MADE OF METAL
Forging the path for a new generation of women welders
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THE MAGIC OF FLOWERS
Cultivate beauty with spring gardening classes
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AN AMERICAN DREAM
Surviving the chaos of war
PAGE 82
“By providing open access to an affordable, high-quality education, institutions like PCC are critical to the future of our families, our communities and our state.”

Oregon Rep. Teresa Alonso Leon
Back to Class

◆ Spring term begins April 3
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

◆ Semana de la Raza
April 24–29, 2017
This week-long celebration honors Latino culture and community at PCC’s Rock Creek Campus, 17705 N.W. Springville Road. Semana de la Raza features free public events such as lectures, music and films. Visit pcc.edu/semana for details.

◆ cultureSEast
May 16–18, 2017
Join PCC Southeast for cultureSEast, a three-day series of performances, lectures, panels and presentations engaging the diverse cultures, identities and stories that comprise Southeast Portland. Visit pcc.edu/cultureSEast for details.

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Hanging on the wall in Ash Jimenez’s kitchen is a framed photo of women welders from 1940s Portland. It was a gift given to her last year by two couples, regulars at the bar she’d worked at, when they found out she’d be leaving to pursue a career in welding.

“The photo definitely inspires me,” she said. “To think of women 75 years ago welding and paving the way really makes me appreciate the opportunity I have before me.”

Twice a week, Jimenez heads over to Vigor Industrial on Swan Island to learn about the art of configuring joints. An occasional jewelry maker, metal is Jimenez’s go-to, making a delicate process of welding called TIG a good fit for her personality.

“I think metal is the perfect medium for its strength, beauty and resilience,” she said.

Jimenez’s introduction to welding came while she was a student at Oregon Tradeswomen, a local nonprofit dedicated to promoting success for women in the trades through education, leadership and mentorship opportunities. When she found out about a new scholarship opportunity to continue her studies at PCC, she knew she had to go for it.

“I’d never welded before. I didn’t know if I’d even like it, if I’d be good at it, or if I could ever do it,” she said. “Luckily I’m very stubborn so that helped.”

Jimenez is the first recipient of a new PCC Foundation scholarship created by prominent community leader and educational champion Evelyn Crowell. The scholarship supports students who are underrepresented in the trades, including women and students of color. Jimenez couldn’t be prouder to carry on Evelyn’s legacy as a trailblazer for women.

“I can’t disappoint all these people who are so proud of me,” she said.

A CRACK IN THE GLASS CEILING

Despite the opportunity to make good money, the trades can be a tough place for women. The job retention factor is often low and female representation is slim. Women make up only 5 percent of the welding workforce in the U.S.

Jimenez, however, grew up with older brothers in a Californian town 15 minutes north of the Mexican border. Whether it was camping or climbing trees, not once did she ever believe she couldn’t do the same things as her brothers.
She sees her determination to become a professional welder as an extension of her feminist ideals—a stubbornness to prove to the world that women can do anything they set their mind to.

“I love that welding is definitely not a woman’s world,” she said. “I like knowing I’m continuing to break through.”

Jimenez is one of five women Kane Heidecker has seen graduate from welding in the six years he’s been teaching at PCC. There’s no doubt for Heidecker that Jimenez is rising to the challenge of a demanding program.

“She has a strong work ethic. She comes in and does everything she needs to do,” he said. “She’s motivated to get it done.”

Like many of the students in her class at Vigor Industrial—a ship repair company known for being a leader in equal opportunity employment during WWII—Jimenez takes class in the evenings after working a full-time job each week. She takes classes at the shared facility created through a partnership between Vigor and PCC to expand training opportunities at the heart of industrial Portland.

“Shops can be really intimidating for women, so I was really pleasantly surprised at the climate,” Jimenez said. “Everyone has been really welcoming and nice. It makes it a lot easier to ask questions.”

PASSING THE TORCH

In the next ten years, much of Oregon’s aging welding workforce is expected to retire, leaving a gap for a new generation to step up and take their place. In the opinion of Dan Wenger, division dean of Arts & Professions, PCC is perfectly poised to fill the pipeline.

“Graduates exit the program prepared for a living-wage career as a welder and maker whose work will literally create the steel bones of our ships, barges, buildings and bridges,” he said.

Jimenez’s ultimate dream after completing the program is to weld stainless steel fermentation tanks for brewers and winemakers. This interest in the food industry comes from her personal experience in the business and parents who own a restaurant—as well as tugging at her Mexican grandmother’s apron growing up. The kitchen is Jimenez’s favorite spot in the house; she hosts dinner parties every chance she gets.

Community is what keeps Jimenez going. Every week, she posts photos for family and friends on social media of the welding projects she’s working on. She volunteers when needed at Oregon Tradeswomen, doing everything from stuffing envelopes to helping with their program fundraisers. She has a fiance who puts up with her crazy schedule and encourages her daily.

And each time she walks by the vintage picture of women welders hanging in her kitchen, it’s a reminder that even strangers have a stake in her future.

“I can’t go back. I’ve worked too hard and changed my life,” she said. “It’s not an easy road. And it’s about to get a lot harder. But I’m in.”

To learn about scholarship opportunities, visit pcc.edu/foundation-scholarships.
Vicky López Sánchez realized she was college material when she was a junior in high school — and it was all thanks to one person. “It was the first time anybody had talked to me about college,” López Sánchez recalled of a visit in 1991 by a recruiter for the Oregon State University Educational Opportunities and College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP). “She told our Hispanic club, ‘You guys can go to college.’ She made an impact on me and my friends. We were inspired and grateful.” That experience marked an important change in López Sánchez’s life, one that had not been steered toward higher education. When she was three, her parents immigrated from Mexico to California, eventually settling in Oregon’s rural Washington County to work the fields and canneries. López Sánchez spoke no English when she began her formal education and constantly would be pulled out of class to get language tutoring. Harder still was math, her most challenging subject. “I worked in the fields picking everything from strawberries to corn and cucumbers,” she remembered. “In school, I didn’t understand what I needed to do to get into college. My high school counselor asked me why I wanted to take Algebra II; she said that I was just going to end up barefoot and pregnant anyway so why even bother. She would constantly dissuade me.” DISCOVERING TRIO That visit by the CAMP recruiter inspired López Sánchez to refocus and boost her grade-point average, enroll in more rigorous classes, and target colleges after graduation. Her hard work was rewarded with a scholarship to attend Portland State University as a TRIO student. That experience led to a lifelong passion for TRIO, which is a handful of U.S. federal programs designed to increase access to higher education for economically disadvantaged students. “I understood then the amount of hard work I needed to do in order to get my grades up so that I could attend college,” said López Sánchez. “I didn’t want to be out in the elements working in the fields anymore, enduring the heat and cold. My parents worked hard and instilled in their children that, with a strong work ethic, things could be better for us.” Her tenacity has paid off. López Sánchez now serves as the Rock Creek Campus’ TRIO Talent Search Program director, and has recently been named president-elect of the Northwest Association of Educational Opportunity Programs (NAEOP) for our region. This organization provides support to TRIO students, giving them educational opportunities they normally wouldn’t receive so they can reach their full potential. From a work-study office assistant and student peer advisor to instructor, coordinator and assistant director at Portland State University, and now at PCC, López Sánchez has worked in TRIO for more than 18 years. "People who work in TRIO tend to be lifers," she said. MAKING A DIFFERENCE The TRIO Talent Search Program targets low-income, first-generation students in middle and high school, and provides them with college and career exploration, academic support, internship opportunities.
The Talent Search Program is one of eight federally funded TRIO programs through the Department of Education. PCC’s program is based at the Willow Creek Center and is designed to help low income and educationally disadvantaged students from the Beaverton School District who have the potential to be successful in college. Students in the program come from families in which they are the first to attend college or receive a college degree or have recently dropped out of school. Talent Search provides academic, career, and financial counseling to its participants and encourages students to graduate from high school and continue on to college. The goal is to increase the number of youth from disadvantaged backgrounds who complete high school and enroll in college. Talent Search serves 500 students in the Beaverton School Districts of Washington County.

López Sánchez and her two advisors demystify the path to college for students by providing comprehensive program support from middle school to college. TRIO exposes students to career paths and academic disciplines that they may not be aware of or see as a possibility for themselves.

“Low-income students need standardized test prep to provide an academic leveling experience to that of their high-income peers,” said López Sánchez. “We’re creating a drive for that student and sparking their interests. If you can impact one person, you can impact their family and their friends.”

Another way that López Sánchez serves as a role model for others is through her community involvement. In addition to being named president-elect of NAEOP Region 10, she serves on Leadership Beaverton, the Oregon TRIO Association board, the Centro Cultural board and PCC’s Men of Color task force, and is co-chair of NAEOP’s Emerging Leaders Institute.

WORKING WITH A MENTOR
If it weren’t for that inspiration to attend college provided by the OSU CAMP recruiter 25 years ago, she doesn’t know where she might be today. But López Sánchez can thank that person every day, if she wishes, because she now works with that former recruiter—Narce Rodriguez, dean of student development at the Rock Creek Campus.

“I am extremely proud of Vicky’s career accomplishments,” said Rodriguez. “She operates with an equity lens that provides her the ability to challenge systems, support students and parents. She is an outstanding Latina role model for many of us. She not only represents us by her passion and compassion, but she gives us hope.”

WHAT IS TALENT SEARCH?

“The Talent Search Program is one of eight federally funded TRIO programs through the Department of Education. PCC’s program is based at the Willow Creek Center and is designed to help low income and educationally disadvantaged students from the Beaverton School District who have the potential to be successful in college. Students in the program come from families in which they are the first to attend college or receive a college degree or have recently dropped out of school. Talent Search provides academic, career, and financial counseling to its participants and encourages students to graduate from high school and continue on to college. The goal is to increase the number of youth from disadvantaged backgrounds who complete high school and enroll in college. Talent Search serves 500 students in the Beaverton School Districts of Washington County.”
When Nora Lindsey got into farming, she was all about food. Like a lot of young folks in Portland—from aspiring chefs to backyard chicken farmers—she wanted to cultivate a garden that would feed people. It wasn’t until she started growing flowers that she found it nourished her in a deeper way.

“I went from not caring a lot about flowers to thinking that they contain the universe,” she said. “It was a revelation.”

Today she calls flowers her “spirit food.”

Lindsey teaches Community Education courses on growing, arranging and appreciating flowers. The former coordinator of the Learning Garden on PCC’s Rock Creek campus, Lindsey’s background is in agriculture and community organizing. She has been farming for about 10 years, and started her growing practice tending to the meditation garden in Scotland’s Findhorn Ecovillage—an intentional community in the U.K. that practices sustainable farming techniques.

She took her interests and experience to Portland and worked on farms for several years until she and a friend started a flower farm to supply bouquets to individuals and local shops.

“A flower that I love to grow is scabiosa. There’s a variety that’s grown just for its seed pod that looks like a star globe—they’re total stunners,” she said.

Lindsey’s flower classes are popular among a diverse range of people from all backgrounds and ages—and that’s part of the fun. She has students who are just starting out and others who are experienced gardeners.

She recalls one of her students who made the flower arrangements for her church. For years, the arrangements had been very stiff and formal, using floral foam and rigid lines. The student came to Lindsey’s class because she wanted some new skills to help her break out of the mold.

“She wanted to find out how the flowers wanted to be arranged,” Lindsey said. “It was an amazing experience to help her get in touch with them.”

Like the floral arrangements in a church service, Lindsey explains that flowers are used in all of our most important ceremonies and rituals—a practice that spans traditions, cultures, and lines of history.

“We use flowers to honor our dead, to honor our love, to honor someone being born,” she said. “I want to help people develop their own relationship with flowers to make these moments in our lives even more special.”

As Lindsey learned more about flowers and came to love them, she has re-aligned her professional and personal interests to focus on the spiritual qualities of flowers, rather than their horticultural aspects. A self-identified witch, she studies the magical properties of flowers as a student at a local mystery school. She hopes to continue her spiritual education by attending divinity school in the future.

Through their cycles, Lindsey believes that flowers have a lot to teach us.

“It’s truly an education to work with flowers. They teach us about death and sex and life,” she said. “They teach us to slow down and really see what’s all around us.”

—Rebecca Olson
As the baby boomers head into retirement, financial planning is on a lot of people’s minds. It’s estimated that about 10,000 people retire every day—a trend that’s expected to continue for the next decade.

And while many are eager to kick back and enjoy their golden years, it’s not an easy process for everyone. According to AARP, three-quarters of Americans between 55 and 64 have less than $30,000 in savings. Another survey reports that only 21 percent of workers say they are very confident about having enough money for a comfortable retirement.

If you’re part of the majority of people who don’t feel super confident about your finances, educating yourself is the best thing you can do.

“Many financial magazines will tell you that you need a million dollars or more to retire and that’s insane,” says Gary Duell, PCC Community Ed instructor. “What you really should be focusing on isn’t some magic ‘number’ of what you need to accumulate—it’s your cash flow.”

Duell is owner and founder of Duell Wealth Preservation, and has more than 35 years of experience in the insurance and financial services industry. When he’s not working with clients, he teaches retirement education courses to pre- and current retirees through PCC’s Community Education.

Duell’s classes are open to everyone, but they’re best for people who are a few years out from retirement with some savings already—people who are looking to make the most of what they have.

The class offerings cover a wide range of topics related to retirement financial education—from making a household budget, to understanding taxes as a retired person. While you can find a lot of the same information on the internet, Duell says that nothing compares to getting—in person—a curated lesson from an experienced advisor.

“The info you’ll get in this class is worth about 100 times the cost of tuition when it comes to results,” he says. “You just can’t get better ROI than that.”
For many PCC students, the Vietnam War is something they only know about from textbooks. But for Ben Le, a long-time employee in the college’s Information Technology Department, the Vietnam War separated him from his family in Vietnam, and ultimately brought him to the United States and a new life.

Le was one of the Vietnamese refugees (or “boat people”), who fled in small and overcrowded wooden fishing boats after the end of the war in 1975 in harrowing journeys across the South China Sea.

His father was a high-ranking South Vietnamese officer who worked directly with the U.S. forces. As the North Vietnamese army advanced south, thousands frantically sought to board flights out of the country. Le’s family tried for 10 days, but despite having priority government papers, they were unable to get on a plane. The country fell to the communists, and soon after, Le’s father was arrested and imprisoned at a re-education camp.

During the next four years, Le made several unsuccessful attempts to escape.

In 1979, during a visit to his father in the camp, Le quietly told him he would try one more time. He and a friend had enough money to buy two seats on an escaping boat. Under the cover of darkness, they and 31 other people furtively packed into a nine-foot skiff with a small outboard motor and raced toward open water toward Hong Kong.

For weeks they motored and drifted, suffering thirst, hunger, the merciless sun, storms and sleep deprivation. They were intercepted and detained twice by Chinese authorities, and there was constant worry about pirates and getting lost.

Meanwhile, large ships passed them by despite frantic efforts by the refugees to gain their attention. On rare occasions, ships lowered containers of fuel, food and water to their boat, which became more and more unseaworthy as their journey progressed, forcing the refugees to take turns bailing to avoid sinking.

After nearly a month of crossing more than 600 miles of open sea, they made it to Hong Kong.

“I COULDN’T WAIT TO BECOME A CITIZEN AND SERVE THIS COUNTRY.”
Le knew English and was quickly given a job as an interpreter at the United Nation’s office in the Hong Kong refugee camp. There he met a fellow refugee who would become his wife.

In 1981, Le’s application for political asylum in the U.S. was granted and they arrived in Minnesota where he had relatives. After one week there, the couple started jobs in electronic assembly, but because of limited career options there they moved to Portland after four months.

“What I found very important is the freedom,” he said. “It’s really open… I couldn’t wait to become a citizen and serve this country. I’m proud that I’ve become a successful American, in American society.”

Le went on to earn his associate degree at PCC and in 1983 was hired as a part-time computer operator at the college. The following year he was made a full-time employee, and today he is the Information Technology’s server administration manager. Through the years, he has helped to remodel the college’s primary data center, assisted in network redesign, refreshed the computer hardware and software, and implemented backup and disaster recovery data centers.

Along the way, Le also became an American citizen.

“My goal has always been to serve a public institution in education,” he added, “So when I got a job offer at PCC, it really met my goal and my dream. I’m still working here after 35 years. It’s where I started and where I’ll probably end up.”

Today Le enjoys spending time with his wife and daughter. And every week he and friends from PCC meet up at Pho Hung, a popular Vietnamese restaurant on Southeast Powell Boulevard.

After the end of the Vietnam War, there was no way to communicate with his extended family. But in 1992, after President Clinton normalized relations with Vietnam, Le was finally able to visit. While his mother and siblings were still alive, his father had died in the intervening years. Their reunion took place at his gravesite.

Le still misses his extended family, and the vibrant street life and sense of community in Vietnam, but he considers the United States his home.

“That’s why they call it the United States of America,” Le said. “So that people from all over the world come here and become one strong, successful country. In the United States of America, the ‘State’ doesn’t mean a piece of land—it’s the people.”
This November, PCC announced the dedication of a forthcoming Center for African American Community History in honor of longtime neighborhood leader and educational champion Evelyn “Evie” Crowell. Crowell, who moved to North Portland from Michigan with her family in 1942, was a trailblazer for Portland’s African American community. A teacher and librarian for Portland State University for most of her career, she was the first African American woman to lead the YWCA of Greater Portland. Crowell also served on the boards of the Oregon Symphony and Portland Center Stage, and has been an active member of the Portland chapters of the Links and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority.

More recently, she donated more than $109,000 to the PCC Foundation, establishing an endowed scholarship in her name to support students enrolled in technical programs at PCC’s Swan Island Trades Center (learn more on page 4).

The Evelyn Crowell Center for African American Community History—to be curated and installed in the Cascade Library over the next year—will tell the story of African Americans in North and Northeast Portland through words, pictures, and artifacts.

“It’s humbling to be here talking about Evie and her life, because I truly believe that she has lived her life the way all of us should aspire to live—with courage, with tenacity, and with love in her heart for her community and her fellow human beings,” said Dr. Karin Edwards, president of the PCC Cascade Campus.

The Evelyn Crowell Center for African American Community History, Edwards said, “will preserve this community’s unique history for generations to come, so that no one will forget the struggles and triumphs of African Americans in Portland, and no one will forget the legacy of this remarkable woman.”
Hundreds of supporters attended PCC’s 18th annual “Waicipi” Pow Wow this January. People from all over the region came to celebrate Native American culture and tradition through a free community dinner, dancers and drum groups, and local Native vendors.

The aviation hangar on the Rock Creek Campus has been officially named The Michael D. Reese Hangar in memory of business leader and aviation enthusiast Michael D. Reese. Reese’s widow Patricia and family honored his love of flying and passion for education by creating opportunities for Aviation Maintenance Technology students. Their $270,000 donation to the PCC Foundation will create an endowment that will fund two full-ride scholarships each year.
The National Science Foundation has awarded PCC nearly $2 million in grants to help expand educational opportunities for underrepresented students in the fields of technology and manufacturing.

The funding has allowed PCC to set up two projects at the Rock Creek and Sylvania campuses focusing on retention and success in the fields of microelectronics, engineering, and advanced manufacturing.

“These are fields that have been traditionally less attractive to women and minorities,” explained Dorina Cornea-Hasegan, who will serve as the coordinator of the new Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) Lab on the Rock Creek Campus. “We’re really eager to improve retention and success rates for students from more diverse backgrounds who maybe didn’t consider a career in this area.”

This funding will expand opportunities for students in many programs including Microelectronics Technology, Solar Voltaic Manufacturing Technology, Automated Manufacturing Technology, Electronic Engineering Technology, Civil and Mechanical Engineering Technology, and Machine Manufacturing Technology.

Both campus projects will supply scholarships, provide personal advising and connect students to industry and alumni mentors to create a guided pathway for students. By supporting learners from start to finish, PCC seeks to increase the number of qualified workers in high-demand fields—as well as increase the diversity of the workforce.

These tactics will work to increase program completion and employment rates, but also to increase enrollment for women and minority students in STEAM fields overall.

Rock Creek Campus, for example, aims to increase the percentage of females enrolled in microelectronics to 25 percent over the next five years. Other goals include increasing the percentage of students of color by 10 percent, ensuring that there is a 90 percent graduation rate for scholars in the microelectronics program and achieving a 100 percent employment rate for graduates of the semiconductor industry program.

To get there, Rock Creek’s project will implement a successful mentoring model adapted from the University of Maryland-Baltimore County’s Center for Women in Technology based on scholar, faculty, alumni and industry participation.

“We’ll concentrate on strategies that have proven successful across the country and add to the knowledge base of what works here at PCC,” said Cornea-Hasegan. “It’s a very exciting time.”

To learn more about STEAM programs at PCC, visit pcc.edu/stem.
Join us at the PCC Foundation’s sixth annual benefit for student scholarships and support programs. Your support puts students on the trail to success—we’ll see you at the lodge!

Buy your ticket at pcc.edu/gala
My Project:
“Capture the moment.”
— Melanie S.
   Digital photography student

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 spring.