

# Dr. Tim Cook named President of Clackamas Community College



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Clark College Vice President of Instruction Dr. Tim Cook has been named President of Clackamas Community College. Dr. Cook's appointment at Clackamas Community College comes after a national search to replace Dr. Joanne Truesdell, who has served as Clackamas Community College president since 2007.

Dr. Cook started his career at Clark College in 1997 as a faculty counselor and taught at the college for 14 years before moving into the Vice President of Instruction role. In total, Dr. Cook has spent 21 years at the college and has been an active member of the community. The move to Clackamas Community College is a move home for Dr. Cook, who is from Oregon City, Ore.

"As a first-generation community college student, I am committed to the work of community colleges, and I'm excited for this next step in my career," Dr. Cook said. "Clark

College provided me with many opportunities to positively impact the lives of students, and I'm looking forward to continuing that work at Clackamas Community College."

"We are all very happy for Dr. Cook and know he will make an excellent president," Clark College President Robert K. Knight said. "He has been at the heart of some of our most important initiatives, and leaves us with a great foundation due to his work on our Academic Plan and the work we have been doing to improve college completion through our involvement with the national American Association of Community Colleges Guided Pathways initiative."

The search is underway for a new Vice President of Instruction. Dr. Cook begins his new role at Clackamas Community College on July 1, and in order to ensure a smooth transition Dr. Travis Kibota has been named Interim Vice President of Instruction. Dr. Kibota is a professor of biology who previously served as a dean at the college and in the grant development office. Dr. Kibota will not be a candidate for the permanent position. "I'm happy to have someone with Dr. Kibota's experience and expertise step in as the interim. It will make the transition much easier," President Knight said.

The search timeline comprises bringing candidates to the college during spring term and having a new Vice President of Instruction named before the end of the academic year. That new person would likely not start until sometime during the 2018 fall term.

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# Q&A with: English instructor Alexis Nelson



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Alexis Nelson

English instructor Alexis Nelson has taught at Clark College for four years. Last year she became active in the committee that organizes the college's Columbia Writers Series (CWS), which brings accomplished writers to the college to read from and discuss their work; the next installment of the series is on Monday, Nov. 18. Nelson, who earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature from the University of California at Santa Barbara, has a Master of Fine Arts degree in Nonfiction Writing from Portland State University. Recently, *Clark 24/7* chatted with her about CWS, as well as about a new English course she's helping to develop and her own recent brush with literary fame.

**I understand you've become part of the group that organizes Clark's Columbia Writers Series. Could you tell me a little bit about that event and its purpose?**

The Columbia Writers Series brings professional authors to campus to read from and talk about their work. We bring in local and national fiction writers, nonfiction writers, poets, playwrights and screenwriters. As for the purpose of the series, last year I had a student tell me she didn't "get" poetry until she attended a CWS reading, with the poet Matthew Dickman. Hearing Dickman read his work helped this student appreciate and understand poetry in a new way, and it got her interested in attending more readings in the future. To me, that's what CWS is all about: enriching the educational experience of Clark students by introducing them to contemporary authors and by exposing them to literature in a new way. The series also emphasizes Clark's role as a center for arts and culture within the community, and it builds connections between Clark faculty, students, and members of the public.

**CWS seems to be undergoing a sea change recently. What's the thought process behind that, and what can we look forward to seeing at CWS in the future?**

There is a core group of English department faculty that is really excited about CWS right now, and we've been putting a lot of work into getting great authors to come to campus and creating more awareness of our readings. We're all writers ourselves, and we see so much opportunity to build this series into something truly special for Clark and the community. We've also been working on building stronger connections between CWS and some of the other exciting creative writing initiatives we have at Clark. For instance, last year, Clark's art and literary journal, *Phoenix*, published a fantastic interview with one of our CWS readers, Charles D'Ambrosio. D'Ambrosio is an award-winning author with a national reputation, and having that in-depth interview with him was great for *Phoenix*, not to mention a wonderful opportunity for the student who conducted the interview. We'd love to be able to do more things like this in the future, in addition to

continuing to bring in the best writers from the Northwest and beyond.

**Tell me about this coming CWS reading.**

I'm really excited about the November 18 reading for a couple of reasons. First, we're going to have two writers: poet Zachary Schomburg and fiction-writer Ismet Prcic. Zachary and Ismet both won Oregon Book Awards this year, so this is a chance to hear two of the Northwest's best contemporary writers share their work. I'm also especially excited for this reading because Ismet actually teaches at Clark—he's an adjunct in the Drama department—so we'll also be celebrating Clark's talented faculty. Ismet was born in Bosnia and his award-winning novel *Shards* tells the story of a young Bosnian immigrant, so there's also a connection between the November 18 reading and International Education Week, which will be happening at the same time.

**I know you've been developing a Creative Nonfiction course at Clark. How did that come about, and what role do you think the course will fill at Clark?**

Creative nonfiction is an important genre that has become a lot more prominent and popular in the last couple of decades. It's a diverse genre that includes things like memoir, personal essay, travel writing, and even journalistic pieces that use some of the techniques of fiction-writing such as description and scene-building. If you look at other schools that offer fiction and poetry writing courses, most of them will have creative nonfiction writing classes as well. My MFA is in nonfiction writing, and I'm a nonfiction writer myself, so when I saw that there weren't any creative nonfiction courses being offered at Clark, I wanted to design one. I think this class will help round out the creative writing offerings at Clark. It's also an important course because this type of writing is fun and creative, but it also has practical applications. If you're interested in writing for magazines,

you need to know creative nonfiction. Being able to write a great personal essay will also help with college and scholarship applications.

### **How do Clark students respond to the coursework in this class?**

When I taught nonfiction writing at Clark last spring, I had a number of Running Start students who were in their teens; there were also several returning students in their 30s and 40s. To me, this diversity is part of what makes Clark special. Particularly in a class where you're writing from personal experience, having students who have been through a lot in their lives and others who are just beginning to figure out who they are makes for a dynamic class. The students were so respectful of one another, and I think that both the older and the younger students learned a lot from each another.

### **How has teaching this course informed your own writing process?**

Teaching forces me to think about how different pieces of writing are put together, and to put into words ideas about craft that I might not otherwise fully articulate to myself. I also like to do all the writing exercises that I give my students along with them, and this can sometimes open unexpected doors for me and lead to new work. Overall, it's just great to be immersed in reading, thinking, and talking about the kind of writing I'm most passionate about. It's like breathing richer air.

### **Finally, I know you're hesitant to talk about this, but your essay, "On Love and Memory," was recently listed as a notable essay in *The Best American Essays 2013*. How does it feel to have your work recognized by such a prestigious publication? Also, since the original essay isn't available online, could you share a little about its theme?**

One of my grandmothers had dementia and the other currently has Alzheimer's; so the essay is partly about what they've

gone through and partly about my own fears of losing my memory. It also, like the title suggests, explores the relationship between memory and love. The essay is structured like a collage, with short, discrete sections that are woven together to create a whole that's greater than the sum of its parts. It's a somewhat experimental kind of writing that I've been really excited by lately.

I was thrilled when the essay was published in the first place (in a great journal called *The Normal School*), but knowing that it stood out to the editor of the *Best American Essays* series feels even better. At the same time, it's funny how quickly the initial excitement over getting news like that fades, in the sense that it doesn't make the work any easier. I'd imagine that even getting a big book deal or winning a prestigious prize would be same. Afterward, you still have to go back to your desk and figure out how to put more words on the page.

*Photo: Clark College/Jenny Shadley*

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## **Clark's Foodie Future**



Arriving in late August, The Mighty Bowl was the first food cart to move onto campus, opening September 13.

This past fall, the Culinary Arts Taskforce was formed to work on two things: revamping the Culinary Arts, Food program and improving food-service options on the main campus. Recently the Taskforce released its findings, and they could indicate dramatic changes not just in the program and the college's dining options, but in the look and shape of the campus as well.

The Taskforce quickly recognized one major challenge facing the current Culinary Arts program: In order to stay up-to-date with modern culinary trends, students needed instructional time to develop skills and learn about new tools and technology, theories, dietary restrictions, and global cuisine. However, the program was also responsible for most of the food production at the college, which left little time for purely instructional lab activities and skill development.

At the same time, because Culinary Arts students were responsible for producing most of the food at campus, food service was limited to their class hours—and both students and employees often need to eat at times outside those hours.

Looking at these challenges, it became clear to the Taskforce



that the Culinary Arts program needed to stop being the sole source of food on campus. The solution: Bring in local vendors, in a limited capacity, to augment food service for the campus community. Meanwhile, Culinary Arts students would take part in more-rigorous academics and updated lab activities—while still gaining hands-on experience by providing some food service to the college. The program would also move to a cohort model and be designed to qualify for accreditation by the American Culinary Federation.

In order to accomplish all this, however, something else needed to change: the facility itself. Students would need access to SMART classrooms and a demonstration kitchen (currently the program has neither) to learn the new curriculum, and outside vendors would want a larger, more inviting space in which to set up shop. So the Taskforce also recommended adding a second story to the northwest corner of Gaiser Hall and remodeling the first-floor section to house a modern food court with different cook-to-order kiosks, a new bakery area, and a modern dining room. The second floor would include the SMART classrooms, offices, and other facilities required for a modern Culinary Arts program.

“[A] renovation, while costly, is an investment in the program, an investment in student retention, and an investment in the goals of the Strategic Plan,” the Taskforce’s final proposal concludes. “The creation of an inviting space for students, faculty, and staff to congregate as members of a community will serve Clark College for decades to come.”

The next step will be a predesign study to accurately budget for these renovations—after that, the fundraising process to make these proposals reality can begin. Meanwhile, the Culinary Arts, Food program is not taking new students. Learn more about the proposed changes online at [http://www.clark.edu/academics/programs/culinary\\_arts/Taskforce\\_Proposal.pdf](http://www.clark.edu/academics/programs/culinary_arts/Taskforce_Proposal.pdf).

## Meet Your (Lunch) Makers

So where will students and employees eat while the Culinary Arts, Food program goes through its transformation? In addition to currently existing food kiosks around campus and the Bakery (which will continue service during the revamp), three new food carts will set up shop on the walkway on the east side of Gaiser Hall. Here they are, with links to their websites and expected beginning month of service:

- Foody Blues BBQ
- Mighty Bowl
- Chewy's Really Big Burritos

*Photo: Clark College/Hannah Erickson*