

Two Events Inspire Student Career Paths

Career Services regularly hosts events that expose students to potential job paths and connects them with industry professionals. Two events this past week highlighted the value of partnering with our community and educating students on careers.

Exploring Technology and Engineering Careers

At the Career Connect on February 4 in Cannell Library, students pursuing engineering and technology career paths had opportunities to meet with industry professionals and explore their career options.

Health Care and Biosciences Programs

Clark students pursuing Health Care and Bioscience programs connected with campus supports and with employers to discuss available internships, jobs, and other opportunities.

Spring Career Connect

Clark students, alumni, community members, and local employers participated in Clark's Career Connect event geared for students enrolled or interested in programs in the college's Public Service, Society and Education area of study.

Career Connect

More than 60 students, alumni, and community members participated in Clark's Career Connect event geared for students enrolled in programs in the college's Business and Entrepreneurship area of study.

Penguins hiring Penguins



It's become an annual tradition: hundreds of Clark College students showing up to meet potential employers as graduation looms near. But while Clark's Career Fair has become a familiar part of the academic cycle, not everyone realizes how many of those employer booths are staffed by former Clark students—some of whom attended the fair themselves, once upon a time.

Leslie Matheney, an HR generalist for Burgerville, remembered attending the fair before graduating from Clark in 2008 with her associate degree. "At the time, I wasn't really ready for it," she said, noting that she had just been looking for part-time work as she geared up to transfer to WSU Vancouver, where she earned a bachelor's degree in human resources and personal psychology.

Matheney, who was at the May 3 fair to recruit seasonal crew members and managers, said she felt being a Clark graduate helped her when she did start looking for full-time, permanent

employment. "I think, especially because I was looking for a position at a local company, it was good," she said. "I think that Clark is really well respected in this area."



Sgt. Fred Nieman stands with a colleague at the Clark County Sheriff's Office table.

Sergeant Fred Neiman, who was recruiting for the Clark County Sheriff's Office, said that his workplace also values the diversity of Clark's student body. "What we look for is folks who have a variety of education and background," he said. "You deal with all kinds of people in public safety. So to have a background of diverse education and experiences, and knowing how to interact with lots of different kinds of people—that's valuable."

Neiman has a long personal connection with Clark College. Not only did he attend classes here in the late 1970s, but he came back to work as its Director of Security for eight years. Clark is also where he met his wife, and their three children all earned associate degrees from the college.

"It's a wonderful institution," he said. "I enjoyed attending here when I was a student, and I enjoyed working here when I was an employee."

Vicky Barnes also has a child who graduated from Clark. She

earned her own associate degree here—with highest honors, no less—while he was still a teen.



Vicki Barnes

“I often got mistaken for a professor on campus,” laughed Barnes, who was at the fair to recruit for Woodland Public School, where she is the HR coordinator and district office manager. Barnes said she enjoyed her time as a Penguin, even though it meant long days—she attended Clark while working at WPS. “This is something I wanted to show my kids—that you can be a life-long learner.”

“It definitely benefited me in HR,” she said. “You learn how to engage with people, how to get out of your comfort zone.”

As if to prove this, she quickly turned to a woman eyeing her display of job descriptions to answer questions about open positions in the district.

According to Clark College Employer Relations Specialist Scott Clemans, 15 of the 110 employers who registered for this year’s fair indicated that they would have Clark College alumni present.

“Smart companies send alumni to events like these because they’re great role models and mentors for current Clark students,” Clemans said. “The alumni show current students what’s possible after college, and give great advice on how to

achieve it. And of course, they relate to Clark students on a level that other recruiters simply can't."

Clemans added that the fair was an impressive success. "Not only did we have 110 employers registered to attend—the maximum the O'Connell gym would hold—but we had to create a wait list for interested employers and probably had about 20 more who were interested but contacted us too late to register," he said.

This year's job fair included not only employer booths but also a photo booth where visitors could get a professional portrait taken for their LinkedIn accounts. Leading up to the fair, Clark College Career Services also hosted numerous workshops and events, as well as the annual Career Clothing Closet, to prepare students and guests for the day. The fair, which is open not just to Clark students but to all job-seekers in the community, saw 923 visitors this year—up 15 percent from last year's attendance.

Top photo: Clark College/Jenny Shadley. Photos of Nieman and Barnes: Clark College/Hannah Erickson.

An investment in students' financial futures



Judy Starr, director of Corporate and Foundation Relations at Clark College Foundation, center, receives a check from David Reiter, senior vice president and private client manager for Bank of America, and Jessica Hewitt, vice president of Enterprise Business & Community Engagement for Bank of America.

The Bank of America Charitable Foundation recently awarded Clark College a \$20,000 grant to support a full-time financial literacy coach at Clark College. The coach works directly with students to help them stabilize their finances and increase the likelihood of students meeting their economic, educational, and career goals.

The grant, delivered to Clark College Foundation, provides ongoing support within Clark College's Career Services

department for students. Assuring that a full-time financial coach remains on staff allows the college to continue providing workshops, classroom presentations, and individual sessions focusing on how to budget, balance a checkbook, set long-term financial goals, and understand credit cards, credit scores and loan repayments.

“The full-time coach has been highly valuable for our students,” said Lisa Gibert, president and CEO of Clark College Foundation. “The coach assisted 64 students in one-on-one sessions over a seven-month period, held 27 different budgeting workshops for scores of other students and conducted specialty workshops for the Veterans Resource Center and the Pathways Center.”

Jamie Madison was one of those students. She was ready to graduate from Clark’s nursing program in 2015 when unforeseen circumstances led her to withdraw. When she was contemplating a return, she was unsure if she had the resources to do so. She met with Clark’s financial literacy coach, Craig Ebersole, who helped her outline her personal finances and discover ways to limit her spending and create a budget.

“I am now confident with my finances and proactively use the resources I have learned about,” said Madison, who returned to Clark to finish her degree. “These resources help me through college and prepare me for my career after graduation.”

Approximately 54 percent of Clark students come from families living below the poverty level, and 60 percent are unemployed or receive public assistance. Moreover, nearly three-quarters of Clark students are the first generation in their families to attend college.

“Bank of America understands that financial fluency and empowerment are key drivers for future financial mobility and success,” said David K. Reiter, senior vice president at U.S. Trust Bank of America Private Wealth Management in Vancouver.

“That is why we are proud to support Clark College Foundation on this important decision to retain a financial coach. When individuals feel financially secure and are able to achieve their financial goals, communities are made stronger and we all benefit.”

A budgeting course delivered by the financial literacy coach was added to the College 101: College Essentials course last year. All students working toward an Associate of Arts degree are required to complete the course, which introduces students to campus resources, such as campus navigation, technology, tutoring support, and financial aid.

Text and photo provided by the Clark College Foundation.

Meet the Coaches



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

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

"We want these coaches to be a resource not just for our

students, but for our employees as well,” said Associate Director of Workforce Education Services Armetta Burney. “Our hope is that, when staff or faculty encounter a student who seems to be overwhelmed by poverty-related challenges, they’ll know that they can refer the student to one of our coaches for help.”

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

These four new Resource Coaches are meant to change that dynamic. Now, when a student is making the transition from basic education courses to credit-bearing college ones, they’ll have support from a Transitional Studies Coach during the process. When they’re struggling to afford housing or food, the Workforce Education Services Coach can help them apply for public benefits and connect with community organizations. If college becomes overwhelming and their grades begin to slip, the Retention and Career Coach can help them get back on track. And if they find their finances stretched thin, the Financial Literacy Coach can help them set up a budget and figure out strategies to make the most out of their financial resources.

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

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

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

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

Meet the Coaches



Nicole, Transitional Studies Coach

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

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

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



Angelica, Workforce Education Services Coach

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

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

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



Craig, Financial Literacy Coach

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

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

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



Alex, Retention & Career Coach

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

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

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

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

Career Days is Big



Attendees meet potential employers at the 2014 Career Days job fair.

Clark College's Career Days is entering its fifth year with its largest-ever number of employers participating in two separate job fairs, as well as many new events designed to help today's job-seekers. The three-day event will be held April 27-29 at the college's main campus.

The annual event includes seminars, skills sessions, clinics,

speaker panels, and other events designed to assist students and community members in their job search efforts and to prepare students in transferring to a bachelor's degree. All events are free and open to the public.

Schedule highlights (full schedule available [here](#)):

Monday, April 27

- Presentation: "LinkedIn & the Online Job Search"
- Speakers panel: "Careers in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math"
- Career assessment workshop

Tuesday, April 28

- Drop-in resume and LinkedIn Clinic
- Employer panel: "Succeeding at Your Job"

Wednesday, April 29

- Job Fair with representative from 61 employers
- Separate Health Careers Job Fair with representatives from 20 employers
- Photo booth for a free professional headshot for attendees' LinkedIn profiles
- "Borrow an Expert" event in which successful Clark College alumni can be reserved for 15-minute conversations about jobs in their respective fields.

"Clark College takes great pride in its role as a promoter of economic vitality in our region," said Clark College Career Services Director Edie Blakley. "Eleven of the 12 Career Days 2015 events bring employers and professionals from outside the college to connect with our students and community members. This provides immediate opportunities for jobs, skill development, networking, and getting information that can help our graduates put their degrees to work."

All events are free to students and members of the community.

No registration is required. Clark College is located at 1933 Fort Vancouver Way, Vancouver. Driving directions and parking maps are available at www.clark.edu/maps.

Complete information about the event – including times and locations of the various events – is available at www.clark.edu/cc/careerdays or by calling 360-992-2902.

Information about Clark College Career Services is available at www.clark.edu/cc/careerservices.

Photo: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

Weaving a Stronger Safety Net



Clark College has received a major grant toward the college's efforts to help low-income students complete their education. Work is already underway on the three-year Working Families Success Network (WFSN) grant, which provides \$100,000 per year to hire staff and equip them to work with students.

WFSN is a program of Achieving the Dream, a partnership of seven nonprofit organizations that has grown to become the

largest non-governmental reform movement working in higher education today. Achieving the Dream works at 200 higher education institutions in 34 states and the District of Columbia helping nearly 4 million college students realize greater economic opportunity.

Through the WFSN grant, Clark College will have an opportunity to provide more support to students in the areas of financial literacy, career services and gaining access to public benefits. "One of our goals is to remove the stigma and mystery surrounding some of the public benefits that students may be eligible for," Armetta Burney, Associate Director of Workforce Education Services, said. She explained that the grant allows the college to hire four part-time coaches to work one-on-one with students, helping them to access resources and manage their finances as they reach for their educational goals.

"We also have an effort underway to help faculty and staff understand how to direct and encourage low-income students," Burney added. "This is a large issue for the college as a whole, as 47 percent of Clark College students are classified as low-income." Burney added that there are many ways for faculty and staff to encourage students, but one of the easiest is to share the website www.washingtonconnection.org, which helps students quickly and easily determine their eligibility for public benefits.

The grant parameters state a goal of reaching 25 percent of low-income students with both high- and low-touch services by the end of the three-year grant. High-touch services include one-on-one interactions like financial coaching, career coaching, or assistance with access to public benefits. Low-touch services include workshops, classes and general information on resources and services provided by the college.

"We know that far too many of our students are just one financial crisis away from dropping out of school, and that

once they drop out it can be incredibly difficult for them to return,” said Edie Blakley, Director of Career Services. “With this grant, Clark College will be able to help more of these students weave a safety net for themselves that can allow them to stay focused on their long-term goals and create a plan for their financial wellness during and after college”