Clark College CONTINUES TO EVOLVE

By HOWARD RUCK
Columbian reporter

Demand for college credits and career training that Clark College offers just won’t let up.

By autumn 2010, high unemployment rates pushed part- or full-time enrollment to a record-high 16,500 students.

Among them were more than 2,700 area high school students who earned tuition-free Running Start college credits.

School faces the challenges of record enrollment

should the economy rebound, population and business growth in Clark County will continue to steer local students and career-minded adults to Vancouver’s public community college, founded in 1963.

And so, the institution keeps evolving.

Clark plans to expand its health and medical training. It hopes to build a $90 million allied health classroom building by 2013, just west of its main campus on Fort Vancouver Way. Besides health training, state-of-the-art laboratories and teaching space would serve growing needs in the science, technology, engineering and math fields.

State legislators’ approval of construction funds might be stalled by Washington state government’s fiscal crisis, however. Also on the drawing board: A north Clark County satellite campus to meet the county’s expected growth.

That branch campus would form a nice counterpoint to the Clark Center at Columbia Tech Center in east Vancouver, which opened in 2008 on East Mill Plain Boulevard near 192nd Avenue. The attractive classroom building that attracted more than 1,000 students taking courses of all types, equivalent to about 500 full-time students.

Clark’s plan in 2011: Clark’s new Early Learning Center for childhood development classes and child care, and a new Japanese Garden, both located on the main campus.

Clark’s first satellite campus continues a positive partnership with Washington State University Vancouver. The Clark Center at WSU’s Willamette Campus in southwest Vancouver serves hundreds of Clark students and houses its popular nursing program. With WSU’s upper division courses, the two schools have learned to make a stay-at-home, four-year college track possible.

Clark has formal co-admissions agreements with WSU, Portland State University, Marylhurst University and Concordia University.

The teamwork means hassle-free registration and service for transfer students. Some can reserve upper-division slots while they are advising, library and other resources of either school.

Clark has close ties with Eastern Washington University. Students here can earn EWU bachelor’s and master’s degrees in social work and technology, and a dental hygiene bachelor’s degree, with instruction from visiting EWU faculty.

Clark’s well-regarded health care program includes nursing, medical radiography and dental hygiene. There are 294 slots each year for students to begin a two-year nursing degree track and 30 slots open every other year for medical radiography. Since 1970, each dental hygiene graduate has passed the national board exam on the first try.

In 2010, Clark launched mechatronics courses at the Columbia Tech Center building.

Students learn to service modern equipment controlled by electronic and computer systems. This year, Clark will add a new two-year degree in Pharmacy Tech leadership, which can lead to a bachelor’s degree through Central Washington University.

An Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training program assists GED or ESL students who got specialized job training for welding and early childhood education professions. I-BEST classes offer extra academic support in high-demand job training. I-BEST also helps students earning certification as nursing or office assistants.

Popular options

Clark has added online tutorials, telecourses, discussion board messages and a hybrid blend of classroom and alternative instruction to better meet students’ work and family responsibilities.

Clark has fully embraced Internet-based “e-Learning.” By autumn 2010, more than 700 students were enrolled in online, on-campus courses, besides other hybrid classes taught mostly online with limited face-to-face or “F2F” instruction, as it’s now labeled. Those online and e-Learning classes served the equivalent of 1,460 full-time students more than 15 percent of Clark’s full-time population.

Clark also serves hundreds of students in its Town Plaza Center, in Vancouver’s McLoughlin Heights neighborhood. Town Plaza is geared for specialized job training, Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language.

Town Plaza is home to a Pathways Learning Center that extends resources to students and customers of other work force agencies there. Add comes from a $102,058 state Opportunity Grant designed to help cover costs of tuition, books and supplies for low-income students who enter high-demand careers. The grant has served hundreds of Clark students in recent years. More information is available on the website: http://www.clark.edu/admissions_fns_add/tn_plc/opportun_grant.cfm.

Basic skills classes also are taught at campus, at Battle Ground, Evergreen and Vancouver district public schools and at WorkSource in Stevenson and WorkSource Columbia Gorge in White Salmon.

ALTERNATIVE UNIVERSITIES

In Clark County

For many working adults and those between jobs during a ragged economy, alternative universities are a critical learning option.

There’s been tremendous growth nationwide in students and federal grant dollars flowing to private, for-profit colleges that offer mostly online instruction. Riding the wave are Vancouver based City University, the University of Phoenix and Everest College. All these are private institutions with locations across the country. Both City University and the University of Phoenix moved into new buildings earlier this week.

Starting in 2009, the Montgomery GI Bill gives significant tuition discounts to active and reserve military service members, who can benefit greatly from online options given their mobility.

CITY UNIVERSITY OF SEATTLE

3500 S.E. Second Clinic, Suite 200, Vancouver.


City U, located on Vancouver Street near just north of Mill Plain Boulevard in Cascade Park, the Vancouver branch has 420 students enrolled in late 2010. The branch has several degree programs and professional advancement courses for educators. Its online business program offers distance learning opportunities, leading to bachelor’s degrees in business administration up to MBA. Regular tuition ranges from $235 to about $656 per credit, for undergraduate to graduate certification or degree courses.

UNIVERSITY OF PHOENIX

500 Broadway, Suite 200, Vancouver.

Information: 360-953-7100, http://www.phoenix.edu

The downtown Vancouver site is among five Portland Vancouver metro-area University of Phoenix campuses that serve about 2,000 students in its distance learning programs and flexible-schedule centers. Options range all the way from an associate degree to a doctoral degree. The Vancouver campus offers classes on campus, live classes online, and weekly online classes, bachelor’s degree in business administration and business administration, respectively. At campuses in the metro area, additional fields of study: arts and sciences (including communications, criminal justice and security), healthcare, human services, nursing, psychology, and technology. In early 2010, regular tuition rates ranged from $415 to $500 per semester credit, and $617 to $649 per credit.

DIESTER COLLEGE

120 N.E. 136th Ave, Suite 120/200, Vancouver.

Information: http://www.mesterv.edu, 888-764-2930 or 360-787-2000

East Vancouver is home to the Fertel College campus in Clark County. The branch has degree and certificate programs including accounting, business administration, economics, infectious disease, medical billing and coding and paralegal. The school also offers several massage therapy programs. Costs start at $357 per credit; day and night school classes are available. Financial aid is available to those who qualify. Job placement services are also available to graduates. There are the nearest campuses in downtown Portland and Tigard, Ore.