

Veterans Resource Center receives grant



The Veterans Resource Center at Clark College received a \$449,460 federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education to establish a Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success (CEVSS) over three years. Clark is one of only two community colleges in the state to receive the grant. Focused on supporting veteran student success, the Center will provide a single point of contact to coordinate comprehensive, individualized support services that address the academic, financial, physical, and social needs of Clark College's 600 student-veterans.

Vice President of Student Affairs Dr. Michele Cruse said, "We are grateful to receive grant funding from the U.S. Department of Education to support our Veterans Resource Center. This grant comes at a critical time when the needs of our military-connected students continue to outpace our available resources. This grant will allow our Veterans Resource Center

to expand its offerings.”

To better support student veterans, Clark College will establish a cross-departmental team with representatives from every office that works with student veterans, including Admissions, Financial Aid, the Counseling and Health Center, and Career Services—to name just a few.

Additionally, the grant will pay for a full-time student success coach; half of a full-time program coordinator position; a part-time tutoring position; outreach and recruitment activities; disability accommodations such as Live Scribe pens; and essentials including housing and food supports for student veterans.

Associate Director of Veterans Services Dave Daly said, “Because of this grant, the Center will now have the ability to help today’s warriors not only to transition from the service, but also to be more successful in staying in school and completing their path in higher education. Our goal is for our student veterans to bring their deeper, world perspective not only to Clark College, but also as graduates who are productive, insightful members of the greater community.”

U.S. Senator Patty Murray announced the grant award from the U.S. Department of Education and called it a vital investment in Washington state’s veterans.

Senator Murray said, “I’m glad to see this federal award going towards helping veterans in Washington state as they pursue an education and I appreciate Clark College’s efforts to help those who have served our country. As a proud partner of our state’s veterans and educators, I will continue working to ensure they have the resources they need to succeed and thrive.”

Senator Murray is the incoming chair of the Senate education committee, serves on the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee,

and is a steadfast advocate for veterans and their families.

About Clark College

Founded in 1933, Clark College provides residents of Southwest Washington with affordable, high-quality academic and technical education. It is a public community college offering more than 100 degree and certificate programs, including bachelor's and associate degrees; professional certificates; high school diplomas and GED preparation; and non-credit community and continuing education. Clark serves a wide range of students including high school students, displaced workers, veterans, parents, non-native English speakers, and mature learners. Approximately three-quarters of its students are in the first generation of their families to attend college.

Teaching accessibility



Bruce Elgort

Clark College computer technology instructor Bruce Elgort recently received grants from the national organizations Teach Access and the Partnership on Employment & Accessible Technology (PEAT), as well as the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), to incorporate

accessibility principles into computer science curriculum.

Elgort was just one of 13 faculty members across the nation to receive this grant and the only instructor from a community college to do so. He plans to use the funds to enhance his current curriculum so that it expands its teaching of Universal Design principles.

“We teach accessibility in our HTML classes—you know, ‘add a description to all your images so people using screen-reader technology know what they are,’” Elgort said. “It’s time to start taking accessibility further. It’s time to create forms for people with cognitive disabilities, or physical disabilities that go beyond visual impairment.”

The topic is deeply personal for Elgort, who is visually impaired himself. “I am a user of accessibility,” he said. “I am someone who is challenged as a user of technology.”

Funded by Teach Access and PEAT, the Teach Access Curriculum Development Award totals \$5,000. The SBCTC is matching that grant with an additional \$5,000. Elgort plans to use the funds to develop curriculum enhancements over the summer, and have them ready to share with other faculty in the fall.

“We’re extremely fortunate to have a faculty member like Bruce working at Clark College. His strong commitment to ensuring everyone can use technology is commendable. With the Teach Access and PEAT grant, which SBCTC is matching, Bruce can impact an entire industry by making sure future web developers are equipped to develop accessible technology as soon as they enter the field,” said Jess Thompson, program administrator for accessible technology initiatives at SBCTC.

About Bruce Elgort

Bruce Elgort began his career as an electrical engineer and then moved into the world of enterprise information technology. He was responsible for designing and developing

collaborative computing solutions to serve global businesses. Elgort also started one of the largest open-source communities for IBM's Collaboration Software division. He is a popular speaker at conferences and industry events. As an entrepreneur, he created the award-winning IdeaJam idea-management software. Elgort began teaching at Clark College in 2013 and has earned the college's prestigious Exceptional Faculty Award in 2014 and 2018.

About Clark College

Located in Vancouver's Central Park and serving more than 12,000 students per quarter, Clark College is Southwest Washington's oldest public institution of higher education. The college currently offers classes at two satellite locations: one on the Washington State University Vancouver campus and one in the Columbia Tech Center in East Vancouver. Additionally, its Economic & Community Development program is housed in the Columbia Bank building in downtown Vancouver.

About Teach Access

Teach Access is a unique collaboration among members of higher education, the technology industry and advocates for accessibility, with a shared goal of making technology broadly accessible by infusing accessibility into higher education, with enhanced training and collaborations with people with disabilities. Teach Access includes members from leading tech companies, academic institutions and disability advocacy organizations and other non-profit institutions. Teach Access operates as a fiscal sponsorship fund at the Silicon Valley Community Foundation (SVCF). To learn more visit teachaccess.org or email info@teachaccess.org.

About the Washington State Board for

Community and Technical Colleges

The Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges is led by a governor-appointed board and provides leadership, advocacy, and coordination for Washington's system of 34 public community and technical colleges. Each year, about 374,000 students train for the workforce, prepare to transfer to a university, gain basic math and English skills, or pursue continuing education.

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.

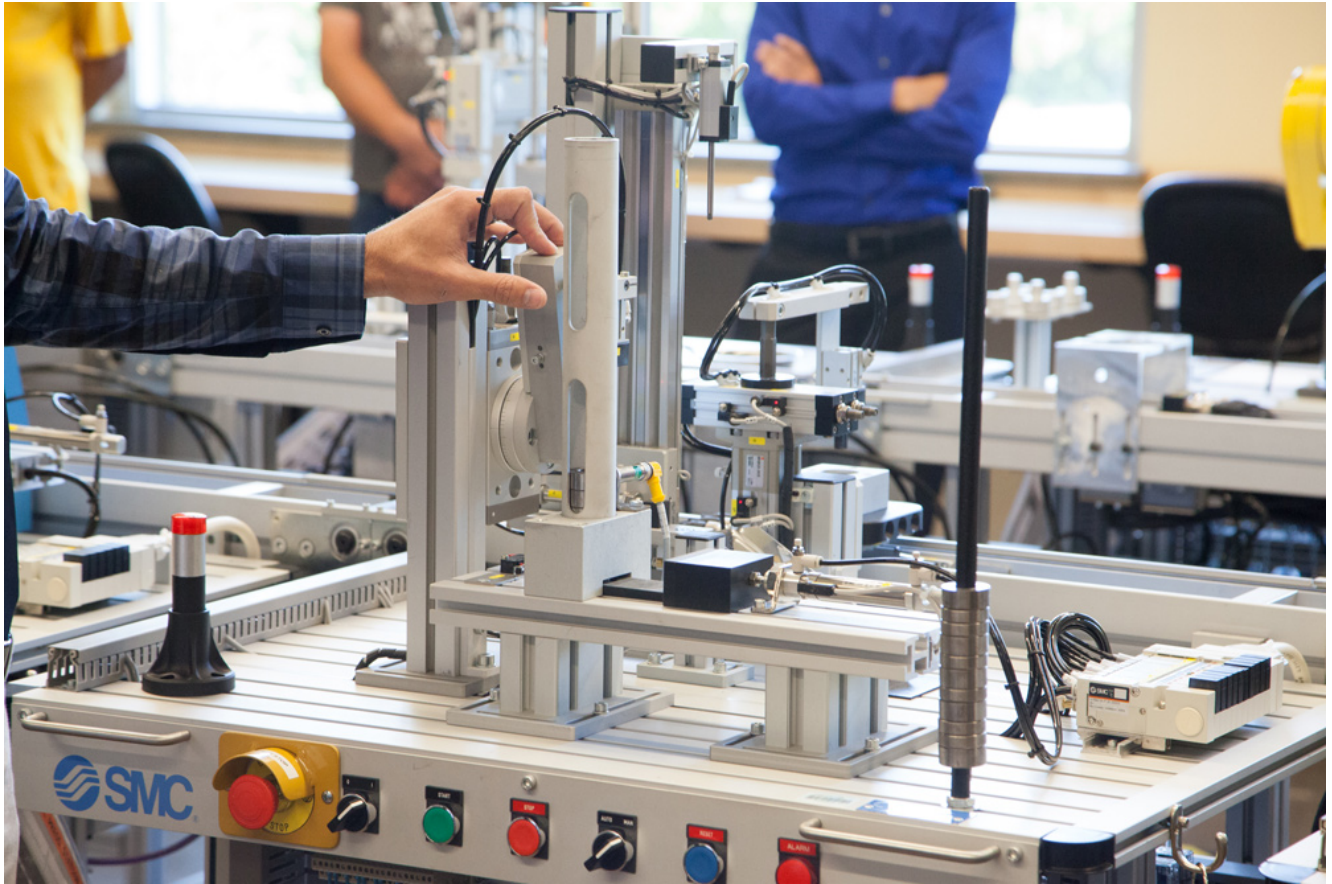
“Bank of America understands that financial fluency and empowerment are key drivers for future financial mobility and success,” said David K. Reiter, senior vice president at U.S. Trust Bank of America Private Wealth Management in Vancouver.

“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.

A RAMP to tech jobs



Clark College's popular mechatronics program combines electronics with mechanized processes to prepare students for jobs in today's high-tech manufacturing.

Clark College has received a \$200,000 grant from the National Science Foundation to create a new Rural Access Mechatronics Program (RAMP) that will help students in rural areas become skilled technicians in the high-demand field of advanced manufacturing.

"Thanks to this funding, Clark College will be able to provide greater access to our highly regarded Mechatronics program to students living anywhere in Clark's service district," said Clark College Dean of Workforce, Career and Technical Education Genevieve Howard. Clark's service district includes Clark, Skamania, and Klickitat counties.

During the grant's first year, Clark College faculty will develop a curriculum of seven "hybrid" classes that compose a Certificate of Completion in Mechatronics Fundamentals. Hybrid classes are taught partially in a face-to-face classroom, and

partially online, allowing students in remote locations to attend classes without commuting long distances each day to a college campus.

Many regional employers have expressed a need for additional technicians trained in mechatronics, a discipline that focuses on the integration of mechanical and electronic components in modern manufacturing and utility environments. Employers who wrote letters in support of this project include Boeing, Insitu, NORPAC, Silicon Forest Electronics, Vancouver Energy, the Columbia River Economic Development Council, and the Southwest Washington STEM Network.

“The RAMP program is another example of how Clark College is addressing the workforce needs of advanced manufacturing businesses,” said Jeanne Bennett, CEO of the Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council, which also supports the project. “The hybrid/online program will enable more students to receive training, and this will increase our region’s pool of skilled mechatronics technicians.”



The program will begin accepting its pilot cohort of students in the fall quarter of 2017. Given Clark’s strong focus on hands-on learning, the college is currently examining potential options for bringing lab facilities to students in remote areas of its service district. These could include anything from suitcase-sized training modules to a traveling “lab” on wheels.

Clark College received this grant through the NSF's Advanced Technical Education program, which was created to improve and expand educational programs for technicians to work in high-tech, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields. The grant proposal was developed by mechatronics professors Chris Lewis and Ken Luchini with Director of Grant Development Lori Silverman and Howard.

"The RAMP grant is exciting because it validates the ability of Clark College faculty and staff to develop a grant proposal that is competitive on a national scale in an academically rigorous process," said Howard. "Our hope is that we can replicate this hybrid model in other areas of career and technical education, potentially with further NSF assistance."

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

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

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"

Safety Steps



Among the many events organized by the Emergency Management Planning Committee was this evacuation drill held on May 9, 2013.

The Emergency Management for Higher Education (EMHE) federal grant period concluded Sept. 30, 2013. Over the three-year performance period, the \$744,402 Department of Education grant successfully supported expansive steps to create a safer college environment for students, personnel and guests.

Grant-funded activities were overseen by members of the Emergency Management Planning Committee. Key accomplishments

include staff development, support and training; equipment and supply selection and acquisition; and creation of detailed plans such as the Emergency Operations Plan and Continuity of Operations Plan. During the grant period, the college accomplished all seven grant objectives. In its summation, the independent third-party evaluation team “found Clark College’s efforts to fulfill the intent and requirements of the EMHE grant to be exemplary. The college took its commitment to the Department of Education seriously and has found a way to overcome each obstacle that surfaced throughout the grant period. Not only did Clark College meet the goals and objectives of its integrated emergency program under the EMHE grant, in the opinion of the third-party evaluation team they exceeded them.”

A video entitled “Clark College: Development of a Community College Emergency Management Program (2010-2013)” was produced by emergency management staff. The project was developed as a “show-and-tell” piece for both contemporary and historical use and to share with other community and technical colleges. Key components of Clark College’s emergency program are featured in the 3:43 piece, which illustrates program building blocks, personnel contributions and the related college culture shift that has occurred. It is open-captioned for accessibility. EMHE grant-funding allowed staff to hire local government CVTV to film the video.

A new Emergency Response Guide was completed and distributed in October. The bright yellow, spiral-bound, 24-page guide serves as a detailed desk reference on college emergency procedures. The guide was revised and enhanced to reflect the content of the college’s Emergency Operations Plan. The cost was paid by the federal Emergency Management for Higher Education grant. Distribution was handled by Environmental Health and Safety staff and student employees, and includes all work sites throughout the college. An electronic version is also available on ClarkNet [login required], with a student

version available on Clark's website.