

Clark College president receives contract extension, prepares for school year

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staff reporter

Clark College President Robert Knight recently received a three-year contract extension, something he says reaffirms his belief that the college is moving in the right direction.

Knight has been the president of the college since May 2007. He started off as vice president of administrative services in March 2004 before moving to interim president in July 2006.

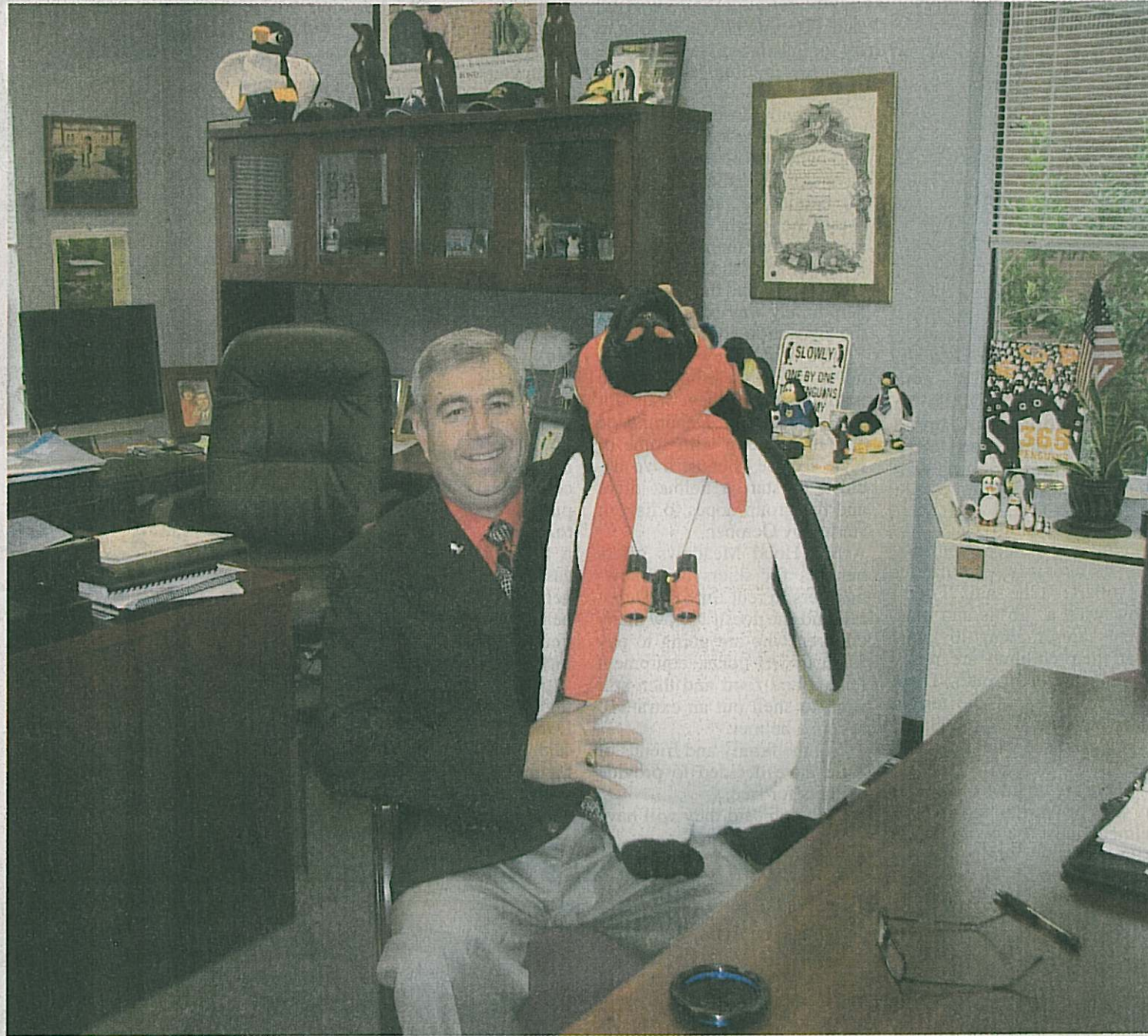
Working about 60 hours each week as president, Knight said he thinks the college has improved in quite a few areas since he took over. One of those areas, he says, is the administration is listening to its faculty and staff, something that wasn't always the case before.

"I think we do a much better job of listening to the questions and concerns from the faculty and staff and the overall morale of people who work here has gotten better," Knight said.

Knight said he expects around 16,000 students to be enrolled at Clark during fall quarter, which starts Sept. 20. He said the college had about as many students also enroll last year, which was a 3,000 student increase from 2008. While there are still many new students coming straight from high school, Knight said he's seen an increase in older people enrolling at the college since the unemployment rate has gone up.

"We've seen a lot of people coming to the college for re-training or to get into other programs so they can find a better job," he said.

Knight said the state raised the tuition at Clark College by seven percent each of the last two years. This, along with an increase in students paying that tuition, has helped the col-



CLARK COLLEGE PRESIDENT Bob Knight shows his love for the 'Penguin Nation' as he holds a giant stuffed Oswald on his lap.

lege cope, at least some, with the budget cuts that have taken place over the last two years.

Over the last two years, Knight said Clark's budget has

been cut by 18 percent, or about \$5.1 million. He said the college will also be getting another across-the-board budget cut soon, of between 4-7 percent.

Though the college has not had any of its programs cut, Knight said they are trying to be more frugal by cutting down on the purchase of supplies,

equipment and travel expenses. He said they have also been hiring more part-time adjunct professors as opposed to permanent full-time, and although

no members of the faculty have been laid off, there are open positions that haven't been filled.

Over the last year, Knight said a few new aspects have been added to the college. A new program that combines mechanics and electronics is now being offered, as is a new program that enables students to attend classes just on the weekends and still get their degree. Knight said construction has also begun on rebuilding the Early Childhood Education facilities.

Looking into the future, Knight said he would like to continue to expand Clark College throughout the region. Clark currently has four separate facilities--Clark College at WSU Vancouver, Clark College at Town Plaza, Clark College at Columbia Tech Center and the main campus. Knight said that by the end of this decade, he would like to have another campus in the Battle Ground/Ridgefield area.

"We also want to continue to meet the needs of the community over the next few years," Knight said. "I would like to meet the job needs of the community and continue to open up programs for people so they can get the jobs that are in demand."

Knight said he hasn't really seen one specific program that has gained popularity over the rest. He said there is still a lot of students who come to Clark to get transfer degrees before they move on to a university and that the vocational and health areas are always in high demand.

"Community colleges supply a powerful and great education," he said. "The teachers are here to just teach so there are no teacher assistants and no huge classes, just the teachers and the students."