

Phi Theta Kappa at Clark College Wins Regional Awards Again

For the second year in a row, the Clark College's chapter of Phi Theta Kappa (PTK), the international honor society for community colleges, was ranked first place in the region and received the Distinguished Chapter Award.

Phi Theta Kappa earns awards



Anne LeGrave and Jordan Peterson

Clark College's chapter of Phi Theta Kappa (PTK), the

international honor society for community colleges, has been hard at work this year. Two of its members have been nominated to the All-Washington Academic Team, and the chapter took top honors in PTK's regional Hallmark Awards.

"I am so excited that our chapter is being recognized at the regional level and I'm looking forward to attending [the annual PTK conference] Catalyst in April to see how we rank internationally," said PTK advisor Darci Feider, who earned a regional PTK Paragon Award for new advisor. The chapter also ranked No. 1 regionally for its college project (supporting a fall return to campus) and distinguished theme, and No. 3 for its Honors in Action project. Additionally, three officers—Isabel Henkes, Jadyn Pahlka, and Nathan Pham—were recognized with regional awards. See the full list of regional awards [here](#).

In addition to these regional awards, earlier this year Clark College President Karin Edwards was named a PTK Paragon President.

Alpha Sigma Phi (the name of Clark College's PTK chapter) has even more accomplishments to celebrate. Two of its members have been nominated to the 2022 All-Washington Academic Team. On May 12, students Anne LeGrave and Jordan Peterson will represent Clark College at the 25th annual All-Washington Academic Team ceremony, honoring 80 students from Washington State for their academic excellence and community service.

Top students from 33 of Washington state's community and technical colleges will be honored at the annual ceremony, which will be held virtually on Zoom; each receives a medal and a \$225 scholarship from KeyBank and becomes eligible for additional scholarships from private sponsors as well as transfer scholarships from four-year colleges and universities. Gov. Jay Inslee, who will be providing a video speech for the event, will also issue a signed proclamation declaring May12, 2022 to be All-Washington Academic Team Day.

Read more about both students below.



Anne LeGrave

Anne LeGrave

Anne LeGrave has had her share of challenges trying to pursue her education during the COVID-19 pandemic. A single mother, she has had to take online classes while caring for her toddler daughter. However, she hasn't let those challenges keep her from her dream of earning a college degree in business administration. Described by one professor as a "model student," she continues to earn good grades while working to build a better life for herself and her daughter.

Jordan Peterson



Jordan Peterson

Jordan Peterson is a Running Start student attending Clark College while still high school, with a passion for supporting her community. When the COVID-19 pandemic forced her school to move to remote learning, she realized some of her classmates were having trouble adjusting. She created an online study group that allowed students to connect with each other and

overcome technological and academic challenges. Jordan is pursuing a degree in biology as part of her plan to become a doctor.

A passion for education



Moses Kimeli Korir at Clark College's 2021 Commencement ceremony.

Ever since he was a 10-year-old boy growing up in Kenya, Moses Kimeli Korir dreamed of being a teacher. When he grew up, he traveled 9,000 miles to Vancouver, Washington to fulfill his dreams.

Twenty-two years later, Korir was a step closer as he attended Clark College's 2021 Commencement ceremony to receive his Associate of Applied Science degree in Early Childhood Education (ECE). And during the ceremony, he discovered that his journey had been given a huge forward boost: President

Karin Edwards announced that he was that year's recipient of the Community College President's Award, providing full tuition for up to two years to complete his bachelor's degree at Washington State University Vancouver.

"Balancing parenthood, full-time employment, and college coursework is no small feat, but [Korir] has managed to do all of this while maintaining a high academic standard," said Dr. Edwards in her announcement. "He is a great example of our students' resilience and determination."

A musical awakening

Korir's passion for teaching is intertwined with his passion for music—both of which he discovered at age 10.

That was when he saw a piano for the first time, while attending school in a city near Mount Elgon and the Kenyan-Ugandan border. He was intrigued. He wanted to touch it, but children weren't allowed.

Shortly afterward, his family moved to a rural area. He did not see a piano again for a long time.

Finally, he discovered a neighbor who had a piano.

Korir said, "I asked permission to play it, and I taught myself to play."

He already had decided he wanted to be a teacher, but his connection with the piano was another "aha" moment.



Early Childhood Education professor Sarah Theberge congratulates Moses Kimeli Korir at Clark College's 2021 Commencement.

He explained, "When I began learning the piano, that's when I decided I wanted to become a piano teacher. I wanted to help children learn something new."

He bought his first keyboard at age 11. He worked and saved his money to buy his first piano when he was 17. He practiced the piano diligently.

After high school, Korir trained to be an elementary school teacher. He taught for a year. Next, he taught piano with an international organization in Kenya for two more years.

Then he realized the next part of his teaching dream: relocating to the U.S. to earn a teaching degree and teach in an American school. In 2019, Korir came to Clark College through its International Programs and began pursuing a degree in Early Childhood Education.

The right place

Korir said, "I found myself at Clark College. It's the right place. The ECE path at Clark College is the best. If someone has a passion to be a teacher, it really gives you the background and knowledge to be successful."

At Clark College, Korir was able to get hands-on experience in his field by working part-time in the college's Child & Family Studies program, which provides on-campus child care to students, employees, and the community. He enjoyed working with children, and eventually gained enough work experience to gain a position as a full-time teacher in a Head Start preschool classroom for Educational Opportunities for Children and Families (EOCF). He was delighted to find a job that allowed him to continue working with children and more than doubled his work hours, providing enough money to pay his tuition and provide for his wife and two young children.

The new job meant less time for studying, but Korir made it work. He did his homework at night when his own young children were asleep.

Despite the challenges, Korir says his Early Childhood Education classes at Clark have helped him excel in his preschool classroom.

"All my ECE classes are going deep on how to help children," he said. "All are applicable in the field. I'm using them every day. Not only at work, but also at home with my own children."

"He is a student who is hungry for knowledge and who beautifully weaves knowledge from his culture into Western practices, while thinking critically about how these things intersect," said ECE professor Michelle Mallory. "He brings us all along on that journey."

A calm presence in classroom



Moses Kimeli Korir brings a broad cultural perspective to his work teaching children.

Wynette Francis, Korir's supervisor at EOCF, said, "Moses has a calming presence, a steadiness in the classroom. He's willing to learn and grow. He exudes kindness and respect."

Dana Taub, center director of EOCF's program at Ellsworth Elementary, said, "Moses engages with the children. We have a child on the spectrum, and he's very good with her."

Noting that the Ellsworth Head Start is an all-day program, she added, "Keeping kids engaged all day, you have to be on top of your game."

Korir said his education at Clark College taught him how to help children cope with their emotions—an important skill, given the challenging situations he can encounter in the classroom.

"For instance, if a child hits another child or hits me, the teacher, I've learned how to calm them down," he said. "I talk with the child and acknowledging the situation. Acknowledge their feelings. Most of the time, it works."

And teaching brings rewards along with the challenges. "I am enjoying my connection with the children in Head Start," Korir said. "They make me smile."

Keeping the dream going

Receiving the President's Award will enable Korir to pursue his plans to transfer to WSU Vancouver and earn a Bachelor of Arts degree in Human Development.

The Community College President's Award in honor of Val Ogden is given each year to a student who has completed their studies at Clark College and is transferring to Washington State University Vancouver. They receive full tuition and fees for two years while they finish their bachelor's degree at WSU Vancouver. The award is traditionally announced during that year's Commencement ceremony. This year, due to COVID-19, the ceremony was held outdoors on the college's soccer field, with only graduates and faculty attending.

Korir's educational goals stretch beyond his bachelor's degree. He plans to earn his master's degree in education and eventually become an instructor at a college or university.

"Education is important to me because it's an equalizer," Korir says. "It brings everyone on board whether you're from a poor background or a rich background."

And he hasn't forgotten his piano dream—he hopes one day to open a music production studio to help others share the gift of music. He'll be sure to let curious children who visit touch the piano keys as much as they want.



Moses Kimeli Korir, *second from left*, poses for a photo with International Programs Associate Director Jody Shulnak, fellow International Student Venant Manirafasha, and International Admissions Manager Csendi Hopp at the 2021 Commencement ceremony.

**Student earns math
scholarship**



Aukusitino "A.J." Ah-Yek. *Photo: Maddy Bisila, courtesy of Aukusitino "A.J." Ah-Yek*

Aukusitino "A.J." Ah-Yek was recently named the first recipient of the newly created Sigma Scholarship, awarded by the Clark College Mathematics Department to support and encourage students who are traditionally underrepresented in STEM fields to pursue higher-level mathematics. "Thanks to generous donations from many of you in our college community, we are awarding AJ \$1500 to go towards his future education," wrote mathematics professor Kayoko Barnhill in an email to college employees today.

Ah-Yek enrolled at Clark College as a Running Start student, initially undecided about his degree path. Soon after finishing his pre-calculus courses, he became a math tutor and eventually an engineering and writing tutor. Throughout his time at Clark, he has played in the college's Jazz Band and also participated in engineering competitions at the college. After graduating this spring with his Associate in Science – Transfer Track 2 degree, he plans to transfer to WSU Pullman to major in mechanical engineering and minor in mathematics. His career focus is in Aerospace Engineering.

"On behalf of the Tutoring Services Team, I would like to let the scholarship committee know that they definitely got the right candidate when they picked A.J. for this," wrote

Tutoring Services Program Manager Janice Taylor. "A.J. is not only an academic rising star, but he is also a rock star in Tutoring Services! He is not afraid to set high goals and he will achieve every single one of them in the shortest time possible. AJ has been an invaluable member of our team and a great resource for his fellow peers at Clark College, we are excited and sad to see him head off to Pullman."

Overcoming obstacles, pursuing their dreams



Marcell Richard has had to miss out on time with his daughter while his family is separated during COVID-19. *Photo courtesy of Marcell Richard.*

Clark College students shared the obstacles they have overcome

during the pandemic during “Student Voices: The Realities of Being a College Student during COVID.” The April 15 Zoom panel was presented by Clark’s Teaching and Learning Center and moderated by Director of MESA Dalila Paredes.

The panel grew from Paredes’ work with MESA, a program that supports underrepresented student populations pursuing careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. When she meets one-on-one with a student for the first time, she starts the Zoom session by asking the student how they are doing and what challenges they have faced during the pandemic. Their common struggle is figuring out how to pay their tuition. But their challenges go far beyond money.

Paredes said, “So many of their stories are incredible. Many students have been furloughed from their jobs not just once, but twice. Many are parents. They are in multiple-generation households and are taking care of their parents, grandparents, aunts and uncle and their children—with very little resources. We have students from war-torn countries, intergenerational households, poverty. Students who have lost their housing. Family members who are ill.”

She added, “I wanted faculty to hear these stories—to hear students say, ‘These are my hurdles. This is how I overcame them.’ For underrepresented students, COVID is just one more hurdle. It’s just one more thing for them to navigate.”

Two of these Student Voices stories are featured below.

Pearl Muodzi



Pearl Muodzi

Pearl Muodzi, 20, is majoring in biology at Clark with an eventual goal to become a doctor. She had a comfortable life in her native Zimbabwe where she lived with her parents and three brothers. She had a private school education.

But her life changed drastically beginning with her father being diagnosed with a rare type of inoperable cancer. She became his caregiver. Her father died in 2017. A few months later she was walking with her brother when men driving fire trucks and army trucks pulled up and began shooting people.

Muodzi recalled, "I found myself sprinting for my life with my little brother."

Things in Zimbabwe grew increasingly unstable. The president was ousted, inflation was rampant, and life became more difficult. Muodzi, her mother, and younger brother took a two-week vacation to visit family in Vancouver and to get a break from the challenges back home. But the week they arrived in Vancouver, civil war broke out in Zimbabwe. Friends and family in Zimbabwe sent videos showing soldiers killing

people just outside the gate of their family home.

Muodzi said, "I cannot begin to explain how shocked I was. We could not go home. Our two-week vacation turned into an immigration situation. When you're going on vacation, you carry a small suitcase and just a few things from home. We left everything behind."

Muodzi's two aunts welcomed her family into their home and helped them. Eventually, her mother found work and they moved out into their own place.

Muodzi said, "There we were, trying to start a new life."

In fall 2020, Muodzi enrolled at Clark College as a full-time student. To help pay for her education, she works 25 to 30 hours a week at a mail-shipping business.

In Zimbabwe she had just completed her Cambridge exams and already had studied college-level biology, chemistry and math, but those classes were not accepted. She had to start over. Despite the challenges of a new country, new education system, online classes and working, she earned a 3.9 GPA at Clark.

Navigating college in America during a global pandemic has been just one more challenge for Muodzi.

She said, "I'm proud of my growth. I've learned how to tackle challenges differently. To endure challenges. I'm proud of myself for stepping up in my academic life."

Money and time are her biggest barriers.

"Balancing working and going to school is challenging. Most of the time I am tired. I'm not doing as well as I could."

Muodzi said, "A big motivator for me is my parents. I want to be a doctor because I want to find a way to cure the disease my dad had. I also am inspired by my mother who works day and

night to provide for us. I see my mother work so hard. I can't take school lightly."

Muodzi's pathway to become a surgeon includes completing two years at Clark, then transferring to WSU Vancouver to earn a bachelor's degree in biology. Next she plans to attend University of Washington Medical School. It's a long road ahead of Muodzi, but she already has come so far.

Marcell Richard



Marcell Richard

Marcell Richard, 31, is a full-time Clark College student who is pursuing a biology degree. His eventual goal: to earn a degree in forensic toxicology. Richard is experienced at climbing over obstacles to reach his goals.

He's a first-generation college student raised by his single mother. His father is black; his mother is white. When his mother was diagnosed with cancer last summer and became very ill, Richard stepped up to be his mother's caregiver.

Due to COVID, last year Richard was laid off from his job waiting tables and bar tending. He exhausted his unemployment benefits. He and his partner, also a Clark College student,

have a two-year-old daughter. When their lease expired in January, they could not afford their apartment. Richard moved in with his mother, in Gresham, Oregon, to be her caregiver. His partner moved in with her own mother in Vancouver with their daughter. Richard spends the night with his partner and daughter two to three times a week to maintain some continuity in their young daughter's life—and to be a couple with his partner. They are saving their money in the hope of eventually being able to rent their own place and be together again.

Richard diligently is overcoming challenges. He recently started a work-study job with Clark's Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion as a student consultant. He's a member of Phi Theta Kappa, the honor society for community and technical colleges. Richard is a BUILD Exito student, a MESA student, and is a student advocate for MESA.

He explained, "I'm trying to uplift students and form a community, especially during these times when we're isolated and apart. I've been given an opportunity to go to school and have received scholarships and help. It's time to give back."

Richard listed his biggest barriers: "Trying to take care of my mom and watching her health deteriorate. Also, I'm away from my daughter half of the time. It puts a strain on my relationship with my daughter and my partner. I bury myself in my studies. That's how I cope."

Through all the loss and challenges, Richard said, "Many times, I've tried and failed due to pitfalls, but I've never given up on my education. Despite the difficulties, I've stayed in school. I have a lot more schooling to go. This is the path I chose."

Richard plans to earn a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology, a Master of Science degree in Biology with a minor in chemistry, and eventually apply to medical school to study forensic pathology.

He added, “Everyone has a different narrative. We don’t know what other people are going through. Kindness goes a long way.”

His advice to fellow students navigating through the pandemic: “If you’re like me, you have this sense of imposter syndrome. That you can’t do it. But you can do it. Take one leap of faith. Reach out to resources and groups. Make connections. It’s all about breaking out of your shell and creating a support system. Get as much tutoring help as possible if you have problems with math like I do. Clark has so many programs and resources to help students. Use them.”

Two Clark students join All-Washington Academic Team



On April 15, two outstanding students represented Clark College at the 25th annual All-Washington Academic Team ceremony, honoring students from Washington State for their academic excellence and community service. Bios for students Erin Lysne and Natalie Worthy appear below.

Top students from 33 of Washington state's community and technical colleges were honored at the annual ceremony, which was held virtually due to COVID-19; each received a medal and a \$250 scholarship from KeyBank and became eligible for additional scholarships from private sponsors as well as transfer scholarships from four-year colleges and universities. Natalie Worthy was also awarded a \$750 scholarship from Washington State Employees Credit Union (WSECU). Gov. Jay Inslee served as keynote speaker at the event.

The All-Washington Academic Team is a program of Phi Theta Kappa, the international honor society for two-year colleges. It is co-sponsored by the Washington Association of Community and Technical Colleges, Washington State Association

of College Trustees, and State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. Besides KeyBank and WSECU, scholarships are funded by the Washington State Association of College Trustees.



Erin Lysne. *Photo courtesy of Erin Lysne.*

About Erin Lysne

Erin Lysne, 29, has always loved the outdoors. That passion led her to pursue a career in geology. Despite encountering attitudes from some people that geology is a “man’s field,” Lysne has excelled in her studies, becoming a geology tutor and starting Clark College’s first Geosciences Club. She volunteers with environmental organizations including Friends of Trees, the Vancouver Water Education Resource Center, and the Cascade Volcano Observatory. She plans to continue her education to earn a doctorate in volcanology.

About Natalie Worthy



Natalie Worthy. *Photo courtesy of Natalie Worthy.*

Natalie Worthy began volunteering at age 8 and hasn’t stopped

since. She recently earned a silver Congressional Award for her community service and was also named Miss Battle Ground's Outstanding Teen in 2020. She balances her many volunteer activities with being a Running Start student, working part-time, and performing in musical theater. She plans to continue her studies at a university and achieve her lifelong dream of being a professional performer.

More aid for students in crisis



The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic downturn have caused many financial challenges for Clark College students. Some have lost jobs, while others have found themselves facing steep medical bills. With schools closed for months, many

students with dependent children were scrambling to pay for child care.

That's where Clark College's emergency grants program comes in—and, starting in spring term, it's about to start helping even more students than before.

Soon after the college moved to remote operations in spring 2020, it set up a one-stop clearinghouse to manage all the different sources of emergency funding available to students experiencing a financial crisis. These sources include community organizations, Clark College Foundation, state funding—and the largest source of all, federal funding distributed through the 2020 CARES Act.

By December, however, that CARES funding—about \$2.6 million dollars—was almost exhausted.

“We averaged awarding around \$96,000 a week over the last three terms,” said Sheri Terjeson, who manages the Emergency Grants program. “Our students have faced incredible challenges paying for basic needs like rent and food, not to mention school supplies and health care.”

By December, Terjeson and the rest of the Emergency Grants Committee were desperately trying to figure out how to stretch out the few remaining grant funds to help students in the coming winter term. Fortunately, just before the new year began, Congress passed the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA), providing additional funding for students.

“That funding really came just in the nick of time,” said Terjeson. “We all breathed a sigh of relief when we heard the news—and then started running full-speed to get that funding ready for our students as quickly as possible.”

In winter term alone, the college disbursed more than \$635,000 in emergency grants to 668 students. Now, however, with the

CRRSAA and the funds in President Biden's COVID relief package that was signed into law in March, the college expects to award approximately \$1.1 million to students in need during spring term 2021.

Unfortunately, that federal funding excluded certain kinds of students from eligibility, including Dreamer (DACA and/or undocumented) students. But the Washington State Legislature also recently approved new funding for emergency grants to students, including Dreamers. The grants can be applied for through the same Emergency Grant Application as is used for all other emergency funds.

"Really, our message to students is that, if they are worried that financial hardship is going to derail their educations, they should fill out the Emergency Grant Application, and let us see if there's a funding source that matches up with them," said Terjeson. "There are a lot of different sources of funding—from the government, from generous donors through the Clark College Foundation, from funding sources dedicated to supporting a particular subset of students like veterans or students of color—and we will do our best to find a source that can be used for that particular student's case."

"What we don't want is for students to stop their educational journeys because of a financial crisis," added Dr. Michele Cruse, Interim Vice President of Student Affairs. "Once students drop out of college, it can be very difficult for them to come back. We know that a college education can have life-changing benefits for students, their families, and their communities. That is why we are working so hard to keep our students supported during these challenging times."

And now, thanks to this increased funding from multiple sources, the college will be able to help more students than ever.

If you are a student experiencing financial hardship, please

visit our Emergency Grants page to learn how to apply for emergency assistance.

Free bus passes for students



Photo courtesy of C-TRAN

Starting March 1, Clark College students will no longer have to pay for the C-TRAN bus pass called “BackPASS,” thanks to an interlocal agreement between C-TRAN and Clark College.

“We are grateful to our partners at C-TRAN in our shared efforts to provide for students and improve accessibility,” said Dr. Karin Edwards, Clark College President. “Together we have removed one more barrier to help improve student retention and success.”

The new benefit applies to all enrolled

students. Students need to have their Clark College ID card in order to receive the bus pass sticker. Both can be obtained through the Clark College Bookstore.

While many students are taking classes remotely and online during the pandemic, the bus pass allows them unlimited transportation on the C-TRAN's local service area. "Many of our students rely on public transportation to get to and from work, home and school," said Josiah Joner, Associated Students of Clark College President. "A bus pass is essential and now it's available to everyone regardless of ability to pay."

Unlocking education for the incarcerated



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Making a game plan

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

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

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

Adapting during COVID



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

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

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

Al-Zubaidy, the instructors and staff are working remotely from their homes, but they drive to Larch twice a week to drop off packets of course assignments for students. Located in the remote Cascade foothills in the far east of

Clark County, Larch Corrections center is 22 miles—about a 40-minute drive—from Clark College’s main campus.

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

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

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

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

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

Looking toward the future

Al-Zubaidy was the re-entry navigator at Larch before becoming

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

Because there is no guidebook for running educational programs in a prison during a global pandemic, Al-Zubaidy, the Clark faculty and staff have had to problem-solve each time a new roadblock arises. The deans and directors of all corrections facilities across the state meet weekly via Zoom to share ideas and best practices in corrections education during the pandemic.

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



Clark College staff and faculty deliver backpacks full of school supplies to students at Larch Corrections Center,

where online learning is not an option. *Photo courtesy of Hanan Al-Zubaidy*

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

She said, "Students were yelling through their windows asking us if we were finally bringing their assignments. One student saw our basic skills instructor through the window and began asking how he could turn in his homework and if he could get more assignments to work on while in lockdown. Providing our students with material keeps them on track in their programs, gives them something to do to fill their time, and provides a sense of normalcy during these challenging times."

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

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

Clark College removes application fee



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

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

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

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

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

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