

The heroes' journeys



Clark College's 2014-2015 Exceptional Faculty Award recipients are, *clockwise from top left*, Steven Clark (biology), Alison Dolder (bakery), Michiyo Okuhara (Japanese), and Matthew Gallaher (English).

An interesting pattern emerged while interviewing the recipients of the 2014 -2015 Clark College Exceptional Faculty Awards: In each case, when the faculty member was asked how they came to teach at Clark, he or she would grin, look into the distance, and say something along the lines of, "Well, it's kind of a funny story..."

The details of each "funny story" varied: They meant to become zoologists, but wound up teaching baking. They meant to teach at a four-year university—or at a grade school—but wound up teaching at community college. They meant to teach English in Japan, but wound up teaching Japanese in the U.S. But no

matter how each journey began, it arrived at the same place: Somehow, their passion drew them to Clark College, and once they were here, they'd found their home. All four of these faculty members radiate a love of their subject matter and their work. Small wonder, then, that students responded by nominating them for this award, which was announced during the college's 2015 Commencement ceremony and officially presented during Opening Day activities on Sept. 14.

The Clark College Exceptional Faculty Awards are presented annually to full-time and part-time faculty members. This year the award recipients include two full-time tenured professors and two part-time adjunct instructors, whose detailed biographies can be accessed through the links below:

- Steven Clark: The naturalist
- Alison Dolder: The tough-but-caring technician
- Matthew Gallaher: The voice of encouragement
- Michiyo Okuhara: The cultural ambassador

The awards are made possible through an endowed trust fund established in 1993 by the Washington State Legislature and the Clark College Exceptional Faculty Endowment Fund. That fund provides recognition of exemplary work performance, positive impact on students, professional commitment, and other contributions to the college. Nominations can be submitted by Clark College students, faculty, classified employees, administrators, alumni, Board members, and Foundation directors.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley