

## OREGON LOCAL NEWS

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### Enrollment swells on opening day at Oregon's community colleges

By **Suzanne Pardington**, *The Oregonian*

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Bruce Ely/*The Oregonian*

*Portland Community College opened classes Monday and expects nearly 35,400 students this fall. Jane Zunkel teaches a writing course that is in high demand. Other community colleges in Oregon also face large enrollment increases. Classes are filling as fast as they open at community colleges this week as the recession pushes more students back to school.*

Portland and Mt. Hood community colleges started classes Monday with double-digit increases in enrollment, long waiting lists and a rush for financial aid. **Clackamas Community College** also is preparing for a surge of new students when classes open there next week.

Students who try to register this week will find many classes closed and state grant money depleted. But college leaders say they are trying to serve as many students as possible despite a nearly 10 percent drop in state funding.

"There are many people returning to school who realize when this economy turns around they will need to finish this degree to make them more competitive in the job market," said John Sygielski, president of Mt. Hood Community College.

Following a state and national trend, Portland Community College's fall head count is up 11 percent to 35,396 students, Mt. Hood is up 15 percent to 9,580 students, and Clackamas is up 3 percent to 6,047 students. And more of those students are taking classes full time this year, further increasing demand for classes.

Central Oregon Community College in Bend took the unusual step of closing fall admissions Sept. 3, more than two weeks before classes started. At that time, the campus had 7,500 names on waiting lists.

The biggest demand is for professional-technical programs such as health

care and welding and for general education classes such writing, math, science and speech.

Writing classes such as Jane Zunkel's Introduction to Expository Writing are full at Portland Community College's Cascade campus in North Portland. Last week, Zunkel had 27 students registered for the class and six on the waiting list.

On Monday, she expected more students to try to add the class, a gateway to higher level courses. She was prepared to turn them down.

"It's hard because you really want to give them a spot but that compromises the integrity of the class," she said.

Low class sizes are the hallmark of community colleges, she said.

"We all keep doing what we're doing because we love it, and we see the difference it makes in students' lives," she said. "But we're all sort of maxed out all the time."

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