

# New community education center a part of Ogden 'College Town' approach

THURSDAY , MARCH 06, 2014 - 2:02 PM

Mitch Shaw, Standard-Examiner Staff



OGDEN — The latest initiative in Ogden city’s and Weber State University’s “College Town” project aims to bring the benefits of higher education to populations that traditionally haven’t had access to it.

The city and the university have teamed to open the new Weber State University Community Education Center — a one-stop center providing support for under-served populations including minority, low-income and first-generation community members to access and complete post-secondary education.

Located at 2955 Harrison Blvd., in the lower level of the United Way/Red Cross building, the center includes three offices: the Community Education Center, the Melba S. Lehner Children’s School and the Community Research Extension of the Center for Community Engaged Learning.

Bruce Davis, vice provost and dean of Continuing Education, said the center will provide personalized support for individuals and families with special challenges and needs and will pair individuals with advisors to assist them in entering the university.

“It’s not just going to be, ‘Here’s a packet — this is what you do,’” said Luis Lopez, director of the center. “When people from an underrepresented community want to go to college, they’ll be connected to a person from our center to walk them through the process until they’re sitting down in class.”

Lopez said the center will market itself to the “non-traditional,” under-represented populations in the Top of Utah.

“We won’t specifically target kids in high school or junior high,” Lopez said. “We will serve them of course, but we’re focusing on the non-traditional students. Older people who may have dropped out of school and have been out of that environment for years. Our vision is to break down social and historical barriers (and) create an environment of trust, collaboration and inclusiveness.”

The center has also partnered with Weber County School District to offer a conversational English as a second language class. Lopez said soon the center will offer a drop-in lab GED preparation course in Spanish as well as space to take the GED.

The children’s school, which is affiliated with the Department of Child and Family Studies, will be for the children of individuals who receive services from the center.

The school offers a developmentally appropriate learning program with structured activities designed specifically for the children.

The center is the latest initiative in what has been a nearly two-year collaboration between Ogden and WSU with the end goal of turning Ogden into a “college town.”

The city council recently adopted a “College Town Charter” between WSU and Ogden that formalizes an ongoing partnership between the two entities.

“This center will serve as a key community resource to provide education to individuals who would otherwise not have access to these opportunities,” said Ogden City Council Chair Bart Blair.

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