

Plans for Clark College campus in North Clark County loom in the future

No final decisions, plans made yet

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staff reporter

With enrollment continuing to increase rapidly each year at Clark College, officials at the college are continuing to look into the possibility of building a campus in the North Clark County area sometime in the future.

According to the Clark College website, college faculty and staff welcomed 16,054 total students in fall 2010, which included 4,036 new students. Although Clark has made several attempts to expand programs at

the main campus and several branch campuses, enrollment continues to grow.

Clark plans to expand its health and medical training by building a \$38 million allied health classroom building by 2013, just west of the main campus on Fort Vancouver Way. Students from all over the County are also able to take classes at one of Clark's branch campuses, including one at the Columbia Tech Center in east Vancouver at the Clark Center at Washington State University Vancouver.

Although it may be far off in the distance, plans are in the

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Campus

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works for a Clark College campus in the North Clark County area. Bob Williamson, vice president of administrative services at Clark, said college officials started out by looking at 16 potential sites for a possible North County campus and in July made a presentation to the Clark College Board of Trustees, which summarized the pros and cons of the top five most likely locations.

Currently, Williamson said they have the possible location narrowed down to five sites, including one in the north Vancouver area, three in the Ridgefield area and one in the Battle Ground area. He declined to specifically identify the site locations.

"We can add or subtract from that list at any time," Williamson said. "We are still analyzing all of the pros and the cons, it's a very critical decision for

the college and the County."

Williamson said he will present updated information to the Board of Trustees sometime in October. This new information will include things such as infrastructure costs, how much each site will cost the college to bring in sewer and water, how easy each site will be for students to access and more.

The hope is that college officials will be able to identify a site by this December and conclude negotiations by December 2012. However, Williamson said that because of reductions in the state capital budget, it will most likely be at least 10 years before they even break ground on the project.

"We would like to lock in a land deal while prices are still good," Williamson said. "We want to buy big, at least 60-70 acres, we envision this to be a fully-operational campus."

Although the City of Battle Ground has not yet been the chosen location for the Clark campus, the City has recently

submitted an Urban Growth Boundary Expansion Request with Clark County. If added, the land would be designated for Employment Campus as the comprehensive plan designation and zoning designation.

Robert Maul, Battle Ground community development director, said having the land properly designated would allow for more economic growth and more jobs for the overall growth boundary. With the Employment Campus designation, the land couldn't be used for retail or residential, but could be used for medical, technical or educational purposes.

"The timing worked out conveniently," Maul said. "Clark has been looking at several locations and if they decide on the site here, we would love to have them. If not, we still want to have that employment land."