

Congratulations, Class of 2017!



Happy graduates prepare to walk in the 2017 Clark College Commencement ceremony.

On June 22, approximately 800 graduates gathered at Sunlight Supply Amphitheater to participate in the 2017 Clark College Commencement ceremony. A strong breeze tried to whip their carefully decorated mortarboard caps off their heads, and the summery sunshine forced many to unzip their gowns to avoid overheating, but nothing could stop them from celebrating their achievements.



Amanda Owens with her daughter, Naya, at Clark's 2017 Commencement.

This year marked the first time that graduates wore differently colored robes based on the degree/certificate they earned. Bachelor of Applied Science recipients wore white robes; associate degrees and certificates, royal blue; and GED completion and high school diploma, light blue. This is the second year that the college graduated baccalaureate degree-holders, and the third year that GED/High School Diploma graduates from Transitional Studies students participated in the ceremony.

Graduates hugged each other to celebrate the momentous day. Some held their children in their arms. Associate degree recipient Amanda Owens watched her 5-year-old daughter, Naya, play with bubbles as she waited to enter the amphitheater. The two had lots to celebrate: Not only was Owens graduating, but the single mother had recently found out she would have stable housing for the first time years, thanks, in part, to her part-time job as a program coordinator in Clark's Workforce Education department.

In line with Owens was her friend, Amanda Williams, who was also graduating with an associate transfer degree. Like Owens, Williams had enrolled at Clark straight out of high school but then dropped out—in Williams's case, because of a family crisis. By the time she returned to school, she had a family

of her own to care for. “Juggling being a mom with schoolwork was the hardest thing,” said the mother of two. “There were some late nights doing homework after the kids went to bed.”



Amy and Tom Merfeld get ready to graduate together.

Williams, who plans to continue her education at Washington State University Vancouver to become a social worker, did not have her children with her in line—they were being watched by her husband, which only seemed fair since she had watched them during last year’s Commencement ceremony, when he graduated with a welding degree. A few yards down the line, Amy and Tom Merfeld were doing the Williamses one better: The couple, who have been married for 10 years, were graduating together.

The Merfelds pursued different educational paths at Clark—Amy earning her degree in Addiction Counselor Education and Tom, one in merchandising management. As such, they were never “study buddies,” but they did support each other’s educations with some creative scheduling. “When she was at school, I was at work,” said Tom, who installs windows and runs his own entertainment company. “A lot of classes I was able to do online, which helped.”

Clearly, many graduates struggled with competing time commitments while pursuing their educations. When, during the ceremony, President Bob Knight asked all graduates who had

worked while attending Clark to rise to be recognized, the vast majority of graduates stood up.



“Remember the feeling of what it’s like to complete something you set out to complete,” said actor Ernie Hudson during his 2017 Commencement keynote address.

This year’s keynote speaker, actor Ernie Hudson, could empathize with those students. As he described during his keynote address, Hudson had grown up poor, and by the time he tried to enter college, he was working as a janitor in order to support his wife and young son. “I was at my wit’s end,” he recalled. “It was a rough time.”

Hudson went on to recount how he enrolled at Wayne State University and fell in love with acting—how he helped found what is now the oldest African-American theater company in the United States, and then drove with his wife and two sons from Michigan to Connecticut in order to personally convince the admissions staff at Yale University to allow him into its celebrated Master of Fine Arts program in drama. He also spoke about the difficulties of trying to launch his acting career while simultaneously adjusting to being a single father, balancing the duties of work and family—and the work ethic that helped him eventually find success in films

like *Ghostbusters*, *The Crow*, and *Miss Congeniality*.

"I'm not that brilliant," he said. "I know how to work hard."

But Hudson added that, along with his work ethic, he credits trusting his "spirit" to get him where he is today. "There's a part of you, and it speaks to you in the strangest ways, in the middle of the night," he said. "You have to listen to it."



Student Ambassador Abigail Volk was the 2017 Commencement student speaker.

The ceremony was also occasion to announce two major awards. Early in ceremony, President Knight announced the names of the recipients of the 2017 Exceptional Faculty Awards: economics instructor Patricia Atkinson; English instructor Dr. John Caruso; American Sign Language instructor Becky Engel; computer science and engineering instructor Dr. Nicholas Macias; and welding professor Brian McVay. Later during the ceremony, he announced that graduate Nicholas Freese was the recipient of the 2017-2018 Community College Presidents' Award in Honor of Val Ogden. This annual scholarship is given to a Clark College graduate

who demonstrates leadership potential, a commitment to community service, and academic achievement. The scholarship award provides full-time tuition at WSUV and is renewable for one additional year, essentially providing full tuition to complete a bachelor's degree.

Thanks to the Clark College Foundation, scholarship finalists Sarah Moe and José Augusto Barcelos Espindola Neto also received \$1,000 each to attend WSUV.

In all, more than 2,100 degrees and certificates were conferred upon the Class of 2017, Clark's 81st graduating class. Of those graduates, 413 were Running Start students—a record number for the college, which has the largest Running Start program in the state.

At the end of the ceremony, President Knight said, "Your time at Clark has provided you with new skills, new perspectives, and new confidence. These are powerful tools. As you take your next step, use those tools to build a bright future for yourselves and for our community."

See a video of memories from the Class of 2017:

Photos: Jenny Shadley/Clark College. To see more photos, visit our Flickr album.

Video: Nick Bremer/Clark College

To watch the Commencement ceremony in its entirety, visit CVTV's website.

“I want to be a role model”



Nicholas Freese '17 waits in line to participate in commencement.

When Nicholas Freese heard his name announced as the recipient of the Community College Presidents' Scholarship in Honor of Val Ogden, there was one person he wanted to discuss it with, above all others: his 4-year-old daughter, Sadie.

“I really want to know what my daughter thinks about this,” he said as he stood in line to receive his degree, clearly still stunned by the news that he would be able to attend Washington State University Vancouver for two years, tuition-free, in order to complete his bachelor's degree. Clark College President Bob Knight made the announcement during the 2017 Clark College Commencement ceremony.



Nicholas Freese stands, stunned, as he learns that he has received the 2017-2018 Community College Presidents' Scholarship.

It might seem strange to want to know a toddler's opinion on your academic achievements, but for Freese, Sadie has been at the heart of his pursuit of higher education. "With her, I have the opportunity to be awesome, just from the get-go," he said during an interview prior to Commencement. "She can just think of Daddy as this great guy who's worked hard and pursued his goals."

Freese is painfully aware that many people who have known him since his own childhood might not see him in such an unambiguously positive light. Growing up in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Freese began getting into trouble around the time he entered high school. Trying to escape a violent home life with an alcoholic father, Freese began staying with friends—including "some people I probably shouldn't have been hanging out with," he said.

By his junior year, Freese was struggling with his own addiction issues. He bounced between alternative schools, but didn't graduate from any; he tried rehab, but it didn't stick. For the next few years, he wandered from city to city: Denver, Seattle, Honolulu, Saipan. By the time he landed in Vancouver, he had made the commitment to get sober, but hadn't found much

direction past that.

All that changed after Sadie was born. “At first, it was like, ‘Daddy’s being clean,’ but after a while I felt like, ‘That’s great, but what’s Daddy going to *do*?’” Freese recalled. “I don’t want to be borderline poverty, like I grew up. I want to be a role model.”

Freese enrolled at Clark College. At first, he found college daunting—less academically than logistically. “I didn’t understand how registration worked,” he said. “I had to use my resources. I had to ask for advice, and I’m not used to asking for advice. I’d be in the Financial Aid Office every day for a week, trying to figure things out.”

But as Freese continued at Clark, he learned how to navigate its support systems. Advisors showed him how to plan his degree; he met friends while working out in the Fitness Center; he took advantage of other free and subsidized services like the Counseling and Health Center and the college’s dental clinic. In the end, Freese graduated with honors, earning a cumulative GPA of 3.77.



Clark College President Bob Knight congratulates scholarship recipient Nicholas Freese.

It hasn’t always been easy. Freese had to balance his studies

with caring for Sadie and volunteering in his community. He serves as a mentor to other recovering addicts, works on clean-up parties in his neighborhood, and participates in activities aimed at improving police-community relations. Additionally, he has worked during much of his time at Clark, though he credits his wife, Ashley, with keeping the family financially afloat while he pursues his education.

“She’s paying the bills,” he said. “She’s working toward this just as much as I am.”

Freese, now 28, plans to major in public affairs at WSUV, with the long-term goal of becoming a lawyer. “I want to be a voice for those who don’t have a voice,” he said. “I want to help people.”

A first-generation college graduate, Freese said he hopes that sharing the story of his struggles and success will help to inspire others who might be facing their own challenges. “I want to show people in a similar case that this is possible,” he said.

For Freese, earning this scholarship means that he will be able to concentrate on his studies at WSUV instead of on how to pay for them. But it also carries deeper meaning than the easing of financial burdens.

“What it means to me is that I’m there, I’ve reached that level,” he said, raising his hand to about chest-height. “I’m not just getting an associate degree—*I’m doing well.*”

And he knows just the little girl to celebrate that with.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

A year of talent

On May 16, the Archer Gallery was filled with visitors to the opening of the 2017 Art Student Annual Exhibition. This yearly event showcases the best artwork produced by Clark art students in the past academic year. Students compete not only for a spot in the show, but also for awards sponsored by local businesses and organizations. This year's outside juror was Karl Burkheimer, head of the Master of Fine Arts program at the Oregon College of Art and Craft. Awards are listed below.

The exhibition is on display through June 16. The Archer Gallery is open 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Tuesdays through Thursdays, and noon to 5:00 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays.

- **Best in Show**, sponsored by Blick Art Materials
Ana Stoumbos, *Figure Study*, oil on paper
- **Most Ambitious**, sponsored by Portland Institute for Contemporary Art
Meakia Blake, *Connect*, video
- **Solo Show Award**, sponsored by Niche Wine Bar

- Matt Harmon, *Marsyes V. Apollo: Diana*, oil on canvas
- **Best Painting or Drawing**, sponsored by Clark Bookstore and Dengerink Art Supply
Leah Adams, *A Netherhole*, oil on canvas
 - **2nd Place Award, Painting or Drawing**, sponsored by Clark Bookstore and Blick Art Materials
Ray Bennett, *Self-portrait in Ink*, ink on paper
 - **3rd Place Award, Painting or Drawing** sponsored by Clark Bookstore
Julie Foley, *Zelda Series*, metal
 - **Best Video or Time-based Art**, sponsored by Artist & Craftsman Supply
Ana Stoumbos, *Transit*, video
 - **2nd place Video or Time-based Art**, sponsored by Collage Art and Craft Supplies
Jonno Heyne, *Paradoxial Adventures of Grayman II*, ink marker and digital graphics
 - **Best Graphic Arts**, sponsored by the Art Gym at Marylhurst University
Tricia Davis-Payne, *Do You Know*, digital illustration
 - **Best Welded Sculpture**, sponsored by Clark Welding Department
Marie Perrin Ogier, *Untitled*, metal
 - **Best Photography**, sponsored by Pro Photo Supply
Isiah Huntington, *Expansivity*, digital photograph
 - **Newspace Scholarship Award**, sponsored by Newspace Center for Photography
Jennifer Avens, *Omnia Mors Aequat*, silver gelatin print
 - **2nd Place Photography Award**, sponsored by Pro Photo Supply
Dayna Bojanowski, *Under*, digital photograph
 - **3rd Place Photography Award**, sponsored by Blue Moon Camera
Matthew Philbrook, *Forgotten*, black and white photograph
 - **Blue Sky Membership Award**, sponsored by Blue Sky, the Oregon Center for the Photographic Arts
Kelly Pearce, *Pieces of Home*, photographs

- **Best Ceramic Art**, sponsored by Clay Art Center
Lauren Duquette, *Blue Pitcher*, ceramic
- **2nd Place Ceramic Art**, sponsored by Georgie's Ceramics and Clay
Aleks Dernovoy, *Mechanical Tulip*, ceramic
- **3rd place Ceramic Art**, sponsored by Georgie's Ceramics and Clay
Stephani Ueltschi, *Pressure*, ceramic
- **4th place Ceramic Art**, sponsored by Georgie's Ceramics and Clay
Colton Rasanen, *Planter*, ceramic

Photography by Clark College/Jenny Shadley. More photos on our Flickr page.

**Phoenix
transformation**

embraces



Student Jorin Copeland turns to his artwork featured in the 2017 Phoenix.

On May 16, Clark College's award-winning art and literary journal, *Phoenix*, unveiled its 2017 edition at a reception in PUB 161. Taking inspiration from the Clark community, the *Phoenix* staff adopted the collegewide theme of Transformation for the new journal. Through more than 70 works of poetry, fiction, interviews, photography, paintings, and more, contributors' pieces explore moments of change and growth.



At the reception, Clark student and *Phoenix* managing editor Megan Robb spoke of the personal challenges she has faced and how it inspired her to write a poem for the journal titled "Inner Reflection."

"We have the choice to transform ourselves repeatedly, shedding the dark, hurtful pieces of our soul and regaining

some beauty. This is what I was doing when I wrote this piece,” Robb said. “I had decided it was time to stop wallowing in the unfamiliarity I felt with myself and begin readying myself for change, for regeneration, a personal transformation that brought me to the doors of this college.”

Beyond the personal, transformation is a natural part of creating *Phoenix*, says fiction editor Ashlee Nelson. She spoke at the reception about the unique perspectives that each year’s students brings to the publication and the possibilities that arise when different creative minds collaborate.

“Whatever next year’s edition of *Phoenix* brings, it will be its own,” said Nelson. “It will represent Clark’s creative student body and their interests. It will be Clark at a moment in time before it transforms again, as students become alumni, and community members become students. There is something special about *Phoenix* in this way.”



The staff of the 2017 Phoenix. Faculty co-advisor Liz Donley (black jacket) stands in the center.

The Clark community is not the only one that recognizes how special *Phoenix* is—the journal recently won the National Program Directors’ Prize for design for undergraduate literary

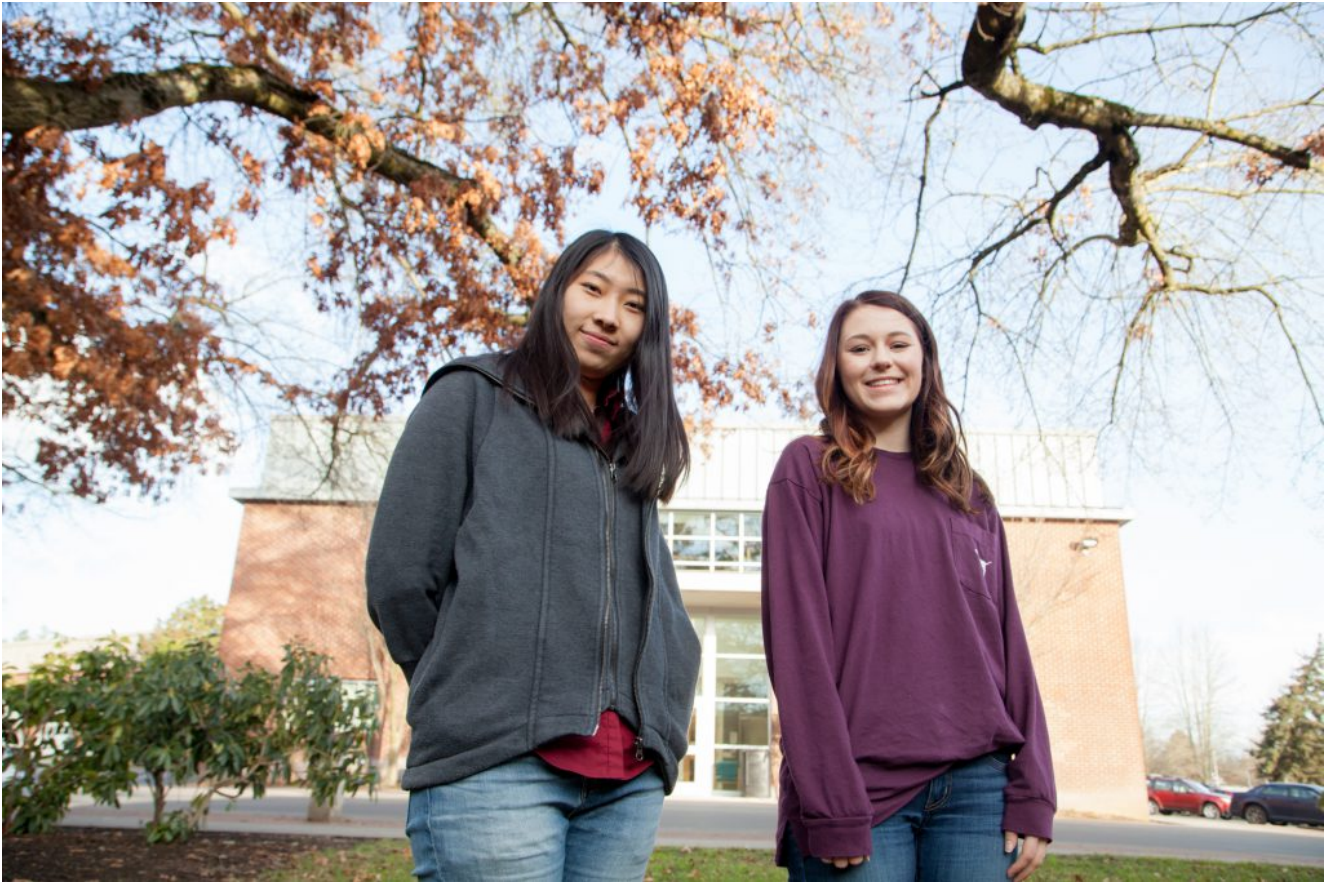
magazines by the Association of Writers & Writing Programs (AWP).

Each year, AWP honors two national undergraduate journals with a content and a design award, and past winners have included journals from Columbia University, The New School, Kansas City Art Institute, University of Washington, and other prestigious institutions. This is the first time in a decade that the award has gone to a two-year college.

The judge for this year's award, Lisa Noble, Creative Services Manager of Edelman Financial Services, wrote, "From cover to cover *Phoenix* stands out as an exemplary publication in design, quality, and concept . . . The publishers of *Phoenix* should feel very proud of what they've created. It is an important collaboration that succeeds in showcasing the diversity of talented individuals who chose Clark College to develop their craft."

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley. To see more photos from the event, visit our Flickr album.

Global dreams converge at Clark



Ruixuan Bai and Meghan Jackson are Clark College's nominees to the 2017 All-Washington Academic Team.

One student plans to spend her career overseas; the other traveled across an ocean to study here. But on March 23, the stories of Meghan Jackson and Ruixuan Bai will converge when they represent Clark College at the 22nd annual All-Washington Academic Team ceremony honoring 63 students from Washington state for their academic excellence and community service.

The All-Washington Academic Team is a program of Phi Theta Kappa, the international honor society for two-year colleges. Top students from each of Washington state's 34 community and technical colleges will be honored at the annual ceremony, which will be held at South Puget Sound Community College in Olympia; each will receive a medal and scholarship, and will become eligible for additional transfer scholarships from in-state colleges and universities.

About Ruixuan Bai



Ruixuan Bai

When Ruixuan Bai first traveled from China to Clark College to study as an international student, it was her first time riding in an airplane. Bai, now 21, began her educational journey at Clark in the college's Intensive English Language Program three years ago. She has since become an active member of the Clark community. She has served as both a Transitional Studies Peer Mentor and an International Peer Mentor at the college, as well as vice president of the Associated Students of Clark College, president of the Chinese Culture Club, and president of the college's chapter of Phi Theta Kappa. Additionally, she volunteers at Peace Health Center and at Share House.

A first-generation college student, Bai chose to study in America on the advice of her parents, who urged her to broaden her horizons and learn from other cultures. She chose Clark in part for reasons of affordability and in part because of its prestigious nursing program.

"At first it was hard," she said. "I didn't know that much language. I wasn't used to the food—I wound up in the emergency room because my stomach hurt so much. But I really like the people here. They are very kind and very patient with my English. And I can eat the food now!"

Bai developed her goal of working in medicine after the death of her beloved aunt from uterine cancer. Currently, Bai is double-majoring in biology and business. She holds a 3.85 grade point average and plans to graduate from Clark in fall 2017, after which she hopes to continue her education in the United States.

“I want to have a better future, but I’m still deciding what that will look like,” she said. “I like the life here, but I miss my country and my family. I haven’t celebrated Chinese New Year since I came here.”

About Meghan Jackson



Meghan Jackson

Meghan Jackson came to Clark College through Running Start, a Washington state program that allows high school students to earn college credit. The Washougal High School student said she was looking for an advanced learning environment, as well as the opportunity to explore interests before entering a four-year institution.

“College was always a given for me, but I never really knew what I wanted to study,” said Jackson, 17. “Part of why I wanted to do Running Start was so I could try different

classes and find out what interested me most.”

The strategy worked: Inspired by her women’s studies and political science courses at Clark, Jackson decided to pursue a career in international diplomacy. She has maintained a 4.0 grade point average at Clark and expects to graduate in spring 2017. In addition to her studies, Jackson plays high school soccer and serves as president of Washougal High’s American Sign Language Club.

Thanks to Running Start, Jackson may be able to enter university with sophomore or junior standing, thereby helping relieve the financial burden of college tuition for her parents. She says earning scholarships like the one provided to All-Washington Academic Team members not only helps further ease that financial burden, but also helps confirm her decision to begin college at an early age.

“I work really hard, I study a lot,” Jackson said. “To be able to say I’m a part of this, it’s special to me.”

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

Indy earns awards



Staff from the 2017 *Independent*. Photo: Dee Anne Finken/Clark College

Clark College student journalists brought home first- and fourth-place honors from the annual Associated Collegiate Press' midwinter conference, held March 2-5 in San Francisco.

The Clark College *Independent* website outpaced 14 other two- and four-year colleges to win first place in the large-school online news category. The print edition of the *Indy* (to use its nickname) finished fourth from among 12 entries from community colleges.

Editor-in-chief Ieva Braciulyte said the *Indy's* success in the competition felt rewarding. But she also said she and the 11 members of her staff who traveled to San Francisco valued attending the workshops and meeting other student journalists. "It was so exciting to network and get to know the struggles of other newsrooms and how they problem-solve."

Braciulyte said she also appreciated support from the

Associated Students of Clark College, which funded the trip.

“I know the conference inspired and educated our editors,” Braciulyte said. “That will get passed down to next quarter’s staff and benefit the newsroom for a long time.”

Students from 84 colleges and universities attended more than 100 conference workshops, presented largely by media professionals and journalism faculty from colleges and universities across the country. Topics included things like newsroom leadership, photography, investigative reporting, interviewing, social media, and dealing with controversial stories.

Clark students Marvin Peña and Diana Aristizabal, who produce the *Independent*’s Spanish-language insert, *Mundo Clark*, also presented a workshop. “Can You Hear Me Now? Creating New Media Outlets” detailed their efforts to create *Mundo*.

Peña, who is from Venezuela, has been a member of the *Independent* staff for three years. He and Aristizabal, who is from Colombia, created *Mundo* last year as a means for bridging cultures at Clark.

Peña said he appreciated the chance to explain his work to an audience of other college students. “It was challenging because it was my first time presenting on this level,” Peña said. “But it was inspiring because I got to inspire people, and get feedback from other students working on new projects.”

The *Independent* staff publishes a print edition every three weeks and updates the online edition regularly at www.clarkcollegeindependent.com. The award-winning website was designed in 2014 by then-student Lisa Presley.

Presley, who is now studying psychology and human development at Washington State University Vancouver, said the creation of the website was a laborious process between her, then-editor-in-chief Zach McMahon and *Independent* advisor Dee Anne Finken.

“We wanted to improve on the look and make it user-friendly,” Presley said. “We also wanted it to still have a newspaper look with the text columns, and we worked with the Disabilities Services office to make it accessible... It’s kind of my baby.”

The ACP is the nation’s oldest and largest membership organization for student journalists, said executive director Laura Widmer.

This article contributed by journalism professor Dee Anne Finken.

Molded at Clark



The Next Step: An exhibition of work created by alumni from the Ceramics Area at Clark College.

On February 22, several Clark College alumni gathered in the Frost Art Center's lobby gallery during the reception for their collective show, "The Next Step." The brainchild of art professor Lisa Conway, the show highlights the achievements of former students in the college's ceramics.

"I feel really kind of flabbergasted to be doing this," said Trish Bottemiller '15, gazing at a fellow alumna's delicately painted bowl. "It's so nice to be back to see what everybody else from Clark is doing."

Bottemiller said that her time at Clark was "a huge influence" on her artistic path. "I had never touched clay before I came to Clark," she said. "Clark definitely prepared me to continue my education at [the Oregon College of Art and Craft]. My

portfolio was approved before I even applied, because I was so thoroughly prepared for what I was up against.”

The show runs through March 25 and is part of Clark’s programming during the upcoming National Council for Education in the Ceramic Arts conference in Portland in March. According to the show’s opening statement, “Collectively, these 10 artists have all found employment in their field, built their own studios, completed residences, internships, mentorships, or transferred on to other undergraduate and graduate programs in ceramic arts. Most importantly, they have all created their own communities for sharing resources, advice and inspiration along the way.”

Read more about the artists, in their own words:

Elizabeth Alexander

Trisha Bottemiller

Jordan Jones

KeigKenzie Studios

Hector Macias

Yelena Roslaya

Lauren Ruhe

Aleka Tomlinson

Alyssa Willard



LIZ ALEXANDER

I applied to Clark College exclusively to take ceramics

classes, and eight short months after enrolling I finally got the chance to sign up for Ceramics I and rapidly became obsessed with clay. Ceramics II and III quickly followed, as well as a Special Projects class so I could continue working with clay beyond the typical class projects. When the time came to graduate from Clark, the thought of losing access to the equipment and supplies (that were now essential to my practice and I couldn't afford on my own) was worrying to say the least. Fortunately, one of my ceramics teachers strongly suggested that I apply to Oregon College of Art and Craft and to my astonishment I was accepted.

I am now in my thesis year at OCAC and my studio practice has changed a lot from what I thought it would be. When I started making work I didn't understand the environmental effect that just creating a piece of art can have. I thought nothing of buying supplies for a new project or what my pieces were made of. With each year that I have been in school, however, I've gained more knowledge about the responsibilities of being an artist. For me, being a responsible artist means having an awareness of the materials that I use in my work and using as much recycled and eco-friendly supplies as possible, including found objects. I still have a lot to learn to reach the type of working practice that I want to achieve, but this is my way of continuing to create without feeling like I am just producing objects to clutter up the world we live in.



TRISH BOTTEMILLER

When I first came to Clark, I was determined to be a drawing/painting major. That was what I had done, and been good at, my entire life. One fateful semester, though, I found myself in a ceramics class as an elective. It changed my life, and eventually became my major. I transferred from Clark to the Oregon College of Art and Craft, where I currently study for my Bachelor of Fine Arts in Ceramics. The transition from the familiar, community space of Clark's ceramics department was a bit scary and it took some time to really feel at home in my new school. I'm learning so much, and I've had the most amazing exposure to an entirely art-based community thanks to OCAC. It has forever changed who I am as a person and as an artist. I never imagined I would be making the things that I am. Currently, I'm very invested in both figurative sculpture, and mold-made slip-cast objects using a marbling technique that I have become rather obsessed with. I have the amazing opportunity to create not only my own glazes, but my own clay bodies. Lately, much of my mold-made objects are cast using a cone 10 translucent porcelain that has been a learning experience to work with. I look forward to learning even more. It is never enough.



JORDAN JONES

I left Clark College to pursue a three-year apprenticeship with Robbie Lobell and Cook on Clay on Whidbey Island. I was thoroughly excited, completely nervous, and definitely overwhelmed as I left Clark in a whirlwind heading for my new adventure in clay. This opportunity allowed me to continue to work in ceramics after Clark, and also gave me the tools to continue working in clay after the apprenticeship was over. I was immersed in the day-to-day aspects of the life of a studio potter, along with learning how a small business in artisan manufacturing runs and grows. I had a studio space and Robbie's mentorship, which greatly helped me develop my voice and style. After completing my apprenticeship, I worked at Cook on Clay as an employee before taking the plunge and committing to working for myself full-time as a studio potter. I currently continue to live on Whidbey, sharing a house and home studio with my studio mate from my apprenticeship. I create functional pottery with playful and lively animals carved onto my pots. Like many other potters, I believe that using handmade objects brings joy to people in their daily lives. I want my pots to delight the people that use them. I use a stoneware clay that I decorate with sgraffito and slip inlay, soda-fired to cone 10. I am interested in exploring cone 6 electric firing again and plan to start experimenting with that soon.

I think one of the biggest resources for continuing to work in ceramics has been getting involved in my clay community. There are so many wonderful and knowledgeable people out there. Also, the "*Field Guide for Ceramic Artisans*" compiled by Julia Galloway, is a fabulous resource chock-full of valuable, helpful information. My advice for students at Clark who want to continue their pursuits would be to put yourself out there as much as you can. Become involved in your clay community, and get to know the people around you. Apply to shows, call for entries, and galleries. Research and pursue different ways to continue your education, whether it be undergrad, grad school, residencies, workshops, assistantships, or

apprenticeships. There are so many different ways to continue on your path, find out what works for you.



KEIGKENZIE STUDIO: SAM MACKENZIE & KELLY KEIGWIN

We both began our journey with ceramics at Clark College, Sam in 2003 and Kelly in 2010. Upon exiting we knew we wanted to continue to create pottery, but didn't know it would become our primary form of expression. We had the common questions of how and where to keep working, since we couldn't immediately build a ceramics studio of our own. Sam continued her education at Oregon College of Art and Craft, which lead to teaching art classes for children. After we met, Sam recommended Kelly join her working at OCAC which brought Kelly back into a ceramics studio.

Sam was able to seek out and purchase used items to start a home studio, including an ancient Skutt kiln and a Pacifica wheel. We've had to learn along the way about repairing and keeping used studio equipment running. We recently upgraded to a larger, newer used Skutt kiln, but it's taken a while. We learned many things by working with other potters at OCAC and by visiting Georgie's in Portland. For those who can't buy their own equipment, it is possible to work and have your pieces fired at Georgie's, at community centers, and even at other artists' studios for a fee.

We're fortunate to have a home studio. It is nothing fancy, but it gets the job done. Our advice to students who want to continue pursuing art after graduation is to make sure you know your resources. Don't be afraid to be scrappy. There are many paths to take with art, particularly ceramics and pottery. Do you want to be in gallery shows? Do you want to be a studio potter? Do you want to be an educator? OCAC is a good option for continued learning and access to equipment – either by seeking a degree or simply signing up for an evening class.

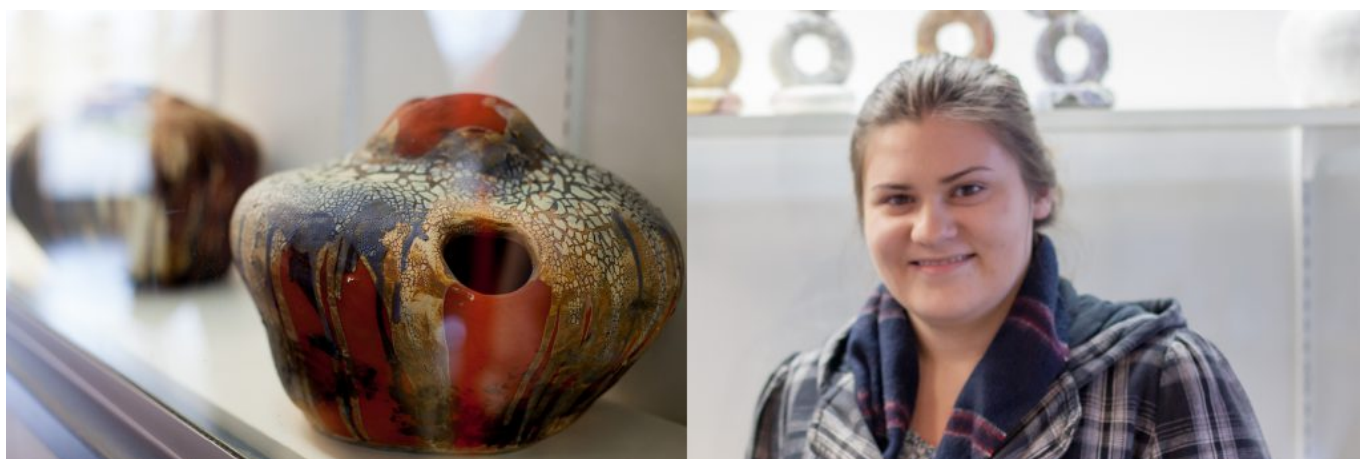
We have both taken meandering paths in life, in general and artistically. We both have many years of experience working in various media, but pottery has become a natural way for us to work collaboratively and sell work to support ourselves. Generally speaking, Sam throws on the wheel, while Kelly throws, does some slab work and hand building. Kelly carves imagery on the pieces and we both work on glazing. Our work is mostly cone 6 porcelain and features colorful characters that reflect both the lighter side of human experiences and connect with personal emotions. We often feature hearts and themes of companionship – a reflection of the happiness and love we all long for. We find that people connect with these images personally, in a way that evokes positive feelings and simple joy.



HECTOR MACIAS

It started with a pottery class in high school. The art credit I desired went on to fulfill its purpose and more. With an interest in ceramics, I found myself in the pottery studio at Clark College. During this time, I had the opportunity to learn and explore more about ceramics than I could ever imagine. After leaving Clark, I ran into one of the problems every ceramic student would face, studio space. Luckily, Oregon and Washington both have great ceramic communities with great opportunities. I became involved with the Oregon Potter's Association and found studios to temporarily work in. It wasn't until a few months later that I bought my first potter's wheel and now I happily work in my studio at home.

My style of ceramic work is largely influenced by Japanese pottery. The wares that I create are wheel thrown from porcelain or on occasion from red clay bodies. I'm a big fan of using celadon glazes and glazes with a lot of flux. My work is almost always made to be functional. There's nothing like eating and drinking from handmade wares. If you have never used a pottery wheel I encourage you to try it sometime. You might find the experience to be very therapeutic.



YELENA ROSLAYA

My immediate feelings after leaving Clark College were nervous and excited at the same time. I was nervous not knowing what

was ahead of me or what was going to unfold in terms of my artistic career. I was also excited because it was like an adventure where I couldn't predict what was going to happen. After leaving Clark College, I transferred immediately to Oregon College of Art and Craft, where I focused on Ceramics. Four years later, I graduated with a BFA from OCAC and am now assisting ceramic artist Careen Stoll in Battle Ground. At OCAC, I pushed myself and worked beyond academia. I tried to take every job opportunity or call to artist that came up that pertained to me. This led me to be a step ahead above my peers as well as access some great collaborations I didn't expect.

My ceramic work is evolved around sound, musical instruments, and my personal experience with hearing-motion synesthesia. My style tends to be formed intuitively and I love to use colorful underglazes and crawling glazes that contrast each other. It gives the work energy and motion as if it's alive. I currently share a studio space with Careen Stoll, where we share ideas, advice, and helpful information. It's a two-way mentoring atmosphere. My personal advice for ceramic or art students who want to continue their pursuit after graduation is to keep going, to continue looking and applying and never give up.



LAUREN RUHE

After completion of my AFA at Clark College, I continued my education at The Oregon College of Art and Craft (OCAC). While attending OCAC, I focused on improving my techniques, as well as on finding my own voice and style for my work. I also developed new and useful skills, such as how to make my own glazes, different methods of firing clay, and digging up local clay in order to process it into a usable material.

A frequent theme that I use in my work is the memory of the place where I grew up. I spent my childhood in a thickly-wooded area located outside of Vancouver, Washington, where I encountered wildlife daily. The forest was a mysterious and magical place that was full of life, and also seemed much bigger than anything I could have ever imagined. I encountered forest animals daily, and my family even named some of the frequent visitors to our yard. These forest friends have been the main focus of my current work.



ALEKA TOMLINSON

After taking ceramics courses at Clark College as part of the Running Start Program in 2006, I transferred into a BFA program at the Oregon College of Art and Craft. After that I took a hiatus from clay and made work privately in book format through drawing and painting. A job opportunity as studio technician at Pigeon Toe Ceramics in Portland brought me back

to clay. I quickly grew from my position as a studio tech to a full time production potter and operations manager. During this time, I was able to make connections with local artists in Portland and began working as an assistant to artists Lilith Rockett in ceramics and Andy Paiko in glass.

In 2015 I was accepted by the Ash Street Project in Portland, a ceramics mentorship program run by Thomas Orr and Joanna Bloom. I was fortunate to spend 11 months sharing a studio with Thomas and Joanna, three other mentees, and a number of visiting artists including Jean Nicolas Gerard, Eva Kwong, Jessica Jackson-Hutchins, Dirk Staschke, Jennifer Kenworth, Michelle Liccardo, and my teacher from Clark, Lisa Conway. During my time at Ash Street I took advantage of the dedicated studio space and found my voice as a ceramic artist. Upon leaving in the summer of 2016, I moved into a private home studio and worked part time as assistant to ceramic artist Brian Jones. That fall I assisted artists Birdie Boone and Matt Repsher during an 8-week concentration at Penland School of Craft in North Carolina, after which I returned home to Portland to continue work in my own studio, while assisting artists Brian Jones and Victoria Christen.



ALYSSA WILLARD

After leaving Clark I was excited to continue my education in

the arts. I went on to complete my BFA at Central Washington University in Ellensburg, and am currently working towards my MFA at Montana State University in Bozeman, with a focus on both ceramics and painting. Montana State University has great studio spaces and equipment. There are wood-fired kilns, electric kilns, gas-fired, and soda/salt kilns all available for me to use. It is also great because I am surrounded by so many talented artists who work in a variety of mediums; their work inspires me and I can get quality feedback on my work from both the faculty and other graduate students. My advice for other art students that want to continue their pursuits is to continue to network, and actively participate in the art scene in some way, whether it's through school, residencies, commissions, or call-for-entries.

Currently my work explores the interactions between technology and the natural environment. I am interested in the combination of plant forms with electronic or mechanical components. My work can be interpreted in different ways, and I am starting to be more interested in the viewer's interpretation, rather than describing how I view the work. I use a combination of techniques depending on the form I am looking to create. I have also been experimenting with firing techniques. I mostly electric fire, but I also do wood and salt firings. So far the wood and salt firings have only been used exclusively for functional pieces. I have also been experimenting with room-temperature finishes, such as using spray paint and resin.

Building a Better Future



Keeley
McConnell '16

You want to know Keeley McConnell's strategy for success, the thing that's helped her go from remedial math to high-level medical research? It's this: Stay focused on the path in front of you. One foot in front of the other. If you can make that next step, you can keep going.

Four years ago, the next step was: Get the kids in the car. Pack everything else in around them. Get the heck out of Dodge before your ex comes back.

Eighty miles later, McConnell and her three children arrived at a shelter for victims of domestic violence. She'd left her job, her home. She had no idea how she would support her family on the money she earned as a medical assistant. But one thing at a time. Find a place to live, get some stability.

It was only three months later, when McConnell had moved her family into an apartment, that she considered college. "When I was in high school, I never thought about college as an option," she says. "I'd taken one class when I was pregnant with my son, but I tested into the lowest level of math they had and I thought, 'Oh my goodness, this is going to take forever!'"

However, a friend encouraged McConnell to come with her to apply to Clark College. Just as she'd feared, McConnell tested into DVED 21, the lowest-level math course offered at the

time. But one thing at a time. Keep your eyes on the path.

McConnell's other strategy has been listening to advice from friends, family, and mentors. When an instructor suggested she enroll in Clark's Math Academy program, McConnell signed up. This yearlong program pairs standard classroom time with dedicated math labs, where students get extra help understanding difficult concepts. McConnell describes it as "the key to my success in math."



Keeley McConnell helping a student in Clark College's STEM Tutoring Center.

By the time McConnell finished her last Math Academy class, not only was she prepared to enter college-level math courses—she'd been recommended to become a math tutor herself. The experience helped boost her confidence and gave her the tools she needed to continue pursuing her dream of becoming a physician's assistant.

That goal would require her to spend two more years at Clark to earn an associate degree, plus another two at a four-year institution to complete a bachelor's, followed by at least two years of medical school. *But*. One foot in front of the other. Stay focused on the path in front of you.

McConnell continued to thrive at Clark, finding she enjoyed the intellectual challenge of biology coursework. And once again, a mentor stepped in to change the course of her life.

When biology chair Dr. Travis Kibota first approached her about applying to the BUILD EXITO Scholar Program, she was skeptical. Run by Portland State University in partnership with Oregon Health Sciences University, and with funding provided by the National Institutes of Health, the program helps undergraduates from diverse backgrounds become successful in health research careers.

“I was hesitant at first, because I wasn’t originally interested in going into research,” McConnell says. “But it’s been the most amazing opportunity.”

Through her participation in BUILD EXITO, McConnell joined a cohort of students from community colleges in the region who formed a Research Learning Community. Within that RLC, she could learn about careers in research, develop skills, and connect with mentors. She also had a built-in social network to help her make the adjustment to a four-year institution after she graduated from Clark in spring 2016.

“If I had had to do all this without EXITO, I would have been really overwhelmed,” she says. “I knew everyone at Clark—staff, faculty, students. PSU was huge. But the EXITO staff have been there for me—you can go in and ask them anything.”

Now a junior in her second semester at PSU, McConnell is deeply immersed in research in her chosen field of trauma medicine; she’ll even see her name on some upcoming research papers, a big boost to career advancement in the research world. “I work with the Chief of Trauma at OHSU,” she says proudly. “I wear a pager; when a call comes in, I’m there, collecting data and samples.”

McConnell says it was overwhelming when she first walked into OHSU. “I looked up and thought, ‘I’m so close. I’m literally standing in the building I want to have my future in. It’s what I’ve been waiting for my whole life.’”



Keeley McConnell, *left*, celebrates graduation from Clark College in 2016 with a friend.

She still faces challenges. While BUILD EXIT0 students receive a stipend that significantly eases the financial burden of being a college student, McConnell still works 30 hours a week outside of school to support herself and her three children, now ages 8, 9 and 18. And she struggles to find time to be present for her children as a mom.

“It’s probably my biggest challenge right now,” she says. “But they’re great, they’re my little drivers. I want them to have something better. They need to see that, when you want something and you work really hard at for it, you can get it.”

McConnell brought her son with her earlier this year when she was invited to the Washington State Association of College Trustees’ Transforming Lives Awards banquet, where they sat between Clark College President Bob Knight and two state senators. “I wanted him to experience that,” she says. “But once we were there, I realized how big a deal this was for me, too. With me, I get so focused on the road ahead, I don’t spend much time thinking about the big picture. It made me realize, ‘Oh, gosh, I guess I have come a long way.’ And, you know, my kids and I—we’re still moving forward.”

Are you a student interested in participating in BUILD EXIT0? The application deadline for the 2017-2018 year is February 28, and there is a free application help session on Friday, February 24, 10 a.m. – 11:50 a.m., in SHL 124.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

Get a Running Start at Clark College



High school sophomores and juniors can learn how to take the next step in their education by attending one of two optional Running Start Information Night sessions at Clark College.

The identical sessions will be held 7:00-8:00 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 1 and Wednesday, Feb. 22, 2017, in the Clark College gymnasium in the O'Connell Sports Center, located on the southwest corner of Clark College's main campus.

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/technical courses as long as the students meet the criteria and the classes are college-level.

The program, which can significantly reduce the cost of a four-year 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. According to Associate Director of Running Start Linda Calvert, these annual information nights frequently attract hundreds of interested students and parents to the college, which is why the college hosts two sessions. Fall Quarter 2016 Clark College welcomed 2432 Running Start students, which was up by 163 from the previous year.

These information sessions are for students and parents who want to know more about beginning the program in fall 2017. Calvert explained, "These optional sessions provide a great chance to hear current Running Start students candidly describe their experiences in the program. You'll also hear about the eligibility criteria, deadlines, and more."

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

Calvert noted, "Running Start is not for everyone. It requires not only college-level skills, but also college-level maturity. Successful program participants who flourish under the academic rigor of Running Start are generally self-motivated and looking for additional academic challenges. Students frequently tell us that they like the learning environment at the college and the ability to gradually sample the college environment."

Clark College is located at 1933 Fort Vancouver Way in Vancouver, Wash. Parking will be available in the college's Red lots on the east side of Fort Vancouver Way and in the Purple Lot on the west side of Fort Vancouver Way. Driving directions and parking maps are available at www.clark.edu/maps.

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.

For more information on Running Start, visit the Clark College website at www.clark.edu/runningstart. For information about Running Start Information Nights, call 360-992-2366.

Financial Aid Info Night



On Wednesday, December 7, specialists from Clark College's

Financial Aid Office will be on hand to answer questions from prospective students and parents about navigating the world of financial aid.

Clark's annual Financial Aid Information Night provides information about Clark's admission process, scholarship opportunities, financial aid grants and loans, how to apply, and much more.

The event will be held from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Clark College's main campus in Gaiser Student Center. Clark College is located at 1933 Fort Vancouver Way, Vancouver, WA 98663. Driving directions and parking maps are available at www.clark.edu/maps.

This event is free and open to the public; it requires no advance registration or reservation. Information is available at the Clark website at <http://www.clark.edu/cc/fan>. If you have any additional questions, please direct them to Clark College's Financial Aid Office in Gaiser Hall at 360-992-2153 or finaid@clark.edu.

Event Schedule:

- 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.: Open House
- 6:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.: Financial Aid Presentation by Chippi Bello, Clark College Associate Dean of Financial Aid
- 7:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.: Question-and-Answer Session

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