

PTK Brings Home Awards

Phi Theta Kappa earns awards including the Hallmark Award for Distinguished College Project at the Catalyst National Conference.

Phi Theta Kappa Induction

Phi Theta Kappa celebrated 134 new members at the 2024 winter term Induction Ceremony.

Phi Theta Kappa

Alpha Sigma Phi, Clark College's chapter of Phi Theta Kappa celebrated its new 424 members at the 2023 Induction Ceremony on the evening of June 1.

Phi Theta Kappa earns awards



Anne LeGrave and Jordan Peterson

Clark College's chapter of Phi Theta Kappa (PTK), the international honor society for community colleges, has been hard at work this year. Two of its members have been nominated to the All-Washington Academic Team, and the chapter took top honors in PTK's regional Hallmark Awards.

"I am so excited that our chapter is being recognized at the regional level and I'm looking forward to attending [the annual PTK conference] Catalyst in April to see how we rank internationally," said PTK advisor Darci Feider, who earned a regional PTK Paragon Award for new advisor. The chapter also ranked No. 1 regionally for its college project (supporting a fall return to campus) and distinguished theme, and No. 3 for its Honors in Action project. Additionally, three officers—Isabel Henkes, Jadyn Pahlka, and Nathan Pham—were recognized with regional awards. See the full list of regional awards [here](#).

In addition to these regional awards, earlier this year Clark

College President Karin Edwards was named a PTK Paragon President.

Alpha Sigma Phi (the name of Clark College's PTK chapter) has even more accomplishments to celebrate. Two of its members have been nominated to the 2022 All-Washington Academic Team. On May 12, students Anne LeGrave and Jordan Peterson will represent Clark College at the 25th annual All-Washington Academic Team ceremony, honoring 80 students from Washington State for their academic excellence and community service.

Top students from 33 of Washington state's community and technical colleges will be honored at the annual ceremony, which will be held virtually on Zoom; each receives a medal and a \$225 scholarship from KeyBank and becomes eligible for additional scholarships from private sponsors as well as transfer scholarships from four-year colleges and universities. Gov. Jay Inslee, who will be providing a video speech for the event, will also issue a signed proclamation declaring May12, 2022 to be All-Washington Academic Team Day.

Read more about both students below.



Anne LeGrave

Anne LeGrave

Anne LeGrave has had her share of challenges trying to pursue her education during the COVID-19 pandemic. A single mother, she has had to take online classes while caring for her toddler daughter. However, she hasn't let those challenges keep her from her dream of earning a college degree in

business administration. Described by one professor as a “model student,” she continues to earn good grades while working to build a better life for herself and her daughter.

Jordan Peterson



Jordan Peterson

Jordan Peterson is a Running Start student attending Clark College while still high school, with a passion for supporting her community. When the COVID-19 pandemic forced her school to move to remote learning, she realized some of her classmates were having trouble adjusting. She created an online study group that allowed students to connect with each other and overcome technological and academic challenges. Jordan is pursuing a degree in biology as part of her plan to become a doctor.

Discovering their potential at Clark



Angela Kyle and Heather Leasure

On March 21, two outstanding students represented Clark College at the 23rd annual All-Washington Academic Team ceremony, honoring 59 students from Washington state for their academic excellence and community service.

Top students from 33 of Washington state's community and technical colleges were honored at the annual ceremony, which was held at South Puget Sound Community College in Olympia; each received a medal and a \$250 scholarship from KeyBank and became eligible for additional scholarships from private sponsors as well as transfer scholarships from four-year colleges and universities. Angela Kyle was also awarded a \$750 scholarship from WSECU. Gov. Jay Inslee, who served as keynote speaker at the event, presented a signed proclamation declaring March 21, 2019 to be All-Washington Academic Team Day.

The All-Washington Academic Team is a program of Phi Theta Kappa, the international honor society for two-year colleges. Earlier this month, Alpha Sigma Phi was awarded the highest

honor of Most Distinguished Chapter in the Greater Northwest Region, along with four other awards.

This year's Clark College All-Washington Academic Team members share many things in common: They both came to Clark in their 30s, after many years away from school; both are members of the college's Entrepreneur Club; and both have found confidence in their capabilities through their achievement at Clark. Below is a bit about their stories.

Angela Kyle



After graduating from high school, Angela Kyle went straight to a state university, intent upon becoming a teacher. But when she became pregnant with her first child, Kyle dropped out and put her educational plans on hold. It was only when all four of her children were in school that Kyle felt she could focus on her own goals again. She enrolled at Clark College in 2016.

Kyle, now 41, said her experience at Clark was dramatically different from what she experienced at a large state university. "At university, they're so focused on academics," she said. "You're kind of on your own. But at Clark College, they're focused on the student as a whole. It's so hands-on. Even online instructors share resources with us, from the

Penguin Pantry to tutoring.”

Kyle has taken a mix of face-to-face and online classes to balance her schoolwork, volunteer work, and family obligations. She is on track to graduate this June with both a transfer Associate of Arts and an Associate of Applied Science in Business Administration. She is also dual-enrolled in Central Washington University’s online program, working on a bachelor’s degree in social science/interdisciplinary studies with a minor in accessibility studies.

Kyle’s responsibilities extend beyond her academics. She currently works as a Student Ambassador; serves as social media coordinator for the college’s Entrepreneur Club and as president of Clark’s Phi Theta Kappa chapter; and volunteers for both her local PTA and the All-American Girl Scholarship Program—all while maintaining a 3.63 GPA. While her work has been challenging, Kyle said she was inspired to keep going to be a role model to her children.

“They see me, and college isn’t scary,” she said. “My oldest son is at Clark now too, through Running Start. None of my kids see college as unattainable.”

Kyle wants to spread that message beyond her family. She plans to become a college advisor so that she can support other students—especially those, like herself, who are the first in their families to attend college.

“My whole journey has prepared me for this career,” she says. “I’ve been all the kinds of student: I’ve been the freshman in a dorm straight out of high school, I’ve been the older student with a family coming back to school. Wherever a student might be coming from, I can relate to every part of the path they might be on ... and hopefully make their journey a little shorter than mine was.”

Heather Leasure



Heather Leasure was sitting in the audience at her cousin's graduation when the thought struck her: She should go to college herself. "My cousin is 11 years younger than me, and I felt embarrassed that she was getting her bachelor's degree and I didn't even have an associate," she recalled. "So I came home and enrolled in summer quarter."

At Clark, Leasure discovered she had leadership and academic strengths she had never recognized within herself. As president of the college's Entrepreneur Club, she helped start a new event at Clark called Pitch Fest, where budding student entrepreneurs could bring their start-up ideas and compete for a chance at the \$25,000 grand prize offered at the University of Washington's Business Plan Competition. She serves as public relations officer of the college's chapter of Phi Theta Kappa and volunteers as a precinct commission officer in her neighborhood—all while maintaining a 3.82 GPA.

In her first year at Clark, Leasure was struck a terrible blow that could have derailed her promising start to college: The store where she worked closed and she was laid off. "Financial aid has been the biggest support service for me, because without them I would not have been able to continue

attending,” she said.

Leasure said that she remains committed to continuing her education because she wants a more stable economic future. “I’m 36 and have worked since I was 15 in jobs that I had no future in,” she said. “What motivates me is the will to be better and to do better.”

Leasure credited her mother as another motivating force in my life. “She didn’t graduate from high school, but she went back later in life and got her GED and an associate degree,” she said. “She is very proud that I returned to school after such a long break and have really come into my own.”

Soon, Leasure’s mother—and maybe her cousin too—will have another graduation ceremony to attend: Leasure is on track to graduate this June with a transfer Associate of Arts degree. And she doesn’t plan to stop there: She’s planning to transfer to Washington State University Vancouver and earn her bachelor’s degree in business management.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

Students helping students



Members of Phi Theta Kappa get ready to distribute Thanksgiving groceries to students in 2016.

Every year, members of Clark College's chapter of Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) Honor Society collect money to pay for grocery baskets so that Clark students in need can have all the supplies to make Thanksgiving dinner for their families. This year, they have collected the names of 100 students who could use help this holiday.

Each basket costs about \$25 and includes a 12-14 pound turkey, mashed potatoes and gravy, stuffing, yams, green beans, cranberry sauce, dinner rolls, and a pie.

PTK is asking for donations from the community to help cover the cost of these baskets. Donors may contribute by dropping off monetary donations to the Cashier's Office in Gaiser Hall or by calling the Cashier's Office at 360-992-2177. Either way, be sure to mention the account code "VB." Donations need

to be received by Monday, November 19 at 5:00 p.m.

Phi Theta Kappa is the international honor society of two-year colleges.

Photo: Clark College/Hannah Erickson

This article contributed by Alpha Sigma Phi, Clark College's chapter of Phi Theta Kappa

All-Washington Academic Team



Clark College Vice President of Instruction Dr. Tim Cook with 2018 All-Washington Academic Team members Madysen Saucedo and Carlos Hunt.

On March 22, three outstanding students represented Clark College at the 23rd annual All-Washington Academic Team ceremony, honoring 78 students from Washington State for their academic excellence and community service.

The All-Washington Academic Team is a program of Phi Theta Kappa, the international honor society for two-year colleges. Top students from each of Washington state's 34 community and technical colleges were honored at the annual ceremony, which was held at South Puget Sound Community College in Olympia; each received a medal and a \$250 scholarship from KeyBank, and will become eligible for additional transfer scholarships from in-state colleges and universities.

The three Clark College team members are:

Carlos Hunt

After many years of working in construction, Carlos Hunt realized that he wanted to find work that was less physically taxing and more intellectually stimulating. Since coming to Clark College, he has developed an interest in social justice and public administration. "I want to help people in an empowering way which inspires them to share whatever talent they have with others," he says.



Diane
Hurst

Diane Hurst

After many years of staying home with her children to home-school them, Diane Hurst came to Clark College to learn skills that would help her financially support herself and her family. She is now completing an Associate of Fine Arts degree in Graphic Design, which she says allows her to explore her creativity. Outside of school, she volunteers at her church and is working on marketing her own line of greeting cards.

Madysen Saucedo

Madysen Saucedo was 15 years old when she began taking classes at Clark College through Running Start. While it was an adjustment to sit in classrooms with students older than her own parents, she says she has appreciated the academic challenge she experienced at Clark. She plans to transfer to Arizona State University, where she will continue studying mathematics to pursue her goal of becoming an actuary—and becoming the first person in her family to graduate from college.

Global dreams converge at Clark



Ruixuan Bai and Meghan Jackson are Clark College's nominees to the 2017 All-Washington Academic Team.

One student plans to spend her career overseas; the other traveled across an ocean to study here. But on March 23, the stories of Meghan Jackson and Ruixuan Bai will converge when they represent Clark College at the 22nd annual All-Washington Academic Team ceremony honoring 63 students from Washington state for their academic excellence and community service.

The All-Washington Academic Team is a program of Phi Theta Kappa, the international honor society for two-year colleges. Top students from each of Washington state's 34 community and technical colleges will be honored at the annual ceremony, which will be held at South Puget Sound Community College in Olympia; each will receive a medal and scholarship, and will become eligible for additional transfer scholarships from in-state colleges and universities.

About Ruixuan Bai



Ruixuan Bai

When Ruixuan Bai first traveled from China to Clark College to study as an international student, it was her first time riding in an airplane. Bai, now 21, began her educational journey at Clark in the college's Intensive English Language Program three years ago. She has since become an active member of the Clark community. She has served as both a Transitional Studies Peer Mentor and an International Peer Mentor at the college, as well as vice president of the Associated Students of Clark College, president of the Chinese Culture Club, and president of the college's chapter of Phi Theta Kappa. Additionally, she volunteers at Peace Health Center and at Share House.

A first-generation college student, Bai chose to study in America on the advice of her parents, who urged her to broaden her horizons and learn from other cultures. She chose Clark in part for reasons of affordability and in part because of its prestigious nursing program.

"At first it was hard," she said. "I didn't know that much language. I wasn't used to the food—I wound up in the emergency room because my stomach hurt so much. But I really like the people here. They are very kind and very patient with my English. And I can eat the food now!"

Bai developed her goal of working in medicine after the death of her beloved aunt from uterine cancer. Currently, Bai is double-majoring in biology and business. She holds a 3.85 grade point average and plans to graduate from Clark in fall 2017, after which she hopes to continue her education in the United States.

“I want to have a better future, but I’m still deciding what that will look like,” she said. “I like the life here, but I miss my country and my family. I haven’t celebrated Chinese New Year since I came here.”

About Meghan Jackson



Meghan Jackson

Meghan Jackson came to Clark College through Running Start, a Washington state program that allows high school students to earn college credit. The Washougal High School student said she was looking for an advanced learning environment, as well as the opportunity to explore interests before entering a four-year institution.

“College was always a given for me, but I never really knew what I wanted to study,” said Jackson, 17. “Part of why I wanted to do Running Start was so I could try different

classes and find out what interested me most.”

The strategy worked: Inspired by her women’s studies and political science courses at Clark, Jackson decided to pursue a career in international diplomacy. She has maintained a 4.0 grade point average at Clark and expects to graduate in spring 2017. In addition to her studies, Jackson plays high school soccer and serves as president of Washougal High’s American Sign Language Club.

Thanks to Running Start, Jackson may be able to enter university with sophomore or junior standing, thereby helping relieve the financial burden of college tuition for her parents. She says earning scholarships like the one provided to All-Washington Academic Team members not only helps further ease that financial burden, but also helps confirm her decision to begin college at an early age.

“I work really hard, I study a lot,” Jackson said. “To be able to say I’m a part of this, it’s special to me.”

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

After 20 years, a dream realized



2016-2017 Community College Presidents' Scholarship in Honor of Val Ogden recipient Holly Varner

Holly Varner had always meant to go to college. She tried taking classes a couple times, but life as a Navy wife made it difficult—she was constantly having to move to follow her husband's 21-year-long career, not to mention taking care of three boys, now ages 8, 13, and 18. It was only when her husband retired and the family settled in Washougal that Varner could pursue her dream. She enrolled in Clark with just a GED and a handful of community-college classes on her transcript, determined to succeed academically.

During the 2016 Clark College Commencement ceremony, that determination paid off when Varner heard Clark College President Robert K. Knight announce that she was the recipient of the 2016-2017 Community College Presidents' Award in Honor of Val Ogden. The scholarship award provides full-time tuition at Washington State University Vancouver (WSUV) and is renewable for one additional year, essentially providing full

tuition to complete a bachelor's degree.



Holly Varner hugs her son after hearing that she has received two years of tuition to Washington State University Vancouver.

As soon as President Knight made the announcement, Varner stood and hugged her son, Jonathan, who had attended Clark alongside his mother through Washington State's Running Start program, which allows high school students to attend college tuition-free. The two had taken three classes together and even quizzed each other before exams.

"It was great to see him progress, to see him grow," said Varner.

Varner's own growth at Clark has been exceptional. She graduated with a 3.98 Grade Point Average ("I was so upset about that A-minus!") while managing multiple volunteer and extracurricular activities. Varner served as Vice President of Service for Alpha Sigma Phi, Clark College's chapter of the international honor society Phi Theta Kappa. In that role, Varner helped organize a Thanksgiving basket drive that provided holiday dinner supplies to more than 100 Clark College students and their families—negotiating an agreement with a new vendor that brought down the price of each basket that in turn allowed Alpha Sigma Phi to serve more students.

She also coordinated drives to provide books and art supplies to families in local homeless shelters. She interviewed more than 60 homeless individuals to learn what they needed most; based on those interviews, she developed a shoe and sock drive to help them.

“She is the go-to person if advisors, other officers, or administration have questions,” wrote Professor Ruth Trejo, who serves as Alpha Sigma Phi’s advisor. “We joke about her three-inch binder, where her sticky tabs have sticky tabs.”

Varner will begin studying at WSUV this fall. She intends to major social work and/or public health. Varner said that, while her family had educational funding available to them through the GI Bill, she needed to save that funding to help put her children through school. Receiving the Community College Presidents’ Scholarship will allow her to pursue her own education, hopefully to a master’s degree.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

Battling stereotypes, they found success



Qi Wu and Tammy Senior are Clark College's representatives to the 2016 All-Washington Academic Team.

Two outstanding Clark College students were selected to attend the 2016 All-Washington Academic Team Recognition Ceremony, held on March 24 at South Puget Sound Community College in Olympia, Washington. Tammy Senior and Qi Wu are two of just 66 students from community and technical colleges across the state to receive this honor, which recognizes students for their academic excellence and service to the community.

At first glance, Senior and Wu don't seem terribly similar. One is young even by the standards of Running Start, a program that allows high schoolers to take college courses; the other is coming back to college after serving four years in the military. One has spent her whole life in Vancouver; the other has lived in more countries than she can count on one hand.

But on closer inspection, certain parallels become clear between the two young women: They're both fascinated by science and technology. They both are driven students who make

time in their busy schedules to serve their communities. Both have had to challenge others' assumptions and figuring out creative ways to get around obstacles in their educational journeys. And so far, both are succeeding impressively.



Clark student Qi Wu stands before the college's new STEM Building, slated to open in fall 2016.

Wu's obstacles began surfacing when she and her mother emigrated from China to the United States. Wu, then a sophomore in high school, struggled to maintain her grades while learning a new language in a new culture. She also found herself confronting gender stereotypes, as classmates and teachers assumed she would be more interested in subjects like art and the humanities instead of math and science.

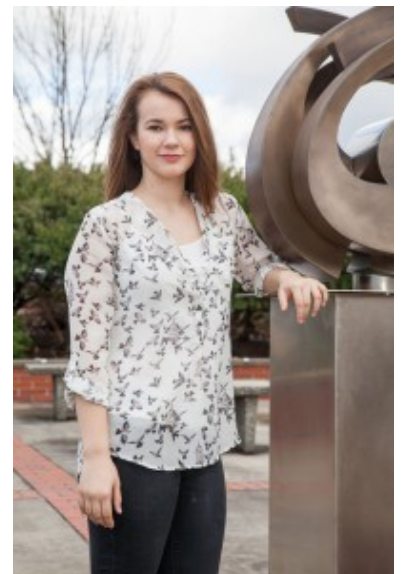
"When I was growing up, I was always better in physics and chemistry," she said. "I like numbers, I like logic. When I came to Clark and took my first engineering course, it was like, 'Wow, this is where I belong!'"

However, soon a new hurdle appeared. Wu, whose mother had remarried and had another child, realized her family could not afford to pay for her college education. Hoping to support herself, she enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 2010 as an aviation mechanic, and took every opportunity to earn educational credits and develop new skills—despite the doubts some had of

the petite young woman's abilities.

"When I got transferred to Japan, my supervisor told me, 'Well, you can do the desk job here, because you're a girl,'" Wu recalled. "And I said, 'No. I want to do the job I trained for.'"

Wu said that overall, she's grateful for the opportunities the military provided her to travel and learn skills that will help in her electrical engineering career. She's currently receiving scholarships from Clark, which allows her to save her military education benefits for the more-expensive, four-year institutions she hopes to attend one day to earn her master's degree. She also works in Clark's scholarship office herself, and spends weekends training as a Naval Reservist.



Clark student Tammy Senior says she's been impressed by how welcoming the college was to her, even when she took her first class at age 14.

Like Wu, Senior's challenges also began in high school, but

they were of a different nature: She felt stifled. "I wasn't being challenged enough," she recalls. "I took a class at Clark and found it so much better."

Senior's family couldn't afford to pay for a full load of college classes out of pocket, and when the 14-year-old visited Clark's scholarship office, she discovered she was too young to qualify for financial aid or scholarship opportunities. Then, the scholarship staff offered a new possibility: Perhaps Senior could enroll in Running Start, the Washington State program that allows eligible high school juniors and seniors to take college classes tuition-free. The only problem was that Senior was still a freshman. She wound up skipping the 10th grade in order to qualify, enrolling at Clark as a full-time student at age 15.

"It was definitely interesting," Senior, now 16 and set to graduate in the spring, said with a grin. "But Clark's pretty welcoming, and I really thrived in the community here."

Senior has maintained a 4.0 GPA while taking classes in Clark's challenging Honors Program, volunteering with her church, teaching private music lessons, and serving as the vice president of leadership for Clark's chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, the international honor society for two-year colleges. She'll be 17 when she enters a university—potentially with junior standing, depending on where she attends.

"People ask me, 'Why don't you enjoy your high school years?'" Senior said. "But I'm a planner. I think ahead. My mother wasn't able to finish school because she started a family. I know I have a lot of school ahead of me, and this is a way to speed things up."

Senior hopes to become a neurologist, a goal developed when her beloved grandmother suffered a series of debilitating strokes in 2014. Like Wu, Senior faced some skepticism about her ambitions.

“When I tell people I want to pursue a career in neurology, sometimes they look at me strangely and say, ‘Oh, why don’t you go into nursing, so you have time for a family?’” she said. “But I know I can do it. I can have a family. I can have the career of my choice. I just have to work hard. And you know, they would never tell a male student that.”

Both students say they appreciate the support they’ve found at Clark. “I like the diversity here,” says Wu, a first-generation college student. “Engineering professor Izad [Khormae] is from Iran. My physics teacher is from Russia. I think half the STEM faculty are women. And then in my classes I’ve met a few other veterans. You get so many different experiences here, different cultures.”

Wu and Senior were honored for their achievements at the All-Washington Academic Team induction ceremony on March 24, 2016, in Olympia, where Gov. Jay Inslee was the keynote speaker. The All-Washington Academic Team is a program of Phi Theta Kappa, the international honor society of two-year colleges. Team members are eligible for numerous scholarships, including transfer scholarships at most four-year universities in the state.

“It is such an honor,” said Senior, sitting with Wu during a break between classes.

“It’s nice for your hard work to be recognized,” adds Wu.

“Yes, you feel like your hard work is finally paying off,” said Senior.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley