Christina Niemi didn’t just want to be good at her job, she wanted to be great. So when she decided to pursue a career in the airline industry, she chose PCC for her studies in Aviation Maintenance Technology.

“The classes were fascinating and all the instructors worked in the industry. One was in the navy and another was an African bush pilot. They explained things from one end of the spectrum to the other.”

Christina Niemi  
PCC Graduate, Aviation Maintenance Technology  
Line Mechanic, Horizon Airlines

We’re all about your future.  
www.pcc.edu

Working? Raising a family?

Weekend College makes its debut at the Cascade Campus this Spring Term. It’s aimed at people with day jobs, people with families – people like you who have a hard time attending class at regular hours.

Art | Biology | Business Administration | Computer Applications | Chemistry | Criminal Justice | Economics | Education | History | Math | Multimedia |

For a complete listing of courses and times, visit www.pcc.edu/weekend.
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spring • kaleidoscope • 2007

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As we start off 2007 many of us at PCC are busy working with our legislative and community leaders to strengthen Oregon’s education system. For the past six years, Oregon has balanced the state’s budget by cutting funding to education, making it more difficult for students to succeed in high school and more expensive for students to enroll in public colleges and universities.

At the college level, these cuts have resulted in serious reductions in post-secondary education programs and untenably large increases in tuition and fees. Thousands of students have been shut out of higher education.

I hope our residents and students will join us in demanding better funding for all public education, including community colleges. Restoring state support to enable colleges to enroll more students, ensure student success in college and provide Oregonians access to family wage jobs is critically important to all of us.

As you read this issue of kaleidoscope you’ll see the important role PCC plays in helping to strengthen our economy – today and in the future. PCC does this through our many professional technical programs that directly respond to businesses’ need for highly skilled workers. PCC’s Multimedia program, which is training animators and video editors for the “new media” industry, is just one example. PCC also supports the economic vitality of our community through our college transfer programs, which offer an affordable, high quality route to obtaining the first two years of a bachelor’s degree. Thousands of PCC students transfer each year and tell us that PCC has given them the tools to succeed at a university.

Please take time to read the story about the Sylvania Campus and the improvements made with the November 2000 bond measure. Using taxpayer dollars wisely, we upgraded and updated existing facilities while adding two new buildings with energy efficient and sustainable features.

Finally, in the last seven months PCC lost two individuals who were incredibly committed to the college. Last summer longtime art instructor Richard Helzer passed away suddenly. His loss is felt across Rock Creek campus where he was one of the founding faculty members. Last month Doreen Margoloin, PCC’s Board Chair, died after a brief illness. Her dedication to community colleges both nationally and statewide will long be remembered.

I highlight only several of the wonderful stories inside this issue. In the middle of the magazine you’ll find the Community Education Schedule with hundreds of courses offered for the spring term. As always, remember to say in touch with PCC by visiting www.pcc.edu.

Sincerely yours,

Preston Pulliams
District President
Navy he landed in the Pacific Northwest and enrolled at Portland Community College's Cascade Campus. He balanced classes and full-time work for the Oregon Employment Department. In 1981 Brooks and his wife, Margaret founded S. Brooks and Associates, Inc., an employment services company. Six years later he launched the Oregon Association for Minority Entrepreneurs, which promotes economic development for ethnic minorities. In July he takes over as chair of the Portland Business Alliance where he’s been on the board for more than two decades. To relax and unwind, Brooks, 59, and Margaret, escape to the Oregon Coast where they have a home.

Q. What years did you attend Portland Community College?

Q. Why did you choose PCC?
A. I chose PCC for several reasons. As a resident of Northeast Portland, employed full time, it was important that I not use my limited time for travel. Attending PCC allowed me to spend my non-work hours in study. PCC also offered counseling and support to veterans, facilitating my transition from military to civilian life. And finally, PCC offered and continues to offer demographically diverse instructors.

Q. Name some of your favorite classes.
A. Philosophy – critical thinking, real estate, anthropology and sociology.

Q. What was your favorite part of the campus?
A. The library.

Q. Did you transfer to a four-year university?
A. In September 1977, I received an Associate of Arts in General Studies with a business emphasis from PCC. I transferred to Portland State University, where I received a Bachelor of Science in Business with a Minor in Black Studies. I entered the Master’s program in Urban Planning.

Q. Any advice for young college students now at PCC?
A. Take advantage of the wonderful staff and faculty that are willing to advise and counsel you.

Q. Is there anything you learned at PCC that helps you in your business today?
A. I continue to put into use the hands-on accounting and critical thinking skills I learned at PCC.
As voters headed to the polls back in 2000 to decide the Portland Community College bond measure, the Sylvania Campus had two primary needs: more classroom space and financing for deferred maintenance projects.

Portland residents responded positively and six years later two new buildings appear on the 39-year-old campus and dozens of classrooms have been upgraded. Plenty more work took place below and within every building on campus as crews revamped everything from electrical systems to air conditioning and heating units.

Sylvania’s share of the $144 million bond measure was about $35 million, resulting in the Technology Classroom Building – a direct response to the classroom space dilemma – and the College Services Building, which opened last fall and is headquarters for the district’s physical plant offices, parking and transportation, public safety and grounds and maintenance.

The three-story technology building, which opened in 2004, has eight classrooms on the main floor and seven state-of-the-art computer labs and faculty offices on the second floor. Distance education offices fill the lower level. The main floor is an atrium with an indoor garden, a fountain sculpture and casual seating areas. With a nod to energy conservation, the main floor is warmed by overflow heat from individual classrooms.

“We designed it to catch the heat on its way out,” said Grant Bennett, project manager for the physical plant department who oversaw campus improvements.

In fact, the technology building, with its energy efficiency and sustainable features, recently earned an award from the American Institute of Architects for the facility’s overall design.

In the three-story College Services Building the color to remember is green as the facility was built with engineered wood (scraps of wood) and features efficient natural lighting with a polycarbonate wall system. To address summer sun, light shelves were attached to the outside windows, allowing sun rays to bounce off them instead of windows.

A significant amount of work has been done on virtually every campus building. Nearly 80 classrooms across the campus have been refurbished with new ceilings, lighting, carpet and air conditioning. The general purpose classrooms are outfitted with basic tables and chairs and each room has a podium where faculty members can plug in laptop computers and show images on a nearby whiteboard.

Other campus improvements include gutting and renovating the main floor of the Health Technology Building and refurbishing dental, nursing and early childhood education classrooms and labs. The art history and film studies room in the Communication Technology Building was renovated and the upper floor of the Science and Technology Building was remodeled.

Emergency lighting and fire sprinklers were improved in every building and generators were installed. Now every building has back-up power during an emergency response.

Two other significant “firsts”: Elevators were added to some facilities and now every floor of every building is accessible by an elevator. In addition, every building now has air conditioning.
French instructor Heidi Cropsey has taught at Portland Community College for nearly 20 years and last fall she was honored by the Confederation in Oregon of Foreign Language Teachers as its Outstanding Teacher at the college level. Cropsey was born in Corvallis and as a child moved with her family to Peru. As an adult, she’s lived in Scotland, London, France and Mexico. She speaks fluent French and Spanish.

I was once the proverbial starving student, not unlike many of my own students. One day, I went to the registrar’s office to pay my tuition, for which I had sacrificed virtually everything in an already tight budget, only to discover that I had miscalculated. There had been an increase, really a nominal amount, but what seemed a crushing, insurmountable obstacle to my dreams. I considered myself a good student, and this apparent setback seemed so unfair, that I reacted viscerally and tears welled up in my eyes. The lady processing my application took pity on me and an exception was made. It was an act of kindness from someone who did not know me.

As a teacher I try to be attuned not only to whether my students are mastering their subject, but also to the circumstances of their lives. Teaching a two-year sequence in a foreign language helps me to get to know my students in a way that teaching a one-quarter class does not.

“I am proud to be part of an institution that serves as a bridge between high school and the university.”

Students interact in French, and even perform in French depending on their talents. Over the years my students have sung French songs (from popular to operatic), read and acted out poems in French, danced traditional French dances, played musical instruments, and written and performed a puppet play. The goal is for students to attain oral proficiency, develop grammatical competence, literacy and intercultural awareness, and have a foundation for future academic development, travel and work. I have great expectations of my students.

I also know that for many of them the opportunity of a college education can be a daunting challenge. During my college years a professor who had a reputation for expecting much from his students recommended me for a fellowship, Assistance Étrangère, which allowed me to study and teach in Paris. I have set up an emergency fund for students unable to pay the tuition for their French courses. I’ve also used the informal mechanism of recommendations to help students realize their dreams.

My students may not realize that their teacher owes a debt of gratitude to numerous people, that small acts of kindness have made enormous impacts on my life, and that the teaching profession is collaborative. If I perform well in class, it is because I have the support of other teachers and the institutions’ anonymous network of technical staff, librarians, secretaries and administrators. I have been blessed by exceptional students, people of excellent character, who honor me by pursuing their dreams.
Growing up as a teenager in Sacramento, Calif., Nan Poppe never considered education as a career choice. She was drawn to social work, helping others get back on their feet after misfortunes.

After college, she made a self discovery.

“What I realized is the best way to help someone is to give them an education,” she said. “That’s what empowers people to change their lives.”

She certainly knows how to empower folks as she’s a national expert on how underrepresented populations can succeed in college. And because of her success with alternative high school students, she helped secure more than $13 million in grants from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to replicate PCC’s Gateway to College model nationwide.

“She’s a national leader on workforce, economic development, and adult literacy issues and is an avid believer in providing educational and training opportunities to Oregonians so they have access to high skilled, liveable wage jobs.”

Now as President of PCC’s Extended Learning Campus she oversees workforce training, community education, adult education and the growing college transfer program at Southeast Center.

For Poppe, this “dream job” is all about the students. Her focus never wavers.

She says that often dislocated workers, immigrants and welfare recipients don’t see themselves as college-bound.

“For a lot of people their dreams don’t get nourished,” she said. “But we can help people rewrite their stories. It’s really inspiring.”

After earning a degree from San Diego State University in the 1970s, Poppe headed to Eugene and worked for the county’s social service agency. She then landed a job at Lane Community College and launched a program to retrain dislocated workers just as the timber crisis was unfolding, forcing many employees out of jobs.

After five years she moved to Mt. Hood Community College and started the Steps to Success welfare-to-work program, now co-operated by Mt. Hood and PCC. She basically built the program from scratch as Oregon was ahead of the national push to reform welfare. The program won recognition as being one of the best in the country, and she stayed at Mt. Hood for a decade.

Along the way she earned a master’s degree in social work from California State University, Fresno and a doctorate in education from Oregon State University.

In August 1998 she arrived at PCC, first as Dean of Instruction for the Cascade Open Campus. In 2003, she took over the Extended Learning Campus, which is now headquartered at the Southeast Center. She’s also held stints as interim president at the Cascade Campus and district vice president for academic and student affairs.

Poppe puts in long hours but also believes in balance and she sets an example for her employees to work hard but also enjoy life. For her that enjoyment comes from hiking, skiing, biking and living aboard a house boat across from Sauvie Island.
Richard Helzer took on many roles during his 37-year career with Portland Community College. He taught ceramics at Sylvania, opened the art department at Rock Creek, oversaw the gallery, served as a mentor to young faculty members and guided thousands of students through sculpture, drawing and painting classes.

Colleagues recount the many hats he wore during his tenure but more often they speak of his friendship, the comic relief and optimism he provided during challenging times, the impish smile always on his face and his approachable style that always welcomed students and staff.

"When I visited his classroom, two things were always apparent: he was having a great time and his students were as well," said art department chair Mark Andres, who was hired by Helzer about 15 years ago. "He knew that having artists working on their own things in front of students made for a rich educational experience. If I walked by the sculpture studio I'd often hear the steady sound of Dick's chisel carving stone. If I stopped to look in, he'd always make time to show me what he was working on. That rich, dynamic studio atmosphere was something Dick cultivated."

His sudden death while mowing the grass on June 30, 2006 shocked the entire campus community. He was 66. Just four months later Sharon, his wife of 45 years, died of cancer at the age of 65.

Many consider Helzer, who once was the "one-man band" and sole art instructor in the early days at Rock Creek, the steward of the department.

"What I miss the most about Dick is the institutional memory he could provide on any issue in the art department," said Richey Bellinger, a ceramics instructor. "He was wonderfully positive and had this incredible energy and his love of teaching was obvious."

In his honor the Rock Creek gallery was renamed the Helzer Art Gallery last fall. His work was the inaugural exhibit in the newly named gallery and another show displayed art pieces from his former students.

Helzer's sculptures appear across the campus and include a wall relief of textured wood and copper in Building 7 and two herons made of welded metal outside the greenhouses. Another notable piece of work is the large wooden crucifix created for the Chapel of Christ the Teacher at the University of Portland – a work he considered one of the most challenging. His art is displayed in private collections throughout California, Texas, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, New York and London.

Aside from work, Helzer loved being outdoors. He was a regular PCC team member for the Hood to Coast Relay who often kept his colleagues going during the race with laughter and jokes. He gardened and built a house for his family – a daughter, son, son-in-law, daughter-in-law and three grandchildren – in Lincoln City. He and his wife frequently traveled, most recently to Hawaii last March where they renewed their wedding vows.

Helzer touched many lives during his time at Rock Creek, Andres added. "He gave his life to this institution. You can’t talk about the art department without his name being at the top."
Richard and Sharon Helzer’s wish to continue helping students has resulted in the largest donation ever from an individual to PCC. Shortly before her death in November, Sharon Helzer gave the PCC Foundation $105,000. The Richard Helzer Endowed Memorial Scholarship will pay for tuition, books and art supplies for a second-year art student. The Sharon L. Helzer Endowed Memorial Scholarship will provide support for a second-year nursing student. Sharon Helzer was a retired nurse.

“Thanks to the Helzer family this donation will provide scholarships for many PCC students in the years to come,” said PCC District President Preston Pulliams. “The years Dick worked at Rock Creek and the countless students he taught will never be forgotten. His legacy will live on for generations.”

Kim Galloway, the Helzer’s daughter, said that outside his family, art and teaching were the most important things in her dad’s life.

“Originally my father was supposed to go into the family business (garbage hauling) but he stood up to his father to pursue his passion,” said Galloway, adding that Dick Helzer had planned to retire later this year. “He was so invested in the art program at Rock Creek and the art gallery and he often talked about creating an endowment for future students.”

For more information on donations to the Helzer scholarships or the PCC Foundation, call 503-977-4382.
Moving Up

PCC is the perfect place to start a college career before transferring to a four-year university

Zach Wegner is serious about teaching and conducting research at a university. So he did what he considers one of the smartest moves of his life: he enrolled at PCC for the first couple years of college. In no time he had taken plenty of classes to satisfy requirements and he's now a junior at University of Oregon in Eugene.

“PCC offered many similar opportunities and resources as a university at a fraction of the price. It’s a great place to figure out where you fit in on a college campus and how to benefit from campus resources before spending university prices,” said Wegner, who is majoring in sociology and expects to graduate in 2008. “It’s nice that PCC allows people to be as involved on campus as they need or desire to be. The course list is also quite impressive and I was amazed at all the options I had for classes.”

PCC offers classes in more than 80 subjects – everything from anthropology to women’s studies – and each year thousands of students transfer from PCC to four-year universities to finish their college degrees. For many, they would not have been able to reach their dream of a college education if not for PCC.

“I'd recommend PCC to anyone because it's affordable, classes are smaller, professors are more accommodating, the facilities are more accessible and there is more help for people who need it,” said Gillian Weisgram, who transferred from PCC to Portland State University in 2004 and expects to graduate in June with a liberal studies degree.

PCC has dual enrollment agreements and partnership programs with many local private and public universities. Each year about 4,500 PCC students transfer their credits to a four-year public university in Oregon.

“We have such a strong relationship with four-year universities," said Laura Massey, PCC’s Director of Institutional Effectiveness. "Nationwide you’ll find that most juniors and seniors at universities were once community college students."
Each year about 4,500 PCC students transfer to a four-year public university in Oregon. Students also transfer to private institutions.

Here’s what current and former students say about PCC:

“Starting at a community college gave me confidence as I needed to prove to myself that I could achieve at a college level. PCC gave me a chance to see what higher learning feels like.” Angela-Marie Loo, who attends both PCC and Portland State University. She graduates from PCC in June and hopes to earn a bachelor’s degree in healthcare administration in 2009.

“In every way, PCC gave me my start. After I graduated I went on to PSU on a minority scholarship and finished my degree in economics. I also worked full time. I applied for and won a fellowship at Carnegie-Mellon and that inspired me to aim even higher,” Joel Campos Alvis, who went on to Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) for graduate school.

“PCC has been an amazing school. When I came here two years ago I received a ton of support. I didn’t expect it,” Rosalie Tucker, now at UCLA studying in the World Arts and Cultures program.
Film Festival Shows Realistic Views of Africa

This year’s free event runs through March 3

It started out modestly as a way to expose students and staff to African culture through feature films from Africa. Seventeen years later the Cascade Festival of African Films has grown into a venerable, free citywide event that attracts thousands of patrons to one of the largest African film festivals in the country.

This year the festival includes 20 movies shown in the Moriarty Arts and Humanities Building at the PCC Cascade Campus as well as Portland State University, McMenamins Kennedy School Theater and the Hollywood Theatre. Beginning in early February and running through March 3, the well-regarded festival has become a traditional part of events celebrating Black History Month. This year the 2006 Academy Award winner for Best Foreign Film “Tsotsi” kicks off the festival.

“Over the years our guiding principle has always been that we wanted to show films that were made by Africans so people here in Portland could see life in Africa through the eyes of Africans, not Hollywood,” said festival co-founder Michael Dembrow, who teaches English and film studies classes at Cascade, and has studied African films for decades.

In 1991 Dembrow and Mary Holmström, an African literature instructor who grew up in South Africa, began working with other faculty members to produce a small yet respectable film festival. That first year four films were shown in Cascade’s Terrell Hall and attendance – with 400 people – was better than expected. The number of attendees last year was 4,500.

“When I taught I could reach a few people in my classes, but with the film festival we can reach so many more,” said Holmström, who retired in 2001 and helped build the PCC library into the largest repository of African films in the Pacific Northwest. “This festival gives people a different perspective of Africa. They will learn more and be touched in innumerable ways.”

The films range from political to historical to the way villages are handling conflicts between traditional customs and modernity – a favorite among moviegoers.

Over the years the number of films has increased steadily and in recent years nearly 25 movies – a majority made by African directors – have been shown. Film directors lead discussion after some of the shows.

Dembrow said even with the wide range of films shown and the talented filmmakers who speak there is another reason people attend.

“The festival’s real strength is that we’ve never charged admission,” he said.

For more information about the festival and to view the list of films shown this year visit www.africanfilmfestival.org or call 503-244-6111, Ext. 3630 for a brochure.
Doreen Margolin, Portland Community College Board Chair, passed away recently following a brief illness. She was 59.

Appointed in 1999, elected in 2001 and re-elected in 2005, Margolin represented Zone 5 in the PCC District, which encompasses southwest and southeast Portland. She was named chair of the board in 2006.

“Doreen made significant and lasting contributions to the college,” said District President Preston Pulliams. “She worked tirelessly at the state and national levels for community colleges as well. Doreen gave her time and energy generously to the college and we will miss her very much.”

Margolin, a Portland attorney in private practice specializing in domestic relations, worked on behalf of Oregon community colleges at the state and national levels. Her efforts date back two decades when she was appointed to the first board of the then newly-formed PCC Foundation. She chaired the Oregon Community College Association Board from 2000 to 2002 and served on the association’s Legislative Committee.

On the national level, she was elected to the Board of Directors for the Association of Community College Trustees in 2003. She served on that association’s Finance Committee, Governance Committee and the Ad Hoc Board Services Audit.

Last fall Margolin was honored with the Howard Cherry Award by the Oregon Community College Association. The award, the association’s highest honor, is for outstanding accomplishments on behalf of community colleges. Cherry was a founding member of PCC’s Board of Trustees and helped establish Rock Creek and Cascade.

In January, the board appointed David Squire to fill Margolin’s seat through June. Voters will decide a permanent replacement during the May 15, 2007 special election.

PCC Loses Community College Champion

Calendar of Events: A Look at What’s Ahead

FEBRUARY

The Cascade Festival of African Films, the largest African film festival on the West Coast, celebrates its 17th year with films shown through March 3. Held annually at the Cascade Campus, 705 N. Killingsworth St., and other venues in Portland, it is free and open to the public. For more information visit www.africanfilmfestival.org.

MARCH

The Theater Arts program presents “The Love of the Nightingale” at 7:30 p.m. on March 8-10 and March 16 and 17 and at 2 p.m. on March 18 in the Performing Arts Center at the Sylvania Campus, 12000 S.W. 49th Ave. The play is a contemporary retelling of the ancient Greek myth of Philomel and her sister Proene. For more information call 503-977-4949 or visit www.pcc.edu/theatre.

APRIL

Spring term classes begin on Monday, April 2. For information about registration call 503-977-4933 or visit www.pcc.edu.

The Cascade Art Gallery will host the art exhibit, “Towards Abstraction,” from March 26 through April 26. The gallery is located in Room 102 of Terrell Hall, 705 N. Killingsworth St. For more information visit http://spot.pcc.edu/cascadegallery.

MAY

The Cascade Job Fair 2007 is set for 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Tuesday, May 1 in the Cascade Campus gymnasium, 705 N. Killingsworth St. More than 85 employers will be on hand. Admission is free. For more information visit www.pcc.edu/resources/careers/fairs/cascade.

Art Beat 2007, the 20th Anniversary of the districtwide festival of art, will spread across all three PCC comprehensive campuses and the Southeast Center from May 7-11, offering students and the community access to local and national artists, as well as an extensive collection of visual art, dance, music, theater and literary events. All events are free and open to the public. For more information visit www.artbeat.pcc.edu.

The Theater Arts program presents “Swanwhite” at 7:30 p.m. on May 10, 12 and 19; noon on May 11 and 18; and 2 p.m. on May 20 in the Performing Arts Center at the Sylvania Campus, 12000 S.W. 49th Ave. The play dramatizes the traditional fairy tale about a young princess, her stepmother and a prince, proving that love can triumph over all things. For more information call 503-977-4949 or visit www.pcc.edu/theatre.

CORRECTION: In the winter issue of kaleidoscope, Glen Perice was inaccurately described as a Portland State University anthropology professor. He occasionally teaches at the university. kaleidoscope regrets the error.

In January, the board appointed David Squire to fill Margolin’s seat through June. Voters will decide a permanent replacement during the May 15, 2007 special election.