

Economy brings high enrollment

By Christina Pearl
The Clackamas Print

You've spent the first few weeks of the term searching for parking spaces, squeezing through crowded hallways, and elbow-to-elbow in class, then it's no surprise to you that enrollment at Clackamas Community College is higher than

because the economy remains in a slump, more people are coming to school in an attempt to expand their career options. On campus, efforts are being made to adapt, beginning at the busy Registrar's Office.

Dealing with a budget reduction, the impact on the Registrar's Office has been significant," said Registrar Tara Sprehe.

Sprehe noted that implementation of the new call center on campus is making a positive difference.

This year, it was difficult to return phone calls in a timely manner. The call center helps ensure students are reaching a live person when they call instead of voice mail. (This) has impacted the Registrar's Office in a positive way, off-setting the increase in enrollment and "reductions."

According to Sprehe, it will be a few weeks before college officials can determine exact numbers for this term's average enrollment and student/teacher ratio.

Long lines are not something we strive for, but students do express their thanks for all that we do and we appreciate very much. We continue to try different models of service that will hopefully make the student experience what it can be," Sprehe said.

At least one department on campus has taken the increased enrollment in stride. For many years, the Automotive Department maintained an average enrollment of around 25 students in its finishing program and fewer than ten students in its repair program. When the department combined the two mentioned curriculums into a single two-year degree, it became very popular.

The most striking enrollment increase happened last fall, when the program's returning students waited longer than ever to register. The primary 16 spots filled up immediately for returning students, according to Automotive Programs Chair Dave Bradley. Six more spots were opened up and were subsequently snatched up by more new students. When 24 new students decided to register during the first week of the term, they were accommodated and the shop was suddenly filled with 46 students.

Throughout the last school year, the department's new enrollment heavily outweighed its attrition. Hence, by the end of the term the department had an unprecedented 51 students. Bradley kept into action to handle the increase.



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As a result of oversized classes, the automotive students are forced to work in tight conditions.

"We had to bring in additional part-time instructors so that we could keep the student-to-teacher ratio somewhere manageable," he said.

An early-morning visit to the Automotive Department reveals an energetic shop environment, where students are set to projects and part-time instructors Mark House and Russ Peterson provide guidance.

"When we first started with large numbers I was thinking, 'This isn't going to work,' and now it's not nearly as frightening as it was," House said.

The department employs a model of teaching where instructors spend each class period rotating between students, providing equal time for individual attention, according to Bradley.

They also make use of peer assistance within the group.

"A lot of beginning students are intimidated by how big of a group we have," said House. "But I'll take a fifth-term guy to help out a newer student and it just cracks them right out of their shells."

Ryan Johnson is a fourth-term automotive student who watched the growth take place. "My second term, there were twice the amount of people. From there on out it just stayed like that," said Johnson.

It seems the larger numbers are here to stay. Students may need to toughen up those elbows and arrive early to find that perfect parking spot. For at least this one department on campus, the increase has worked out well.

Senior citizens receive benefits from state legislature



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Violet Thomas, browses the fall catalogue. Because of her Senior Tuition Waiver she is able to return to college.

By Sarah Mitts
The Clackamas Print

You think you're too old to go to school, think again. Clackamas Community College has made it much easier for seniors over 65 to keep going through the Senior Tuition Waiver Program, and

to save money doing it.

In 2009, the Oregon Legislature passed a law that directed all community colleges to waive tuition for individuals 65 years or older so they can audit lower-division credit courses. Clackamas has launched the Senior Tuition Waiver program this term with the hopes of helping the com-

munity with educational opportunities while filling empty seats after full tuition-paying students have registered for classes.

"Because this waiver is only for courses that have seats available after full-tuition paying students are registered, individuals interested in this program must register (with a form) beginning week 3 of the term," said Tara Sprehe from the Registrar's Office.

Registration began for the program on Oct. 11 and few people have signed up thus far. There is no limit to the number of waivers the college will give out, but if seniors want to take advantage of this opportunity this semester, now is the time.

"Other community colleges are reporting very low number of participants as well," said Tracy Huddleston of Enrollment Services. "It became a law a while back and after that we had a lot of seniors coming in, but we weren't set up for it. Now we are. There's nothing in the news talking about it so it's not really on people's mind right now. It's one of those things that people have to know about."

While word of the program has yet to reach everyone, more seniors are keen to come back to school and are using community colleges as a stepping stone to a better life.

"Everyday over 50,000 brain cells die, and that's from the time we're born. If you

don't use it, you're going to lose it. I think learning is very important at any age," said Violet Thomas, a senior citizen from Estacada who came back to school and got her GED from Clackamas in 1990. "I was going through a divorce after 37 years to an abusive husband and I wanted to go to work and be on my own. So I went to school."

"I've always wanted to be a child counselor so I'm going to get my general studies degree at Clackamas and then transfer to a university," said Kathy Foley, Thomas's neighbor. Thomas inspired Foley to enroll at Clackamas through the Senior Tuition Waiver Program.

While the Senior Tuition Waiver Program won't get you a degree, it will give seniors an opportunity to sit in on general education classes, like art or

sociology, to touch up skills or decide if they want to go back to school for a better job.

"We have to get up the energy and go forward and inspire ourselves instead of depending on the younger generation to care for us," said Thomas.

Clackamas offers a variety of concessions to seniors who want to take classes in addition to this new program. Seniors can only register for the program during or after the third week of the term. Seniors who wish to attend prior to week three can still take advantage of the gold card program which waives 50 percent of the tuition for individuals 62 and older, according to Sprehe. To learn more about opportunities for seniors, visit the Enrollment Services Center in Roger Rook Hall or call 503-594-6100.

ELIGIBILITY:

- You must be 65 years or older and a resident of Oregon at the beginning of the term in which the course is offered.
- The course must be a lower-division collegiate credit course (100 or 200 level courses, e.g. ART 101, SPN 101, WR 227, etc.).
- Some courses have prior course requirements or prerequisites (e.g. WR 122 requires completion of WR 121 prior to registration). You must meet the prerequisites prior to enrollment.
- The course must be audited. Grades and credit will not be granted at any time for classes taken for audit. Audited classes will not satisfy graduation requirements, veteran's certification or most financial aid requirements.
- You must be registered for 8 or fewer credits each term.

More details of the program can be found on the Senior Tuition Waiver and Audit form at www.clackamas.edu/forms.