

Colleges expand to meet residents' needs

Facilities, offerings grow with county

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As Clark County grows, so do the area's colleges. They're also working more closely together than ever to better serve local residents.

Washington State University Vancouver will enroll freshmen and sophomores this fall for the first time since it opened 17 years ago.

Previously, the only way Clark County students could earn a bachelor's degree at WSU was to first attend Clark College or another two-year institution, then finish at WSU. The institution also offers master's and doctorate degrees.

The branch campus got started in a building at Clark College's campus but now has its own expansive campus full of rolling hills and walking trails in Salmon Creek. By autumn 2005, nearly 2,000 students attended daytime or evening courses at WSU Vancouver. The school offers three dozen fields of study.

University officials argued that students prefer to earn a degree at one institution and that some local students were leaving the area to do it. Those students don't always return, explaining why Clark County has a lower proportion of college graduates among its adults than other areas of the state. The Washington Legislature agreed to expand the Vancouver branch campus and fund 200 freshman slots this year.

As it always has, WSU Vancouver will team with local community colleges, such as Clark and Lower Columbia College in Longview, to make transfers trouble-free for students.

In fact, both Clark and LCC have signed co-admissions pacts with WSU Vancouver. These streamline the admissions process for students and can guarantee them a slot in their chosen program at WSU Vancouver for upper division stud-



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Washington State University Vancouver, founded as a branch campus offering classes for juniors and seniors, is transitioning into a full four-year institution.

ies. Students can use advising, library and other resources at either school.

Clark College raised its presence on WSU's Salmon Creek campus in a big way early this year, opening the \$20 million Clark Center in January. The 63,334-square-foot building houses faculty offices and classrooms, some to be used by the new WSU Vancouver freshman and sophomore students. It also is home base for Clark's nursing studies program.

Health professions are a prime focus of work-force training being upgraded by Clark. Hundreds of applicants competed for slots in a diagnostic imaging program featuring on-site training at local health facilities and private-sector instructors.

Clark hopes to add similar training in related high-demand fields, such as nuclear medicine, radiation therapy, ultrasound and even prosthesis services. It is developing plans to construct a \$29 million classroom building for allied health programs on property just west of Gaiser Hall.

The school also plans to construct an east Vancouver branch campus, proposed for the Columbia Tech Center near Southeast 192nd Avenue where it meets Mill Plain Boulevard. The satellite campus, which could open by 2009, would build on partnerships with local high-tech businesses and serve more than 1,000 students.

Already, Clark serves about 12,500 part- and full-time stu-

dents, including individuals taking adult basic education and community education courses.

There are also two private institutions operating in Vancouver:

■ City University is in Cascade Park, in the Mill Plain One office park. It offers classes designed for working adults seeking to complete a college degree. City University, which is nonprofit, is based in Seattle and has branches throughout the state, in Hawaii and abroad.

■ The University of Phoenix is a for-profit school that grants students the flexibility to primarily use the Internet to learn, rather than attend classes. It operates out of the West Coast Bank building in downtown Vancouver.

INSTITUTIONS

◆ **CLARK COLLEGE:**

The community college at 1800 E. McLoughlin Blvd. serves students taking academic, vocational or adult-education courses. Annual tuition, for a student taking a 12-credit load over three quarters, is \$2,477.40. Call 360-992-2000. On the Web: www.clark.edu.

◆ **WSU**

VANCOUVER: The Washington State University branch campus offers junior-, senior- and grad-level classes and will begin admitting freshmen and sophomores this fall. The campus is at 14204 N.E. Salmon Creek Ave. Annual tuition is \$5,506 for a full academic load. Call 360-546-9788. On the Web: www.vancouver.wsu.edu/.

◆ **CITY**

UNIVERSITY: Based in the Seattle area, City University is a degree-completion institution that offers courses at the 300 level and higher. Undergraduate tuition is \$233 a credit; graduate tuition is \$398 a credit. The local center is in the Mill Plain One office park, at 12500 S.E. Second Circle, Suite 200. Call 360-449-6702. On the Web: www.cityu.edu.

◆ **UNIVERSITY OF**

PHOENIX: The degree-completion school for working adults opened a Vancouver branch. It is in the Vancouver Learning Center, in the West Coast Bank building at 500 Broadway, Suite 200. Undergraduate tuition per credit hour is \$347; graduate tuition is \$405 per credit hour. Phoenix also offers doctoral programs. Call 360-993-7800. On the Web: www.phoenix.edu/oregon.