

## **Breaking new ground for CCC**

*The college moves to expand its healthcare offerings on Harmony Road*

BY DAVID STROUP

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DAVID STROUP / CLACKAMAS REVIEW

Clackamas Community College took a big step closer to its goal of being a health-education leader last week when they broke ground for new facilities on Harmony Road – facilities positioned to be close to the county’s hospitals and clinics.

“For the future of this school it means this will be our first anchor at meeting a growing population here in this part of our county,” said CCC President Joanne Truesdell, “so that students don’t have to travel while they’re working, travel in rush hour, make sure they have access to additional educational opportunities here – rather than try to figure out how to get down I-205 in the traffic.”

Educating future nurses and other health-care professionals has been identified as a priority for the school

“Health care is our first facility, the cornerstone – and that was a function of the blue-ribbon committee and their input when we started surveying the community a few years ago – health care was the first need.

“It made sense – we were out-growing out facilities at the Oregon City campus, it made sense to be right here, strategically located, and they thought so too.”

### **Serving a hungry industry**

The new campus – the building now under construction and a second phase to come later – will be located by the existing Oregon Institute of Technology campus on Harmony Road, across the parking lot from the North Clackamas Aquatic Park. That puts it near Providence

Milwaukie Hospital and down the street from the expanding Kaiser Permanent complex on Sunnyside east of I-205.

Richard Smith of Providence Milwaukie said the health-care industry needs the additional trained professionals the expanded educational facility can turn out.

“When we look at the growing need of health care providers in this region, over the next ten to 20 years, if we look at the number of opportunities for training for this personnel, we realize that there is a significant gap in what is currently available, and this new health facility – this is one big step to meet that need, to train up personnel that will meet the number of folks that will be consuming health care in the future.”

Providence, he aid, is feeling that need as it tries to recruit.

“Absolutely,” Smith said, “we are, and we have been – as well as the health care industry at large has been feeling that. We need to work collaboratively. Industry can’t do this alone, the health care system can’t absorb this alone. Through a partnership we create a synergy that creates a win-win for everyone – it opens up the available number of slots for training folks, which is what Clackamas Community College has stepped up to the plate to provide.”

The need isn’t isolated to Clackamas County.

“This is not a regional issue,” Smith said, “this is a national issue. But here in this region – this is an unprecedented opportunity for this region, because we have so many people that are very interested in careers in health care. We have to figure out how we get them through the pipeline of training.”

Maureen Mitchell, dean of health sciences, at CCC, said the pressure is felt acutely on campus as well.

“We moved into a new facility on the main campus around Christmas 2004 – and we immediately outgrew it. We started a couple of new programs, and we hope with the new space we will be able to expand existing programs and start new ones.

“We have a blue-ribbon committee which is composed of hospital members, long-term care, other partners,” Mitchell said, “and we’re listening to their work-force needs, and hoping to respond to them.”

### **Need felt on campus**

Tim Lussier, president of the CCC student government, agreed.

“Talking to the students every week – talking to them every day – you really hear a lot about the need for the nursing field, the medical field. And we really have a great campus now that has a building for that – but this is the right area with the right partnerships literally down the street... so this is the right step to help students get that education.”

He said he hears about the need all the time:

“You hear it from the students... seven hundred qualified students apply for the nursing program, only 40 get in... and there’s so many other degrees students are trying to get – it

just makes sense for them to have their own building down here with all the hospitals and businesses right next door.”

North Clackamas School District Superintendent Ron Naso was also on hand for the groundbreaking, and he said the expanded health care programs made possible at the facility will mean a lot for students coming out of high school

“A facility like this serves us in two ways... we do have 11th and 12th graders in our health services program through the Sabin-Schellenberg Center, and we’re hoping that there’s going to be some sort of connection at some point... those youngsters would have the opportunity to move on to the community college and nursing programs and other health programs as part of the ‘two-plus-two’ program.

### **Working together**

“This is an exciting time for K-12,” Naso said, “as much as it is for the community college. We’re looking forward to the opportunities that it provides for our youngsters, and services those youngsters are ultimately going to provide to the community.”

The school district and the college have been working together to feed the need for more health professionals.

“There’s no connection in this particular facility – but we have been working with the college in what we call the ‘two-plus-two’ program, where juniors and seniors earn connected credits with the community college, and then move right into their programs when they graduate... this will be an extension of that.”

County Board of Commissioners Chair Martha Schrader said the new health-care campus on Harmony Road meets the county’s economic needs as well.

“This is absolutely fabulous,” Schrader said. “we really are thrilled that the work we started back in 2004 with the original blue-ribbon committee has come to fruition, and this is the result of that hard work – of Clackamas County identifying health care as an economic engine in the county.”

“We’re becoming a leader in this cluster and sector – we are the first county in the state working with our community college and other partners to legitimize health care as an economic engine. Nobody has done this before.”