

# Maximum Annual Leave Accrual

The amount of vacation leave *classified employees* are allowed to accumulate is limited. Once a year, on each employee's anniversary date, Clark College's computer system checks leave balances and automatically eliminates any hours in excess of 240. For more details refer to your WPEA contract.

The amount of vacation leave that *administrative and exempt employees* are allowed to accumulate is also limited to 240 hours. Any amount in excess of 240 is removed from the system on October 1 each year.

All employees whose vacation balances (shown on paycheck stubs) exceed, or are approaching, 240 hours, should plan ahead with their supervisors to use excess vacation hours before the cut-off date.

For further information contact Human Resources.

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## **SICK LEAVE BUYOUT – Deadline is January 31, 2015**

Under the provisions of Administrative Procedure 635.025, the AHE CBA, and the WPEA CBA, eligible employees who have balances of more than 480 hours of compensable sick leave as of December 31, 2014, may choose to convert unused sick leave hours accrued in 2014 to monetary compensation. Any sick leave hours used during 2014 are deducted from the hours that are available to convert.

Compensation is calculated at the rate of 25 percent of the

employee's current hourly rate. Employees who choose to participate in the buyout must be compensated for *all* eligible sick leave hours earned in 2014, not just a portion of them.

Employees considering buyout should be aware that the College offers a VEBA program to retirees which allows sick leave buyout dollars to be transferred to a VEBA account, tax free, to be used to pay for medical expenses during retirement. To be eligible for VEBA an employee must retire from state service and meet other requirements. For more details and eligibility requirements for VEBA contact a benefits representative in Human Resources.

Sick leave buyout application forms are available in Human Resources. The deadline for submitting completed forms is January 31, 2015. Payment will be received on February 25, 2015. Please call **Thao Schmidt, x2628**, or **Guisela Eberle, x2119**, for additional information.

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## The Race is On!



Members of Team Penguin 2013 show off their tees. (Organizer Joe Jenkins is

standing in the center of the front row.) *Photo: Clark College/Alison Pezanoski-Browne*

Once again, academic advisor Joe Jenkins is organizing a Clark College team to run in the next Shamrock Run, held March 15 in Portland. Last year, 96 members of Team Penguin completed one of the courses—which range from a 3.1-mile walk to a 13.1-mile half-marathon run—raising \$480 for the Alex Montoya Scholarship Fund at Clark College Foundation. Interested in learning more? Jenkins has created a Facebook page for team members to share information, schedule training runs, and cheer each other on.

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## **Fall 2014 Classified Staff Excellence Award**



Heather White

Congratulations to Heather White, recipient of the 2014 Fall Quarter Classified Staff Excellence Award! The following is taken from her award nomination:

**Heather White** is the Program Support Supervisor for Disability Support Services. She has been with the college since 2002.

Heather provides a tremendous service to the community by facilitating communication between hearing and deaf consumers. Heather interprets and provides accessibility for campus events professionally and holds herself to the high standards of skill that she expects from all of her interpreters. Her performance in her work is the very definition of "excellence."

Heather always has a great attitude. She is compassionate to everyone who comes in seeking help. She takes the time to know the specific needs of the deaf students and the interpreters, and matches the student's needs with the interpreter's strengths. What is important to the student is important to Heather.

Heather works to improve our community in many ways. She is involved with the Sign Language Interpreter Program Advisory Committee at Portland Community College and is on the Washington School for the Deaf Post High School Advisory Committee as well as the State Deaf Transfer Fair Local Advisory Committee. She is also on the Commencement committee and provides the interpretation at Commencement to make it accessible to deaf students, faculty, staff and audience members. She has taken on the role of placing interpreters for Washington State University Vancouver and Lower Columbia College.

Heather is a wonderful person to work with and for. Whether someone is a new or veteran interpreter, she makes sure we all feel respected and supported. She always listens actively and attentively and looks at each person as an individual.

## **Congratulations to all of the fall quarter nominees:**

**Vanessa Meyer:** Vanessa is doing a great job in the department. She pays attention to details and maintains the office and its immediate environment, including the mailroom, elegantly. Vanessa is cheerful, polite and shows courtesy to the faculty. When help is needed, she takes prompt action. Her messages are clear and precise. Everything she does is orderly.

**Susan Taylor:** Susan is in charge of all admissions at Clark International Programs and she always manages to get everything in order to perfection. She wants to help every person she comes in contact with. Whether it is a student or a co-worker or someone outside of our campus, she is willing to take all the time needed to make you feel comfortable and confident. Susan respects everyone. She is always the bigger person and is always polite, no matter what the situation.

**Thor Tesdale:** Thor works tirelessly to maintain the interior and exterior appearance of the college. He takes great pride in his work and makes sure the job is completed to satisfaction and on time. Thor prioritizes jobs so that the most pressing deadlines are met first. He is very personable and is willing to “bend” his schedule as much as possible to accommodate the needs of other individuals. Thor’s calm and respectful personality is a beneficial addition to Facilities Services. The personal thank-you notes he has received are additional evidence of his high level of service.

The College Community will celebrate all 2014-2015 nominees and recipients at the Annual Ice Cream Social.

The Classified Staff Excellence Award was established in 2005 and recognizes classified staff who have demonstrated exemplary work performance, outstanding customer service, a positive and cooperative spirit, and special achievements or contributions to the college community. Thanks to the support of the Clark College Foundation, each quarter’s recipient receives a \$400 cash award.

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# Important Retirement Plan News



When benefits-eligible employees first enroll in a retirement plan here at Clark, they choose between plan options that are specific to their job classification. Some plans require you choose a contribution rate, and usually

that contribution rate is irrevocable. In January, however, some employees (primarily faculty and classified) may have the option to make a change.

## FACULTY

In January 2015, faculty employees who are participants in the Teacher's Retirement System Plan 3 (TRS Plan 3) will have the opportunity to change their contribution rate as they have in past years every January. If you are a TRS Plan 3 member this is the LAST time you will have the opportunity to change your rate without changing employers. You can do this by completing a **TRS Plan 3 Contribution Rate Change Form** and turning it in to HR between January 1 and 31. Forms are also available online at [www.drs.wa.gov](http://www.drs.wa.gov) or in HR.

Most benefits-eligible faculty members are on the TRS plan or TIAA-CREF. If you don't know which plan you are on check your paystub, which you can access from <https://www.clark.edu/EHT>.

## CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEES & OTHERS

Each January, some employees who are in the Public Employees

Retirement System Plan 2 (PERS Plan 2) have the opportunity to transfer to PERS Plan 3. Classified employees are most often enrolled in either PERS 2 or PERS 3. Check your paystub if you don't remember which plan you are on. You can transfer if you were hired before 3/1/2002. When you log in to your account in [www.drs.wa.gov](http://www.drs.wa.gov) you will see a message if you are able to transfer. If you transfer, you cannot go back to Plan 2. Also, if you are a TRS Plan 2 member (very few of us are), you have the opportunity each January to transfer to Plan 3. To educate yourself on the differences between the two plans go to [www.drs.wa.gov](http://www.drs.wa.gov). To transfer to Plan 3, complete the **Member Information Form** and turn it in to HR by January 31, 2015.

**TIAA-CREF PARTICIPANTS** (Administrative/Exempt and Faculty employees)

We will be offering individual sessions next quarter on January 27, 28, & 29 on the main campus in HR. Watch your email for an invitation and information about how to register.

### **EMPLOYEES IN A DRS PLAN CLOSE TO RETIREMENT**

The 2015 Retirement Planning Seminar Schedule is now available from the Department of Retirement Systems (DRS). If you are a member of SERS, PERS or TRS and within five years of retirement you may want to register for and attend a seminar. The schedule of seminars in Washington for 2015 is now **online**. If you do not find a seminar near your location or on a date that is convenient for you, you may be interested in viewing our **recorded seminar** online. This seminar was recorded in Wenatchee on August 9, 2014, and is available for viewing at any time.

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# Farewell, Phil!



Phil Sheehan, *center*, endures some light roasting with characteristic aplomb during his retirement party.

Is there anyone at Clark College who can remember the college without Phil Sheehan? Not likely—the Director of Information Technology, who retired on September 26 after 38 years of service, was walking the campus long before he began working here. In fact, he was a regular presence even before he started taking classes here in 1966: His father, Bill Sheehan, taught psychology at Clark for 24 years, and young Phil was a frequent visitor as a child.

One way or another, Clark College has been part of Phil Sheehan's life—and vice versa—almost since he was born. So it's no wonder that PUB 161 was filled with people wishing him a fond farewell during a retirement party held September 24. The crowd included not just current colleagues, but also



former colleagues who had preceded Sheehan into retirement or moved onto other workplaces—a testament to the connections he had forged with so many people at the college over the past four decades.

The speeches began almost immediately, and were long and heartfelt. Clark College President Bob Knight, who often composes “odes” to outgoing employees, recited a truly epic one in honor of Sheehan. “There aren’t too many in Penguin Nation history,” it read in part, “who have the makings of Phil’s pedigree.”

After graduating with his Associate of Arts degree from Clark in 1968, Sheehan earned his bachelor’s degree in Communications from the University of Washington in 1970, then returned to Clark to earn an Associate of Applied Science. He began teaching Electronics at Clark in 1976; in 1992, he took on the newly created position of Director of Computing Services at the college, which eventually became Information Technology. He earned an M.B.A. from Marylhurst University in 2002. In 2006, he was tapped to serve as Interim Vice President of Administrative Services, a position he held from for more than two years.

“I just can’t think of anyone who has had more of an impact at the college,” said Associate Vice President for Planning & Effectiveness Shanda Diehl before presenting Sheehan with a handmade quilt made of Clark College T-shirts. “In 1992, technology didn’t rule our world. And now it does. I know we all appreciate how meticulous you’ve been.”

“You go into a classroom here and expect the technology to work, and work well,” added Vice President of Instruction Dr. Tim Cook. “And I know that’s in large part because of Phil.”

Sheehan was characteristically soft-spoken and matter-of-fact when taking over the mic. “Clark has been a great place to work,” he said to the room full of well-wishers. “When we

started out, we just were using mainframe computers. Personal computers hadn't even come on the scene. And then we started having networks. So it's been a real roller coaster. It's been a great job—never a dull moment.”

*Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley*

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## Exceptional Classified Staff Awards



Melissa Williams receives her Exceptional Classified Staff Award during Opening Day 2014.

Opening Day is traditionally the occasion for announcing the

yearly Exceptional Classified Staff Awards, which recognize two classified employees for their contributions to Clark College. Recipients receive a glass plaque and \$1,000, funded through an anonymous donor's contributions to the Clark College Foundation.

For their "exemplary work performance, outstanding service to the college, a positive and cooperative spirit, and/or special achievements or contributions to the college," Enrollment Services Program Coordinator Melissa Williams and Facilities Services Custodian Derald Richards were named the winners of the 2014-2015 Clark College Exceptional Classified Staff Awards.



President Knight presents Derald Richards with his Classified Excellence Award.

### **Derald Richards, Custodian**

Derald Richards was described in his nomination as "consistently performing at a level above and beyond the scope of his job."

While Richards is naturally a quiet and retiring person, those who work with him regularly at Clark College at Columbia Tech Center have learned to value his cheerful attitude, helpful suggestions, and the way he takes pride in everything that is

asked of him. One nominator wrote, “He will drop whatever he is doing to assist staff, faculty, or students. No matter how busy he is, he always greets everyone with a smile and never a complaint.”

Another coworker summed Richards up with just two words: “Super Wonderful!!!”



President Knight presents Melissa Williams with her Exceptional Classified Staff Award.

### **Melissa Williams, Enrollment Services Program Coordinator**

Whether they know it or not, probably every student who registers for classes at Clark has been supported in some way or another by Melissa Williams. Her nomination states that she “consistently goes far beyond what is expected of her job title to see that students, faculty, college staff, and the community get what they need. She earnestly engages in students’ experiences at Clark and has helped to create an environment of focused customer service, communication, and teamwork. Her communication skills have been instrumental in explaining policies and procedures, assisting new staff, keeping her coworkers in the loop when changes occur, and

keeping everyone up to date on a daily basis. Her approach, keeping students as the forefront of what we do, has improved and enhanced Clark College's ability to meet the changing needs of our student population. ... In truth, she is the very definition of an exemplary employee."

Other nominees for 2014-2015 were: Scott Coffie, eLearning, Information Technology Specialist 4; Rose Gardner, Administrative Services, Office Assistant 3; Silvia Marinova, Business Technology, Instruction & Classroom Support Technician 2; Vanessa Meyer, Behavioral & Social Sciences, Secretary Senior; Lynn Vanhoomissen, Security & Safety, Program Support Supervisor 1; Jennifer Vernon, Early Childhood Education, Program Specialist 3; and Heather White, Disability Support Services, Program Support Services Supervisor 2.

The Clark College Foundation instituted the yearly Exceptional Classified Staff and quarterly Classified Staff Excellence awards in 1997 to recognize exceptional staff members. Nominations may be submitted by classified, administrative and exempt staff; faculty; students; alumni; retirees; college trustees; and Foundation directors.

*Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley*

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## **Presidential Coins**





President Bob Knight introduces the Presidential Coin recipients on Opening Day 2014.

In 2007, Clark College President Bob Knight introduced a new honor at Clark College: the presidential coin.

The coin is given to faculty and staff members who provide exemplary service to Clark students, the college and the community. The honorees are decided by the president and are kept secret until the names are announced—generally on Opening Day in the fall or during the annual State of the College address.

Five Clark College employees received Presidential Coins during Opening Day 2014 on September 10. They were:

## Kael Godwin



As a Research and Analytics Professional working within the college's Office of Planning & Effectiveness, Kael Godwin "transforms the way we use data so that we can make better decisions," said President Knight. In his seven years at Clark, Godwin has earned a reputation as someone who's "approachable and responsible ... and will do anything to help the college, even if it is outside his job description."

Knight also cited Godwin's key role in supporting the implementation of the college's new customer relations management software, and noted that many people at the college have remarked upon his strong work ethic and commitment to the college.



## Ron Hirt



Fiscal Analyst Ron Hirt began working at Clark College in 1983. In more than 30 years of service, he has become known not just for his daily runs around campus—no matter what the weather—but also for his expertise in finding any kind of information located in the college’s financial management system, regardless of how buried, obscure or complex it is. He has been a key player in many of the financial audits that the college has undergone – and passed, always helping to ensure there are no findings.

“The guy is meticulous,” President Knight said. “You can ask him for any kind of file and he knows right where it is. When I first came to Clark as a vice president, he was one of the people I knew I could go to for help.”

## **Susan Muir**



Student Affairs Administrative Assistant Susan Muir began working at Clark in 2007; through the years, her service to Clark has spanned many areas pertaining to her department, including retention programs, student conduct, behavioral intervention team, and the Veterans Resource Center. “In every situation, she follows through to make sure the students and programs are well-served,” said President Knight. “Her knowledge, skills, and abilities are known across the college

because of her willingness to provide a helping hand.”

Knight added that Muir is known for creating a calm and welcoming environment in her office that helps support students who arrive there in crisis, as well as for being willing to share her time and energy (not to mention her impressive stash of chocolate) with visitors to Student Affairs.



**Vicki Cheng**

Vicki Cheng, an Administrative Assistant in the Workforce, Career & Technical Education department, has been a Clark employee for 32 years. Her depth of experience is a great asset to her department and allows her to prioritize day-to-day issues effectively.

“She is always willing to step up and assist anyone who walks through the office door with impeccable customer service and a genuine desire to help,” said Knight. “She always makes a point to know and understand the projects across the unit so that she is capable of answering questions that may arise, and often offers suggestions that improve the end product.”

## Patti Serrano



Business Administration professor Patti Serrano is no stranger to honors at Clark: She was named one of the college's 2012-2013 Exceptional Faculty Award recipients. "She has been a rock in her division for 33 years and counting," said President Knight. "Through her leadership, she has formally and informally mentored faculty, staff and administrators."

Serrano has been a key participant in such important collegewide efforts as strategic planning, accreditation, and course development. Currently, she is leading her department's efforts to develop a new Bachelor of Applied Science degree in Management. "She is admired and respected by students, faculty, and staff alike," said President Knight.

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# Helping little Penguins start

# the school year right



Eleven years—that is how long Clark employees have been generously donating backpacks and supplies to school-aged children of Clark College students through the Annual Backpack Project. This year, employees sponsored 76 backpacks, adding to a cumulative total of well over 600 backpacks collected so far.





Once again, the Office of Planning and Effectiveness oversaw the donation process. Student parents were identified by staff members from Financial Aid, Child & Family Studies, Eligibility Programs, and Veteran Affairs. In August, employees from across the college volunteered to purchase and fill backpacks. Each donor was given a shopping list that

included basic information about the child—age, gender, favorite colors and themes—as well as specific items that child would need at school. The backpacks were presented to their recipients before the beginning of the school year.

Through emails and thank-you notes, students expressed their gratitude at receiving the backpacks. One parent's response expressed the realities faced by many families with both children and parents in school: "I received the backpacks for the kids today and I am overwhelmed with gratitude," she wrote. "I didn't realize that supplies would be included. ... I appreciate the support. It was a difficult decision to come back and finish my degree. There is a lot of family sacrifice involved, [and] gestures like these make a big difference. Thank you."



Another student wrote, "As a single working mother, this is a great stress relief." Yet another card read, "I'm currently homeless, so this helps so much."

The children also expressed delight as they picked up backpacks stuffed full of supplies. As one child put it: “I really like it, and can’t wait to use it for school.”

*Story and photos submitted by Susan Maxwell*

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## Exceptional Faculty, Exceptional Stories



Clockwise from top left: Kelly Fielding, Chris Martins, Sarah Theberge, and Jim Wilkins-Luton.

A professor who never planned on going to college, A Web-savvy wiz who stays in touch with students on Twitter, an aspiring academic who turned his back on the ivory tower in favor of

more hands-on teaching, and an experienced clinician who takes the mystery out of a much-misunderstood subject—these are the recipients of the 2013-2014 Clark College Exceptional Faculty Awards, which were announced during the college's 2014 Commencement ceremony and officially presented to their recipients during Opening Day activities on Sept. 10.

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:

- Kelly Fielding: The voice of experience
- Chris Martin: The technophile with human feeling
- Sarah Theberge: The accidental professor
- Jim Wilkins-Luton: The book-lover gone digital

The awards are made possible through an endowed trust fund established by the Washington State Legislature and the Clark College Exceptional Faculty Endowment Fund, which was established in 1993. 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*