

CLARK COLLEGE •

Connections

VOL. 25, No. 3 ■ SPRING 2012

Schedule of classes ■ Spring Classes start April 9, 2012

ClarkCollege *The Next Step*

50

years of Nursing Excellence





Our business partners know it, and we hope you know it too: Clark College plays a major role in driving our regional economy by training a highly skilled workforce.

Our renowned nursing program is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. Clark's program is keeping pace with that rapidly changing field. It's an outstanding example of the Clark programs that support health care in our region.

Our new mechatronics program blends mechanical, electronic and information technology. This state-of-the-art program, which is offered at Clark College at Columbia Tech Center, was a major investment for the college. It's already paying off—both for our students and for the companies that hire them.

That's just one way in which we're changing with the times. With more and more of our students getting their class and program information online, we'll soon be moving away from our traditional quarterly printed schedule. Look for more information about that in the weeks to come.

Welcome to spring quarter at Clark College—where we are always taking The Next Step so you can too!

Robert K. Knight
President

President

Robert K. Knight

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Volume 25, NO.3 Spring 2012

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Clark College Mission Statement:

Clark College provides opportunities for diverse learners to achieve their educational and professional goals, thereby enriching the social, cultural, and economic environment of our region and the global community.

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The 2011-2013 Clark College academic catalog is available online at www.clark.edu/catalog.



From small beginnings: The Clark Nursing Program's first graduating class had just 15 members. Today, the program graduates between 115 and 140 new nurses a year. Back row, *left to right*, Nancy Fleischmann, Tanene Essen, Rudy Reinikka, Helen Smith, Margaret Poff, Frances Storlie. Front row, Margorie Meyer, Elizabeth Rombosek, Charlotte Hellzer, John Park, Kaylene Paetow, Marge Rowe, Julia Stratton. Not pictured, Lenou Bricken, Clarice Moyer.

FIFTY YEARS OF EXCELLENCE

For half a century, Clark College's nursing program has kept Southwest Washington healthy

HERE'S A FUN LITTLE EXPERIMENT: NEXT TIME YOU VISIT A CLINIC OR HOSPITAL IN SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON, ASK YOUR NURSE WHERE THEY STUDIED NURSING. Chances are high that the answer will be "Clark College." After all, Clark's nursing Program has been supplying this area with nurses for 50 years, making it the longest-standing nursing program in the region.

From Then to Now

This June, Clark Nursing will celebrate the 50th anniversary of its first graduating class. But in truth, the college's history of nursing education stretches long before then, back to when it taught Nurse's Aide courses to help fill the nursing shortage during World War II. After the war ended, the college began offering "practical nursing" courses, which allowed students to learn enough basic nursing skills to get entry-level jobs in hospitals.

At the time, nurses were typically trained in hospital-sponsored and -hosted schools, but in the 1950s a push emerged to move

nursing education to a college setting. When St. Joseph's Hospital shut down its nursing school in the mid-1950s, leaving the region with no one to train new nurses, Clark College stepped in to fill the gap. It's been providing quality nursing care—and high-paying jobs—to the region ever since.

Jean Hamilton, who would become the program's first director, worked to develop an associate degree in nursing at the college—the first such degree in the Pacific Northwest, and only the fifth in the entire country. From the very beginning, she designed the program's courses so that they would be transferrable, allowing graduates to go on to earn bachelor's and advanced degrees after completing their studies at the college.

The program's first class graduated in 1962—all 15 of them. Much has changed in the ensuing 50 years. In response to the growing demand for quality nursing care in the region, Clark now enrolls new nursing classes each fall, winter and spring quarter, producing between 115 and 140 new nurses each year.

“[Clark] is pretty huge just in terms of being a provider of nurses in the region,” says Scott Bailey, regional labor economist for the Washington Employment Security Department. “That’s such a critical piece of the healthcare system.”

According to Bailey, the region has need for all those new nurses. Currently, he says, Southwest Washington employs more than 3,400 registered nurses; by 2019, he predicts, that number will rise to 4,500. And Clark nurses don’t just serve Southwest Washington: They have provided critical care in places like Liberia, Haiti, and Kosovo. Many serve in the military, where they have cared for soldiers in both Iraq and Afghanistan. “If you’re good, you can basically go wherever you want,” says Bailey.

To Be a Nurse

Given that flexibility and employment outlook, it’s easy to understand why people are eager to enter Clark’s nursing program. “Last year, we had 173 applicants for 96 openings,” says Clark College Director of Nursing Cindy Myers. She lists some other reasons the program is so popular: Entry-level wages for graduates are between \$32 and \$34 an hour; tuition is very affordable compared to a four-year college; graduates can easily transfer to WSU Vancouver to pursue a bachelor’s or master’s degree in nursing; the program has a strong reputation. Numbers back up that reputation: More than 90 percent of Clark nursing graduates pass their board certification on the first attempt. To put that in perspective, in 2011 the national rate stood below 85 percent.

In her position as clinical educator at PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center, Cheryl Snodgrass works with both nursing students and recent graduates. “In the past six months, about half the newly graduated nurses we’ve hired are from Clark College,” she says. “I’ve seen over and over again that the Clark College graduate can come in here as a new graduate, and they do very, very well in the clinical setting because they’re used to taking what we call a ‘full patient load.’”

Snodgrass has first-hand knowledge of the quality of Clark College’s nursing program—she’s a graduate herself, class of ‘74. “I was just so pleased with my educational experience,” she says. “I was 20 when I graduated and able to right away be a nurse in an acute-care setting in a hospital. I was prepared.”

These days, few nursing graduates are that young. Myers (a Clark Nursing alumna herself, class of ‘92) estimates that the average age of Clark nursing students is early-to-mid-thirties.



Above: Jean Hamilton, *top right*, designed Clark’s nursing program to provide graduates with real-life skills.

Many students are coming to nursing as a mid-life career change or as the next step after years as a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA). “The diversity makes for a really rich learning environment,” says Myers.

As diverse as today’s nursing students are, however, one thing unites them: a passion for nursing. “You have to be really committed and dedicated,” says Myers. “You have to want to be a nurse.”

Snodgrass backs that up. “It’s a very unique kind of job to have, because it’s not a job,” she says. “It’s who you are, it’s who you become.”



Hands-On Learning

To see that passion first-hand, all you need to do is visit Clark's Nursing Lab, located on the WSU Vancouver campus. This state-of-the-art simulated clinical environment is where students learn and practice their skills—everything from washing their hands for surgery to delivering a baby—before they apply them to real-life situations in their clinical rotations. Made possible with private dollars given through the Clark College Foundation, the lab boasts several exam bays, an isolation room, and several lifelike mannequin (called “sims”), some of which can be manipulated by instructors to speak, move, and even breathe in reaction to students' care.

“With these sims, students have a safe environment to learn in,” says Nursing Professor Rosemary Sievila. “They can make mistakes, they can do things over and over until they learn, so if they encounter that situation in the real world, they'll know what to do.”

Fourth-quarter nursing student Rosanna McClellan is in the middle of trying to irrigate the bladder of an adult male sim. McClellan, 24, spent three years as a CNA but says she always wanted to be a nurse. “I thought about being a doctor, but nurses get to spend more time with the patients and that's really what I love,” she says.

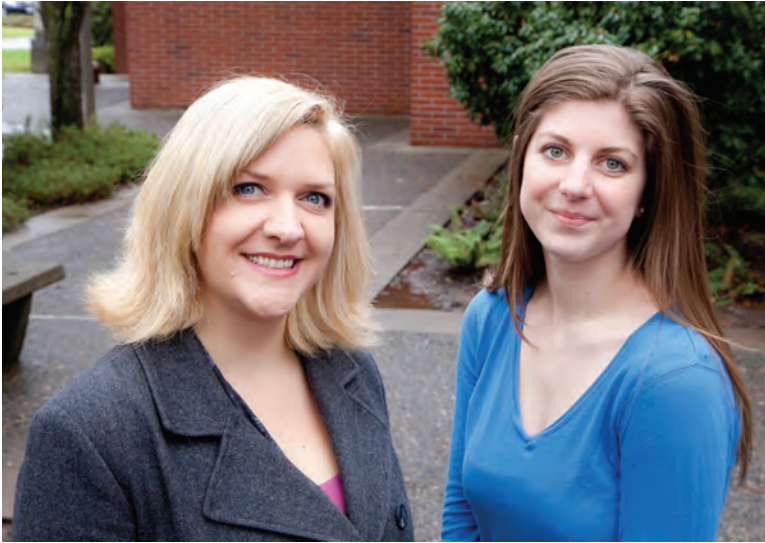
Already, McClellan has learned the rewards of caring for patients—even the challenging ones. “I don't know how many patients I've come into contact with who don't want to talk, don't want anything to do with you, and then you give them a bed bath or you ask them about their animals or their family, and all of a sudden they get a smile on their face and the hospital doesn't seem like such a bad, yucky place to be,” she says. “That one moment can make your whole day worth it.”

She acknowledges that it's been difficult to juggle her family responsibilities with her studies; she gets up at 4 a.m. two days a week to get her two children to day care before starting her clinical rotation in Salmon Creek. And classes can be tough. “Everyone in the program will tell you that at one point or another you're questioning if you made the right choice to go to nursing school,” she says with a laugh. “And we all come to the conclusion that it is beyond worth it. ... I think everyone I've met in the nursing program here—they're all going to be great nurses. And I feel really honored to be a part of that.”

Top to bottom: Rosanna McClellan, *right*, learns proper irrigation procedure from instructor Linda Valenzuela; in the Nursing Lab, students learn how to prep themselves for the operating room; fourth-quarter nursing student Kerri Six practices cleaning a tracheotomy tube on a sim.

TWO PATHS, ONE COLLEGE

Clark College helps two outstanding students achieve their dreams



Tami Eldridge, *left*, and Lauren Stanton are Clark's representatives on the All-Washington Academic Team.

CLARK COLLEGE'S REPRESENTATIVES ON THE 2012 ALL-WASHINGTON ACADEMIC TEAM REFLECT TWO VERY DIFFERENT PATHS TOWARD HIGHER EDUCATION. BUT BOTH WOMEN SHOW WHY COMMUNITY COLLEGE IS SO OFTEN THE RIGHT CHOICE FOR PEOPLE BEGINNING THEIR ACADEMIC JOURNEY.

When Lauren Stanton graduated from high school, her original plan was to move straight to a four-year college. But then she began to rethink things. She wasn't sure what she wanted to major in yet—what if she got two years into college, only to discover the institution didn't offer her chosen major? And tuition at a four-year institution was too expensive to allow her the freedom to sample classes in many subjects while trying to decide which she wanted to pursue.

At Clark, the 20-year-old Stanton has had the opportunity to take classes in diverse subjects and graduate with an Associate of Arts degree that will allow her to transfer to a four-year institution where she can focus her studies on becoming a professor of either history or biology. She has earned a 3.77 GPA and become active in Phi Theta Kappa, the international honor society for two-year colleges. Through Clark's chapter, she organized a project to provide Thanksgiving dinners for 274

students who might otherwise not have been able to afford a holiday meal for their families. By her own admission "the shy one" in her family, Stanton's experiences at Clark have helped her develop leadership skills and push past her comfort zone.

For Tami Eldridge, attending Clark was a way to honor a promise she made herself when she was in high school. The daughter of a single mother, Eldridge spent part of her freshman year in a homeless shelter as her mother struggled to support the family. Eldridge's two elder brothers became ensnared by drugs, and during her sophomore year of high school her oldest brother committed suicide during a drug-induced psychosis.

"Every choice I have made in my life since then has resulted from the determination to rise above the tragedy, chaos, poverty, and disappointment I experienced in my youth in a way to make myself and my mom proud," Eldridge wrote in a recent essay.

It was when Eldridge's own children (Michaela, 9, and Evan, 6) entered elementary school that she began considering a career as a teacher. She chose to attend Clark because its flexible class times allowed her to balance her studies with her family life, and because the college's diverse student body meant that, as a 32-year-old mother and wife, "I don't feel like I stick out like a sore thumb."

Having earned a 3.98 cumulative GPA at Clark, Eldridge plans to enter WSU Vancouver's Bachelor of Arts in Education program, which she will begin just days after graduating from Clark in June. Currently she's leaning toward specializing in math. "After having some really great math teachers in my college courses, I realize that math can be fun and I would love to instill that in others," she says.

As members of the All-Washington Academic Team, which honors two outstanding members of Phi Theta Kappa from each Washington two-year college, Stanton and Eldridge will attend a recognition ceremony in Olympia on March 22. They will also be eligible for multiple scholarships from colleges, universities, local businesses and the Clark College Foundation.



MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

Clark enters the emerging field of mechatronics

“MECHATRONICS.” SOUNDS LIKE A NEW BUNCH OF SATURDAY-MORNING SUPERHEROES, DOESN’T IT? But in fact, mechatronics is an emerging field of study that combines mechanical, electrical, industrial and computer engineering—giving students a knowledge base that’s flexible enough to take them from factory assembly lines to aerospace research. And Clark College is at the forefront of this new field, having started the only mechatronics program in state in 2010.

“Mechatronics is a huge, broad umbrella,” says Professor Chris Lewis, who developed the program at Clark. “It’s mechanical technicians, it’s electrical technicians. Instead of feeding into a specific industry, it gives students a skill set that they can use in many different industries.”

Think of it this way: Every time a factory uses automated machinery to assemble a product, every time a railroad monitors its trains through a centralized headquarters, every

time an oil company needs to regulate the flow of oil through a pipeline ... in short, every time a mechanical function is electrically controlled, mechatronics is involved.

The program began when the college decided to update its Electronics program. Lewis, who was teaching electronics at the time, began speaking with local industries to discover what kinds of skills they needed in new employees, and it became clear that they were looking for multidisciplinary expertise. “As the machines become more sophisticated, then the knowledge needed to operate and repair them becomes more diverse,” Lewis explains. After a year of research, he launched the new Mechatronics program, which incorporates coursework on hydraulics, pneumatics, robotics, programmable logic controllers (PLCs), power distribution, and laser alignment, as well as basic project management and business classes that will give graduates the skills necessary to start and run their own business.

Eric Wooldridge is one of the first seven students expected to graduate from the program this spring. Like many in the program, he enrolled after being laid off from his longtime job at a local factory. “I got into this field because it ties in with my previous field,” says the former machinist. “I find it fascinating. It’s helped round out my abilities, and we get to work on some really cool stuff.”

Indeed, part of what makes Clark’s Mechatronics program so valuable is the state-of-the-art equipment used during teaching. The program’s lab space, located in Clark’s Columbia Tech Center facility, boasts an entire automated factory assembly line in miniature, complete with a conveyor belt and programmable robotic arm. The room also holds a flow-control module, allowing students to learn how to regulate fluids in an industrial setting—an application required in businesses ranging from public utilities to breweries. Most modules are also equipped with a control box that allows the instructor to simulate “malfunctions” in the equipment, giving students hands-on experience in how to identify and fix them.



Lewis visited major local manufacturers before choosing his equipment to make sure his students would be learning the skills they needed. Touring the lab, he points to various modules. “This robot is in the Frito Lay facility here in Vancouver,” he says, gesturing to the yellow robotic arm that’s currently fixing screws into a widget on the model assembly line. “You see these ‘pick and place’ machines at Intel.”

Student Viti Atuaia appreciates this focus on practical job skills. “When I started, I didn’t have any clue about what mechatronics was,” says the former plumber. “But when you look at industry right now, it is becoming all robotic, all automated. There is a lot of potential here.”

The Bureau of Labor Statistics confirms that: According to its data, employment in the engineering field (which encompasses mechatronics) is expected to grow by 11 percent over the 2008-2018 decade.

“I’m really proud that Clark is looking to our area’s industries to find a way to help both those industries and our community,” says Lewis. “A lot of people in our community are hurting right now, and we’re giving them skills to find jobs that will support their families for years to come.”

Opposite page: Instructor Anne Koering shows off the Mechatronics Lab’s state-of-the-art equipment. This page, top: Students Viti Atuaia, *left*, and Gary Heid try out the lab’s robotic arm. Left: Professor Chris Lewis, *right*, explains flow control to student Robert Merchant.



For more information on Clark’s Mechatronics program, visit www.clark.edu/cc/mechatronics



President Knight honors former interim athletic director, coach and Clark athlete Denny Huston with a Presidential Coin.

PROMISES KEPT, PROMISES MADE

President Knight renews Clark College's commitment to its community and students at State of the College address

AT A TIME OF HIGH ENROLLMENT AND STATE BUDGET CUTS, WHAT ARE THE PROMISES OF HIGHER EDUCATION? And what would it mean if our region could promise a college education for its children? Those were two of the themes of Clark College's 2012 State of the College address on January 19.

Clark College President Bob Knight noted that the college continues to welcome record numbers of students, with full-time enrollment for fall quarter up 2 percent and winter quarter up 1 percent from last year. At the same time, Knight said, state funding has declined dramatically. "Just a few years ago—as our college celebrated our 75th anniversary—the state of Washington provided 61.6 percent of our total operating budget," he said. "One year later, state funding had declined to 52.5 percent. It's now 41.5 percent and will likely drop below 40 percent by the end of this academic year. Instead of being state-supported, Clark is now state-assisted."

Knight noted that additional cuts are pending. "Governor Chris Gregoire recommended an additional 13 percent budget cut for higher education," he said. "At Clark, that would translate into a loss of an additional \$3 million."

Knight focused heavily on the impact on students. "In the past three years, students have experienced tuition increases of

7 percent, 7 percent and 12 percent," he said. "Another 12 percent increase will take effect next year."

At the same time, he said, financial aid and student loans have increased dramatically. The amount of financial aid increased from \$48.5 million to nearly \$59 million in one year. Student loans increased from \$16.5 million to \$22.8 million.

Knight said that grants and donor dollars through the Clark College Foundation are a critical and integral part of funding at Clark College today and for the future. "For years, when we talked about the Foundation, we spoke about the margin of excellence that they provide for our students and the college," Knight said. "Today, the Foundation helps us meet our basic needs."

He pointed out some of the recent projects made possible by the Foundation, including the new Oliva Family Early Learning Center and the updates to the Dental Hygiene lab, as well as the new Penguin Promise scholarship program (see sidebar, next page). He noted that the college recently received major grants for both advising and basic education.

At a time of budget cuts, said Knight, those kinds of faculty and staff initiatives to support student success are why "Clark College is the best college in the state."

During the State of the College address, President Robert K. Knight announced two new events honoring achievement and one new scholarship program.

Penguin Promise

A partnership of Clark College, the Clark College Foundation and the Boys and Girls Clubs of Southwest Washington, Penguin Promise provides a path for some members of the Boys and Girls Clubs to enter and complete their education at Clark College. Under the program, which will rely on community support, students would enter the program in eighth grade. They would continue the program through the 12th grade. Youth enrolled in the program receive mentoring, college preparation, and regular exposure to the college environment through field trips to institutions of higher learning, including Clark College's main campus. If they complete the program successfully, once they are accepted to Clark College, they would receive scholarships for their tuition, fees, and books.



Clark Trustee Rhona Sen Hoss, President Robert K. Knight, Boys and Girls Clubs of Southwest Washington Executive Director Elise Menashe, and Boys and Girls Clubs of Southwest Washington Board Chair Carol Opatrny.

Iris Awards

The Iris Awards celebrate the lasting and far-reaching contributions of women in Southwest Washington and beyond. The awards, which will be presented on March 8, 2012—International Women's Day—will honor the tradition of the regional "Women of Achievement" celebration but embrace a new direction for the future. The Iris Awards are supported by Clark College, the Clark College Foundation and the Vancouver Business Journal. The winners of the 2012 Iris Awards are:

LISA NISENFELD, *president of the Columbia River Economic Development Council*

SALLY SCHAEFER, *a community leader and volunteer for more than 50 years*

MARY STREHLOW, *developmental disabilities manager for the Clark County Department of Community Services*

Tickets to the March 8 awards ceremony are available through www.vbjusa.com.

Clark College Athletic Hall of Fame

With the help of former interim athletic director Denny Huston and members of the Penguin Athletic Club, the college has created an Athletic Hall of Fame. The first inductees into the Hall of Fame are:

KAREN (REMY) MORGAN HILL

JACOB "VERN" KINDSFATHER

RANDY MYERS

CLAUDE "SKEET" O'CONNELL

JIM RAINES

GAYDENA THOMPSON

MARY LOU WHITE

1992-1993 WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM

Tickets to the February 25 induction ceremony are available by calling 360-992-2691.



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Save the
dates for
these events

Iris Awards
March 8

Celebrating the contributions of women
in Southwest Washington.
www.clark.edu/cc/irisawards

Sakura Festival
April 19

Welcoming spring and honoring
the friendship between Vancouver
and its sister city of Joyo, Japan.
This year features the official
opening of the Royce Pollard
Japanese Friendship Garden.
www.clark.edu/cc/sakura

Commencement
June 21

Come cheer the class of 2012 as our
graduates take the Next Step
into their futures. This year's
speaker is Iraq war veteran and
"Dancing With The Stars" champion
J.R. Martinez.
www.clark.edu/cc/commencement