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CAVIT considering expansion, having classes for young adults

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COOLIDGE — The Central Arizona Valley Institute of Technology may expand student enrollment next school year to include adults between the ages of 18 and 21.

Superintendent Mike Glover told the CAVIT Governing Board Nov. 6 that current law allows it, and extending the enrollment age would enable high school seniors to enroll in a two-year CAVIT program, earn college credit and be certificated in their career fields.

"That would offer us the opportunity to serve more students," he said.

Enrolling young adults also could provide enough students to allow CAVIT to offer evening classes to high school students who need to make up credits or take test preparation classes at their high schools during the day.

"So in essence, we are breaking down that barrier of coming to CAVIT," he said.

Enrolling young adults could allow CAVIT to offer evening classes to graduates who want to continue their career training. Fire science graduates, for example, might want to return to CAVIT for training as emergency medical technicians.

"It allows us to continue the pipeline training with our students to get them to their ultimate goal of either college or careers," he said.

Enrolling young adults would allow CAVIT to offer a 300-hour practicum like

private schools do, so graduates of the veterinary and medical assistant programs could better compete for jobs.

"They need that end-of-program portion to say these students are truly ready to go out in the field," he said.

Enrolling young adults also would allow CAVIT to partner with the high schools and offer a transitional career program for students with special needs. Students could learn entry-level career skills at CAVIT and be placed with businesses for life- and work-skill experience.

"It's something that the schools are struggling with, with respect to meeting the transition of special education students," he said, "and we do have the resources, the connections and industry folks."

Glover said the law allows young adult students to take CAVIT classes during regular hours if vacant seats exist — except in massage therapy classes. The parents of students younger than 18 would have to be notified. Young adult students would have to be fingerprinted and have background checks at their own expense. They would not be counted for state funding and would have to pay tuition.

The East Valley Institute of Technology, Western Maricopa Education Consortium and the Pima County Joint Technological Education District are already serving young adults, he said. He would like CAVIT to offer the option next school year.

Board member Wilbur Freeman asked if CAVIT would have to hire more staff.

Glover said no. Some CAVIT teachers

work only three-quarters time and are interested in more work hours.

Board President Marty Baca asked about the plan's disadvantages.

"No. 1, a tremendous amount of work," Glover said, "getting the word out to everyone. Coordinating the evening-afternoon classes is a challenge."

Glover said he is confident his staff can make it successful. The idea came about because current students asked for the opportunities and there is interest in evening EMT and nursing classes and a summer practicum.

Board member Alma Farrell said CAVIT has a captive audience with its current students.

Board member Linda Good said she is glad to see services for special needs students.

Glover plans to meet with the five high school districts and special education staff later this month. If CAVIT had enough enrollment, it could offer a work-based practicum with industry in the summer of 2014, after-school classes next school year, another practicum in the summer of 2015 and apply then for post-secondary accreditation with the Council on Occupational Education.

The intent is not to compete with the community college, Glover added. It is to give CAVIT students another semester or summer of opportunity and push them toward Central Arizona College for associate degrees and certification.

A vote on the issue is expected by the board in December.