

2011 STATE OF THE COLLEGE ADDRESS
CLARK COLLEGE PRESIDENT ROBERT K. KNIGHT
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GAISER STUDENT CENTER

INTRODUCTION

This is the fifth time that I've been privileged to speak to you – as Clark's president – about the accomplishments of the past year – and the challenges that lie ahead.

This year, our accomplishments have been as strong as ever.

And that's especially impressive because they have taken place during a very difficult year.

Quite honestly, this year will be even more difficult and that will probably be true for at least the next two years.

As we thought about the theme for this year's address – we kept coming back to the fact that today – January 20 – is "Penguin Awareness Day." If you don't believe me: Google it.

Better yet: Let's ask someone who knows. Is today Penguin Awareness Day? [President Knight welcomes Clark mascot Oswald to the stage]

Actually, here at Clark College, every day is Penguin Awareness Day.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines awareness – being aware – as "having or showing realization, perception or knowledge."

Today, I want to use the word "aware" to enhance your knowledge about Clark College and to share our own perceptions and realizations.

Last year. This year. In the years to come.

AWARE: A IS FOR ACADEMICS

At Clark College today, the first “a” in the word “aware” stands for “academics.”

I could fill this entire speech – and more – just talking about the accomplishments that have taken place in our classrooms this year.

As we continue to experience record enrollment, our talented and passionate faculty have excelled in our classrooms – inspiring our students.

Here are just a few examples.

- Since 2006, our eLearning enrollment growth has been dramatic. It has increased from 150 FTEs in 2006 – about three percent of our students -- to more than 1,100 FTEs in 2010. That means more than one out of every 10 students is taking classes online.
- Some of our students are successfully earning their associate degrees through our Weekend College program. That was possible because of the commitment of our eLearning team and the faculty members who have developed and taught Weekend College courses.
- Our Automotive Technology, Dental Hygiene and Nursing programs all successfully completed accreditation – reflecting the highest standards of program excellence.
- At Clark College at Town Plaza, our Adult Volunteer Literacy Center has been transformed into Student Learning Center – complete with updated resources and new computers for our students and their mentors.
- In 2010, Clark College at Columbia Tech Center hosted both a National Science Foundation workshop and the Northwest eLearning Community Conference.

Here's one more important fact.

In 2006, the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges established the Student Achievement Initiative, or SAI. As the name implies, it focuses on the achievements of students. Completing credentials and training programs. Achieving other milestones such as passing a college-level math course.

This year, Clark earned the highest number of SAI points of any of Washington's community and technical colleges.

We're so focused on student achievement that even Oswald is hitting the books.

AWARE: W IS FOR WORKFORCE EDUCATION

At Clark College today, “w” stands for “workforce education.”

- In 2010, Clark College received a Perkins Leadership grant of \$11,000. The dollars were used to design and develop outcomes assessment plans for our Career & Technical Education programs. They will guide us to best practices.
- I-BEST stands Integrated Basic Education Skills Training. In the I-BEST program, students learn from specialists in their technical fields. They also learn basic skills including English, reading, and math. This year, Clark successfully implemented I-BEST programs in early childhood education, welding, business technologies, and Health Sciences.
- Working together, our Instruction and Corporate and Continuing Education units secured about \$1.6 million in ARRA funds – you may know them as dollars for stimulus recovery. That funding was used to create short-term credit and non-credit programs to meet immediate training needs in our region. And, through regular meetings with our partners at the Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council, we are continuing to work strategically to meet the training needs of our business and industry partners.

AWARE: A IS ALSO FOR ACHIEVEMENT

At Clark College today, “a” also stands for “achievement.”

Some are individual achievements. Others have been accomplished through the talent and dedication of countless men and women across the college.

- During the 2009-2010 academic year, our Financial Aid staff members processed 10,838 financial aid files – 33% more than the year before. As a result of their tireless work, our students received more than \$43 million in support -- 36% more than the prior year. This year, they have already distributed more than \$51 million in financial aid.
- This has been a year when Clark people and programs have received regional, state and national honors.
- Director of Clark College Culinary Arts Larry Mains was honored by Chefs de Cuisine of Oregon for bringing more chefs into our community than any other educator in our region.
- Survey Instructor Tim Kent received the 2010 Oregon Surveyor of the Year award.
- Our Dental Hygiene program celebrated twice this year. They welcomed back alums for a 40th anniversary celebration. Their students once again had a 100% pass rate on the National Board examinations on their first attempt. That record also extends back 40 years. That's right. Forty years of perfection.
- Eight medical radiography students joined Lambda Nu, their national honor society. Competing against more than 400 chapters, Clark's chapter of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society earned top honors at their 2010 International Convention.

- The 2009 PHOENIX – Clark’s student literary and art publication -- won top honors in its category from the American Scholastic Press Association. Clark College student journalists won 11 awards as *The Independent* earned third-place honors in the 2010 Washington Community College Journalism Awards.
- Clark students Michael Gay and Fallon Hughes have just been named to the 2011 All-Washington Academic Team.
- In 2010, Tami Jacobs, Clark’s Director of Disability Support Services, received a Meritorious Service Award from the Washington Association on Postsecondary Education and Disability.
- For the second year, under the leadership of Jody Shulnak, Clark College was named to the President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll for its commitment to volunteering and service-learning.
- You can see that commitment in action today. For the third year in a row, our student ambassadors are collecting nonperishable food donations during the State of the College address. Food bank supplies are low after the holidays. This is a great way for the college community to give back to our fellow community members.
- Our leaders, alumni and partners have also been honored this year.
- Clark College alum Rico Selga has travelled the world providing medical care in areas devastated by disaster, conflict, and poverty. For his humanitarian work, he received the 2010 Clark College Outstanding Alumni Award.
- On Saturday, former Clark student Jacquie Brown – Miss Washington – finished fourth in the Miss America Pageant. She made our college – and our state – proud.

- Our partners at the Clark College Foundation were honored by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education. They received a 2010 WealthEngine Award, given to superior fundraising programs across the country.
- The Foundation made a vitally important accomplishment possible this year. They secured the private support that matched a Washington state grant – allowing us to break ground on Phase One of our new Early Learning Center.
- The college has earned regional and national honors for our success in opening Clark College at Columbia Tech Center. We received two Spotlight Awards – top honors – from the Portland Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America. In March, we will receive a national Paragon award from the National Council for Marketing and Public Relations. Over a period of 10 years, people from across the college brought CTC to life. They all earned those awards.
- As we celebrated the 20th anniversary of our beautiful cherry trees at our annual Sakura Festival, we broke ground for a beautiful Japanese garden. Construction is scheduled to begin this summer. A dedication ceremony will be held after classes begin in September.
- This year, Clark student athletes earned three regional championships: men's and women's cross country -- and men's soccer. Our women's cross country team went on to win the Northwest Athletic Association of Community Colleges championship – and their coach, Ryan Hovde, was named coach of the year.
- Several years ago, we introduced a tradition at this event when we welcomed our men's soccer team and presented them with rings for winning the NWAACC championship. I am proud to continue that tradition today.

- Please join me in welcoming and congratulating coach of the year Ryan Hovde, assistant coach Amber Moore, and the Clark's women's cross-country team – Shelby Beaudoin, Angela Gula, Tamara Kulla, Holly Meler, Katarina Mueller and Briel Thoun – our 2010 NWAACC champions!

AWARE: R IS FOR OUR REALITIES

Several realities dominate Clark College today.

One reality is enrollment.

A November 2010 issue of Community College Week listed the 50 fastest growing two-year colleges in the country with enrollment of more than 10,000 students. Clark ranked 19th. We were the only Washington college on the list. We continue to have the largest Running Start program in the state.

This is the third consecutive year that we have experienced record enrollment. Based on our projections, that will continue during the next academic year – and beyond.

That growth has been challenging for everyone.

For our students and faculty in our classrooms.

For the Student Affairs staff that is responsible for registration, financial aid, career services and much more.

For the Administrative Services team that is responsible for maintaining our buildings and facilities.

For all of the units across the college that provide services to our students.

Their service has been remarkable. Please join me in thanking them.

The other harsh reality is the budget. Like most states, Washington is facing declining revenues and increased demands. That has translated into painful budget cuts.

Governor Gregoire talked about those difficult decisions as she sought feedback during a public forum in this room last July.

Here at Clark, we are facing two realities. The first reality is that only about half of our funding now comes from the state. The rest comes from tuition and donor support.

Up to this year, we've been able to maintain services by tightening our belts and increasing workload. Our students have done their part. Their tuition has gone up.

But we must now implement an additional \$2 million dollars in permanent budget cuts.

This year, we are going to have to make cuts that no one wants to make.

We began the process by focusing on the things that we are required to do by law.

We then looked at the things that we must do to remain accredited.

Finally, we looked at the things we do -- and take pride in -- because they reflect our aspirations for our students and our region.

I don't want to minimize the decisions that we will soon have to make. They will be painful.

Throughout this process, we have sought feedback at every level of the college. We will continue to do that.

Most of all, we are committed to communicating openly and honestly and treating all members of the college community with the respect that they have earned for their dedication and service to Clark College.

We faced another reality this year during a very painful time at the college. A flier distributed by a student caused fear and concern. It sparked a college-wide and even regional discussion about hate speech versus free speech.

As I've noted, we are a learning institution and we all have learned from this experience.

Since that time, we have developed and implemented new procedures for dealing with these kinds of events.

At the same time, a college-wide task force is developing a policy to address issues of free speech while ensuring a safe college environment. Their recommendations will be unveiled this quarter.

From an open forum at the college -- to an hour-long radio discussion -- to a rally at the Chime Tower, we have tried to be open about our experiences in the hope that others can learn from them too.

But I want to be clear.

We will not tolerate threats against any members of our college community.

Clark College should always be a place where individuals can come together for open, thoughtful discussions.

The college should never be a place for hatred or fear.

Safety and security is a fourth reality.

Since the tragedy at Virginia Tech, like other colleges and universities across the country, Clark College has taken countless actions to increase security. New classroom locks. Enhanced signage. A new telephone system will allow us to provide alerts instantly across the college.

These are stressful times. This year, we established a Behavioral Intervention Team. They do an outstanding job working with students, faculty and staff to identify – and respond to – students who have caused concern that they might harm themselves or others.

Under the leadership of Professor Judy Van Patten, our Mental Health Mondays series addresses important social issues. Those sessions are held Mondays at noon in the Penguin Student Lounge. They are free and open to the public.

One of the highlights of the past year came when we received exciting news from the Department of Education. Jennifer Grove – our Director of Operations & Auxiliary Services – worked with the office of Planning & Effectiveness – to submit a federal grant request.

As a result of that work, the college received a grant of nearly \$750 thousand dollars. It was the full amount requested by the college. No other institution in the country received their full request.

We should all be proud to know that the tireless efforts by our faculty, staff and administrators to keep our college safe have been recognized nationally.

The grant funding will support the work done by our Emergency Management Planning Team, our Behavioral Intervention Team and others at the college. And our work wouldn't be possible without the support of our partners at the City of Vancouver, the Vancouver Police Department, Clark County Public Health, and the Clark Regional Emergency Services Agency. We thank them all.

We all have a responsibility in terms of safety.

Last year, a Clark College student demonstrated that -- in the truest sense.

Neil Oldaker was visiting the McDonald's Restaurant at Fourth Plain and Fort Vancouver Way – a block from the college – when he noticed that a car in the drive-through line was on fire.

The driver – an 80-year-old woman – wasn't aware what was happening.

Neil knocked on the window.

When the woman didn't respond, he opened the door and pulled her to safety just before the flames spread.

It was a remarkable display of courage – and humility as word of his heroic actions spread.

He reminded us of our responsibility to help others.

He reminded us of how special our students are.

Neil is here with us today. Neil, please stand.

I hope you all will join me in recognizing Neil and thanking him for his bravery – on behalf of our college and our community.

AWARE: E IS FOR ENERGY

There are a lot of great words starting with “e”.

Exceptional. Exhilarating. Exploration.

But, when I walk across our main campus...or visit Town Plaza, Columbia Tech Center and WSU Vancouver...I see energy.

I see the energy of our students. Many of them are juggling one or two jobs – and families – as well as taking classes.

I see the energy of our faculty bringing knowledge to life.

I see the excitement when students grasp complex ideas.

I see the energy in our Welcome Center as a staff member greets a prospective student – someone who wants to attend college but doesn’t know how to get started.

I see it in our student leadership – and in our student clubs.

I see it in the arts, music, theatre, athletics, lectures, and events that are held at the college year-round.

I see it everywhere at Clark College.

I see it every day.

A NEW AWARENESS

To maintain that energy – to address today’s realities – to stay focused on academics and workforce education – and to stay focused on achievement – I think we have to embrace a new awareness.

A NEW AWARENESS: A IS FOR ADAPTABILITY

In that new awareness, “a” is for adaptability.

It means we have to respond quickly to today’s realities and be responsive to the needs of our students and our business partners.

Our Corporate Learning Center provides training for businesses – large and small. They focus on quality – and streamlining processes – and looking for efficiencies.

We must do the same – while always staying focused on our students.

A NEW AWARENESS: W IS FOR WORKING TOGETHER

In our new awareness, “w” is for working together.

At a college of 16,000 students and hundreds of faculty, staff and administrators, there are bound to be disagreements.

But I firmly believe that what unites us – our mission and our dedication to our students – is greater than what divides us.

This year, we have stepped up our commitment to shared governance. I’ve already spoken about the budget process.

In addition, we initiated a new process for developing college policies that includes input from College Council. Some 40 policies were either adopted or updated using this new, open process.

I spoke a moment ago about working with our community partners in our efforts to keep our college safe and secure.

We have also continued to expand our educational partnerships.

Our most enduring partnership – with WSU Vancouver – is as strong as ever.

Our co-admission agreements with Portland State University and Marylhurst University enable our students to transfer seamlessly from Clark -- continuing their education and pursuing bachelor’s degrees.

This year, Clark College signed an articulation agreement with another co-admission partner – Concordia University. This agreement allows students in our Fitness Trainer program to seamlessly transfer to Concordia’s Exercise and Sport Science degree program.

Responding to our students’ needs, Clark signed articulation agreements with the University of Phoenix. After the University of Washington, the University of Phoenix has the second highest transfer rate among students at Washington’s community colleges. It’s another way that we make it easy for our students to take “The Next Step” in their education.

We are staying focused on our K-12 partnerships. For example, we offer college-level courses in Math and English for the Vancouver School District's College in High School initiative.

Most of all, we value our partnership with the talented men and women of the Clark College Foundation. Their efforts to secure support from generous donors have never been more important -- or more appreciated.

A NEW AWARENESS: A IS ALSO FOR ASPIRATIONS

In our new awareness, the next “a” reflects our aspirations.

Fifty years ago today, John F. Kennedy became the 35th President of the United States.

In his inaugural address, he outlined a vision for the future. He also noted that success or failure would ultimately depend on America’s citizens – not what our country could do for us – but we what could do for our country.

It’s much easier to live up to your aspirations in good times.

It’s much harder in times of uncertainty and challenges.

The new mayor of Atlanta, Georgia has also faced tough budget realities. In a recent column, Pulitzer-prize winning writer Thomas J. Friedman praised Mayor Kasim Reed for leading what he called “mature and honest conversations...to deal effectively with the new economic realities we are facing as a nation.”

Mayor Reed also said something else that’s very important: that “we need to be very clear where just surviving takes you: it takes you to a lifestyle of just survival.”

Our students don’t want to simply survive.

Our region doesn’t want to simply survive.

Clark College doesn’t want to simply survive.

We all want to dream. We all want to grow.

So, here at Clark College, we are staying focused on our aspirations.

We want to ensure that our students get the support they need – in our classrooms and through our advisors and counselors – to achieve their academic goals.

We want to be a healthy Penguin Nation.

We want to be sustainable and “green.”

We want to be clean and litter-free.

Our aspirations also include a new building devoted to science, technology, engineering and math – we call it STEM – on the west side of Fort Vancouver Way. They also include a brand new facility – similar to Clark College at Columbia Tech Center— in Northern or Central Clark County.

We believe that’s a worthy aspiration for this decade.

I like to call it our 20/20 vision.

20/20 -- for the clarity of our vision.

2020 -- because we hope that both facilities will be serving students by the end of this decade -- or in the early twenties.

Our aspirations are possible because of the extraordinary contributions of our faculty, staff, administrators, trustees and supporters.

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

Presidential coins are given to members of our college community who go above and beyond in support of our students.

I make the decisions; no one knows in advance.

I do it on opening day each fall.

In 2009, we extended that tradition to the State of the College address.

I'm proud to continue it again today.

[Presentation of Presidential Coins to Monica Knowles, Clark College Bookstore Manager; John Maduta, Program Specialist, Advising; Dr. Charlene Montierth, Clark College Geology Professor; and Janet Owens, Administrative Assistant, Corporate and Continuing Education.]

Last fall – in a matter of hours – our region lost two great leaders.

Both left legacies of public service in our region and across our state.

Rep. Bill Fromhold was a four-term state legislator. He served as president and CEO of the Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce and as superintendent of ESD 112. He also served on the Clark College Board of Trustees.

His admirers have described him as one of the best legislators our region has ever had...a wonderful person... a giant in Clark County and Southwest Washington.

Tom Koenninger had a distinguished 57-year career as a reporter, editor and columnist – including 37 years at The Columbian newspaper. Tom graduated from Clark College in 1951. In 1990, he received the Clark College Outstanding Alumni Award.

Tom was appointed to the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, where he served for more than a decade, including four years as board chair.

In a message to a member of the Clark community, Tom once wrote about what he called his “reverence for Clark College, its historic importance in higher education, and its pivotal place in our future.”

Tom and Bill both joined us for the groundbreaking of Clark College at Columbia Tech Center. Their presence meant a great day on that special day.

Bill and Tom were both passionate advocates for open access to quality education – that everyone who wants to go to college should have that opportunity.

We believe that too.

Today, I am proud to announce that, with support from the Clark College Foundation, we will present a \$3,000 scholarship in Bill Fromhold's name – and a \$3,000 scholarship in Tom Koenninger's name -- to students in an academic transfer program at Clark College next year.

Marcia Fromhold and Marilyn Koenninger were unable to be with us today, but I will be speaking to them this afternoon and I will tell them how proud we are to honor Bill and Tom through these scholarships.

A NEW AWARENESS: R IS FOR RESILIENCE

In tough times, people succeed because they are resilient.

So, in our new awareness, “r” is for resilience.

Resilient people are flexible. They are creative. They take action.

They know that the tough times will eventually pass.

They believe in the future.

Clark College is resilient. Our people are resilient.

We believe in our future.

A NEW AWARENESS: “E” IS EXTRAORDINARY EDUCATION, EXCELLENT SERVICES, ENGAGED LEARNERS, ENRICHED COMMUNITY

Because we believe in our future, in our new awareness, “e” is for the elements of our Clark College vision.

Extraordinary Education.

Excellent Services.

Engaged Learners.

Enriched Community.

Because that is who we are.

Because we are deeply aware of the importance of our mission.

Because we are aware of our responsibilities to our students and to our region.

Because we embrace them.

During good times and tough times.

Today and tomorrow.