

MESA Center opens



MESA Director Roman Lara Alvarado chats with MESA ambassadors Maisy Pantua Sibayan and Karina Hottinger in the new MESA Center. *Clark College/Susan Parrish*

Biology student Lemman Gurre sat at a high bistro-style table next to the wall of windows in the new MESA Center on the third floor of the STEM Building. From her third-floor vantage point, she could see the campus, a ribbon of the Columbia River, and Portland's hills. In the quiet study space, she took notes as she read from her laptop screen.

Since the MESA Center opened fall term, the space has been well used by students. Director of MESA Román Lara said students use the center to study, plug in their laptops to work, use the center's printer, check out textbooks from the lending library, or stop in for a snack and quiet moment between classes. The inner room offers large whiteboards and tables for students to study alone or to work on group

projects.

- In the reception area, MESA ambassadors, Maisy Pantua Sibayan and Karina Hottinger connect with students, welcome them to the space, and schedule students to use the space. Both are current Clark students pursuing STEM studies.
- In the bright lounge, comfortable upholstered furniture in chartreuse, orange, and aqua invites students to sit in the quiet space to work on their classwork, study, or take a break. Students also can grab a snack in the kitchenette which includes a microwave, toaster oven, refrigerator, coffee pot, and hot water for tea.

What is MESA?

MESA (Math, Engineering, Science Achievement) is a national program designed to increase the number of historically underrepresented populations to succeed in STEM fields. This includes African American, Native American, Latino/Hispanic, and Pacific Islander/Hawaiian and women community college students who transfer to universities and earn STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) bachelor's degrees.

At Clark, this includes a dedicated space for studying and creating community, as well as opportunities for mentorship, assistance with books and fees, conference participation, campus visits, and more.

Clark College began its MESA program during the 2018-19 academic year. The program can serve up to 100 students and currently serves more than 80 students. Between 20 and 30 students are very active in the program. Others use the basic services, such as the textbook lending library. Learn more about Clark's MESA program [here](#).

Campus and industry tours



During fall term, Lara took a group of second-year Clark students to Seattle to attend a transfer student preview event at the University of Washington. Students learned about UW's admission and application process, took a guided tour of the campus, and attended program-specific sessions, including a 3D printing demonstration. Some students had the opportunity to meet with academic advisors.

Lara is planning to take MESA students to tour the campuses of Portland State University and Washington State University Vancouver during winter term.

He also is planning industry tours for MESA students to visit local employers who hire STEM graduates. His wish list includes ABSCI, Boeing, Fred Hutch Cancer Center, and Oregon Museum of Science and Industry.

He also promotes opportunities for undergraduate internships and research opportunities to MESA students and is always on the lookout for new opportunities. MESA students will be eligible to apply for undergraduate research opportunities at

WSU Vancouver during the summer.



Clark MESA students visited the University of Washington campus in Fall 2023.

Eligibility for MESA:

- Belong to historically underrepresented populations in STEM, including Black/African American, Indigenous/Native American, Latino/Hispanic, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and women in STEM.
- Be a first-generation college student whose parents did not receive a bachelor's degree
- Intend to earn a bachelor's degree in a STEM major
- Be a citizen or resident of the U.S., DACA eligible or undocumented
- Come from an economically disadvantaged background
- Do not hold currently hold a bachelor's degree in any field

Services MESA provides:

- MESA Center in STEM Building Room 358
- Academic advising and transfer planning
- Academic excellence workshops
- Textbook lending library
- Internship, research, and scholarship opportunities
- University campus and industry visits
- Professional development workshops

About Washington MESA

The Washington MESA program is an educational pathway program administered by the University of Washington and established by the Washington State Legislature. Clark College is one of 12 community colleges in Washington that offers a MESA transfer prep program center for its students who plan to transfer to a four-year college to earn a bachelor's degree. [Learn more here.](#)