

Unlocking education for the incarcerated



A Clark College faculty member brings backpacks full of class supplies to students at Larch Corrections Center. Photo courtesy of Hanan Al-Zubaidy

A surge in COVID-19 cases paused Clark College's programs at Larch Corrections Center in early January. The minimum-security prison had its first positive COVID-19 test in late December. Only a week later, 218 of those incarcerated –about 70 percent of the prison's residency–had tested positive for COVID.

An immediate shutdown meant Clark College programs came to a halt. The classroom building was closed. All face-to-face classes were canceled.

"With COVID restrictions, everybody in the education field propelled forward into new methods with online learning, but corrections education took a few steps backward," said Hanan Al-Zubaidy, Clark's Director of Education at

Larch Corrections.

For security reasons, Larch residents do not have access to the internet, so online education is not an option.

Al-Zubaidy said, "With our classroom closed, we had to figure out a new way."

As it turned out, the new way was an old way.

Making a game plan

"We came up with a game plan for getting coursework materials to students until they can return to the classroom," Al-Zubaidy said.

She and Clark instructors –Justin Allen, Lauren Zavrel, Steven Smith and Ron Powers–stepped up to provide educational care packages to those who are enrolled in Clark programs at Larch. They filled backpacks with textbooks, packets of assignments and reading materials, paper, pens and pencils–everything students need to do their work.

They distributed the backpacks with books at the beginning of the quarter. Students work on their Clark projects in their living units and return their completed work in a collection box. Assignments are collected weekly. The assignments are critical to keeping students engaged so they can get back on track once classrooms are open again.

Adapting during COVID



Hanan Al-Zubaidy helps prepare backpacks for students at Larch Corrections Center. *Photo courtesy of Hanan Al-Zubaidy*

Clark College offers business, GED, and High School Plus (a high school credit-recovery program) courses at Larch Corrections Center. While the classroom facility is closed, students cannot take the GED test, but they can work on recovering high school credits.

Typically, 175 Larch students are enrolled at Clark per quarter, but with COVID social distancing restrictions and rapid releases shortly after the pandemic began, only 68 students are enrolled winter quarter.

Al-Zubaidy, the instructors and staff are working remotely from their homes, but they drive to Larch twice a week to drop off packets of course assignments for students. Located in the remote Cascade foothills in the far east of Clark County, Larch Corrections center is 22 miles—about a 40-minute drive—from Clark College's main campus.

Sometimes instructors and staff go into the living units to drop off the material. If there are many COVID cases, they dress in PPE or the corrections staff distributes the educational material to students. Due to the number of active COVID cases, when students' completed papers are picked up, Al-Zubaidy sprays papers with a cleaning solution and

leaves them in the classroom for two days before instructors can handle them.

During the COVID lockdown, students who have questions about a particular assignment can message their instructors via an offline messaging system called a kiosk, which Al-Zubaidy described as like a computer, but without internet access. Students also can request tutoring help from a trained tutor if one is living on their floor. (The residents are confined to their own floor.) These paid tutors are also residents at Larch. Some tutors also are Clark students.

Al-Zubaidy said, “We wish we could have a tutor on every single floor, because they are in the units with our students when we can’t be there during COVID.”

She spoke about the Larch students having to adapt to frequent changes in their housing units during the pandemic and dealing with additional stress from not knowing what is expected of them.

“Our students have been very patient. To help reduce their stress, we’ve been flexible with assignment due dates. It’s important we do what we can do to ease some of that frustration.”

Looking toward the future

Al-Zubaidy was the re-entry navigator at Larch before becoming the program director in September. The Clark team at Larch does significant reentry work to prepare students for continuing their education after they are released. They set students up with meetings with colleges across the state. During the lockdown, Al-Zubaidy has been dropping off FAFSA forms and college applications for students.

Because there is no guidebook for running educational programs in a prison during a global pandemic, Al-Zubaidy, the Clark

faculty and staff have had to problem-solve each time a new roadblock arises. The deans and directors of all corrections facilities across the state meet weekly via Zoom to share ideas and best practices in corrections education during the pandemic.

Al-Zubaidy said, “It’s helpful to be able to bounce ideas off other directors and ask: ‘What did you do in this situation? What worked for you?’ This group makes me feel supported for all that’s going on.”



Clark College staff and faculty deliver backpacks full of school supplies to students at Larch Corrections Center, where online learning is not an option. *Photo courtesy of Hanan Al-Zubaidy*

This was the first backpack drop for Clark students at Larch Corrections Center, but it won’t be the last. Al-Zubaidy said although it was a lot of work for her team to put together backpacks and folders with student materials and to distribute packets throughout the quarter, it was important to do.

She said, “Students were yelling through their windows asking us if we were finally bringing their assignments. One student saw our basic skills instructor

through the window and began asking how he could turn in his homework and if he could get more assignments to work on while in lockdown. Providing our students with material keeps them on track in their programs, gives them something to do to fill their time, and provides a sense of normalcy during these challenging times.”

Al-Zubaidy’s team isn’t done innovating: Clark College is expanding its educational offerings at Larch to include a degree program in Supervisory Management.

Armetta Burney, Interim Dean of WPTE & STEM, said, “I appreciate our faculty and staff’s leadership and the extraordinary commitment they have demonstrated to support our students at Larch. They have come up with creative solutions. They are deeply invested in our students at Larch.”

**Clark College removes
application fee**



Clark College has taken an exciting new step to expand access to higher education. Beginning with registration for the 2021 spring term, the college is removing its admission application fee, making it free for almost all prospective students to apply. (The one exception is International Students, who use a separate admissions process to apply to the college that requires special handling of their F-1 visa status.)

Previously the college charged a \$25 application fee to most prospective students. While this is significantly less than the application fees for most universities and private colleges, it still could prove to be a barrier for some of the college's students. Approximately 40 percent of Clark College students qualify as low-income.

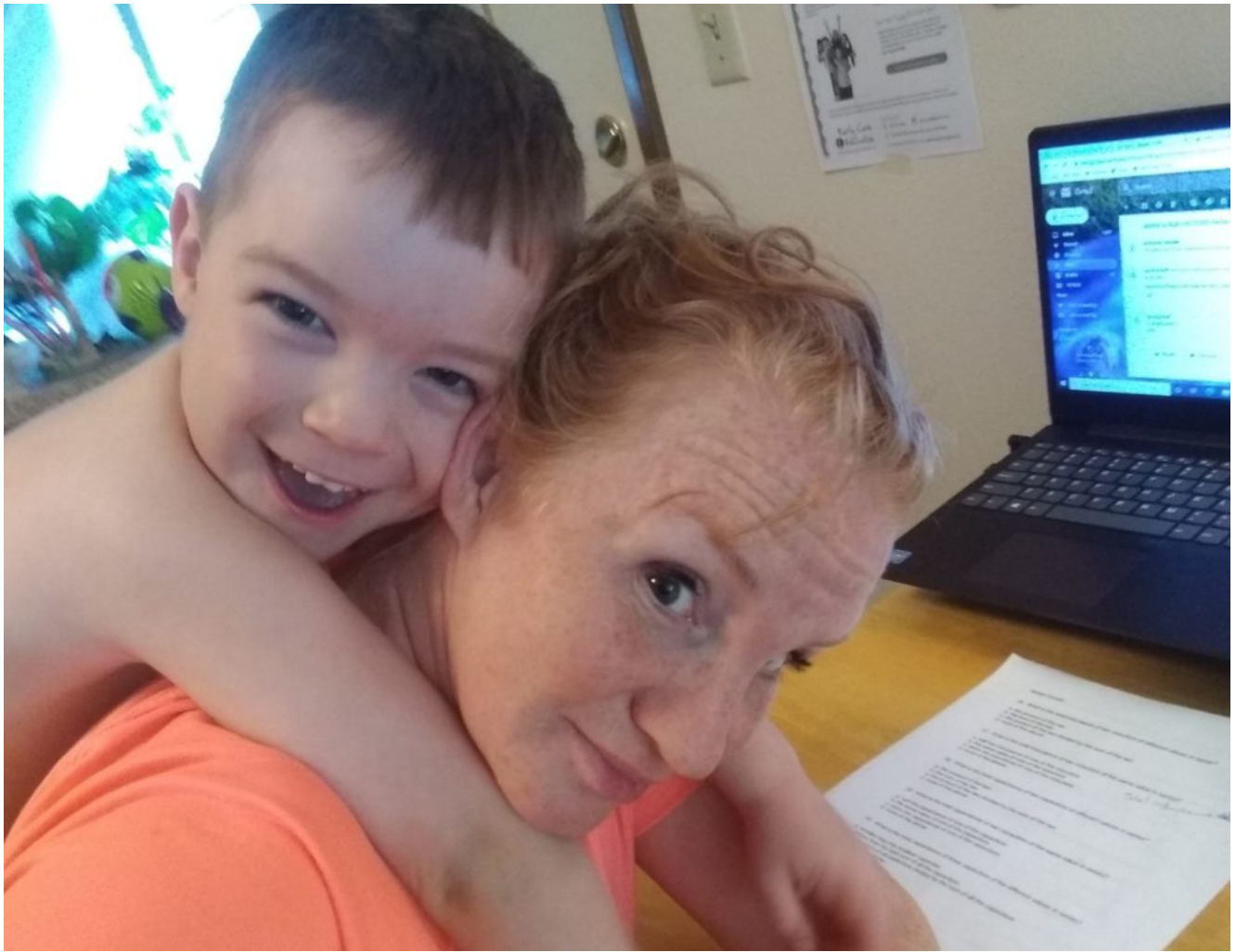
"This has been a complex project that was months in the making, especially given the college's current budget challenges, but I am so proud of our staff for staying focused on serving our students by removing barriers that discourage students from taking the next step," said Dr. Michele Cruse, Interim Vice President of Student Affairs. "Clark College is

committed to being an open-enrollment institution, and this one more big step toward being truly open to everyone in our community.”

“We don’t want students to have to choose between gas money and the admissions fee,” said Josiah Joner, Associated Students of Clark College President. “Money’s tight. We need to make it easier for students to get started.”

The change goes into effect for students applying for spring term, registration for which began on February 9 for most students.

College and quarantine ... with kids



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

Being a college student during the COVID-19 pandemic can be tricky enough, but it becomes exponentially more challenging when you're also taking care of young children whose school or child care facility has been closed or moved online.

About a quarter of Clark College students have dependent children. Many of these parent students have found themselves trying to manage their own studies while also serving as teacher's aide for their children.

Clark 24/7 interviewed some of these parent students to find out how they are coping. We also spoke with Michele Volk, director of the college's Child and Family Studies child care center, which has remained open during the pandemic to serve parent students and their families. Their responses, edited for clarity and brevity, are in the links below.

Note: These interviews were conducted in late 2020, when

public schools in the region were still operating remotely. In the time since, some schools have partially re-opened.

Child and Family Studies Q&A

- Michele Volk: Child care during COVID

Parent student profiles

- Jessica Bull: “Take extra care to reassure them.”
- Samantha Golden: “You can’t be 100 percent all the time.”
- Moses Kimeli: “Eventually, it’s getting easier.”
- Monserrat Soriano: “This is not the way it’s supposed to happen, but that’s all we got.”

Veterans Resource Center receives grant



The Veterans Resource Center at Clark College received a \$449,460 federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education to establish a Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success (CEVSS) over three years. Clark is one of only two community colleges in the state to receive the grant. Focused on supporting veteran student success, the Center will provide a single point of contact to coordinate comprehensive, individualized support services that address the academic, financial, physical, and social needs of Clark College's 600 student-veterans.

Vice President of Student Affairs Dr. Michele Cruse said, "We are grateful to receive grant funding from the U.S. Department of Education to support our Veterans Resource Center. This grant comes at a critical time when the needs of our military-connected students continue to outpace our available resources. This grant will allow our Veterans Resource Center to expand its offerings."

To better support student veterans, Clark College will establish a cross-departmental team with representatives from every office that works with student veterans, including

Admissions, Financial Aid, the Counseling and Health Center, and Career Services—to name just a few.

Additionally, the grant will pay for a full-time student success coach; half of a full-time program coordinator position; a part-time tutoring position; outreach and recruitment activities; disability accommodations such as Live Scribe pens; and essentials including housing and food supports for student veterans.

Associate Director of Veterans Services Dave Daly said, “Because of this grant, the Center will now have the ability to help today’s warriors not only to transition from the service, but also to be more successful in staying in school and completing their path in higher education. Our goal is for our student veterans to bring their deeper, world perspective not only to Clark College, but also as graduates who are productive, insightful members of the greater community.”

U.S. Senator Patty Murray announced the grant award from the U.S. Department of Education and called it a vital investment in Washington state’s veterans.

Senator Murray said, “I’m glad to see this federal award going towards helping veterans in Washington state as they pursue an education and I appreciate Clark College’s efforts to help those who have served our country. As a proud partner of our state’s veterans and educators, I will continue working to ensure they have the resources they need to succeed and thrive.”

Senator Murray is the incoming chair of the Senate education committee, serves on the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee, and is a steadfast advocate for veterans and their families.

About Clark College

Founded in 1933, Clark College provides residents of Southwest

Washington with affordable, high-quality academic and technical education. It is a public community college offering more than 100 degree and certificate programs, including bachelor's and associate degrees; professional certificates; high school diplomas and GED preparation; and non-credit community and continuing education. Clark serves a wide range of students including high school students, displaced workers, veterans, parents, non-native English speakers, and mature learners. Approximately three-quarters of its students are in the first generation of their families to attend college.

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.

New faces joining health care workforce



2021 Medical Assistant graduate Cindi Clark is ready for a new career in healthcare.

Twenty-three Clark College students who earned their degree in Medical Assistant celebrated their achievement with family and friends during a virtual Pinning ceremony on January 20.

For student Candi Clark, the Pinning ceremony was the culmination of longtime family support and inspiration. As a teen, Clark attended the Pinning ceremony for her mother, Rhonda Hansen-Boyle, who earned her nursing degree at Clark College and now works at the Veterans Administration Medical Center.

During the virtual ceremony, Clark was surrounded by her supportive family—her mother, father and sister—to celebrate her graduation. She says her family's support was instrumental to her success as she navigated life's obstacles—including a global pandemic—to earn her degree.

"I've always had a calling to help people," she said. "Once I told my mother I wanted to go into the medical field, my mom was 100 percent behind me."

Medical assistants are in demand. Many will join the healthcare workforce in the coming weeks. The Vancouver Clinic hired 19 of the 23 students.

In addition to her supportive family, Clark is thankful for the help and guidance she received from WorkSource, which has partnered with Clark College to help students succeed.

WorkSource uses federal funding through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and provides critical support and services to workers who want to develop the necessary skills for a good job in high-demand fields such as health care services. Available services include tuition assistance, book allowances, uniforms, supplies, and career counseling.

The program is open to a wide variety of adults including those who have been laid off, displaced, or who are under-employed. Low-income adults and veterans also are eligible.

“Our goal is to get people back to work in high-demand occupations that provide stable and meaningful employment to benefit their families and the community,” said Karin LaValla, WorkSource Health Care Liaison. “By partnering with Clark College, we can integrate our services, working together to provide those wrap-around supports to help students succeed.”

LaValla and her team work directly with Dr. Sarah Kuzera, Director of the Medical Assisting Program at Clark College. They attend the orientation for new students and explain their program. In this year’s class, nearly half of the students were eligible for WorkSource services.

“They receive help with tuition, books, transportation, childcare, financial and job coaching,” said Kuzera. “This has been a stressful year for our students. We’re grateful to have WorkSource at our side as active partners helping our students succeed.”

“WorkSource has been so helpful—a combination coach and fairy godmother,” said Candi Clark. “When I needed help with tuition, supplies—even scrubs—they were there for me. It’s

made all the difference in being able to complete my studies.”

WorkSource also helps students find externships and employment. The federal program provides employers up to 50 percent wage reimbursement for a student’s first 30 to 60 days on the job. Candi Clark has already interned at Vancouver Clinic doing patient care and is eager to complete her testing and get to work.

Certified Medical Assistants are in high demand right now, in part because of the pandemic. Medical assistants work directly with physicians and patients in both the clinical and administrative settings. They maintain the daily workflow of a medical office.

“Our graduates are in high demand,” said Kuzera. “Our program is growing.”

The next class, called a cohort, begins spring term; the first day of classes is April 5. Interested students can learn more on the college’s Medical Assisting page.

During the Pinning ceremony—a tradition in many health care programs—the graduates celebrated one another via Zoom. “It’s harder to do basic things, like draw blood, during a pandemic,” said Candi Clark. “But we figured it out and we can be proud of ourselves that we didn’t give up.”



Rhonda Hansen-Boyle, *left*, congratulates her daughter Candi Clark on graduating from the Clark College Medical Assistant program during a virtual pinning ceremony. Hansen-Boyle is an alumnus of the college's Nursing program.

Clark's story came full circle during the Pinning ceremony, when her mother attached the pin to her daughter's shirt. In the family photo taken immediately after the pinning, Clark proudly wears her pin. Her smiling mother is reaching out to touch her daughter's shoulder.

"This is so exciting for me and my family," Clark said. "It's been a long road to get here. I can't wait to get to work. Healthcare is kind of the family business. We gravitate to the helping professions. It's where we can make a difference."

For students interested in learning more about WorkSource Washington and its educational training opportunities for job-seekers can visit WorkSource's website.

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?

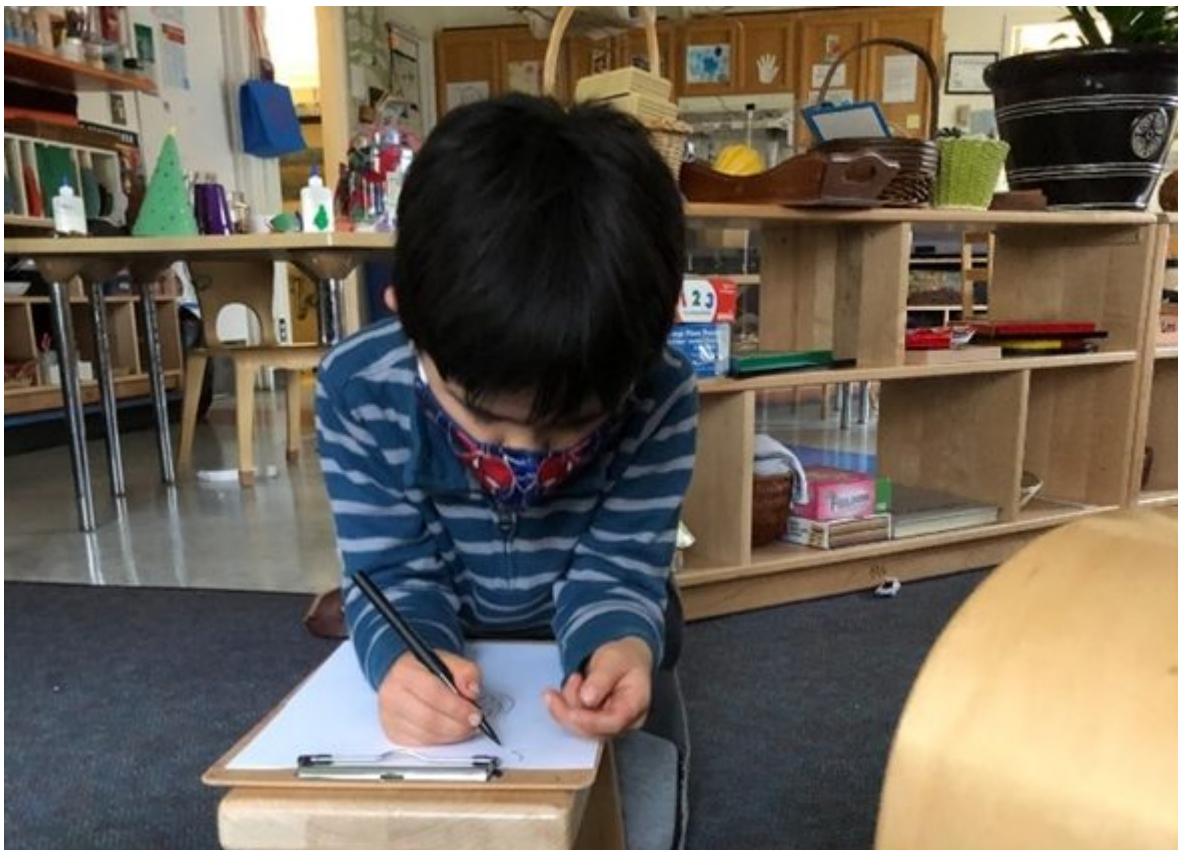
MV: Yes. Throughout the pandemic we remained open for essential workers as defined by Washington State. We erred on the side of caution as guidance changed frequently.

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.

**Clark College hosts
Northwest Regional Equity
Conference**



Northwest Regional Equity Conference

Sharing Strategies for Anti-Racist Practices

February 24-26, 2021

Registration is now open for Clark College's 2021 Northwest Regional Equity Conference. This year's theme is "Sharing Strategies for Equity and Anti-Racist Practices."

The online, two-day conference aims to improve equitable, sustainable experiences and outcomes for historically under-represented students and employees of the higher education system through effective instruction and anti-racist supports. This year the conference will broaden its scope of topics beyond higher education.



Left to right: Rashida Willard, Randolph Carter ,and Michael Tuncap at the 2020 NWREC.

“We see racism playing out before our eyes, and conversations around anti-racism are as much needed right now as they have always been, but what is really needed is anti-racism in action,” said Rashida Willard, Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Clark College. “We all benefit by sharing our experiences and learning from those who bring their expertise to these vital conversations.”

This conference has been broadened to include governmental, non-profit, and corporate sectors. It is really geared toward individuals across the nation who would like to broaden their social justice knowledge or remove institutional barriers for historically underrepresented populations.

Workshops include:

- Bias and Discrimination in AI systems
- A Call to Anti-Racism -Teaching Cultural Diversity to Health Care Students
- Data Storytelling
- Creating IMPACTful Mentoring Opportunities for BIPOC Students
- Restorative Justice
- Employee Engagement and Retention

- Best Practices for Working with Incarcerated Students
- Disability Justice
- Building a Community of Collective Care
- Making DEI Training Count: Overcoming Common Pitfalls
- Creating Pathways for Native, Latinx and Afrocentric Education from High School through College
- Equity in Student Conduct

“We created the conference last year because we saw a need to elevate the discussion, seek out best practices, and take action,” said Willard. “These are the very issues we are working on at Clark College. We are working on becoming anti-racist – not just on paper, but in everything we do. We want to share these best practices with community. We are in a time of seismic change as our nation grapples with systemic racism, politics, the pandemic and the economy. The Northwest Regional Equity Conference provides a pathway forward for communities ready to take the next step.”

For more information about NWREC: <http://www.clark.edu/campus-life/student-support/diversity-and-equity/equity-conference/index.php>. Those who need accommodation due to a disability can contact Clark College’s Disability Support Services Office at 360-992-2314, 360-991-0901 video phone.

Keynote Speakers

Talila “TL” Lewis is a community lawyer, educator, and organizer whose work highlights and addresses the nexus between race, class, disability and structural inequity. Recognized as a 2015 White House Champion of Change and one of *Pacific Standard Magazine’s* Top 30 Thinkers Under 30, Lewis engineers and leads innovative and intersectional social justice efforts that illuminate and address grave injustices within education, medical, and legal systems that have gone unaddressed for generations. A recent graduate of American

University Washington College of Law, Lewis has received awards from numerous universities, the American Bar Association, Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, American Association for People with Disabilities, the Nation Institute, National Black Deaf Advocates, and EBONY Magazine, among others. Lewis is a 2018 Roddenberry Fellow and a 2018 Atlantic Fellow for Racial Equity.

Aaron Reader is a practitioner, poet, activist and educator, with extensive experience in diversity, equity and inclusion in higher education. He has served higher education in a number of capacities over the last decade from teaching, social justice, education equity, and currently is the Vice President of Student Services at Highline College. In addition to his work in higher education he has a passion for poetry and spoken word. He has been identified as workshop leader, facilitator and speaker for colleges, summits and conferences. Reader has been recognized as a local spoken-word artist who has a powerful, emotional, real, and conscious style.

Dr. Angel B. Pérez has worked for over two decades to realize his belief that diversity and academic excellence go hand-in-hand, and that every young person who aspires to higher education should have the opportunity to achieve. A recognized thought-leader on issues of equity and access in American education, Pérez is a tireless champion for under-represented communities and a creative advocate for reform. Named by a *Forbes* article in 2019 as the most influential voice in college admissions, Pérez strives to build an educational ecosystem that better represents today's America.

Get a Running Start at Clark College



High school students can learn how to take the next step in their education by attending one of four optional Virtual Running Start Information Night sessions hosted by Clark College.

The identical sessions will be held 6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. on Monday, Jan. 25; Tuesday, Feb. 9; Wednesday, Feb. 24; and Thursday, March 18. All four events, which are free and open to the public, will be held virtually over Zoom.

Running Start allows eligible juniors and seniors to earn college credit while they fulfill their high school graduation requirements. Running Start students attend Clark classes along with “regular” college students. They can choose from a full range of academic and professional and technical

courses.

The program, which can significantly reduce the cost of a college degree, has proven popular in Southwest Washington. Some Running Start students are so motivated that they earn their associate degree from Clark at the same time that they earn their high school diploma. These annual information nights frequently attract hundreds of interested students and parents to the college.

These information sessions are for students and parents who want to know more about beginning the program in Fall 2021. While the sessions are completely optional, they are a good opportunity to hear current Running Start students candidly describe their experiences in the program and to learn about the program benefits, eligibility criteria, expectations, timelines, and more.

An American Sign Language interpreter will be available at each session. Additionally, the first session will be recorded and afterward available with translations into other languages online at www.clark.edu/runningstart.

Running Start students pay for books, transportation, and some fees, but do not pay full Clark College tuition. Students can attend part-time or full-time under the Running Start program. Fees are subject to change by the Washington State Legislature. A fee waiver is available for those demonstrating financial need.

Individuals who need accommodation due to a disability in order to fully participate in this event should contact Clark College's Disability Support Services Office at 360-992-2314 or 360-991-0901 (VP) as soon as possible.

For more information on Running Start, visit the Clark College website at www.clark.edu/runningstart. For information about Running Start Information Nights, call 360-992-2078.

Honoring Dr. King by celebrating Black leadership



Clark College will honor the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on Wednesday, January 20, with an online event celebrating Black leadership and creativity. The event, which is free and open to the public, will be hosted live on Zoom from 12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

The event will feature guest speaker Dr. Andrew Jolivet, Professor and Chair-Elect of the Ethnic Studies Department at the University of California, San Diego. His topic will be "Black Lives, Black Leadership: From Matter to Thriving."

The event will also include the singing of the Black National Anthem by GodSisterz as well as artwork from local artists Manny Dempsey and Hobbs Waters.

For more information about this event, including link to the Zoom meeting, visit www.clark.edu/cc/mlk.

Individuals who need accommodation due to a disability in order to fully participate in this event should contact Clark College's Disability Support Services Office at 360-992-2314 or 360-991-0901 (VP), or visit Penguin Union Building (PUB) room 013, as soon as possible.

About Dr. Andrew Jolivéte

Dr. Andrew Jolivéte (Atakapa-Ishak Nation of Louisiana [Tsikip/Opelousa/Heron Clan]) is Professor and Chair-Elect of the Ethnic Studies Department at the University of California, San Diego as well as the inaugural founding Director of Native American and Indigenous Studies at UCSD. A former professor and Department Chair of American Indian Studies at San Francisco State University, he is the author or editor of nine books in print or forthcoming including the Lammy Award nominated, *Indian Blood: HIV and Colonial Trauma in San Francisco's Two-Spirit Community*. His scholarship examines Native American, Indigenous, Creole, Black, Latinx, Queer, Mixed-Race, and Comparative Critical Ethnic Studies.