

Staff Development Days



Left to right: Wendé Fisher, Michelle Golder, Vanessa Neal, Tre Sandlin, Vanessa Bural, Alyssa Voyles, Parfait Bassalé, Dr. Karin Edwards, Andra Spenser, and Haley Tucker.

So much to learn—and so little time!

Perhaps those thoughts were repeated often by staff participating in Staff Development days on August 15 and 16.

Clark College employees spent two days learning together on campus during Staff Development Days. The annual event allows staff time to connect with other staff on campus, learn valuable skills, and share department information. The event formerly was called Teaching and Learning Days.

Six concurrent breakout sessions offered more than three dozen professional development opportunities focused on a variety of topics. New features this year included supervisor training series, micro learning sessions, and opportunities for department meetings.

Lighter, just-for-fun sessions included genealogy and propagating house plants. Many thanks to the staff members who painted colorful designs on 140 rocks during the summer. Before the event, the rocks were hidden around campus and staff were encouraged to walk the campus to search for rocks.

Many thanks to the staff who organized Staff Development Days: Alyssa Voyles, Vanessa Bural, Andra Spencer, Carolyn Stark, Degundrea Harris, Haley Tucker, Joey Hicklin, Lindsey Schuhmacher, Michelle Golder, Tre Sandlin, and Wendé Fisher.

Thanks to the bookstore for providing free ice cream treats on the second day that soared above 100 degrees.

Departments including Human Resources, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Disability Support Services, Entry Services, Transitional Studies, Facilities Services, and others

presented overviews of their department's focus.

In her welcome to staff, Dr. Edwards noted that Staff Development Days supports the connection to the college's Equity-Centered Strategic Plan by reinforcing employee engagement, empowerment, and excellence. She also called attention to those people impacted by the recent devastating wildfire on Maui.



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Alyssa added, "We felt that this year was a big success, with bonding over rock painting, packed sessions covering necessary Clark skills and knowledge, and people getting to spend time in person with colleagues they only ever work with on Zoom! And the free ice cream provided by the bookstore always helps."

PPI training sessions were offered on subjects including antisemitism, DACA, equitable decision making and more.

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Andra Spencer, program manager in the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, said, "The ODEI team is working to have our training sessions be both data-informed and shaped by feedback from the college community. Through feedback we have received through the Climate Survey and other venues, we have learned that antisemitism is an area Clark staff would like to

learn more about. We were excited to provide this training for the first time and to see such a positive response! We continue to hear from attendees about the positive learning experience in this workshop and the new things they are still thinking about.”

So many people streamed into Rosalba Pitkin and Katia Quintero’s presentation about DACA that more chairs had to be brought from another room.

“We didn’t expect so many people to be interested in DACA,” said Rosalba.

She told the participants, “We thank you for coming and for your interest in helping these students. We hope that this presentation and others like it will help cultivate greater empathy and understanding for these students.”

Katia reminded participants that DACA applies not only to some Clark students, but also to some college employees.

Katia said, “It’s gratifying to have so many Clark employees interested in learning more about DACA and how it impacts not only our students, but also our employees.”

Staff gathered for morning coffee and chatting and later headed to the bookstore for free ice cream treats. A delicious lunch was provided on both days. Relaxing chair massage sessions were available, too.

To conserve resources, the conference did not provide disposable water bottles. Instead, staff members refilled their own water bottles at water-refill stations. Rather than the conference printing hundreds of programs, staff members were encouraged to access the online program or print their own program.

Keynote by Parfait Bassalé



The second day opened with an inspiring presentation by Parfait Bassale, immigrant, artist, reconciler, and belonging strategist. The musician and songwriter played his guitar and sang his original song, “Safe House.”

When he finished singing, he said, “I see you. I hear you. I’m with you.”

Then he talked about three levers of belonging required for people to feel connected, at work or in any group:

1. Connection/representation
2. Visible support and care
3. A sense of agency; a person feeling their voice matters and they are being heard

To create connection, he asked Clark staff members to ask these questions: “How do we create opportunities for connection and for our stories to come out? How do we show support and care for each other? How do we allow for more voices to be shared? How can I be more present?”

Later, on social media, Parfait shared a photo of him standing with Clark College staff: “What a gift it was to remind dedicated professionals that all it takes is one person to make the difference to produce an experience of belonging for another human being.”

Director of Guided Pathways and Partnerships, Rhianna Johnson, said Parfait’s presentation caused her to reflect about what it means to have a sense of belonging at work.

“To me, it means feeling seen, heard, and respected,” Rhianna said. “It means trusting that others have your back. People need training, guidance, and tools to excel in their roles.

Folks feel a sense of belonging when they are confident in their position and understand how they fit into the bigger picture. It also means feeling included in the group.” Listen to Parfait Bassalé’s song here.

Safe House *by Parfait Bassalé*

Verse 1: I see you with a limp from afar I see all of you I am curious about you What has brought you this far? I have time. Do you?

Chorus: Where do wounded birds fly When they’re trying to survive? I have wondered this for a while now. Yeah. Where do wounded birds fly When they’re trying to survive? Will I be a safe house? A safe house.

Verse 2: I hear you. All these scars from before. I do have some, too. Tell me, how I can support you? Your story isn’t my truth. So, what needs have you?

Verse 3: I am with you. As you heal from these wounds.

You rekindle my youth. I will journey alongside of you As you grow wings anew. I will soar with you.

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