

Welcome, Penguins!



Students were greeted with sunshine as they started a new academic year on September 21, 2015.

The parking lots were filled. The Bookstore was bustling. And the sunshine poured down as if to comfort those who were still mourning the end of their summers as they started the 2015 fall quarter at Clark College on Monday, September 21.



View of Gaiser Hall from the

new STEM Building, currently slated to open in fall 2016.

Returning students got to see how much progress had been made on the college's new Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) Building, which broke ground last fall and is slated to open in fall 2016. What had been mostly a collection of girders when students left in June has now grown into an imposing presence on Ft. Vancouver Way with walls and roof.

This will not be the only construction students will see on the main campus this year: Gaiser will undergo a remodel in preparation for a significantly restructured and modernized Culinary Arts program, and C-TRAN's Bus Rapid Transit Project is likely to also bring some minor construction along Ft. Vancouver Way.

While official numbers are not available until after the 10th day of class, the quarter began with 11,187 students enrolled, or 4 percent fewer students than the first day of the 2014 fall quarter. This decrease in enrollment is consistent with numbers throughout the state, as a strengthening economy has softened the enrollment spike seen during the recent recession. Oregon two-year colleges are also experiencing significant decreases in enrollment.

While enrollment declined overall, some specific segments saw increases. Running Start, which allows high school students to earn college credits while still in high school, saw its enrollment rise by 14 percent from its fall 2014 numbers to more than 2,200 students. Elearning (or online) courses grew this year by 5 percent, with more than 3,700 students taking advantage of the flexibility to take online classes at times and places that work for them. The college continued to see slow but steady growth in students of color, up 1 percent compared with fall 2014. Students of color now make up 31 percent of Clark's student body.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley