

Students helping students



Members of Phi Theta Kappa get ready to distribute Thanksgiving groceries to students in 2016.

Every year, members of Clark College's chapter of Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) Honor Society collect money to pay for grocery baskets so that Clark students in need can have all the supplies to make Thanksgiving dinner for their families. This year, they have collected the names of 100 students who could use help this holiday.

Each basket costs about \$25 and includes a 12-14 pound turkey, mashed potatoes and gravy, stuffing, yams, green beans, cranberry sauce, dinner rolls, and a pie.

PTK is asking for donations from the community to help cover

the cost of these baskets. Donors may contribute by dropping off monetary donations to the Cashier's Office in Gaiser Hall or by calling the Cashier's Office at 360-992-2177. Either way, be sure to mention the account code "VB." Donations need to be received by Monday, November 19 at 5:00 p.m.

Phi Theta Kappa is the international honor society of two-year colleges.

Photo: Clark College/Hannah Erickson

This article contributed by Alpha Sigma Phi, Clark College's chapter of Phi Theta Kappa

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

Teaching Students to Fish



Members of Clark's Phi Theta Kappa chapter, Alpha Sigma Phi, hand out CollegeFish goodies at the Involvement Fair to increase awareness in the program.

As tuition at many four-year institutions continues to soar, many students have realized the value of spending their first two years of college at a community college. New studies show that the majority of community college graduates who go on to four-year colleges do so successfully, and the economic advantages of the "2+2" plan have been publicized in the media for years.

But while many students enter Clark confident in their transfer plans, they sometimes begin to feel lost or overwhelmed at some point in the process. After all, aren't they supposed to be focusing on their time at Clark, taking in all the school has to offer? Well, yes—but early planning is critical to transferring successfully.

So where does a student even start? There are a number of resources available to students: Advising Services, the Career

Center, our WSU Vancouver Transfer Coordinator, and so on. And this fall quarter, a brand-new tool will be available for Clark students who have indicated they intend to eventually transfer.

CollegeFish.org is a free database and transfer-planning tool for community college students that's been developed and maintained by Phi Theta Kappa (PTK), the honor society for two-year colleges. CollegeFish was originally developed for members of PTK to use in their planning; however, through a Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation grant, PTK was given the opportunity to refine the tool and open access to all students in specific pilot states.

Clark College is one of several colleges in Washington that are partnering with PTK to roll out CollegeFish access. CollegeFish allows students to create a personalized profile of their transfer institution preferences—size, location, major, and cost—and provides recommended transfer matches based on those preferences. CollegeFish also creates a Transfer Success Plan for students, so they can customize their higher education journey and manage it to stay on track. Lastly, when students access CollegeFish.org, they have the opportunity to search for more than \$37 million in transfer scholarships.

Clark PTK advisor Melissa Sinclair says that staff and faculty will soon receive an email with some basic information about CollegeFish.org, as well as an invitation to a training session to learn more about the website's functionality. Eligible students will receive an email in October alerting them to the resource.

Photo: Clark College/Jenny Shadley