

A beautiful birthday



Art students Matt Harmon and John Mangan, with assistance from Clark College President Bob Knight, unveil a new mural at the 25th anniversary of Cannell Library. *Photo: Clark College/Nick Bremer-Korb*

Normally, you wouldn't hold a birthday party at a library. But when you're celebrating the "birth" of a library itself—well, bring on the sweets and decorations! Fans of Cannell Library gathered for a festive celebration of the landmark building on September 29, a quarter-century after the library first opened its doors to Clark students and the public.

The event began with greetings from Clark College President Bob Knight and Dean of Clark Libraries & Academic Success Services Michelle Bagley. Knight commended the library, calling it a "wonderful learning environment for our students."

Bagley noted that Cannell, like libraries around the world, has had to make many changes over the past 25 years to adapt to evolving technology. Primarily print collections are now housed digitally; the library loans out netbooks and phone chargers along with books and DVDs; and the building is devoting more of its square footage to small study rooms and collaborative spaces as students come to the library for more than just reading.



All three of Cannell Library's directors—former director Lynn Chmelir, current Dean of Clark Libraries and Academic Success Services Michelle Bagley, and former director Leonor Ingraham-Swets—were on hand to celebrate the building's 25th anniversary.

Photo: Bob Hughes

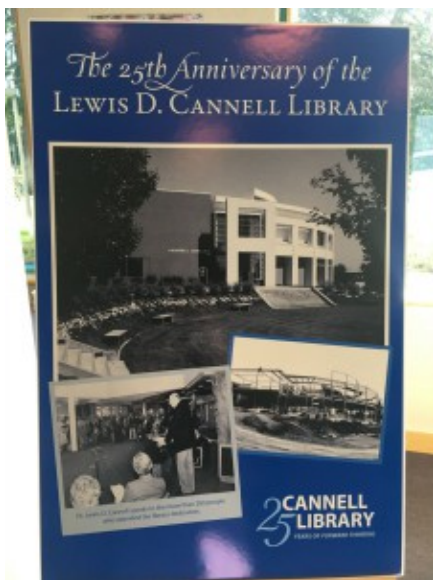
"The changes this library has seen over the last 25 years are really amazing," Bagley said. "We have a great team here. This is a group that is continually thinking forward. They are innovative, they initiate change, and they are creative. I'm excited to see what they will do in the next 25 years."

As befitting a birthday party, there was even a gift to

unwrap: a new mural created by members of the Clark College Art Club that graces the library's entrance. The project began during spring quarter, when members of the Art Club, who had been looking for a service project, offered to create a mural to fill a space left blank after an artwork that had been on loan to the library was removed. Members submitted design proposals; that of student Matt Harmon was chosen.

"The title I suggest for this work is 'Nature and Change,' but I want everyone to come up with their own interpretation of this," Harmon said before unveiling the mural with President Knight and fellow Art Club member John Mangan, who helped organize the project.

Later, Harmon said that working on the project helped validate his choice to attend Clark. "The main reason I came to Clark was to become a part of an art scene," said the 32-year-old, who expects to earn his Associate of Fine Arts in spring 2016. "For the longest time I didn't want to go to school."



Posters and displays celebrated Cannell Library's past and future at the building's 25th anniversary

celebration.

Mangan, meanwhile, originally came to Clark in 2013 to pursue his love of painting after retiring from his 37-year tenure as a medical photographer for the Department of Veterans Affairs. In fact, Clark played into his choice to settle in Vancouver after retirement. “Clark College is one of the top community colleges in Washington, and it’s got a really good art department,” he explained. “I frankly didn’t expect to be in school this long, but I really enjoy it and there’s always another class to take.”

Opened in 1990, Cannell Library is the seventh library location in the college’s 82-year history; previously, the library had spent many years in the space now occupied by the Clark College Bookstore in Gaiser Hall. With its curving white exterior overseeing the Chime Tower, the building has become an iconic part of the college’s main campus. It houses a computer lab, numerous study rooms, and access to more than 3 million volumes through its Summit interlibrary loan system. It is named after Dr. Lewis D. Cannell, who served as Clark’s chief academic officer from 1935 until 1970. Dean Cannell was always a strong advocate for Clark’s library, saying, “A book is a wonderful invention, as basic as the wheel. One doesn’t have to plug a book in, one doesn’t have to thaw it out; one simply opens it and another human being speaks to you.”

Learn as you lunch



Biology professor Steven Clark

Clark College is inviting the public to come back to school for a series of free seminars that explore the lighter side of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM). New this academic year, the Clark College STEM Seminar Series launches on Friday, October 16, at noon in Anna Pechanec Hall room 201 with “Rockin’ Out with Rock Rabbits.”

This seminar covers research done by biology professor Steven Clark on pika, tiny rabbit-like creatures who normally live in high elevations. Prof. Clark will discuss what he’s discovered about an unusual population of these creatures living in the Columbia River Gorge whose survival may hold keys to understanding how our environment can adapt to global climate change. Expect Prof. Clark, who recently received an Exceptional Faculty Award, to share photos and insights in an exciting, high-energy presentation geared toward anyone with an interest in science—no Ph.D. required!

Other fall quarter events in this series include:

- **The Science Behind Sci-Fi** with Prof. Joe Pitkin, Oct. 30
- **Handicapping Horse Races** with instructor Robert Weston, Nov. 13
- **Breaking the Cycle of Abuse** with Prof. Mika Maruyama, Dec. 4

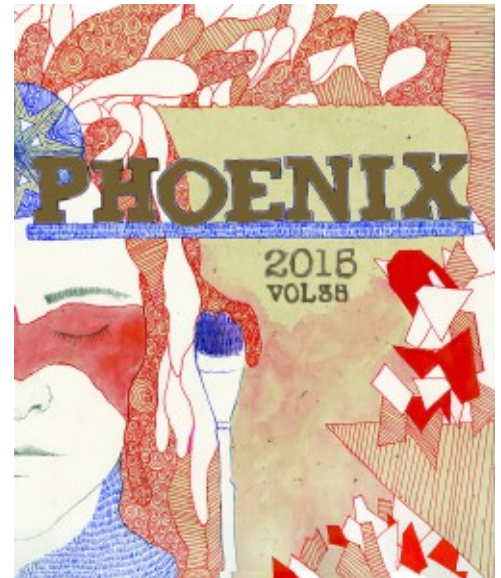
All events are held on Fridays from noon to 1 p.m. in APH room 201. All are free and open to the public. Light snacks will be

available and guests are welcome to bring their own lunches with them.

“Clark College has long been a center for STEM learning in this region,” said Clark College STEM Coordinator Erin Harwood, who helped organize the seminar series. “We already do lots of outreach to encourage interest in STEM among our community’s young people through our annual Science Olympiad and other events. This is a way to show adults as well that learning about STEM can be lots of fun. We’re hoping people start looking forward to these seminars as a great way to spend their Friday lunch break learning something new.”

Clark College is located at 1933 Fort Vancouver Way, Vancouver. Driving directions and parking maps are available at www.clark.edu/maps. Anyone needing accommodation due to a disability in order to fully participate in this event should contact Clark College’s Disability Support Services Office at (360) 992-2314 or (360) 991-0901 (VP), or visit Penguin Union Building room 013, as soon as possible.

The Best in the West



The theme of the 2015 *Phoenix* was “the artist’s sketchbook.”

The 2015 issue of *Phoenix*, Clark College’s student-run arts and literary journal, was recently awarded first place in the Community College Humanities Association (CCHA) Literary Magazine Competition for the Pacific-Western Division.

“This is a first for us,” said Clark English professor and *Phoenix* faculty advisor Elizabeth Donley. “In 2013, we placed third as a magazine in the same division, and were delighted to do so. In the past, *Phoenix* has regularly been honored for the art and design of the magazine more than anything else. But the CCHA competition really focuses on the literary aspects of the journal. In many ways, this is the first significant award that honors the literary components of *Phoenix*.”

Several individual Clark students received recognition for their entries in *Phoenix* as well:

- David Powers, second place in Short Stories for “Gouge Away”
- W.R. Soasey, third place in Creative Nonfiction for “Not the Favorite”
- Trenelle Doyle, second place in Artwork for “The

Perception Project”

- Matthew Harmon, third place in Artwork for “Empirical Being”
- Alan Logston, first place in Song for “Shades of Steel”
- Jeffrey Points, first place in Performance for “Project Spielberg”

The CCHA’s Pacific-Western Division includes community colleges in California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, and Wyoming.

Over the course of its 34-year history, Phoenix has won many regional and national awards. Many students who work on it go on to pursue careers in writing or the arts. Jennie Avens, a former Phoenix editor who graduated from Clark with her Associate of Fine Arts in spring 2015, said working on the journal helped prepare her for a position as volunteer director for a nonprofit serving budding artists. “Working on Phoenix was an amazing experience that has opened me up to other career possibilities and taught me an abundance of things I use in my life as an artist,” she said.

Phoenix is available in an online format at clarkphoenix.com.

**England appointed to
commission**



Dolly England

Clark College is pleased to announce that Dolly England, Diversity Outreach Manager, was recently appointed to the Washington State Commission on African American Affairs by Gov. Jay Inslee. As a commissioner for Southwest Washington, England will help shape policy and understanding regarding African-Americans in Washington State.

“Dolly England’s appointment to this important commission is a wonderful example of the important roles Clark College employees play in serving our community,” said Clark College President Robert K. Knight. “I am sure she will bring a wealth of insight and energy to the commission, just as she has done here at Clark.”

England, who has more than 15 years of experience working in community health and is the former vice president of the Vancouver NAACP, joined Clark College in January to help guide the college’s efforts to attract and retain diverse employees. Creating the Diversity Outreach Manager position is just one step in Clark’s effort to ensure the college continues to attract the best and brightest employee candidates. As part of this role, England is leading several efforts to expand and modernize the college’s outreach to potential new candidates. Some highlights of these new outreach efforts include:

- Members of the Clark’s Human Resources staff have begun attending regional community events and career

fairs—totaling more than 15 by the end of 2015.

- Human Resources staff will attend national career fairs during the key faculty recruitment period of November – January.
- The college has recently contracted with social recruitment vendor CareerArc to strategically expand its job postings into the realm of social media.
- The college has set an ambitious new goal of ensuring the candidate pool for each new job opening is at least 25 percent diverse, a description which includes race, color, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, creed, and veteran status.
- Clark College is a participant in the newly formed Southwest Washington Community Human Resources Group, which was developed by local employers to share and develop strategies to diversify recruitment both within their respective organizations and in the region as a whole.

“This is an exciting time for Clark College,” says England. “By expanding our reach and using some of the same tools Fortune 500 companies use to recruit the best and brightest candidates from across the country, we can ensure that Clark is building a workforce that will maintain its high reputation for decades to come.”

Clark College employs 1,600 employees. As a nonprofit Washington State institution, Clark College offers faculty and staff the opportunity to serve the community by guiding individuals to achieve their educational and professional goals. The college also offers many attractive benefits for potential employees, including its location in the heart of the Pacific Northwest; its beautiful, 101-acre campus; access to discounted classes; fitness center membership; on-site child care; ample opportunities for professional development; high-quality teaching facilities; and teaching-focused

faculty.

Photo: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

Meet the Coaches



With their low tuition rates and open-door enrollment policies, community colleges have long been a way for students of all socioeconomic backgrounds to pursue higher education and career advancement. However, students experiencing poverty often face challenges that go beyond paying for school. Financial hardship can turn anything from transportation to Internet access into a potential obstacle that could derail a student's plans.

That's why Clark College recently hired four new Resource Coaches to help students remain successful and supported all the way through their educational journey. The coaches were hired through a Working Families Success Network grant announced earlier this year, with supplementation from a grant from the Community Foundation of Southwest Washington, and are part of a collegewide effort to improve Clark's support and understanding of students in poverty.

"We want these coaches to be a resource not just for our students, but for our employees as well," said Associate Director of Workforce Education Services Armetta Burney. "Our hope is that, when staff or faculty encounter a student who seems to be overwhelmed by poverty-related challenges, they'll know that they can refer the student to one of our coaches for help."

According to most-recent data, almost half of Clark's students are low-income, and almost three-quarters of them are first-generation students. These students may lack stable housing or a quiet place to study. They may have difficulty affording basic school supplies, or child care, or transportation to and from school. Additionally, college can feel very lonely for these students. Because they're the first to attend college, they may not feel like they can turn to their family or friends for support or advice; meanwhile, they may feel alienated from classmates and faculty who don't understand the unique challenges they face.

These four new Resource Coaches are meant to change that dynamic. Now, when a student is making the transition from basic education courses to credit-bearing college ones, they'll have support from a Transitional Studies Coach during the process. When they're struggling to afford housing or food, the Workforce Education Services Coach can help them apply for public benefits and connect with community organizations. If college becomes overwhelming and their grades begin to slip, the Retention and Career Coach can help

them get back on track. And if they find their finances stretched thin, the Financial Literacy Coach can help them set up a budget and figure out strategies to make the most out of their financial resources.

While many of these services have been available at the college in different forms, the coaches add a personal relationship that can help keep at-risk students from slipping through the cracks.

“We almost never talk to a student just once,” explains Transitional Studies Coach Nicole Hopkins. “After we meet with a student, we call them back. And I will call them again and again if I have to: ‘Hey, how are you doing? Are you working on that plan we figured out for you?’ I am happy to walk students across the street to someone’s office if I think they need more help after our meeting.”

Additionally, the Resource Coaches serve as advocates to the rest of the college, sharing their students’ perspectives and working to make Clark a more inclusive environment. They offer workshops to Clark faculty and staff on how to communicate with students experiencing poverty, including one held during the college’s first-ever Teaching and Learning Days in August. The additional grant from the Community Foundation of Southwest Washington funds the Financial Literacy Coach’s work teaching workshops on financial resources and skills to students in order to help break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

“We want to help remove the stigma and misperceptions about poverty, both here at Clark and within our broader community,” says Director of Career Services Edie Blakley. “We see it as part of the college’s role as a learning institution.”

Meet the Coaches



Nicole, Transitional Studies Coach

Nicole works with students enrolled in Clark's Transitional Studies program—which includes English as a Second Language, Adult High School Diploma, and GED Preparation—as they transfer into credit-bearing courses at the college. When students come in to meet her, she helps them assess which resources they have, and which they lack, to succeed at Clark. She discusses their personal and educational goals and helps them identify potential barriers, connecting them to resources that might help diminish those barriers. Often she guides them through options like I-BEST and Learning Communities that could help them enter college successfully. And she helps them with college logistics like testing and registration.

Nicole calls her job “exciting and inspiring,” adding, “each one of us has our own story, and it is my privilege to be a part of someone's story. I get the opportunity to help students move past the barriers on their journey toward success and the best part is, I get to celebrate with them as they reach each goal.”

Contact: TBG 209; M-F 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.; nhopkins@clark.edu



Angelica, Workforce Education Services Coach

Angelica works primarily with students enrolled in Workforce Education programs, which help low-income and unemployed individuals earn vocational/technical degrees and certificates. She helps guide these students through college processes, from applying for financial aid to setting up their student email. With years of experience working with people experiencing poverty, she can help connect students to support services both inside and outside the college so they can focus on their education.

“My position excites me because I am able to provide information to students about resources that they may not have been aware of,” Angelica says. “I love to see students grow and develop into professionals as they complete their degrees at Clark. I have been able to build lasting relationships with students that go beyond degree attainment.”

Contact: GHL 128; T 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., W 9 a.m. – 2 p.m., Th 9 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.; WESCoach@clark.edu



Craig, Financial Literacy Coach

Attending college brings with it a whole slew of financial challenges. For a person who's used to living paycheck to paycheck, receiving a quarter's worth of financial aid at one time can be difficult to manage. Books, fees, and equipment can cost hundreds of dollars. Craig's job is to help students manage their budgets and avoid common pitfalls. He helps them check their credit scores and shop for the best bank or credit card to fit their needs. He works with them to develop plans to work through any debt or financial challenges they currently have, as well as long-term plans to help them create a solid financial foundation from which to build. Additionally, Craig regularly holds workshops on financial literacy through the Career Center and the Library.

"I enjoy helping students understand how to make money work for them, thereby bringing them closer to attaining their dreams," he says.

Contact: PUB 002; M-F 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.; cebersole@clark.edu



Alex, Retention & Career Coach

Most students come to Alex for one of two reasons: Either they're not sure where they want to go, or they've hit a stumbling block on the road to get there. Alex helps students explore careers and academic fields that fit their skills and interests, and then create a plan to reach their chosen goal. Additionally, she helps students whose grades have triggered an Academic Early Warning, helping them take the steps they need to get their grades back on track without jeopardizing their financial aid. She takes a holistic look at their lives, helping connect them with services that can help them with not just their academic challenges but their personal ones as well.

"I think being a former Clark student myself helps me understand what these students are going through," says Alex, who earned her associate degree in 2009 before transferring to Portland State University for her bachelor's. "What excites me about this position is the opportunity to support students in accessing and using relevant campus and community resources, help prioritize their success and set strong, personalized goals, and ultimately tie these skills to their future career goals."

*Contact: HSC 124; T & W 9 a.m. – 4 p.m., Th 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.;
amartin@clark.edu*

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

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

Exceptional Faculty Award spotlight: The cultural ambassador



Professor Michiyo Okuhara helps members of the Japanese Club teach children in Clark's Child & Family Studies program about kimono in advance of the 2014 Sakura Festival.

Professor Michiyo Okuhara is well aware that students who enroll in her Japanese courses probably have a limited understanding of her home country's culture.

"They see it in pop culture—*anime*, *manga*, Hello Kitty—or sometimes traditional things like samurai," she says. "In

class we don't focus on animation or comic books. We try to inspire them to learn the language, but also a more complete sense of Japanese culture."

Ironically, for someone who now teaches Japanese, Okuhara originally came to the United States to learn English. "I studied English in Japan, but I wanted to use it and live it," she explains. She earned her master's degree at Portland State University, also getting a certificate to teach Japanese as a foreign language from that institution, and in 1999 began teaching at Clark.

"At the time, the program was very small," she remembers. "I had four classes a year, just Japanese 101 to 103."

Today, thanks largely to Okuhara's efforts, Clark offers two years of Japanese study. The college's Japanese Club, which Okuhara helped found, is a vibrant and visible presence on the main campus. Okuhara has also been a key organizer of the college's annual Sakura Festival, and has helped incorporate children from the college's Child and Family Studies (CFS) program into the event—something she started after her own son, Anthony, graduated from the program's daycare. (Okuhara's daughter, Sakura, also has a Clark connection, having earned her associate here before transferring to Western Washington University.)



Okuhara, who received tenure in 2013, says she appreciates the partnerships she's been able to develop at Clark. "We have great colleagues, great collaboration," she says. "Like with CFS, and also International Programs are a great support for us. Or when we had a Japanese theater troupe visiting and needed a performance space; [drama professor] Gene Biby offered to let us use his stage. We're a small department, but

with other people's help, we can do things we cannot do alone."

This year, Okuhara received 2014-2015 Exceptional Faculty Award. "This instructor goes above and beyond, helping students outside of class and outside of her office hours," wrote one student in her nomination. "She not only teaches the language, but she puts forth an extra energy to relate our lessons to Japanese culture. Her knowledge is not only shared to the class, but to the Clark community as well."

Many of Okuhara's former students return during Sakura to visit "Okuhara-sensei," as they call her. Others write her from Japan to tell her about working there. Okuhara cherishes those stories, but feels that teaching world languages helps students even if they never leave their hometown.

"Not everyone gets to major in Japanese or work in Japan," she says. "But part of what they learn is empathy for other cultures, and maybe patience with people from other countries who don't speak English. I really enjoy seeing students learn. When they say Japanese is fun—that's what I hope for."

Learn about other recipients of the 2014-2015 Exceptional Faculty Awards.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

Exceptional Faculty Award spotlight: The tough-but-

caring technician



Bakery instructor Alison Dolder shows off some of her students' work.

Alison Dolder has got to have, hands-down, the best-smelling classroom at Clark College. The Bakery instructor and interim department head spends much of her time guiding students as they work in the program's lab, which is also a fully functional bakery. Racks of pie shells and biscuits stand by the doorway, and the air is thick with the aromas of butter and sugar. Students in chef's whites stand at tables, making croissants and baguettes to be sold in the college's retail bakery in Gaiser Hall.

"The training here is very different from some culinary schools," says Dolder. "Our students come in, and the very first day they're put in their station and they're forming, they're cutting—everything they'll be doing for the next two

weeks till they switch stations. It's as close to a production bakery as we can get. When they get out and enter the job market, they don't require as much training [as other new graduates] because they're used to the fast pace. They're ready to jump right in."

It's that combination of practicality and enthusiasm—combined with empathy and support—that prompted students to nominate Dolder for the 2014-2015 Exceptional Faculty Award. "I joined the baking program on a whim and it has come to be the greatest decision of my life," wrote one student in her nomination. "I feel like I can be not only the best baker or the best businesswoman around, but I can be the best of myself at all times, and for that I am grateful. Ms. Alison is so encouraging at times, she is tough at times, she is compassionate at times, and she can challenge you daily."



Dolder encourages her students to express their creativity, whether it's through experimenting with whole-wheat croissant dough or

designing a
steampunk-inspired
layer cake.

Dolder came to baking almost by accident. She'd started college as a zoology major, but didn't enjoy the math and chemistry courses and decided to leave school to regroup. "My husband was going to school full-time and working full-time, and so just as something to do, I took a cake-decorating class," she says. "It turns out I was really good at it."

Dolder worked in bakeries and taught cake decoration for more than a decade before deciding to return to school to learn her craft in-depth. Ironically, what appealed to her most was the chemistry involved. "I love how you can take all these ingredients and turn them into something else, something delicious," she says.

Dolder graduated from Clark's bakery program in 2000 and quickly landed a job at the nationally known Pearl Bakery in Portland. But while she loved the work, she realized it wasn't compatible with having two young children. "I was really lucky to work with [former Pearl head baker and current Little T owner] Tim Healea, but it was 9 p.m. to 5 a.m.," she says. When a teaching position opened up at Clark, she decided to apply.

Dolder makes sure her students understand the realities of life as a professional baker. "I tell them, 'Don't believe everything you see on TV,'" she says. "You know, there's that illusion that 'I'm going to start baking cakes and get my own show and be famous.' Baking is hard work."

Dolder is happy to have returned to Clark to share her love and knowledge of baking with today's students. She's looking forward to doing so in the college's soon-to-be-remodeled Culinary Arts wing. "It's so exciting," she says. "I'm looking forward to introducing a new cohort model for our program in a

shiny new facility.” A shiny new facility that, in short order, will probably once again turn into the best-smelling classroom on campus.

Learn about other recipients of the 2014-2015 Exceptional Faculty Awards.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

Exceptional Faculty Award spotlight: The voice of encouragement



English instructor Matthew Gallaher.

Matthew Gallaher's English Composition is winding down for the day. "If you have any last-minute questions, I'll stick around," the instructor tells his students, who are broken up into groups to "workshop" their papers with their classmates.

Gallaher sits down near one slump-shouldered student. "How are you doing?" he asks the student. "Do you have questions?"

"No," sighs the student. "I just wish I had more time."

"You *do* have time," Gallaher responds with a smile. He points to the student's paper. "This is only a first draft. You're still going to do a second draft, and then revise it again before handing it in. Don't give up on this!"

Imagine every possible permutation of the word "encourage," and it shows up in students' nominations of Gallaher for the 2014-2015 Exceptional Faculty Award, along with words like "fun," "sincere," and "enthusiasm."



"The largest impact that Matthew has had on his students, and on me personally, is his ability to make students feel important, and that their individual success is valuable," reads one. "He goes above and beyond to help others, and is encouraging to his students to continue to develop and share their skills."

Gallaher's enthusiasm and support led him to be recruited as advisor for Alpha Sigma Phi, the Clark College chapter of the international honor society Phi Theta Kappa that blends academic achievement with public service. After two years in that position, Gallaher is stepping down to focus on teaching, but he says he enjoyed mentoring students as they developed new ways to help their community, including annual food drives and a campaign to reduce and reuse electronic waste.

"I was in Boy Scouts as a kid and an Eagle Scout, and it kind of reminded me of that," says Gallaher, who earned Phi Theta Kappa's Paragon Award for New Advisors in 2013.

Much of Gallaher's work at Clark contains echoes of his early years. "My whole family got their associate degrees," he says. "My parents both came from working class families and could never have afforded college without community college. I went to community college as a high school student, St. Petersburg College in South Florida."

Gallaher, who earned his bachelor's degree from University of South Florida and his master's in English from Portland State University, says he appreciates the diversity of students he encounters teaching at a community college. "You never know what kind of students you're going to have," he says. "There are vets from the last two conflicts, and there are students who have only been in this country a few months. There are older students and students who are still in high school. You get all these people together, and they don't agree almost ever, and it's kind of great to hear them get riled up as they hear opinions and viewpoints they've never been exposed to before."

Gallaher says he was honored to discover students had nominated him for the award, especially because he is an adjunct instructor, teaching part-time at Clark and part-time at Portland Community College. "It was surprising and humbling," he says. "Being an adjunct can be lonely. You don't quite feel part of the community. Phi Theta Kappa really helped me feel more a part of Clark. And now this is just another way of saying, 'Hey, you love Clark—and Clark loves you, too.' That feels good."

Learn about other recipients of the 2014-2015 Exceptional Faculty Awards.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

Exceptional Faculty Award spotlight: The naturalist



Biology professor Steven Clark in his office.

Steven Clark's office is full of animals. There's the "Cats Against the Bomb" calendar; the poster of the grizzly bear; the woodblock print of a turtle; the vintage Audubon Society birdwatching chart; photos of bees, rodents, spiders, his dogs. The effect is something like walking into a natural history museum that's been shoved into a filing cabinet.

"This room is reflective of my interests," says Clark, glancing over at an illustration of wildflowers above his desk. And, indeed, a conversation with Clark is likely to take

you through the intricacies of parasitic wasps, the difficulties involved in attaching radio monitors to pond turtles, and a startlingly accurate imitation of a pika—a small, rabbit-like creature whose populations in the Columbia Gorge Clark has been helping to monitor for years.

It's hard not to look around this room and assume that Clark was destined to be a biology professor. But Clark, who received his Master of Special Education for the Hearing Impaired from Lewis & Clark College in 1986, began his career teaching almost everything *but* biology at the Washington School for the Deaf.

"I was attracted to the idea of teaching an underserved population," he says. Eventually, however, Clark found himself drawn to the sciences, and in 2000 he left the School for the Deaf to pursue a master's degree in Environmental Sciences and Resources at Portland State University. For four years, he worked as a field biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife while also teaching mathematics and biology at Clark as an adjunct instructor.

For Clark, teaching at a community college still fulfills that urge to help underserved populations. "There are great teachers at all colleges, I know that, but I think the mission of the community college—to teach the rank and file of our community—I like that," he says. "My mother never got to go to college. But I used to think that if my mom *had* gone to college, she would have gone to a community college."



Professor Clark at a STEM demonstration in 2015.

Clark, who received tenure in 2014, currently teaches the biology sequence for life sciences majors, a three-quarter series that has earned a reputation as a daunting academic challenge.

“It’s funny, because I think of myself as a warm person, but I know my class is often perceived as ... rigorous,” Clark says, smiling and pausing as he searches for the right word. “I think some students get nervous at first when I explain the work load. But the reason I talk about it from the very beginning is that I want them to understand what they’re getting into. I invite students from the past year to talk about what worked in getting them to be successful. I’ll tell students to show me their notes so I can see where they’re missing something. And you know, I think by the middle of winter quarter, their [study] habits have gotten better and they’re starting to have fun.”

Clark’s theory is backed up by the many students who nominated him for a 2014-2015 Exceptional Faculty Award. “Biology may very well be the study of life, but without an enthusiastic instructor it can seem completely lifeless,” reads one nomination. “Steven Clark has somehow managed to maintain a strict and efficient authority over his classroom, while also making it incredibly fun and intriguing. I can honestly say that I have never seen those two concepts, authority and fun, incorporated into a class so well together. ... He truly cares

for his students, that is abundantly apparent.”

For Clark, his classes’ rigor is one of the ways he shows that he cares. “I like my students to know that they did all their hard stuff at community college, where the focus is on teaching and the tuition is lower and there’s more room to recover from mistakes,” he says. “The best thing for me is when former students email me and say, ‘I’m at Washington State University right now, and me and the other Clark students are in the top tier.’”

Learn about other recipients of the 2014-2015 Exceptional Faculty Awards.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley