

theater production takes the stage

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Fuel costs plunge, the poor rejoice

Matt Ostergren

for Clackamas Print

Unprecedented fluctuations have occurred in crude oil prices these last few months. Gasoline prices peaked at more than \$4 a gallon this most recent summer – now prices are less than half that much.

This phenomenon has a variety of different reasons that account for it.

John Dean Darris, Clackamas' political science professor, Alan Shackleford, the college's economics professor, explain the reasons behind this sudden fluctuation.

The first reason is a function of supply and demand. As the global economy slows down, the demand for crude oil decreases. Because they have less money, people are traveling less, traveling by airplane less, buying fewer products that were shipped from overseas or across the country, and fewer products derived from crude oil like plastics. Losses and cut hours account for much of this decrease. People have less money to spend or their jobs may be in jeopardy, so they spend less money on frivolous things.

"In short," said Darris, "no one is buying." The second reason is less obvious than the first. Elections drive down prices. By lowering prices near elections, companies avoid voter backlash. People are less likely to vote for candidates who support green energy, conservation or high profit taxes.

Companies lower their prices temporarily to protect short-term profits, but this trend is not unique to oil companies. Industries in general will try to avoid negative attention around election time. When elections get near – prices drop.

A third reason is tied to the value of the dollar. The good news of a recessionary economy is as the dollar gets weaker, its value increases, thereby reducing the cost of oil. A recession shrinks the economy, people lose their jobs, and thus people value the dollar more. Even if the dollar gains value, corporations have fewer dollars to spend on goods.

There is more petroleum bang for your buck," Darris

explains. The fourth and final reason is tied to the first reason. Yes, the price of crude oil has decreased, but expectations are that it will not increase in the near future either. The recession is not expected to end soon. In fact, demand is expected to decrease.

The price of oil is affected now because like many commodities, oil is traded in the future. Investors are not going to sell oil they plan on selling in a few months if they



Lisa Sellars Clackamas Print

A 76 gas station on the corner of Beaver Creek and Molalla shows the lowest gas prices since March 2006. The dramatic drop in gas prices recently is due in part to low demand, elections and a decreased value of the dollar.

expect demand to decrease even more by then.

When prices shot up during the first part of the year, it was not necessarily a product of an increase of demand. Speculation about petroleum prices rising led investors to keep buying futures at higher prices. Because of the profitability of this speculation, investors expected prices to continue to grow at the unstable rate it was increasing.

"These complex social phenomena have scientific explanation for those who know and those who want to know. If you want to understand these things well, take an economics class or a political science class," said Darris.

Gas prices – and markets in general – were also discussed in the last two economy colloquiums on campus. Alan Shackleford expressed the opinion that the colloquiums were a good way for students who did not have an expertise in eco-

nomics to receive useful information regarding these trends. Having discussions helps with growth in the understanding of these things.

"Once we understand these things, we can talk about how to change things," said Shackleford.

These economic and political issues are interconnected. Most of these problems began with the burst of the mortgage bubble, which is considered by Shackleford a product of relaxed regulation. As industries and countries become more interdependent, trends of growth or loss become more universal. Like any community, what affects one affects another.

The social science department plans on continuing the discussion of fuel prices and the political-economic situation in general in future colloquiums. The plan is to have a continuing conversation over a continuing situation.

Partnership between CCC and OIT creates seamless path for degrees

John Hurlburt

Clackamas News Editor

Clackamas Community College's Harmony campus and Portland's Oregon Institute of Technology (OIT) have long been close neighbors, but it's not been quite able to come together.

That is, until Monday. Last Monday at 1 p.m., Clackamas' President, Joanne Truesdell, and OIT's President,

Chris Maples, signed papers finalizing a dual-enrollment agreement between the two schools.

The partnership between the two schools was a step towards streamlining the college process as a whole, according to Truesdell.

By enrolling in both schools, students can now plan out their entire path towards a Bachelor's degree without having to worry about where to transfer to or if the curriculum will change before they get there.

An added bonus to the agreement between the two schools is the reduction in bureaucracy.

"What we're trying to do is streamline the process," Registrar Tara Sprehe said. "There's a lot of red tape when you're trying to go to college."

In order to cut through some of this paper shuffling, certain things have been changed and information between the two schools will now be shared. One major change for the better is financial aid.

Before, students would have to file for financial aid at both schools – meaning if you wanted full time status at both schools, you would be required to take 12 credit hours at each school. This leaves stu-

dents with two options: either pay the extra money to be a part-time student at one or both colleges, or take 24 credits to be granted full-time status at both.

Abe Fouhy, a student studying at both schools, has had experience with trying to get financial aid while being enrolled at two schools.

"FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) doesn't really like it when you do that," Fouhy said. "This is cool because we can take the scholarships and financial aid and work it for both schools."

Aside from reducing paper-

work and easing the transition between schools, many present at the signing were also excited about what this partnership means for the community.

County Commissioner Lynn Peterson believes this signing will help in "making Clackamas a hub of renewable energy curriculum."

Peterson's belief falls in line with that of Truesdell.

"Knowledge currently doubles every four years, and (that rate) is expected to accelerate. We're currently preparing individuals for fields that didn't exist 15 years ago," said Truesdell.