

Battling stereotypes, they found success



Qi Wu and Tammy Senior are Clark College's representatives to the 2016 All-Washington Academic Team.

Two outstanding Clark College students were selected to attend the 2016 All-Washington Academic Team Recognition Ceremony, held on March 24 at South Puget Sound Community College in Olympia, Washington. Tammy Senior and Qi Wu are two of just 66 students from community and technical colleges across the state to receive this honor, which recognizes students for their academic excellence and service to the community.

At first glance, Senior and Wu don't seem terribly similar. One is young even by the standards of Running Start, a program that allows high schoolers to take college courses; the other is coming back to college after serving four years in the

military. One has spent her whole life in Vancouver; the other has lived in more countries than she can count on one hand.

But on closer inspection, certain parallels become clear between the two young women: They're both fascinated by science and technology. They both are driven students who make time in their busy schedules to serve their communities. Both have had to challenge others' assumptions and figuring out creative ways to get around obstacles in their educational journeys. And so far, both are succeeding impressively.



Clark student Qi Wu stands before the college's new STEM Building, slated to open in fall 2016.

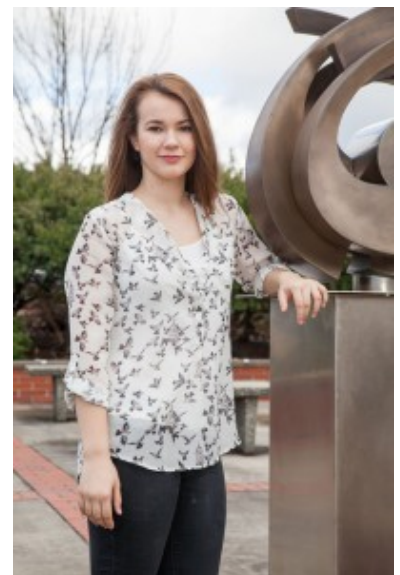
Wu's obstacles began surfacing when she and her mother emigrated from China to the United States. Wu, then a sophomore in high school, struggled to maintain her grades while learning a new language in a new culture. She also found herself confronting gender stereotypes, as classmates and teachers assumed she would be more interested in subjects like art and the humanities instead of math and science.

"When I was growing up, I was always better in physics and chemistry," she said. "I like numbers, I like logic. When I came to Clark and took my first engineering course, it was like, 'Wow, this is where I belong!'"

However, soon a new hurdle appeared. Wu, whose mother had remarried and had another child, realized her family could not afford to pay for her college education. Hoping to support herself, she enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 2010 as an aviation mechanic, and took every opportunity to earn educational credits and develop new skills—despite the doubts some had of the petite young woman’s abilities.

“When I got transferred to Japan, my supervisor told me, ‘Well, you can do the desk job here, because you’re a girl,’” Wu recalled. “And I said, ‘No. I want to do the job I trained for.’”

Wu said that overall, she’s grateful for the opportunities the military provided her to travel and learn skills that will help in her electrical engineering career. She’s currently receiving scholarships from Clark, which allows her to save her military education benefits for the more-expensive, four-year institutions she hopes to attend one day to earn her master’s degree. She also works in Clark’s scholarship office herself, and spends weekends training as a Naval Reservist.



Clark student Tammy Senior says she’s been impressed by how welcoming the

college was to her, even when she took her first class at age 14.

Like Wu, Senior's challenges also began in high school, but they were of a different nature: She felt stifled. "I wasn't being challenged enough," she recalls. "I took a class at Clark and found it so much better."

Senior's family couldn't afford to pay for a full load of college classes out of pocket, and when the 14-year-old visited Clark's scholarship office, she discovered she was too young to qualify for financial aid or scholarship opportunities. Then, the scholarship staff offered a new possibility: Perhaps Senior could enroll in Running Start, the Washington State program that allows eligible high school juniors and seniors to take college classes tuition-free. The only problem was that Senior was still a freshman. She wound up skipping the 10th grade in order to qualify, enrolling at Clark as a full-time student at age 15.

"It was definitely interesting," Senior, now 16 and set to graduate in the spring, said with a grin. "But Clark's pretty welcoming, and I really thrived in the community here."

Senior has maintained a 4.0 GPA while taking classes in Clark's challenging Honors Program, volunteering with her church, teaching private music lessons, and serving as the vice president of leadership for Clark's chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, the international honor society for two-year colleges. She'll be 17 when she enters a university—potentially with junior standing, depending on where she attends.

"People ask me, 'Why don't you enjoy your high school years?'" Senior said. "But I'm a planner. I think ahead. My mother wasn't able to finish school because she started a family. I know I have a lot of school ahead of me, and this is a way to

speed things up.”

Senior hopes to become a neurologist, a goal developed when her beloved grandmother suffered a series of debilitating strokes in 2014. Like Wu, Senior faced some skepticism about her ambitions.

“When I tell people I want to pursue a career in neurology, sometimes they look at me strangely and say, ‘Oh, why don’t you go into nursing, so you have time for a family?’” she said. “But I know I can do it. I can have a family. I can have the career of my choice. I just have to work hard. And you know, they would never tell a male student that.”

Both students say they appreciate the support they’ve found at Clark. “I like the diversity here,” says Wu, a first-generation college student. “Engineering professor Izad [Khormae] is from Iran. My physics teacher is from Russia. I think half the STEM faculty are women. And then in my classes I’ve met a few other veterans. You get so many different experiences here, different cultures.”

Wu and Senior were honored for their achievements at the All-Washington Academic Team induction ceremony on March 24, 2016, in Olympia, where Gov. Jay Inslee was the keynote speaker. The All-Washington Academic Team is a program of Phi Theta Kappa, the international honor society of two-year colleges. Team members are eligible for numerous scholarships, including transfer scholarships at most four-year universities in the state.

“It is such an honor,” said Senior, sitting with Wu during a break between classes.

“It’s nice for your hard work to be recognized,” adds Wu.

“Yes, you feel like your hard work is finally paying off,” said Senior.

Catching dreams, sharing history



Brent Learned talks about George Curtis Levi's traditional "ledger art" with attendees of the 2016 Student of Color Luncheon.

The winter 2016 Student of Color Luncheon was filled with history—some of it long in the past, and some of it being made right then. The event featured artists Brent Learned and George Curtis Levi, whose work is currently being featured at the Clark County Historical Museum, speaking about atrocities

committed against their ancestors in the 19th century. It also marked the bestowal of Clark's first scholarship designated specifically for a Native American student.



Dream Catcher
Scholarship
recipient Channa
Smith

The Clark College Dream Catcher Scholarship was first announced at the college's annual Native American celebration in 2014. Clark student Channa Smith said she was honored to be its inaugural recipient. "When I first applied for the scholarship, I didn't think much about it beyond, 'Oh, it would be nice to have some money,'" she said at the reception. "But it's been really transformative. I didn't think how much it would mean to me to be recognized for my hard work."

Smith has been very active in the community, both at the college and in Southwest Washington. A Coast Salish tribe member, she helped start Clark's new Native American Cultural Club and has participated in local Chinook tribal activities since moving to the area.



Channa Smith was named the inaugural recipient of the Dream Catcher Scholarship at the 2016 Student of Color Luncheon. Multicultural Retention Manager Felisciana Peralta, *right*, presented the scholarship.

After the scholarship was presented to Smith, Learned and Levi spoke about creating the art that makes up “One November Morning.” This exhibit depicts the Sand Creek Massacre of November 29, 1864, when more than 150 Cheyenne and Arapaho people were killed in Sand Creek, Colorado, by U.S. Army soldiers.

“You have to know where you come from to know where you’re going, and that’s what we’re trying to do,” said Levi during the presentation. He urged students at the luncheon to remember their own history and communities as they progressed in life. “Go back to your communities after you graduate and give back,” he said.

“One November Morning” will be on display at the Clark County Historical Museum through May 28. As part of its “Native Voices” exhibit, the Clark College Libraries is hosting a free art walk on Friday, March 4, that begins at Cannell Library with a reception, then visits the Native American basketry currently on display at Archer Gallery, and ends at the Clark County Historical Museum.

The spring 2016 Student of Color Luncheon will be held in May. It will feature the announcement of the recipient of Clark's 2016 Constance Baker Motley Scholarship, which is given each year to a Clark College student of color.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

Turning students into scientists



Clark College is providing an unprecedented opportunity for eligible students to start their research careers while

still in community college—getting hands-on research opportunities, paid internships, and special educational support to help them succeed in the exciting career of scientific researcher.

This opportunity comes through a recently developed program called BUILD-EXIT0. Introduced in 2015, BUILD-EXIT0 is a program designed to support undergraduate students who are interested in pursuing research careers in the biomedical, behavioral, clinical, health, and social sciences. Scholars receive a broad range of support and opportunities. Over the course of their three years in the program (one here at Clark, the other two at Portland State University, the University of Hawaii at Mānoa, the University of Alaska in Anchorage, or the University of Guam), scholars will enroll in specific courses and will participate in workshops designed to enhance their skills and knowledge in science and research. In addition to summer research training, scholars will be placed in research labs and will receive paid research internships, as well as some tuition benefits. And scholars will have access to dedicated advisors and mentors to help them navigate their educational pathway.

This a great opportunity for students interested in solving pressing medical problems, discovering new scientific breakthroughs, or simply satisfying their curiosity about the world around them. Interested students can visit The first step to applying is to visit the BUILD-EXIT0 website—but they should do so quickly, as the application deadline before noon on Friday, March 4.

Clark students interested in participating in the program may direct questions to Professor Travis Kibota (tkibota@clark.edu, 992-2282). Dr. Kibota can put interested students in contact with one of Clark's current 2015 BUILD-EXIT0 scholars to get some first-hand information about the program.

This article was contributed by Prof. Roberto Anitori

A smart investment



Clark College student Cindy Nguyen hopes to become an ultrasound technician.

“I’ve always wanted to go to college,” says Clark student Cindy Nguyen. Even so—and despite her excellent grades—Nguyen acknowledges that college has its challenges.

“When you come to college, you need to learn to study more efficiently than you did in high school,” says the 19-year-old. “And there’s the money thing: tuition, and then textbooks are really expensive, like \$200 a quarter.”

Like almost three-quarters of Clark's student body, Nguyen is a first-generation college student. Her mother, a nail technician, and her father, who installs hardwood flooring, never had the chance to attend college in their native Vietnam. Paying for college for their children (Nguyen's older sister, who also attended Clark, is now a social worker, and her younger sister is still in middle school) is a financial challenge for them—but one they have decided is worth the sacrifice.

"They're really supportive," says Nguyen. "They're willing to do anything for me to pursue my education, because they never had that opportunity."

Being able to attend Clark has helped significantly in reducing the cost of college for the Nguyen family, who have lived in Vancouver since the 1990s. Nguyen is able to save on housing by staying with her parents while completing her prerequisites at Clark before transferring to a farther-away institution to complete her degree in ultrasound technology. Furthermore, she has received support from scholarships made possible by generous donors to the Clark College Foundation.

"That's been really helpful," she says. "It's relieved the financial burden. Without the scholarships, I would have to get a job to support myself in college. This way, I can just concentrate on my studies. I'm so focused on what I'm doing."

Every year, Clark College Foundation supports the college's students with tens of thousands of dollars in scholarships, many of which are funded by Clark alumni who remember being struggling students themselves.

Nguyen says having total strangers investing in her education gives her a sense of responsibility to make that investment worthwhile. "It's really motivating," she says. "Their way of helping me has allowed me to enable myself, achieve an education, and hopefully support other people one day. I see

myself working at a hospital and helping people as an ultrasound technician. That's my dream. So what I'm learning right now, I'm going to give back to them—and I'm going to help support my parents, too.”

Photo: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

Student stories: Flying with a Phoenix



My name is Lily Hart, and I am a student at Clark College. I'm also the Managing Editor of *Phoenix* and was Assistant Literary Editor last year. *Phoenix* is Clark College's award-winning

literary and art journal. Run by student editors and faculty advisers, it publishes work from Clark College students, faculty and alumni—mostly students. We publish in print and online, and accept a wide array of work including fiction, creative non-fiction, poetry, ceramics, design work, music, and dramatic recitals. You can go online at clarkphoenix.com to get a full list. This year, *Phoenix* is proud to introduce a new category: graphic novels.



I am hoping that this post will give you insight into the behind-the-scenes process of *Phoenix*—and will maybe prompt you to submit something to the journal yourself!

Right now, the 2016 *Phoenix* is just finishing up its pre-production phase. Here are a couple little tidbits about the early stages that many people aren't aware of. Clark offers a three-credit class in the fall – Intro to Literary Publication. In this class, students work on marketing and promotions; interview plans and strategies; and editing 101. If you are curious about some of the work done in the class, take a look at the promotional posters going up around campus, as well as a slide in the Gaiser Student Center: We created all of those in our class, and it's fun to be able to see our "homework" on display all over campus. We have a class of 16 students, and everyone is enthusiastic about the work we've started.

One of my classmates in Intro to Literary Publication, Rowan Walters, is *Phoenix's* Poetry Editor. "Starting in the class and progressing to the staff has made me feel valuable, both to the campus of a school I love as well as to society in general," she says.

I would definitely agree with this. For me, one of the other highlights of being involved is getting to know a lot of amazing people with similar interests. It's a nice community feel.

You also get real-world experience in being an editor, gaining organization skills and managing projects, which are all perfect skills for today's job market. As Jennie Avens, our Fine Arts editor from 2015 and again staff for 2016, says,



“Working with this team was a great practical experience that gave me a sneak peek of what to expect if I get into publishing after graduation.” Whether a student's career goals lie in editing and the arts, or in something completely different, the skills gained from being on *Phoenix* gives are always applicable.

Another thing which I'm really excited about is the awards *Phoenix* has won. In 2014, the journal won first place in the American Scholastic Press literary and art journal competition, and individual student work won as well. Last year, (when I was involved, so this is super exciting!) it won the 2015 Washington Community College Humanities Association's Large Budget Literary/Arts Magazine of the Year, and the Community College Humanities Association award for first place Literary Journal. This is a huge deal for us because we have never won that award before.

Remember, submissions are open to the entire college community—students, faculty, staff and alumni—and the submission deadlines are January 9 for literature, January 19 for art, and February 29 for video. Visit clarkphoenix.com to find out more about how to submit your work. We hope to see your submissions!

This article was contributed by Clark student Lily Hart.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

Meet the Coaches



With their low tuition rates and open-door enrollment policies, community colleges have long been a way for students of all socioeconomic backgrounds to pursue higher education and career advancement. However, students experiencing poverty often face challenges that go beyond paying for school. Financial hardship can turn anything from transportation to Internet access into a potential obstacle that could derail a student's plans.

That's why Clark College recently hired four new Resource Coaches to help students remain successful and supported all the way through their educational journey. The coaches were hired through a Working Families Success Network grant announced earlier this year, with supplementation from a grant from the Community Foundation of Southwest Washington, and are part of a collegewide effort to improve Clark's support and understanding of students in poverty.

"We want these coaches to be a resource not just for our students, but for our employees as well," said Associate Director of Workforce Education Services Armetta Burney. "Our hope is that, when staff or faculty encounter a student who seems to be overwhelmed by poverty-related challenges, they'll know that they can refer the student to one of our coaches for help."

According to most-recent data, almost half of Clark's students are low-income, and almost three-quarters of them are first-generation students. These students may lack stable housing or a quiet place to study. They may have difficulty affording basic school supplies, or child care, or transportation to and from school. Additionally, college can feel very lonely for these students. Because they're the first to attend college, they may not feel like they can turn to their family or friends for support or advice; meanwhile, they may feel alienated from classmates and faculty who don't understand the unique challenges they face.

These four new Resource Coaches are meant to change that dynamic. Now, when a student is making the transition from basic education courses to credit-bearing college ones, they'll have support from a Transitional Studies Coach during the process. When they're struggling to afford housing or food, the Workforce Education Services Coach can help them apply for public benefits and connect with community organizations. If college becomes overwhelming and their grades begin to slip, the Retention and Career Coach can help

them get back on track. And if they find their finances stretched thin, the Financial Literacy Coach can help them set up a budget and figure out strategies to make the most out of their financial resources.

While many of these services have been available at the college in different forms, the coaches add a personal relationship that can help keep at-risk students from slipping through the cracks.

“We almost never talk to a student just once,” explains Transitional Studies Coach Nicole Hopkins. “After we meet with a student, we call them back. And I will call them again and again if I have to: ‘Hey, how are you doing? Are you working on that plan we figured out for you?’ I am happy to walk students across the street to someone’s office if I think they need more help after our meeting.”

Additionally, the Resource Coaches serve as advocates to the rest of the college, sharing their students’ perspectives and working to make Clark a more inclusive environment. They offer workshops to Clark faculty and staff on how to communicate with students experiencing poverty, including one held during the college’s first-ever Teaching and Learning Days in August. The additional grant from the Community Foundation of Southwest Washington funds the Financial Literacy Coach’s work teaching workshops on financial resources and skills to students in order to help break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

“We want to help remove the stigma and misperceptions about poverty, both here at Clark and within our broader community,” says Director of Career Services Edie Blakley. “We see it as part of the college’s role as a learning institution.”

Meet the Coaches



Nicole, Transitional Studies Coach

Nicole works with students enrolled in Clark's Transitional Studies program—which includes English as a Second Language, Adult High School Diploma, and GED Preparation—as they transfer into credit-bearing courses at the college. When students come in to meet her, she helps them assess which resources they have, and which they lack, to succeed at Clark. She discusses their personal and educational goals and helps them identify potential barriers, connecting them to resources that might help diminish those barriers. Often she guides them through options like I-BEST and Learning Communities that could help them enter college successfully. And she helps them with college logistics like testing and registration.

Nicole calls her job “exciting and inspiring,” adding, “each one of us has our own story, and it is my privilege to be a part of someone’s story. I get the opportunity to help students move past the barriers on their journey toward success and the best part is, I get to celebrate with them as they reach each goal.”

Contact: TBG 209; M-F 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.; nhopkins@clark.edu



Angelica, Workforce Education Services Coach

Angelica works primarily with students enrolled in Workforce Education programs, which help low-income and unemployed individuals earn vocational/technical degrees and certificates. She helps guide these students through college processes, from applying for financial aid to setting up their student email. With years of experience working with people experiencing poverty, she can help connect students to support services both inside and outside the college so they can focus on their education.

“My position excites me because I am able to provide information to students about resources that they may not have been aware of,” Angelica says. “I love to see students grow and develop into professionals as they complete their degrees at Clark. I have been able to build lasting relationships with students that go beyond degree attainment.”

Contact: GHL 128; T 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., W 9 a.m. – 2 p.m., Th 9 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.; WESCoach@clark.edu



Craig, Financial Literacy Coach

Attending college brings with it a whole slew of financial challenges. For a person who's used to living paycheck to paycheck, receiving a quarter's worth of financial aid at one time can be difficult to manage. Books, fees, and equipment can cost hundreds of dollars. Craig's job is to help students manage their budgets and avoid common pitfalls. He helps them check their credit scores and shop for the best bank or credit card to fit their needs. He works with them to develop plans to work through any debt or financial challenges they currently have, as well as long-term plans to help them create a solid financial foundation from which to build. Additionally, Craig regularly holds workshops on financial literacy through the Career Center and the Library.

"I enjoy helping students understand how to make money work for them, thereby bringing them closer to attaining their dreams," he says.

Contact: PUB 002; M-F 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.; cebersole@clark.edu



Alex, Retention & Career Coach

Most students come to Alex for one of two reasons: Either they're not sure where they want to go, or they've hit a stumbling block on the road to get there. Alex helps students explore careers and academic fields that fit their skills and interests, and then create a plan to reach their chosen goal. Additionally, she helps students whose grades have triggered an Academic Early Warning, helping them take the steps they need to get their grades back on track without jeopardizing their financial aid. She takes a holistic look at their lives, helping connect them with services that can help them with not just their academic challenges but their personal ones as well.

"I think being a former Clark student myself helps me understand what these students are going through," says Alex, who earned her associate degree in 2009 before transferring to Portland State University for her bachelor's. "What excites me about this position is the opportunity to support students in accessing and using relevant campus and community resources, help prioritize their success and set strong, personalized goals, and ultimately tie these skills to their future career goals."

*Contact: HSC 124; T & W 9 a.m. – 4 p.m., Th 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.;
amartin@clark.edu*

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

A springboard to opportunity



Three Clark College Transitional Studies students celebrate earning their high school diplomas during Clark's 2015 Commencement ceremony. Beginning in the 2015 summer quarter, students like them have a new option for earning their diploma called High School 21+.

Starting this summer quarter, adults in Southwest Washington who lack a high school diploma have a new, streamlined way to earn this valuable educational achievement. Clark College has adopted High School 21+, a new program in Washington State

that is designed to help adults gain the education they need to participate in today's workforce.

"There are so many adults who are afraid of returning to school or who are worried about the GED exam and that stands in their way of defining and reaching their goals," said Monica Wilson, Transitional Studies Program Manager. "High School 21+ gives adults a new pathway to meet their goals with additional supports from the Transitional Studies team to help make the process as easy as possible."

High School 21+, which was launched in 2014 in 12 community and technical colleges by the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, is open to all Washington residents aged 21 or older who do not have a high school degree. While students have always been able to earn high school diplomas or prepare for the GED through two-year colleges, this new program helps remove some obstacles to the process. Students can earn credit for skills gained through work or military history, helping to reduce the amount of time spent in classes that are unnecessary. Also, the program infuses basic skills classes—things like computer skills or writing that students often need to take, but that previously did not apply toward their high school credential—with rigorous academic coursework, allowing them to apply toward a diploma.

According to the U.S. Census, 10 percent of Washington State adults (defined as 25 years or older) do not have a high school degree. Meanwhile, according to recent studies, more than two-thirds of all jobs in Washington State will require postsecondary education by 2018—the sixth-highest rate in the nation.

High School 21+ is designed to make earning a high school diploma more accessible. Classes cost \$25 a quarter and books are provided for no additional charge; classes are offered at two locations, during times that fit working adults'

schedules. And, because federal regulations now require a high school diploma or equivalency to receive financial aid, High School 21+ makes college more accessible as well for thousands of Washington State residents.

Clark College's Department of Transitional Studies launched High School 21+ in the 2015 summer quarter with 41 students enrolled. Already, five of them are expected to earn their high school degrees in fall quarter.

To learn more about Clark College's High School 21+ program, visit www.clark.edu/cc/hs21.

Photo: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

A Night of Celebration



Almost 740 graduates attended the 2015 Clark College Commencement ceremony, held June 18 at the Clark County Event Center.

The sun shone, the bagpipes sounded, and the members of Clark College's 79th graduating class gathered together—more than 730 of them, making the 2015 Commencement ceremony the college's largest yet.

The Clark County Event Center was filled with friends, family members, and other well-wishers at the event, which took place during the evening of June 18.



First-generation college graduate David Scott '15 attended the 2015 Commencement ceremony.

Approximately 20 members of the crowd were there to cheer on David Scott, 22, who was receiving his Associate of Arts degree. "I'm the first one in my family to graduate from college," said Scott, whose neck was adorned with multiple leis, a traditional Hawaiian token of celebration. "They're pretty stoked."

Scott, who is transferring to Washington State University Vancouver in the fall and hopes to become an elementary school teacher, said he was impressed by the caring nature of his professors at Clark. "They genuinely want you to be successful," he said as he waited in line to enter the ceremony.

Scott said he also appreciated the flexibility of Clark's online courses. "I've been working fulltime as an overnight stocker at Winco Foods," he explained. "It's really good that they have online classes because I get off work at 7:30 a.m. and need to sleep."

In total, some 2,000 degrees and certificates were conferred upon the Class of 2015. This year's graduating class included 278 Running Start graduates—a new record for the college,

which has the largest Running Start program in the state.



“We got here at 4:45 to line up,” say these Running Start students from Woodland High School, including N.E.R.D. Girls president and Clark Aeronautics Club member Adeline Dinehart, *third from left*.

Adeline Dinehart stood with five friends at the head of the line of graduates. All six young women were Woodland High School students who had attended Clark through Running Start. Dinehart had thrived at Clark, where she became president of the popular N.E.R.D. (Not Even Remotely Dorky) Girls Club and a member of the Clark Aeronautics Club, which successfully participated in a NASA rocketry competition in Huntsville, Alabama, this spring.

“We were the only community college in the maxi competition,” she said proudly. “The atmosphere there was great—really competitive, but also really encouraging of one another.”

Dinehart said she appreciated the faculty’s promotion of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, citing engineering professors Carol Hsu and Tina Barsotti in particular. “Tina and Carol are amazing,” she said. “They have taught me so much over the past two years.”

Dinehart will be attending University of Washington in the fall. Two of her friends, Jamie Kitchen and Shianne Burhop, are also college-bound, but headed to George Fox University, where they will be roommates.

“The credits from Clark transfer really well,” said Kitchen. “That’s part of why I chose to come to Clark.”

“Going to Woodland, you have the choice as a Running Start student between Lower Columbia College and Clark,” explained Burhop, who had adorned her cap with the Bilbo Baggins quote, “I think I am quite ready for another adventure.”

This year’s ceremony saw an explosion in cap decoration, and as students filed into the ceremony, the westering sun glinted off of messages outlined in glitter and rhinestones.



Outgoing ASCC President Emmah Ferguson addressed the Class of 2015 at Commencement. Both her siblings also attended Clark through Running Start; Ruth graduated from the University of Washington the week before Clark’s Commencement and Zachary is entering Duke Law School on a full scholarship in the fall.

The ceremony itself held many highlights. Student speaker and ASCC president Emmah Ferguson shared how Clark had developed

an unrealized love of science within her.

“We have all had obstacles,” she said. “For me, my biggest obstacle was probably myself and my ideas about what I could and couldn’t do. ... It is our resilience and persistence that has gotten us this far, and it will take us where we want to go next.”



Curt Warner, *left*, thanks Clark College President Robert K. Knight before giving the 2015 Commencement keynote address.

Former Seattle Seahawks running back and businessman Curt Warner gave the keynote address. Noting that he had grown up in West Virginia’s coal mining country, where career options were limited, he urged graduates to aspire toward their goals, even if others tried to dissuade them.

“If people say you can’t succeed, you don’t have time to listen to that,” he said. “Dedicate yourselves to your goals. Never give up. People who make goals get slapped down at least once. Everyone loses sometime. It’s how you handle the losing that makes you a winner.”

The ceremony also served as the announcement of the 2015 Exceptional Faculty Awards. The 2015 awardees are Steven Clark, professor of biology; Alison Dolder, instructor of baking; Matthew Gallaher, instructor of English; and Michiyo

Okuhara, professor of Japanese. President Robert K. Knight also announced the recipient of the 2015-2016 Community College President's Award, Kathleen Fockler.



High school diploma recipient Leeann Hodge addressed the 2015 Commencement. This was the first time in many years that high school diploma and GED recipients participated in Commencement.

New this year, students who earned GEDs or High School Diplomas through the college's Transitional Studies program were invited to participate in the ceremony. Approximately 25 of these students participated in the ceremony, and High School Diploma recipient Leeann Hodge was one of two student speakers to address the crowd.



Transitional Studies

graduates Chris Boots, Devon Zach, and Amanda Halbert wait in line to participate in the 2015 Commencement ceremony.

Before the ceremony began, these students had stood in a line adjacent to the line for associate degree and certificate recipients. One of them, Amanda Halbert, said she decided to pursue her GED once her youngest child was getting ready to start kindergarten. She is beginning college-level classes at Clark now, with the goal of earning a degree in graphic design.

“It’s a little nerve-wracking, looking across at the people in that line, getting their associate degrees,” she admitted. “But I’m proud of myself for being here. And I know I’ll be in that line one day.”

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

To see more photos from Commencement, visit Clark’s Flickr album.

On Her Way



Kathleen Fockler smiles after receiving the news that she has received the 2015-2016 Community College President's Scholarship.

About a month ago, Kathleen Fockler was on the way to a Beaverton testing facility to sit for the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX), the exam each nursing student must pass before officially becoming a Registered Nurse.

She was ready. It had taken her 20 years to reach this point, but she felt confident that the rigorous coursework of the Clark College Nursing Program had prepared her for the exam. Finally, after years of struggle, she was going to achieve her long-held dream of becoming a nurse.

And then her car broke down.

In the middle of the Route 26 tunnel.

During morning rush hour.

It could have been a disaster. But Kathleen Fockler, age 47,

is not someone to submit to defeat. When the tow truck arrived, she persuaded the driver to take both her car and herself to the testing site. She had driven there the week before just to be sure of the route—"I didn't want to get lost," she explains—so she was able to direct him there swiftly.

"I got there just a couple minutes after the exam began, and when I explained my situation, they let me go ahead and take the test," Fockler recalls.

From the beginning, Fockler's road to becoming a nurse has been beset by unexpected detours and daunting challenges. And each time, Fockler has been able to overcome these roadblocks with a combination of preparation, persistence, and support from those around her. During the 2015 Commencement ceremony, her persistence was rewarded when Clark College President Robert K. Knight announced that she was the recipient of this year's Community College President's Award in honor of Val Ogden. This scholarship provides full tuition and fees for two years to a Clark graduate completing their bachelor's degree at Washington State University Vancouver.

"I still can't believe it," Fockler says. "This is an incredible opportunity. A door has just been opened right up for me."

Fockler began taking pre-nursing courses at Clark in 1994. However, her plans were derailed when her then-newborn son, Gabe, began experiencing seizures and developmental delays. "The timing was not right," Fockler says. She decided to leave school and concentrate on supporting her son and her daughter, MaKenzie, who was born three years after Gabe.

Fockler held onto her dream even while spending many years working as a paraprofessional assistant in the Evergreen School District Early Childhood Center, helping support children with developmental delays. It was only when Gabe

entered Clark through the Running Start program that Fockler felt the time was right for her to return to school as well.

At first, the experience of returning to school after 20 years was intimidating. Courses required online registration—Fockler didn't even own a computer. But she quickly found the support she needed at Clark.

“The resources that Clark has are tremendous,” she says. “There's a math lab, there are computer labs, there's a retention specialist in the nursing department. There's just so much in place to help the student.”

Fockler is quick to point out another resource that helped her on her journey: the college's scholarships office. “When I applied to nursing school, I thought, ‘How am I going to do this?’” she recalls. “At the time, I was working two jobs, and I'd heard how demanding the nursing curriculum was.”

But Clark's scholarship specialists quickly went into action, finding Fockler potential scholarship opportunities and encouraging her to apply. “[Outreach/Scholarship Coordinator] Lizette Drennan was like my cheerleader,” she recalls. “There was a postcard of the scholarship staff that I found, and I stuck it in my binder to remind me about the people who were supporting me. I had a picture of my family, and Lizette's smiling face.”



Presidential Scholarship recipient Kathleen Fockler takes a moment to hug and thank her nursing professors at commencement.

Fockler also found support from the nursing faculty, who encouraged her to keep going. Fockler gained confidence after working in the program's state-of-the-art simulation lab, which helped her develop clinical skills before she even began her internship.

That internship proved to be another challenge. From the beginning, Fockler had set her sights on becoming a pediatric nurse working with medically fragile children, a goal formed through her experiences sitting in hospitals with Gabe early on. But Clark's nursing program had only one pediatric internship opening per cohort.

A faculty member suggested Fockler volunteer at the Center for Medically Fragile Children (CMFC) at Providence in Portland to gain experience. Clark didn't have an internship partnership set up with the CMFC; these agreements are labor-intensive and highly competitive. But Fockler so impressed the CMFC staff as a volunteer that they decided to create an internship partnership for her. Now, Clark has a regular internship opening at the center.

Throughout her studies, Fockler has shown a tireless work ethic. She went over notes while waiting in her children's doctor offices. She reviewed cranial nerves while sitting beside her mother's hospital bed after a surgery. And when Fockler herself had to undergo thyroid surgery, she didn't skip a class, deciding to simply attend the evening lecture rather than her standard morning one.

"Each day, I try to learn everything I can," she says.

On top of all that, Fockler found time to regularly volunteer with the Evergreen School District, the CFMC, SHARE House, and the Student Nurse Association of Clark College.

Despite her talent and perseverance, however, Fockler knew there was another huge hurdle standing between herself and her goal. In order to work in a specialized hospital setting like the CMFC, Fockler would need to earn a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree. Fockler—who lives in Vancouver with her children; husband, Bunnell; and mother-in-law, Beth LaViolette—has begun working with an in-home nursing care service for medically fragile children. Even so, she couldn't see how she could afford university tuition for both herself and MaKenzie, who is entering the University of Washington in the fall. Receiving the Community College President's Scholarship means her way is now clear to continue her education.

Fockler is effusive in her thanks to all the organizations who have provided scholarships to her, including the Clark College Foundation, Vancouver Rotary, and 40 et 8.

"I guess it really does take a village to raise a nurse," says Fockler, who hopes one day to be able to fund her own nursing scholarship. "The community supported me tremendously, and working hard is my way of paying them back."

Additional Scholarships

Through the support of the Clark College Foundation, two other finalists for the Community College President's Scholarship were awarded \$3,000 scholarships to continue their education. President Knight announced the scholarships to **Julie Mercado** and **Melanie Brawley** during the Commencement ceremony as well.

Photos: Clark College/Hannah Erickson (top) and Clark College/Jenny Shadley

A Different Kind of Final



Computer Technology instructor Bruce Elgort brings years of private-sector experience to the classroom.

On Thursday, June 11, students in Clark College instructor Bruce Elgort's PHP and SQL programming class (CTEC 227) will face an audience. While that might be standard for a class in the performance arts, it's less expected in a computer science course focused on complex web and application development questions. However, Elgort believes it is exactly the type of thing that will set them apart as they look for jobs.

"The most important thing is that these students are showing what they learned in solving the technical problems in front of them, but it is also important that they learn how to

explain their approach and interact with clients and customers,” Elgort said.

Elgort knows, having spent several years in private industry as the president of Elguji Software and, before that, in IT roles with Sharp Electronics and Underwriter Laboratories. He continues to be engaged in national Open Source software efforts and a variety of other projects. Beyond his deep industry experience, Elgort has distinguished himself as a teacher, earning an Exceptional Faculty Award at Clark College in 2013.

Elgort invites members of the community to attend the presentations, which will take place on June 11 at 4 p.m. in Foster Auditorium on Clark College’s main campus. The crowd of 50 to 60 individuals from the tech community and Clark College are there to provide feedback and learn more about the college Computer Technology program.

Students started their projects by developing detailed application specifications for a fictitious bank called “Greenwell Bank.” Students interviewed their client to see what “the bank” needed for app functionality. Once the specs were approved, they went into the architecture and design phases. From there, they then sought continuous feedback from the application stakeholders as they coded the applications. The projects being presented include two home inventory apps, a construction bidding app, an HR employee review app, and a project management system. All of this occurred within a nine-week timeframe.

While the CTEC 227 presentations are notable for the large public audience expected to attend, many programs at Clark—including Engineering, Computer Science, Mechatronics, and Studio Art—include public presentations to industry experts as part of their final or capstone projects.

Clark College is located at 1933 Fort Vancouver Way, close to

downtown Vancouver. Parking is free. Maps and directions are available online.

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 room 013 as soon as possible.