



The Clark Journal

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THE PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

In story after story about today's economic crisis, we keep hearing references to the Great Depression. They resonate strongly at Clark College because we were founded during some of the toughest times of the Great Depression.

After struggling and even closing our doors for a time during World War II, the college reopened and began to grow. When the college celebrated its 25th anniversary, it was thriving. That year, we dedicated our main campus in Vancouver's Central Park and welcomed Dr. Dwight C. Baird as president.

By the time the college marked its 50th anniversary celebration, the United States was, once again, facing tough economic times. That period was followed by unprecedented growth.

Twenty-five years later, we are once again facing economic challenges. History tells us that these tough times will also pass and that our college will continue to grow and thrive.

The legislative session currently underway in Olympia is dominated by discussions about the biennium budget for 2009–2011. We receive updates regularly and are striving to make good decisions by keeping the process open; listening to our faculty, staff and administrators; and always focusing on our students.

Our new Strategic Plan will help to guide those efforts. It's based on recommendations from our accreditation self-study, the 2008 visit by the accreditation evaluation team and input from the college community. There's a link to history there too.

At the invitation of the college, a committee of five professors from the University of Washington visited Clark Junior College on March 12, 1937. It was the college's first accreditation visit.

According to the book "A History of the Vancouver Public Schools," the professors "inspected the accounts, the libraries and the laboratories, visited classes, conferred with instructors, chatted with students, had lunch with the board and talked with other members of the community."

In the book, it states: "Acknowledging the meagerness of facilities, the committee concluded that the quality of the work and the competence and earnestness of the faculty warranted the encouragement that accreditation would give."

On April 23, 1937, Clark Junior College received the news that it had been accredited for one year. We have remained accredited to this day.

For 75 years, we have helped our students and our region survive tough economic times. Today, we're being called upon to do it again. And we will do it—just as we've done in the past—by staying focused on our mission and always believing in a bright future for our students, our college and our region.

Robert K. Knight, Clark College President

It's a matter of money: Budget tops 2009 legislative session agenda

Facing a shortfall from reduced sales tax revenue rates and other income sources, Washington Governor Chris Gregoire and members of the Washington state legislature have been taking their turns at proposing ways to balance the state's spending—for this year and the years to come.

The impact of the state's shortfall has already had an impact at Clark College. And as the legislature continues its work on the 2009–2011 biennium budget, the college is bracing to see what the future holds.



CUTTING BACK IN 2008-2009

As the 2008-2009 school year began in September, the nation's economic downturn was already underway—although few knew then just how bad things might get.

Within weeks, word had spread throughout state agencies and institutions—including Clark College—to be prepared to trim spending for the 2008-2009 fiscal year. Initial reports put the level of reduction in the 2% to 3% range; by February 2009, that number had increased to 4.3%.

The college was able to achieve the 4.3% reduction (a total of \$1.4 million out of the college's \$32.6 million state allocation) through reduced funding for such activities as employee training and development, dues, memberships, travel and events; salary savings through unfilled positions; reductions in supplies, equipment replacement, printing and postage; and additional unbudgeted revenue received through higher-than-anticipated student enrollment.

While the 4.3% reduction is permanent—meaning it will carry forward into 2009-2010—the manner in which these reductions were achieved for this fiscal year may not be. The college will consider how to achieve these reductions in 2009-2010 as part of the budget development process.

On Feb. 19, 2009, Gov. Gregoire signed a “belt-tightening” bill (ESSB 5460) and the first 2009 supplemental operation bill (ESHB 1694), both of which went into effect immediately. Provisions of the bills that affected Clark and other community and technical colleges in the state included:

- Limits on salary increases;
- Hiring freeze;
- Personal service contract freeze;
- Out-of-state travel and training limitations; and an
- Equipment purchase freeze.

On March 19, the Economic and Revenue Forecast Council released an updated state revenue forecast. It forecasts state revenue down \$15 million for the current biennium (2007-2009), and down \$538 million for the next (2009-2011) biennium. “Since our last official revenue forecast in November, the state economy has weakened considerably,” noted the council in its forecast release. Despite



Washington Governor Chris Gregoire addressed the Trustees Association for Community and Technical Colleges in January 2009. During the meeting, State Board member Tom Koenninger asked Gregoire if she saw any hopeful trends emerging that would turn the economy around. “Not yet,” she said. “It’s going to get worse before it gets better.”



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*“We are the
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*We are part
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—Robert K. Knight,
Clark College President

the decrease in forecasted revenue for the current (2007-2009) biennium, as of late March, no further reductions in state spending at the community and technical colleges (including Clark) had been mandated.

PLANNING FOR LESS IN 2009–2011

Amid reductions for the current fiscal year, the state is also developing revenue projections and budgets for the next (2009–2011) biennium.

In December 2008, Gov. Gregoire released her proposed 2009–2011 state budget. In it she closed a projected \$5.7 billion shortfall through a combination of program reductions; suspension of state employee, teacher and care worker salary increases; pension changes; anticipated increased federal contributions; and the use of the state's rainy day fund.

The proposed budget met the shortfall without raising taxes—a move Gregoire was quick to defend. “Now is not the time to be raising taxes on our residents and businesses,” she said in releasing her proposed budget. “Our families are tightening their belts, and that's what government needs to do. The state must squeeze every ounce of value from each taxpayer dollar while maintaining our priorities of protecting families and children the best we can.”

While the governor's proposed budget included cuts to higher education—including a system-wide cut of 6.5% for the state's community and technical colleges—it was less than the 20% figure that had originally been discussed. However, as Clark College President Robert Knight noted in an open meeting with college faculty and staff in December, “There will be a lot of politics that will be played over the next several months. The important message for all of us...that we need to be going to Olympia with is [that] we are already the best value going and we are the solution to bringing this economy out much quicker. We are the ones teaching the skills to the workers who will bring us out of this mess. We are part of the solution.”

The 2009 state legislative session convened Jan. 12. During the Trustees Association for Community and Technical Colleges (TACTC) conference in January, Gov. Gregoire addressed the audience. Speaking of her proposed budget, she told attendees, “I hate it,” adding that she had told legislators, “And when you're done you'll hate your budget, too.”

President Knight appeared before the Senate Ways and Means Higher Education Committee in Olympia on Feb. 13, addressing lawmakers on the impact on colleges and their students of both a 6.5% budget reduction (as proposed by the governor) and a 9.5% budget reduction.

Clark College Foundation President and CEO Lisa Gibert also had the opportunity to represent the state's community colleges when she addressed the House Higher Education Committee on Feb. 6. Gibert explained endowments and their role in providing access to and affordability in higher education. Her message focused on



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the idea that, while endowments are a valuable piece of the economic puzzle, they cannot be relied upon to solve the access and affordability problem. “All aspects of the financial picture must work together to make education a reality for Washingtonians,” noted Gibert.

“Clark College Foundation has historically been able to provide significant support to the college to support both access and the student experience at Clark College,” said Gibert. “This will continue to be our mission.” She added, “However, since July 2008, the financial markets have deteriorated significantly and our investment balances have declined along with the market. It’s the same situation faced by many colleges and universities across the country.” Gibert says the foundation will also “undertake more initiatives with fewer resources” and will continue to work with the college to determine how to best reach out to the community to generate additional dollars.

WORKING NOW FOR THE WORK AHEAD

With the release of the March 2009 revenue forecast, the state’s revenue projection for the next biennium is \$2.1 billion less than it was in November 2008. As a result, Clark College is entering its budget-setting process for the 2009-2010 fiscal year cautiously, preparing budget reduction scenarios of 6.5, 9.5 and 12 percent (equal to approximately \$1.9 million, \$2.8 million and \$3.6 million, respectively)—even as it awaits the final budget from the Washington State Legislature.

Members of the Clark community are taking action to address and meet the anticipated budget reduction in 2009 and beyond—in ways that limit the impact on students.

- College employees continue to submit cost-reduction suggestions directly to President Knight through the college Intranet (https://www.clark.edu/www_administration/budget_reduction_suggestions/).
- Guest opinion/editorial pieces by Knight have appeared in *The Columbian*, the *Vancouver Business Journal*, the *Battle Ground Reflector*, the *Camas-Washougal Post Record* and other regional papers. These pieces, combined with an active presence in Olympia and relationships with

Clark’s legislative representatives, provide understanding and support for the role the college will play in economic recovery.

- The College Council recently adopted a set of budget principles and values. They are available on the Intranet: [http://intranet/college_information/budget/ClarkCollegeBudgetValuesPrinciplesandGuidelines.pdf]. These principles and values will guide our thinking as we move forward with the budget development process.
- Ongoing monitoring of revenue forecasts, budget reductions and state provisions—and their implications—for the current fiscal year and beyond.
- Against that backdrop, the college has established a timeline for the budget process, which was shared in a message from Knight. “This will be a difficult budget to build, and the final product may not reflect everything that you recommended or preferred,” stated Knight. “My commitment to you is to ensure that the cabinet presents the best informed, most carefully considered budget possible to the Board for their ultimate approval. I believe this process will get us there.”

The legislative session continues in Olympia with discussions about budget reductions and proposed tuition increases. Any tuition increase would have to be approved by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC). Once approved, it would automatically be implemented at all of Washington’s community and technical colleges. If it’s adopted, it cannot be changed by the college. The date by which these decisions will be made is still unknown.

In his messages to the college community regarding the state’s financial picture, Knight maintains his appreciation for employees’ efforts to continue supporting Clark students despite challenging times—and provides ongoing encouragement as well. “Our founders brought higher education to Southwest Washington during the Great Depression,” he noted. “Today’s Clark College is their legacy. It is up to us to face today’s economic challenges while still staying focused on a bright future for our college and our community. That will be our legacy.”



After 75 years, Clark still maintains the highest standards



Clark College has marked another milestone during its 75th anniversary year, with the reaffirmation of the college's accreditation by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU).

According to NWCCU, accreditation "recognizes higher education institutions for performance, integrity, and quality to merit the confidence of the educational community and the public."

Read on for more about the October 2008 accreditation visit, the evaluation team's report, and the next steps for Clark College in maintaining and improving its standards for the benefit of our students.

SINCE LAST WE SPOKE...

In the spring 2008 issue of *The Clark Journal*, it was reported that the final draft of the college's accreditation report was under review, in preparation for its public dissemination and submission to NWCCU. Over the summer, the details of the accreditation site visit were finalized, including the compilation of all supporting documentation referenced in the study. As members of the college community returned to Clark in September, a final general session was held to update the college community on the accreditation visit.

The site visit was held October 8-10, 2008. A team of 13 individuals reviewed Clark's self-study report, appendices and related exhibits; held open sessions with faculty, staff and students; met with members of the college's Board of Trustees; and conducted interviews with various members of the college community. At the conclusion of its visit, the evaluation committee held an open session at which their draft recommendations and commendations were presented. No further information on the status of Clark's bid for reaccreditation was shared at that time. Following the visit, a draft report was shared with Clark College President Robert K. Knight for the college to provide correction of factual errors, which was completed Nov. 7, 2008.

On Jan. 8, 2009, Knight, accompanied by Associate Vice President of Planning and Effectiveness Shanda Diehl, attended the NWCCU hearing on the college's accreditation. During the hearing, commission members addressed questions to Knight as part of the evaluation process. In a message to the college community following the visit, Knight said, "I assured the commission that we will continue to support the areas that they recognized with commendations and that we will continue to work to improve the five areas where the team provided recommendations."

NWCCU REVAMPS ACCREDITATION PROCESS

In 2011, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) will officially implement a new accreditation process.

Under the current system, NWCCU establishes standards and determines the accreditation status of a college based on a self-study of those standards, followed by an evaluation by external experts, which occurs every 10 years. Interim visits and reports are also part of the process.

Beginning in 2011, NWCCU will evaluate all colleges and universities based on their strategic plan, which must include the mission, core themes and goals of the institution. Each institution must also identify and measure college-wide indicators to evaluate and assess how the college is meeting its strategic plan. This new process will be an ongoing cycle over a seven-year period (as compared to the current 10-year cycle), with reports due at different points through the seven-year cycle.

Clark College's first accreditation cycle under the new system will be 2011-2016. Each of the five standards, and the year Clark is required to submit its report to the commission, are as follows:

continued next page



After 75 years, Clark still maintains the highest standards



“When we began the accreditation process, we were committed to ensuring that the self-study would be transparent and honest,” continued Knight.

“Accreditation commissioner Dr. Carol Lucey told me that our self-study was just that—transparent and honest. I’m very proud of that.”

By early February, it was announced to the college community that Clark College’s accreditation had been reaffirmed by NWCCU.

COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In its letter to Clark reaffirming the college’s accreditation the commission restated its commendations for:

1. The efforts of Clark’s Teaching and Learning Center in support of learner-centered teaching and linking learning and assessment.
2. The college’s support of professional development activities.
3. The use of Clark’s library—and information resources and services—to actively support teaching and learning.
4. The planning and maintenance of Clark’s facilities to support a learning atmosphere.
5. The commitment of the Clark College Foundation in support of educational programs at the college.

The commission also restated its recommendations for Clark College, which focused on:

1. Institutional planning and evaluation;
2. Program review and outcomes assessment;
3. Protection of student records;
4. Advising and counseling; and
5. College governance.

In reaffirming Clark’s accreditation, the commission found that recommendations 1, 4 and 5 (institutional planning and evaluation; advising and counseling; and college governance, respectively) are substantially in compliance with commission criteria for accreditation—but are in need of improvement. However, the commission found that the college does not meet commission criteria for accreditation regarding recommendations 2 and 3 (program review and outcomes assessment; and protection of student records). (The full text of the commission’s commendations and recommendations to Clark College can be viewed on the Clark College Web site: http://www.clark.edu/about_clark/documents/AccreditationFinalEvaluatorReport11-7-08.pdf.)

- Standard One: Mission, core themes, goals and outcomes (year one report). Due 2011.
- Standard Two: Resource and capacity (year three report). Due 2013.
- Standard Three: Planning and implementation (year five report); together with
- Standard Four: Effectiveness and improvement (year five report). Due 2015.
- Standard Five: Mission fulfillment, sustainability and adaptation (year seven report). Due 2016.

In short, the requirement of the new accreditation process is that all functions within the college are directly tied to the college-wide strategic plan. The process will still evaluate the functions of the college, but only as they relate to the college-wide mission, core themes and college goals, rather than explicitly defined and independent standards.

“The change in the accreditation process is consistent with the direction Clark College is forging in the strategic planning and continuous improvement efforts,” said Associate Vice President for Planning and Institutional Effectiveness Shanda Diehl. “President Knight, Executive Cabinet, and all of the planning committees and task forces have already laid the foundation for an easy transition toward this comprehensive continuous improvement model.”



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NEXT STEPS

As noted in his comments to the commission during the January 2009 hearing, Knight—and the college as a whole—is committed to supporting the areas highlighted by the commendations and continuing to work to improve the areas addressed in the recommendations.

In addition, NWCCU is requiring Clark College to take appropriate action to address the program review and outcomes assessment recommendation, as well as the protection of student records recommendation, within a two-year period. The commission has asked the college to submit a progress report on the protection of student records this spring (2009), as well as an interim report and visit to the college in spring 2010 to address the recommendations involving institutional planning and evaluation, program review and outcomes assessment, advising and counseling, and college governance.

Work is already underway to address the recommendations of the evaluation committee. In addition, the 2009-2010 institutional goals, formerly known as the president's goals, specifically address four of the five recommendations. The goals are as follows:

1. Develop and begin implementation of effective instructional program review and outcomes assessment procedures that comply with accreditation standards. (Focus on learning; Clark College 2008 accreditation self-study standard 2 and general recommendation 2)
2. Use technology to offer instruction and services more efficiently without limiting access or quality. (Focus on learning and expand access to education; Clark College 2008 accreditation self-study standards 5 and 8)
3. Ensure that all students are effectively advised. (Expand access to education; Clark College 2008 accreditation self-study standard 3 and general recommendation 4)
4. Implement the diversity plan [currently under development] throughout the college. (Foster a diverse college community; Clark College 2008 accreditation self-study standard 9)
5. Develop integrated operations plans to facilitate improvement for all areas of the college. Plans must include measurable goals, benchmarks and outcomes tied to the 2009-2014 college strategic plan [currently under development]. (Enhance college systems; Clark College 2008 accreditation self study standard 1 and general recommendation 1)
6. Define, communicate, implement and monitor a shared governance structure that identifies the role administrators, faculty, staff and students each play in the college decision-making process. (Enhance college systems; Clark College 2008 accreditation self study standards 6 and 9 and general recommendation 5)

Clark College is also in the process of revising and updating its strategic planning components (including the mission, vision, strategic directions and five-year college goals) for 2009-2014. The proposed institutional goals for 2009-2010, as well as the revision of the strategic plan, are consistent with the coming changes in NWCCU's accreditation process (see sidebar, "NWCCU revamps accreditation process," beginning on p. 5).

Clark College's 2009-2014 strategic plan will be implemented July 1, 2009. The budget process for 2009-2010, future planning for all areas of the college, and the accreditation process will be dependent on the strategic plan. At this time, college-wide feedback on the proposed strategic plan is being sought and can be provided through the Clark College Intranet: http://intranet/college_information/strategic_plan/feedback.cfm



Clark College at 75: Focused on a bright future



With a nod to the past and against the background of today's economic challenges, the 2009 State of the College address focused on the vision of a bright future for Clark College.

Held on Jan. 15 in the Gaiser Student Center, the address brought together faculty, staff, administrators, students and trustees of the college, as well as area dignitaries and guests. Among the visitors were Brian Willoughby, representative for Senator Maria Cantwell; Kimberly Blake Pincheira, representative for Congressman Brian Baird; Schuyler Hoss, representative for Governor Chris Gregoire; Vancouver Mayor Royce Pollard; Vancouver City Council members Jeanne Harris, Larry Smith and Jeanne Stewart; and Vancouver City Manager Pat McDonnell.



During his address, Clark College President Robert K. Knight reflected on the challenges faced by the college's founders. On the day before classes were to begin in 1933, faculty members held a meeting. "Imagine what that discussion must have been like," Knight said. "The nation was in the midst of the Great Depression—some of the toughest times that our country has ever seen."

According to historical records, faculty members questioned whether the college should open. "But jobs were scarce—especially teaching jobs," Knight said. "And one student had signed up on the first day of registration and paid his tuition in full. That support—that belief in a bright future for the little junior college—carried the day."



Top: Clark College President Robert Knight (left) and Clark College Foundation President/CEO Lisa Gibert (right) stop for a photo at the 2009 State of the College address. Center: Vancouver Mayor Royce Pollard (left) and Clark College Trustee Jack Burkman were among the community representatives in attendance. Bottom Left: Vancouver City Council member Larry Smith (left), Associated Students of Clark College (ASCC) President Pat Mehigan (center), and Clark College Trustee John White at the 2009 State of the College address. Bottom Right: Casey Wyckoff (left) and Ralph Willson (right), of LSW Architects, with Clark's Administrative Services Operations Manager Jennifer Grove (center), at the State of the College address.



Clark College at 75: Focused on a bright future

Knight noted that Clark College began in one building, the Hidden House, in downtown Vancouver with half a dozen faculty members and fewer than 20 students. Today, the college welcomes more than 13,000 students each quarter on the college's main campus, at Clark College at Town Plaza, and at Clark College at WSU Vancouver. They are taught by nearly 600 full-time and part-time faculty members.

But, Knight noted, "One important thing hasn't changed. We are still your community college."

Knight highlighted accomplishments from the past year including the college's visit by the accreditation team from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). Accreditation demonstrates that colleges and universities have been recognized for their performance, integrity and quality.

Knight also shared highlights from the college's 75th anniversary celebration including video greetings from Gov. Chris Gregoire, Washington 3rd District Rep. Brian Baird and Vancouver Mayor Royce Pollard.

As he discussed budget and economic challenges, Knight focused first on Clark students and their needs. During the first six months of the 2008-2009 fiscal year, the college distributed more than \$25 million dollars in financial aid to nearly 5,000 Clark students—more than the college distributed during all of the 2007-2008 fiscal year. At the same time, the college faced its own challenge in the then-anticipated 4.3% budget cut for the 2008-2009 fiscal year.

"It has been challenging but our goal has been to trim our budget in a way that has the least impact on our students," acknowledged Knight. Looking to the future, Knight reminded audience members that "colleges and universities are the economic engine that drives the state's economy and will drive our recovery."

Knight said, "As we observe our 75th anniversary, it's ironic that we find ourselves again in tough economic times—the most challenging since the college was founded." But, Knight added, "Tough times eventually pass. And our anniversary provides an important reminder that we need to stay focused on our students and continue to build for the future." That future includes a Running Start program that is now the largest in the

state. It also includes online, weekend, and two-day per week associate degree options as well as the opening of Clark College at Columbia Tech Center in fall 2009.

"A lot has changed since we were founded in 1933, but the mission of Clark College has not," he said. "Our founders brought higher education to Southwest Washington. They opened a college at a time when few believed it could be done. They focused on success for each and every student. They believed passionately in a bright future for Clark College. So do I."

PRESIDENTIAL COINS PRESENTED AT STATE OF THE COLLEGE ADDRESS

Four members of the Clark community were presented with coins by Clark College President Robert K. Knight during the 2009 State of the College address. The four recipients were:

- **Paul Casillas**, mathematics professor and division chair;
- **Nancy Heidrick**, assistant financial aid director;
- **Tami Jacobs**, disability support services manager; and
- **Skip Jimerson**, plant services grounds manager.

Knight first introduced the presidential coins during the fall 2007 opening day address to the college community. This was the first time coins had been presented during the State of the College event. To date, 14 individuals have received coins in recognition of their positive contributions to the college.



Clark College at 75: Focused on a bright future



Left: President Knight and staff members at Clark College at Town Plaza join in a college-wide celebration to mark the State of the College. A similar celebration was held at Clark College at WSU Vancouver. Right: Disability Support Services Manager Tami Jacobs (right) receives a surprise while interpreting the State of the College address as President Knight announces her one of four recipients of a presidential coin.



Above: A student shares some cake with Oswald. Middle left: Student Ambassadors Danielle Kermode (left) and Diane Haraldson (right) gathered donations of non-perishable food for donation to Share Vancouver's backpack program, which provides easy-to-prepare food for area elementary school children in need. Bottom left: Oswald makes his contribution to the food drive benefiting Share Vancouver held in conjunction with the 2009 State of the College address.

