

Exceptional Faculty Award spotlight: The tough-but- caring technician



Bakery instructor Alison Dolder shows off some of her students' work.

Alison Dolder has got to have, hands-down, the best-smelling classroom at Clark College. The Bakery instructor and interim department head spends much of her time guiding students as they work in the program's lab, which is also a fully functional bakery. Racks of pie shells and biscuits stand by the doorway, and the air is thick with the aromas of butter and sugar. Students in chef's whites stand at tables, making croissants and baguettes to be sold in the college's retail bakery in Gaiser Hall.

“The training here is very different from some culinary schools,” says Dolder. “Our students come in, and the very first day they’re put in their station and they’re forming, they’re cutting—everything they’ll be doing for the next two weeks till they switch stations. It’s as close to a production bakery as we can get. When they get out and enter the job market, they don’t require as much training [as other new graduates] because they’re used to the fast pace. They’re ready to jump right in.”

It’s that combination of practicality and enthusiasm—combined with empathy and support—that prompted students to nominate Dolder for the 2014-2015 Exceptional Faculty Award. “I joined the baking program on a whim and it has come to be the greatest decision of my life,” wrote one student in her nomination. “I feel like I can be not only the best baker or the best businesswoman around, but I can be the best of myself at all times, and for that I am grateful. Ms. Alison is so encouraging at times, she is tough at times, she is compassionate at times, and she can challenge you daily.”



Dolder encourages her students to express their creativity, whether

it's through
experimenting with
whole-wheat
croissant dough or
designing a
steampunk-inspired
layer cake.

Dolder came to baking almost by accident. She'd started college as a zoology major, but didn't enjoy the math and chemistry courses and decided to leave school to regroup. "My husband was going to school full-time and working full-time, and so just as something to do, I took a cake-decorating class," she says. "It turns out I was really good at it."

Dolder worked in bakeries and taught cake decoration for more than a decade before deciding to return to school to learn her craft in-depth. Ironically, what appealed to her most was the chemistry involved. "I love how you can take all these ingredients and turn them into something else, something delicious," she says.

Dolder graduated from Clark's bakery program in 2000 and quickly landed a job at the nationally known Pearl Bakery in Portland. But while she loved the work, she realized it wasn't compatible with having two young children. "I was really lucky to work with [former Pearl head baker and current Little T owner] Tim Healea, but it was 9 p.m. to 5 a.m.," she says. When a teaching position opened up at Clark, she decided to apply.

Dolder makes sure her students understand the realities of life as a professional baker. "I tell them, 'Don't believe everything you see on TV,'" she says. "You know, there's that illusion that 'I'm going to start baking cakes and get my own show and be famous.' Baking is hard work."

Dolder is happy to have returned to Clark to share her love

and knowledge of baking with today's students. She's looking forward to doing so in the college's soon-to-be-remodeled Culinary Arts wing. "It's so exciting," she says. "I'm looking forward to introducing a new cohort model for our program in a shiny new facility." A shiny new facility that, in short order, will probably once again turn into the best-smelling classroom on campus.

Learn about other recipients of the 2014-2015 Exceptional Faculty Awards.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

Clark Gets Technical



High school students visit Clark's Automotive Technology

program for a quick lesson under the hood during the 2015 Professional Technical Day.

Last Thursday 375 high school students visited Clark during its 24th annual Professional Technical Day, visiting with instructors in 18 different programs and finding out more about how to enter these fields themselves.

“Professional Technical Day is fantastic way to introduce local high school students, career counselors, teachers and administrators to the career technical educational opportunities that are available here at Clark College,” says Genevieve Howard,



Students in Clark's Bakery program share their experiences with high school students during the 2015 Professional Technical Day.

Clark College Dean of Workforce, Career & Technical Education. “With the reduction of career technical education programs in the high schools, this is often the first exposure many students have to these career opportunities, and I think Clark faculty and staff do a great job of getting students excited and engaged around these opportunities.”

The students came from 15 different high schools from the Vancouver and Portland area, including Mountain View, Ft.

Vancouver, Union, and Grant. Each student could pick two different program presentations during the half-day event. Popular programs included Automotive (and its highly regarded Toyoto T-TEN program), Welding, Bakery, Nursing/Dental Hygiene, Early Childhood Education, Business Technology, and Medical Office.



Area high school counselors and educators had a chance to hear about the future of technical careers from industry experts during Clark's 2015 Professional Technical Day.

In addition to the students, 45 counselors, teachers, and principals attended the event. They were given a full tour of the available programs, as well as the opportunity to hear a panel discussion with industry experts about job prospects and educational requirements for today's professional technical careers. Panelists were: Jim Lucey, human resources director of Linear Technology; Matt Houghton, general manager of Schurman Machine; Natalie Pacholl, training program specialist at SEH America; and Craig Baldwin, head of worldwide operations at nLight.

"At Professional Technical Day, high school students get a rare opportunity to interact with Clark College instructors and professors in hands-on learning environments that

demonstrate the academic rigor and technical skill involved in career pathways such as: Welding Technology, Automotive Technology, Mechatronics, and Computer Networking, Science and Engineering,” says Clark College Student Recruitment Specialist Jami Fordyce, who helped organize the event. “We hope that students leave inspired and more confident than ever that college is part of their future, and that Clark College is a wonderful place to start.”

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley