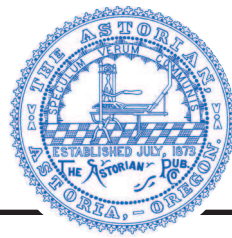


OPINION



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OUR VIEW

Community colleges deserve higher priority

With the possible exception of some high school graduates who can't wait to put a few hundred miles between themselves and their hometowns, everyone loves community colleges. They are the Marine Corps of higher education — useful, efficient, no-nonsense, mission-oriented.

And yet community colleges struggle to maintain an appropriate level of support and enthusiasm from political leaders — or sometimes even from local citizens who have the highest stake in their success. Perhaps because they lack intercollegiate sports teams and the other accoutrements of universities, community colleges too easily slip from appropriators' minds when budget time rolls around.

This confusion — loving local colleges while starving them of resources — is amply apparent this year.

As we recently reported, Clatsop Community College is planning for contingencies, including potential tuition increases, if state funding doesn't come in significantly higher than what Gov. Kate Brown has proposed.

Brown's proposed two-year budget recommends \$543 million for community colleges, a \$27 million cut from this cycle and the lowest funding level since the 2015-17 budget. A secondary proposal from the governor calls for some meaningful help for colleges, but is contingent on legislators agreeing to \$2 billion in additional taxes.

And while the state grapples



Clatsop Community College's 2018 commencement.

Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

with funding its community colleges at current levels, a separate plan is being floated to allow them to begin developing full-fledged bachelor's degree programs.

This would be a welcome avenue toward career advancement for many in Clatsop County, who otherwise find it difficult to balance jobs and families versus aspirations for four-year degrees. It would also help in Pacific County, where Clatsop Community College is the primary postsecondary choice for Ilwaco and Naselle high school grads.

In Washington state, the Spokesman-Review reported last week that lawmakers in session in Olympia are actively seeking ways to help defray the cost of college for low- to moderate-income students.

By next year, 70 percent of jobs in the state will require some type of postsecondary education, but

in 2016, only 44 percent of workers in Washington had received at least an associate degree, according to a report cited by the Spokane newspaper.

The shift in the past decade of tuition costs from state to student has meant students of modest means must spend a greater percentage of their income on a degree and are less likely to enroll, the report said.

To address this need, legislators are working to provide more money to the existing Promise Scholarships program. Last year, 22,600 state students qualified for this financial aid but didn't receive it, because funds ran out.

Gov. Jay Inslee is asking for \$103.3 million "to ensure all students at or below 70 percent of the state's median family income receive a scholarship," the Spokesman-Review reported.

In the Washington House, a pro-

COMMUNITY COLLEGES TOO EASILY SLIP FROM APPROPRIATORS' MINDS WHEN BUDGET TIME ROLLS AROUND.

posal would start ramping up free community and technical college for all low- to moderate-income students.

It is good to see leadership of the Pacific Northwest states grapple with how to support students and the community colleges upon which so many of them rely. It is less good to see such a scatter-gun approach, with too little sign of connections between goals and realistic long-term funding streams.

Speaking for our region's rural areas, the importance of community colleges can't be overstated. They are one of society's best investments. They provide a path to higher education for many who might otherwise find it difficult to build on a high school diploma. In a world that requires computer, math and language competency, an associate's degree can play a large role in personal success.

If our states truly care about bridging the urban-rural divide, a great place to start is guaranteeing appropriate levels of funding for community colleges and the students who attend them. This would help many more citizens than the largess showered on universities in the form of athletic coaches' salaries and other frills.

Water under the bridge



Compiled by Bob Duke

From the pages of Astoria's daily newspapers

10 years ago this week — 2009

If there's one thing Astoria has plenty of, it's historic buildings. Now there's a plan afoot to turn that valuable resource into a money-maker for the region by organizing a Historic Preservation Economic Cluster.

A historic preservation cluster would provide a framework for an interdependent relationship among property owners, developers, contractors, craftspeople, suppliers, merchants, educators, government agencies and tourism-related businesses throughout Clatsop County, said Rick Gardner, director of Clatsop Economic Development Resource (CEDR).

"If you say Napa Valley, people think wine," Gardner said. "We want Astoria to mean historic preservation."

The local housing market is showing signs of distress as the national housing crisis continues.

In the past year, home foreclosures in Clatsop County doubled while sales on the North Coast dropped by one-third.

Local real estate agents say with prices and interest rates falling, it's a buyer's market. But some buyers have been scared off by the economic recession, while others have struggled to secure home loans as banks rein in lending.

Even though the North Coast has a relatively stable housing market compared with the rest of the country, many suspect local home prices will fall further before the balance of buyers to sellers evens out.

Local businesses are tightening their belts and changing strategies to stay afloat as consumers trim spending.

They're reducing staff hours, switching inventory and cutting deals. And, for the most part, they're hanging on.

Several notable business have closed recently as the economy has slowed, including Cafe Uniontown and the Windsor House of Tea in Astoria, Panaderia Fiesta Bakery and Sound Waves Car Stereo in Warrenton and the Day Spa on Broadway and KB Toys in Seaside.



Movie poster from 1944.

50 years ago — 1969

After seeing the site first-hand, a group of state officials said the proposal for an earth-filled dam on the North Fork of the Klaskanine River is probably worth investigating.

Seven men from various state agencies, a private engineer and Larry Snyder, chairman of the Clatsop Water Resources Board, descended a steep hillside Friday to look at the site of the dam, which is being proposed to increase production at the State Fish Commission's Klaskanine Fish Hatchery.

A device to prevent valve parts from falling into an engine cylinder in case of breakage or damage to a valve spring has been patented by an Astorian man, Victor Erickson.

A description in the letter of patent calls the device a "valve safety cap securable over a valve circular spring retainer plant to prevent valve components from dropping down into engine cylinders in case of breakage or damage to the valve spring."

More than 1,500 people sat in a cold, miserable, drenching drizzle Sunday in Ocean Shores, Washington.

There was supposed to be a surf race, but the lousy tide didn't come in strong enough. There was supposed to be a crab race, but someone swiped the crabs.

"It was," said promoter Bob Ward, "the most successful February Fog Festival this community has ever had."

Now in its second year, the February Fog Festival was dreamed up by local resort owners who decided the only way to get a little action in the offseason is to be a little off.

What most people come to see is the annual North American Mid Winter Wading Championships, which sends goose-pimpled patrons dashing through waves up to seven feet high in the Pacific surf.

75 years ago — 1944

Planting of roadside strips on the Wolf Creek highway from Sunset camp to the Nehalem bridge will be undertaken immediately by the West Coast Lumbermen's Association as a contribution to the state of Oregon. This project, conceived several years ago by the officials of the lumber association, became assured Wednesday when the state highway commission gave its approval.

This section of the Wolf Creek highway is an ugly stretch of the great thoroughfare, traversing as it does an area that has been denuded of timber and which has become a waste of unsightly stumps, burned and fallen timber. It is to cover these scars with evergreens that the timbermen have decided to reforest strips between 500 and 600 feet in depth on each side of the highway.

The Westport and Wauna lumber companies Wednesday became the first mills in Clatsop County to fly the red, white and blue "Army-Navy E" pennant over their operations, after awards and praise were delivered to them at special ceremonies before the massed working personnel, their families and many big-name lumbermen from the Northwest.

The ceremony at Westport was held on the open dock from a bunting-draped platform and with several hundred people sitting on gigantic timbers hewn by the mill from the big sticks of Oregon forests. At Wauna, the program was presented in one of the big Wauna mill's sheds, where a shaft of sunlight knauna through one of the dormer windows, and played directly on a big "V" that marked the speakers' platform.

"All to the good" is the way shop keepers locally refer to the new blue and red ration tokens in circulation today. There is just a bit of confusion attached to the cashing of the K, L and M processed food stamps at various values, say merchants, but generally speaking the token system appears to be just what the situation requires.