

# Honoring Excellence



On Opening Day 2013, Exceptional Faculty Award plaques were presented to, *left to right*, Darcie Thompson (accepting the award for her mother-in-law, Mickey Thompson), Patti Serrano, Bruce Elgort, Tony Chennault, and Mike Arnold.

Clark College President Bob Knight announced the recipients of the 2013 Exceptional Faculty Awards during the 2013 Commencement ceremony on June 20; they were presented with engraved plaques during Opening Day on September 11. This year, five faculty members—two part-time instructors and three full-time professors—received the award, which honors excellence in teaching.

The Clark College Exceptional Faculty Awards are presented annually to full-time and part-time faculty members in recognition of exemplary work performance, positive impact on students, professional commitment, and other contributions to the college. Nominations are submitted by Clark College students, faculty, classified employees, administrators, alumni, Board members, and Foundation directors. The awards are made possible through an endowed trust fund established by the Washington State Legislature and the Clark College Exceptional Faculty Endowment Fund, which was established in 1993.

This year's Exceptional Faculty Award recipients are:



Mike Arnold

**Mike Arnold, Health and Physical Education**

Mike Arnold began teaching at Clark College in 1989 and over

that time has taught everything from archery to weight lifting, as well as coaching athletic teams. His students praise him for helping them improve not only their bodies, but their minds and characters as well. “Not only does he want you to do well in his class, he wants you to do well in life,” wrote one student in his nomination.

Another student wrote, “Mike Arnold is one of the most caring, respectable, honest and genuine people I have ever met. He is willing to help any student that is in need. ... He is more than a teacher; he is a friend and a mentor.”



Tony Chennault

### **Tony Chennault, Biology**

“Simply put, Tony Chennault is the best professor I have ever had,” wrote one student in nominating Chennault for the Exceptional Faculty Award. Many students praise Chennault for making a notoriously difficult series of classes—namely, Human Anatomy and Physiology—fun and understandable.

Chennault, who also teaches Human Biology, began teaching at Clark in 2008 and received tenure in 2011. He strives to make his students feel comfortable as they tackle challenging material, providing them with helpful study tips and mnemonic tricks for learning anatomical terms. “I believe this award is a reflection of having a job that I truly love and am passionate about, and I take pride in bringing that passion and energy to class every day, trying my best to make learning the science of the human body fun for the students as I have fun, too,” he said.



Bruce Elgort

### **Bruce Elgort, Computer Technology**

Bruce Elgort has only been teaching at Clark since winter quarter 2013, but already he has made a huge impression on his students. “I was worried when I started his class that I wouldn’t be able to learn the material or properly grasp the concepts, but after I was in Bruce’s class for an hour, I felt confident and comfortable and able to learn anything,” wrote one nominator.

While Elgort is relatively new to teaching in a college setting, he has a long career in computer technology. He has worked for major technology companies, including Sharp and Underwriters Laboratories, and launched his own successful software company. When he teaches courses about programming, HTML, and PHP coding, he brings real-life experience from the work world into his classroom—a classroom that extends into the virtual realm through help sessions conducted via social media. “In today’s hyper-connected, ‘always-on’ world, the ability to extend the physical classroom is something that has become an integral part of all my work at Clark,” Elgort says.



Patti Serrano

### **Patti Serrano, Business Administration**

Patti Serrano has had plenty of time to develop fans at Clark College—she began teaching here in 1981, beginning by teaching Fashion Merchandising before transitioning to Business Management and Marketing courses. During that time, Serrano has demonstrated leadership at the college time and again. She helped draft the college’s Strategic Plan and participated in

the college's last three accreditation efforts, as well as serving on countless committees to improve college functions; she has also served as head of the college's Business Department and chair of the Business Division. Additionally, she is a committed educator.

"Having known Patti Serrano for over thirty years, I have personally seen the many, many hours she has devoted to helping her students with guidance in professional and personal advice," said one coworker. "She has been a positive force for hundreds of students."



Mickey Thompson

### **Mickey Thompson, Paralegal**

Mickey Thompson entered the legal profession in 1977, and she brings both a depth of knowledge and a great enthusiasm about paralegal work to her teaching. Students point to the countless hours she has spent serving as the advisor to the Clark College Law Club and to her patience when guiding them through the thicket of legal terminology.

"She's compassionate, organized, strict, and funny all at the same time," wrote one student in her nomination. "Legal procedure is tough and complicated, and Mickey makes sure that all of her students understand the course material and have a good grasp on the concepts."

*Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley*