

New horticulture mural sprouts on walls of Clairmont Hall

Story and photo by Cassidy Scott

Clackamas Community College's horticulture and art departments came together over the summer to produce an agricultural history mural on the walls of Clairmont Hall.

The idea was first conceptualized by horticulture instructor Bruce Nelson in fall of 2013, when students in his Urban Agriculture class created a timeline of Willamette Valley agriculture on paper.

"It was just on butcher paper, a temporary thing really. It kind of got us all thinking, you know, it would be kind of a cool thing if we had something like that in the department," Nelson said.

Nelson's idea was to create a timeline mural, showing the rich agricultural history of the Willamette Valley. Nelson then took his idea to the art department, which had done similar murals in the past.

"I approached David Andersen, who has been involved in many of those murals, and he said sure, he'd love to do it and could offer it as a summer class," Nelson said.

Before the plan could be put into action, however, Nelson had to acquire the funds. Nelson put in a request to the CCC Foundation, which after requesting all the necessary paperwork from Nelson was able to help the mural become a reality, granting the project \$3,300.

"The Foundation was critical," Nelson said. "We were lucky to get a substantial grant."

The Foundation helped not only with Andersen and his teaching compensation for the summer class, but assisted in paying then-CCC student Karen Irving, who was a critical part in the needed research behind the project.

For Irving, who loved the project, the pay was just an added bonus.

"I'm a big agriculture geek so I really liked this project," Irving said. "I also loved that it was part of something very official and it had the backing of the college."

There was even more research and planning for the art students as they began the project.

"The first day Bruce came in and spoke about

the history and the timeline," Andersen explained. "Then I handed out pieces of paper that we could propose all sorts of things on, and then we winnowed down those proposals into something that was pretty livable for all of us. And so we had a basic starting point."

That being said, the "basic starting point," ended up being slightly ambitious as the art students attempted to create not only a large three-paneled mural in the entrance to Clairmont Hall, but also another handful scattered down the adjacent hallway. They set out to accomplish this in a three-week period last summer.

"In the beginning I thought we had too much time, but as it kept going on and on and on it was like, we don't have enough time," Andersen said. "We had to hustle a lot near the end to finish it off."

And although the hours were long, for students invested in the project it was well worth the work.

"I probably put more hours into it than a lot of people, but I love it so it didn't feel like work," said Kate Kobielsky, former CCC art student.

Now that all the finishing touches are done on the mural, the teachers and students involved were very happy with the end result.

"I actually drove down to see it," Irving said. "We love how it turned out."

Kobielsky agreed.

"The horticulture department was a great place for this installment, otherwise an unvisited area of campus by general student body," Kobielsky said. "Now this department could see a lot more foot traffic — possibly creating more widespread interest in horticulture."

Andersen noted the importance of merging two very different departments within the school.

"There's a lot of students in the arts who aren't going to take horticulture and a lot of horticulture students who have never taken an art class, when we merge like that it kind of exposes everyone to a different way of thinking," Andersen said. "I'm proud of what the students were able to accomplish."

Now, the mural is finished and the paint brushes are put down — or are they?

"We're going to sneak over there and paint things into the big mural every once in a while, we already have, nobody knows. So we might consider it an ongoing interactive piece in the painting classes," Andersen said.



Art and horticulture departments combined forces to create an agricultural history mural in the Clairmont Hall.