



STEVEN LANE/The Columbian
**Running Start student
Jena Bodell rehearses with
the Clark College cast of
the musical "Jesus Christ
Superstar."**

Running Start gathers steam

More high-schoolers
are earning free
Clark College credits

By **HOWARD BUCK**
Columbian staff writer

Jena Bodell prefers her drama on the stage, not in the classroom.

Midway through her second year at Clark College, the Skyview High School senior will earn her Associate of Arts degree without spending a day at high school the past two years.

On Page C5

- Did you know?
- Running Start's fall head count in review: 1992-2008.

"All the social problems aren't there," Bodell, 17, said of Clark. "There are no social cliques, really. You can concentrate on your schoolwork and not worry about what people think of you," she said.

Bodell is a Running Start student, earning college credits at no cost that will hasten her pursuit of a bachelor's degree

If you go

■ **What:** Running Start orientation for students who are currently high school sophomores or juniors and their parents.

■ **When:** 7 to 8 p.m. Jan. 15 and Jan. 24.

■ **Where:** Clark College's Gaiser Hall student center, 1933 Fort Vancouver Way, Vancouver.

in theater direction.

Turns out she has plenty of company at Clark. More than 1,000 high school students have registered for Running Start courses in the winter term that starts today.

Total credit hours reflect 800 full-time-equivalent students, a new high at Clark. The school has gladly added class sections to keep up with demand.

Running Start continues to lure crowds, enough so for

Clark to schedule double orientation sessions this month for prospective entrants in the fall.

The identical orientation meetings run 7 to 8 p.m. Jan. 15 and Jan. 24, in the O'Connell Sports Center gym. Parents or students need attend only one.

"The word is out. People are pretty familiar with Running Start," said Linda Calvert, program manager. "They appreciate what the value of the program is."

Enrollment has steadily grown since Calvert helped

RUNNING START, Page C5

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Jena Bodell, Running Start student

Running Start:

From Page C1

start Clark's program in 1992. Today, nearly one of every 12 Clark students is a participant. Clark trails only Green River and Bellevue community colleges in Running Start numbers across Washington.

Early on, Clark leaders worried that precocious students might struggle. That hasn't happened, as Running Start students earn better grades, on average, than their Clark classmates. It makes sense, because high school applicants must first demonstrate college-level reading and writing skills on a COMPASS placement test all incoming Clark students take.

Running Start students also are grabbing more credits than ever: An average 11 credits per term, just shy of a full-time load of 12 credits.

Bodell, who has earned A's and B's, will earn an impressive 18 credits this term, two by performing in the play "Jesus Christ Superstar" next month.

Her Clark transfer credits will let her start as a junior at Central Washington University, her current top pick for bachelor's studies.

"I can just take all my classes on my major and not have to worry about all the little things" such as prerequisite English and math courses," Bodell said.

She'll seek the theater degree, plus a teaching certificate. Her goal is to teach high school drama and operate a children's theater school in Vancouver.

Bodell is no trendsetter at her Salmon Creek home. Three older siblings have used Running Start rather than finish up at Skyview. The former Utah residents were home-

RUNNING START AT CLARK COLLEGE FALL HEAD COUNT

1992	210
1993	281
1994	420
1995	414
1996	409
1997	490
1998	592
1999	583
2000	595
2001	611
2002	646
2003	681
2004	696
2005	878
2006	918
2007	995
2008*	1,074

Source: Clark College

* Winter term

schooled and were confident in their skills, she noted. And her parents readily embraced the means of shaving college costs.

"It's free tuition; why wouldn't you do it?" Bodell said.

She praised Clark instructors for "real experience in the field," compared with most high school teachers. "They can really relate and tell you what it's like," she said.

Bodell has improved her own real-world mettle. Theater has boosted social skills that really blossomed while in Running Start, she said.

"Now that I'm at Clark, it's a lot easier to be doing a project with a 30-year-old," she said.

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Did you know?

■ Running Start allows students to earn early college credits at Clark College while completing high school. State K-12 school funding pays student tuition, while the school district keeps a small portion.