

Believing in the future: Clark College Commencement 2011

Woodland resident receives 2011 President's Award

Belief in the future was the theme of Clark College's 2011 commencement ceremony as the college honored the largest graduating class in its history.

Nearly 600 graduates participated in the ceremony, which was held June 16 at the Sleep Country Amphitheater in Ridgefield.

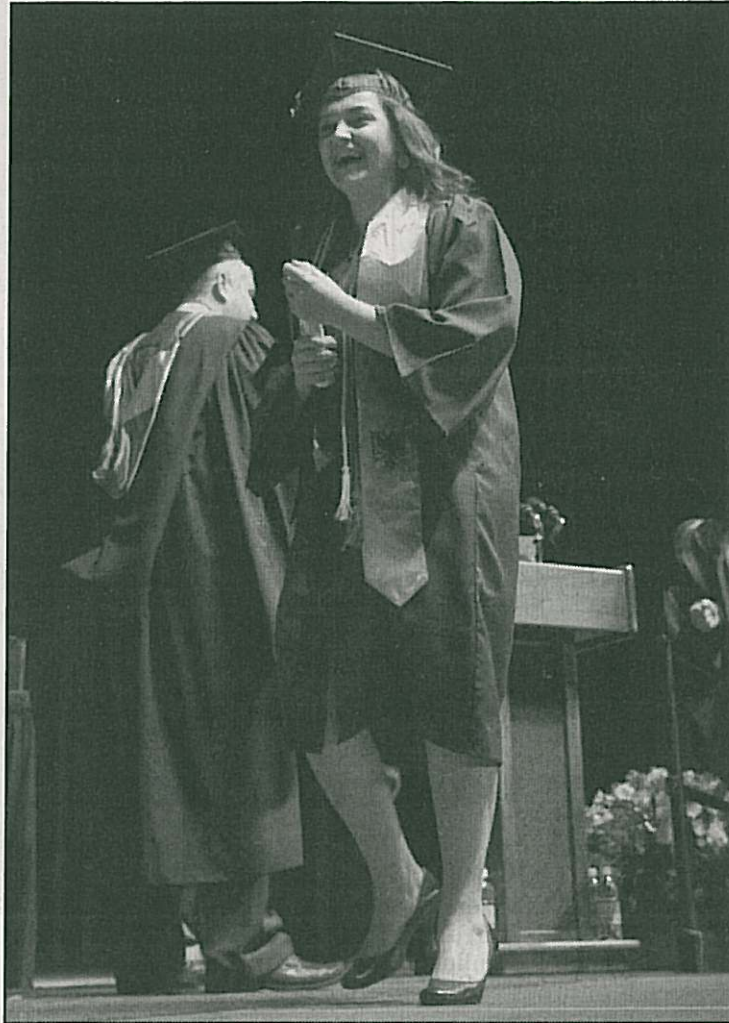
The college celebrated the achievements of more than 1,500 men and women who earned degrees and certificates at Clark College during the 2010-2011 academic year. They included the first graduates from the college's weekend degree and online degree programs as well as the first graduate to have taken their classes almost entirely at Clark College at Columbia Tech Center.

Additionally, 148 students graduated from the Running Start program, successfully taking classes at Clark College while completing their high school studies. Honor student Jacquelyn Patching was the first Running Start graduate from the Washington State School for the Blind.

During the ceremony, Clark College President Robert K. Knight announced the names of the recipients of the 2011 Exceptional Faculty Awards. The 2011 honorees are Laura Demeri, a part-time health and physical education instructor; Kimberly Karaman, a part-time math instructor; Julian Nelson, professor of German; Dr. Marcia Roi, professor of Addiction Counselor Education; and Ann Snyder, who recently retired from Clark's women's studies program.

Inva Begolli of Woodland was the recipient of the 2011-2012 Community College President's Award. That scholarship is given to a Clark College graduate who is transferring to a WSU Vancouver degree program and who has demonstrated leadership potential, is community service oriented, and who has a strong academic record. The scholarship award provides full-time tuition (10-18 credits) and is renewable for one additional year, or a total of four semesters.

An honors graduate who earned an associate in arts degree, Begolli was a student ambassador at Clark College and a member of Phi Theta Kappa, the honor society for



INVA BEGOLLI, of Woodland, was the recipient of the 2011-2012 Community College President's Award. She is shown here at the Clark College 2011 commencement ceremony June 16.

Photo courtesy of Jennifer Shadley

two-year colleges. Begolli also served on Clark's International Week and Environmental Health Committees. In the community, she has been a youth group president for the Red Cross and Director of Youth Ministry for the Word of Life Church.

In her application, Begolli wrote: "Not many Albanians have had the opportunity to pursue an education in the United States, but my parents have made sacrifices to help me with my dream."

Her career goal is to become "a successful pharmacist."

Knight announced that, for the first time, two finalists would also receive scholarships, provided by donor support to the Clark College Foundation. Shayne Goodwin and Tabitha Michele-Marie Stokes, both of Vancouver, will receive scholarships to "bridge the gap beyond financial aid, ensuring that tuition and fees for both recipients will be covered for the next two years at WSU Vancouver."

Goodwin, an honors graduate in business administration, served as a peer mentor at Clark College, participated in Clark's speech and debate team, and was a member of Phi Theta Kappa. He is liturgist for the Vancouver Heights United Methodist Church and

volunteers for Open House Ministries. He also serves as a coach in the Central Vancouver Little League.

Stokes, who graduated with a transfer degree in addiction counselor education, was a member of the Clark College Addiction Counseling Education Club. She volunteers with community organizations including Alcoholics Anonymous, Oxford Houses, and Faces of Hope.

The ceremony included special remarks and a moment of silence in honor of Dean of Enrollment Services Alex Montoya, who died on June 11. Knight announced that, in Montoya's honor, the Clark College Foundation has established a full scholarship for a Hispanic student to attend Clark College.

"Alex once said that he loved his job because it 'gives me the opportunity to make great things happen for people who want to go to college,'" Knight said. "This wonderful opportunity means that Alex will continue – in the best sense – to 'make great things happen for people who want to go to college.'"

Dr. Donna Beegle, a national poverty expert, was the keynote speaker for the event.