

2024 All-Washington Academic Team

Congratulations to the four outstanding students who will represent Clark College at the 27th annual All-Washington Academic Team ceremony on April 25 at South Puget Sound Community College in Lacey.

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 May 12, 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.

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.

Clark's All-Washington Academic Team



Julisse Hopmann and Kellie Langston
Congratulations to Clark College
students **Julisse Hopmann** and **Kellie Langston**, who were named
to the 2020 All-Washington Academic Team. The students were
recognized for their achievement during the June 10 Board of
Trustees meeting.

Julisse Hopmann is earning her Associate of Applied Science
degree in Business Administration with a Certificate of
Proficiency in business management. She expects to graduate
Winter 2021. Running Start student Kellie Langston graduated
from Clark College in June with her high school diploma and
her Associate of Arts degree. *Read more about Julisse and
Kellie below.*

Julisse Hopmann

Sometimes we find ourselves in over our heads—treading water
and about to go under. But then a stranger comes along at just
the right moment and pulls us to safety. Four years ago,

when Julisse Hopmann was a 25-year-old diner waitress, a customer pulled her from the brink and changed her life.

Julisse explains, "During that period of my life, I was drinking heavily. I wanted help, but I didn't feel I could get the help I needed."

An astute customer approached Julisse, pressed a card into her hand, and told her she had turned her own life around through a 12-step program.

"She probably could smell the liquor coming from my pores," Julisse recalls. "She gave me her card and said she could help me. Sometime later, [I had] one really bad night when I was drinking so much that I didn't think I was going to wake up, and I didn't want to wake up. But I did wake up—so I called her that morning and asked her to help me."

Julisse says, "My life was one big struggle, but at age 25, I turned my life around. That was my second chance. My redemption. Now I ask myself how I can be a beacon of hope."

Today she juggles her classes at Clark, cares for her 3-year-old son, and helps others through her involvement with a 12-step recovery program.

"I try to help others the way I was helped," she says. "Some people just need to get to 12-step meetings. Some people need resources. Alcohol and addiction come with other issues, including mental health issues."

Before her alcohol addiction and recovery, she ran away from home and joined the carnival when she was 18. She had always wanted to travel. Shortly after earning her high school diploma via Clark's Running Start program, she told her parents she was joining a friend and going on the road to work at a carnival, Funtastic Traveling Shows.

"My parents told me they'd do anything they could to stop me,"

Julisse recalls. "So, I left a note on the kitchen counter and left in the middle of the night. I caught up with the carnival at the rest stop near Battle Ground. I left everything behind."

For six seasons she traveled with the carnival to state and county fairs throughout Washington and Oregon. She discovered she enjoyed the work and was good with people and at business management. The carnival owner, Ron Burback, who had earned a business degree at Portland State University, saw something in Julisse and gave her increasing responsibilities. She started out making cotton candy, but by the time she left, she was managing a burger stand and two cotton candy stands.

She recalls the 80-year-old carnival owner telling her, "This carnival is my dream. You need to go back to school and find your own dream."

She doesn't have any regrets about joining the carnival. "I picked up a lot of useful skills: leadership, communication, working with people, learning how to handle stress, working long hours," she says. "When people tell me starting your own company is hard work, I know I can do it."

Five years after leaving the carnival, she's following Burback's advice. She's back at Clark College and pulling straight A's. She's been a Clark student before. She completed her high school diploma as a Running Start student in 2009. After she left the carnival, she enrolled at Clark but didn't stay. "I wasn't in the right mental space to take care of myself," she says. "My drinking picked up. I got depressed. I couldn't do it."

Julisse grew up on Larch Mountain near Hockinson, "way out in the sticks," she says. "I was always in the woods. Nature is healing for me."

After she graduates from Clark, her career goal is to combine her love of nature with her desire to help people struggling

with addiction to find connection.

“I get a lot of personal connection from a 12-step program. Everybody needs connection,” she says. “My goal is to start a nonprofit naturopathic clinic to help people with addictions to connect with each other and with nature.”

Kellie Langston

If there’s a volunteer project to be done, Kellie Langston is likely rolling up her sleeves. During COVID-19 quarantine, the 17-year-old volunteer helped distribute meals to the students at Hearthwood Elementary, where her mother is a teacher.

Kellie has faced multiple challenges: coping with her parents’ divorce, abuse, toxic households, and going back and forth between two families. As a result, she struggled with mental health issues. She chose to use that struggle to guide her volunteerism. During her first two years at Mountain View High School, she volunteered with her school’s chapter of Youth Suicide Prevention Program, which trains youth to recognize the signs, risks, and triggers of suicide and how to get help.

“I wanted to use my story to help other students realize that they aren’t alone,” she says. “I know how someone with suicidal thoughts feels. Students pay more attention when it’s a peer speaking rather than an adult.”

Kellie served as the club’s co-president her freshman and sophomore years. She and fellow club members wrote inspirational chalk messages on the school’s walkways and opened doors for and greeted students when they arrived at school to help them feel welcome and connected.

But what Kellie enjoyed most about being involved in the club was speaking to more than 50 classes and leading discussions

about youth suicide, mental illness, stressors, helpful hotlines and how students could find extra support when they needed it. "Presenting helped me deal with my own mental health problems and my trials and tribulations," she says. "It was powerful and rewarding."

Kellie was invited to participate in a KATU News town hall on youth mental health along with other teen volunteers with youth mental health programs. She had her turn on the air answering students' questions.

During her junior year, Kellie became a full-time Running Start student. She joined Phi Theta Kappa and volunteered for service projects including distributing Thanksgiving meals to more than 100 Clark students in need.

In the fall Langston plans to continue her studies at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. If the campus isn't open for face-to-face instruction due to COVID-19 restrictions, she says she likely will stay home in Washougal and take her courses online. She plans to pursue a degree in education or perhaps business entrepreneurship.

"My dream job is to be a writer and a public speaker," Kellie says. "I hope to inspire youth to overcome their own obstacles."

About the All-Washington Academic Team

In all, 65 students from Washington's community and technical colleges were named to this year's All-Washington Academic Team. Traditionally, students are honored at a reception at South Puget Sound Community College in Olympia in late March, but this year, the COVID-19 outbreak canceled the event.

The All-Washington Academic Team is a program of Phi Theta Kappa, the international honor society for two-year college.

It recognizes academic achievers in the state's community and technical colleges who have demonstrated a commitment to scholastic achievement and service to their college and community. To qualify for the team, students must participate in PTK and fulfill other competitive criteria.

Each All-Washington Academic member receives a Phi Theta Kappa medallion and a \$250 scholarship from KeyBank. The top-qualifying students also will receive scholarships from Washington State Employees Credit Union and the Washington State Association of College Trustees. Additionally, students who choose to attend Washington State four-year colleges and universities are eligible to receive additional scholarships ranging from \$1,000 to \$12,000.

Photo: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

**Discovering their potential
at Clark**



Angela Kyle and Heather Leasure

On March 21, two outstanding students represented Clark College at the 23rd annual All-Washington Academic Team ceremony, honoring 59 students from Washington state for their academic excellence and community service.

Top students from 33 of Washington state's community and technical colleges were honored at the annual ceremony, which was held at South Puget Sound Community College in Olympia; 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. Angela Kyle was also awarded a \$750 scholarship from WSECU. Gov. Jay Inslee, who served as keynote speaker at the event, presented a signed proclamation declaring March 21, 2019 to be All-Washington Academic Team Day.

The All-Washington Academic Team is a program of Phi Theta Kappa, the international honor society for two-year colleges. Earlier this month, Alpha Sigma Phi was awarded the highest

honor of Most Distinguished Chapter in the Greater Northwest Region, along with four other awards.

This year's Clark College All-Washington Academic Team members share many things in common: They both came to Clark in their 30s, after many years away from school; both are members of the college's Entrepreneur Club; and both have found confidence in their capabilities through their achievement at Clark. Below is a bit about their stories.

Angela Kyle



After graduating from high school, Angela Kyle went straight to a state university, intent upon becoming a teacher. But when she became pregnant with her first child, Kyle dropped out and put her educational plans on hold. It was only when all four of her children were in school that Kyle felt she could focus on her own goals again. She enrolled at Clark College in 2016.

Kyle, now 41, said her experience at Clark was dramatically different from what she experienced at a large state university. "At university, they're so focused on academics," she said. "You're kind of on your own. But at Clark College, they're focused on the student as a whole. It's so hands-on. Even online instructors share resources with us, from the

Penguin Pantry to tutoring.”

Kyle has taken a mix of face-to-face and online classes to balance her schoolwork, volunteer work, and family obligations. She is on track to graduate this June with both a transfer Associate of Arts and an Associate of Applied Science in Business Administration. She is also dual-enrolled in Central Washington University’s online program, working on a bachelor’s degree in social science/interdisciplinary studies with a minor in accessibility studies.

Kyle’s responsibilities extend beyond her academics. She currently works as a Student Ambassador; serves as social media coordinator for the college’s Entrepreneur Club and as president of Clark’s Phi Theta Kappa chapter; and volunteers for both her local PTA and the All-American Girl Scholarship Program—all while maintaining a 3.63 GPA. While her work has been challenging, Kyle said she was inspired to keep going to be a role model to her children.

“They see me, and college isn’t scary,” she said. “My oldest son is at Clark now too, through Running Start. None of my kids see college as unattainable.”

Kyle wants to spread that message beyond her family. She plans to become a college advisor so that she can support other students—especially those, like herself, who are the first in their families to attend college.

“My whole journey has prepared me for this career,” she says. “I’ve been all the kinds of student: I’ve been the freshman in a dorm straight out of high school, I’ve been the older student with a family coming back to school. Wherever a student might be coming from, I can relate to every part of the path they might be on ... and hopefully make their journey a little shorter than mine was.”

Heather Leasure



Heather Leasure was sitting in the audience at her cousin's graduation when the thought struck her: She should go to college herself. "My cousin is 11 years younger than me, and I felt embarrassed that she was getting her bachelor's degree and I didn't even have an associate," she recalled. "So I came home and enrolled in summer quarter."

At Clark, Leasure discovered she had leadership and academic strengths she had never recognized within herself. As president of the college's Entrepreneur Club, she helped start a new event at Clark called Pitch Fest, where budding student entrepreneurs could bring their start-up ideas and compete for a chance at the \$25,000 grand prize offered at the University of Washington's Business Plan Competition. She serves as public relations officer of the college's chapter of Phi Theta Kappa and volunteers as a precinct commission officer in her neighborhood—all while maintaining a 3.82 GPA.

In her first year at Clark, Leasure was struck a terrible blow that could have derailed her promising start to college: The store where she worked closed and she was laid off. "Financial aid has been the biggest support service for me, because without them I would not have been able to continue

attending,” she said.

Leasure said that she remains committed to continuing her education because she wants a more stable economic future. “I’m 36 and have worked since I was 15 in jobs that I had no future in,” she said. “What motivates me is the will to be better and to do better.”

Leasure credited her mother as another motivating force in my life. “She didn’t graduate from high school, but she went back later in life and got her GED and an associate degree,” she said. “She is very proud that I returned to school after such a long break and have really come into my own.”

Soon, Leasure’s mother—and maybe her cousin too—will have another graduation ceremony to attend: Leasure is on track to graduate this June with a transfer Associate of Arts degree. And she doesn’t plan to stop there: She’s planning to transfer to Washington State University Vancouver and earn her bachelor’s degree in business management.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

All-Washington Academic Team



Clark College Vice President of Instruction Dr. Tim Cook with 2018 All-Washington Academic Team members Madysen Saucedo and Carlos Hunt.

On March 22, three outstanding students represented Clark College at the 23rd annual All-Washington Academic Team ceremony, honoring 78 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 were honored at the annual ceremony, which was held at South Puget Sound Community College in Olympia; each received a medal and a \$250 scholarship from KeyBank, and will become eligible for additional transfer scholarships from in-state colleges and universities.

The three Clark College team members are:

Carlos Hunt

After many years of working in construction, Carlos Hunt realized that he wanted to find work that was less physically taxing and more intellectually stimulating. Since coming to Clark College, he has developed an interest in social justice and public administration. "I want to help people in an empowering way which inspires them to share whatever talent they have with others," he says.



Diane
Hurst

Diane Hurst

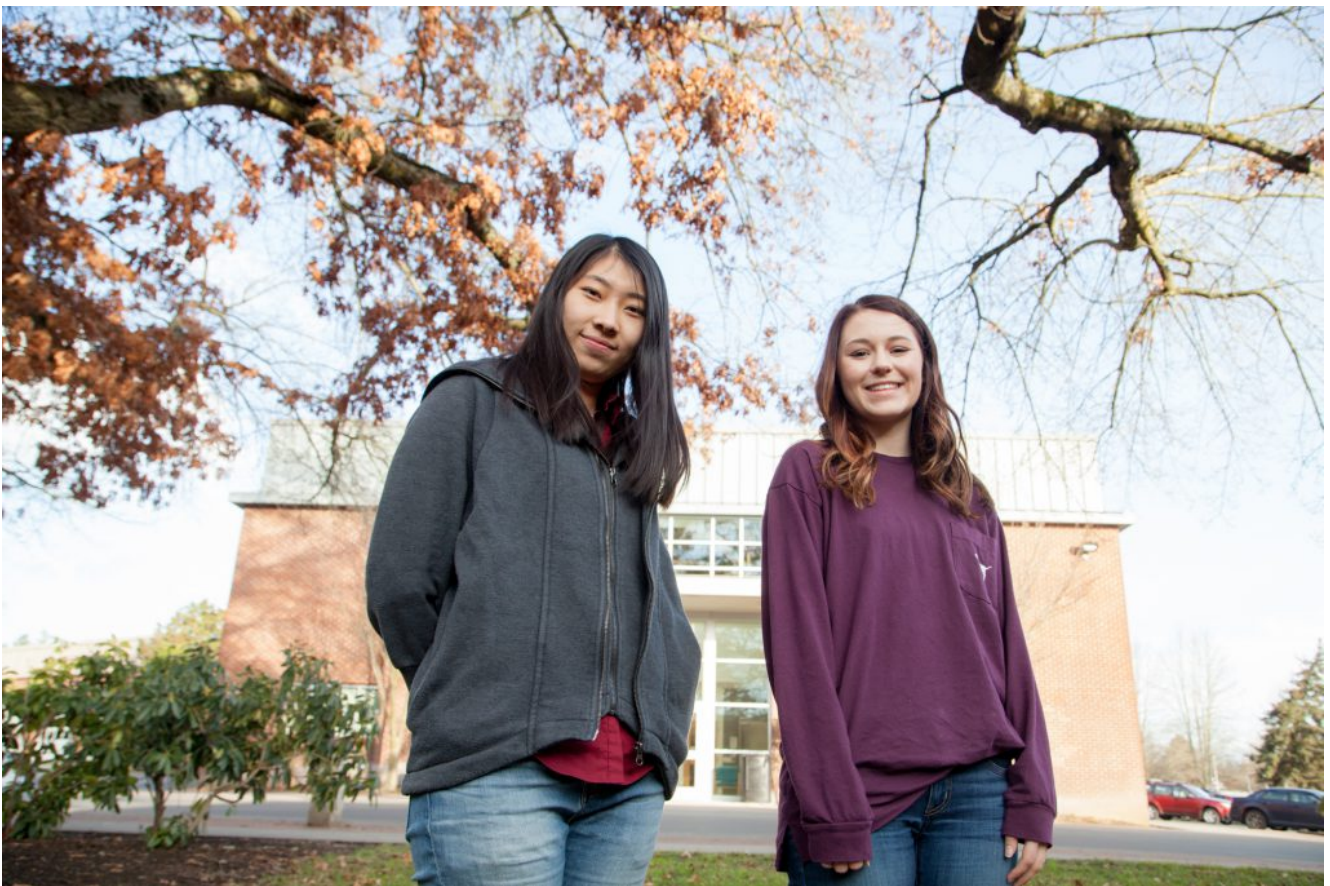
After many years of staying home with her children to home-school them, Diane Hurst came to Clark College to learn skills that would help her financially support herself and her family. She is now completing an Associate of Fine Arts degree in Graphic Design, which she says allows her to explore her creativity. Outside of school, she volunteers at her church and is working on marketing her own line of greeting cards.

Madysen Saucedo

Madysen Saucedo was 15 years old when she began taking classes at Clark College through Running Start. While it was an adjustment to sit in classrooms with students older than her own parents, she says she has appreciated the academic challenge she experienced at Clark. She plans to transfer to Arizona State University, where she will continue studying

mathematics to pursue her goal of becoming an actuary—and becoming the first person in her family to graduate from college.

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

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.

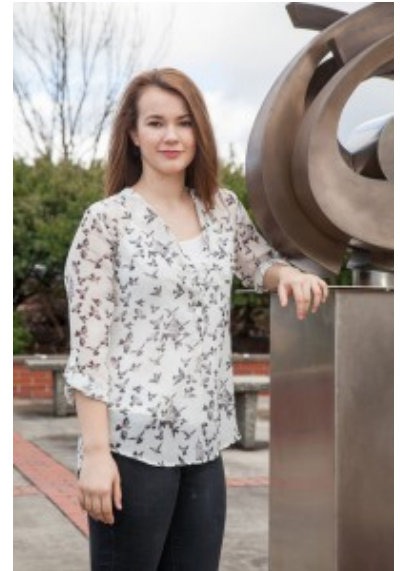
Wu's obstacles began surfacing when she and her mother emigrated from China to the United States. Wu, then a sophomore in high school, struggled to maintain her grades while learning a new language in a new culture. She also found herself confronting gender stereotypes, as classmates and teachers assumed 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.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

Two Global Journeys Reach Success



Martin Parrao, *left*, and Lidiya Nikolayev, *right*, are Clark's 2015 representatives to the All-Washington Academic Team.

Two students whose stories began on almost opposite sides of the earth have found success in the face of adversity at Clark College. Martin Parrao and Lidiya Nikolayev represented Clark College at the 2015 All-Washington Academic Team Recognition Ceremony, held on March 26 at South Puget Sound Community College in Olympia, Washington.

About Lidiya Nikolayev

About Martin Parrao

About the All-Washington Academic Team

About Lidiya Nikolayev

Lidiya Nikolayev, 30, came to the United States with her parents from Moldova when she was almost 6 years old. From early on, she displayed a head for business. "When I was 12, I met a nice lady who's a real estate agent, and she taught me to read contracts," recalls Nikolayev, who speaks English,

Turkish, Russian, and Hindi. “My family had a side business buying homes and fixing them up to resell, so I started helping with that.”

Small wonder, then, that Nikolayev is now pursuing a career in finance. But there is a more personal and painful reason for her interest as well. The truth is, she began to hone her financial acumen while caring for her son, Ivan, who was born with cerebral palsy. Faced with daunting medical bills and limited income, Nikolayev became expert at managing a budget. Ivan passed away in 2011; as Nikolayev recovered from her trauma, she became determined to go to college and find a career that would not only make her self-sufficient, but allow her to create family-friendly jobs for other parents. “No parent should have to sacrifice time with their children to have a career,” she says. “More companies in the corporate world should be creating work environments with flexible schedules that allow employees better balance between work and family responsibilities.”

Nikolayev enrolled at Clark in 2013, and quickly gained notice for both her aptitude and drive. She has just finished a quarter in which she took a staggering 22 credits, divided between classes at Clark College and at a community college in Texas, where she is enrolled in online courses. This is even more challenging than it sounds—because the Texas college is on a semester system and Clark uses a quarter system, Nikolayev can be prepping for a midterm in one class while taking a final in another, and she rarely gets a vacation since one or the other of her schools is almost always in session while the other one is on break.

Nikolayev devised this strategy to facilitate a possible transfer to the University of Texas at Dallas, whose business program she admires. “For six months I bothered the heck out of both colleges’ advising and credentials departments figuring it all out,” she says with a laugh. The plan worked: Nikolayev has been accepted at UTD, as well as at multiple

other universities, though she is still weighing her options before deciding on a transfer destination.

In addition to her turbo-powered studying, Nikolayev continues to help with her family's farm; serves as student representative on many of the college's administrative committees; and volunteers with both Phi Theta Kappa and the Association for India's Development. In 2014, she earned an OSWALD Award from Clark College Student Life for her volunteer activities. And she has maintained a high grade point average all the while. Her secret? Not a lot of sleep and a whole lot of personal organization, plus using the flexibility of online learning to do coursework when it fits her schedule.

Nikolayev says she learned her work ethic early on from her parents. In addition to farming and investing in real estate, her father does seasonal work at factories, while her mother worked 14-hour shifts as a housekeeper during Nikolayev's childhood—often taking night shifts so she could spend the days taking care of the children.

"I'm going to be the first person in my family to get a bachelor's degree," Nikolayev says. "I'll work as hard as it takes to get there."

About Martin Parrao

When Martin Parrao's family moved from Chile to the Pacific Northwest in 2006, Parrao was already 15 years old. He spoke no English. "The process of learning English has been one of the longest and most difficult challenges I have ever faced," he says. "Going through high school was very difficult for me, but I was determined to work extra-hard so that one day I could reach my goals and prove to my parents that their efforts to come to this country were not in vain."

That hard work paid off: Parrao went from taking English as a Second Language classes to graduating from Battle Ground High

School with honors in 2009. He enrolled at a four-year university, but quickly encountered a new challenge. "I took one class, and it was super-expensive," he says. "I couldn't afford to keep going."

Parrao, 24, is a legal resident of this country, but he is not yet a citizen. This means that up until recently, he could qualify for in-state tuition, but not for federal or state financial aid. A 2014 Washington state law called the "Real HOPE Act" now allows students like Parrao to be eligible for state financial aid, but at the time, Parrao found himself facing thousands of dollars in tuition each quarter, even if he attended part-time, with no hope of assistance.

Parrao regrouped. He dropped out of university, realizing that his limited funds would go farther at Clark. Even so, he had to work for months to save enough money to take a single class, meaning that for his first three years at Clark, he could only afford to take one or two classes a year.

At the end of 2011, another challenge emerged: His family decided to return to Chile. Many young people might have taken that as a sign to give up, but Parrao became even more determined to pursue his dreams. "For me, just the sacrifice of having to learn a whole new language when I was 15, and working so hard to graduate high school with honors—to go back would mean all that effort was wasted," he says.

Parrao began applying for scholarships, working closely with Clark College Outreach/Scholarship Coordinator Lizette Drennan to identify opportunities. "Lizette was a great help," Parrao says. "Every time I had a question, she was there for me." The work paid off in 2013 when Parrao received a scholarship that allowed him to begin attending Clark part-time, followed by another that allowed him to become a full-time student.

At first, Parrao wanted to get a terminal two-year business degree; he assumed he wouldn't be able to afford more than two

years of college. But as he continued to excel in his coursework (he currently holds a 3.96 grade point average) and as scholarships and the Real HOPE Act began to make attending college full-time affordable, he realized that he could do more. "I realized, 'This is the moment,'" says Parrao, who is engaged. "Because if you go out and work full-time and get married, you will not be able to do everything you can do right now."

Parrao chose to return to Clark to complete a transfer Associate of Arts degree. He plans to transfer in the fall to the Washington State University Vancouver, where he will pursue a bachelor's degree in Accounting. Meanwhile, he continues to work two jobs—as a computer lab aide in Clark College's Tech Hub, and as sales support for an industrial supplies company. He hopes to one day run his own business so he can provide jobs and scholarships to those who, like him, have more potential than resources.

Parrao says he greatly appreciates the opportunities provided to him by employers, friends, scholarship donors, and Clark College. "For my situation, this is probably the only way I could ever have done it," he says. "It made me realize how important it is to have opportunities for everyone. And that was given to me at Clark. It's changed my life."

About the All-Washington Academic Team

The All-Washington Academic Team is a program of Phi Theta Kappa, the honor society for two-year colleges. The team honors students who demonstrate a commitment to success in the classroom and service in their communities, and has become the showcase of the Washington community and technical college system. This year's team consists of 65 students representing all the state's 34 community and technical colleges.

Gov. Jay Inslee was on hand to acknowledge recipients at the 20th annual ceremony, hosted by South Puget Sound Community

College in Olympia, Wash. Phi Theta Kappa, the Trustees Association of Community and Technical Colleges (TACTC), the Washington Association of Community and Technical Colleges, and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges sponsor the event. All-Washington Academic Team members received scholarships from KeyBank and became eligible for scholarships from TACTC, the Washington State Employees Credit Union, and transfer scholarships from all four-year colleges and universities but one in Washington State.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley