



Photos by TROY WAYRYNEN/The Columbian

Students make their way to classes on the first day of school at Clark College on Monday. Enrollment may reach a record 16,000 full- and part-time students. Many also will pay record textbook prices, unless they can take advantage of discounts and rentals offered.

# Clark cracks book on new year

College bookstore offers more textbook titles for rent to help students save

By HOWARD BUCK  
Columbian staff writer

The steady parade of students sporting jeans, cell phones and backpacks resumed Monday at Clark College, pretty much where it left off in June.

As did the ever-escalating cost of school for 16,000 full- and part-time students expected for the new fall quarter, another record enrollment.

Not only has tuition jumped 7 percent a second straight year, but textbook prices continue to push the bounds of sanity.

That new copy of "Psychology in Action," required for all Psych 100 classes? A cool \$136.60, please.

The standard "Understanding Economics" for Econ 101 students? That'll run \$93.75.

A "College Algebra" textbook for all Math 111 class sections goes for \$139.65. For students who first need a refresher course, the requisite "PreAlgebra" book is \$104.55.

Oh, and students mustn't forget a graphing calculator, also mandatory: \$129.99 for the Texas Instruments T-84 model stocked at the Clark College campus bookstore.

Lisa Bradstreet, 34, of Amboy is starting her second quarter at Clark after her loan officer job with a home mortgage company fizzled last year.

On Monday she dropped about \$320 on books for four courses. But she's past the initial sticker shock of her return to school — and soaring book prices.

"I was a little appalled," said Bradstreet, who plans to pursue an elementary teaching degree at WSUV when she's done at Clark.

Good thing the Penguin Nation bookstore finds more ways to help students battle the bloated prices, mostly inflated at the wholesale level.



Clark College students can rent 21 different textbook titles and 75 advanced graphing calculators this quarter.

## TEXTBOOK OPTIONS

"Understanding Nutrition," required text for Nutrition 103 course

- New: .....\$149.70
- Used: .....\$112.30
- Electronic "Jumpbook" version: .....\$81.10
- Rental for one quarter: .....\$52.40

The store in Gaiser Hall now offers 21 textbook titles, more than 1,000 copies total, for rent to students each quarter at 30 to 35 percent of new-book prices.

Focus is on core courses — such as Econ 101, early writing and math classes, sociology, psychology and such — said Monica Knowles, Clark bookstore manager. Selection has grown steadily since Clark introduced a handful of rentals in 2008, she said.

Add 75 of those T-84 calculators, now available for rent at \$35 per quarter, and Clark estimates students taking advantage of rentals will save nearly \$82,000 total this quarter, compared to purchasing the items new.

"I think it's really substantial," Knowles said. "It's pretty much undeniable that textbooks are a huge expense

item for students. We try to give as many options as possible."

The 1,000-item total was a hard-won milestone that "nearly brought a tear to my eye," she said.

On Monday, Samueal Rezene, 16, a Running Start program student from Prairie High School, was glad to scoop up his Psychology 100 textbook (full price: \$136.60) for a rental bargain \$44.50.

He signed paperwork that requires he return the book by 4 p.m. the Friday of finals week, in December, in the same condition as he received it (some of the rentals are previously used books). A late fee of \$10 would be tacked on for each day past that deadline, not to exceed \$100.

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## WHAT'S NEW AT CLARK:

- Monday's student head count: 15,439 (expected to approach 16,000).
- Nearly \$11 million in financial aid

- has been disbursed for fall term.
- William Belden, 15-year veteran at Green River Community College near Seattle, is now vice

- president of student affairs.
- New "mechatronics" courses start at the Columbia Tech Center classroom building. The

growing study field is centered on mechanical and electrical systems managed by control devices.

# Clark College:

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After Rezene gave the book a careful once-over — much like a rental car customer checking for dents — he sealed the deal.

“No complaints,” he said. He’d already purchased used English and sociology course textbooks, saving considerably on each, and was set for the term.

True, rentals might not work for each Clark student, including many parents (or pet owners). Books must come back free of “tears (both the ripping and the sobbing kind), liquid damage and writing or excessive highlighting,” the contract declares.

“I’ve got two nephews at home. I’ll just have to lock (the books) in my room,” Rezene said with a smile.

Rentals also may not work for students who need or wish to keep the book or calculator for more than one quarter.

## Outpacing inflation

Clearly, trends portend a move toward electronic books and away from increasingly weighty books with 800, 900 or more pages — glossy books that can be made obsolete in a

## OTHER WAYS FOR STUDENTS TO SAVE

Besides a limited rental-book option, the Clark College bookstore offers several ways students can save:

- Clark offers many titles online, through the Jumpbooks brand service. Student Lisa Bradstreet says she has made good use of the digital option. She can save all her “margin notes” on her computer screen and print them out separately, she said. She’s also taken complete courses online, saving an hour’s drive to Vancouver from Amboy.
- Clark has set up a peer-to-peer exchange at its website, a secondary market where students buy and sell books at discount.
- Students may sell back used books at the end of each quarter,

retrieving as much as half the original new-book price. And they have — to the tune of northward of half-a-million dollars in recent quarters, Knowles said.

- Students who can’t receive financial aid checks until the first day of school (proof of attendance is required) may come in prior to the first day and place books “on hold” for \$10, so they don’t find all the discounted rentals and used inventory wiped out before they have spending money.
- Running Start students who qualify for low-income free and reduced meal rates at their high school may receive one free textbook per quarter.

few short years.

A 2005 federal General Accountability Office report found textbook prices had increased at twice the rate of inflation in the 18 years ending in December 2004, nearly tripling in total price during that span. Still, tuition and fees increased faster yet.

That GAO study found that textbooks and other supplies (laptops excluded) as a percentage of tuition and fees was 72 percent for students at two-year public colleges, and 26 percent at public four-year

schools.

Knowles of Clark College said publishers explain that years of research by professors and others, expensive marketing campaigns, production costs and the risk a title won’t sell each contribute to drive up textbook prices.

Until every student has steady computer and Internet access, the books are a habit that won’t be kicked, she predicted.

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