

# 2024 Employee Awards

Clark College employees gathered on September 16 to kick off the 2024-25 academic year during Opening Day festivities at O'Connell Sports Center. During the event, the following faculty and staff members were recognized. Congratulations to all the recipients! Read more about Opening Day: <https://news.clark.edu/2024/09/opening-day-2024/>

Exceptional Faculty Awards | Exceptional Classified Staff Awards | Exceptional Administrative-Exempt Award | Lora Whitfield Social Equity Award | Years of Service Awards

## Exceptional Faculty Award recipients



*Left to right:* Becky Engel, Halina Brant-Zawadzki, Tanya Diaz-Kozłowski, Sarah Blanchette, Catherine Johnston, and Sarah Luther

Clark College Exceptional Faculty Award is one of the highest honors that the college bestows. While anyone at the college

can nominate a faculty member for this award, most nominations come from students to recognize professors who truly made a difference in their lives.

## **Halina Brant-Zawadzki, Nursing**

Dr. Halina Brant-Zawadzki (Dr. B-Z) has taught Nursing at Clark College since January 2022. She has more than 18 years of experience in nursing education from various nursing schools in the Portland-Vancouver metro area, including being tenured faculty at the University of Portland's School of Nursing. She teaches in the classroom, in the acute care setting, and in the simulation lab.

Dr. Brant-Zawadzki holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from Lewis and Clark College, both a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and a Master of Science in Nursing from the University of Portland, and a Ph.D. in Nursing Science from the University of Washington. Her area of scholarship focuses on trauma-responsive education, stress management, and coping strategies in undergraduate nursing students.

*Her student nominator wrote: "Dr. Brant-Zawadzki is the definition of 'I'm here to help.' She was attentive to each student and made everyone feel valid, supported, and wanted. She takes every question into careful consideration and tries different approaches for different learning styles. Her lectures and notes had videos, readings, demonstrations, and more to make sure every learner was addressed in their style."*

## **Sarah Luther, Mathematics**

Sarah Luther earned her Bachelor of Arts in English and a minor in Mathematics and a Master of Arts in Teaching in Secondary Education from Lewis and Clark College. She earned her Master of Science in Mathematics from Texas A&M University. Luther previously was a middle-school math teacher

and a mathematics editor and textbook problem writer. She taught math at Umpqua Community College in Roseburg, Oregon before she started teaching at Clark College 11 years ago.

Luther serves on the college's Sigma Scholarship Committee and a tenure committee. She also is a member of Clark's Math Activities Committee that organizes events to give students opportunities to interact with math outside the classroom. These include origami events, game nights emphasizing strategy and logic, and an event exploring the Pythagorean Theorem.

*Her student nominator wrote:* "Math is not at all my strength and when I first began Math 105, I was absolutely terrified. These feelings quickly vanished when I met with Professor Luther and realized I didn't have to feel embarrassed to ask for help. She is not only very easy to understand, but also such an empathetic and understanding person who knows exactly how to work with students. It's clear that she truly cares about the success of her students and I'm so incredibly grateful for her help this quarter."

## **Sarah Blanchette, Human Services**

Sarah Blanchette received an Associate of Arts in Social Sciences with an emphasis in Social Services from College of the Redwoods, a community college in Eureka, California, and a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology at University of California Davis.

Next Sarah worked in social and human services leadership and administration for 25 years: 13 years at the Department of Social and Health Services and 7 years at Developmental Disabilities Administration. Working with youth, families, aging adults, and individuals with developmental disabilities led her to complete her master's degree in Social Work at Eastern Washington University, which was co-located at Clark at the time.

Her master's studies led Sarah to Clark College in 2019 to teach the next generation of human service workers through the BASHS and ACED programs.

Sarah said, "Teaching deepened my life. I have been inspired by my students' resilience and by their passion for making the world a better place."

*Her student nominator wrote:* "Sarah gives me hope for the future of my field. She teaches us alternative ways to view and use old ideas so we can apply conventional practices in a contemporary way that's more trauma informed, culturally adaptable, and influenced by acknowledgement of the unique strengths and needs of various populations. She's cultivating the generation of counselors that the world needs, and it's both inspiring and motivating as an aspiring researcher trying to change the way helpers help for the better."

## **Tanya Diaz-Kozłowski, Women's Studies**

Dr. Tanya Diaz-Kozłowski (she/her/ella) is a meditator, writer, and teacher who has taught Women's Studies courses at Clark College since Fall 2020. She centers queer and BIPOC narratives in all courses to explore knowledge, subjectivity, and power with students as co-partners in learning, encouraging students to forge connections rooted in awareness, accountability, and compassion rather than reactivity, stereotypes, and dis/mis information.

Her contributions at Clark include mentoring queer and BIPOC students, serving on multiple hiring committees, speaking at the Queer Student Luncheon, serving as chair of a tenure committee, serving on the Instructional Planning Committee, and co-creating community and connection gatherings for Clark College faculty and staff.

Dr. Diaz-Kozłowski holds a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from University of Wisconsin-Parkside, a Master of Science in

Higher Education from Eastern Illinois University, and a doctorate degree in Education Policy, Organization, and Leadership with a focus in social and cultural foundations from The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. In addition to her tenure at Clark, she has worked at the Uniting Pride Center of Champaign County and has taught at Illinois State University and The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

*Her student nominator wrote: "Race, gender, and sexuality all intersect with our identities. This is what we were taught in Women's Studies and how Dr. Diaz-Kozłowski treats us reflects exactly what we learn. They respect pronouns and queer individuals. Also, they advocate for BIPOC and queer authors, which respects students' identities as they may be relatable to us."*

## **Rebecca Engel, American Sign Language**

Rebecca Engel earned a Bachelor of Science in Sociology from Oregon State University and a Master of Education degree in Deaf Education from Western Oregon University. Before coming to Clark College, she taught middle school at Washington School for the Deaf. She has been teaching at Clark since 2006 and was granted tenure in 2020.

At Clark she teaches all levels of American Sign Language as well as Deaf Culture courses. She serves on Clark's Curriculum committee, is ASL Club advisor, and actively participates in Teaching and Learning Center communities.

She also serves on CTE advisory boards for Evergreen and Vancouver school districts. She also serves on the Language Access advisory committee for OSPI.

*Her student nominator wrote: "I am one of many students who have been touched by Becky's contagious light and electric energy. She has supported me in my two years as an ASL student*

at Clark College and has always encouraged me to chase my dreams of becoming an ASL interpreter. Her willingness to teach me and her excitement toward my journey is a huge part of the reason why I am here today. She has shared resources with me, given valuable feedback that has grown my ASL skills, and reminded me why my dreams matter.”

“As a Deaf woman, Becky understands the value of respecting differences and has encouraged others to do so as well. Many times, we have discussed the importance of Deaf Culture as well as taking the time to learn from other people’s experiences. Becky is always willing to help and wants all of her students to feel supported in her classroom. She makes me feel like I am important and so are my opinions.”

## **Catherine Johnston, English as a Second Language**

Volunteering with a literacy organization prompted Catherine Johnston to begin a career in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). Fifteen minutes into her initial tutoring session with a pre-literate speaker of Arabic, she decided to pursue a Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) at University of San Francisco. She previously earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English at DePaul University.

Since 1997, she has enjoyed teaching children and adults in language schools and universities, training teachers in a training certificate program, and writing and editing educational materials for several publishers. She has worked in educational settings in Hong Kong, Mexico, and various parts of the United States. She began teaching full time at Clark College in 2007.

Catherine said it is a privilege and a pleasure to have a role in the cultural adjustment process of her immigrant and refugee students, some of whom came here by choice and some of

whom came here by circumstance.

She said, "Whether students are accomplished professionals, new to formal education, or somewhere in between, I appreciate the opportunity to help my ESL learners realize their goals. Serving alongside my Transitional Studies staff and faculty colleagues is a joy."

*Her student nominator wrote:* "In the realm of education, there are teachers who simply impart knowledge, and then there are those rare individuals who leave an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of their students. Catherine Johnston, without a doubt, falls into the latter category. As an older student representing our diverse class, she is the best teacher I have encountered who helped me to believe in myself and have the courage to start a new life here in the United States, where English is not my first language."

## **Exceptional      Classified      Staff Awards**





Left to right: Terry Haye and Andra Spencer.

## Andra Spencer, Office of Diversity Equity & Inclusion

*Her nominator wrote:* “Andra has been a part of ODEI for a little over a year, and the positive impact of her work and dedication were immediately felt. Andra’s passion for equity and education is contagious. She dove into creating a PPI training on recognizing and disrupting antisemitism this summer and introduced many to a body of knowledge previously undiscussed at the college.”

## Teresa Haye, Bachelor of Applied Science Teacher Education (BASTE)

*Her nominator wrote:* “Terry has been essential to the success of this program, which grew from 5 students in the first year to 20 students in the second year. Her passion for student success, removing barriers, and prioritizing tasks that allow



for those dynamics are all part of her superpowers.”

## Exceptional Administrative-Exempt Award



### Monica Knowles, Bookstore

*Her nominator wrote:* “They are a productive leader; their work performance is exemplary. This is due partly to the fact that they have created well thought out procedures for the operation of the Bookstore. More importantly, they make sure that team members understand the importance of their roles in the big picture and provide the proper training for team members to perform their roles well. They foster an encouraging environment in which staff members want to collaborate and give their best for the Bookstore.”

# Lora Whitfield Social Equity Award



## Ciera Jones, Athletics

Lora Whitfield was an Early Childhood Education professor at Clark College who cared deeply about this community. She was committed to the success of her fellow employees and the students she served. As a tenured professor, she promoted equity and inclusion, creating a culture of community for all.

Clark's Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion reviews the nominations for this award and makes a recommendation based on a Clark employee's demonstrated and sustained commitment to advancing equity. The recipient receives \$1,000 and a plaque in honor of Lora Whitfield.

*Her student nominator wrote: "Coach Ciera preaches equity and opportunity—and she stands by it. From allowing members onto her team who lack a background in the sport due to systemic*

failures, to promoting mental health resources and seeking ways to give back to the community, Ciera acts on her beliefs. She continuously goes above and beyond to ensure her team is involved on the field, in the school, and in the world around them. She is a shining example of leadership.”

“Coach Ciera demonstrates her leadership on the field, and in her office. When you speak with her, you can sense her respect for others. As a Deaf player on her team, I never felt lesser or othered by her. I was given numerous opportunities to grow in the sport, challenge my own obstacles, and better my mind and body. Her leadership instilled confidence in me that I carry to the classroom, and Ciera has reached out to me about partnering with the ASL Club to provide softball camps to the local Deaf community, furthering this inclusion and equity.”

## Years of Service Awards

Brad Avakian, vice president of Human Resources, presented the years of service awards to employees with 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 years of service. Thanks to an anonymous donor through the Foundation, all years of service awards also come with monetary compensation based on the number of years served.

### 5 years

- *Human Resources:* Alicia Dingivan
- *Instruction:* Aaron Ahn, Andrea Belleisl, Sandra Bennett, Opinderjit Bhella, Sarah Blanchette, Chris Cerone, Kristin Christophersen, Joanne Costello, Kymber Croft-Miller, Jennifer Denrow, Cassia Gammill, Hernan Garzon, Katherine Goforth, Jesse Kysar, Nicholas Luisi, Erin Lynch, Olga Lyubar, Kathryn Matsuura, Stacie Murdoch, Kenneth Murr, Valenti Pischanskaya- Cayanan, Brian Shannon, Richa Sharma, Tabitha Stokes, Christopher Thompson, Christina Wallace
- *Operations:* Courtney Braddock, Laurie Mitchell, Darcie

Daniel

- *Student Affairs:* Michael Aguirre, Kelsey Gramm, Amanda Mabrey
- *Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion:* Alyssa Montminy
- *Foundation:* Andy Palmquist, Angela Torretta

## 10 YEARS

- *Instruction:* Christopher Chaffin, Lindsay Christopher, Amy Ellis, Jay Fancher, Caron Ford, Jaron Gardiner, Rebecca Herman, Alec Josephson, Sergey Kachenkov, Darcy Kennedy, Manda Levie, Donald Ludwig, Brian McVay, James Powers, Cathy Reynolds, Jeffrey Snyder, Aubrey Tobias, Kurtis Trimbo, Michelle Vincent, Tiffani Young, Shelly Williams
- *Operations:* Meghan Moss, Stacy Watne
- *Student Affairs:* Marianne Luther, Patricia Marley, Kandice Ripplinger, Joanne Vaughn

## 15 YEARS

- *Instruction:* Linda Appert, William Athens, Jack Bohl, Loni Bramson, Amanda Brown, Erin Burrows, Amanda Crochet, Alison Dolder, Wendy Edgar, Nicole Ekle, Rebecca Engel, Heidi Fay, Cynthia Foreman, Michael Guerra, Marilyn Hale, Shanda Haluapo, John Jarvie, James Jensen, Divya Kashyap, Donna Marshall, Angelica Quinn, Julie Saiturn, Stephen Shepherd, Erin Staples
- *Operations:* Kay Martinez
- *Student Affairs:* Cindy Aplin, Margaret Estes



## 20 YEARS

- *Instruction:* David Caldwell, Isaac Erskine, Gothard Grey, Izad Khormaei, John Kuhn, Gayle Lee, Kanchan Mathur, Christopher Milner, John Mitchel, April Nixon



Thao Schmidt and Dr. Edwards.



Mark Bolke, Jennifer Dean, Sarah Gallow and Dr. Edwards.



Sabra Sand, Monica Knowles, Billie Garner, and a poster of Damon Grady.





Shirley Schwartz and Dr. Edwards



Gail Robinson, Don Gonser, Judy Emenegger, Kayoko Barnhill, Kristine Barker, and Aaron Bingham.





Mike Arnold and Dr. Edwards



Lisa Hasart and Dr. Edwards

## 25 YEARS

- *Human Resources:* Thao Schmidt
- *Instruction:* Mark Bolke, Ray Cooper, Jennifer Dean, Sara Gallow, Kathleen Perillo
- *Operations:* Billie Garner, Damon Grady, Monica Knowles, Sabra Sand
- *Foundation:* Shirley Schwartz

## 30 YEARS

- *Instruction:* Kristine Barker, Kayoko Barnhill, Aaron Bingham, Judy Emenegger, Donald Gonser, Travis Kibota, Gail Robinson
- *Student Affairs:* Kimberly Bower
- *Foundation:* Karen Hagen

## 35 YEARS

- *Instruction:* Mike Arnold
- *Operations:* Lisa Hasart

*Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley*

More photos from Opening Day can be found on Flickr:  
<https://flic.kr/s/aHBqjBHKt8>