

Building Community the Penguin Way



Calen Ouellette, CEO of the Clark College Foundation, kicked off his Penguin Talk, “Build, Strengthen, and Sustain Community – Together,” by comparing a community with a true Clark College metaphor: Penguins!

“Penguins thrive because of community,” Calen said. “And just like them, we need each other to weather challenges, raise the next generation, and find our way through noise and uncertainty.”

The second installment of this year’s Penguin Talks: Clark College Lunch & Learn series, Calen’s presentation invited the audience to reflect on the idea of community and what it truly means – specifically who supports them, challenges them, and

makes space for them to fully be themselves.

To lead by example, Calen encouraged attendees to start building community on the spot by introducing themselves to the people sitting nearby. Friends and strangers alike reached across the aisles, sparking conversations and making new connections.

Calen then walked the audience through the three pillars that hold up every strong community: **learning**, **connection**, and **leadership**. He wove together inspirational quotes and personal stories that brought each pillar to life, including one brief but meaningful conversation with Al Roker that shaped his view on leadership.

For those who appreciate hard data, Calen also shared compelling statistics underscoring the benefits and value of strong communities. From student success and economic strength to better mental and physical health, the numbers made one takeaway clear: **community matters**.

He closed with a challenge. Distributing notecards and pens, Calen asked everyone to write down one small action they could take in the coming weeks to build community. Some read their answers aloud –like sharing fresh flowers from their gardens or bringing treats to their neighbors. Calen then left everyone with one final call to action:

“Let’s go do something BOLD.”



Learn More

Penguin Talks: Clark College Lunch & Learn is a free, three-week series that invites the public and college community to explore impactful local topics and engage with inspiring speakers. The final session, *The Role and Future of Community Colleges* with Clark College President Dr. Karin Edwards, will be on June 5. Register [here](#).

Penguin Talks will return for another series in October 2025.