Catio Craze

Students are learning how to design and construct outdoor spaces for felines

see inside cover
Catio by Design

It’s the latest craze that keeps cats and their owners connected and safe in the Great Outdoors

On Sept. 7, take a whirlwind Community Ed class that tours catios around Portland with Pamela Nelson-Gordon. The Portland Community College instructor will lead discussions about the designs and details at each location. At the end of the tour, she will talk about design elements and the construction methods used to create them.

Catios are a big deal in Portland. According to data from the Cats Safe at Home organization, there are an estimated 500 catios or more in the city. The Feral Cat Coalition of Oregon partnered with the Audubon Society of Portland in creating this popular tour in 2013.

“We are pleased to see catios growing in popularity in the Portland region and beyond,” said Meg Buckley, project manager for Cats Safe at Home. “When a safe outdoor enclosure is provided, you are giving your kitty fresh air and enrichment, and you are keeping both your cat and local wildlife safe.”

Nelson-Gordon, who also teaches summer classes in drywall, garden trellises and more, caught on to the catio phenomenon while rescuing four cats through the Feral Cat Coalition. With a background in building construction, she plans to teach additional non-credit courses to demonstrate how to design and construct their own catios.

See pages 30 – 31 for Community Ed Home and Garden classes, including Catio Design and Construction.

For more details on catios, visit CatsSafeAtHome.org.

CORRECTION: In the spring edition, an incorrect photo of Hillsboro Aero Academy CEO Jon Hay (pictured), was associated with his bio announcing him as a 2019 Diamond Alum. The correct photo and bio can be read at pcc.edu. We regret the error.
Dear Readers,

Welcome to another edition of Portland Community College’s “Communities” Magazine! In this issue, we explore the value of a good education. From exceptional instruction to dedicated student support, PCC is rich with examples that showcase its commitment to academic excellence.

You’ll meet Steven Black, a nationally rated fire prevention trainer and long-time fire protection instructor. He is joined by our accounting faculty Usha Ramanujam, whose life experience influences the support she gives to students.

In addition to great faculty, this issue of “Communities” focuses on our students. Take Jennifer Thornton and Audrey Broussard, former high school dropouts who returned to college and are about to graduate as ophthalmic medical technicians. Or alumni Mike Campbell and Korey Theberge, who overcame adversity to graduate from our engineering program, and now have great careers with Intel.

These are exciting times for the college. The PCC Foundation has just launched its “Campaign for Opportunity” to provide thousands of students with the support they need to complete their education. The campaign’s fundraising will target access and success for our students, the Future Connect Scholarship Program, critical workforce initiatives, and hunger and homelessness – issues that, unfortunately, many of our students face.

Higher education is the bridge to opportunity for our students, and one that contributes to making our community stronger, more skilled and better able to build on its success. I see this magic unfold daily by way of the inspiring students, faculty, staff and community partners I meet – and who you’ll read about in this issue of “Communities.” Please enjoy!

Sincerely,
Mark Mitsui

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A value of a good education can be quantified by the excellence of an institution’s faculty. At Portland Community College, Fire Protection Technology instructor Steven Black is a good example.

Black’s excellence isn’t just teaching fire protection in a classroom, but practicing it in the real world, too. Black is in his ninth year as a PCC instructor, and since 2002 he has worked as the B-shift captain and training officer for the Cornelius Fire Department in Washington County. That means he’s on fire calls and assisting with emergencies in his community, or busy instructing best practices of fire suppression and safety.

At PCC, he uses this real-world experience to instruct students in “Major Emergency Tactics and Strategy,” “Fire Program Skills Academy,” and “Pumper Operator Academy” classes, among others. Black also works for the National Fire Academy as a contract instructor, which allows him to travel to various locations across the country to teach health and safety, and incident safety officer classes.

“I get the privilege of working with many high-character men and women from various backgrounds and fire departments in an environment where we can discuss how we want to shape the future of our occupation,” said Black, who is a National Fire Prevention Association-rated officer, instructor and investigator. “The other thing that stands out to me is that I get a short moment in time where I can be a small piece in helping someone pursue their dream.”
The college’s Fire Protection Technology Program is made up of instructors from fire departments across Oregon and Washington. Instructors come from both large metropolitan departments, as well as small and rural ones.

“One instructor might be an expert in high-rise emergencies, while another is an expert in wildland fires,” Black said. “I believe that our students get real-life, hands-on skills while working with industry experts.”

Black and his fellow instructors use a wide range of approaches, including group learning, behavioral skills conditioning, real-world experiences, and case study review. Students also review calls with EMS and fire in a safe environment of the classroom, as well as practice donning personal protective equipment and self-contained breathing gear.

“A student could expect to find themselves cutting a car one day for a crash victim scenario or entering a burning building to learn about fire attack,” he said. “Firefighting is a team sport, and students will make friends that they will keep for life.”

Black said students can move onto a career with a fire department at the conclusion of the academy and can be hired as a probationary firefighter earning between $55,000 to $75,000 per year.

Black was one of those students. He earned his associate degree in Fire Protection Technology from PCC, which led to getting his bachelor’s degree in Fire Service Administration from Eastern Oregon University. He is currently working on his master’s degree in Adult Education and Technical Training from Colorado State University.

As a long-time instructor and firefighter, Black knows on a deeply personal level the change that happens to trainees as they journey through the fire protection program.

“My favorite part is watching the transformation that takes place when the students are tentative and shy with equipment and tasks, to when they become emboldened and want more responsibility,” Black said. “This becomes most apparent on a live fire day. After they’ve accomplished their first burn, you can almost see their expression change to ‘I can do this.’”

Fire Protection Technology

It prepares students for a rewarding firefighting career, by training them on the latest equipment and learning from expert instructors. Visit: pcc.edu/programs/fire-protection

“My favorite part is watching the transformation that takes place when the students are tentative and shy with equipment and tasks. ... After they’ve accomplished their first burn, you can almost see their expression change to ‘I can do this.’”

— Steven Black
Education can change people’s lives for the better. Take Jennifer Thornton and Audrey Broussard, who will graduate from the Ophthalmic Medical Technology (OMT) Program.

They are about to launch careers working as assistants to eye physicians and surgeons. Both are high school dropouts who were forced to juggle parenthood with working full-time jobs.

Broussard dropped out of high school at age 16, and got married young. “For a long time I told myself I couldn’t go back to school because I wasn’t capable,” she explained. “I’d heard it my entire life, so I believed it.”

Thornton made it through six months at Jefferson High School, then tried night school at Grant before dropping out and enrolling in beauty school.

In time, they found jobs that met their needs, and even earned their GEDs, but neither felt that they’d found a career.

Focused on Making a Change

Broussard enrolled at Portland Community College because she wanted to find a career that helped people and melded her visual and technical skills. About the same time, Thornton started at PCC because she wanted to transition to a job in health care that had security. She decided to take a class as a test, and she aced it.

“I was so proud of myself after being gone for so long,” Thornton said. “I thought, ‘Oh my god, I’m doing this.'”

Thornton and Broussard discovered the OMT program and enrolled. As students training to be OMT Technicians, they are learning how to take medical histories, perform diagnostic tests, record ocular measurements and photograph the inside of a patient’s eye.

Enjoying the Sites

The two students found the opportunity to train at different practicum sites invaluable. Students get to work at five different sites for three-month stints as part of their ophthalmic medical studies.

“It’s great because it helps you decide where you want to work afterwards,” said Broussard. “You get to try them all out and discover which is the best fit for you. It is so amazing to be able to be out in the field working with patients.”

Adeline Stone, the department chair for OMT, said, “(The practicum sites) set our program apart. This program is beneficial both for the students and for our partner clinics. The clinics have a huge need for what we do.”
Ophthalmic Medical Technology

It’s the only associate degree program of its kind in the western United States at the intermediate training level as an ophthalmic technician. It boasts a high job placement rate for students within three months of graduation. Visit: pcc.edu/programs/ophthalmic

Foundation for Great Careers

Ophthalmic Medical Technology is the only accredited associate degree program of its kind on the West Coast. Due to an aging population that needs health care, there is a predicted 25-percent increase in the need for technicians during the next three years.

“This program is a direct path to having a career, because of how in-demand OMT technicians are, and PCC graduates in particular,” Thornton said. “We typically get hired in our last term.”

The OMT Program usually receives between 35 – 45 applications for 24 – 28 spots in the program every year. With greater funding from the state, the college could grow programs like this and offer more spots, providing more graduates with skills for a living wage job and economic mobility.

“My favorite part is that we’re student-focused and changing lives,” Stone said. “The students and faculty are in this field because they want to help people.”

Luciana Diniz was born and raised in the city of Santos, in the Brazilian state of São Paulo.

The city is famous for producing soccer legends Pelé and Neymar and for being a musical hot-spot for samba, bossa nova, choro, opera, tango, and fado. This latter part has provided Diniz with fond memories of her youth.

“When I was a child, my father would get home from work and turn the music on,” Diaz said. “We would play and sing at family gatherings until two or three in the morning, and he made sure we only went to restaurants with good live music.”

Diniz has used that love of song to create the non-credit course “Portuguese Through Music” at Portland Community College. The Community Education class typically occurs during spring term, and combines her love of language with her passion for tunes. Students learn the vocabulary of Portuguese while listening to sounds from Brazil’s finest musicians.

This course is the latest project for Diniz, who is a former department chair and current full-time PCC instructor for the English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Program.

Diniz moved to Portland 12 years ago after earning a doctorate in Applied Linguistics from Georgia State University. She was surprised to discover Portland has a small-yet-vibrant Brazilian food scene. Restaurants and grocery stores featuring Brazilian sections have been a revelation.

She said there’s even a local company offering homemade Brazilian food that can be delivered to your house.

In addition to the food, Portland is home to a tight-knit Brazilian music community of choro groups, bossa nova enthusiasts, and a large-scale Carnivale-style drum ensemble called, “Bloco Alegria.”

“Even though most of my family is in Brazil, I was happy to be able to find culture, food, and music that are comforting and make me feel at home in Portland,” Diniz said.

Diniz said it’s been a dream come true to be in a position to introduce people to her Portuguese language in a fun and innovative way, as well as teach motivated ESOL students English and help them acclimate to America.

“I admire each of my students for valuing education and making it a priority in their lives,” she said.

Community Ed offers 15 language courses this summer. For a full list, visit pages 33 – 37.
Press start on your new career path by visiting pcc.edu/thinkpccfirst
Good Accounting

In Usha Ramanujam’s accounting classroom, support and career guidance are the norm

A successful academic journey can’t happen without plenty of support outside the classroom.

Take the Business Administration Program at Portland Community College. In the program students get support and career guidance, in addition to excellent faculty and curriculum.

Usha Ramanujam teaches accounting, which is a core course in the program. Armed with an associate degree or short-term certificate from PCC in accounting, graduates can land promising positions with growth potential and can transfer credits to great universities at a fraction of the cost.

“Accounting isn’t just number crunching,” said Ramanujam, who has been at the college since 2005. “It needs technological competence, like working with data and programs, and having soft skills to complement them. With this associate degree, students are ready to enter the workforce.”

However, in addition to teaching, Ramanujam advises students on their academic and professional careers. This assistance underscores just how critical it is for students to have the support they need to move through the program and graduate.

“For first-generation college students, feeling supported makes all the difference in the world,” she said. “It’s time wasted if they get shuffled from one general advisor to another. There are a lot of steps ahead of them, and connecting them to the right people at the right time is crucial.”

Ramanujam grew up in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, in India. Her father was a judge, which meant the family moved often as he was assigned to different regions of the country. At the age of 19, she started working while simultaneously earning her first master’s degree in business. In 1988, she left for America to earn her second master’s, in accounting, at The State University of New York. After working at various positions with IBM across the country, Ramanujam, her husband, and their children settled in Portland, where she completed the Certified Public Accountant examination.

“From my experience, I definitely know what PCC students are going through,” she said. “They are working hard to support their families while in college, which I’ve done myself.”

What bit of advice does she have for prospective students? She said to develop your skills with a world view.

“In the workplace, you collaborate with culturally diverse groups of people,” Ramanujam said. “Global cultural competency is an essential skill needed in today’s job market.”

Business Administration Program

It offers associate degrees in accounting, management, marketing and business administration. Credits transfer to a four-year college or university for bachelor degrees in business. Visit: pcc.edu/programs/business
An Electrifying Education

Intel employees credit the Electronic Engineering Program for sparking passions

Years ago, Mike Campbell left Texas for the blue skies of Alaska to be a fisherman. But a funny thing happened along the way: His car broke down on Interstate-5, near Wilsonville. Stuck in the Portland area, Campbell decided to stay and find work.

As luck would have it, he found a job as an industrial maintenance technician where he could apply his knack for fixing things. In this role, he spent the next two decades working for a variety of companies, including PepsiCo.

“I wasn’t planning to stop in Oregon, but here I am,” he laughed.

For Campbell, life as an industrial tech was great until 2008, when he injured his back.

“It was a rough five years of trying to strengthen my back and recuperate,” admitted Campbell, who today is 25-percent disabled. “Three surgeries didn’t work, and I decided to look to see what else I could do.”

Living off disability insurance payments, he needed to find a new career. Campbell, a high school dropout, turned to Portland Community College to earn his GED and take three remedial math courses to improve his placement into the college’s Electronics Engineering Technology Program.
\begin{quote}
“I looked at programming degrees, and PCC covered all the bases,” he said. “The EET degree gave me a wider variety of training specialties.”
\end{quote}

Joining Campbell in PCC’s career-technical program was Korey Theberge. He became fascinated with engineering and technology at a young age when he would take apart his home computers and work on the components. His interest led him to pursue as many engineering labs at Sherwood High School as he could to strengthen his skills. But his family had limited finances, and going to college after high school seemed like a dream.

“I was trying to figure out what to do with my life,” Theberge said. “Neither of my parents went to college, nor did we have money for school for me and my sister. But I was really interested in technology and electricity. I heard PCC was a great place to start your degree, and it’s true.”

The EET program at the Sylvania Campus in Southwest Portland was perfect for both Therberge and Campbell. The breadth of courses, industry affiliations, and resources enabled them to begin their careers in an innovative field. They got to put their skills to the test in challenging labs, including one that showed them how to build and program robots.

Campbell, 39, and Theberge, 28, have another thing in common other than being PCC alumni. The two EET graduates are Intel Corp employees. Theberge works in research and development, while Campbell is an employee in the fabrication unit.

“People ask me what I do, and I tell them I’ve probably touched a component in your iPad, cell phone, or your computer,” Campbell said. Together they collaborate to help produce Intel’s latest technology and products.

“Intel looks to Portland Community College as a rich pipeline of talent to our Oregon-based manufacturing facilities,” said Kevin Foster, Intel’s college relations manager and member of the EET advisory board. “We value this important relationship with PCC.”

And Intel isn’t alone in its admiration; the EET program is valued by many local companies.

“We have had great success hiring graduates of PCC,” said Jürgen Lindner, general manager of Micro Systems Engineering, Inc. “Graduates are prepared to work in the electronics field and are industry-ready thanks to the robust curriculum that provides soft skill training while building solid technical skills.”

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Electronic Engineering Technology

The established program gives graduates skills to earn jobs or the foundation to pursue advanced degrees. Associate degrees and short-term certificates available.

Visit: pcc.edu/programs/electronic-engineering
Printing Excellence

President Mark Mitsui spent spring term visiting classrooms around the college to honor excellence in teaching. One of his visits was to instructor Tara Murino-Brault’s “Screenprinting” class at the Cascade Campus. In her “Fab Lab,” the affable leader tried his hand at creating an artistic print along with her students during a class.

Mitsui’s visit came shortly after being chosen as one of Portland’s “2018 Top 12 Executives” by the Portland Business Journal. He was selected for his visionary leadership, fostering excellence in instruction, and helping to establish initiatives that build opportunity and equitable student success. The competition was fierce as nearly 100 contenders, from a variety of industries, were under consideration by the Portland Business Journal’s editorial team.

History Corner

Building an Accessible Future

Built in the mid-1970s, the Rock Creek Campus was created to serve as an educational beacon for a growing rural Washington County.

Today, the campus is a critical resource for the 18,000 annual students who take advantage of its 14 career-technical and lower division transfer credit programs. Its 260-acre campus includes woodlands, wetlands and grassland, a working farm that supports student learning, and a 3.6 acre learning garden that fosters sustainability and healthy eating. About 66 percent of Rock Creek students enroll in college transfer courses, and 18 percent enroll in CTE programs.

It’s the kind of educational service that founding PCC President Amo DeBernardis (left) envisioned back in the 1970s.
Panthers on the Prowl in Salem

This past spring, 117 advocates of Portland Community College attended the college’s “Day at the Capitol” in Salem to tell their PCC story to legislators and thank them for investing in higher education. As the largest institution of higher education in the state, PCC creates opportunities for nearly 71,000 students each year, with many of them being the first in their families to attend college.

The day featured 11 teams of advocates, who met with 44 state representatives and senators. They got to tell the legislators about the major impact community colleges have on their communities. This lobbying event is designed to build awareness of the special role community colleges play in serving the state’s educational needs, and to provide Oregon’s community colleges with enough funding to keep tuition flat, offer robust student support services, and scale up needed career-technical education programs to meet industry needs.
Ben Buswell is changing the way people see their environments, other people, and how they look at his art.

“People come back the following term after taking my class and have said, ‘Oh I can’t look at people’s faces on the bus the same way anymore,’” he said. “And I think that is awesome.”

For the past 13 years, Buswell has taught sculpture and drawing courses at the Rock Creek Campus in Washington County. He challenges students to rethink how they view their surroundings and create a piece of art.

“It’s not about perfection,” said Buswell, who shares with students that he can understand who they are by how they create art.

“I feel that a lot of people come to school with a specific goal of having to pass their classes to graduate and make money. I can get in the way of that a little bit by letting them go and explore and create without those pressures, but still gain skills like problem solving. Having a little bit of that in your life is okay and healthy.”

How Buswell makes his art explains a lot about him, too – that he’s pretty talented. His photographic 3-D installations are installed at Western Oregon University and Oregon Health & Science’s Collaborative Life Sciences Building, as well as in Hollywood filmmaker Jan de Bont’s home.

As the viewer moves to look at one of Buswell’s photo installations, the light changes and creates movement physically across the photos. He alters the symbolic value of the images through texturing to give them back their tactility and presence with the viewer.

“My work is based on looking at the line between images and objects, and how the differences between them communicate with us,” Buswell explained.

Buswell, who also teaches metal casting, is a 2015 Hallie Ford Fellow in the Visual Arts and is a two-time recipient of the Career Opportunity Grant from the Oregon Arts Commission and Ford Family Foundation. His reputation is such that he was profiled by OPB’s “Oregon Art Beat” that showcased his process.

As great as all that is for Buswell, his passion remains in the classroom.

“The thing I enjoy about teaching the most is seeing the light turn on in students,” he said. “Most of our students aren’t necessarily art students. To show them a technique or a way of thinking that all of sudden opens up the world to them is the best part of teaching, for me.”

Art courses are offered at all of the college’s four comprehensive campuses: Cascade, Rock Creek, Southeast, and Sylvania. It provides technical, aesthetic, communication, and problem-solving skills applicable to many career opportunities.

View: pcc.edu/programs/art
A ‘Campaign for Opportunity’

The PCC Foundation’s fundraising initiative to boost student success

After her husband left her and their eight children, Tera Roberts needed a path to opportunity.

In the mid 2000s, Roberts was 35 and her children were all under the age of 16 years old, living in the rural timber town of Vernonia. She had been married right out of high school and stayed at home with her kids while her husband worked. She had no idea how she was going to keep her family afloat on her own.

Roberts turned to Portland Community College where she found not only that path for herself, but for her whole family. The “Campaign for Opportunity,” the PCC Foundation’s first-ever philanthropic campaign, seeks to raise $30 million to give students like Roberts and her children a better chance at success.

The “Campaign for Opportunity” supports Oregon’s largest institution of higher education, enrolling about 71,000 students annually. The campaign will prioritize funding for scholarships and instruction; enhance the successful Future Connect Program that serves under-represented students; build support for workforce programs; and combat student hunger and housing insecurity.

“With philanthropic support, PCC can close the gap for people who are being left behind and open the door to a more equitable, sustainable future for individuals, families, our workforce, and our region,” said Ann Prater, executive director of the PCC Foundation.

It did for Tera Roberts. The day after her husband left, Roberts went straight to PCC and asked for help. In one day, she completed her financial aid application (FAFSA), took her placement tests, and enrolled in classes. In 24 hours, she became the first person in her family to attend college, and would go on to use a PCC Foundation scholarship to get by and succeed.

Today, Roberts has a doctorate in Nursing from Oregon Health & Science University and works at the Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center in Hillsboro. Many of her children started taking classes at PCC while still in high school, and most are pursuing advanced degrees. Two of her children are currently teaching at PCC.

“I don’t know where I’d be if it weren’t for PCC,” Roberts said. “I knew I was on the right path, pursuing a better life for me and my family. PCC gave my family the opportunity we needed to move ourselves forward.”

Campbell for Opportunity

The PCC Foundation’s first comprehensive fundraising campaign has the goal to give students like Tera Roberts and her family a better chance at success through financial support. The four priorities are:

- Increase Access & Success
- Sustain the Future Connect Program
- Grow Workforce Program Support
- Support Urgent Student Need

To learn more: pcc.edu/campaignforopportunity
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.