

"In good times and in bad times, Clark College rises to the moment."

Bob Knight, Clark College president



Photos by STEVEN LANE/The Columbian

Clark College President Bob Knight on Thursday presents campus bookstore buyer May Jolly with a commemorative coin for her distinguished work. Knight singled out six employees during his annual State of the College address at Gaiser Student Center.

Clark College dives into decade

President Bob Knight looks to continue branching out amid budget woes

By **HOWARD BUCK**
Columbian staff writer

After a decade bookended with uncertainty — from Y2K to the struggling economy — Clark College will face new challenges the next 10 years.

One constant endures, said President Bob Knight during his annual campus address on Thursday: "In good times and in bad times, Clark College rises to the moment."

Knight ticked off impressive gains notched in the 2000s. They include new branches

opened at Washington State University Vancouver and the Columbia Tech Center, new e-learning and weekend degree programs, and massive boosts in student financial aid.

As for the 2010s?

Clark fully expects to open its proposed \$36 million STEM classroom building — that's for science, technology, engineering and math training — although state budget woes seem certain to delay completion until



Clark College activated a new reader board on Fort Vancouver Way following the annual campus address by President Bob Knight on Thursday.

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at least 2015, Knight said.

Not far behind will be another satellite campus to serve northern Clark County residents, Knight said. That project has made its way onto future state funding lists, while leaders have already scouted potential sites "somewhere between Ridgefield and Battle Ground," he said.

"We believe that building will be completed by the end of the

decade," Knight said.

Near-term, Washington's state budget troubles promise some grief, he warned.

Gov. Chris Gregoire's initial budget plan for 2010-11 would cut more than \$182 million in student financial aid, including about \$3.7 million due to Clark, Knight said. That's beside the risk that dollars will be stripped from worker retraining and work study programs.

The impacts would be felt across the community, Knight said. "Our most vulnerable students are at risk," he told the Gaiser Student Center crowd that included many local elect-

ed officials.

Financial aid has exploded, coincident with record Clark student enrollment that now tops 16,000 students.

Clark's financial aid office received 15,000 applications through December, Knight noted, a 63 percent jump from 2008. More than \$42 million in aid was awarded, up from \$25 million. Pell grants reached \$20 million, up from nearly \$9 million, while student loans hit \$14 million, up from almost \$8 million.

The third-year president urged state legislators to "rise to the moment" and work in

Olympia to preserve student programs and access.

Students already have paid their freight: Tuition rates jumped 7 percent in September and will again this year, Knight noted.

Knight gave kudos to Royce Pollard, Vancouver's ex-mayor and a staunch Clark advocate, and greeted new Mayor Tim Leavitt, a Clark graduate who has joined alumni and other campus support activities.

"We know that Tim will rise to the moment as he assumes his new responsibilities," he said.

Knight presented commemo-

rative coins to honor six Clark employees for dedicated and distinguished service.

They are Linda Calvert, Running Start program manager; Joy Horning, Social Sciences and Fine Arts administrative assistant; May Jolly, campus bookstore buyer; Luanne Lundberg, math and reading instructor; Becky Merritt, eligibility program director who has steered displaced homemaker support; and Lisa Nelson, a purchasing specialist.

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