

# So long, Skip: saying goodbye to “Clark’s Lorax”



Skip and Lori Jimerson at Skip’s retirement party

On September 24, Clark College bid a fond farewell to retiring Grounds Manager Skip Jimerson. The Penguin Student Lounge was filled with colleagues who’d worked with Jimerson over his quarter-century at the college.

Jimerson began his career at Clark as a custodian in 1990 and shortly thereafter moved to the grounds division. Once there, his strong work ethic and dedication helped him advance until, in 2008, he was named grounds manager.

Many people stood to share memories of Jimerson, often referring to his famously laconic demeanor. (Indeed, true to character, Jimerson declined to make any public remarks at the party.) “Skip is a quiet leader,” said Clark College President Bob Knight in his remarks. “He doesn’t talk much—he talks with his actions. He cares about this institution.”

Director of Facilities Services Tim Petta said, “In my mind, I’m going to think about you as the college’s Lorax—you speak for the trees.”



Grounds Manager Skip Jimerson and CADD Professor Keith Stansbury share a laugh at Jimerson’s retirement party after 25 years of service. At the party, Director of Facilities Services Tim Petta, *not pictured*, referenced the quotation on this plaque that reads, “A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in.

Jimerson was instrumental in making Clark College officially recognized as a Tree Campus USA by the Arbor Day Foundation for the past five years, as well as in an ongoing effort to plant state trees from all 50 states on the college’s main campus. Colleagues mentioned many other projects he’d helped realize, ranging from outdoor play spaces for Child & Family Studies to work on new facilities like Clark College at Columbia Tech Center and the new STEM Building being built on the main campus. Other colleagues praised him as a manager.

“What I most value is his gentle spirit,” said Director of Career Services Edie Blakley. “Some of our students have less-than-stellar backgrounds. Skip, you’ve always given people a second chance, and that has really touched my heart.”

There was one more colleague who had plenty of praise for him: Lori Jimerson, Skip’s wife of 26 years, who works as a fiscal specialist in Facilities Services. “I’m going to miss him as a coworker, honestly,” she said in between serving slices of cake to the gathered guests. “He’s an excellent colleague. ... He’s really put his heart and soul into this place.”

*Photos: Clark College/Hannah Erickson*

---

# Important Retirement Plan News



When benefits-eligible employees first enroll in a retirement plan here at Clark, they choose between plan options that are specific to their job classification. Some plans require you choose a contribution rate, and usually

that contribution rate is irrevocable. In January, however, some employees (primarily faculty and classified) may have the option to make a change.

## **FACULTY**

In January 2015, faculty employees who are participants in the Teacher’s Retirement System Plan 3 (TRS Plan 3) will have the

opportunity to change their contribution rate as they have in past years every January. If you are a TRS Plan 3 member this is the LAST time you will have the opportunity to change your rate without changing employers. You can do this by completing a **TRS Plan 3 Contribution Rate Change Form** and turning it in to HR between January 1 and 31. Forms are also available on line at [www.drs.wa.gov](http://www.drs.wa.gov) or in HR.

Most benefits-eligible faculty members are on the TRS plan or TIAA-CREF. If you don't know which plan you are on check your paystub, which you can access from <https://www.clark.edu/EHT>.

### **CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEES & OTHERS**

Each January, some employees who are in the Public Employees Retirement System Plan 2 (PERS Plan 2) have the opportunity to transfer to PERS Plan 3. Classified employees are most often enrolled in either PERS 2 or PERS 3. Check your paystub if you don't remember which plan you are on. You can transfer if you were hired before 3/1/2002. When you log in to your account in [www.drs.wa.gov](http://www.drs.wa.gov) you will see a message if you are able to transfer. If you transfer, you cannot go back to Plan 2. Also, if you are a TRS Plan 2 member (very few of us are), you have the opportunity each January to transfer to Plan 3. To educate yourself on the differences between the two plans go to [www.drs.wa.gov](http://www.drs.wa.gov). To transfer to Plan 3, complete the **Member Information Form** and turn it in to HR by January 31, 2015.

**TIAA-CREF PARTICIPANTS** (Administrative/Exempt and Faculty employees)

We will be offering individual sessions next quarter on January 27, 28, & 29 on the main campus in HR. Watch your email for an invitation and information about how to register.

### **EMPLOYEES IN A DRS PLAN CLOSE TO RETIREMENT**

The 2015 Retirement Planning Seminar Schedule is now available from the Department of Retirement Systems (DRS). If you are a



member of SERS, PERS or TRS and within five years of retirement you may want to register for and attend a seminar. The schedule of seminars in Washington for 2015 is now **online**. If you do not find a seminar near your location or on a date that is convenient for you, you may be interested in viewing our **recorded seminar** online. This seminar was recorded in Wenatchee on August 9, 2014, and is available for viewing at any time.

---

## Farewell, Phil!



Phil Sheehan, *center*, endures some light roasting with characteristic aplomb during his retirement party.

Is there anyone at Clark College who can remember the college without Phil Sheehan? Not likely—the Director of Information Technology, who retired on September 26 after 38 years of service, was walking the campus long before he began working here. In fact, he was a regular presence even before he started taking classes here in 1966: His father, Bill Sheehan, taught psychology at Clark for 24 years, and young Phil was a frequent visitor as a child.

One way or another, Clark College has been part of Phil Sheehan's life—and vice versa—almost since he was born. So it's no wonder that PUB 161 was filled with people wishing him a fond farewell during a retirement party held September 24. The crowd included not just current colleagues, but also former colleagues who had preceded Sheehan into retirement or moved onto other workplaces—a testament to the connections he had forged with so many people at the college over the past four decades.

The speeches began almost immediately, and were long and heartfelt. Clark College President Bob Knight, who often composes "odes" to outgoing employees, recited a truly epic one in honor of Sheehan. "There aren't too many in Penguin Nation history," it read in part, "who have the makings of Phil's pedigree."

After graduating with his Associate of Arts degree from Clark in 1968, Sheehan earned his bachelor's degree in Communications from the University of Washington in 1970, then returned to Clark to earn an Associate of Applied Science. He began teaching Electronics at Clark in 1976; in 1992, he took on the newly created position of Director of Computing Services at the college, which eventually became Information Technology. He earned an M.B.A. from Marylhurst University in 2002. In 2006, he was tapped to serve as Interim Vice President of Administrative Services, a position he held from for more than two years.

“I just can’t think of anyone who has had more of an impact at the college,” said Associate Vice President for Planning & Effectiveness Shanda Diehl before presenting Sheehan with a handmade quilt made of Clark College T-shirts. “In 1992, technology didn’t rule our world. And now it does. I know we all appreciate how meticulous you’ve been.”

“You go into a classroom here and expect the technology to work, and work well,” added Vice President of Instruction Dr. Tim Cook. “And I know that’s in large part because of Phil.”

Sheehan was characteristically soft-spoken and matter-of-fact when taking over the mic. “Clark has been a great place to work,” he said to the room full of well-wishers. “When we started out, we just were using mainframe computers. Personal computers hadn’t even come on the scene. And then we started having networks. So it’s been a real roller coaster. It’s been a great job—never a dull moment.”

*Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley*

---

## **Two Centuries of Service**



Vice President of Instruction Tim Cook congratulates Philosophy instructor Otto Schlumpf, who taught at Clark for 25 years.

On December 3, Clark College employees gathered in Gaiser Student Center to nibble on pastries from the Bakery Department, celebrate the holidays, and honor their colleagues who are retiring during the 2013-14 academic year.



S  
C  
O  
T  
T  
R  
O  
T  
T  
A



d Kathy Bobula

Thirteen retirees were retiring this year; together, they have provided the college with a combined 241 years of service. Five of the retirees had worked at Clark for more than three decades each, a testament to the college's work environment.

One of those longtime employees, Early Childhood Education and Psychology professor Kathy Bobula, spoke about the change she has seen at the college over her 31 years of working here. "When I came here, there were about 4,000 students, no computers—we used chalk," she said as she accepted an honorary plaque. "And I knew everybody. ... There is sometimes a wistful longing for those days, when we all knew each other and the college was smaller. But look at how many more student we're serving now—that's a good thing."

Bobula, like many retiring faculty members, plans to continue teaching part-time after her retirement. "You can't just give up your audience cold turkey," she quipped. "You have to do it gradually."



John Fite and his wife,  
Nancy

Economics professor John Fite, however, says he will be content to leave the classroom and spend time with his wife traveling and enjoying their second home in the San Juan Islands. Of course, this is his third retirement: Fite served in the U.S. Air Force for 20 years, followed by 18 years working as a commercial airline pilot.

Director of Business Services Karen Wynkoop, meanwhile, is already searching for a good volunteer position to keep her occupied after leaving Clark. Wynkoop says she will miss both her colleagues and the students she met while working on the ASCC Finance Committee, some of whom she still keeps in touch with.

Vice President of Tim Cook addressed the assembled guests and offered thanks to the retirees on behalf of the college. "We are truly a fortunate college," he said, noting how many retirees had stayed at Clark for decades. "It shows we are still a nice, family environment and a nice place to work, where people care about each other.



Jennifer Wheeler and Richard Bartz greet Paula Cole and Kathy Bobula.

The 2013-14 retirees are:

## FACULTY

**Katherine Bobula** was hired to teach Early Childhood Education as a faculty member in September 1982. She was awarded tenure in 1985 and has taught in both the ECE and Psychology departments. Professor Bobula will retire on June 20, 2014, after 31 years of service to Clark College.

**Becky Ellis** was hired as a faculty member in Nursing in September 2003. She was awarded tenure in 2010. Professor Ellis is retiring on June 20, 2014, after 8 years of service to Clark College.

**John Fite** was hired as a faculty member in Economics in September 2006. He was awarded tenure in 2010. Professor Fite will retire on August 30, 2014, after 7 years of service to Clark College.

**Stephen Jones** was hired as a faculty member in Biology in September 2007. He retired on June 20, 2013, after 6 years of service to Clark College.

**Otto Schlumpf** was hired as a faculty member in Philosophy in January 1988. He retired on June 20, 2013, after 25 years of service to Clark College.

**Ian Titterton** was hired as a faculty member in Culinary Arts in September 2005. He was awarded tenure in 2008. Professor Titterton will be retiring on June 20, 2014, after 8 years of service to Clark College.

### Classified Retirees

**Irene Benack** served as a Fiscal Technician Supervisor in Accounting. She was originally hired in 1999 and retired from her position on September 12, 2013, after 14 years of service to Clark College.

**Michele Eason** was originally hired in 1981 in Admission. She retired from her her current position as Program Assistant in

the Financial Aid Department on July 31, 2013, after 31 years of service to Clark College.

**Linda Fifarek** was originally hired part-time as a Cashier 1 in the Bakery Department in January 1979. She retired from her her current permanent position as Fiscal Technician lead in the Culinary Arts Department on August 5, 2013, after 32 years of service to Clark College.

**Tom Kaarto (Facilities Services)** was hired as a full-time temporary Carpenter Lead in the Maintenance Department in August 1981. He retired from his current permanent position as Maintenance Mechanic 3 in the Facilities Services Department on September 26, 2013, after 31 years of service to Clark College.

**Scott Root (Information Technology)** was hired as a Media Services Operator in the Media Department in August 1981. He is retiring from his current position as an Information Technology Specialist 3 in the IT Department on December 31, 2013, after 32 years of service to Clark College.

**Peggy Winston** was hired as an Office Assistant 2 with the Foundation in September 1997, retiring from her current position as Program Coordinator in the Music Department. She retired from her position on October 31, 2013, after 9 years of service to Clark College.

### **Exempt Retirees**

**Karen Wynkoop** was hired as Director of Business Services in the Administrative Services Department. She was originally hired in 2005 and is retiring from her position on December 31, 2013, after 7 years of service to Clark College.

*Photos: Jenny Shadley/Clark College*

*Associate Vice President of Human Resources Darcy Rourk*

*contributed to this article.*

View more photos on Flickr.