SUMMER 2016
PORTLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE
COMMUNITIES

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“Creating opportunities for low-income and first-generation college students to access higher education is essential to building a flourishing and equitable Oregon — and Portland Community College is an exemplary leader in this work.”

Doug Stamm
CEO, Meyer Memorial Trust
2016 Patron Award Honoree
Back to Class
◆ Summer 2016 term begins June 20
Register now! There are thousands of credit and non-credit classes available at hundreds of sites across the Portland metro area. For information about registration, visit pcc.edu.

Upcoming Events
◆ cultureSEast: Bridging Identities, Stories and Communities
May 17–19
Join PCC as we celebrate the diversity of cultures neighboring the Southeast Campus with this free event series. Visit pcc.edu/cultureSEast for details.

◆ 2016 Commencement
7 p.m., Friday June 10
Celebrate PCC’s graduates as they receive degrees and certificates in front of thousands of friends, family and community members. 7 p.m., Memorial Coliseum, 300 N. Winning Way.

◆ Portland Pride Parade
11 a.m., Sunday June 19
Watch for PCC students, faculty and staff wearing PCC T-shirts in Sunday’s parade, ending at the Tom McCall Waterfront Park.

Get social with PCC
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Contributors: James Hill, Rebecca Olson, Sarah Mirk
Photographers: Erin Berzel, James Hill, Vern Uyetake

Shared on Social Media
◆ What other college lets you study with the cows?? Study sesh is on point today @followmatty_in_stumptown

◆ Enjoying a Holland theme at this month’s Bagels, Coffee & Conversation at Southeast! @jesshowardPCC

◆ Day’s end… taking in the natural beauty of the campus and the outstanding work of our @PortlandCC Grounds Dept! @triciabrand

◆ Amazing day representing @PortlandCC Southeast at the 82nd Ave Parade of Roses! So much fun! #candyfordays #lovethis @jpetersmcbride

Share your thoughts and photos with us on Twitter @PortlandCC.
WHITENESS HISTORY MONTH

How a provocative project exploring race and racism ignited a courageous conversation at PCC and beyond.

by Sarah Mirk, contributing reporter

Two giant portraits of Andy Warhol flashed on the screen as Portland Community College art instructor Amanda Chao asked the 50 people gathered in a Cascade campus lecture hall to notice how white the images were. Warhol was white, of course, but Chao pointed out that the famous artist had composed the portraits to make himself look extra white. The high-contrast pictures made his platinum hair and porcelain skin glow above his black turtleneck.

“For Warhol, the idea of creating a persona that was commercially successful was wrapped up in the idea of whiteness,” said Chao, as students in the audience nodded along.

Chao’s lecture about Warhol’s obsession with image was the first event in a month-long exploration of race, racism and identity organized by a grassroots group of PCC faculty, staff and students. Hundreds of people attended more than 90 free public events during April — everything from a screening of the film Black Girl in Suburbia to a discussion of this winter’s militant-led occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge.

The project was called Whiteness History Month.

Unlike heritage months, this ambitious initiative was not conceived by its organizers as a celebration of white history, people or culture. Instead, it was created to explore how systems of privilege have evolved over time to favor light-skinned people. The goal? To help inspire innovative and practical solutions to the myriad community issues and social problems that stem from white privilege.

“It’s important to have a dialogue around whiteness,” said Kayse Jama, the executive director of the Center for Intercultural Organizing, a community-based racial justice group that hosted four events during Whiteness History Month. “We were excited to be involved in this because of the opportunity to help our community to have deep discussions about race.”

Poll after poll shows that Americans understand racism’s influence on society in different ways depending on their own race. A recent ABC news survey, for example, asked if racial minorities in the U.S. receive equal treatment to whites in the criminal justice system. Fifty-two percent of white people surveyed said yes while 90 percent of black people said no.

Those findings came as no surprise to many of PCC’s students, faculty and staff of color, who for years have discussed the impact of race and privilege on
Whiteness History Month’s provocative title had many people wondering about the difference between “white” and “whiteness.”

**White** is a term describing people. It refers to light-skinned people of European descent.

**Whiteness** describes a system. It refers to the construction of the white race, white culture, and the privileges and advantages afforded to white people through government policies, media portrayals, and decision-making power in corporations, schools and judicial systems.

The Ferguson debate brought out aspects of our culture that many white folks did not believe existed in regard to race and ethnicity at PCC or beyond,” said Amara Perez, who worked at the time as the coordinator of the Sylvania Campus Multicultural Center and co-coordinated the campus diversity council. “People of color, like myself, were talking about this issue long before Ferguson. But it wasn’t until the national discussion triggered a college-wide discussion among students and staff about race and policing. The intensity of those conversations shocked some.

“People of color, like myself, were talking about this issue long before Ferguson. But it wasn’t until the national discussion triggered a college-wide conversation that administrators, faculty and staff became more aware of what we call ‘campus climate issues’ related to race.”

In response, last fall PCC conducted its first-ever campus climate survey, hiring independent experts to administer surveys and direct in-person interviews and focus groups. The results were eye-opening. Around 40 percent of the 1,554 PCC community members surveyed said they had faced racial or ethnic discrimination or harassment at the college. The majority of those surveyed also wanted PCC to work more actively to dismantle systems of inequality, making good on a pledge in its strategic plan calling for the college to forge a nationally renowned culture for diversity, equity and inclusion.

In many ways, PCC is in a good position to engage conversations about race — since 32 percent of its 89,900 students are people of color, making the college far more racially diverse than the surrounding city. Acknowledging a responsibility to serve this multicultural student body is one reason PCC’s Board of Directors and administrators so strongly supported the project.

“We hope to deliberately create spaces where students, faculty and staff alike are encouraged to learn and question,” said PCC Chief Diversity Officer Kimberly Baker-Flowers, “Whiteness History Month provided opportunities for us, as a college community, to think more intentionally about our learning and work environments.”

“We believe that a diversity of perspectives and experiences enrich learning, and that respectful dialogue across differences is at the heart of academic life,” added Karin Edwards, president of PCC’s Cascade Campus. “We value all activities that seek to create this rich understanding.”
Not everyone reacted to the idea of Whiteness History Month with such warm feelings.

When a call-for-proposal reminder was sent out in January, news of the event landed on a political website that described it in a blaring headline as “a month devoted to whiteness shaming.” Links to the article went viral, and angry calls and emails poured in—some so hostile that public safety patrols were increased on campus, and social media was monitored round-the-clock for potential threats.

Throughout the month, groups and individuals unhappy with the initiative or confused about its purpose continued to express strong opinions. Some pushback also came from members of the PCC community. In January, a part-time PCC instructor wrote an editorial in a campus publication claiming the event was unworthy of being held at the college.

At the same time, other students, faculty and community members loudly praised the effort. And hundreds of media outlets have reported on the project, including OBP, ABC, NBC, Salon, The Christian Science Monitor and the Wall Street Journal.

“If we would have called it ‘anti-racism month,’ no one would have batted an eye,” said PCC marketing instructor Simon Tam, who hosted a lecture for Whiteness History Month called “Give Racism a Chance: We Can’t Stop Racism If We Don’t Talk About It.”

Tam’s session in mid-April was standing-room only. In addition to an entire PCC ethics class, the audience included northeast Portland neighbors concerned about local gentrification, and parents of Vernon Elementary School students.

“We have a very serious problem of denial,” said Tam, explaining that one issue is that Americans often see racism as a binary thing: you’re either a racist or not a racist.

In reality, it’s much more complicated, said Tam. “People can have excellent intentions and still sometimes do or say things that are based on ignorance or racist assumptions.”

It has taken Tam a long time to get to the point where he can both be proud of his own heritage and compassionate toward people who make assumptions about him based on his ethnicity. He still has a scar on the top of his head from bullies who beat him up as a kid, calling him names like “chink” and “gook.”

“I’m proud of my college and the dialogue they’re creating.”

- Si V. Del Cielo

“If there ever was a thing to create a heated discussion on race, this is it. Their intentions are good, I’m just not sure everyone will realize it.”

- Derric Tanner

“I am really proud of PortlandCC tackling the hard conversation of whiteness!! A bold and necessary move for Oregon’s largest college!”

- Hollie Oakes-Miller

“Nevermind the haters...this is essential work, and I am proud to see it being done in Portland and in my alma mater.”

- Doug Taylor

“Making whiteness visible doesn’t address who holds power.”

- Deborah Douglas
“I was ashamed of my culture,” he said, and wished he could just be like his white classmates. But as he got older, Tam learned to be proud of his family and their roots in Taiwan and China. Now, when he’s not teaching at PCC, he tours the world in all-Asian rock band called The Slants—their name reclaiming an anti-Asian slur reminiscent of the ones hurled at Tam as a kid.

PCC could always do a better job when it comes to its treatment of staff and students of color, says Tam. In his experience, staffers who are people of color are frequently asked to serve on committee after committee to provide diverse representation—and all that after-hours work adds up. But Tam was glad to see high turnout and institutional support for Whiteness History Month. “The fact that PCC went out on a limb and held this event says a lot about the school.”

One person in the room for Tam’s talk was 52-year-old Charles Beasley, a recent PCC student who transferred last year to a nursing program. When he returned to college at PCC in his fifties, Beasley, who is black, said he was wary of discussing race with his classmates. Whiteness History Month has helped change that.

“You have your shields up,” he said. “This is an event that helps you take your shields down.” Instead of seeing race as a single issue that is too dicey to discuss, Beasley says he learned that it’s important to see how racism influences all academic subjects. “If you don’t deal with racism, you can’t understand history, you can’t understand economics.”

So what’s next? Will Whiteness History Month become an annual event? Its organizers say no. They intended the project to respond to a very specific moment in the country at large and at PCC. Repeating the event again and again might not make sense, said Perez. “For any college to address issues of equality and exclusion, you must constantly be engaged in what is happening to the people most affected, what the nuances of that are, and to keep coming back to the table.”

That doesn’t always mean hosting events—it could mean rewriting class curriculums, for example. “We hope that folks carry what they learned forward in new ways,” said Perez.
Mitzi Zilka got turned on to Billie Holiday when she was a kid—and hasn’t looked back.

A dedicated jazz singer since age 12, Zilka has performed at most of the jazz venues in Portland and many in California. She’s toured in the Netherlands and sang all over Sydney, Australia.

After moving back to Portland in 1993, she wanted to be involved in the jazz community but didn’t know where to start. She started a Portland Jazz Singing Concert series, bringing to the stage the Rose City’s best jazz singers.

The concert series grew in popularity and sparked a desire in people to sing jazz themselves. Zilka answered the call and pitched a Jazz Singer’s Workshop to PCC. The workshop took off and has been a keystone of the Portland Jazz community for the past eight years.

“It’s very low as far as intimidation,” she said. “There’s no one making you feel like you don’t have a good voice or you’re too old or whatever it is. We have a lot of fun, we make friends, we laugh—it’s very supportive.”

It’s not all laughter though. Zilka challenges her students to push themselves beyond their comfort zones.

“I like to tell my students that this is the place where you’re supposed to make the mistakes. Don’t be perfect, let’s get it better—that’s how you get started.”

The beginning PCC’s Jazz Singer’s Workshop is a two-hour weekly workshop that covers not only vocal performance skills and techniques, but the basics of how to be a professional jazz singer. Students learn how to count in a band, use a mic, work with musicians and connect with the audience. The relatively small group—a maximum of 10—means students get individual coaching and time with the piano accompanist, along with the sense of community that comes from being in a class rather than a private lesson.

A second two-hour workshop is offered for students looking to take their skills to the next level. At the conclusion of each term, a performance with a trio of professional jazz musicians takes place at Wilf’s Restaurant and Jazz Lounge for those who feel ready to take it to the stage.

“It’s very welcoming,” Mitzi said. "A lot of people are hungry for connection and community in this world, and that’s really what this workshop is all about.”

Flower Arranging from the Garden

Learn how to arrange flowers right from the garden. You will learn when to harvest flowers so they last as long as possible in the vase, and practice basic arranging techniques. Bring your favorite vases to take your arrangements home!

You’ll often see the instructor, Nora Lindsey, in the Learning Garden at PCC Rock Creek where she manages the educational space. She brings 10 years of experience in sustainable agriculture, with special expertise in small-scale flower production to the class.

To learn more, turn to page 30 or visit pcc.edu/communityed.

Summer in a Winery

Savor the taste of summer and join professional winemakers behind the scenes in the barrel room of their Newberg winery. Explore the art of topping, bottling and racking while sipping summer favorites.

The class is led by Briana Rogers, co-owner of Purple Cow Vineyards in Newberg who, years ago, took PCC’s Wine Connoisseur Series. Today she’s eager to share what she’s learned and the fermented fruit of her labors!

To learn more, turn to page 29 or visit pcc.edu/communityed.
Nothing beats the real world when it comes to helping students learn.

A new pilot project is doing that for PCC’s dental hygiene and dental assisting students. It is a pilot program created by the Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) School of Dentistry to allow its fourth-year dental students to simulate what it will be like to run their own practice. The university’s students nearing graduation are charged with running their clinical schedule four days per week, orchestrating a full schedule of appointments while utilizing the skills of PCC students.

“It’s been so incredible for the students and us as a college,” said PCC’s Dental Programs Director Josette Beach. “The students are able to interact with a dentist in ways that mirror what they will do in a private practice. The experience they are gaining from this is priceless. When they graduate from the programs they will transition into private practice so much more easily because of this.”

PCC plans to rotate first-year students into the collaborative project to prepare them for their second-year curriculum.

So far, 18 PCC students participate in weekly rotations. The dental hygiene students gain experience doing cleanings, exposing radiographs, administering anesthesia and placing restorations that have been prepared by the pre-doctoral students. The dental assisting students help with a full array of dental procedures that they will encounter in a dental office.

“It’s gone pretty well for us considering it’s a pilot project,” said dental hygiene student Aubrey Wassouf, 32. “It gives you a better idea about what to expect in the real world. You are pushed throughout the day with a full schedule of patients, and it makes you feel like a real hygienist.”

The partnership between the two schools made sense, and PCC is honored to be part of the collaboration.

“This program was designed to test ways we can better prepare students for real-world conditions, including working with other dental professionals to serve patients in a clinical setting,” said Sean Benson, OHSU School of Dentistry assistant professor. “My expectations have been exceeded by the professionalism, teamwork, and patient care provided by all parties of this pilot project.”

— James Hill

PCC’s dental assisting and dental hygiene programs offer a one-year certificate and associate degree. To learn more, visit pcc.edu/programs.
AN EVENING FOR OPPORTUNITY RAISES A RECORD-BREAKING $430,000 FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

More than 500 supporters joined the Portland Community College Foundation for the fifth annual An Evening for Opportunity. With a theme inspired by the college’s mascot and the original “Pink Panther” film, the event featured remarks by Oregon Governor Kate Brown, student speakers and a performance by Pink Martini, which performed late into the night.

Funds raised will enable hundreds of PCC students, many being the first in their families to attend college and with deep financial need, to be supported in their academic pursuits.

Special thanks to the event’s major sponsors: Carol & Max Lyons, Hillsboro Aviation, Marion Levitan & Howard Werth, Pamplin Media Group, Hoffman Construction Company, NW Natural, and Oregon Lottery.

To support PCC students, visit pcc.edu/give.
Special guest “Inspector Clouseau” PCC supporters Carol and Max Lyons.

Ross Lienhart shares a dance during the live performance by Pink Martini.

Student speaker Alexander McPherson (right) shared his story as part of the evening’s keynote.

From left: Howard Werth, Marion Levitan, Ken Wells, Interim President Sylvia Kelley, and Don Rushmer.

PCC Board member Kali Thorne Ladd.
Five years ago, Oregon found itself in the midst of an educational crisis. High school completion rates in the Portland Metro area were at an abysmal 65 percent, and college completion rates were even lower. With only one-third of Multnomah County high school students going on to college, and only half of them finishing, the region faced serious issues of retention and completion among its youth.

Portland Community College and the City of Portland came together to address this issue. As a response to the state’s ambitious goals to improve graduation rates, they proposed a simple solution: target low-income and first-generation college students who aspire to go to college, and connect them with scholarships and one-on-one academic support.

The model program was called Future Connect.

Since 2011, Future Connect has helped more than 1,200 students transition to college, serving 60 different high schools and community-based programs. With funding from the cities of Beaverton and Hillsboro, the State of Oregon and more than 400 individuals and foundations, the program continues to expand to serve more students each year.

Future Connect’s unique model of support has doubled the expected retention rate for low-income and first-generation college students attending PCC. But it’s not just the architecture of this program that has made these students so successful.

The retention rate for Future Connect students who return for their second year is 75 percent, and this rate has improved with each cohort.

Future Connect students are two times as likely to finish college as similar students who do not receive guidance or financial support.

Invest in Portland’s future. Visit pcc.edu/give to learn how you can help.
Future Connect has enrolled 1,283 students since 2011, and this number is growing. In preparation for the 2016–17 academic year, our recruitment specialists have connected with nearly 3,800 local high school students.

“The students we work with are incredibly determined and show an amount of grit that I’m humbled by,” said Josh Laurie, Future Connect program manager. “And because of the obstacles that they’ve overcome—not despite them, but because of them—they’re excellent college students.”

The growth of this program over the past five years has been made possible by the partnership among local and state government, and private investors. In all, support from the cities of Portland, Hillsboro and Beaverton, the State of Oregon and private donors exceeds $6 million, and the Future Connect consortium continues to grow.

“The Future Connect students are having two times the success of their peer groups not in Future Connect. That is game changing,” said Doug Stamm, CEO of Meyer Memorial Trust. “So why wouldn’t we invest in that? It’s a sure bet.”

Looking ahead to the next five years, the future looks bright. Future Connect recruitment coaches met with more than 3,000 local high school students so far this year, and enrollment in the program is expected to grow.

“When you connect driven and talented students with the resources they need to be successful—the sky’s really the limit,” said Laurie.

— Rebecca Olson

Sumaya Mohammed
Beaverton High School

“Future Connect has opened so many doors for me, and thanks to my amazing coaches I have learned that I can do anything I set my mind to. Thank you Future Connect!”

Joaquin Valdez
Hillsboro High School

“Future Connect made the impossible, possible. I’ve improved not only as a student, but as a whole person. My Future Connect cohort and coaches are not regular people to me, they are my family.”

Estera Magda
Madison High School

“I don’t know what I would have done without my amazing coach, Tobias. When I needed guidance, he helped me get on the right path. Every day I feel more independent and I have gained more confidence in myself.”
WHAT’S NEW AT PCC?

STEM students have a blast at the Fourth Annual Hermanas Conference

More than 225 students from Hillsboro, Beaverton, Forest Grove and Portland metro high schools participated in the Fourth Annual Hermanas Conference last month. This is an event held at the Rock Creek Campus designed to inspire Latina students to pursue education in science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM).

One of the most popular sessions, “The Chemistry of Fireworks,” featured balloons filled with chemical compounds exploding in a series of loud blasts and rainbow-colored explosions. After the pyrotechnics, the students were asked to figure out which compound made the blasts by examining the residue back in the lab.

“This all is designed to inspire girls to consider STEM as a career option and elevate the opportunities they have in their lives,” said Hirally Santiago, an industrial engineer who volunteered at the event.

Another goal was to give confidence to the young women by having them connect with female engineers who come from similar backgrounds. Diana H. Perez, Deputy Monument Manager for Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, was one of the featured speakers who shared her story about how she got to where she is today.

“I’m a person who looks like them and comes from a similar background who they can connect with,” said Miriam Ceja, a chemical engineer. “At the end, I told them to ‘echale ganas,’ which means ‘go and get it.’”

There were 10 group sessions covering not only fireworks, but physiology, physics, 3-D printing and pharmacy.

This spring, 60 baby lambs were born on the college’s Rock Creek farm. The youngsters are looked after by Farm Coordinator Terry Lookabill, Veterinary Technology Program students, and Talisman, their llama guardian who protects the sheep from predators.

PCC is officially certified as a Bee Campus USA location—one of only four in the nation. This is a special designation that recognizes educational campuses that commit to a set of practices to support pollinators, including bees, butterflies, birds, and bats, among thousands of other species.
The college hosted its 2016 Day at the Capitol this spring, attracting hundreds of supporters to Salem to share their PCC stories. The day gave the PCC community a way to thank legislators for investing in higher education and show how important their support is in the lives of students.

Along with multiple higher-ed and industry partners, PCC will help lead an exciting collaboration to create an Oregon Manufacturing Innovation Center in Columbia County. The partnership will support research innovation and develop advanced manufacturing training programs based on a skilled apprenticeship model. The joint effort will leverage funding from multiple sources.
PCC mails this schedule of classes to households four times each year to let you know about upcoming Community Ed classes and share what’s happening at PCC. It is printed and mailed for about 21¢ per copy and can be recycled. Because it is addressed “Residential Customer” we are not able to remove individuals from our distribution route. We hope you find it informative and enjoy the stories inside.

My Project:
Run into summer!
— Roberto Suarez,
Personal Training Student

project: YOU

Make YOU the project!
If you can dream it PCC Community Ed’s hundreds of classes can help you achieve it. Go online to pcc.edu/communityed and get started on your own Project: YOU this summer.

PCC CommunityEd