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FULL FORECAST

Community colleges cash in as college costs soar

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By [Tanya Mendia](#) [CONNECT](#)



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esa Community College Red Mountain.

It's the one day a week these students will meet in person for lab. The rest of the week, the learning happens where and when they want.

"One thing we're trying to help our students is get a really good schedule that works with their commitments outside of school," said Professor Liz Csikar.

One of those students with other commitments is Hailey Caragata, an aspiring nurse, who is working 30 hours a week to make ends meet.

"It's really important because I need to get into nursing school so I can start my career and start making real money," she said.

Caragata is taking classes that are a hybrid of online and in person.

"It's kind of whenever I can fit it in but it's very flexible which is really nice," she added.

The Red Mountain campus rolled out new flexible courses this fall, allowing students to come to campus four days a week, two days a week, or even just once.

"They're saving approximately four to six hours a week not coming to campus just for my class so that's a pretty significant amount," Csikar said.

Community colleges are fighting to stay current as they compete with the bigger universities and smaller budgets.

The hybrid, concentrated and fast-tracked courses are their way of adapting to the changing needs of college students.

"What we're trying to do is actually build more courses that fit that flexible, hybrid kind of model," Csikar said. "We're actually able to offer more classes which will work with more people's schedules."

Full-time school is certainly unrealistic for Caragata but with this many options she is looking at getting her degree faster on a schedule that works for her.

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