

# BMCC and WSU Tri-Cities create transfer program

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Blue Mountain Community College and Washington State University Tri-Cities signed a new deal to facilitate transfers between the two schools.

According to a university press release, the agreement creates the WSU Tri-Cities-BMCC Bridges program, which will waive application and transcript fees for Blue Mountain students looking to transfer to Washington State's Richland campus and make BMCC transfers immediately eligible for in-state tuition once they make the move. Bridges participants will be assigned advisers from both schools to ensure they're not taking any classes that won't transfer between the two institutions.

The two colleges signed the agreement Nov. 4. In the press release, BMCC President Mark Browning expressed excitement over the new program.

"Bridges is what we hope to see for all our students who see a path to their future



Washington State University Tri-Cities/Contributed Photo  
**Sandra Haynes, the chancellor of Washington State University Tri-Cities, signs an agreement Nov. 4, 2021, creating a new transfer program while seated next to Blue Mountain Community College President Mark Browning in Hermiston.**

through a regional research university like Washington State University Tri-Cities," he said in a statement. "Blue Mountain students will now be able to pursue a complete program right here. The resources available through WSU Tri-Cities

are now available to those BMCC students who enroll in Bridges — including those in a variety of STEM programs ranging from engineering, to computer science, to the sciences. Talk about a bright future." Although Eastern Oregon

University is the region's four-year college, BMCC's Hermiston campus is closer to WSU Tri-Cities than any other four-year institution in Oregon. WSU Tri-Cities Chancellor Sandra Haynes said her school's proximity and its diverse student body

where nearly a majority of its attendees are students of color make it a good fit for Blue Mountain students.

"We are excited to partner with Blue Mountain Community College to create access to a baccalaureate degree for more students," she said in a statement. "With our close proximity to BMCC in Oregon, this program creates an ideal partnership between our two institutions to serve students in both areas and help students save on costs."

In an interview after the ceremony, Browning said BMCC staff were working on the agreement before he started his job Sept. 7 and he credited them for bringing the deal to fruition.

During Browning's hiring process, candidates and community members talked about how Blue Mountain was facing increasing competition from institutions across state lines at a time when the college was trying to recover from a steady decline in enrollment. Rather than attend classes close at BMCC's Hermiston or Boardman's campuses, some students in western

Umatilla County and north Morrow County were traveling across the Columbia River to enroll at Columbia Basin College in Richland, Washington.

Browning said BMCC's new alliance with WSU Tri-Cities could help some of those students stay closer to home.

"I want them to be Timberwolves," he said. "And now they can be Cougars."

Interested students will need to sign a declaration of intent on the Bridges website and then submit a WSU Tri-Cities admissions application once they're ready to transfer. The program is only open to BMCC students who have taken less than 45 quarter credits while maintaining a 2.5 cumulative GPA. Eligible students most also be in the process of obtaining an associate's of arts Oregon transfer degree, or an associate's of science transfer degree in business or computer science.

For more information, visit [tricitie.wsu.edu/bridges](http://tricitie.wsu.edu/bridges) or email Bridges advisor Rafa Pruneda at [rpruneda@wsu.edu](mailto:rpruneda@wsu.edu).

## Umatilla chamber hires new executive director

By ERICK PETERSON  
East Oregonian

UMATILLA — Annette Greiner is the new executive director for the Umatilla Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center. She started Nov. 1, after a job interview from the chamber board.

Greiner is an Oregon State University graduate with a bachelor's degree in agricultural business management and resource economics. A recent chamber press release stated she comes from "a long lineage of family-owned farms and ranches in Eastern Oregon." Her recent employment includes work at Two Rivers Correctional Institution, she said, and she has a background in healthcare management.

"I was just waiting for the right opportunity, and here I am," she said of her new position at the chamber.

Now the director, she said her first plan is to become acquainted with local business people and ask people, face-to-face, what they need



Erick Peterson/East Oregonian

**Annette Greiner, the executive director for the Umatilla Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center, poses outside her Umatilla office Friday, Nov. 12, 2021.**

and what she can help with. For instance, she can direct people toward city and county grant opportunities, she said.

A self-described on-and-off resident of the Umatilla/Hermiston area for the last 25 years, Greiner said she has seen a lot of local change. Umatilla's Main Street, in particular, has experienced great growth, she said.

"Not only with their side-

walks and light poles, but with all the new businesses in town," she said. "I just hope, down the line, there can be more diverse commerce."

She said she envisions a future for Umatilla in which the town's residents can do more of their shopping close to home.

"It's nice when you can go downtown and get the things that you need, from local folks," she said.

What's more, she said, she would like to help make Umatilla a destination for people out of town. She said she wants outsiders to know, "Umatilla is not just a county — it's a town."

Mark Ribich, chamber board president, said he is pleased with Greiner and her hiring. He said she has strong organizational skills that will help the chamber and local businesses "get to a better place."

As the executive director, Greiner will manage the chamber and oversee the visitor center, Ribich said, and her primary responsibilities will be offering support to member businesses, providing them with resources they need.

The chamber, Ribich said, will be transitioning into something a bit different, where it will be focusing on something other than distributing masks, hand sanitizer and new guidelines related to the pandemic. It will be coordinating other activities, and he said he thinks Greiner is the right person for the job.

## LOCAL BRIEFS

### Woman pleads not guilty in stabbing

PENDLETON — A woman facing charges of first-degree murder in a September stabbing on the Umatilla Indian Reservation has pleaded not guilty.

A federal grand jury indicted Skylar Crowe, 22, in the killing of Richard Higheagle, 38, according to court documents. She entered a not guilty plea in her arraignment on Oct. 29.

The United States District Court in Portland scheduled a five-day jury trial for the case to begin Dec. 28. Judge Michael H. Simon is presiding.

According to court documents, Crowe turned herself into the Umatilla Tribal Police Department on the night of the stabbing.

She told FBI Special Agent Rex Shark she stabbed Higheagle with a kitchen knife, according to an affidavit Shark filed Sept. 30 in federal court for an arrest warrant.

Crowe claimed Higheagle sexually abused her and her sister throughout childhood, according to court documents. At the time of the abuse, he was married to her mother and they were living under his roof.

A second source, who is unnamed in court documents but is described as Crowe's intimate partner, told officials he saw Crowe stab Higheagle. He told officials that during the first month of their relationship, Crowe told him she "had been raped repeatedly by Higheagle during her childhood" and also "told him repeatedly during their four years together that she

wanted to kill Higheagle."

### Fatal crash closes Interstate 84

LA GRANDE — A man driving a semitrailer was killed in a one-vehicle crash Monday, Nov. 15, on Interstate 84 just west of La Grande.

The driver, who was eastbound, died after he was ejected from his vehicle after he failed to negotiate a curve between the Oregon Department of Transportation weigh station, about 2 miles west of La Grande, and Exit 259. After the driver failed to negotiate the curve his trailer flipped, causing his truck to also flip and eject him, according to Oregon State Police Sgt. Grant Jackson.

The driver died at the scene, according to Oregon State Police, which has not identified the victim.

The accident occurred at about 4:25 a.m.

Jackson said the victim was not wearing a seatbelt. The driver had no passengers. Jackson said that excessive speed may have been a factor in the crash.

The fatal accident forced the closure of the eastbound lanes of traffic on Interstate 84 between La Grande and Exit 216, 6 miles east of Pendleton. The lanes were still closed as of noon on Nov. 15.

Diesel fuel from the truck involved leaked during the crash. A hazmat crew called in from Baker City to clean up the fuel.

In addition to the OSP, the La Grande Fire Department and the Oregon Department Transportation responded to the accident.

—EO Media Group

## Prisons in Umatilla County reopening for visits

By BRYCE DOLE  
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Prisons in Umatilla County are reopening for visitation after being closed for more than four months due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, according to prison spokespersons.

Two Rivers Correctional Institution, Umatilla, began allowing visitors to pre-schedule their visits starting Wednesday, Nov. 10. Eastern Oregon Correctional

Institution will reopen for its visitation on Nov. 17 and also requires people to schedule their visits ahead of time.

Ron Miles, a spokesperson for EOIC, said pre-scheduling is an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the prison and to accommodate the prison's limited staff.

The state has barred visitation multiple times during the pandemic in response to rising COVID-19 cases. The latest closure came in July as the delta variant swept through Oregon,

spokespersons said. "We're hopeful we won't have to shut down again," Miles said.

Miles said the prison is expecting to have a lot of requests for visitation after the prison has been closed for most of the pandemic. He said EOIC will have to briefly turn away some requests for visitation to keep groups small.

People can schedule their visit by calling ICS Corrections at 888-646-9437.

People can schedule their

visit to Two Rives on the ICS Corrections website at [bit.ly/3wGoseD](http://bit.ly/3wGoseD).

At TRCI, each adult in custody will be allowed two visitors, including children. People can visit once a week for one session each day. The sessions are from 8-10:30 a.m. and 1-3:30 p.m. on Wednesdays through Sundays.

Visitors will be screened for COVID-19 symptoms and their temperatures will be checked. Masks and "hand hygiene" are required.

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