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2009 Business Review & Forecast

College enrolment up

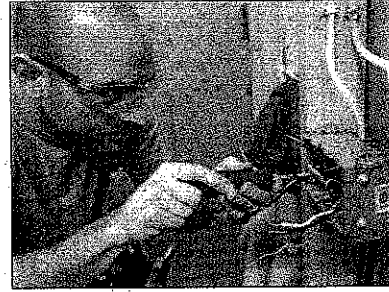
BY CARA BRADY

MORNING STAR STAFF

Okanagan College regional dean John Lent looks back on his second year as dean with pleasure.

"We've seen a lot of good changes. Since 2007, there has been a 26 per cent increase in enrolment and some renovations, some small things that made a big difference, but the place looks good. We've hired some great young professors so that's a good change for us all."

Some of the changes have been in programing with OC now offering business degrees and diplomas and the growth of health programing with certificate courses for home support resident care attendant, human service worker and practical nursing. In the trades, the aircraft maintenance engineering course is ongoing with welding, electrical, finish carpentry and plumbing rotating among the four valley campuses. Students in the residential construction program work in partnership with businesses and trade-



CORY BIALECKI/MORNING STAR

SIMON WIEBE is three weeks into a six month residential wiring course through Okanagan College.

people on community-based projects.

The diploma writing and publishing program will have its first graduating class this spring and the new arts and sciences two-year associate degree program is in its first year.

Continuing Studies is offering a variety of certificates which lead directly to employment, including educational assistant and nail technician.

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More people retraining

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There has been a 22 per cent increase in adult upgrading and more people are seeking certificates, diplomas and associate degrees. There are 750 students in academic programs, about 300 in Continuing Studies and more than 200 international students in a variety of short-and-longer-term programs. The Aboriginal Centre offers mentoring and encouragement for First Nations students.

"They say when times get tough, people turn to college for retraining and refining the skills they've got."

Lent, a former English professor, is hoping to see the innovative creative and performing arts classes with local artists run again.

"I really liked the feel of it and it was a lot of fun. We hope to offer it again in the fall and add drama and music," he said. "For me, this is a dream, considering my background in arts and literature. It's really exciting that all of this campus is becoming more and more of

a community We are a real community college with a spectrum of offerings. We are involved in the community by sponsoring the Nordic Ski Team and we may have a community garden here in the spring."

He recently took information about the writing programs and the Kalamalka Press to the Associated Writing Programs conference and book fair in Chicago.

In the longer term, the college is working on building student residences.

"We're trying to create an atmosphere here that will draw people from the community with things like international cafés, films, lectures and workshops. We want the community to claim the college and use it more."

It's the students who make the college.

"As an old teacher, I like to see people of all ages learning and one of the things I feel very proud of. Things are generally evolving and I'm happy about where things are going."