

Clark's sign-ups for fall jump 6%

Enrollment growth around the state highest in decades

By TOM VOGT
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Fall enrollment at Clark College is up more than 6 percent this year, part of the biggest increase in students the state's two-year college system has seen in decades.

"We haven't seen enrollment growth like this since the 1970s," Loretta Seppanen, research and analysis director with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, said in a Thursday news release.

"And the growth is in all areas — recent high school graduates, transfer students, worker re-training, basic skills, professional technical, working adults," Seppanen said.

In Vancouver, Clark College reported a fall enrollment that is the equivalent of 6,894 students taking full class loads. That's up from the fall 2007 full-time equivalent enrollment of 6,455.

Clark actually has a lot more students on campus than that, because many don't take a full load. The head count — the total number of students taking at least one class — is 13,002.

That's a 6.8 percent increase over the fall 2007 head count of 12,636, said Clark spokeswoman Barbara Kerr.

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Did you know?

- About 45 percent of the state's community and technical college students are in job-training programs.
- 41 percent plan to transfer to four-year colleges.
- 11 percent are in basic skills (adult basic education, English as a second language).

Enrollment:

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Across the state's 34 community and technical colleges, the system is serving more than 133,000 full-time equivalents, up from 125,000 last fall.

On the head-count side, the state enrollment topped 200,000 this year — up from 190,600 a year ago.

Much of the growth has been attributed to the troubled economy. Historically, during eco-

nomic downturns, college enrollments go up as students seek training and retraining to compete for limited job openings.

The two-year system relies on the state Legislature for much of its funding.

"Students need good jobs and bright futures and employers need skilled employees. Our colleges will turn out highly trained workers as we battle our way through this recession," Charlie Earl, executive director of the system, said in the news release. But as enrollments grow, "they won't be able to keep this up without funding."