

New transfer agreement

Clark College students who plan to transfer to Washington State University Vancouver will find a smoother, more intentional path, thanks to a new transfer agreement.

A student leader with community roots



Grace Moe is congratulated by President Bob Knight at the 2018 Commencement ceremony.

This year's recipient of the Community College Presidents' Award in Honor of Val Ogden was Grace Moe, who graduated with

an Associate of Arts transfer degree. “She has shown an exemplary work ethic, participating in student government and volunteering with community organizations while maintaining a high GPA,” said Clark College President Robert K. Knight in announcing the scholarship during the college’s 2018 Commencement ceremony.

Moe came to Clark College through the Running Start program, which allows high school students to earn college credit. A first-generation college student, Moe has excelled at Clark, serving as the president of the Associated Students of Clark College (student government) and earning a cumulative GPA of 3.82. In addition, she has volunteered with Friends of Trees, the Clark County Food Bank, and New Heights Church.

Moe, 17, says that this scholarship will allow her to complete her bachelor’s degree in finance and marketing in two years, when she will be 19 years old; because her parents are unable to financially contribute to her college tuition, without the scholarship she would have had to attend WSUV part-time in order to earn enough to cover the costs. After earning her bachelor’s degree, she intends to spend a year volunteering with her church before beginning a career at a local business.



“My roots are definitely ingrained in this area,” said Moe, who has lived in Vancouver her whole life. “I plan to give back to the community that raised me, by working in the area so that I can continue to volunteer and serve for Vancouver.”

Because Moe was already sitting on stage during the Commencement ceremony in her capacity as ASCC president, Knight invited her to the podium as he announced the scholarship. “You’ve been a wonderful leader and I know we’re

going to hear a lot more about you," he said.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley.

Building a Better Future



Keeley
McConnell '16

You want to know Keeley McConnell's strategy for success, the thing that's helped her go from remedial math to high-level medical research? It's this: Stay focused on the path in front of you. One foot in front of the other. If you can make that next step, you can keep going.

Four years ago, the next step was: Get the kids in the car. Pack everything else in around them. Get the heck out of Dodge before your ex comes back.

Eighty miles later, McConnell and her three children arrived at a shelter for victims of domestic violence. She'd left her job, her home. She had no idea how she would support her family on the money she earned as a medical assistant. But one thing at a time. Find a place to live, get some stability.

It was only three months later, when McConnell had moved her family into an apartment, that she considered college. “When I was in high school, I never thought about college as an option,” she says. “I’d taken one class when I was pregnant with my son, but I tested into the lowest level of math they had and I thought, ‘Oh my goodness, this is going to take forever!’”

However, a friend encouraged McConnell to come with her to apply to Clark College. Just as she’d feared, McConnell tested into DVED 21, the lowest-level math course offered at the time. But one thing at a time. Keep your eyes on the path.

McConnell’s other strategy has been listening to advice from friends, family, and mentors. When an instructor suggested she enroll in Clark’s Math Academy program, McConnell signed up. This yearlong program pairs standard classroom time with dedicated math labs, where students get extra help understanding difficult concepts. McConnell describes it as “the key to my success in math.”



Keeley McConnell helping a student in Clark College’s STEM Tutoring Center.

By the time McConnell finished her last Math Academy class, not only was she prepared to enter college-level math courses—she’d been recommended to become a math tutor herself. The experience helped boost her confidence and gave her the

tools she needed to continue pursuing her dream of becoming a physician's assistant.

That goal would require her to spend two more years at Clark to earn an associate degree, plus another two at a four-year institution to complete a bachelor's, followed by at least two years of medical school. *But*. One foot in front of the other. Stay focused on the path in front of you.

McConnell continued to thrive at Clark, finding she enjoyed the intellectual challenge of biology coursework. And once again, a mentor stepped in to change the course of her life. When biology chair Dr. Travis Kibota first approached her about applying to the BUILD EXITO Scholar Program, she was skeptical. Run by Portland State University in partnership with Oregon Health Sciences University, and with funding provided by the National Institutes of Health, the program helps undergraduates from diverse backgrounds become successful in health research careers.

"I was hesitant at first, because I wasn't originally interested in going into research," McConnell says. "But it's been the most amazing opportunity."

Through her participation in BUILD EXITO, McConnell joined a cohort of students from community colleges in the region who formed a Research Learning Community. Within that RLC, she could learn about careers in research, develop skills, and connect with mentors. She also had a built-in social network to help her make the adjustment to a four-year institution after she graduated from Clark in spring 2016.

"If I had had to do all this without EXITO, I would have been really overwhelmed," she says. "I knew everyone at Clark—staff, faculty, students. PSU was huge. But the EXITO staff have been there for me—you can go in and ask them anything."

Now a junior in her second semester at PSU, McConnell is

deeply immersed in research in her chosen field of trauma medicine; she'll even see her name on some upcoming research papers, a big boost to career advancement in the research world. "I work with the Chief of Trauma at OHSU," she says proudly. "I wear a pager; when a call comes in, I'm there, collecting data and samples."

McConnell says it was overwhelming when she first walked into OHSU. "I looked up and thought, 'I'm so close. I'm literally standing in the building I want to have my future in. It's what I've been waiting for my whole life.'"



Keeley McConnell, *left*, celebrates graduation from Clark College in 2016 with a friend.

She still faces challenges. While BUILD EXIT0 students receive a stipend that significantly eases the financial burden of being a college student, McConnell still works 30 hours a week outside of school to support herself and her three children, now ages 8, 9 and 18. And she struggles to find time to be present for her children as a mom.

"It's probably my biggest challenge right now," she says. "But they're great, they're my little drivers. I want them to have something better. They need to see that, when you want something and you work really hard at for it, you can get it."

McConnell brought her son with her earlier this year when she

was invited to the Washington State Association of College Trustees' Transforming Lives Awards banquet, where they sat between Clark College President Bob Knight and two state senators. "I wanted him to experience that," she says. "But once we were there, I realized how big a deal this was for me, too. With me, I get so focused on the road ahead, I don't spend much time thinking about the big picture. It made me realize, 'Oh, gosh, I guess I have come a long way.' And, you know, my kids and I—we're still moving forward."

Are you a student interested in participating in BUILD EXIT0? The application deadline for the 2017-2018 year is February 28, and there is a free application help session on Friday, February 24, 10 a.m. – 11:50 a.m., in SHL 124.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

New agreement's a HIIT



HIIT student Rachel Cribben says the ability to pursue a bachelor's degree without leaving her home in Vancouver is "extremely important" to her success in the program.

In a move that will provide residents of Southwest Washington with the opportunity to train for high-paying jobs in a rapidly expanding field, Clark College and Bellevue College have signed an articulation agreement that allows students at Clark to earn a bachelor's degree in Health Informatics Information Technology (HIIT) from Bellevue through online and remote classes—without leaving the Clark College campus.

"In our ongoing conversations with regional employers, we realized there was a need for Health Informatics Information Technology professionals and responded quickly to that need, but we also realized that there would be a need for students to take their education to the next level," said Debra Ortiz, director of allied health programs at Clark College. "This is a great opportunity for students to stay here in the region and get a bachelor's degree in a rapidly growing field."

Health Informatics is the science of managing electronic health records and coordinating the computer information systems used by hospitals, clinics, insurance companies, and health care professionals. HIIT professionals work in customizing software for large health care institutions, as well as in data analysis, training clinicians on how to use computer systems, database management, and many other related fields. Demand for these skilled professionals is increasing as more and more health care organizations switch to electronic records-keeping, and as the graying Baby Boomers spur an increase in demand for health care. Indeed, the Bureau for Labor Statistics predicts that demand for HIIT specialists will increase by 21 percent between 2010 and 2020—a rate that’s 50 percent higher than average job growth in all fields.

Clark introduced its HIIT program in winter 2012 in response to regional workforce needs. From the beginning, the program was designed to allow graduates to transfer to four-year institutions, including the Oregon Institute of Technology. However, this new agreement with Bellevue College allows students to continue paying in-state tuition while pursuing their Bachelor of Science degree; because the classes are offered online or remotely, the agreement also allows students to complete their four-year degree without leaving Vancouver.

“We’re thrilled to have this opportunity to collaborate with our colleagues at Clark so that we can offer students convenient access to our online courses,” said Dr. Pamela Charney, program chair of Healthcare Information Technology & Management at Bellevue. “This will give students from Clark a clear pathway to professional success in the exciting new arena of healthcare IT.”

Rachel Cribben is one of those students. Cribben, 27, earned a certificate for medical billing and coding shortly after graduating from high school. But after she and her husband separated in 2011, she realized that she would need to get a

degree to be able to support her two daughters, ages 3 and 5. Her mother, who works at Clark, told her about the HIIT program.

Cribben says HIIT is a good fit for her personality and interests. "I like the healthcare field, but I'm more of a behind-the-scenes kind of person," she says, adding that she hopes to find a job in a hospital's information technology department and eventually manage her own team of specialists there.

Cribben says the material has at times been challenging. "I'm taking Intro to Local Area Networks right now, and I opened up the textbook and saw all these pictures of wires and diagrams and thought, 'How am I going to learn this?'" she says. "But then I saw a picture of a [network interface card] and I recognized it from when my brother built my computer. I realized I actually knew what it was already, and it made me think, 'OK, I can do this.'"

Cribben plans to earn her associate degree from Clark in 2016 and her bachelor's degree through the Bellevue partnership a year after that. For her, the ability to be able to complete her degree without relocating—and primarily through online classes, so that she can continue to care for her children while being a full-time student—is crucial to her success in the program.

"It's extremely important," she says. "I want to do this, and I want to do it well. I want to show my girls that you can do anything that you put your mind to."

Photo: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

Teaching Students to Fish



Members of Clark's Phi Theta Kappa chapter, Alpha Sigma Phi, hand out CollegeFish goodies at the Involvement Fair to increase awareness in the program.

As tuition at many four-year institutions continues to soar, many students have realized the value of spending their first two years of college at a community college. New studies show that the majority of community college graduates who go on to four-year colleges do so successfully, and the economic advantages of the "2+2" plan have been publicized in the media for years.

But while many students enter Clark confident in their transfer plans, they sometimes begin to feel lost or

overwhelmed at some point in the process. After all, aren't they supposed to be focusing on their time at Clark, taking in all the school has to offer? Well, yes—but early planning is critical to transferring successfully.

So where does a student even start? There are a number of resources available to students: Advising Services, the Career Center, our WSU Vancouver Transfer Coordinator, and so on. And this fall quarter, a brand-new tool will be available for Clark students who have indicated they intend to eventually transfer.

CollegeFish.org is a free database and transfer-planning tool for community college students that's been developed and maintained by Phi Theta Kappa (PTK), the honor society for two-year colleges. CollegeFish was originally developed for members of PTK to use in their planning; however, through a Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation grant, PTK was given the opportunity to refine the tool and open access to all students in specific pilot states.

Clark College is one of several colleges in Washington that are partnering with PTK to roll out CollegeFish access. CollegeFish allows students to create a personalized profile of their transfer institution preferences—size, location, major, and cost—and provides recommended transfer matches based on those preferences. CollegeFish also creates a Transfer Success Plan for students, so they can customize their higher education journey and manage it to stay on track. Lastly, when students access CollegeFish.org, they have the opportunity to search for more than \$37 million in transfer scholarships.

Clark PTK advisor Melissa Sinclair says that staff and faculty will soon receive an email with some basic information about CollegeFish.org, as well as an invitation to a training session to learn more about the website's functionality. Eligible students will receive an email in October alerting

them to the resource.

Photo: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

Finding the Right Path



Katie Brown '98, who was named Washington state's 2014 Teacher of the Year, displaying her pride in Shuksan Middle School, where she has taught for 11 years.

Clark College '98 alumna Katie Day Brown was named Washington state's 2014 Teacher of the Year in an awards ceremony held on September 23 in Seattle.

Brown (whose last name was Day when she attended Clark) says that Clark was a crucial part of her educational journey. A graduate of Fort Vancouver High School, she began college at the University of the Redlands in California but realized that it wasn't the right fit for her. However, her intended transfer destination—Western Washington University—wouldn't accept her out-of-state credits.

“So I went back home and thought of Clark,” she says. “They immediately said, ‘OK, we can work with you.’ They got my credits to transfer and I was able to start as a sophomore. I don't really know what decision I would have made if Clark hadn't worked with me. It really helped me continue my education without any interruption.”

Brown adds that Clark was where she took her first anthropology class. “It was one of my favorite classes,” she says. “That's what sparked my interest in anthropology.”

Indeed, after receiving her associate degree with honors from Clark in 1998, Brown went on to earn a bachelor's degree from WWU in anthropology in 2000. Originally, she didn't plan on becoming a teacher, but found herself drawn to the profession after what she calls a “series of aha moments”: volunteering at a high poverty school in college, playing soccer with kids while studying in Costa Rica, and listening to Alaskan tribal elders teach young people about their history as an AmeriCorps volunteer. She returned to WWU to earn a teaching certificate in 2003 and then earned her master's degree in education from Seattle Pacific University in 2009.

Brown now serves as the English Learner Learner specialist at Shuksan Middle School in Bellingham, Washington, where she has earned praise for her ability to collaborate with her colleagues to respect diversity and serve students who may be experiencing language barriers.

As Washington state's Teacher of the Year, Brown will serve as

an ambassador for the teaching profession in 2013-14 while continuing her work at Shuksan. She also will be considered for national Teacher of the Year, which is awarded by the Council of Chief State School Officers. President Obama will announce the winner in a special ceremony at the White House in the spring.

Brown says that she remains a strong advocate for community colleges. "Here at Shuksan, whenever we talk about college, I make sure to include community college in the conversation," she says. "It can be a really great option for the right student."

Photo courtesy of Katie Day Brown