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Camosun eyes growth on West Shore

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Byline: Sam Van Schie

Camosun College is making inroads to the West Shore - expanding course offerings and exploring the idea of a satellite campus.

In January, five university-transferable Camosun courses will be offered through the WestShore Centre for Learning and Training.

"You get everything you'd get coming to Camosun, except the commute," said Stan Chung, dean of arts and science. "It's the same small class sizes, around 30 students, and the same curriculum."

Camosun began offering classes in the West Shore in September. Its initial two classes filled up.

"We wanted to put our feelers out and see what type of interest we'd get," Chung explained. "We weren't disappointed."

Now talks are underway to establish a satellite campus for Camosun on the West Shore. Tom Roemer, vice president of strategic development, noted one in nine students at the college commute from the West Shore.

"We want to establish a permanent presence there," Roemer said. "Just from the perspective of the ecological footprint that (commuting) creates, it makes sense to move closer to where the people are."

Roemer is still working on the details of an expansion plan that will be rolled out in the spring. After that he can start considering locations for the school, which he said could be integrated into a commercial development or within a future location for Belmont secondary school.

"We're not thinking of a full campus," he said. "We don't know if we'll do one location or several ... we want to be more accessible to First Nations communities and high school students in particular."

Through a partnership between south Island school districts and Camosun College, high school students can take college classes at no cost and receive a dual-credit that counts for both high school and college credit.

Previously most of the courses offered through the partnership were in the trades, but the expansion of arts and sciences classes in the West Shore means university-bound students can get a head start on their post-secondary education.

"It's a fantastic opportunity for our students," said Sooke School District superintendent Jim Cambridge. "We expect a lot of kids to sign up, and hopefully

that will continue to show Camosun that we really want them out here."

The West Shore winter timetable for Camosun classes begins at the end of January to parallel the high school timetable.

Among the courses offered are first-year English composition, which is a required course for all B.C. university and college programs. Other classes include: creative writing, Indigenous studio art, introduction to criminal justice, and psychology of child development.

The weekly evening classes begin Jan. 31. Applications are available at www.camosun.ca/apply. High school students should talk to their school counsellors about eligibility.

news@goldstreamgazette.com

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