

Fettered funding

A greater investment in Clark College would mean a greater return for Southwest Washington



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is the president of Clark College.

Imagine operating your business with a \$1.6 million dollar deficit, but the need for your business keeps mounting. Meeting the growing demands for skilled employees in Southwest Washington is the role that Clark College has played for more than 70 years. Business and industry is still growing and we continue to recruit both business interests and people seeking the opportunity for work and career progression. But the funding deficit that Clark College has experienced for the past five years is adversely impacting this growth in three significant ways.

seats by developing an evening and weekend nursing program, we must factor in that needed state funding may not be there, because Clark College is so underfunded, and our district's demand outpaces the support.

Apprenticeship provides a proven model opportunity for student/workers to receive skill training on the job. This combination of on-the-job training and related classroom instruction in which workers learn the practical and theoretical aspects of a highly skilled occupation, provides trade related classroom training that

Full state funding for apprenticeships is very limited. Since tuition only covers one-third of the cost of a full-time equivalent (FTE) student enrolled at Clark College, we lose significant money on every apprenticeship program that we add to meet our district's need for skilled labor in these fields.

Skilled health care worker shortages continue to escalate at an alarming rate. Skilled nurses, physical therapy assistants and surgery technicians all are fields in which Clark College could have significant impact. Yet the funding formulas for developing training and education programs in these high demand occupations does not allow rapid deployment to any one geographic region of the state. Therefore the needs of Southwest Washington's growing health care industry go unmet. As we contemplate expanding our Nursing program to 24 additional

produces competency and pride in true craftsmanship. Clark College currently operates apprenticeships in painting, welding, carpentry, taper and plumbing. On average, we currently enroll 176 apprenticeships each quarter. Full state funding for apprenticeships is very limited. Since tuition only covers one-third of the cost of a full-time equivalent (FTE) student enrolled at Clark College, we lose significant money on

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Because we already serve more students than we are funded to serve, Clark College receives only 50 percent of tuition and no state funds for apprentice FTEs above the state allocation. Though we understand that we are not meeting the need of the business and industry, particularly in the area of iron workers, finish carpenters and electricians, the college can not expand these programs without taking a financial loss.

Washington State and Southwest Washington, in particular, have seen a tremendous growth of workers who do not possess the basic skills for employment while the education rate lags behind most of the nation. An innovative initiative, I-BEST (Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training) provides community colleges with the opportunity to link basic skills education with professional technical education. For example, integrating math and English instruction with welding principles assures that entry-level workers possess the skills that are needed to communicate, work better in teams, solve problems and manage their time. The early analysis tells us this strategy is an extremely effective model for providing more highly prepared workers to the business community.

For example, Shoreline Community College provides Automotive Technology classes, coupled with English as a Second

Language (ESL) classes, for 43 students. At Skagit Valley College, 40 students are combining Nursing Assistant classes with basic skills training. Both institutions have seen success and are considered "best practice" models in the state. While Clark College is eager to bring this initiative to Southwest Washington, the funding mechanism requires that two faculty members teach each class of students. This intensive funding strategy prohibits Clark College's participation in a project that would certainly benefit Southwest Washington.

The impact of Clark College's current funding deficit has a cost beyond the college. It also costs the community by impeding the pipeline of skilled workers that support business and industry. Clark College remains underfunded by more than 400 FTEs, or approximately \$1.6 million (roughly \$4,000 per FTE).

Clark College will continue to serve the education and training needs of our growing community with the expertise of our talented and committed faculty and staff. We are committed to effectively managing our limited financial resources to increase the numbers of students, workers and businesses that we serve and ensure that Southwest Washington has the skilled labor pool it needs to be competitive. But we also believe that it's important to let our business, civic and community leaders know that a greater investment in Clark College would mean a greater return for Southwest Washington.