

# Morale high in Bob Knight's first year at Clark

"This is the best job I've ever had," said Bob Knight as he finishes his first year as president of Clark College this week.

"My main goal is to do what I think is right for Clark College," said Knight.

Knight, 51, was named president of Clark College in May 2007 after serving as interim president from July 2006. Before that he was vice president for administrative services, handling financial and budgeting matters at the Vancouver community college.

Knight's first full year has been a busy one. Enrollment continues to climb and now stands at nearly 13,000 students. The college has acquired a nearby 11.5 acres, part of which was the Southwest Washington Health District, and the remainder a string of stores on Fourth Plain Blvd.

Construction is underway on a new campus facility on NE 192nd Ave. and Mill Plain Blvd which will house electronics and business instruction, plus general education.

And the search is on for a new satellite location in either Ridgefield or Battle Ground where a new building is at the



**BOB KNIGHT has completed his first year as president of Clark College amid increasing morale among faculty and staff at the Vancouver community college. Knight has a plan for full tuition scholarships for qualifying students.**

top of the state funding list for community college growth.

But Knight has another goal: student scholarships.

Knight hopes that every student in the college's district who meets four basic criteria

can receive a full-tuition scholarship.

Those four criteria may seem easy to meet, but Knight says it's not so simple. The criteria are:

-- Graduate from high school

with a "C" average.

-- Have a 95 percent high school attendance record which is not easy for those with "senioritis," said Knight.

-- Complete high school in four consecutive years.

-- Meet minimum standards for graduation, including algebra I.

While the scholarship idea is under study, Knight estimates the annual cost at \$12 million. And he thinks he can come up with the money.

The Clark College Foundation has assets of about \$80 million, said Knight, of which about 75 percent is considered an endowment. That might be part of the scholarship funding, but other sources of funds would also be sought, he said.

The scholarship program would pay the \$3,000 annual Clark College tuition for all students in the college's district which is western Klickitat County, plus Clark and Skamania counties. Books would not be included.

**Student success measured in various way**

Knight said students at Clark College achieve their goals in various way. About 63 percent of students move on to four year universities, about half of whom transfer to Washington State University Vancouver. Nearly 1,000 students are studying English as a second language. Others are pursuing a

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high school diploma or improving on their high school education.

Some students are learning how to take college-level courses. About 27 percent of students pursue vocational training.

Other students are ready for jobs when they leave Clark College. For 38 straight years, every student completing Clark's two year dental hygiene program has passed the national board examination. "No other college can say that," said Knight proudly.

And the college's nursing program produces 40 graduates each quarter, all of whom are employed before graduation.

The college has added a medical radiography program in the last year, with 75 percent of first-year graduates getting jobs right away, he said.

"Success is measured in many different ways," said Knight, noting that the average student is 29-30 years old and most are employed while going to the college.

Knight said he works 60-70 hours a week and is more visible than prior Clark College presidents or other community college presidents. "I'm not an email guy," said Knight. "I don't sit at my desk and computer. I'd rather talk to people, talk to faculty."

Knight is supportive of the relationships between Clark College and Washington State University Vancouver. He meets each month with WSU chancellor Hal Dengerink. Clark College operates a building on the WSU campus where biology and nursing are taught. "We see ourselves as a bridge to WSU," said Knight.

The new east Mill Plain facility will have 70,000 square feet and will open in 2009.

Still the southwest Washington region is under-served with higher education, said Knight.

More facilities and classes are needed to meet student needs.

Facilities are to open in 2013 on newly-acquired lands, and a satellite campus in Ridgefield or Battle Ground could be in operation by 2015.

"A community college needs to be where the population is," said Knight. "The center of growth is moving toward Battle Ground."

## **Morale way up at the college**

Knight takes pride in the results of the last two PACE Surveys which measure the attitude of college staff, instructors and administrators.

During his tenure as interim president, work place satisfaction climbed sharply, said Knight, up from 60.6 percent in 2006 to 81.9 percent in 2007.

The 2008 survey results show continued improvement in morale, although the results have not yet been provided to the Trustees or the public. The latest survey shows continued improvement in every category, said Knight. "It's a positive trend," he said.

The survey asks staff members whether they feel their job is relevant to the college's mission, whether they have the opportunity to be creative in their work, whether the college prepares students for careers, whether students are prepared for further learning, and a list of other factors.

The overall results from the PACE instrument indicate a healthy campus, with a high consultative system, according to the study. The student focus category received the highest mean score--3.89 on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the highest.

"The folks at Clark College support my leadership," said Knight of the study results. "The morale and climate have improved considerably."

Knight said part of his success is allowing people to do their jobs without micro-managing.

## **Slower decisionmaking**

Knight has established a



committee-approach to the selection of new staff members. While he offers his views on filling open positions, a committee makes recommendations on staff additions and the college's vice president for instruction makes decisions.

vice president of administrative services at the college, which is the second time around with no selection made in the first effort.

**Knight exercises daily**

Bob Knight said he exercises daily using on-campus

grew up in Florida, and then spent 21 years in the Army, stationed in Germany, California and other west coast locations. He retired as a Lt. Colonel.

He then worked two years for Consolidated Freightways in real estate management, fol-

ifornia. He earns \$163,000 as president of Clark College.

Knight is Clark College's 10th president since the community college was established in 1933. Robert Oliver was the college's first president 1933-1935, followed by Lewis Cannell 1935-1941, Paul Gaiser 1941-1958, Dwight Baird 1958-1970, L.S. Hakan-son 1970-1975, Richard Jones 1975-1981, Earl "Joe" Johnson 1982-1997, Tana Hasart 1997-2002, and Wayne Branch 2003-2006. The college has also had interim and acting presidents.

Part of his enjoyment the past year has been the lack of pressure.

"I'm not building a resume," said Knight. "I'm not trying to become the president of some other college. I want to stay in this community. I want to retire in this community. I've never been in that position before in my life."

**Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) Survey**

<i>Would you recommend Clark College as a place to work:</i>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
Yes	120 (60.6%)	149 (81.9%)
No	71 (35.9%)	27 (14.8%)
Did not respond	7 (3.5%)	6 (3.3%)

The system is slower and involves more consultation than Knight experienced during his career as an Army officer. "The big difference is process," said Knight. "It can be frustrating. Decisionmaking takes a lot longer in higher education. That's not necessarily a bad thing."

A search continues for a new

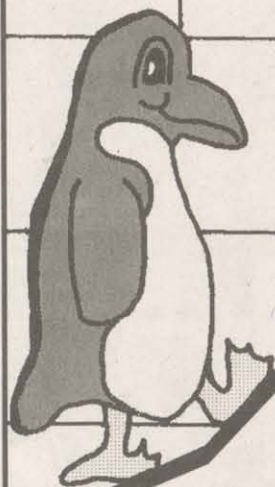
equipment. He lives just a mile from the college and sometimes rides his bike to work. He ran a marathon in Las Vegas, NV last year. And he plays basketball with others his age each Saturday morning.

Knight was born in London, England, where his father was serving in the Air Force. He

lowed by working as vice president of a company in the dental industry in Oregon. He and his wife, Paula, have two sons, ages 20 and 23.

Knight holds a bachelor's degree in engineering from West Point and a master's degree in business administration from Golden University in Cal-

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2008



**Clark College  
Staff Morale**

**"Penguin Nation Rules"**

**2006**

**2008**