



Local column: Start here, stay close, save big

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Carrie and Jerry Scheid

The College of Eastern Idaho is leaps and bounds ahead of where a start-up college would be, write Jerry and Carrie Scheid.

Jerry: How are things going at Eastern Idaho Technical College now that it's become College of Eastern Idaho (CEI)? Since you're one of its trustees, can you give us the inside scoop?

Carrie: Things are moving very quickly. You'll recall the voters just approved the college in mid-May yet we've already got accreditation for our new Associate degrees and we're fully approved to offer federal and state financial aid. Typically it would take years for a start-up college to get this far.

Jerry: That's great! When do you begin offering your new Associate degree programs?

Carrie: Classes for the Associate degrees have already started. We decided to do a "soft opening" and allow some students to enroll this fall to help us shake things out while we gear up our staff, faculty and systems. Our official grand opening will be in January.

Jerry: How are enrollments going?

Carrie: We have over 100 new students enrolled in our Associate in Arts degree or general education classes which qualify for that degree. Overall, our degree enrollments are at 809 which is 133 (20 percent) more degree enrollees than EITC had last fall. We expect that number to jump considerably this spring. In fact, our new Associate in Science degree will become available in January.

Jerry: Were there any surprises in your fall enrollments?

Carrie: One unexpected benefit is that our nursing degree enrollments went from 137 to 243. That's an almost 80 percent increase!

Jerry: Wow! That's important because there is a serious nursing shortage at our local hospitals.

Carrie: In the past, we've had a huge waiting list for the nursing programs. So we're working hard to fix that. Indeed, we're seriously trying to beef up all our vocational and technical offerings. Did you know that our student headcount in work force and technical education programs is over 15,000?

Jerry: What interests me most is the money students can save by starting their college degree at CEI.

Carrie: The savings are huge. CEI costs \$129/credit hour compared to \$305-\$362/credit hour at Idaho's public universities. Costs for a full-time student who completes their first two years at CEI will be \$7700 compared to \$14,000-\$15000 for their first two years at an Idaho public university. CEI also offers financial aid programs to further reduce costs. After finishing an Associate's in Arts or Science degree at CEI, students can transfer into ISU or any other public Idaho university and start as a junior.

Jerry: You know, I attended a community college many years ago and found them very friendly to nontraditional students and folks who weren't sure they were college material.

Carrie: CEI offers excellent remedial programs for students who need extra help. Our goal is to remove obstacles so students can succeed.

Jerry: You mentioned the January grand opening. How does a student enroll?

Carrie: It's super easy. Go to www.cei.edu/startcei. There is an online application which takes only 10 minutes to complete. If you register by Oct. 31st, we'll even waive the \$20 application fee. I also strongly encourage students to contact CEI's financial aid office for help.

Jerry: I'd love to close with a pithy quote about education. But I think CEI's new slogan says it all "Start here; Stay close; Save big!"