

WOU grad rates up to 46 percent

By Emily Mentzer
The Itemizer-Observer

MONMOUTH — Western Oregon University's graduation rates have increased, but remain below a 50 percent completion mark in six years.

David McDonald, associate provost, said rates have climbed from 41 percent in 2009-10 to 46 percent in 2013-14. Because of variables each year, McDonald said taking rates five years apart shows a more accurate measurement.

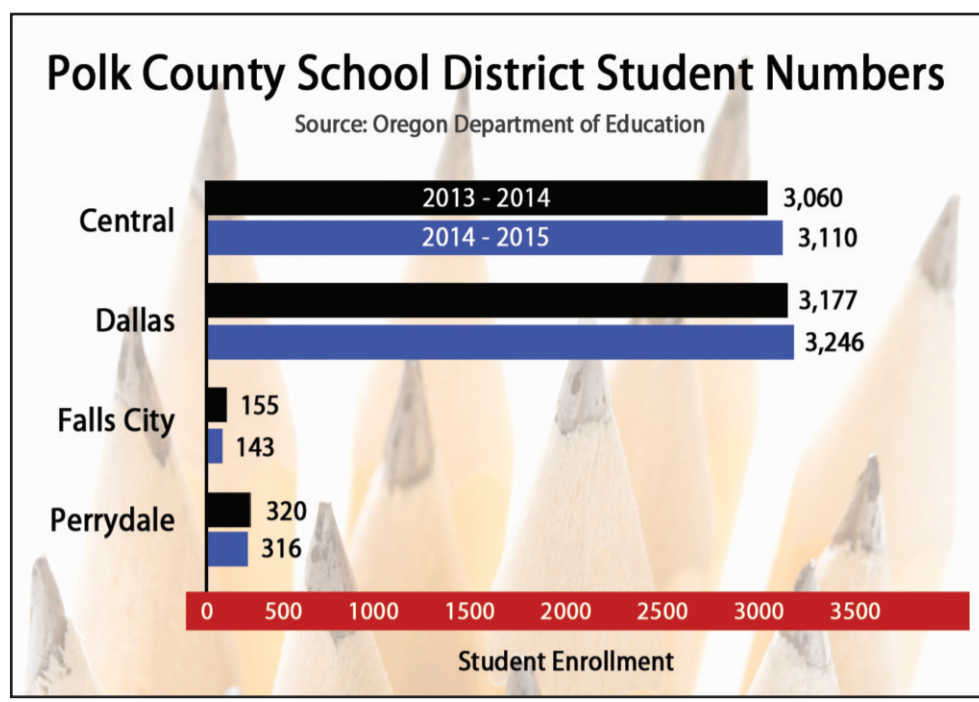
WOU President Mark Weiss said the 46 percent was not good enough during a presentation to the Central Lions Club on Monday.

Reasons for students not earning a bachelor's degree in six years or less vary from not being prepared for college to having affordability issues or even struggling with mental health, Weiss said.

The worst-case scenario is when students drop out of college, leaving the university with debt and no degree, he said.

McDonald added that some of Western's programs are built to get students started at WOU, but to transfer to another school to complete their degree.

Western has developed a culture of Latino students graduating, which runs counter to national trends. Latino grad rates have increased from 35 percent in 2009-10 to 52 percent in 2013-14.



Central and Dallas school districts have more students this year, based on the state's fall enrollment report released this month. Falls City and Perrydale are down slightly.

Enrollment numbers up at Dallas, Central

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

POLK COUNTY — Polk County's two largest school districts — excluding Salem-Keizer — saw increases in enrollment this year, according to the Oregon Department of Education's 2014-15 fall enrollment report.

Meanwhile, Falls City and Perrydale school districts saw small decreases in enrollment from 2013-14.

The report, which was released Feb. 4, uses enrollment tallies provided on the

first school day in October.

According to the report, Central School District's enrollment increased to 3,110 in 2014-15 from 3,060 last year.

Dallas School District jumped from 3,177 in 2013-14 to 3,246 this fall.

The report includes a Dallas senior class tally of 417, but that includes all seniors at Dallas High School, Morrison Campus Alternative School, students enrolled in Extended Campus, and various other programs the district offers at the time.

Falls City's enrollment numbers declined by eight students, according to the fall snapshot, with 143 students in K-12, down from 155 in 2013-14. Of the 143, 46 are at the high school.

Perrydale's enrollment fell slightly from 320 last year to 316 this year. Perrydale High School enrollment is 93.

Statewide, enrollment grew .66 percent from 2013-14 and is at 570,857.

To see the report and those from prior years: www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?=3225.

Search for DSD boss ready for next step

Superintendent to be named in March

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — The Dallas School Board is ready for the next step in the process of finding and hiring a new superintendent: interviews.

Monday night, the district's superintendent screening committee, including school board members, met to reduce the pool of applicants to those the board would take a closer look at through an initial interview.

The committee, which consisted of district staff, city representatives, business leaders and community members, held its first meeting Feb. 11 to begin reviewing applications and resumes.

Superintendent search consultant Mike Taylor said Dallas will compete with 14 other school districts looking for a new leader, a number of them of similar size to Dallas.

"This is very typical of what we have been getting in other searches in the state," Taylor said of the number of candidates who applied for the Dallas job, though that number was not disclosed Monday.

As the meeting was held in executive session — closed to the public — the number of candidates chosen for initial interviews and their names were not released Monday. The

board approved its superintendent job description, hiring procedures and salary range, and took public input on the process and candidate qualifications in meetings held earlier this school year.

"We had several opportunities at public meetings and surveys (for public comment)," Board Chairman Mike Blanchard said before the first meeting of the screening committee.

According to the search schedule, the board will announce its finalists and schedule in-district visits and public meet-and-greet sessions following interviews with the candidates selected in the "debrief session" Monday.

Last fall, Dallas began its search to replace former superintendent Christy Perry, who left the district June 30 to accept a similar post with the Salem-Keizer School District. The board approved a job description and salary range in November and began advertising the post in January.

If the process stays on track, the board should name the district's new leader in March.

Taylor said the search thus far is right on schedule.

"There is a good pool of candidates in the market right now," Taylor said. "We are confident Dallas will find the right person."

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