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## Lewis-Clark State College tallies record enrollment

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By David Johnson of the Tribune

### President says latest figures are in line with goals

An enrollment high-water mark has been reached at Lewis-Clark State College in Lewiston and even higher goals are set for the future, LCSC President Dene K. Thomas said Tuesday.

"Of course there's room for growth," Thomas said. "When I was a candidate for the presidency down here, I said that LCSC should be a school of 4,500 to 5,000. And we're growing into that."

For the first time in the school's history, enrollment surpassed 4,000, with a total of 4,200 students registering this fall, which equates to a full-time equivalency of more than 3,000 students, according to the traditional tally 10 days after the start of classes.

"We're getting there," Thomas said. "This is what we expected, but I'm always afraid to say that before it comes true."

Ten-day enrollment figures at the University of Idaho in Moscow and Washington State University in Pullman are expected to be available sometime this week.

LCSC's record enrollment also marked the fifth semester in a row the school set an attendance high.

"This was, in fact, in keeping with the applications and registrations that we had," Thomas said. "I just really don't like to say it until it comes to be. There was no big huge surprise at the end. The trend has been there since we started preregistration last April."

The upward enrollment trend really started shortly after Thomas took the helm in 2000. At that time, 2,702 students were enrolled. During her tenure, 1,498 more students have been added to the school's enrollment numbers.

"We have grown 55 percent since then," Thomas said. "I really do think now that an important piece of this is the confidence the students and their parents place in the college. That has continued to increase."

This year's record enrollment is a 6.6 percent increase over last year's total of 3,940 students. Over the past three years, according to LCSC records, enrollment has grown by 806 students, or 19.2 percent. What's more, the new enrollment figure represents a new high for freshmen coming directly from high school, freshmen overall, residents and minorities, according to LCSC records.

A total of 430 students claimed minority status this year, with 186 identifying themselves as native American. Both numbers are school records.

Thomas said the growth is even more welcome now that the college has expanded its classroom capacity. "We have the activity center, with the classrooms over there, that came on line in 2006. And now we have Sacajawea Hall that just came on this fall," she said.

The new classroom building is the home for the LCSC nursing and health sciences division, which recorded 139 new students, for a total enrollment of 615 students. The college's business division has 591 students, and 571 students are in the education division, according to school records.

"I think the economy being down is a piece of the (reason for) enrollment going up," Thomas said. "I think the professional degrees is another part of it." She said students attend LCSC knowing jobs are more likely to be available after graduating. That is in part, Thomas said, because the school boasts a high job placement rate for graduates.

"We're a very practical school," Thomas said. "We graduate nurses and med-techs, and teachers and social workers, and business people, accountants. And I don't want to forget all the diesel technicians and car repair people."

Enrollment at the branch in Coeur d'Alene also set a record at 396, a 9.4 percent increase over last year. The only thing appearing to go down at LCSC is average age of students. At 24.83 years, the number represents the youngest average in at least two decades.

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