

Congratulations, Class of 2014!



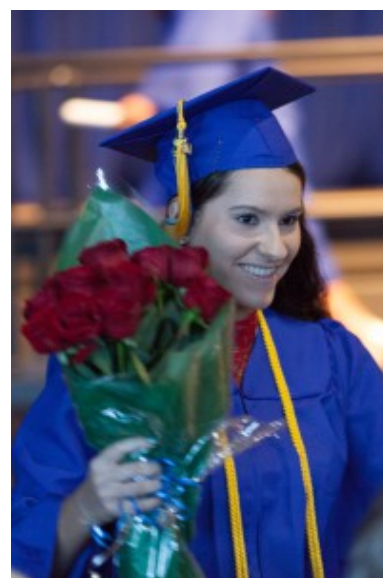
Student speaker Michelle Brincefield addresses her fellow graduates during the 2014 commencement ceremony.

Clark College honored its 78th graduating class—the largest in the college’s 80-year history—at the 2014 Clark College Commencement ceremony held Thursday evening, June 19, at the Sleep Country Amphitheater.

Approximately 2,100 degrees and certificates were conferred on the next generation of our community’s workers, leaders, and scholars—up from 1,900 the year before. Approximately 715 graduates participated in the commencement ceremony, including 235 Running Start graduates—again, a new record for the college, which has the largest Running Start program in the state.

“Tonight we are here to celebrate your individual accomplishment, and more than that, we are here to celebrate a community of accomplishment,” said Clark College President Robert K. Knight in his opening remarks to the Class of 2014. “Our community needs each and every one of you with your individual skills and talents.”

Clark College Board of Trustees Chair Royce Pollard echoed that thought in his own remarks, saying “We know our future is in good hands with you, just as our community has been in good hands with Clark College alumni for eight decades now.” The former Vancouver mayor then asked the graduates to raise their right hands and repeat the following pledge: “I will never forget that I am a member of the Penguin Nation.”



Presidential Scholarship recipient Natasha Hambrook takes her seat after receiving her diploma.

For the second year in a row, the ceremony’s student speaker was chosen through an essay contest open to all 2014

graduates. Outgoing ASCC president Dena Brill introduced Michelle Brincefield, who entered Clark through Running Start and is planning on attending New Mexico Highlands University on a full athletic scholarship.

“Wherever life takes you after today, you can always take pride in knowing that you have a college degree,” Brincefield said. “No one can take that accomplishment away from you.”

During the ceremony, Clark College President Robert K. Knight announced the names of the recipients of the 2014 Exceptional Faculty Awards. The 2014 awardees are Kelly Fielding, instructor of psychology; Chris Martin, instructor of computer technology and computer graphics technology; Sarah Theberge, professor of early childhood education; and Jim Wilkins-Luton, professor of English.

Knight also announced the recipient of the 2014-2015 Community College President’s Award, which is given to a Clark College graduate who is transferring to a WSU Vancouver degree program and who demonstrated leadership potential, a commitment to community service, and academic achievement. Natasha Hambrook will receive full-time tuition that is renewable for one additional year.

This year’s commencement speaker was *ABC Evening News* anchor Byron Pitts, who delivered an inspiring speech about the importance of helping others. Pitts began by explaining his own difficult beginnings with education: Until age 12, he was functionally illiterate, and it took the unflagging support of his single mother to help push him toward academic success.



2014 commencement
keynote speaker
Byron Pitts

Pitts said that while some of that night's graduating class may have had an easy time earning their degrees, he suspected many had had rough roads to travel. "I imagine there are some graduates here tonight who heard too often, 'Not you, now now, not yet. You're not good enough. You're not ready,'" he said, adding that he called such graduates "Children of the Storm."

"To you, the Children of the Storm—to you for whom this night was not guaranteed—you especially have a responsibility, I think, to allow somebody else to live their dream," he said. "Whether it's in nursing or as a machinist or going on to continue your education—whatever it is, in that space where you stand, make life better for someone else."

Pitts received a standing ovation, and it was clear that many attendees found his message inspiring, as posts on social media soon showed.

Photos and Video: Clark College/Jenny Shadley.

Watch the entire ceremony on CVTV.

Something to Smile About



A crowd applauds the ribbon cutting of the new Firstenberg Family Dental Hygiene Education and Care Center.

The Firstenberg Family Dental Hygiene Education and Care Center officially opened with the cutting of a ribbon during a ceremony on June 17, 2014. About 75 guests joined President Robert K. Knight, dental faculty and students, Clark College trustees and Clark College Foundation board of directors to thank individuals, foundations and groups that provided funding for upgrades and new equipment.

Knight thanked the dental faculty, staff and students for doubling up on lab time and dedicating themselves to the refurbishing process. He noted that schedules were extra demanding—some classes ran from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m.—because of space restrictions.

At \$1.5 million, The Firstenburg Foundation provided the lead gift for the care center. Knight noted how The Firstenburg Foundation is an example of partnerships that make Clark County and Southwest Washington a better place to live and work.

“The Firstenburg Foundation is supporting enhancements to a facility that helps our students get the experience of working in a modern dental setting. Our students, in turn, are sought-after to fill dental hygiene jobs in the region and beyond. The Firstenburg Foundation, therefore, has a direct impact on the health and welfare of our region and on Clark’s ability to maximize student learning,” he said.

Bill Firstenburg said his father was a stalwart supporter of Clark College and would have been proud of the new facility.

“Some would have called him conservative, but he didn’t mind spending money if he got value out of it. You’ve got value here to the community. The Dental Hygiene program in particular, gives support and care to those who can’t afford it,” he said.

Dental student and All-Washington Academic nominee Amelia Longbons ’14 said an important lesson she learned was the overall health effects proper dental care has on society. “Dental hygiene is about prevention and attaining and keeping good health. This facility helps students learn so we can help improve the health of the community.”

Blake Bowers, the dean of Business and Health Sciences, said Clark’s Dental Hygiene department and its Clark County partners offer \$600,000 worth of free dental services to

children during its annual Children's Dental Health Day, in addition to other outreach efforts.

"There is a lot of caring and compassion that occurs within our program at all levels," he said.

The renovations included adding six more patient chairs, new equipment and technology, paperless charting and an advanced radiology suite. The clinic now complies with federal patient privacy and confidentiality requirements so that they can continue to serve thousands of community members.

Nearly \$3.3 million in donations from a variety of entities—including The Firstenburg Foundation, Roy and Virginia Andersen Endowment, M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust, John A. and Helen M. Cartales Foundation and many others—made the renovations possible.

Upgrades were necessary in order for Clark to keep pace with the demand for workforce readiness and federal patient privacy rules in the dental hygiene field.

The Oregon-based company, A-dec, built custom-made work stations including modular chairs, cabinets, lights and computer monitor mounts for the space.

Clark's Dental Hygiene program provides education and access to oral health care to low-income residents. The clinic fills 3,200 appointments for 2,000 patients annually. Students serve the community by participating in oral health programs in area schools and caring for patients at the Free Clinic of Southwest Washington, Clark County Skills Center, and Share, a Vancouver-based homeless service.

See more photos on [Flickr](#)

A version of this story originally appeared on the Clark College Foundation website.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

A Night to Celebrate



Natasha Hambrook, recipient of the Community College President's Scholarship, receives her diploma from President Robert K. Knight at Thursday's commencement ceremony.

Clark College honored its 78th graduating class—the largest in the college's 80-year history—at the 2014 Clark College Commencement ceremony held Thursday evening, June 19, at the Sleep Country Amphitheater. Approximately 2,100 degrees and certificates were conferred on the next generation of our community's workers, leaders, and scholars—up from 1,900 the year before. Approximately 715 graduates participated in the commencement ceremony, including 235 Running Start graduates—again, a new record for the college, which has the largest Running Start program in the state.



Lines rapped around the amphitheater as the number of students participating in commencement reached an all time high. Linda Calvert, Associate Director of Running Start, escorted Oswald through the crowd.

During the ceremony, Clark College President Robert K. Knight announced the names of the recipients of the 2014 Exceptional Faculty Awards. The 2014 awardees are Kelly Fielding, instructor of psychology; Chris Martin, instructor of computer technology and computer graphics technology; Sarah Theberge, professor of early childhood education; and Jim Wilkins-Luton, professor of English.

Graduate Natasha Hambrook was the recipient of the 2014-2015 Community College President's Award. The annual scholarship is given to a Clark College graduate who is transferring to a WSU Vancouver degree program and who demonstrated leadership potential, a commitment to community service, and academic achievement. The scholarship award provides full-time tuition and is renewable for one additional year, essentially providing full tuition to complete a bachelor's degree.

Hambrook, who lives in Vancouver with her family and will turn 18 in July, came to Clark through Washington State's Running Start program, which allows high school students to earn college credit while still enrolled in high school. While at

Clark, she maintained a 3.98 grade point average while taking classes in Clark's challenging biology and chemistry sequences and contributing more than 15 hours a week in volunteer work. Some of that work was through her personal commitment to the Southwest Washington Humane Society, where she helps care for cats and trains other teen volunteers; Hambrook has also served as the Student Volunteer Coordinator for Clark's Service and Leadership in the Community (SLIC) program. In that role, she has organized groups of students on volunteer trips to organizations like Habitat for Humanity and Clark County Food Bank, as well as a beach-cleaning trip to Cape Disappointment State Park.



Hambrook says her commitment to community service comes both from a love of helping others and from her own family's experiences. "My family has received help from the food bank in the past, so I know there's a need for community service," she says. Like 73 percent of Clark's student body, Natasha Hambrook is a first-generation college graduate. She plans to study medicine and become a pediatric surgeon. "It feels so amazing to have won this scholarship," Hambrook said after President Knight's announcement at commencement. "I am so grateful I had the opportunity to participate in Running Start, because Clark helped shape me into the woman I am today." This year's commencement speaker was *ABC Evening News* anchor Byron Pitts, who delivered an inspiring speech about the importance of helping others.

Read more stories from Clark's commencement on Clark 24/7 early next week.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley. More photos from Clark's commencement ceremony are available on the college's Flickr site.

Helping Our Community



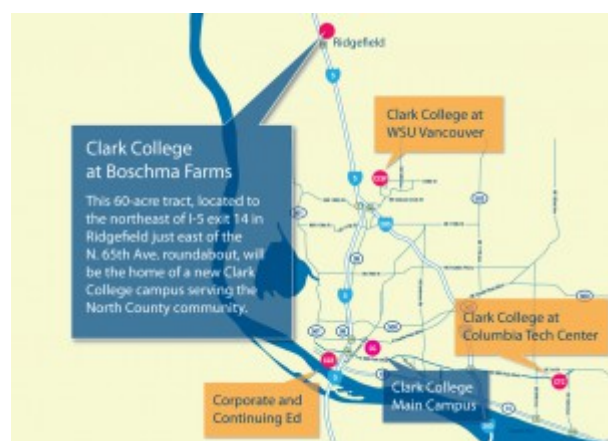
Sarah Weinberger and Edie Blakley of Clark College Career Services accept an award from the Clark College Food Bank on behalf of the college.

Clark College was recognized for volunteering more than 400 hours at the Clark County Food Bank on Monday, June 9, during the food bank's Volunteer Appreciation Night.

Clark has a long relationship with the food bank, which provides bulk food to 29 different food pantries and meal sites throughout the county. Students and employees have donated time to the food bank through the college's Volunteer & Service-Learning program and its Service & Leadership in the Community program, as well as through Communication Studies and Human Development classes.

Present to accept the award on behalf of the college were Edie Blakley, Director of Career Services, and Sarah Weinberger, also of Career Services. The food bank presented them with an engraved cutting board, which will be displayed at the food bank's facility in northeast Vancouver, and with a paper certificate, which will be displayed in the Career Services office at Clark.

Clark College receives \$730K land gift



Clark College has received a second land gift in as many weeks—for a total of more than \$3.85 million in gifts—which when combined with private and state funding, will be the location for a future Clark campus in Ridgefield, Wash.

A \$731,549 gift of land from Ridgefield East 1 Associates, LLC in addition to a May announcement of a \$3.12 million land gift from the Boschma family, will have a long-lasting effect for the region, including expanding access to education.

Lisa Gibert, president/CEO of Clark College Foundation, who was instrumental in securing both gifts and brokering the land purchases, praised the Ridgefield East gift as the ideal location for an entrance to Clark's upcoming campus. "These 10 acres will be the gateway to Clark College at Boschma Farms," she said. "In the years to come, we will work with the city of Ridgefield to encourage retailers such as eateries and coffee

houses to open shops, making it an attractive entryway for a vibrant new campus.”

Clark College will benefit by the acquisition of the new property through the combined generosity of Ridgefield East 1 Associates, LLC, the Boschma family and the charitable support of Clark County residents, Clark College alumni, philanthropic supporters, trusts and foundations.

The Ridgefield East transaction consists of a \$1.99 million purchase price by the Clark College Foundation, accompanied by a \$731,549 land donation—providing a total of 10.28 acres for the future expansion of Clark College. Once built, the North County campus will be known as Clark College at Boschma Farms.

The land is adjacent to the 59.24 acres that was partially gifted from the Boschma Family, LLC and purchased by Clark College Foundation in May. The Ridgefield East property is located on the east side of N. 65th Avenue. It is east of Interstate 5 and Pioneer Street. The address is 264 N. 65th Avenue, Ridgefield, Wash.

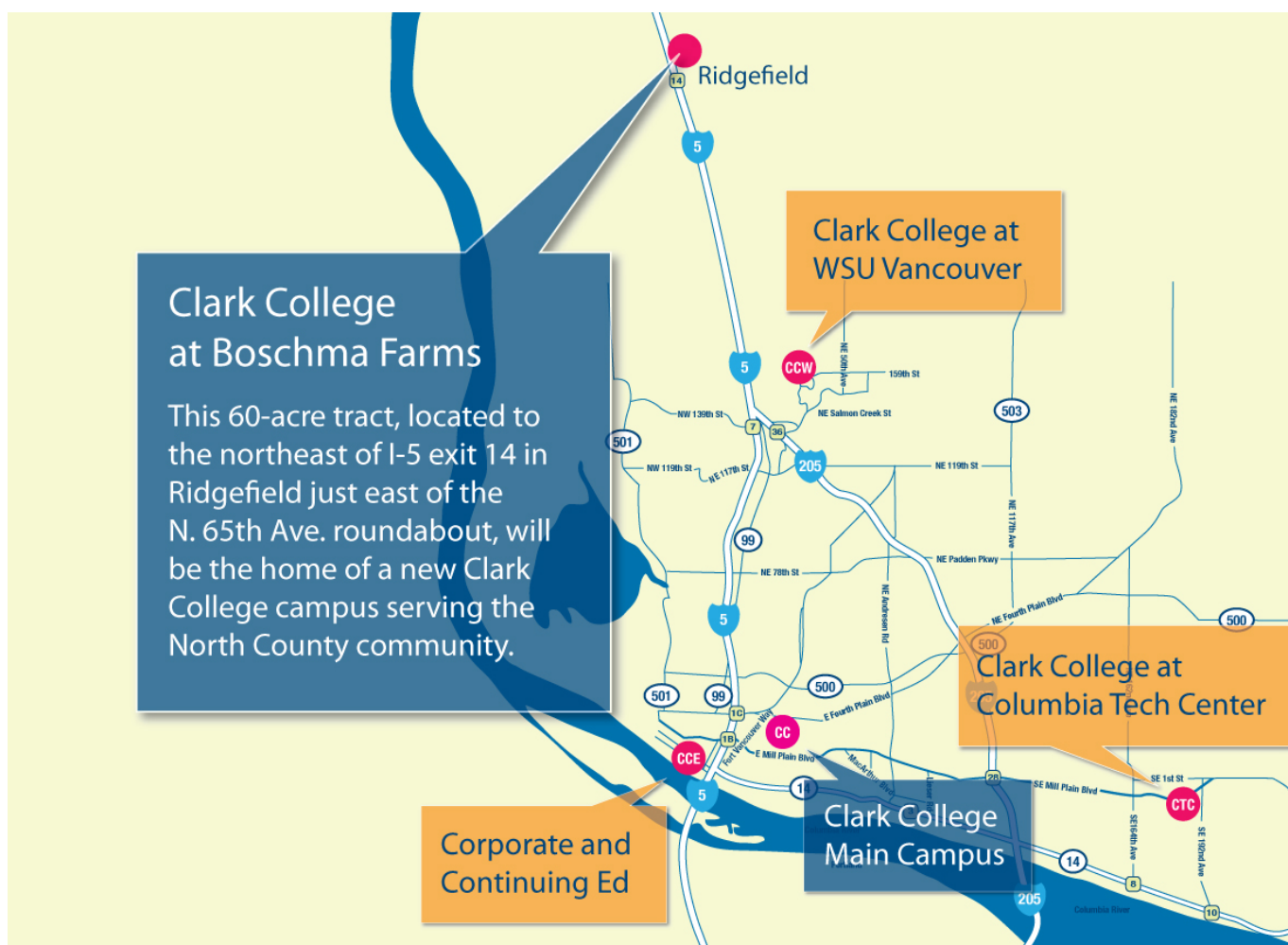
The gifts and acquisitions represent a long-term visionary chapter for the growth anticipated at Clark College. The college’s 2007 Facilities Master Plan identified North County as an area where the college could fulfill its mission of providing access to an underserved area of the service district. The Washington Legislature approved the project concept in 2009.

Recently, the Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges prioritized building projects for the upcoming biennium. Though no money has been allocated yet, funding for design and building has received a green light.

The population in the area has continued to expand. Clark College believes that once facilities and programs are available on a North County campus, students from the northern region of Clark and South region of Cowlitz counties will

utilize this location for their educational needs and career advancement.

North County Location Announced



Clark College announced today the purchase of land that will become the location of a new campus serving the northern portion of the college's service district.

The purchase was made possible with the strong partnership of the Clark College Foundation, which finalized the purchase of nearly 60 acres through a generous \$3.1 million gift from the

Boschma Family LLC. Additionally, the foundation will pay \$6 million for the land. The acreage is located in Ridgefield on the east side of North 65th Avenue, north of Pioneer Street and northeast of the Interstate 5 and Pioneer Street interchange.

The leadership gift from the Boschma family was key in being able to move forward on this project. In making the more than \$3.1 million gift, Hank and Bernice Boschma said they were excited to be a part of expanding educational opportunities for students in the region, including first-generation and immigrant students.

In April, the Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges prioritized building projects for the upcoming biennium. According to that prioritization, the North County Campus building will receive design funding in the 2017-2019 budget, and likely receive construction funding in the 2019-2021 budget.

The gift and acquisition help realize the long-term vision for the growth anticipated at Clark College. The college's 2007 Facilities Master Plan identified North County as a growth area based on projections from regional economists, and the most recent update of the Facilities Master Plan reinforced the need for a facility in this part of Clark's service area.

Clark Jazz Heats Up Colorado



Big Band Outstanding Musician awardee James Powers featured with the Clark College Jazz Ensemble in the Hensel Phelps Theater at the University of Northern Colorado/Greeley Jazz Festival. *Photo courtesy of Richard Inouye.*

For the second year in a row, Clark College Jazz Ensemble students have received top honors at the annual University of Northern Colorado/Greeley Jazz Festival.

This year, Clark students participated in two categories: big band and combo. Recognized from the 7500 festival participants representing seven states and West Germany, five Clark students received Special Citation for Outstanding Musicianship awards. Outstanding musicianship awards for the big band category were presented to David Floratos on saxophone, James Powers on trombone, and Antonio Pickett on drums. Outstanding musicianship awards for combo went to the entire group: David Floratos on saxophone, James Powers on trombone, Jade Denny on bass, and Micah Richie on drums.

The largest event of its kind in the nation, the UNC/Greeley

Jazz Festival brings together internationally recognized artists, jazz lovers, award-winning clinicians, and more than 250 college, high school, and middle school big bands, combos, and jazz vocal groups. This year's festival, its 44th, was held April 24 through 26.

In addition to performing for adjudication by internationally recognized jazz educators, Clark students also had the opportunity to listen to performances and clinics presented by world-renowned professional jazz artists including Wayne Shorter and renowned Jamey Aebersold, both of whom have been designated as Jazz Masters by the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as bassist and three-time Grammy winner Christian McBride.



Jenny Baird, *right*.
Photo: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

Music major Dakota Luu said that the Colorado trip—his first—enhanced his education at Clark. “The recent jazz tour to Colorado has changed my musicality in ways that wouldn’t be possible just by staying local to Vancouver,” he said. “Being around the quality of musicians found during the festival and having the opportunity to hear great musicians like Wayne Shorter and Christian McBride is not quantifiable.”

Clark student Jenny Baird called the opportunity to attend an event of this magnitude a life-changing experience. “The Greeley Jazz Festival changed my outlook on jazz music,” she said. “Hearing famous musicians like Christian McBride, Wayne Shorter and the Jeff Hamilton Trio inspired me to become a better musician and pursue music as a major next fall. Being around fellow student jazz musicians and listening to them play makes me understand the beauty of jazz and the dedication it takes to perform it at the levels we heard.”



David Floratos. *Photo: Clark College/Jenny Shadley*

Fields scholar David Floratos talked about the inspiration he drew from attending the festival. “I was overwhelmed by the amount of passion that was displayed by the artists who performed there, especially by the Wayne Shorter Quartet, who brought me to tears,” he said. “It has further motivated and inspired me to continue my pursuit of becoming a professional musician and composer.”

Congratulations to all the Clark students who participated and thanks to everyone at Clark who helped make this opportunity happen!

The Clark College Jazz Band will be performing at the

College's third annual Big Band Bash, held Saturday, June 7, at 7 p.m. in Gaiser Student Center. Admission is free and open to the public.

Trees and Technology



President Bob Knight receives Clark's Tree Campus USA award from Ben Thompson of the Washington Department of Natural Resources.

On April 9, Clark College celebrated both the natural and digital worlds at its annual Arbor Day event, as it added two new trees to the campus's beautiful arboretum and unveiled a new, student-designed website that uses digital technology to catalog that arboretum. The new online map allows visitors to instantly access descriptions of most trees on campus through their mobile devices.

"This website is a great testament to the value of service learning here at Clark," said Computer Technology Department Chair Robert Hughes at the ceremony, which took place under sunny skies just south of the Chimes Tower. "It showcases the talent of our students, the value of our instruction, and a

great part of Clark's visual landscape."

The mobile-friendly online map is the product of work done by students in instructor Gus Torres's spring 2013 Web Design II class. The students worked with the college's Campus Tree Advisory Committee to identify trees in the campus's extensive arboretum, which includes such notable trees as a six-decade-old Scarlet Oak and 100 Shirofugen blossoming cherry trees donated to the campus by Japanese businessman John Kageyama in 1990. Students then GPS-tagged each listed tree and added it to the map with information about its genus and species. Additional students contributed to the project in subsequent quarters. Hughes was one of the faculty members who helped support the project, along with Torres, Computer Graphics Technology professor Kristl Plinz, and Computer Technology instructor Bruce Elgort.



The online map documents Clark's extensive arboretum.

The event also featured the official bestowing on Clark of Tree Campus USA designation by the Arbor Day Foundation for the fourth year in a row. Tree Campus USA colleges must meet rigorous standards in five separate areas to earn this designation. The award was presented by a Washington State Department of Natural Resources Urban Forestry Specialist Ben Thompson and received by Clark College President Robert K. Knight.

"It's very exciting that Clark College has such enthusiasm for

urban forestry,” said Thompson, who noted that Clark was helping Vancouver earn a “trifecta” by being a Tree City USA with both a Tree Line USA and a Tree Campus USA. He also noted that Clark’s arboretum might benefit students in unsuspected ways.

“I don’t think it’s a coincidence that so many colleges are located on beautiful campuses filled with trees,” he said. “It puts us at ease, at rest. It makes us ready for learning.”

Clark College Bob Knight agreed. “If our students feel comfortable and our faculty feel comfortable, then it opens up their minds and creativity more,” he said, adding that the new arboretum map was a perfect example of that. “It’s exactly what we want to encourage here at Clark College.”



Children from Clark’s Child & Family Studies program get help on their tree-themed scavenger hunt from, *left to right*, Dean of STEM Dr. Peter Williams, President Bob Knight, and Campus Tree Committee members Tim Carper and Melissa Favara.

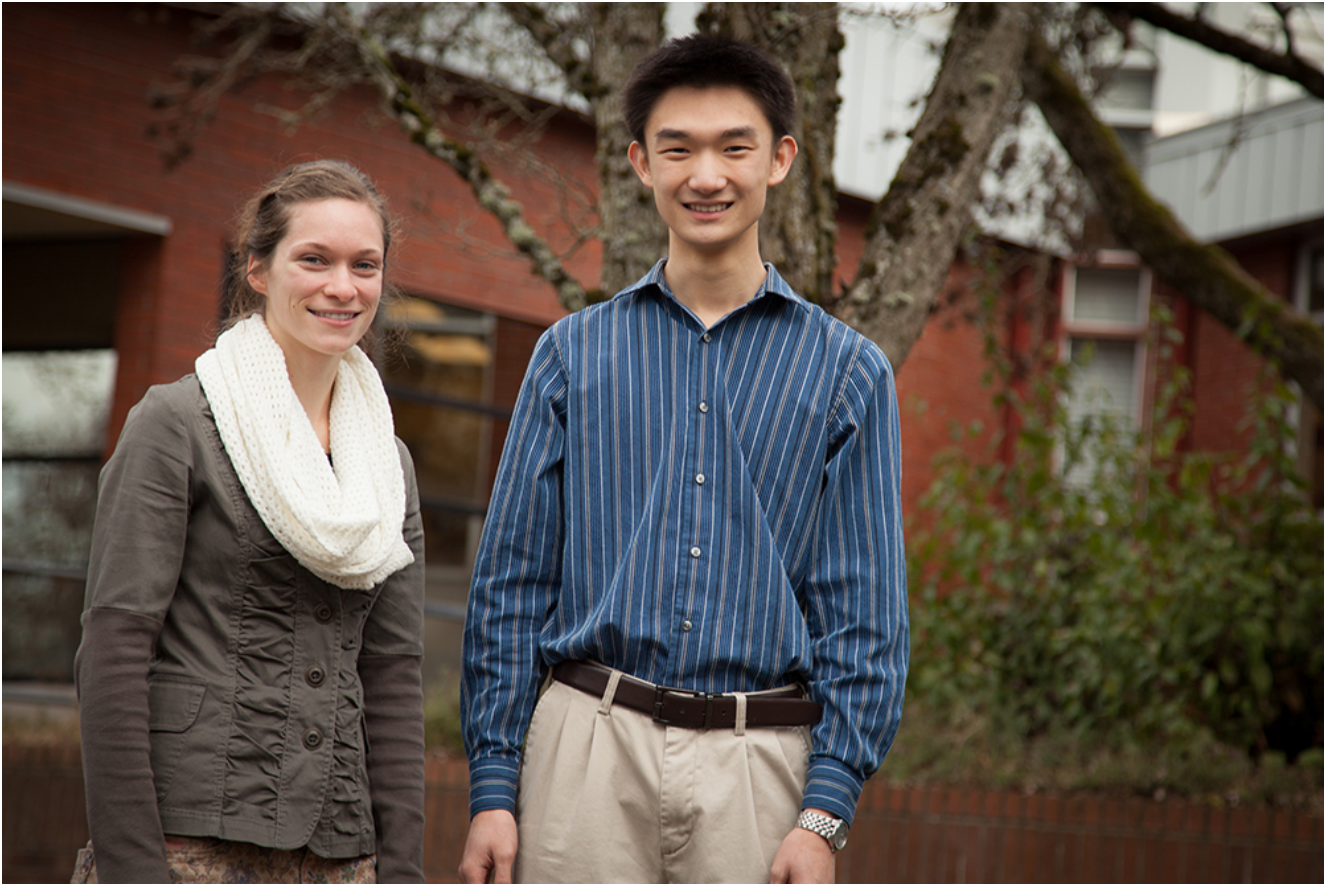
Other speakers at the event included Dean of STEM Dr. Peter Williams and Zahid Chaudry, GIS Program Manager of the U.S. Forest Service Region 6. Additionally, two trees were added to

the campus arboretum: an Eastern Hemlock and an Eastern White Pine. These are the official state trees of Pennsylvania and Maine, respectively, and are part of an effort by the college to include all 50 state trees in the campus arboretum; with these two additions, the arboretum contains 39 state trees.

Also present were two classrooms of children from Clark's Child & Family Studies program, who participated in a tree-themed scavenger hunt and received "seed bombs" filled with seeds of indigenous plants.

Photo: Clark College/Hannah Erickson

Student Spotlight: Amelia Longbons and Christopher Beh



Amelia Longbons and Christopher Beh are Clark College's 2014 All-Washington Academic Team members.

Two Clark College students who serve their college and their community were named to the 2014 All-Washington Academic Team.

Amelia Longbons of Kelso and Christopher Beh of Vancouver were among 68 students from Washington's 34 community and technical colleges who were recognized on March 27 in a ceremony at South Puget Sound Community College in Olympia. Washington Lieutenant Governor Brad Owen was the keynote speaker.

According to organizers, each member of the All-Washington Academic team received a scholarship from KeyBank of Washington. In addition, many of Washington's public and private four-year colleges are offering scholarship opportunities to members of the team.



About Amelia Longbons

Amelia Longbons can vouch for the value of community colleges: She earned her Associate of Arts at Lower Columbia College while still in high school through the Running Start Program and then enrolled at Clark College to enter its highly regarded Dental Hygiene program. Now she is busy on a project to provide dental hygiene care and education to homeless people in Southwest Washington, all while maintaining a 4.0 GPA.

This is not Longbons's first academic honor. She is also a recipient of the American Dental Association Foundation Allied Dental Student Scholarship, awarded to just 15 students nationwide each year and the 2012 Scholastic Achievement Award, granted by Lower Columbia College to the student with the highest grade point average in the graduating class. Additionally, she was valedictorian of her graduating class at Kelso High School.

Longbons's academic achievements are all the more impressive considering how many hours she devotes to volunteer activities. She has a long history of volunteering, but currently concentrates most of her efforts toward her chosen career. She assisted at the Free Clinic of Southwest

Washington's Children's Dental Day and is in the process of organizing a free dental day for local homeless and veterans in the community. She is a member of the Student American Dental Hygienists Association and regularly participates in outreach efforts to promote dental hygiene among underserved communities.

Longbons, 20, plans to graduate with her Associate of Applied Science in Dental Hygiene in June, after which she will enroll in the Bachelor of Science in Dental Hygiene program at Eastern Washington University. She says she hopes to one day use her education to travel to other countries and provide dental hygiene care to the poor and underserved.

"For me, winning this scholarship has been a great honor and made me understand that community colleges are an amazing opportunity to allow me to grow and reach my academic potential," says Longbons. "It's been an inspiration and a motivation to keep going and to work my hardest and to continue my education and give everything I have to becoming a successful student and becoming a successful dental hygienist."



About Christopher Beh

At age 17, Christopher Beh has already experienced a lot of changes and challenges. Beh was 8 years old when his father left the family, and Beh's mother had to work two jobs to keep them afloat.

"At the time, I didn't realize the amount of work that she was putting in so that I could have a future," says Beh. "I thought that she didn't care; of myself as inept. I truly believed that I wasn't capable of becoming anything worthwhile."

But eventually Beh realized that he had both the drive and the ability to succeed academically. He enrolled at Clark College while still in high school through the Running Start Program, and anticipates earning his transfer associate degree in June. At Clark he has joined Alpha Sigma Phi, the college's chapter of the national two-year college honor society Phi Theta Kappa, and has sought out opportunities to challenge himself academically through Clark's rigorous Honors Program. He says these experiences have given him a newfound respect for community colleges.

"What community colleges do for students from all walks of life is absolutely incredible," says Beh. "It's an amazing stepping stone for people who maybe aren't ready for a four-year university, or are looking for a closer-knit environment where students can work together, stay closer to home, and maybe juggle other things that they have going on."

Beh's own juggling act has become even more demanding: He has been helping his mother recover since she underwent neck surgery last year. Additionally, he helps support their household by working part-time at the college's computer help desk. Fortunately, he has been able to take advantage of some of Clark's online course offerings, allowing him more flexibility to assist his mother at home.

"Looking back, I know that I made the right choice," Beh says

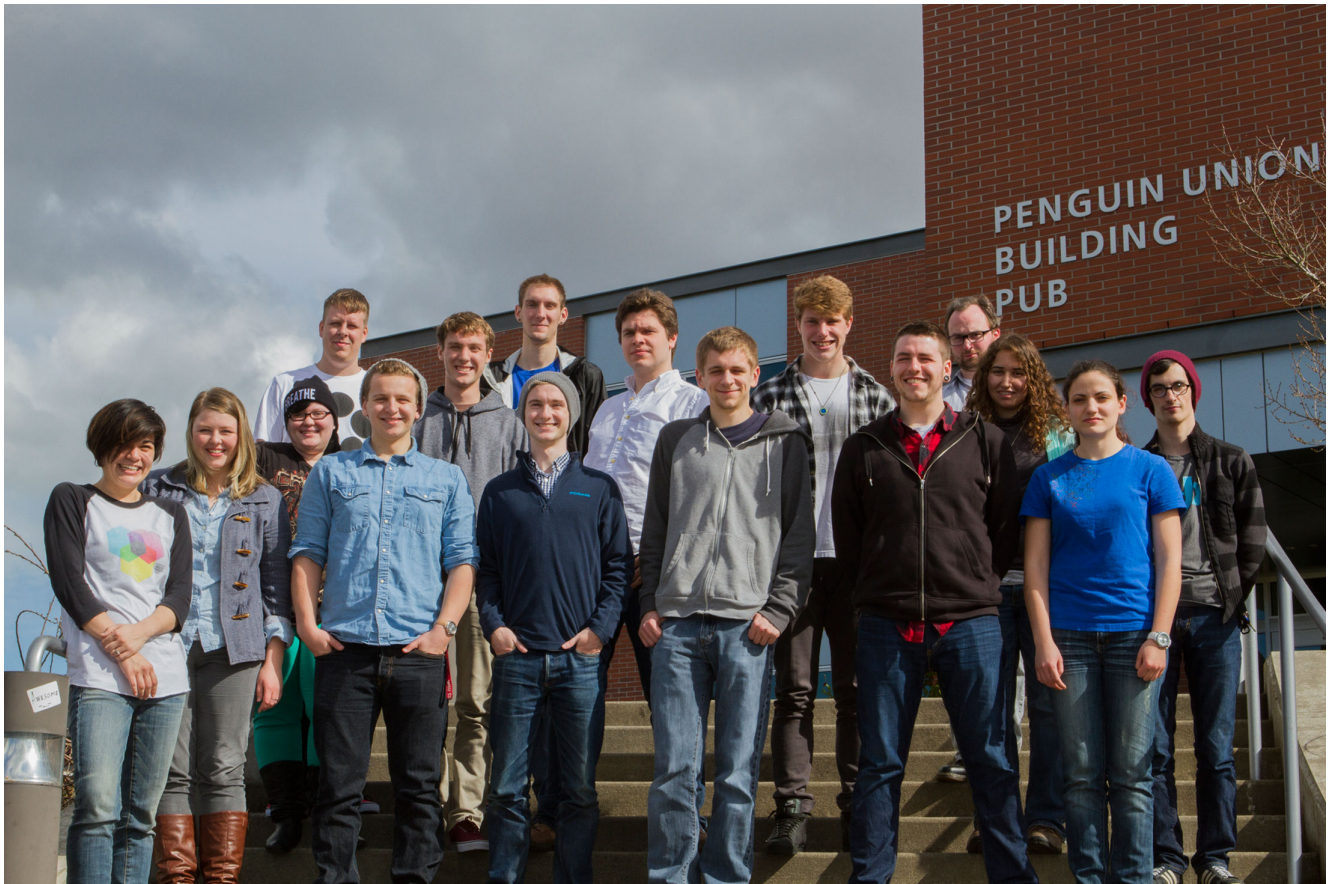
of his decision to attend Clark. "I've been able to help my mom through her recovery, and I'm not bogged down by student loans. I've also been able to be part of an amazing community. I feel that my professors truly care about my success, and I've found a home with Alpha Sigma Phi. At first I chose a community college for the cost and convenience, but I have found so much more at Clark College."

Beh, who is studying computer science and business at Clark, has accepted admission to the University of Washington, where he plans to major in computer science. His work at Clark has made him interested in a job in Information Technology and he hopes to one day work in the Federal Bureau of Investigation's cybercrime division.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

Video: Clark College/Nick Bremer Korb

Indy Wins Awards



Clark College Independent 2014 winter quarter staff include, *left to right* Caitlin Calsbeek, Emma Fletcher, Cloe Beck, Aleksi Lepisto, Kyle Souvenir, Tra Friesen, Kenneth Zummach, Tyler Urke, Robert Berman, Ryan Rutledge, Brody Voge, Tyler “Charle” Brown, Evan “Smiles” Jones, Alejandra Magallanes, Ester Manea and Bradley York. *Photo: The Independent/Bradley York*

Clark College students who publish the print and online editions of *The Independent* captured two national awards at the Associated Collegiate Press 30th annual National College Journalism Convention, held Feb. 27-March 2 in San Diego.

In addition to attending more than 72 workshops and training sessions while at the convention, *The Independent* staff won third place in a “Best of Show” competition among more than 30 community colleges from across the country that publish weekly newspapers. The Clark College student staff also captured 10th place among large schools – both community colleges and four-year institutions – that produce news websites.

This was the first award for *The Independent's* online publication, said Clark journalism instructor Dee Anne Finken, who advises the student staff. She said the acknowledgement is evidence the student staff's digital-first emphasis is working, and noted that the staff's success in the print category was a step up from last year, when Clark students finished seventh at ACP.

Finken and adjunct instructor Jeff Bunch accompanied the 12 students who attended the three-day conference, which also included workshops on everything from the basics of newswriting to the future of journalism in the digital age, each led by experts in the field. Other workshops featured faculty from the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communications at Arizona State University and the Poynter Institute along with *New York Times* Public Editor Margaret Sullivan.

Editor-in-chief Aleksi Lepisto said Clark students are committed to publishing a high-quality news product and will continue to work hard to do even better next year. "If we do good work, people will see it," Lepisto said.

Lepisto said the issue the staff submitted in the "Best of Show" judging featured a solid representation of the quality coverage for which *The Independent* staff has become known. It included a feature story about a Clark anthropology instructor who is also a ghost hunter and archeologist; a look at some of the issues faced by the growing blind student population at Clark; a commentary about a lack of political awareness among students; and an update on the popularity of the food carts on campus.

Finken and Lepisto said they were grateful for support from the Associated Students of Clark College, which helped fund the trip.

Finken noted that student news teams are in a similar

situation as professional news outlets when it comes to figuring out best practices for operating in the rapidly evolving news landscape.

“It’s challenging right now,” Finken said. “We have one foot in developing the fundamentals, but we also have to look ahead to develop more ways of storytelling and delivering the news. But we are up for the challenge.”

In addition to Lepisto, Finken and Bunch, the following student staff members represented *The Independent* at the conference: Esther Manea, Emma Fletcher, Tyler Urke, Tyler “Charlie” Brown, Tra Friesen, Nate Nienaber, Alejandra Magallanes, Kenneth Zummach, Brody Voge, Ryan Rutledge, and Robert Berman.

Other staff members are Caitlin Calsbeek, Evan Jones, Daniel Hampton, Bradley York, Cloe Beck, Killian Bailey, Boyd Lainhart, Kyle Souvenir and Kait Terrel.

Independent staff contributed this article.