Morale high in Bob Knight's first year at Clark

"This is the best job I've ever had," said Bob Knight as he finishes his first year as president of Clark College this week.

"My main goal is to do what I think is right for Clark College," said Knight.

Knight, 51, was named president of Clark College in May 2007 after serving as interim president from July 2006. Before that, he was vice president for administrative services, handling financial and budgeting matters at the Vancouver community college.

Knight’s first full year has been a busy one. Enrollment continues to climb and now stands at nearly 13,000 students.

The college has acquired a nearby 11.5 acres, part of which was the Southwest Washington Health District, and the remainder a string of stores on Fourth Plain Blvd.

Construction is underway on a new campus facility on NE 192nd Ave. and Mill Plain Blvd which will house electronics and business instruction, plus general education.

And the search is on for a new satellite location in either Ridgefield or Battle Ground, where a new building will be at the top of the state funding list for community college growth.

But Knight has another goal: student scholarships.

Knight hopes that every student in the college’s district who meets four basic criteria can receive a full-tuition scholarship.

Those criteria may seem easy to meet, but Knight says it’s not so simple. The criteria are:

- Graduate from high school with a "C" average.
- Have a 95 percent high school attendance record which is not easy for those with "senior-itis," Knight.
- Complete high school in four consecutive years.

Student success measured in various way

Knight said students at Clark College achieve their goals in various ways. About 63 percent of students move on to four year universities, about half of whom transfer to Washington State University Vancouver. Nearly 1,000 students are studying English as a second language. Others are pursuing a variety of training opportunities.

See Knight on page A2
More facilities and classes are needed to meet student needs. Facilities are to open in 2013 on newly-acquired lands, and a satellite campus in Ridgefield or Battle Ground could be in operation by 2015.

"A community college needs to be where the population is," said Knight. "The center of growth is moving toward Battle Ground."

Morale walk up at the college
Knight takes pride in the results of the last two PACE Surveys which measure the attitude of college staff, instructors and administrators.

During his tenure as interim president, work place satisfaction climbed sharply, said Knight, up from 60.6 percent in 2006 to 81.9 percent in 2007.

The 2008 survey results show continued improvement in morale, although the results have not yet been provided to the Trustees or the public. The latest survey shows continued improvement in every category, said Knight. "It's a positive trend," he said.

The survey asks staff members whether they feel their job is relevant to the college's mission, whether they have the opportunity to be creative in their work, whether the college prepares students for careers, whether students are prepared for further learning, and a list of other factors.

The overall results from the PACE instrument indicate a healthy campus, with a high consultative system, according to the study. The student focus category received the highest mean score-3.89 on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the highest.

"The folks at Clark College support my leadership," said Knight of the study results. "The morale and climate have improved considerably."

Knight said part of his success is allowing people to do their jobs without micro-managing.

Slower decisionmaking
Knight has established a committee-approach to the selection of new staff members. While he offers his views on filling open positions, a committee makes recommendations on staff additions and the college's vice president for instruction makes decisions.

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Personal Assessment of the College Environment

Would you recommend Clark College as a place to work:

- Yes: 120
- No: 71
- Did not respond: 7

The system is slower and involves more consultation than Knight experienced during his career as an Army officer. "The big difference is process," said Knight. "It can be frustrating. Decision-making takes a lot longer in higher education. That's not necessarily a bad thing."

A search continues for a new vice president of administrative services at the college, which is the second time around with no selection made in the first effort.

Knight exercises daily
Bob Knight said he exercises daily using on-campus equipment. He lives just a mile from the college and sometimes rides his bike to work. He ran a marathon in Las Vegas, NV last year. And he plays basketball with others his age each Saturday morning.

Knight was born in London, England, where his father was serving in the Air Force. He
farming the area since 1870," wrote Chuck Cushman, executive director of the American Land Rights Association. "They don’t want to sell. They are farmers. They want to keep the land in agriculture. The Colf family is not now and never has been a willing seller. The Corps has placed a gun at their head by threatening eminent domain."

"The Colf family has been through nine years of hell dealing with the Corps of Engineers," continued Cushman.

Cushman wrote that "there are lots of willing sellers of land that can be used for wetland mitigation along the 106 mile affected area of the Columbia River."

Cushman alleged that the several Columbia River Ports already have lands that could be used for mitigation, but "they’d rather throw out farmers." He said the Corps has been partially responsible for the loss of American farms. "They’ve been heavy handed and threatening in the process."

"Only by farmers standing together and working in unison to protect farming and family agriculture operations is there a chance to save and protect productive family farms," added Cushman.

Cushman asked recipients of his email and fax messages to make three or four calls a day. He provided phone numbers and email addresses for more than 25 elected or appointed officials of various agencies, including Col. Thomas O’Donovan who heads the Corps of Engineers in Portland.

Cushman said the American Land Rights Association will alert people everywhere O’Donovan goes in the United States about the "abuse of the Colf family."

"Corps officials should not be able to abuse the rights of farmers and landowners and simply walk away," wrote Cushman. "They need to get full credit for their intimidation and threatening tactics."

Cushman said the Colf family has added farmland to its holdings over the years and has never sold any farm land.

The American Land Rights Association’s messages include a statement by Margaret Colf Hepola, 91, matriarch of the Colf family.

"The challenge with the Columbia River Channel Deepening Project and the taking of our farmlands has lasted for nine years," wrote Hepola.

"This is quite a long time to be involved in a situation that cannot be settled and seems unfair. The situation has been very upsetting to me."

Hepola compared the situation to the loss of her childhood homeland which was flooded when a dam was constructed on the North Fork of the Lewis River.

"I cannot understand the reasoning," added Hepola. "There is land at other places with owners willing to sell but it is not productive farm land. Why is so much land taken in one area and from one family?"

Hepola wrote that she fears for the future of the country when landowners are treated in such a manner.

Cushman and the American Land Rights Association may be reached at (360) 687-3087.

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**Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) Survey**

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<tr>
<th>Would you recommend Clark College as a place to work?</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
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<td>No</td>
<td>71 (35.9%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did not respond</td>
<td>7 (3.5%)</td>
<td>6 (3.3%)</td>
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</tbody>
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Knight was born in London, England, where his father was serving in the Air Force. He grew up in Florida, and then spent 21 years in the Army, stationed in Germany, California and other west coast locations. He retired as a Lt. Colonel.


Part of his enjoyment the past year has been the lack of pressure. "I’m not building a resume," said Knight. "I’m not trying to become the president of some other college. I want to stay in this community. I want to retire in this community. I’ve never been in that position before in my life."
Consider

How better about what’s good for La Center voters, as if they have better informed voters or know more of the pros and cons of the issue. An advisory vote on the issue would force council members to bring that information to light and into their thinking.

Elected officials sometimes think that voters formed, and maybe voters don’t have all the information that elected officials have. In the representative form of government, it is the voters who make decisions, and governments act on those decisions. Regardless of what the elected officials think, the will of the people.

La Center council members argue that they need to make decisions, and that the public doesn’t want to be bothered having chosen them to guide city affairs. In general, that is true. There are some issues where asking for an advisory vote—because it costs money, or because they were appointed to make decisions, but because they fear the anger of the voters who think they know best what actions are best for the public would only screw up, the people, they think.

A Center situation is somewhat similar, as it is argued that asking for an advisory vote or a firm decision on the public advisory vote suggests that the people, in some instances, knows better than the elected officials, which is not true in a democratic or representative form of government.

It is not too late for the La Center council to consider the matter and do the right thing—to vote for advice.

Marvin F. Case
Publisher

Just for grand projects

Boom, the Assessor’s Office has raised the property values, followed by an increase in property taxes. Now our dear school district directors want to come upon us with another burden of property taxes in order to have, nice, fancy facilities.

In fact, the overcrowding is not as perilous as it is described in their propaganda materials (if the enrollment is adjusted with the number of dropouts).

If, among citizens living in those school districts, there are some financially-gifted persons, they are free to come up to negotiate) and Linda Tracy, decided that they were smarter than the attorneys the City paid for and said no talking to the Cowitz.

This is the same City Council that was the laughing stock of the area in a pitched battle over “the float.”

Now this illustrious trio has taken the imperialistic (Webster’s Definition “the extension or imposition of power, authority, or influence”) position that they are kings and queen of the kingdom of La Center Land.

The People Respond

Readers are encouraged to express their views by writing to the editor of the Reflector. Letters are limited to one typewritten, double-spaced page and should be sent to the Reflector, P.O. Box 2020, Battle Ground, WA 98604. Writers are limited to two letters per calendar quarter. All letters must be signed with name, address, plus phone number for verification. Thank-you letters, form letters, and letters critical of a private individual or business will not be published. Opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect those of the Reflector or its staff.

Just who is representing the city of La Center?

I was appalled at the lack of citizen response at the special City Council meeting held at the Community Building April 30. It is discouraging that the citizens of La Center are willing to leave the future of our city in the hands of three elected officials that are driven by some strange, almost delusional concept that talking to the Cowitz Tribe is tantamount to inviting them to build their casino. Two of the council members, Mike Nolan and Bill Birdwell—are on record as wanting to try to negotiate) and Linda Tracy, decided that they were smarter than the attorneys the City paid for and said no talking to the Cowitz.

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