All in the Family

Mother-daughter alumna duo illustrates the power of education

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Dear Readers,

Welcome to another exciting edition of PCC’s “Communities” Magazine! Our theme in this issue centers on the work we are doing to increase equitable student success. Our courageous students face many barriers to completing their education at PCC, including food and housing insecurity, and needs such as childcare and transportation while they attend our college.

At PCC, we have been engaged in redesigning support services and the educational journey to address these growing needs. The college has launched the Yes to Equitable Student Success initiative (YESS), which is affiliated with the national Achieving the Dream movement. In this edition, you’ll read more about YESS and the work that our college community is pursuing to bridge opportunity and equity gaps.

This sort of work is central to all that we do at the college, and it underscores a key belief: Every student deserves the opportunity to build a better life through education.

Our cover story echoes that spirit – a mother-daughter duo who used PCC’s support systems to turn their lives around after escaping domestic abuse. This spring, both graduated on the same day, with the daughter earning an associate degree from PCC and the mother, a master’s from Portland State University.

Please enjoy this issue of “Communities!”

Sincerely,
Mark Mitsui

PS. I want to thank everyone who supported the community college budget request during this year’s legislative session. Your voice was heard and thanks to your support, Oregon’s community colleges will receive the largest increase in funding in many years. Thank you!
Portland Community College is rethinking how it supports students.

The PCC Yes to Equitable Student Success (YESS) initiative is strengthening student success by creating a robust Guided Pathways model as prescribed by the Achieving the Dream project, which involves hundreds of colleges nationwide.

The idea behind this model is that students are more likely to complete a credential or transfer to a four-year institution if they have a clear roadmap of what courses they need to take, as well as receive support along the way to ensure they remain on track. Colleges that have adopted Guided Pathways report that their students are completing degrees faster and taking on more courses, according to the Community College Research Center.

PCC is focused on building a foundation for Guided Pathways and nesting its diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts within this process. The college is increasing data and technology capacity as part of this effort, and implementing a strategic enrollment management platform to monitor success.

“We have a lot of teams working tirelessly,” said Heather Lang, interim vice president of Student Affairs. “They are the ones who are engaged in a focused way. They are designing our strategies and mapping our pathways to achieve goals set out under our priorities.”

According to Lang, there are more than 20 teams across the college engaged with the development of YESS. In just over one year, the teams have logged hundreds of hours focused on strategic planning for YESS, presentations to the college community, and training and development for key stakeholders. The goal of such comprehensive labor is to implement Guided Pathways, as part of the YESS work, by June 2020.

Instructors Jamee Kristen (Sociology) and Chris Brooks (History) lead the Guided Pathways team. Last year, the team facilitated curriculum mapping in order to identify gaps and improve the overall coherence of PCC’s areas of study. This means connecting what faculty teach to what is required by areas of study, and assessing how advisors support students and instructors.
Another team is redesigning the general education program, or core classes students must take to earn their certificate or degree.

Before this process started, PCC could gauge outcomes for students only by completion numbers (number of degrees or certificates awarded). Establishing Guided Pathways allows students to be more strategic as they work on their academic and career goals.

“We can more easily track student achievement and can provide students with a clearer understanding of why they are taking a class, how they'll be assessed and how their class fits in with their academic and career objectives,” Brooks said.

Advisors will be able to track student progress in a meaningful way by intervening quickly if something goes wrong, saving students money and time.

“Faculty and advisors are in close contact and instead of waiting for students to initiate, they are proactively reaching out to them,” Kristen said. “There is a cultural shift happening. It’s really about being fully student-centered. Students are why we are here and who we serve.”

In YESS’ advising redesign project, staff have put in more than 1,700 hours of labor. As a result, new students have been participating in a revamped onboarding process since the summer. Staff also are planning to pilot an early alert system and assign advisors to students starting this fall.

“The reality is that students who don’t have clear academic or career goals are likely to take extra courses in our current system,” said Jason Pinkal, manager of Advising & Placement Support. “This means extra time, extra tuition, or leaving PCC without a degree or certificate. Guided Pathways will provide students with clear academic plans and necessary support resources to help them get, and stay, on track.”

There is a cultural shift happening. It’s really about being fully student-centered. Students are why we are here and who we serve. — Jamee Kristen
All in the Family

Mother-daughter alumna duo illustrates the power of education

When Portland Community College alumna Margarita Hernandez strode across the stage at Portland State University to accept her master’s degree, her daughter, Veyda, was earning her associate degree from PCC at the same time.

In the early 2000s, this day would have seemed impossible to have imagined for both.

Escaping Abuse

In 2000, Margarita and 2-year-old Veyda fled Puebla, Mexico and an abusive husband to move to Tualatin and start life anew. The young mother scrambled to find work to support herself and her daughter, initially landing a low-wage job selling corn in front of a store catering to the Latinx community.

Margarita enrolled Veyda in Oregon Head Start, which provides free preschool to kids under 5. It was through this organization that she was inspired to start her own educational journey.

“I was so fortunate to get assigned to a social worker,” said Margarita of Head Start. “This individual helped me navigate everything, and I was encouraged to go to school and think about what I wanted to do.”

Margarita signed up for non-credit basic education classes at a local church. She then transitioned to PCC and enrolled in the college’s English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Program while working as a teacher’s aide in local schools.

Immigration Process

Once she earned her ESOL certificate, Margarita began taking lower-division college courses and started the legal process of becoming a permanent U.S. resident. This required Margarita to return to Mexico and apply for a green card in order to receive an immigrant Visa – a process that took nearly two years while her daughter transitioned from middle school to high school.
PCC Launches Passion

When her immigration status stabilized, Margarita returned to Portland where her educational career blossomed. She took PCC classes at night as she worked during the day, eventually earning her associate degree and transferring to PSU.

Margarita returned to Head Start to work as a family advocate, helping parents create goals and plan their education.

As she began her master’s degree in Social Work at PSU, Margarita was hired as a transfer specialist with PCC’s Future Connect Scholarship Program to mentor low-income and first-generation students.

“When I work with these students, I see myself,” Margarita said. “This is why it is my dream job, because I have the chance to give back.”

Future Connect enrolls more than 600 first-generation or low-income students who receive scholarships, career guidance, and academic advising.

“Margarita’s story is just one aspect of her greatness, in my eyes,” said Josh Laurie, interim director of the Links Program that runs Future Connect. “Students and staff know that she works from the heart, and there is never a doubt with her when it comes to this.”

OSU Bound

Veyda transferred this fall to Oregon State University to study Kinesiology. The 21-year-old started at PCC three years ago when she was unsure about her educational path. At first she struggled with school, but with guidance from her mother and her instructors, Veyda discovered her passions.

“My mom and I really pushed each other to keep going and to keep studying, and not let bumps in the road slow us down,” Veyda recalled. “To get to this point feels pretty good. Every single struggle has made us tougher. When we get pushed down, we get back up and just keep going.”

“I saw my daughter only once in 18 months,” Margarita remembered. “It was very hard.”

While her mother was away, Veyda lived with her stepfather in Oregon. But the uncertainty of the immigration process for her mother, combined with the challenge of going to a new school and adjusting to adulthood, was a tough period in her life.

“I remember hugging her, and then watching her as I went up the airport’s escalator, waving goodbye,” said an emotional Veyda, who was able to briefly visit her mom in Mexico.
In 1974, at the age of 11, Kartmazov and his family immigrated to Israel from the Soviet Union. It was a time when it was nearly impossible for most citizens of the former USSR to leave that country. While in Israel, Kartmazov was introduced to metalwork after a chance encounter with the last practicing blacksmith in Jerusalem. The blacksmith's 50-year-old shop was located in an ancient stone building near a bustling market where the smell of spices mixed with the industrial aroma of the shop's machine oils, hot iron, and coal forge (type of hearth used to heat metals).

While a student at Hebrew University, Kartmazov took courses in East Asian studies. That interest led him to Japan where he immersed himself in its metal-smithing traditions. Japan's 400-year-old standards for quality, he said, "blew him away."

"My 12 years in Japan has certainly influenced me," he said. "I value simplicity, directness, performance, and cohesion in my work."

Today, he teaches new generations of blacksmiths the art of tool forging, passing on the skills he learned in Israel and Japan to PCC's Community Ed students.
Jenna Reinbold is on the forefront of a new area of study, and her employer has taken notice.

Reinbold, a Portland Community College graduate who is now an associate professor of religion at Colgate University, is examining the intersection of human rights and religion. Within this area she looks at how religion and law interact in the contemporary world, focusing on the separation of church and state in the U.S. She also explores the roles that religion and secularism play in the spread of universal human rights.

As a result of her research, Reinbold was designated “Professor of the Year” by Colgate’s student body. In addition, she was given the 2018 Award for Excellence in the Study of Religion by the American Academy of Religion (AAR) for her book “Seeing the Myth in Human Rights.”

Teaching religious studies at an elite private university in New York state wasn’t part of the plan when she embarked on her education. Her San Diego high school hadn’t offered robust academic support or guidance, and without a concrete educational plan, she felt rudderless. In her early 20s, Reinbold moved to Portland and enrolled at PCC with a plan of getting a degree, and capitalizing on the college’s affordability and accessibility.

“Money was the biggest hurdle for my education,” Reinbold remembered. “As a student, I would never have been able to afford to attend a small private liberal arts college.”

PCC was a really great introduction to the world of higher education. ... I had the drive, but I didn’t have everything figured out ahead of time, and PCC gave me the latitude to explore.

— Jenna Reinbold

She said PCC’s courses allowed her the time to explore what she wanted to do with her life. Reinbold went on to Portland State University where she took a series of classes that included religious studies. These courses created a passion in the subject and provided the impetus for her to earn a master’s degree and doctorate at the University of California, Santa Barbara centered on religious studies with an emphasis in global studies, law, and society.

Recalling her roots, Reinbold credits PCC for giving her the start she needed in her academic career.

“It was a really great introduction to the world of higher education,” she said. “The classes sparked my interest. I had the drive, but I didn’t have everything figured out ahead of time, and PCC gave me the latitude to explore.”

PCC provided Reinbold with the support she needed to further her education.

“I took a couple of writing classes that were fantastic, and it became my passion,” Reinbold recalled.
Getting ‘Rad’ Results

Radiography graduates have their sights set on jobs in healthcare

Portland Community College’s Medical Imaging Department is having quite the year.

The department, which is a critical resource to meeting industry demand for skilled workers, celebrated nearly 50 graduates this past spring and summer, with most having found employment at local clinics. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, overall employment of radiologic and MRI technologists is projected to grow 13 percent through 2026, faster than the average for all occupations.

“The job outlook is very promising in the medical imaging professions,” said Patti Winters, the department’s director.

One of these graduates is Jonah Scott, who used his passion for photography and electronics to frame a burgeoning career in medical imaging.

“I wanted to help people, and I knew this was the most direct and rewarding field,” Scott said. “PCC absolutely prepared me for my career and, if anything, over-prepared me. Instructors show you what is clinically accepted and the ideal at healthcare facilities. They throw you curveballs that you’ll see in the real world to show you how things can go wrong.”

The 30-year-old’s interest in the medical imaging field stemmed not only from photography, but also because of personal loss. The California native was forced to, “quickly grow up.” His parents faced addiction issues, his family was impoverished, and he shouldered much of the responsibility of caring for his mother as she underwent cancer treatments.

Scott needed a change of scenery to transform his life. At the prompting of friends, he moved to Eugene and found employment at a Radio Shack store, where he worked his way up to manager. When the company went bankrupt, he headed north to Portland and enrolled at PCC to jump-start his new career.
“Moving up here got me out of a position where I was going nowhere,” Scott said. “It allowed me to get my feet under me and start a new life.”

Scott works two days a week at Tuality Healthcare under his temporary license, providing x-ray services in the emergency room. Before graduation, he took rigorous classes covering anatomy, radiation, interventional radiology and patient care at the Sylvania Campus while also completing competency tests within his clinicals.

“Throughout this process, the goal is to earn these competencies,” Scott said. “It’s a perfect way to hone your skills.”

Scott, who represented his class with the Oregon Society of Radiologic Technologists, earned his associate degree in addition to his certificates. While Scott determines his specialty, he has participated in rotation at Tuality where he watches professionals work in the MRI, CT, Ultrasound, Nuclear Medicine, and Radiation Therapy departments.

“The coolest part of the PCC program is the work,” Scott said. “At the clinic, you are part of the trauma or ER teams and take x-rays. I’m in surgeries quite a bit and have to be scrubbed up. All of that is exciting because we are saving lives and solving problems. It feels good.”

Scott said instructors have been critical to his learning. Their knowledge of the industry standards and techniques have been invaluable to him.

Instructor Abbie Berman said Scott is very personable and is a quick study. She detailed how his engagement with his studies and enthusiasm within his cohort have been refreshing.

“As much as all students overcome challenges to finish a degree at PCC, Jonah truly showed determination throughout his time here, and approached every obstacle with a balanced and positive attitude that will surely serve him well in his future,” Berman said. ✦

Medical Imaging

Professionals work closely with physicians, nurses, allied health professionals and the public. The department offers an associate degree in Radiography, and certificates in MRI and CT imaging.

Visit: pcc.edu/programs/medical-imaging
History Corner

PCC Foundation Receives Large Private Gift

Led by local philanthropists Irving Levin and Stephanie Fowler, The Renaissance Foundation donated $500,000 to the Portland Community College Foundation’s “Campaign for Opportunity.” The grant, the largest private gift for the Foundation’s campaign, focuses on growing innovative workforce development programs at PCC and supports the SNAP 50/50 Training Employment Program (STEP) – a statewide consortium of community colleges led by PCC.

The gift will leverage additional federal reimbursement to support STEP. The program’s goal is to increase college access, completion, and career opportunities for low-income students around Oregon.

History Corner: Plastered!

Sculpture artist Rick True engages a group of PCC students and the public to “plaster” his body in one of his interactive workshops during the college’s Art Beat Festival in 1991. For 27 years (1988-2014), the annual arts festival showcased hundreds of presentations, performances, demonstrations and workshops by regional and local artists specializing in music, literature, sculpture, and painting. It left a legacy of permanent art collections across the PCC district. Yet, there’s no word on where True’s full-body plaster sculpture ended up.
Partner Awards Honor Employers

The college’s Employer Partnership Awards celebrated three organizations as PCC’s 2019 partners of the year. The categories for the winners included Small Business (Northwest Compounders), Large Business (Vigor Industrial), and Government/Non-Profit (Centro Cultural).

The number of employer partners from across PCC tallies more than 1,600 and represents a variety of fields and industries.

Andrew Lattanner Joins OMIC

Portland Community College selected Andrew Lattanner as the new director of the college’s workforce training center in Columbia County. The training facility is part of the regional Oregon Manufacturing Innovation Center (OMIC), a collaboration of industry, higher education and government organizations.

Lattanner is a transplant to Oregon from Washington, DC, where he served as the legislative director and deputy chief of staff for Indiana U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly. His background includes bringing diverse stakeholders together to address pressing challenges faced by communities, states and regions, as well as leading workforce development initiatives.
Green Machines

Team of students pitch environmentally friendly vending machines

If these students have their way, eco-friendly vending machines will be the wave of the future. A Portland Community College student inventor team pitched their green business concept at the finals of the InventOR competition. It is a statewide prototyping and inventing contest for Oregon collegiates and is sponsored by numerous organizations like The Lemelson Foundation.

PCC’s Adriana Garcia and sisters Claressa and Meranda Tracy-Manning presented the idea of Vend Renter, which is a smart vending machine that enables customers to rent or purchase a range of recreational and outdoor products like sports and outdoor equipment, first-aid kits, sunscreen, towels, and more. It’s also equipped with device-charging lockers to charge phones, tablets, and laptops, while broadcasting Wi-Fi.

“Being a part of this was amazing,” said Meranda. “Seeing Vend Renter in competition with all of these great inventions was inspiring. We had fun telling people about Vend Renter and explaining why it could make a difference in their lives and benefit the environment.”

Team Vend Renter met during the fall of 2018 in instructor Heidi Sickert’s “Intro to Entrepreneurship” class at PCC’s Cascade Campus in North Portland. Their final group project was to come up with a three-minute business pitch about a new, innovative product or service.

During a brainstorming session, the idea just came to them.

“My sister and I go on family outings as much as we can,” said Claressa, who is helping to raise Meranda’s two children. “We want the kids to have a healthy love and respect for outdoor time. So many times we either didn’t bring what we needed for the occasion, or found something we wanted to try out. We asked ourselves, ‘Wouldn’t it be nice if the fun things were already at the fun places?’”

Vend Renter was off and running. To compete in InventOR, the students needed to broaden and refine the concept for their invention, as well as hone their three-minute pitch and supplement it with a business plan, target markets, and estimates of production costs and eventual profit margins. Sickert lent her time and expertise to the team to navigate this process.

“Heidi is our hero,” Claressa said. “She was our guru and mentor. I don’t know if we could have gotten this far without her. She put in so much extra time outside of her class load to work with us.”
Being exposed to a competition like this is something that most people do not get to do, let alone students at a community college. — Adriana Garcia

With Sickert’s guidance, Team Vend Renter made it past the preliminary round of InventOR and earned a spot in the state finals held at Portland State University last June. As a reward, the team received $2,500 from InventOR to be used to refine their prototype and business concept for the state finals.

And in true PCC fashion, the college community stepped in to help, too. The college’s Small Business Development Center helped them wordsmith and refine their pitch while the Multimedia Program aided in the creation of a 3-D animated product rendering.

The team envisions Vend Renter machines deployed in a wide range of settings, each with a unique combination of goods and services for rent or sale. For example, at a campground, a customer could rent camping chairs, flameless cookers, solar torch lights, or purchase first-aid kits, towels, water purification products, toilet paper, insect repellent, and the like.

In addition, the machines are designed to leave a light environmental footprint. Once they go into production, they’ll be powered by solar panels and wind turbines built into the units themselves. By renting the same products over and over, the team said, it will allow those products to be used over their full “life span” rather than sitting unused or being thrown away.

When the InventOR state finals rolled around, the team was ready to go toe-to-toe with teams from other community colleges and universities across the state. While their pitch and product concept were strong, it wasn’t enough to bring home the title, which went to a team from the Oregon Institute of Technology.

“It was a great experience,” Garcia said. “Meeting so many people with great ideas and so much passion behind what they are trying to do was incredible. Being exposed to a competition like this is something that most people do not get to do, let alone students at a community college.”

Will people be able to take advantage of Vend Renter’s services in the not-too-distant future? They just might. The team is exploring their options in concert with the PCC Small Business Development Center, and is also investigating potential sources of start-up capital.

“Team Vend Renter is going to take this as far as we can go,” said Claressa. “We have bought the ticket and now we’re taking the ride. Who knows where we’ll end up?”

(Left to right) Claressa Tracy-Manning, Adriana Garcia, Meranda Tracy-Manning, and Heidi Sickert
MY PROJECT: “Help others to make the best of their lives, for the rest of their lives.”
– Marc Leonard, Personal Trainer. Find more Recreation and Wellness classes on pages 39-46.