

## Dual enrollment gets boost at Walters State

### Federal grant used for video streaming to high schools

By Chloe White

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Walters State Community College will now have the ability to offer college courses to more area high school students thanks to a \$493,000 rural development grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The grant will be used to install "Educast" rooms at the college's Morristown, Sevierville and Greeneville campuses, which will allow them to offer dual enrollment courses to area high schools via video streaming.

Dual enrollment courses, which provide high school junior and seniors the opportunity to earn both high school and college credit simultaneously, have been available at Walters State since the late 1990s, said Linda Roberts, dean of distance education. But the courses have been taught either on-site at area high schools or at one of the college's campus locations.

The video technology will increase access to high schools that in the past would have required the presence of an instructor, something that previously could be cost-prohibitive, especially when only a small number of students were interested in taking a course, she said.

The college's 10-county service area includes Claiborne, Cocke, Grainger, Greene, Hamblen, Hancock, Hawkins, Jefferson, Sevier and Union counties.

The college will record classroom lectures in the Educast rooms and make them available via podcast, which students can watch from a computer.

Walters State has approximately 850 dual enrollment students, Roberts said.

"Dual enrollment gives high school students a jump start and the chance to get some of the basic college courses out of the way," she said. "It also gives students a taste of what college is like without having to take a full set of college classes."

Many students who take advantage of dual enrollment courses enter college with "at least" one semester completed, Roberts said.

Roberts said she hopes to go "full force" with video streaming in fall 2010, after the college pilots it in select high schools in the spring. A pilot computer science course is being video-streamed this semester from the college's Greeneville campus into three Greene County high schools.

The grant also will fund \$137,000 in video-streaming technology equipment for the Jefferson County School system, which submitted a grant proposal in collaboration with Walters State. The money will allow the school system to place distance learning units in four schools: Jefferson County High School, Maury Middle School, Jefferson Middle School and Rush Strong School.

Video streaming will provide opportunities for the schools to participate in collaborative work with other school systems, take part in virtual field trips and add additional courses, such as Advanced Placement and dual enrollment, said Connie Campbell, director of Jefferson County Schools.

"We're hoping the grant will provide students with opportunities beyond the classroom walls," she said.

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