

Focusing on the Future



President Robert K. Knight pauses for a moment in his 2014 State of the College address.

At 80 years old, Clark College still has plenty to learn—that was the message Clark College President Robert K. Knight conveyed in his annual State of the College address.

Knight took a moment to acknowledge that the college was in the midst of celebrating its 80th anniversary, but then said that, rather than focusing on the past, “I have been ... thinking about what steps we can continue to take to ensure that Clark College at 100 is the vibrant and important place that it is today.”

Knight said that he thought the college was “on the right path” in that respect, pointing to recent accomplishments such as a very successful accreditation visit by representatives of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, during which the commission acknowledged the improvements Clark has made in the area of shared governance.



Presidential Coin recipient and Automotive Technology professor Mike Godson, *right*, with Dick Hannah representative Gary Schuler. Godson and Schuler worked together to help create a partnership that allows aspiring automotive technicians to take classes at Clark College and work at

Dick Hannah simultaneously.

Other recent accomplishments Knight noted included:

- Receiving funding for a new building on the main campus dedicated to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), scheduled to break ground in summer 2014;
- Recent state approval for a \$35 million satellite location in northern Clark County at a site still to be determined;
- The success of the Clark College Foundation's "Ensuring a Bright Future" fundraising campaign, which is predicted to reach its goal of \$20 million in spring 2014;
- The introduction of a Bachelor of Applied Science degree in Dental Hygiene, the first bachelor's degree to be offered by the college;
- A statewide record in the number of online courses certified by Quality Matters;
- The opening of a Veterans Resource Center on the main campus to help the college's estimated 800 student veterans;
- The continued development of a new Strategic Plan for the years 2015-2020;
- Clark's leadership role in transitioning to ctcLink;
- New programs and opportunities for students to participate in cutting-edge learning in the automotive, aeronautics, and bioscience fields;
- National awards won by *Phoenix*, Clark's journal of arts and literature;
- Increased enrollment in Clark's Honors Program.

Knight acknowledged that Clark's enrollment has decreased for the first time in recent years. "We expected that," he said. "It's a good thing, because it means that people are finding jobs. We expect enrollment to continue to go down a little bit."



President Knight with Che'yna Shotwell. Shotwell, a junior at Mountain View High School, is part of the Penguin Promise partnership between Clark College and the Boys and Girls Clubs of Southwest Washington, which provides Clark College scholarships to those students who fulfill the program's stringent academic requirements. She is on track to become the first student to receive such a scholarship from the program, which was announced at the 2013 State of the College address.

Knight explained that administration and staff were already discussing how to manage the college's enrollment. "We have to determine what is the right size for Clark College," he said. Then he added, "As we continue to be the most over-enrolled community college in Washington, we haven't turned away students yet."

Knight stressed that any decisions about the college's future would need to be based on whether or not they helped students learn. "As long as I am president, we will never forget that the student comes first and is the only reason we have a job and the only reason we're here," he said.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

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