

Student Parent Profile: Monserrat Soriano



Monserrat Soriano's daughter, Melody, says goodbye to her through the window at Clark College's Child & Family Studies. *Photo courtesy of Monserrat Soriano.*

Monserrat Soriano is a full-time Clark College student on track to complete the Administrative Assistant and Management program in Spring 2021. She's also a single mom to daughter, Melody, 7, in first grade at Martin Luther King Elementary; and son, Emmett, 4, who attends the college's Child and Family Studies child care program. During the COVID-19 pandemic, both kids have attended CFS so that Soriano can study at home. Soriano and her children live with her mother, uncle and brother, but none can help with childcare.

This story is part of a series of interviews with Clark College student parents about how they are balancing school, life, and work, during quarantine.

Q: How has CFS helped you focus on your schoolwork?

MS: After my daughter completes two hours of online school via Zoom each day, I take both kids to the childcare center at

Clark. Then I come home and do my schoolwork. I'm grateful that the state has paid for childcare during COVID. Fall quarter was the first quarter I've had childcare, because my daughter's previous childcare center shut down during COVID.

Q: How are your children coping with doing remote school at home?

MS: When we pick up my daughter's school work packets at King Elementary, she doesn't understand why she can't be in school with her teacher and other kids. She asked me why she is in daycare instead of school.

Q: What are some challenges you've faced during COVID?

MS: I'm a first-generation college student. Sometimes it feels like I'm breaking through walls. When I'm working at home, my family sees me struggling. My mom wants to help with the kids, but she's working two jobs. We all need compassion right now. And grace! When I'm home with my kids, I want to distract myself. I've been sober for almost a year. My testimony is of struggle. Clark needs students like me. I am resilient.

Before COVID, my degree was part of a teach-out program [a process in which a program that is being discontinued teaches the students who are part-way through the degree program]. Then because of COVID, our labs were removed. It adds so much anxiety and pressure. It's been hard to stay motivated. With COVID, I can't plan. I don't know what my next step is. Sometimes I feel that I can't make it. I come into the childcare center crying. I leave crying. That's how I'm coping. I'm going week by week with the kids.

Q: What's one particularly challenging story of taking remote classes while juggling parenting?

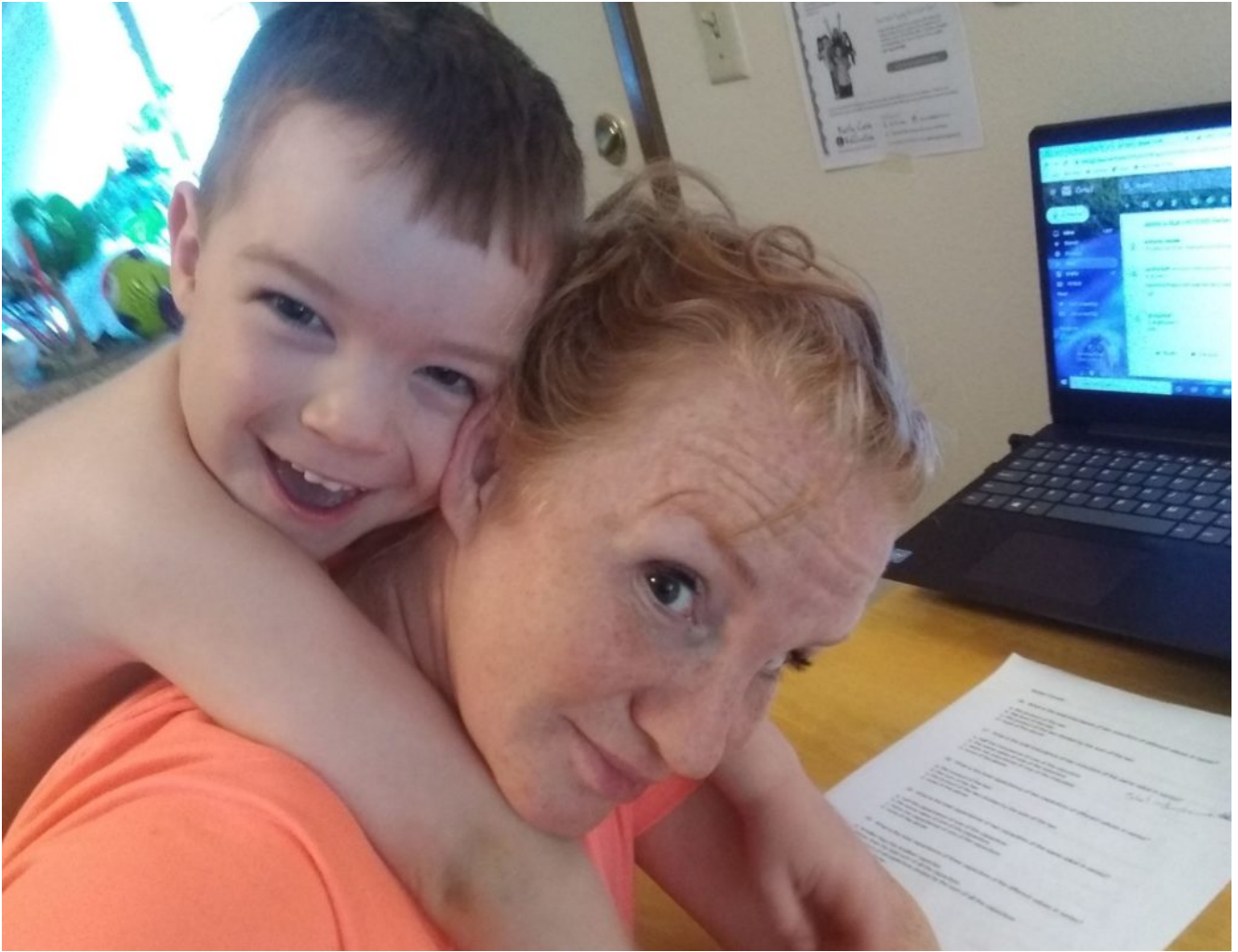
MS: Last quarter I thought I was going to give up. When I was taking my final via Zoom, my three-year old burst in and shouted, "I have to poop, Mom!" My instructor heard him and

gave me more time to complete my final. This is not the way it's supposed to happen, but that's all we got. We have to keep going. We have to keep our sanity.

Q: How are you coping?

MS: I attend Zoom counseling workshops with other parents, so I don't feel like I'm not alone. I learned to give myself some slack. Be gentle with myself as a parent. It's OK to cry in front of my children sometimes. This is not normal times. I'm trying to relax when I can, but I don't even know what that looks like.

Student Parent Profile:
Jessica Bull



Jessica Bull has been juggling her online studies with caring for her young son. *Photo courtesy of Jessica Bull.*

Jessica Bull is a Clark College student pursuing an Industrial Maintenance Technician degree. She works part-time at the college's Child and Family Studies (CFS) and she is full-time parent to her son, Eathin, 5, who is in kindergarten. During fall term, when her welding class ended at 9:20 p.m., Bull's partner stayed with her son. CFS doesn't offer evening childcare.

This story is part of a series of interviews with Clark College student parents about how they are balancing life, work, and school during quarantine.

Q: What is your family's involvement with Clark College Child and Family Studies?

JB: When I go to work at CFS, my son goes with me. I appreciate that the center schedules time to help kids with

their schoolwork. That relieves some pressure from helping him do his schoolwork at home.

Q: How are you and your son coping with COVID challenges?

JB: My son is awesome but being at home—instead of school—is hard for him to switch gears. I just started work again, and he started kindergarten. He's been going to Clark's childcare center since he was 1. We've had early-morning and late-night schedules. He's adaptable.

Q: How have both you and your son adapted to online learning from home?

JB: This whole COVID thing has been rough. I'm not going to lie. I miss studying in Clark's library. When I'm home, I like to spend time with my son, my family. That's our leisure time. But now my son has schoolwork. I try to help him, but I'm Mom. It's hard to get him to focus and to listen to me. It's hard for parents to educate our kids because we're not teachers. It's tough.

Q: What's your advice to fellow Clark students juggling your schoolwork, parenting young children and supervising their remote schoolwork?

JB: As much as you can, stay to the same routine. Kids like routine. Dinner's at one time, bedtime is this time. Make a visual schedule to help them understand their day. Take extra care to reassure them. Get down to their level. Encourage them that it will be OK. Always. Because of the pandemic, we're spending so much more time inside looking at screens. It's not healthy for kids to have so much screen time.

Q: What's your advice to Clark students who are parents of young children?

JB: Give yourself a break. Don't be so hard on yourself. Try your best. Keep pushing forward.

Student Parent Profile: Moses Kimeli

Moses Kimeli is a full-time Clark College student majoring in Early Childhood Development and Education. He works 15 hours a week at Clark College Child & Family Studies. While he is at work, his wife supervises their children: son Ian, 7, second grade, and daughter Honest, 5, in kindergarten. Moses is supervising his children's remote learning.

This story is part of a series of interviews with Clark College student parents about how they are balancing school, life, and work, during quarantine.

Q: How have your children adapted to online school?

MK: They are new from Kenya and are still learning English and communications skills. After a month, they were able to log into Zoom by themselves and do their classes. Now I study while my kids Zoom, but if they have concerns, they ask me for help. My son says he is tired of Zoom classes. My children want to go to school to see their friends. But they are getting better at Zoom classes—and eventually, it's getting easier.

Q: What is your children's homework routine?

MK: I have them sit down with me and I am present to help them with their homework. I am completely engaged with them. I don't work on my own Clark College schoolwork during this time.

Q: When do you have time to study for your Clark College classes?

MK: Before COVID, I studied undisturbed from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. when my children were in school. Now I still study during that time, but I must keep my attention and my eyes on my kids. My strategy is I wake up at 5 a.m. and do my homework because when my children wake up, I focus on them. I study late at night when they are asleep.

Q: How has your family found balance doing online school? Do you worry about spending too much time on screens?

MK: At first, it was challenging, but now we have a system. Last spring after COVID restricted us to doing school at home, I realized my family's entire week was dominated by being online and looking at screens. So last fall, I scheduled a family break from screen time every weekend. By Friday at noon, we are all done with our homework. I collect everyone's tablet and put them away until Saturday night. No homework for anyone. No Zoom. Nothing to do with online stuff. We listen to music, play, go bike riding, cook, just be together. This way is better for the entire family.

Q: What's your advice to fellow Clark students who are parents of school-age children?

MK: Patience. Patience. Patience. If your kids can't figure out how to do something, have patience. Take it easy. Everything will come out.

Child care during COVID: An interview with Child & Family

Studies Director Michele Volk



Michele Volk

When COVID-19 restrictions moved learning online for all K-12 and college students in the state in March 2020, Clark's Child and Family Studies (CFS) kept its doors open to fill a vital role of providing childcare to families of essential workers and Clark students, as well as providing jobs for Clark students.

Clark 24/7 interviewed CFS Director Michele Volk to find out how her team has been safely serving families during the pandemic. "It's been a journey," she said. "We've received such positive feedback from our student families about the difference it makes having a community there for their children. ... By caring for the children of Clark students, CFS is equipping our students to do their own schoolwork and be successful."

Throughout the months of pandemic lockdown, CFS remained open—and welcomed school-age learners, too. It's been a learning process for all involved, as the edited interview below proves.

Q: Did CFS operate during spring term when pandemic

restrictions first were enacted?

MV: Yes. Throughout the pandemic we remained open for essential workers as defined by Washington State. We erred on the side of caution as guidance changed frequently.

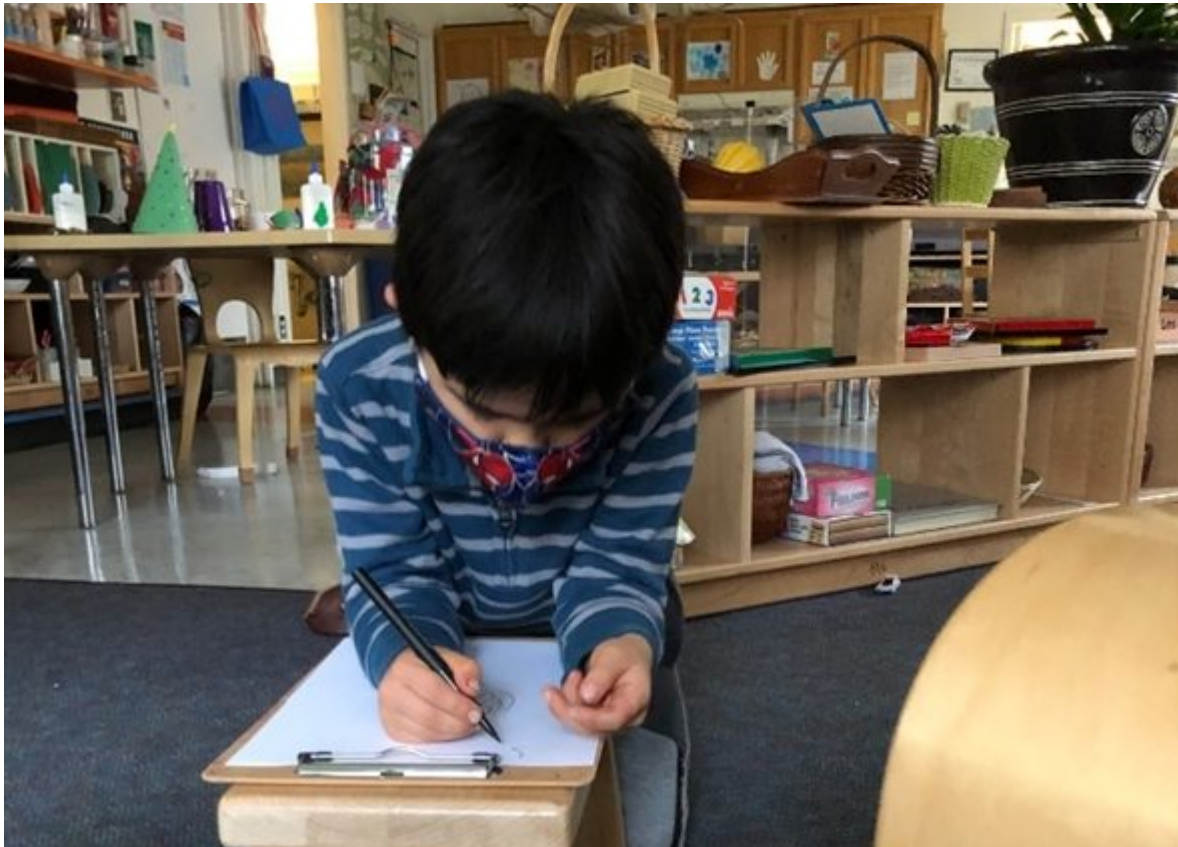
Q: How has CFS adapted to continue operating during COVID restrictions?

MV: CFS has adapted to COVID by continual monitoring of the recommendations, guidance and mandates of licensing, Washington Department of Health, CDC, Clark County, and Clark College. We are following safety protocols and best practices. Here are some of ways we adapted:

1. Added a school-age classroom fall term to accommodate Clark students whose children were at home doing school remotely
2. Decreased the total number of children in program
3. Reduced the number of classrooms in use from six to four
4. Decreased number of children in each classroom
5. Altered hours to stay within stable, consistent groups because we cannot combine groups of children or staff
6. Doubled the square-footage COVID social-distancing space recommendation for each environment
7. Implemented drop-off and pick-up procedures: eight-foot distancing between families, mask wearing, temperature taking, health screening questions, and hand washing
8. Installed Plexiglass barriers, including between larger tables in the school-age classroom
9. Masks: All staff wear masks within six feet of another adult; children age 5 and older wear masks in the classroom
10. Increased the frequency of sanitizing commonly touched items and spaces
11. Pre-COVID group projects have been adapted to

individualized sensory projects

12. Increased time children spend outside by extending outdoor teachers' schedule and going on more campus walks
13. Changed our typical self-service, family-style school meals to teachers serving children, using one-time serving utensils and dishware to limit our chef's exposure



Q: How many children are attending CFS during the pandemic?

MV: Pre-pandemic during fall quarter 2019, we had 128 children enrolled at CFS. In contrast, the 2020 numbers during the pandemic are a fraction of our earlier enrollment: summer break, 41 children; summer quarter, 47; fall quarter, 71; winter quarter, 69.

Q: What have been some of the biggest challenges of operating CFS during COVID?

MV: One challenge has been battling the emotional fatigue of the staff and families. Their stress levels have been high, yet they have continued to be present for the community. It's been difficult missing all in-person family gatherings, community meetings, and the in-person collaboration of a full program. It has been both challenging and touching to see how remote instruction has adapted for ECE lab and Family Life credit. People are finding unique ways to build relationships through Zoom, examining practices, videotaping and sharing of resources to meet outcomes. Despite the decreased enrollment and ratios, stable classroom groups and increased costs, we are committed to keeping everyone employed and engaged.

Q: What are some highlights—some uplifting, heartwarming moments at CFS during COVID?

MV: Hearing family stories has really touched my heart—knowing we have contributed to student retention and success. Having families grateful for our services so they can continue or return to work. Families have stopped by the front desk and expressed their gratitude for being able to either go to school or go to work to provide for their family during this time. Some have brought teachers and office staff flowers and treats.

Q: Are there any positive elements to the children's experience?

MV: It was heartwarming to see children coming back after time away—to see them reunite with their peers and teachers. Seeing children run to be together. School-age children have been reunited with their peers, with whom they attended toddlers' class or preschool.

With fewer children, it seems children are working longer on projects and working more together. The learning stories feel deeper, more connected. Teachers have more time to observe, document, and expand children's learning. Families have been

connected in these moments and connected us to home. This has become a very connected community.



Q: How has your staff stepped up to the plate throughout the pandemic?

MV: Our staff are the true heroes. Throughout the pandemic, they have been present to care for others, even as their own worlds are impacted. The way the teachers, office staff, and ECE faculty have respectfully altered their own lives, dug into deeper practice, meeting children and families where they are, the commitment and collaboration with one another and to safely keep children at the heart of their work—that's inspiring!

Q: How have Clark's CFS student employees made an impact during the pandemic?

MV: For many of those families, that part-time position at CFS also allows the family to have some stability financially. Those same student employees provide continuity for our children in our classroom. The sense of the routine and continuity for everyone in the community has been exceptional.

I believe these children are resilient because of the model of the adults—both their family members and staff—who surround them and keep those consistent routines. These adults revel in the joy with the children. That's made the difference.

Q: How many Clark students currently are employed at CFS?

MV: It has ranged each term between 19 and 25. We are currently hiring for several positions in both classroom and office, for those who have interest.

Q: How has the Clark community supported CFS through this challenging time?

MV: I so appreciate the larger Clark College community and their contributions to making this successful: Emergency Management Team; Facilities Services and the custodial team; Culinary and the treats for our staff and families; the Office of Diversity Equity and Inclusion's equitable decision-making and connecting students to one another; Communications and Marketing for supporting our communications to parents; Instruction and the creativity they have shown; Student Affairs' weekly tips and resources. So many more.

Q: Going forward, do you see some COVID precautions continuing with CFS?

MV: Yes. Post-COVID we will continue with hand-washing, increased sanitizing, and face masks will continue as long as guidance recommends. Pre-COVID we already were doing many of the recommended safety precautions, but we increased the frequency. After COVID we will continue having families wash their hands in the office before entering the program. We plan to continue the sanitizing of the office spaces and commonly touched areas. Clark's Facilities staff have been helpful and responsive. We appreciate them.

Q: Will CFS continue its school-age children classroom after public schools open their doors to in-person learning later

this month?

MV: Yes, we are working with families to make schedule changes to their CFS attendance days to meet their public school-schedule needs. We made a commitment to our children and families for the full school year. They have experienced so much change, and we are here as one of their few support systems.

Q: How do Clark students register to use CFS? Is there a waiting list? Are drop-ins welcome?

MV: We have limited spaces available. Families can check availability in their child's age group by emailing cfs@clark.edu or calling 360-992-2393. If we have no current availability, the family will be asked if they would want to complete an interest form. We prioritize our student families when placing new families. We do not have drop-in care available but operate on stable and consistent groups for best practice in early learning.

A welcome sign for Dreamers



Design by Mia Linnik

Digital Media Arts student Mia Linnik's winning design for a Dreamer-friendly logo

Being a college student can be stressful for anyone, but it carries an extra layer of anxiety for the undocumented. Will they be able to access financial aid? Will they be asked for a Social Security Number? Above all, will talking with a professor or staff member compromise their safety and lead to deportation?

Clark College is taking a new step to reassure these students: It is creating a new logo that faculty and staff can display to show that they are a “safe space” for undocumented students, commonly known as Dreamers.

The concept is much like the “Penguin Pride” sticker unrolled several years ago to indicate safe spaces for Clark's LGBTQIA+ students. As with that sticker, faculty and staff must undergo specific training before receiving the sticker—in this case, “Best Practices to Support Dreamers,” offered by the Office of Diversity Equity and Inclusion.

The project is the result of a collaboration between Digital Media Arts students and BUILD (Broadening Understanding,

Intercultural Leadership and Development), a yearlong employee training program that focuses on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

After completing the inaugural BUILD cohort together, **Deena Godwin**, **Marilyn Hale** and **Yusufu Kamara** proposed creating a Dreamers logo for faculty and staff to display on windows, workspaces, or online to indicate safe spaces and community support for Clark College Dreamers. And who better to design such a thing than Clark College Digital Media Arts students?

Collaborating with Digital Media Arts department head **Kristl Plinz** and students enrolled in a beginning Digital Media Arts course fall term, the three BUILD members along with Diversity Outreach Manager **Rosalba Pitkin** helped define the client needs assessment, then participated in a student-led design pitch session via Zoom. After weeks of creative development, 24 student designs were submitted for consideration. A committee of 18 faculty, staff, and students—including Dreamers—voted on the designs.



Runner-up design by Jessica Peters

The winner, student **Mia Linnik**, was awarded a \$500 tuition scholarship provided by Clark College Foundation. Her design features monarch butterflies, which have become a symbol for Dreamers because of their long migration patterns.

Here is Linnik's description of her winning design: "This design incorporates the ideas of community, support and migration. The concept was to create a warm and uplifting

feeling with supportive hands and a group of flying monarchs. The Earth communicates the idea that Dreamers are from all over the world, and that we are still a community no matter where someone was born. The hands wrapped underneath the Earth conveys a message of support and care. The monarch butterflies are a symbol for migration. The group of butterflies shows community and togetherness.”

One Dreamer commented on the winning design: “It shows me again that Dreamers come from all different backgrounds and we don’t have a limit or where our dreams/goals can take us. We are resilient and determined to go anywhere our education goals take us.”

BUILD teammate and Economics professor **Yusufu Kumara** said of the winning design: “It takes me back to the first time I came to this country as a Fulbright Scholar in 2006. I met many others like me who came here from all over the world, and we were welcomed and embraced and made to feel like we belonged here by people who barely knew us. Looking at the winning design, I cannot hold back tears thinking back to those days, which considering what is going on now, seems like 100 years ago. I am filled with joy and very proud to have been a part of something bigger than myself. My wish is that this can carry over to other colleges and universities around the country. Let’s make this a national thing.”



Runner-up design by Sarah Bounds

Designs by students **Sarah Bounds** and **Jessica Peters** tied for

second place. Both students were awarded a \$75 credit to the Clark College Bookstore, also compliments of the Foundation.

It's hard to know how many Dreamer students attend Clark College; by necessity, they often keep their status hidden. This has been especially true in 2020, when the future of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) initiative has been uncertain. However, the college has made a public commitment to not base admission decisions on immigration status and to not share students' immigration status with others unless required to do so by a subpoena or court order. Furthermore, Dreamers who live in Washington state have an added source of hope: While they are usually ineligible for federal financial aid, they may be eligible for state aid through the Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA).

Learn More

- View the Zoom recording announcing the winning designs.
- View all 24 student design submissions.
- Learn more about how Clark College supports Dreamers at www.clark.edu/cc/dreamers.
- *"Best Practices to Support DREAMers"* will be offered February 8, 2021 from 4 to 6 p.m. via Zoom. Click to register here (must be a Clark College employee to attend).

Penguins feeding Penguins



Cuisine professor Earl Frederick, student Michael Scheidt, and Baking professor Alison Dolder help distribute food to Clark College students through the Penguin Pantry's monthly curbside pickup. *Clark College/Susan Parrish*

Since the global pandemic began, Penguin Pantry—the college's on-campus food bank for students—has doubled the amount of food it distributes monthly. It typically has distributed one box of shelf-stable food and a loaf of bread donated by community partners. Now Clark College is partnering with its own instructional programs to increase the food support it provides to students.

In October, Clark's Cuisine and Professional Baking programs began donating food made in their lab classes to Penguin Pantry. This new partnership is a win-win for everyone. Students and their families are receiving nutritious, from-scratch meals. Culinary students are getting hands-on experience at a time when the pandemic has closed the campus restaurant, food service, and bakery.

"We're giving it away, since we still need the practice and our restaurant is still closed," said Daryl Oest, Culinary support technician.

In the inaugural partnership event on October 27, Penguin Pantry distributed 108 food boxes to Clark students and their families during a seamless curbside pickup system in the Red Lot 3 roundabout. Each box contained a breakfast, lunch, and lasagna dinner.

Cuisine faculty member Robert Earl Frederick and his first-year students baked pans and pans of lasagna to provide 120 meals. Professional Baking department head Alison Dolder and baking students baked full-size pies. Additionally, students received a large box of nonperishable food and a loaf of bread.

Michael Scheidt, 20, a first-year cuisine student, maneuvered a wheeled cart laden with brown paper grocery bags containing a breakfast, lunch and dinner toward the curb outside Penguin Union Building.

"It feels really good to give back to the community," he said. "We've all had hard times."



Clark College Director of Student Life Sarah Gruhler gets ready to distribute food at a curbside pickup. *Clark College/Susan Parrish*

During remote operations, Penguin Pantry has set aside one day a month to distribute food boxes. Students sign up in advance to secure a time slot to pick up the food in the parking lot. Those with dietary restrictions can request vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, dairy-free, or pescatarian items.

A student who drove up to the curb was assisted by Sharon Toliver, Security & Safety Services; Samantha Lelo, Student Life Program Support Supervisor; and Lauren Boys, ASCC Civics and Sustainability Director. They checked the student's name against a list and loaded food into the trunk. Sarah Gruhler, Director of Student Life, supervised the distribution and ensured all ran smoothly.

Afterward Gruhler said, "The distribution went very smoothly. The students were so excited about the additional food. We've

already had 22 returning students sign up for November's distribution."

Frederick added, "We are all looking forward to continuing this partnership in the long run."

And in fact, while October's distribution event was impressive, it was just a dress rehearsal for the big event: Thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving dinner

November's Penguin Pantry curbside distribution during Thanksgiving week will be a full, cooked Thanksgiving dinner with all the trimmings.

"We have plans for Thanksgiving to make sure our students are well taken care of during this tough time," said Oest.

Frederick anticipates roasting 20 turkeys to prepare 150 Thanksgiving meals for students and their families. Dolder says baking students will contribute pies—not only tradition pumpkin, but also apple, marionberry, cherry, and pecan—as well as dinner rolls and a morning treat.

Dolder estimates it will take her baking students two weeks of class hours to make individual pies to feed 150 people. The job will be broken down into smaller tasks: making and freezing the dough, making the pie filling, rolling out pie crusts, and shaping them into disposable pie tins. Eventually, the pies will be assembled, baked, and then frozen again. When students pick up their Thanksgiving food boxes, their pies—and the entire cooked Thanksgiving dinner—will be frozen.

"It's easier for us to serve frozen pies," Dolder says. "And we have a ton of freezer space."

Frederick adds, "It's safer to distribute frozen food."

With COVID, a greater need

Last spring, COVID prevented the on-campus Penguin Pantry from opening for walk-in visitors. Beginning in May, the Penguin Pantry began a monthly curbside food distribution following COVID safety protocols. In May, the pantry distributed 1,125 pounds of food to 165 people in 40 households.

As the pandemic has continued and many students and their families have lost their jobs in the subsequent recession, the number of students requesting food assistance continues to grow steadily. In September the pantry distributed 2,500 pounds to 305 students and their families. That's more than double the amount from May.

Month	People	Households	Pounds of Food
May	165	40	1125
June	177	38	1058
July	207	56	1430
August	263	79	1962
September	305	107	2568

As a partner with Clark County Food Bank, Penguin Pantry must carefully track its numbers and report them to the food bank.

The college has reached out to students to make sure students know about this resource—sharing information about it in online classes, on social media, and through a new text-message service the college has invested in.

“We’ve definitely seen an increase in the number of students requesting food,” says Gruhler. “Since we’ve been able to text students, there’s greater awareness of Penguin Pantry.”

Culinary school during COVID



Cuisine faculty and students prepare lasagne dinners to be given to students through the Penguin Pantry. *Clark College/Kelly Love*

Cuisine and baking students have continued their studies during the pandemic. They are able to meet in the kitchens for in-person lab classes using face coverings, social distancing, and daily temperature checks—all of which is becoming part of their career preparation. Their industry is changing rapidly because of COVID-19 restrictions.

“The industry will change,” said Oest. “We can’t see the crystal ball yet but whether it’s startups, more corporate food service, smaller restaurants, there will be food services moving forward. There will still be the need. These students have learned best safe practices for the post-COVID workplace.”

How to help

Penguin Pantry will distribute Thanksgiving dinner to students on Tuesday, November 24. If you'd like to donate toward Penguin Pantry, a \$30 donation will provide a family of four with a homemade Thanksgiving dinner and dessert.

Ways to donate and helpful links:

- Online: Give online with Clark College Foundation's online giving form and choose 'Penguin Pantry' from the drop-down menu under "Select an Area of Support." In the comments box, note "Thanksgiving dinner."
- By mail: Mail your check/money order to: Clark College, Attn: Cashier's Office (PUB 153), 1933 Ft. Vancouver Way. Make the check out to "Clark College" and write "Penguin Pantry" in the comments area.
- Via phone: Call 360-992-2571 on Tuesday or Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
- Visit www.clark.edu/cc/penguin-pantry to learn more about how to donate to or receive support from the Penguin Pantry.

For welding, an almost seamless transition



A Welding Technologies student participates in an on-campus lab, even though most Clark College classes are being offered remotely during COVID-19. Fortunately, the program had already shifted to partially online classes before the pandemic hit, and students wear personal protective equipment as part of basic welding safety. *Clark College/Tarek Kanso*

When COVID-19 switched Clark College's spring quarter classes from on-campus to online learning, Welding Technologies students were ahead of the curve—and therefore were not as affected as other programs with hands-on labs. Instructor John Kuhn already had pivoted to the hybrid model of classes (part online and part in-person) via an online Canvas shell during summer 2019. At the time, it was a good way for students to complete the bookwork portion of their course. During COVID, it has allowed students to not fall too far behind, because they'd already been working online.

"We were pretty fortunate to have gotten started a year before with hybrid," says Kuhn. "It gave students an opportunity to study more in depth at home. We got a little deeper into theory, the bookwork, utilizing more YouTube welding videos. It proved effectively that they understood the information."



Even before the pandemic, welding students needed to suit up in personal protective equipment. *Clark College/Tarek Kanso*

Because safety is paramount, students in the Welding 102 introductory class must pass a welding safety test with 100 percent. In the past, some students had to retake the test in order to pass. Hybrid learning increased students' understanding of the material and translated into a higher percentage of students who didn't have to take the test a second time.

Welding students returned to campus labs in mid-June to complete their spring quarter practical welding assignments. Because Welding is a year-round program, the students returned for hands-on welding labs during summer quarter, too.

A program made for social distancing

Even before COVID, welding students already were wearing personal protective equipment and were socially distanced. Students suit up for every lab class: heavy, flame-retardant coat; steel-toed work boots with a metal plate added to protect feet; leather gloves; goggles; and a welding helmet with built-in face shield. Students work in individual welding booths, far removed from other students.

We visited the welding lab as six first-year students were finishing their class project: a flange, a small version of the pressure vessel built by second-year students. Pressure vessels are used to store and transfer liquids and gases under high pressure. Welding on pressure vessels must be exact and meet rigorous standards to withstand working conditions.

All the students we spoke with were eager to enter their chosen field. The outlook is promising: The number of welding jobs in Washington is projected to grow about 3 percent from 2019-2029, about average for all occupations, according to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. In the Vancouver-Portland metro area, the average wage for a welder is \$23.98 per hour or \$49,887 annually. That's about \$8,000 higher than the median wage nationally.



Jessica Pellham. Clark College/Susan Parrish

Student story: Jessica Pellham

Jessica Pellham, 26, had no welding experience—and even lacked any experience with tools—when she started the Welding program in fall 2019.

“I kind of started out as a baby,” Pellham laughs. “I wanted to get into a trade. I tried machining. It wasn’t my thing.

Then I watched my fiancé's grandpa welding."

It intrigued her. She tried welding, and she discovered she had an aptitude for it.

Pellham says, "It's hard, physical work, but for me, it's so worth it to do something I love to do."

"She has excelled fantastically," says Kuhn.

Pellham works fulltime at a packing warehouse and goes to Clark fulltime, too. When her cohort began, she was one of three women. Now, a year later, she's the only woman left in her cohort, but there are more women in the second-year cohort.

"I'm hoping to see more women in trades," she says. "We can do it, too."

Pellham's eventual goal is to be hired on a union or government job.

She adds, "I'd love to weld on submarines or ships."



Jeff White. Clark College/Tarek Kanso

Student Story: Jeff White

At 60, Jeff White of Washougal is the oldest student in the cohort. Two years ago, he was laid off from his job as a boiler operator at Georgia Pacific in Camas, a job he'd held for 30 years. White qualified for the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program, a federal program to retrain displaced workers due to overseas competition. The program has paid for all his college expenses. He is living on unemployment while he attends Clark.

White's goal is a job in construction welding. He is a fourth-generation Washougal resident, and hopes he does not have to move to find work after he completes the program.

Student story: Ben Barton

Ben Barton, 29, has worked in restaurants since he was 16. A year ago, when he was working as a server at La Bottega in Uptown Village, he was considering making a career change when a co-worker told him about Clark's welding program.

"I was ready to do something that was stable," Barton says.

He researched the welding program and applied in summer 2019, but the fall cohort was full. There was so much interest that a second section was opened beginning winter 2020. He started the welding program full-time in January while he continued working at the restaurant 30 hours a week. Then COVID-19 closed restaurants in March, and he was laid off. To make up for the lost income, he applied for unemployment benefits.

"I'm thankful for unemployment," Barton says. "I'm going to school to further myself so hopefully I'll never have to be on unemployment again. Financially I've been okay. Obviously, you cut back your spending and you end up making your own meals again. Groceries are cheaper than eating out. My girlfriend

and I are both in the restaurant industry and are good cooks.”



Not only does the Clark College Welding Technologies lab offer hands-on experience with industrial equipment, it's well set up for social distancing. Most work stations are at least 6 feet apart. *Clark College/Tarek Kanso*

During spring quarter no hands-on labs were offered at Clark. Students kept up with their online bookwork, but they could not get into the labs to practice what they were learning.

“I was really thankful that Clark opened our shop back up for us,” he says. “The welders out there working in the industry are still working during COVID. I was at a stalemate. In limbo. I couldn't work. I couldn't do my welding [studies] to further my career.”

“I was one of the few COVID affected positively,” Barton says. “I was juggling school and working. Now I can focus on school.”

Visit www.clark.edu/cc/welding to learn more about the Welding Technologies program.

Clark College supports voting



Oswald shows off the new ballot drop box on Clark College's main campus. *Clark College/Susan Parrish*

A permanent ballot drop box has been installed on Clark College's main campus. The walk-up ballot box is in the Red 3 parking lot, near the flagpole and south of the Penguin Union Building.

"Clark College has always served as a hub of civic engagement in this community," said Clark College President Dr. Karin Edwards. "We're excited to be able to continue this tradition by having our campus become a point of access to the democratic process."

The new ballot box is one of 22 permanent ballot drop boxes in Clark County. These are available 24 hours a day from October 16 through 8 p.m. on Election Day (November 3). Find locations

of all ballot drop boxes in Clark County on the county's website. Use this Google Maps widget to help find directions to the drop box closest to you.

Election Day is Tuesday, November 3.

- Mail-in ballots must be **postmarked** by Election Day.
- Drop-off ballots must be **delivered** by 8 p.m. Election Day.

If you wish to return your voted ballot in person on or before Election Day, take it to Clark County Elections Office, 1408 Franklin Street, Vancouver. Hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Election Day. To reduce the spread of COVID-19, masks and social distancing are required for in-person services.

Finding his wavelength



Clark College student Nick Gibson, *left*, interviews Shannon Chasteen during his internship with Oregon Public Radio. *Photo courtesy of Nick Gibson.*

Clark College sophomore Nick Gibson successfully pursued two hands-on community journalism opportunities over the summer. The experience he gained will enhance his job as editor-in-chief of Clark's student news magazine, *The Indy*, for the 2020-21 academic year.

His first project was working as a news intern at *The Columbian*, Vancouver's daily newspaper. The paid internship was provided by the Dee Ann Finken Fund through Clark College Foundation.

NPR's Next Generation Radio

Gibson's second summer project was being selected by Oregon Public Broadcasting to participate in National Public Radio's

Next Generation Radio Project for outstanding college journalists. Now in its 20th year, NPR Next Gen selects emerging journalists who are either still in school or recently graduated and provides them with five days of training to produce a radio news piece.

Clark journalism professor and *Indy* adviser Beth Slovic encouraged Gibson to apply to Next Gen. Gibson applied, but was doubtful that a community college student would be selected.

"I didn't believe I had any chance of getting this NPR fellowship experience," he says. "I don't have access to the equipment or the training that these big institutions have."

"I like to think *The Indy* lets students follow their interest," Slovic says. "I knew radio was Nick's primary interest. I'm proud of the work Nick did with the project. I think it was great preparation for his work at *The Indy*, and I know he's super-energized to share his enthusiasm for telling people's stories with the rest of the staff."

Despite his initial concerns, Gibson was encouraged that another community college journalist, Kanani Cortez from Portland Community College, also was selected to participate in his Next Generation cohort.

Gibson's NPR project told the COVID-19 story of Shannon Chasteen, chef de cuisine for Portland's Centers for the Arts. When the pandemic shut down restaurants and event venues, Chasteen was furloughed indefinitely. Looking for something productive to do with her time off, Chasteen began volunteering to cook at Blanchet House, a nonprofit organization that feeds and houses people in need in downtown Portland.

When Gibson went to Blanchet House to interview Chasteen, she was nervous. She had never been interviewed before.

“It was really about making Shannon comfortable,” Gibson says. “It’s a non-narrated piece so I had to rely on Shannon to tell her story.”

His next challenge was to edit his 45-minute interview down to a four-minute story. OPB provided journalists, editors, and illustrators to support Gibson and the other Next Gen journalists. He was given a short lesson in editing with Adobe Edition software. He had only five days to complete the project: interview, audio editing, taking photos, and writing the print story.

Gibson says he appreciates the network and support provided by the 600 journalists who have participated in the Next Gen project over the past 20 years. They often share internship and job opportunities across the U.S.

Finding his niche—and his passion



Nick Gibson. *Photo courtesy of Nick Gibson.*

Gibson’s original career plan was not journalism, but psychology. After graduating from high school in Montrose, Colorado in 2016, he received a full-ride scholarship to Colorado Mesa University in Grand Junction, about an hour from home. Settling into his new city and the university campus, he

started his classes. Whether it was the coursework, the school, or the timing—or a combination—it didn't take long for Gibson to realize it wasn't a good fit. After his first term, he took a break from school, but he stayed in Grand Junction for about a year working and getting involved in the community.

He found purpose, connection, and perhaps even his passion when he started volunteering at 100.3 KWSI-LP, a fledgling community radio station. In sharp contrast to how his university classes had felt, radio clicked for him. First, he helped paint the studio and set the antennae. After the station's engineer taught him to work the radio equipment, Gibson hosted a music show, and then a League of Women Voters program. He did stories on ballot issues and teen suicide.

Gibson explains, "Volunteering at the community radio station was a life-changing experience. I realized I was having fun and decided to get into audio storytelling."

He says, "I've always worked best by doing. I think journalism is a lot like cooking. It's best to be in the kitchen, doing it every day. I've always been hands-on, getting to know my community, getting to know how to work the board."

His success at his volunteer gig at the radio station led him down a new career path as an audio journalist. He relocated to Vancouver and moved into his aunt's home to save money. After he learned about Clark College's journalism program, he established Washington residency, which made school more affordable. Eventually, he moved into his own apartment down the street from campus.

The resiliency of students: Learning to pivot and seek help

Gibson was ready to try college again, but he didn't want to

repeat the negative experience he'd had in Colorado. Recognizing he needed to develop coping tools to help him be successful in navigating the challenges of college, he sought therapy. One of the tools he developed in therapy was practicing mindfulness.

"It changed my life," Gibson says. "It helped get me to a place to be able to go back to school."

Three years after his high school graduation, he started attending Clark College in fall of 2019.

Gibson, 22, says, "I understand I'm a couple of steps behind some people I graduated high school with." Then he adds, "But there is no timeline."

Pursuing a journalism career



Nick Gibson taking photos as part of his Oregon Public Radio story. *Photo courtesy of Nick Gibson*

His first quarter at Clark, he took Journalism 101 taught by Beth Slovic "because I knew I wanted to pursue journalism."

The next term, he joined *The Indy* staff. On his first day, he produced an audio story about the faculty strike.

Gibson says, "I wanted to bring my experience at the radio station. As editor-in-chief, that's one of my goals—to diversify *The Indy's* content. With a digital format, you must have engaging content that people want to stay with. Beth (Slovic) is there guiding you. She's an advisor in the best sense. It's student-run."

Slovic agrees. "I don't control what they do. I give them instruction and assignments in class, but I ensure my assignments don't bleed over into their stories for *The Indy*."

Clark's journalism program teaches students to report and write, but also to produce multimedia stories, including audio and video.

"Entry-level journalists today are expected to do it all, so I give students the freedom and the tools to experiment with a lot of different story formats," Slovic says. "Students like Nick, who come to Clark with radio experience, can take it as far as they want. We have had training in podcasting in past quarters in that class, and our newsroom includes podcasting equipment and dedicated space for recording."

She says learning to pitch stories is a key focus during class for *The Indy*.

"Students collaborate over Zoom, phone, Slack, Canvas to share story ideas. As part of the class, they're required to write story pitches. The editors—Nick and his staff—evaluate the pitches and make assignments. We have new students joining the class every quarter, so not a lot of experience pitching. That's one of the things we practice the most."

Gibson says he is grateful for his Clark instructors: "Professors at Clark are so engaged and passionate about their subjects, and they're in the field doing research. I think they really care about their students. They understand the circumstances of their students who are working or are parents."

At the end of NPR's Next Gen production week, Gibson and the other journalists were asked to write a reflection piece. Gibson wrote about the value of community college journalists and community colleges in general. Read Gibson's reflection [here](#).

"[C]ommunity college students are a valuable part of this industry and should be recognized as such," he wrote in his reflection. "Those students are often working with limited funding and limited access to equipment while juggling other responsibilities like parenting or a part-time job. When those students are overlooked it leads to a lack of diversity in newsrooms, which in turn leads to underserved and under-covered communities."

Gibson says, "When you talk about community college students, you're talking about lower-income, many POC [people of color], first-generation college students. I love my peers. I want them all to go on to do great things."

Meanwhile, Gibson is planning for his own great things. After he graduates from Clark, he plans to transfer to WSU Pullman and continue pursuing his journalism education at the Edward R. Murrow School of Journalism and Northwest Public Broadcasting.

Links

- Listen to Nick's Next Generation Radio Project story on NPR:
<https://opb2020.nextgenradio.org/furloughed-chef-volunteers-to-feed-the-needy/>
- Read Gibson's *Columbian* stories:
<https://www.columbian.com/author/ngibson/>
- Contribute to the Dee Anne Finken Scholarship:
<https://www.clarkcollegefoundation.org/campaign/give/>
- Read the Clark College *Indy*: <https://clarkindy.com/>

Dental clinic re-opens



Pat Niesz, 73, has been coming to Clark College's dental clinic for three years. On this visit, student Stefanie Hatley took x-rays and cleaned Niesz's teeth. Hatley would have graduated Spring quarter. Now she will graduate at the end of August. *Photo: Clark College/Susan Parrish*

For 51 years, Clark College's dental hygiene clinic provided affordable dental service to the community—until the COVID-19 pandemic forced it to close in spring term. Now, thanks to careful planning by the college's dental hygiene program, the Firstenburg Dental Hygiene Education and Care Services is back open to serve the community and train the next generation of dental caregivers.

The clinic is a win-win for both the community and the students.

“It’s a two-way street,” says Program Director Kristi Taylor. “We’re helping the community, but they’re helping the students gain real-world experience. We’ve set up our clinic so students have the feel of a private practice. Our goal when students leave here is to be prepared to walk into a private practice. They are very job-ready.”

COVID-19 safety measures added

Before the clinic could reopen, Taylor and instructors scrambled to adapt the lab classes and clinic to meet safety guidelines prescribed by the Centers for Disease Control, Washington State Department of Health, and American Dental Association to protect students, staff and patients.

“It’s a lot of changes across the dental and medical fields,” says Taylor.

The program was helped by the fact that many safety procedures were already in place. Even before the pandemic, students and instructors wore face masks in the clinic when working directly with patients. Frequent handwashing and wearing gloves were also standard.

“We have always been very conscious of infection control,” Taylor says.

Since COVID-19, the program has implemented these new safety measures:

- Scrub caps now are mandatory.
- Clear plastic face shields are worn by students or instructors who are within six feet of a patient.
- Two-feet-tall clear plastic partitions were installed to separate individual stations (called “operatories”) from each other and from common spaces.

- Following social distancing guidelines, the clinic has reduced the number of patients and students on site. The clinic has 30 operatories. Normally, 25 students are working at a time, and they treat 22 patients. Due to COVID restrictions, the students and patients are divided into two groups, and only 10 to 15 patients are scheduled at a time.
- N-95 masks will be required when the clinic is using aerosols again. For now, the program has opted out of using aerosols in the clinic because they potentially could spread COVID-19 particles through the air. Normally, student hygienists use aerosols to polish teeth and to cut out decay before filling cavities. During the pandemic, if a patient needs a filling, the clinic refers them to an outside dental office.

“These precautions are probably long overdue,” Taylor says. “I think we’ll see many of these safety measures remain [after COVID-19].”

Students were assigned patients to call and explain the safety protocols put in place. Some patients chose not to come into the clinic during the pandemic.



Dr. Eugene Sakai works with student Shaylin Breen in Clark College's dental clinic. *Photo: Clark College/Susan Parrish.*

A dentist oversees every clinic session. On this day Dr. Eugene Sakai, retired from his own dental practice, is on site to examine patients and diagnose issues, do soft-tissue exams, and look for disease.

Dr. Sakai says, "COVID is changing things a lot."

CDC guidelines recommend that people maintain six feet distance from others.

"We cannot do our work from six feet away," Taylor says. "A lot of active hygienists have decided to retire due to COVID."

As a result, Taylor says, the industry is short of hygienists. This is good news for Clark's student hygienists.

Taking care of students

Public health restrictions meant instructors and students worked remotely Spring quarter. Before COVID-19, students had all face-to-face classes, except for one online class per quarter. It took team effort to adapt Spring classes for remote learning. By moving the didactic portion into spring and the labs/clinics into summer, instructors didn't have to create many instruction videos.

Dental hygiene students who were scheduled to graduate Spring term had missed an entire quarter of crucial hands-on instruction, both in the lab and working with patients in the clinic. Taylor and her team got to work figuring out how to schedule clinical hours for all students while also observing the social distancing protocols that reduced the number of students allowed to work simultaneously and the number of patients allowed in the clinic.

By the time dental hygiene students returned to campus on June 21, all the lead instructors had put together a plan for their respective clinics.

"We all worked together to create the overall schedule of courses that included all the labs and clinics they had missed in the spring," Taylor says.



Dental hygiene instructor Amy Johnson holds the color-coded schedule her department created to ensure all students got the required lab time to graduate.

Then all the plans were compiled onto a detailed, color-coded schedule to ensure all students completed their required hours for labs including local anesthesia, nitrous oxide, radiology, cleaning and clinic. Implementing social distancing while compressing all the labs and clinical experience into the shorter summer schedule has required most students and faculty to work six-day weeks, and to sometimes work Sunday too.

“This summer has been full of catching all the students up on their hands-on skills,” Taylor says.

“It’s been really hard on the students,” adds instructor Amy Johnson.

The Bachelor of Applied Science in dental hygiene is a four-year degree. The dental portion takes two years to complete.

Each year about 100 potential students from as far away as Seattle and California apply for the program's 25 slots.

"Students can come to Clark, pay a much lower tuition [than at a four-year university], and get the same training," Taylor says.

Seniors will graduate at the end of August after completing their hands-on clinics.

Taylor says some students already have jobs waiting as soon as they pass their six clinical boards and get their license to practice.

"In recent years, all of our students have found jobs," Taylor says. "I get four to six phone calls a week from dental offices looking for hygienists. I'm extremely happy we could return to the lab."

Clark's dental hygiene clinic is open to the public and offers affordable dental care to adults and children. To schedule an appointment, call 360-992-2158. Learn more at www.clark.edu/dentalhygiene.