

**2010 STATE OF THE COLLEGE ADDRESS**  
**CLARK COLLEGE PRESIDENT ROBERT K. KNIGHT**  
**JANUARY 14, 2010**  
**GAISER STUDENT CENTER**

There's something exciting about the promise of a new year – especially as one decade ends and another begins.

It's hard to believe that it was 10 years ago that we welcomed the new millennium.

Remember when we all wondered if clocks would keep ticking and planes would keep flying as Y2K arrived?

Well, thank goodness they did -- as the world joined together to celebrate the year 2000.

After that momentous beginning, it often felt like time was moving in fast-forward.

It was a decade of technology – from blogs and Facebook to YouTube and Twitter. From Wikipedia and Google to I-Pods and smart phones.

The Twin Towers fell -- and there were wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

As the decade began, there was a disputed presidential election.

As the decade ended, Barack Obama was elected president.

At Clark College, the decade was defined by change and growth.

We saw changes in leadership -- and a newly revitalized partnership with the Clark College Foundation.

We saw record enrollment numbers and the opening of two new sites – Clark College at WSU Vancouver and Clark College at Columbia Tech Center.

We dedicated the Penguin Union Building – which includes our Welcome Center – and the new Gaiser Hall which includes our Teaching & Learning Center.

We launched eLearning and created smart classrooms with the latest in technology.

We introduced programs for students with busy lives: a Weekend Degree program and our two-day-a week degree programs.

We also introduced our STEPP program – that's our easy tuition payment plan for students.

We enjoyed strong economic times and felt the impact of the Great Recession.

We lost colleagues and friends -- including Chick Scarpelli and Ellis Dunn.

Our accreditation was affirmed, and we celebrated our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

At the end of the decade, we launched a comprehensive diversity plan to ensure that our college provides a welcoming environment for everyone – as well as a new Strategic Plan and updated mission and vision.

They all keep us focused on our students.

To me, all of that was possible because – in good times and bad – Clark College rises to the moment.

## **IT'S ALL ABOUT THE STUDENT: CHOICES**

When it comes to the student experience, it's about choices.

We know that our students have many choices when it comes to their education.

We are proud when they choose to join our Penguin Nation. (By the way, I was very proud to see that The Columbian included the phrase "Penguin Nation" in its words of the decade in our region.)

Think about a typical day at Clark College – although there's really no such thing.

As you walk across our main campus -- or visit our sites at Columbia Tech Center, Town Plaza and WSU Vancouver -- you'll find students who all have unique reasons for being here.

Our students come to Clark College from throughout our region – and from around the world.

If you visit our classrooms, you'll see students studying English, music, and history. Others are focusing on science, technology, engineering and math.

Some enroll in our nationally-recognized health-related programs: nursing, dental hygiene, and our growing medical radiography program.

Some students are pursuing technical careers in fields including automotive technology, welding, computer technology and power utilities.

Some adult students come to Clark to learn to read and write – or to learn English as a Second Language. Some are at Larch Correctional Center, hoping to build productive lives.

Some of our students earn certificates that help them advance at work.

Some earn associate degrees and continue their education – many at our co-admission partners -- Concordia University, Marylhurst University, Portland State University, and our long-time partner, WSU Vancouver.

We also have a strong partnership with Eastern Washington University, which offers bachelor's and master's degree programs here at Clark.

On that typical day, you'll also find lots of activities and events going on.

It may be a lecture or a concert or a club fair.

It may be a soccer game or our annual Jazz Festival.

Not long ago, I heard a member of Student Life say that, except for staying overnight in a dorm, students can have a full, rich college experience here at Clark.

It's true. Their time here is what they make it.

Run for student government.

Write for the Independent, our student newspaper.

Write or submit art or photography for the Phoenix, our student-led art and literary magazine. The Phoenix just won its second consecutive award from the American Scholastic Press Association as the best literary and art magazine in the country. It received that honor in the category of all junior and community colleges with more than 25-hundred students.

Some of our students may want to play an instrument or sing in one of our musical groups.

Become a Penguin student athlete.

Join a club. Start a club.

The choice is theirs.

## THE NEXT STEPS FOR A NEW DECADE

Ten years ago, we could never have imagined all the things that happened during the past decade. It's impossible to know exactly how Clark College will grow during the next 10 years, but we do know some things.

After a two-day symposium last spring among representatives of the college community, business leaders and community members, we're moving forward with plans for a new building devoted to science, technology, engineering and math. We call that "STEM" for short.

We plan to build it on the west side of Fort Vancouver Way – just across the street from this building. We want it to be home to state-of-the-art, interactive learning. We want it to reflect a sense of excitement and innovation. We want it to be a building that engages our students and our region. I can see a time when students from elementary and middle schools will come on field trips to see what's happening in our new STEM building.

This building will be a \$36 million dollar investment in our region.

Funding for construction is scheduled to come during the next legislative session. That would allow us to break ground in 2011 and open the building in fall of 2013.

But, it now appears that construction may be pushed back one biennium – which means we'd break ground in 2013 and open the building in 2015.

While we may not know the exact date, we do know this: Our STEM building will open during this new decade.

When we started planning Clark College at Columbia Tech Center, that area was largely undeveloped. Look at that area today. As we prepared to open that building last fall, we believed that it would grow slowly. Instead, it opened at near capacity.

Just as we've grown to better serve the eastern portion of our service district, we know that we need to grow to serve the northern portion.

I'm proud to say that our planned facility in northern Clark County has made the list of growth projects at Washington's community and technical colleges and will be funded in the next decade also.

We believe that building will be completed by the end of the decade.

Through the generosity of a donor and the city of Vancouver, our main campus will soon be the home for a beautiful Japanese garden. We plan to break ground on that project this year and dedicate it during our April 2011 Sakura Festival.

In short, while we may not know exactly what our future looks like, we're committed to building a bright one – for our students and for our region.

We will rise to the moment.

As I mentioned, the Japanese garden will be located here at Clark because of support from the City of Vancouver. Throughout the past decade, Royce Pollard served as mayor of America's Vancouver with passion, dedication and commitment. He is a long-time booster of Clark College. We thank him for his support and salute him for his tireless service and we know that his support of – and involvement with – Clark College will continue.

As the new decade begins, the city has a new mayor -- and we are filled with Penguin pride because our new Mayor – Tim Leavitt -- is a Clark College alum. He is a member of our alumni association and has served on its board. He has taken part in our Random Assistance event – where students receive gift cards to the Clark College Bookstores. We know that Tim will rise to the moment as he assumes his new responsibilities.

## **RIISING TO THE MOMENT: SUPPORTING OUR STUDENTS**

Because of the weak economy, many Clark College students rely on financial aid to cover their cost of education. Our Financial Aid staff, accounting staff and cashiers have all been working very hard to keep up with the demand, as we serve a record number of students.

Through the end of December, the Financial Aid office received nearly 15,000 financial aid applications. That's a 63% increase over last year. They awarded more than \$42 million in financial aid. Last year, it was \$25 million. That's a dramatic increase.

These kinds of increases are seen in every area.

This year the Financial Aid Office has awarded more than \$20 million in Pell grants. Last year, it was just under \$9 million.

More than \$900,000 in scholarships has been awarded to students, compared to \$801,000 last year.

Students have borrowed \$14 million in student loans. Last year, it was just under \$8 million.

Several years ago, we established the STEPP program. That's our Student Tuition Easy Payment Plan.

Instead of having to pay full tuition at the beginning of a quarter, students can make up to three separate installment payments each quarter -- interest free.

During the 2009 calendar year, more than 37-hundred students took advantage of the STEPP program.

We know that textbooks are expensive. To support our students, our bookstore established a book rental program. Instead of buying a new book, you can rent one.

In just six quarters – from August 2008 through December 2009 – that program saved Clark students nearly \$150 thousand.

In addition, we bought back more than 26 thousand books – returning nearly three-quarters of a million dollars to our students. That's an increase of one-third in total dollars for our students through our book buyback program.

And it's more than just dollars and cents. Our Academic Early Warning system allows us to support students who are struggling. Last fall, one-quarter of our faculty members used that system – reaching out to nearly 1,500 students and offering resources to help them succeed. That's nearly double the number of students from fall 2008.

In all of these ways, we've tried to rise to the moment to support our students.

How have we done?

Here are some thoughts from some of our 2009 graduates.

***[PRESENTATION OF A VIDEO FEATURING 2009 CLARK COLLEGE GRADUATES]***



## **RIISING TO THE MOMENT: STATE SUPPORT**

It's ironic. During tough economic times, companies cut back because their demand is down. The opposite is true for us.

During tough economic times, our enrollment numbers have grown dramatically -- at the same time that state funding has been cut.

For most of the past decade, our enrollment was between 11,000 and 12,000 students a quarter. Last spring, we reached 13,000.

Last September, we welcomed more than 16,000 “for credit” students – our all-time record enrollment. That record enrollment extended to our adult basic education and GED classes at Town Plaza – as well as our Running Start program. In addition, nearly 10,000 seats were filled in our Corporate and Continuing Education classes.

That record enrollment came as state investments in community colleges declined 11 percent.

What did Clark do? We rose to the moment.

We filled classrooms and added new sections. We increased class sizes and the student to faculty ratio. We used one-time, stimulus funds to balance our budget. We hired more part-time faculty.

We did it all by carefully trimming our budget in ways that – as much as possible -- minimized the impact on our students. I want to thank everyone across the college – faculty, staff and administrators – who has made this possible.

And, by the way, our students did their part. They saw their tuition increase.

None of us know what will happen during the next legislative session.

We believe that an economic recovery is beginning – slowly. But state revenues are still down and unemployment is still high.

We are facing additional cuts and we're worried that fewer dollars may be available for worker retraining and work study programs – hurting the students who most need our help and support.

The governor's initial 2010 budget proposal included a cut of more than \$182 million in student financial aid. We estimate that Clark's share of the cut would be approximately \$3.7 million dollars in grants, work study dollars and scholarship aid.

Remember: When access to our system is limited, we risk losing the high-quality workforce that Washington State needs to help turn our economy around. Community colleges educate and train the talent for our workforce.

We hope that our legislators will rise to the moment.

If we can hold off additional cuts, we can continue to serve the people who need us most.

In addition, more investments in the worker retraining program will be needed to meet the unprecedented demand that will continue for years to come.

## **RIISING TO THE MOMENT: DONOR SUPPORT**

At a time when state funding is declining, donor support through the Clark College Foundation has never been more important.

In the past decade, through the Clark College Foundation, generous donors have provided nearly \$28 million in support to Clark College.

Through donor support, the Foundation was able to purchase the land for Clark College at Columbia Tech Center as well as the county property where our new STEM building will be built.

While the state will provide funding to build our STEM facility, we will need support from generous donors to create the kind of building that will encourage excitement among students of all ages in these classes which are so important to their futures – and ours.

The Foundation is currently seeking support from donors for our efforts to build a new facility for our Early Childhood Education program.

We know that their continuing efforts will be important as we start planning for a facility in northern Clark County.

And, of course, donors provide scholarships – dollars that literally make the difference in allowing students to stay in school.

Donor support – through the Clark College Foundation – truly provides our margin of excellence.

During their December meeting, Clark's Board of Trustees approved a document that has truly been years in the making. It is our operating agreement with our partners in the Clark College Foundation. It provides the framework for the goals which we are working together to accomplish.

I am so proud of the partnership between the college and the Foundation – as well as the support provided by our Alumni Association and Penguin Athletic Club.

Our Foundation President & CEO Lisa Gibert was unable to be here today, but a number of her colleagues at the Foundation have joined us. Please join me in thanking them for everything they do for our college and our students.

## **RIISING TO THE MOMENT: PERSON BY PERSON**

In truth, we all rise to the moment in our own way.

A faculty member sits with a student – after class and after hours – to help them succeed on a challenging assignment or maybe even a personal issue.

Hour after hour, a staff member greets students with a smile – students who need assistance in registering or applying for financial aid.

A supporter donates to the Clark College Foundation, knowing that they will make a critical difference in determining whether a struggling student is able to stay in college.

A student juggles family and work responsibilities – or may be facing the loss of a job – while taking classes, step by next step, to build a bright future.

Sustainability is vitally important to the future of our planet. For more than a year, the students in Clark's Club for Social Action led the efforts to replace the plastic utensils in our food court with "ecoware" – which is biodegradable. Because of their passion and hard work, we are now a greener Penguin Nation.

We also believe strongly in service learning – making a difference in our community, our country and our world. Our students have held food drives, built homes for Habitat for Humanity, delivered holiday food baskets, cultivated community gardens and much more.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who donated food today for Share Vancouver. You have made a difference in our community by helping our own citizens who are struggling and in need.

I would also encourage you to reach out to support, in whatever way you can, the people of Haiti, who are facing such unimaginable destruction and devastation following this week's earthquake.

During the past year, a number of our faculty members have been recognized across the state – and across the country -- for their accomplishments and contributions.

Clark College dental hygiene instructor Karla Sylwester was one of just five educators from Washington's two-year and four-year colleges to receive the Anna Sue McNeill award for her commitment to teaching, learning and assessment.

Clark College communication studies professor – and debate coach -- Dave Kosloski was named the 2009 Community College Outstanding Educator by the National Communication Association.

Automotive technology professor Mike Godson was honored as Educator of the Year by the North American Council of Automotive Teachers. He was also named L1 Master Technician of the Year by Automotive Service Excellence and Motor Age Training.

Music professor Don Appert – conductor of the Clark College orchestra—received a fourth national ASCAPLUS award for his original compositions.

Don and Dave are in their classrooms teaching, but Karla and Mike were able to join us.

At this time, I'd like to ask them to stand so we can recognize them.

Three years ago, I began a new tradition at Clark.

Presidential coins are given to members of our college community who rise to the moment – going above and beyond in support of our students.

I make the decisions; no one knows in advance.

Normally, I do it on opening day in the fall.

But we extended that tradition to the State of the College address last year and I'm proud to continue it today.

### **[CLARK COLLEGE PRESIDENTIAL COIN PRESENTATIONS]**

- Linda Calvert, Associate Director, Running Start
- Joy Horning, Administrative Assistant, Social Sciences and Fine Arts
- May Jolly, Buyer, Clark College Bookstore
- Luanne Lundberg, Professor of Developmental Education
- Becky Merritt, Associate Director of Eligibility Programs
- Lisa Nelson, Manager, Purchasing Services

In their own way, each of these individuals defines what it means to rise to the moment.

## **RIISING TO THE MOMENT: LIGHTING THE WAY**

Several years ago, we established a wayfinding task force.

We asked them to create a plan to provide consistent signage to assist students, staff and visitors in finding their way to locations on the college's main campus.

The first steps were the parking signs and lettering on buildings throughout our campus.

The next steps were the new monument signs that you see as you enter the campus.

One of the final steps will take place today – as we light our new electronic reader board.

Our reader board will give us a new tool for sharing news and information with our students as well as the broader community.

It's located on Fort Vancouver Way, next to the Welcome Center.

We'll be lighting it immediately following this address.

We hope that you'll join us.



## **RIISING TO THE MOMENT: OUR HISTORY AND OUR DESTINY**

When it comes to history, you could say that Clark College has a date with destiny.

We were founded during the Great Depression.

We celebrated our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary on a high note by dedicating our beautiful campus here in Vancouver's Central Park.

The college's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary came during a major economic downturn.

Our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary came during the Great Recession.

During the best of times and the worst of times, we rise to the moment to support our students and our community.

That is Clark College's proud history.

We believe it is also our destiny.