

# Opening Day 2024

Faculty and Staff kick-off the 2024-25 academic year with an Opening Day celebration and Faculty Focus events.

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## Opening Day: Award Recipients

Clark College employees gathered on September 18 to kick off the 2023-24 academic year during Opening Day festivities at O'Connell Sports Center. During the event, the following staff members were recognized for their service to the college.

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## Opening Day 2022

Clark College starts the new academic year with its first in-person Opening Day since 2019.

President Edwards said that although she has been at Clark College for over 2 years, this was the first in-person opening

day celebration, and she was loving it!

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## New year, new traditions



Amanda Brown, a 2019 Exceptional Classified Award recipient, receives her award from Interim President Dr. Sandra Fowler-Hill.

On September 16, Clark College employees gathered in the O'Connell Sports Center gymnasium for the traditional Opening Day ceremonies. While much of the program was familiar to longtime employees, this year's event brought a few new elements.

The first and most noticeable was the college's new leader: Interim President Dr. Sandra Fowler-Hill, who is serving a one-year term as interim president while the college seeks a permanent replacement for retired president Bob Knight.

Fowler-Hill joked that, while she has attended many such celebrations during her decades-long career in higher education, here at Clark, “this is my first Opening Day—and my last Opening Day.”





“We’re eager to serve Clark’s students and make this college a welcoming place for all.”

– *ASCC President Evans Kaame*

Board of Trustees chair Jane Jacobsen thanked Dr. Fowler-Hill for coming out of her retirement as the president of Portland Community College’s Rock Creek campus to step into the interim role.

Trustee Paul Speer outlined the process for hiring a new president, reiterating that the Board of Trustees was “transparent, equitable and inclusive.” The college has posted updated information about the presidential search on its website.



Trustee Jane Jacobsen

Opening Day was also the occasion to announce two new employee awards. The first was the Exceptional Administrative-Exempt Award, recognizing a class of employees that fall neither into Classified staff nor faculty categories. Administrative-exempt

staff include many administrators, managers, directors, executive assistants, and other employees who are not eligible for overtime compensation.

“We realized there’s a group of employees who haven’t had an opportunity to have their excellence recognized,” said Dr. Fowler-Hill.

The second new award was announced by Associate Vice President of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Rashida Willard. The Lora Whitfield Social Equity Award will be awarded to a member of the Clark College community who has demonstrated a sustained commitment to advancing equity, Willard said. It is named in honor of early childhood education professor Lora Whitfield, who died in July. Dr. Debi Jenkins read a poem to honor Whitfield’s memory.

Social equity was a significant theme in a presentation on the college’s progress toward Guided Pathways from Willard, Vice President of Instruction Sachi Horback, and Vice President of Student Affairs Bill Belden.

“It is on us to make sure all our students complete and persist,” said Willard. “We can’t put it on our students to succeed in a broken system. We need to fix the system in order for everyone to succeed.”



### Professor Mike Arnold

Old traditions were also honored at Opening Day, including the recognition of employees for their years of service. Four employees—Mike Arnold, Lynn Boydston, Lisa Hasart, and Vicki Weese—were recognized for having worked at the college for 30 years. Vice President of Human Resources and Compliance Stefani Coverson also announced the recipients of the 2019 Exceptional Classified Award: Amanda Brown and Ian Beckett.

The recipients of the 2018-2019 Exceptional Faculty Award, who were announced at Commencement, were recognized again and provided with plaques honoring their achievement.

Dr. Fowler-Hill concluded the event by saying, “It’s an honor to be your interim President this year. You are dedicated, passionate and steadfast in your work to support our students. I have rolled up my sleeves to join you in this work and support you every way I can.”





Employees gather in the O'Connell Sports Center gym for Opening Day.

*Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley*

More photos can be found on Flickr.

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# Marking the path for a new year





Clark employees enter O'Connell Sports Complex to attend Opening Day.

Fall was in the air on Monday, September 18. Not only did the day see the first substantial rainfall in months—a change welcomed by many, with their thoughts on this summer's devastating wildfire season—but it was also the occasion for Clark College faculty and staff to gather once again and greet a new academic year at the college's annual Opening Day celebration.

The event highlighted a year in which the college will be, in many ways, re-envisioning itself. President Bob Knight opened his remarks with lessons that he and other college leadership had gained Dr. Margaret Wheatley's book, *Who Do We Choose to Be?: Facing Reality, Claiming Leadership, Restoring Sanity*. "In a world that is sometimes chaotic at best, every day, faculty and staff have the opportunity to do extraordinary things that change the lives of students, improve the community, and ultimately impact our world," he said, adding

that the college is adapting to expand those opportunities.

Board of Trustees Chair Jada Rupley echoed that theme, discussing the board's role in approving the college's Strategic and Academic plans that are designed, in large part, to help boost student retention and completion rates.



“Now the hard work is what needs to be done—and that’s your work,” she said.

Knight went on to enumerate some of aspects of that work, including the college's progress toward the Guided Pathways model of higher education, which has led to the creation of a new “Areas of Study” map that changes the way current programs are organized. He also talked about new systems put in place to provide shared governance at the college, as well as continued work toward realizing the college's Social Equity Plan.

In speaking about social equity, Knight addressed the plight of Clark students covered by Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), a currently threatened program that provides limited protection to undocumented immigrants who grew up in the United States. “Our DACA students are welcome here at Clark College,” said Knight. He continued over the noise of a standing ovation, “We’re an open-access college and we’re here for everyone!”

Knight received another standing ovation shortly afterward when he announced the opening of the college's new Penguin Pantry, an on-campus food bank that began serving students this summer. “This new service recognizes that our students make difficult choices with their money every day, and we don't want hunger to limit a student's ability to learn,” he said.

Knight also looked forward to the McClaskey Culinary Institute opening later in the year—"We'll be eating there very soon, so hang on"—and thanked the Clark College Foundation for its support in funding the new facility.



President Bob Knight congratulates Clark alumna Dr. Inva Begolli during the college's 2017 Opening Day.

Then, in a reminder of what the college has already accomplished, he invited Dr. Inva Begolli to join him at the podium. Begolli, who graduated from Clark in 2011 after fleeing her native Albania, earned a full scholarship to continue her education at Washington State University. Earlier this year, she earned her doctorate in Pharmacy from Pacific University. "This lady is an example of what we do here at Clark College," said Knight. "She wants to be the Health Minister of Albania one day, and I believe she will be."

Knight said that another way the college is adapting to meet its students is through a months-long rebranding effort. "As we continue to struggle through an enrollment crisis, it is important to take a step back and evaluate who we are, if others know who we are, and most importantly, if who we are matches who or what people think we are," he said.

Employees received weekly planners with key brand messages inside them and viewed a video covering key elements of the

brand. As is Opening Day tradition, a music video featuring employees was unveiled, and employees were honored with awards, Presidential Coins, and service-anniversary recognitions. The event ended with lunch in Gaiser Student Center.

*Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley*

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## Save the Date: Fall Orientation



Before we say goodbye to spring quarter, make sure to put Clark's 2014 Fall Orientation on your calendar. Opening Day activities will be on Wednesday, September 10, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in O'Connell Sports Complex, followed by Fall Orientation through September 19 in various locations. Visit the Fall Orientation home page for the full lineup of events.

Opening Day is a time for us to come together as a community. To make that possible—and so that everyone from all of our locations can attend our opening day celebration—the college will be closed on the morning of Wednesday, September 10. Offices will open and services will resume at 1 p.m. that afternoon.

This year's Orientation Fair will be held Tuesday, September 16, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in Gaiser Student Center.

*Article contributed by the Fall Orientation Committed.*



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# Excellent News



Joe Jenkins basks in his colleagues' applause as he receives his Exceptional Classified Staff Award.

Opening Day is traditionally the occasion for announcing the yearly Exceptional Classified Staff Awards, which recognize two classified employees for their contributions to Clark College. Recipients receive a glass plaque and \$1,000, funded through an anonymous donor's contributions to the Clark College Foundation.

The 2013 Exceptional Classified Staff Award winners were:



Joe Jenkins

**Joe Jenkins, Academic Advisor**

Joe Jenkins was described in his nomination as having a relatable sense of humor and high energy that keeps students engaged and aware. “He helps others think outside of the box and communicates in an easy, friendly manner,” the nomination read. “He is active in identifying student needs, and has advocated for greater course offerings so students can complete their degree requirements in a timely manner. His expertise and knowledge has led to increased student retention and engagement.”



Jennifer  
Wheeler

**Jennifer Wheeler, Information Technology Services**

In her nomination, Jennifer Wheeler was described as “one of the most diligent, collaborative and consistent members of the college community.”

“She is delightful, professional, personable and respectful of the diverse individuals who work and go to school here,” the nomination comments continued. “She takes pride in her work, but more importantly in the effect it has on the success of the entire college. She is always upbeat and exemplifies a can-do spirit for Clark College.”

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## New Steps



After the office of instruction showed their music video “Rock of All Ages” a flash mob started at the front of the gym. The flash mob enticed members of staff, faculty, students and even members of the Clark College board of trustees to get up and dance.



On September 11, Clark College employees gathered in the O'Connell Sports Center gymnasium to kick off another academic year. Opening Day festivities are an annual tradition at the college, a time to recognize employees' accomplishments and to reinvigorate the college community for the coming year.

This year, the day began on a more somber note than normal, as President Bob Knight took a moment to acknowledge that Opening Day happened to fall on the anniversary of the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. He noted that he had been in the O'Connell gym 12 years ago, playing an early-morning game of basketball, when he first learned of the attacks. Knight then asked the gathered crowd to hold a moment of silence in memory of the victims of September 11.



Knight then mapped out some of the challenges and changes the college would face in the coming year. He noted that after years of skyrocketing enrollments, numbers are starting to slip downward again, requiring staff in many departments to focus on recruitment and retention. The college is also gearing up to adopt ctcLink, a new collection of online systems being phased

into use at all 34 Washington state community and technical colleges. And while the 3-percent pay cut that affected most college employees has ended, the college is still facing some budget difficulties, partly due to decreased enrollment and partly due to being underfunding by the state. For instance, the college's new STEM Building was funded by the state—but at \$4.5 million less than originally planned.

"I am confident that you will face these challenges and overcome them, just as well as you have done in the past," Knight said, adding that the college would continue to rely on



private support gathered by the Clark College Foundation, which is ending its \$20 million Ensuring a Bright Future campaign next June.

Associate Vice President for Planning and Effectiveness Shanda Diehl spoke about another upcoming challenge: crafting the college's 2015-2020 Strategic Plan. "Since we will use the strategic plan as a tool to make decisions, we need all of your feedback during its development," she said, mapping out how that would take place.

But along with the talk of challenges and policies, there was also time for fun and high jinks. Traditionally, Opening Day includes a music video about the college, and this year it fell to the Office of Instruction to create the video. Titled "Rock of All Ages," it drew cheers and laughter from the gathered employees—and, afterward, sparked an impromptu dance party that lured to the floor faculty, staff, Student Ambassadors, and even the three trustees in attendance.



Clark President Robert K. Knight presents French professor Doug Mrazek with an award for 35 years of service to Clark College.

The event also was occasion for President Knight to award Presidential Coins to five employees, and for Human Resources to announce the recipients of the 2013 Exceptional Classified Staff Awards and to present service-anniversary awards to employees who had worked at the college for five, ten, 15, 20, 25, and 30 years. One employee, French professor Doug Mrazrek, received an award for 35 years at the college—as well as a standing ovation from the crowd. The event was also an opportunity to present plaques to the recipients of the 2012-2013 Exceptional Faculty Awards, whose names were officially announced during Commencement.

*Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley*

*EDITED 9/30/13 to correct end date of Foundation campaign.*

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## **Vision Quest**



Associate Vice President of  
Planning and Effectiveness  
Shanda Diehl

On Opening Day 2013, Associate Vice President for Planning and Effectiveness Shanda Diehl explained the college's approach to creating its 2015-2020 Strategic Plan. "Since we will use the strategic plan as a tool to make decisions, we need all of your feedback during its development," she said, mapping out how that would take place.

The process began on Opening Day with employees being randomly assigned to groups of 12. These groups met for an hour to discuss how each individual member helped support student learning, which the college has identified as the common purpose that unites all departments and programs.

These groups will meet again in October, November, January, and February to discuss different aspects of student learning.

After the small-group meetings, employees gathered near Andersen Fountain for a complimentary lunch, where some of them discussed the previous activity.



New Career Services employee  
Alex Martin

“You tend to stick with the people you know, so it was a good way to meet new people at the college,” said Facilities Services Office Assistant Ramona Sott. “And it’s important to be talking about this: How do we help the students here get a better education, and get them to stay?”

“I thought it was fun,” said Career Services employee (and Clark ’09 graduate) Alex Martin, who found herself providing feedback for the college’s future on her first day of work. “We had custodians in our group, people in Admissions, all kinds of employees—it was great. I learned a lot.”