

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.

Penguin flies high among Cougars



Clark alumnus and employee Narek Daniyelyan was named to the WSU Board of Regents. *Photo courtesy of WSU.*

Clark College alumnus and employee Narek Daniyelyan has been appointed by Governor Jay Inslee as the student member of the Washington State University Board of Regents for the 2016-2017 academic year.

“I am excited to have Daniyelyan as our student representative on the regents,” said WSU President Kirk Schulz. “He has an impressive background and will bring a strong student voice to board deliberations. I look forward to working closely with Daniyelyan during my first year as WSU President”

Daniyelyan has a long history of service to institutions of higher learning. During his time at Clark, he was a Student

Ambassador, helping to guide new students around the college and supporting Clark events. He graduated from Clark with his Associate of Arts transfer degree from Clark in 2009, but soon returned to the college to work as a recruitment specialist. He currently works in the college's Office of Instruction as its Education Partnership Manager, engaging with local schools, businesses and other higher education institutions to create and maintain mutually beneficial student partnership agreements. His other past work includes serving as a recreation leader for the City of Vancouver and as an intern with the Clark County Juvenile Court system.

Daniyelyan continued his education after Clark, graduating from WSU Vancouver in 2012 with a bachelor's degree in Human Development. In 2013 he began his master's degree studies in public affairs at WSUV.

"Upon graduation, I plan to continue working in higher education and serving students in our community," said Daniyelyan. "Education has given me an opportunity for social mobility, so I want to help others see their potential and become the best versions of themselves."

"I am ecstatic to be serving as the Student Regent and am looking forward to representing all WSU students," Daniyelyan said of his appointment. "During my time as student regent I hope to learn about some of the amazing things that past Student Regents have accomplished, work with current board members on some of the pressing initiatives for the year, and serve as a liaison between students and the board."

Daniyelyan was elected vice president of the Associated Students of WSU Vancouver and has held a variety of other student leadership positions, including serving as a student ambassador and as director of Leadership Development for ASWSU-Vancouver.

Effective July 1, Daniyelyan's appointment will run through

June 30, 2017. He succeeds current Student Regent Jansen VanderMeulen, of Burlington, Wash.

This article adapted from the Washington State University news site.

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 payed 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

On Her Way



Kathleen Fockler smiles after receiving the news that she has received the 2015-2016 Community College President's Scholarship.

About a month ago, Kathleen Fockler was on the way to a Beaverton testing facility to sit for the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX), the exam each nursing student must pass before officially becoming a Registered Nurse.

She was ready. It had taken her 20 years to reach this point, but she felt confident that the rigorous coursework of the Clark College Nursing Program had prepared her for the exam. Finally, after years of struggle, she was going to achieve her long-held dream of becoming a nurse.

And then her car broke down.

In the middle of the Route 26 tunnel.

During morning rush hour.

It could have been a disaster. But Kathleen Fockler, age 47, is not someone to submit to defeat. When the tow truck arrived, she persuaded the driver to take both her car and herself to the testing site. She had driven there the week before just to be sure of the route—"I didn't want to get lost," she explains—so she was able to direct him there swiftly.

"I got there just a couple minutes after the exam began, and when I explained my situation, they let me go ahead and take the test," Fockler recalls.

From the beginning, Fockler's road to becoming a nurse has been beset by unexpected detours and daunting challenges. And each time, Fockler has been able to overcome these roadblocks with a combination of preparation, persistence, and support from those around her. During the 2015 Commencement ceremony, her persistence was rewarded when Clark College President Robert K. Knight announced that she was the recipient of this year's Community College President's Award in honor of Val Ogden. This scholarship provides full tuition and fees for two years to a Clark graduate completing their bachelor's degree at Washington State University Vancouver.

"I still can't believe it," Fockler says. "This is an incredible opportunity. A door has just been opened right up for me."

Fockler began taking pre-nursing courses at Clark in 1994. However, her plans were derailed when her then-newborn son, Gabe, began experiencing seizures and developmental delays. "The timing was not right," Fockler says. She decided to leave school and concentrate on supporting her son and her daughter, MaKenzie, who was born three years after Gabe.

Fockler held onto her dream even while spending many years working as a paraprofessional assistant in the Evergreen

School District Early Childhood Center, helping support children with developmental delays. It was only when Gabe entered Clark through the Running Start program that Fockler felt the time was right for her to return to school as well.

At first, the experience of returning to school after 20 years was intimidating. Courses required online registration—Fockler didn't even own a computer. But she quickly found the support she needed at Clark.

“The resources that Clark has are tremendous,” she says. “There's a math lab, there are computer labs, there's a retention specialist in the nursing department. There's just so much in place to help the student.”

Fockler is quick to point out another resource that helped her on her journey: the college's scholarships office. “When I applied to nursing school, I thought, ‘How am I going to do this?’” she recalls. “At the time, I was working two jobs, and I'd heard how demanding the nursing curriculum was.”

But Clark's scholarship specialists quickly went into action, finding Fockler potential scholarship opportunities and encouraging her to apply. “[Outreach/Scholarship Coordinator] Lizette Drennan was like my cheerleader,” she recalls. “There was a postcard of the scholarship staff that I found, and I stuck it in my binder to remind me about the people who were supporting me. I had a picture of my family, and Lizette's smiling face.”



2015-2016 Community College Presidential Scholarship recipient Kathleen Fockler takes a moment to hug and thank her nursing professors at commencement.

Fockler also found support from the nursing faculty, who encouraged her to keep going. Fockler gained confidence after working in the program's state-of-the-art simulation lab, which helped her develop clinical skills before she even began her internship.

That internship proved to be another challenge. From the beginning, Fockler had set her sights on becoming a pediatric nurse working with medically fragile children, a goal formed through her experiences sitting in hospitals with Gabe early on. But Clark's nursing program had only one pediatric internship opening per cohort.

A faculty member suggested Fockler volunteer at the Center for Medically Fragile Children (CMFC) at Providence in Portland to gain experience. Clark didn't have an internship partnership set up with the CMFC; these agreements are labor-intensive and highly competitive. But Fockler so impressed the CMFC staff as a volunteer that they decided to create an internship partnership for her. Now, Clark has a regular internship opening at the center.

Throughout her studies, Fockler has shown a tireless work ethic. She went over notes while waiting in her children's doctor offices. She reviewed cranial nerves while sitting beside her mother's hospital bed after a surgery. And when Fockler herself had to undergo thyroid surgery, she didn't skip a class, deciding to simply attend the evening lecture rather than her standard morning one.

"Each day, I try to learn everything I can," she says.

On top of all that, Fockler found time to regularly volunteer with the Evergreen School District, the CFMC, SHARE House, and the Student Nurse Association of Clark College.

Despite her talent and perseverance, however, Fockler knew there was another huge hurdle standing between herself and her goal. In order to work in a specialized hospital setting like the CMFC, Fockler would need to earn a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree. Fockler—who lives in Vancouver with her children; husband, Bunnell; and mother-in-law, Beth LaViolette—has begun working with an in-home nursing care service for medically fragile children. Even so, she couldn't see how she could afford university tuition for both herself and MaKenzie, who is entering the University of Washington in the fall. Receiving the Community College President's Scholarship means her way is now clear to continue her education.

Fockler is effusive in her thanks to all the organizations who have provided scholarships to her, including the Clark College Foundation, Vancouver Rotary, and 40 et 8.

"I guess it really does take a village to raise a nurse," says Fockler, who hopes one day to be able to fund her own nursing scholarship. "The community supported me tremendously, and working hard is my way of paying them back."

Additional Scholarships

Through the support of the Clark College Foundation, two other finalists for the Community College President's Scholarship were awarded \$3,000 scholarships to continue their education. President Knight announced the scholarships to **Julie Mercado** and **Melanie Brawley** during the Commencement ceremony as well.

Photos: Clark College/Hannah Erickson (top) and Clark College/Jenny Shadley

Free Financial Aid Advice



WSUV's Butch the Cougar and Clark's Oswald the Penguin help Student Ambassadors greet guests at the 2013 College Goal Washington event.

Clark College and Washington State University Vancouver will again team up to host College Goal Washington, a free annual event that helps students and families complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), the form required to apply for federal financial assistance for higher education. The event will be held in Scarpelli Hall on Clark College's main campus at 11:00 a.m. on Jan. 24.

Clark College and Washington State University Vancouver's College Goal Washington is the largest of its kind in the state.

New this year, the event will also cover the Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA), the new form created through Washington's Real HOPE Act that allows certain low-income, non-citizen students to apply for state financial aid. Spanish and Russian interpreters will be available. "Because the law was passed recently, there is confusion and uncertainty about how it works and who is eligible to apply," explained Karen Driscoll, director of financial aid at Clark College. "We are committed to helping our community's students and their families understand their financial aid options."

The event is open to all students and families, no matter where a student plans to go to school. Whether a student chooses a four-year college, community college, vocational or technical school, College Goal Washington can help make education more affordable. The FAFSA is considered the gateway to accessing financial aid resources such as federal and state grants, school loans, and scholarships.

Family financial information is a key part of completing the form, so students and parents are encouraged to attend together. Typically the FAFSA form takes about 45 minutes to complete.

In addition to computer labs for completing the FAFSA, College Goal Washington will offer a brief welcome presentation and

helpful workshops: “Getting to College & Succeeding,” “Financial Aid 101” and “Scholarships.”

Clark College is located at 1933 Fort Vancouver Way, close to downtown Vancouver. Parking is free and widely available in the Orange Lot next to Scarpelli Hall. Maps and directions are available online.

Individuals who need accommodation due to a disability in order to fully participate in this event should contact Clark College’s Disability Support Services Office at 360-992-2314 or 360-991-0901 (VP), or visit Penguin Union Building room 013 as soon as possible.

For more information about College Goal Washington, visit <http://www.clark.edu/enroll/paying-for-college/events.php> or call 360-992-2153.

A Night to Celebrate



Natasha Hambrook, recipient of the Community College President's Scholarship, receives her diploma from President Robert K. Knight at Thursday's commencement ceremony.

Clark College honored its 78th graduating class—the largest in the college's 80-year history—at the 2014 Clark College Commencement ceremony held Thursday evening, June 19, at the Sleep Country Amphitheater. Approximately 2,100 degrees and certificates were conferred on the next generation of our community's workers, leaders, and scholars—up from 1,900 the year before. Approximately 715 graduates participated in the commencement ceremony, including 235 Running Start graduates—again, a new record for the college, which has the largest Running Start program in the state.



Lines rapped around the amphitheater as the number of students participating in commencement reached an all time high. Linda Calvert, Associate Director of Running Start, escorted Oswald through the crowd.

During the ceremony, Clark College President Robert K. Knight announced the names of the recipients of the 2014 Exceptional Faculty Awards. The 2014 awardees are Kelly Fielding, instructor of psychology; Chris Martin, instructor of computer technology and computer graphics technology; Sarah Theberge, professor of early childhood education; and Jim Wilkins-Luton, professor of English.

Graduate Natasha Hambrook was the recipient of the 2014-2015 Community College President's Award. The annual scholarship is given to a Clark College graduate who is transferring to a WSU Vancouver degree program and who demonstrated leadership potential, a commitment to community service, and academic achievement. The scholarship award provides full-time tuition and is renewable for one additional year, essentially providing full tuition to complete a bachelor's degree.

Hambrook, who lives in Vancouver with her family and will turn 18 in July, came to Clark through Washington State's Running Start program, which allows high school students to earn college credit while still enrolled in high school. While at

Clark, she maintained a 3.98 grade point average while taking classes in Clark's challenging biology and chemistry sequences and contributing more than 15 hours a week in volunteer work. Some of that work was through her personal commitment to the Southwest Washington Humane Society, where she helps care for cats and trains other teen volunteers; Hambrook has also served as the Student Volunteer Coordinator for Clark's Service and Leadership in the Community (SLIC) program. In that role, she has organized groups of students on volunteer trips to organizations like Habitat for Humanity and Clark County Food Bank, as well as a beach-cleaning trip to Cape Disappointment State Park.



Hambrook says her commitment to community service comes both from a love of helping others and from her own family's experiences. "My family has received help from the food bank in the past, so I know there's a need for community service," she says. Like 73 percent of Clark's student body, Natasha Hambrook is a first-generation college graduate. She plans to study medicine and become a pediatric surgeon. "It feels so amazing to have won this scholarship," Hambrook said after President Knight's announcement at commencement. "I am so grateful I had the opportunity to participate in Running Start, because Clark helped shape me into the woman I am today." This year's commencement speaker was *ABC Evening News* anchor Byron Pitts, who delivered an inspiring speech about the importance of helping others.

Read more stories from Clark's commencement on Clark 24/7 early next week.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley. More photos from Clark's commencement ceremony are available on the college's Flickr site.

Goal Met



WSUV's Butch T. Cougar and Clark's own Oswald the Penguin, as well as volunteers and Student Ambassadors from Clark College, were on hand to greet guests at College Goal Washington. *Photo: Matthew Hunt/Doghouse Graphics.*

On January 26, Clark College hosted a College Goal Washington event in Gaiser Student Center, attracting approximately 250 guests—more than any other such event in Southwest Washington.

College Goal Washington (also called "College Goal Sunday") is

a state-based volunteer program that provides free information and assistance to students and families who are applying for financial aid for post-secondary education. Financial aid specialists from both Clark College and Washington State University Vancouver were on hand to help families fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Volunteers were able to provide assistance in both Spanish and Russian, as well as in English.

The afternoon-long event included three break-out sessions: "Getting to College & Succeeding," "Financial Aid 101," and "Scholarships." Translation into Spanish and Russian was also provided for these sessions.

Financial Aid Program Coordinator Kendra Graham contributed this article.

All in the Family



Presidential Scholarship recipient Ramona Vercher at Clark College's 2013 Commencement.

Every last Sunday of the month, the Vercher family holds a big dinner for all its many members: Donnie and Louise Vercher, their nine children, 14 grandchildren, and assorted in-laws, relatives, and friends. The family would have plenty to celebrate at their June dinner: Ramona Vercher, the second-youngest of the Vercher children, was named the recipient of the 2013-14 Community College President's Award. The annual scholarship is given to a Clark College graduate who is transferring to a Washington State University Vancouver degree program; it provides full-time tuition for one year, renewable for one additional year, for a total of four semesters.

The whole Vercher family was in attendance at commencement, when the award is announced. As Clark College President Bob Knight described Vercher's achievements, a massive cheer filled the amphitheater when the family realized she had won.

Vercher, who is a resident of Vancouver, graduated with

honors, earning an associate degree in business administration. A first-generation college graduate, she plans to major in business administration with a specialization in finance while attending WSU Vancouver.

While at Clark, Vercher served in a number of volunteer roles both on and off campus. She was a work-study tutor at the Student Learning Center helping Adult Basic Education (ABE), General Educational Development (GED), and English as a Second Language (ESL) students in all subjects. She was also a Classroom Tutor, assisting professors in the classroom, and part of Clark's Homework Help program, where she assisted individual students. Within the greater community, her volunteer service has included work with the City of Vancouver's Urban Youth and Urban Forestry programs. Additionally, she helps run the charity begun by her family's small business, Daddy D's BBQ, providing Christmas presents to families in need, and works there as a cashier.

"Receiving this scholarship means everything in the world to me," said Ramona Vercher after the ceremony. "I am a first-generation college student, so to have this opportunity to continue my education is the biggest thing that has ever happened to me in my life."

Knight said that people who know Vercher praised her for her strong work ethic. Indeed, Vercher has often begun study sessions at 5 a.m. to fit them around her work and other activities. She and her longtime boyfriend, Dwan James (also a Clark student), have regularly eschewed fun weekend outings for "date nights" of studying.

Vercher attributes her work ethic to the example set by her parents; Donnie regularly works 13 hours a day at his barbecue restaurant, a business he began after breaking his back doing construction work on bridges. "I never graduated high school," said Donnie. "I think [Ramona] sees what her parents went through and wants better."

Indeed, many of the Vercher children are pursuing education. Ramona's brother Sherman recently graduated from Western Oregon University, and two of her sisters received their GED diplomas at Clark's GED and high school completion ceremony on June 22.

Vercher was one of three finalists selected for the award. President Knight announced that the other two finalists, Jennifer Campbell and David Taub, would receive \$1,000 scholarships from the Clark College Foundation to continue their education. Knight said of the three finalists, "They are all sterling examples of what Clark College is about."

Vercher plans to continue being an example of both Clark College and her family. "I am going to do big things through this scholarship," she said. "This definitely won't be the last you see of me."

Photo: Clark College/Jenny Shadley