

STEM groundbreaking draws a happy crowd



Clark student Audreyana Foster; Dena Horton, representing U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell; Vancouver Mayor Tim Leavitt; Clark County Commissioner Edward Barnes; Lisa Gibert, president/CEO of Clark College Foundation; and Clark President Bob Knight shovel the ceremonial dirt at the STEM building groundbreaking.

A burst of rain accompanied Clark's Pep Band as they played Pharrell Williams' "Happy" before a crowd of about 60 people on Tuesday afternoon during Clark College's official groundbreaking of its science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) building.

In speaking about why STEM education is critical to the region, Clark College President Bob Knight was joined

by Vancouver Mayor Tim Leavitt; Dena Horton, representing U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell; and Clark student Audreyana Foster.

“When completed, this project will continue to help us do what we have done for over 80 years: train and educate those who will lead Vancouver and the region forward,” said Knight during the September 30 event. “At more than 70,000 square feet, the facility will be the largest single classroom building on campus. The final investment in Clark will exceed \$41 million, between state funds and those provided by Clark College Foundation for equipment.”

Leavitt spoke about the economic advantages of having citizens trained for highly skilled and family-wage jobs such as in the STEM field. Cantwell’s message outlined the state’s commitment to education and jobs growth and her excitement about watching the building evolve over the next 20 months of construction.

Foster, a mechanical engineering student who began her studies at Clark when she was a teenager through Clark’s Running Start program, said the college’s faculty have opened up a new world for her.



Clark College’s pep band played through the rain during the STEM Building groundbreaking.

“I have learned how things function in the world outside of

the classroom,” she said. “And though not all of the lessons have been enjoyable, Clark College’s STEM program has provided me a safe learning environment that has helped me to learn in spite of my mistakes.”

Knight, Leavitt, Horton, and Foster were then joined by Clark College Foundation President/CEO Lisa Gibert and Clark County Commissioner Edward Barnes to shovel the ceremonial dirt of the groundbreaking. The sun shone through the cloud breaks, and cheers erupted from the crowd. Knight thanked the guests for their continued belief in Clark College and for all that they do to enrich the Southwest Washington community.

Construction is underway at the Fort Vancouver Way site and is expected to be completed in February 2016. Currently, the building is slated to open by the summer of 2016, according to college officials.

A version of this article originally appeared on the Clark College Foundation website.