

COLLEGE: EOU freshman retention rate jumped to 72% last year

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State University student who originally planned to be a pharmacist, now wants to be a physician’s assistant. The move will require similar classes at the undergraduate level, but lead to a career Zepeda thinks will allow her more direct interaction with patients.

She’s hit some rough patches in the transition from high school to college, learning that professors wouldn’t remind students of assignments and would be generally less accessible.

“I can understand why people drop out,” she said. “The classes are different in high school and college.”

Some of her struggles were compounded by a sense of homesickness, sometimes spurring her to travel from Corvallis to Woodburn or Beaverton to find a taco truck with foods that remind her of home.

To overcome a tough transition, Zepeda is seeking and receiving support from friends, family and OSU advisers.

At the recommendation of an acquaintance, Zepeda joined OSU’s College Assistance Migrant Program, which provides tutoring, financial aid and other services to students who are migrants, are the children of migrants or have participated in a migrant education program.

Hanging on

None of the students interviewed said they were considering dropping out, but it’s a distinct reality for many first-year college students. About 1 in 3 students in the U.S. don’t return for their sophomore year.

Eastern Oregon University’s freshman retention rate was between 55-60 percent two years ago but jumped to 72 percent last year.

Kathleen Brown, EOU student success coordinator, said EOU improved its performance by creating two required courses for

first-year students.

One of those classes, a university studies course, teaches students things like academic literacy so they are better prepared for upper division courses.

The freshman-specific classes are also used as a way to keep better tabs on first-year students if they start to show signs of falling behind, which allows the university to direct students to their advisers or even other students with their major.

“It’s really hard to hide when you’re struggling,” she said.

Patrick Collins of Heppner is a freshman at EOU and a fan of the university studies class. He singled out a quiz he took that identified his strengths, which gave him new ways to better utilize his attributes. A longtime strength has been skill on the football field, which earned him a scholarship to EOU.

Collins is a redshirt player this year, meaning he won’t play in any games but can practice with the team. But he still attends up to three football-related events per day.

Because of the time commitment, Collins said the football program provides structural support for academics, setting up mandatory study halls, grade monitoring and tutors for classes where players are struggling.

He’s also adjusting to La Grande fairly well, the close proximity to Heppner allowing him to visit his family frequently.

“It’s big enough where you get the things that you need, but small enough to remind you of home,” he said.

On the right track

Hermiston graduate Laura Dewey also stayed close to home for college, choosing BMCC with the intent to eventually transfer to OSU to seek a veterinary degree.

In her first term, Dewey is taking all of her classes at BMCC’s Hermiston campus, easing her transition to college life.

Using money she saved from jobs she

worked last summer and the grants she received through the Oregon Promise program, Dewey now doesn’t have to balance a job with school like many other college students.

Dewey also noticed there is less hand holding in college.

“You have to be an advocate for yourself,” she said.

While some students are changing their majors and focus to better suit their interests, others have found their initial decisions validated.

Pendleton High School grad Ryan Lacey is studying astronautical engineering at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida, and is doing well in his early classes.

Lacey doubles down when he’s not in class, having joined a club that is building a rocket capable of delivering a payload up to 10,000 feet, in addition to other extracurricular activities.

“Going to the clubs reminds you why you’re in engineering,” he said.

Lacey finds Florida’s temperate climate boring, but enjoyed a trip to the beach in the Florida Panhandle while Hurricane Matthew passed over Daytona Beach in October.

Cece Hoffman, a Pendleton graduate and University of Washington freshman, is also finding a lot to like about college life.

Hoffman said she’s learning there’s a lot more career paths than she anticipated with her public health major, including jobs in epidemiology, anthropology and with the Center for Disease Control.

A member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Hoffman said she loves the diversity of her campus and the city of Seattle and is considering a variety of clubs, like a health major club for minority students and a sign language club.

“It feels very natural to be here,” she said.

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BEES: One-third of food depends on honeybees

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income comes from pollination. The farm provides bees to pollinate everything from Hermiston watermelons to California almonds.

Lohman’s favorite part of the job is raising young bees and making new colonies. One-third of all food depends on honeybees to survive, she said, and having a beehive can be a wonderful thing for gardens, so long as they’re maintained properly.

“It’s very easy for beehives to die,” Lohman said. “Right now, there’s such an interest in raising bees. People are so anxious to do something that’s good for the world.”

Lohman said a beehive at the River Walk Garden would make for a great teaching tool, for both gardeners and the public in general.

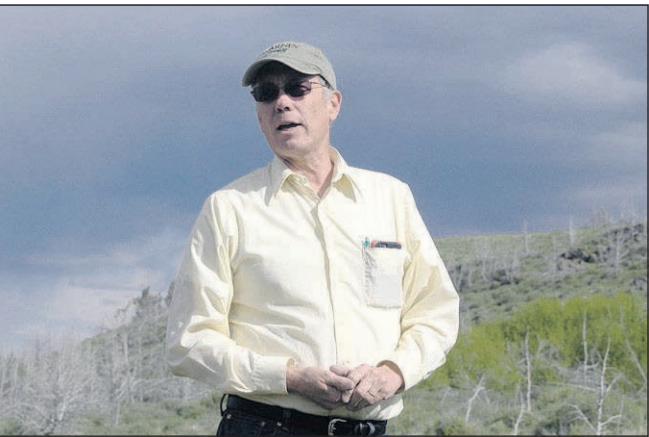
“Beehives don’t have to be pests,” she said. “That’s what we want people to understand.”

The main goal of the community garden, Sanders said, is education. The garden is home to a variety of crops, including corn, squash, peppers and kale. Produce is donated to CAPECO to distribute to families across Eastern Oregon.

Adding a beehive would be another valuable piece of the puzzle, Sanders said.

“Pollinators are a huge part of life in the garden,” she said. “That’s part of this whole education.”

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Eric Mortenson/Capital Press

Harney County Judge Steven Grasty, shown here at a 2014 sage grouse habitat agreement ceremony, leaves office at the end of the year.

HARNEY: Occupiers received little support from county residents

Continued from 1A

Runnels, who won enough votes in the May primary to avoid a November runoff, will take over as judge. Only a handful of Oregon counties, all of them rural, sparsely populated and east of the Cascades, maintain the county court system of government. They aren’t about to change.

Harney County is deep red Republican. President Obama only got 25 percent of the county vote in 2008, and only 23 percent in 2012. But Eastern Oregon’s votes have always been swamped by Portland, Salem and Eugene, and always will be, which is partly why there is loud disagreement with federal land management policies. The Bundy occupiers figured they’d find support in Harney County.

For the most part, they didn’t. People such as Grasty and Sheriff Dave Ward told them to go home. There were a lot of factors for that, but the main one was that you don’t show up as an armed militia in Harney County, take over a public place where county residents work and visit, and expect to be welcomed — no matter how much people may agree with your baseline message about government.

In addition, this was a county that in 2014 forged the first collaboration between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and private landowners on conserving Greater sage grouse habitat. It was a remarkable series of agreements: Cattle ranchers agreed to manage their rangeland in a way that benefited the bird, while the feds promised 30 years protection from additional regulation even if sage grouse were added to the endangered species list. The agreements were quickly and widely copied in other Oregon counties and in other states. Many people credit them with the government’s decision to keep sage grouse off the list.

That was all in the background when the occupiers arrived, took over, riled up

the county, got arrested and went to trial.

Then the federal jury acquitted the occupiers because prosecutors overreached on the conspiracy angle instead of sticking with simpler weapons, trespass and work interference charges. Marty Goold, director of the Harney County Soil & Water Conservation District, said the verdict was like pulling a bandage off a wound that hadn’t healed.

The district served as mediator between federal wildlife officials and local landowners. Despite the verdict, Goold said people involved in the sage grouse agreements are hanging together.

“I’ve seen no ripple in our organization that would tell me or indicate to me that there is a feeling of animosity or distrust in working through the process,” she said. “It’s a continuing discussion. We discuss hard issues with U.S. Fish and Wildlife but do it in a respectful manner to the best of our ability.”

Goold said she’d like to see more consistent land management “across the fencelines,” where private land bumps up against federal land. She said people have to keep talking to each other.

“That’s the critical piece I think a lot of people have to keep in the forefront of their minds when they take on an effort like we did,” Goold said. “There will be some real tough times but there will be some really great rewards.”

Grasty, the county judge, said the fractures remain despite the county’s inclination to move on.

“So you worry,” he said. “I’ve had a couple people say the verdict was precedent setting.”

He disagrees. “That verdict is a verdict of a jury trial; we’re not talking about a Supreme Court decision. They didn’t make a decision on who owns the refuge.

“What people do from this point forward with that decision, or how they interpret it, I don’t know,” he said.

“Worried? Not at this point.”

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