



Message from the Director

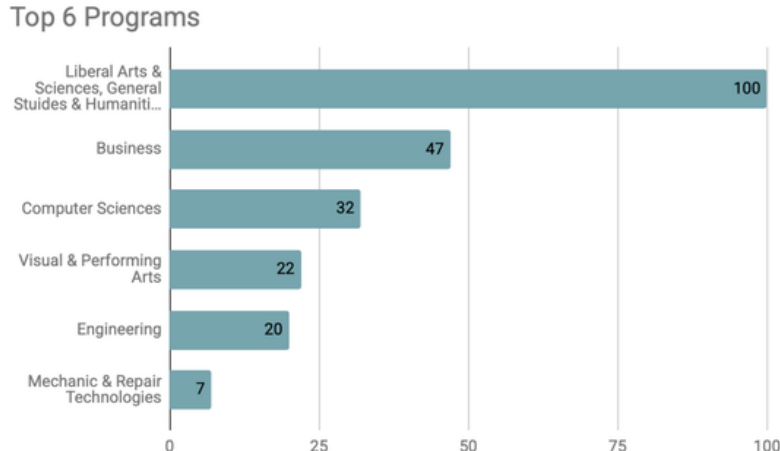


With the dogwoods finally in bloom, I'm happy to welcome in spring, but looking back on our Winter term brings a bright smile to my face.

While Winter term wasn't without its challenges for international students, I'm happy to share the uplifting stories we saw during the start of the new year. Take a moment to read through our updates and celebrate with us.

Who are our F-1 international students?

What are our students studying?



This winter, our community was vibrant with **323 students**, including **19 new students**, representing **62 countries** from around the globe!

International students study in many different programs at PCC, but the top 6 areas of study are General Studies, Business, Computer Science, Visual & Performing Arts, Engineering, and Mechanical Technology.

Student Leader Spotlight

☀️ Meet **Fareeha**, this year's PCC Student Trustee!

Originally from Uganda, Fareeha began her studies at PCC in Summer 2024 and quickly became involved on campus. She serves as the **Student Trustee on the College Board of Directors**, ensuring that student concerns are heard, prioritized, and reflected in decision-making processes and in every room she enters.



In addition to being the Student Trustee, Fareeha is also the Chair of the PCC Student Activity Fee Allocation Committee, a Senator in Student Government, helped to co-found the African Students Union and serves as their Vice President, and was the Chief Financial Advisor for the Muslim Students Association.

Fareeha's favorite part of being a student leader is making sure that no student ever feels invisible in the same way she once did. What she loves most is the opportunity she gets by stepping into rooms where decisions are made and carrying student voices and stories with her.

"I love that being a Student trustee, I don't just represent students; I advocate from lived experience. I get to turn the uncertainty into belonging and silence in voice. And that!..... is what makes it for me. ... Knowing that I am not just part of PCC, but also helping shape a space where my fellow students can feel seen, heard, and truly belong."

Highlights from last term

In Winter term, our students fought the winter blues and stayed engaged by participating in activities all term!

- 🎳 Students had a fun night **bowling at KingPins** in Southeast. New friendships were made and a little bit of competitiveness made for a great time!
- 🗣️ A visit to **OMSI After Dark** for their "Into the Abyss" exhibit made for a fun night!
- 🏀 Students got to experience an NBA game and **cheer on the Portland Trailblazers!**
- 🛼 A night of **roller skating** and dancing at the Oaks Amusement Park brought lots of smiles and laughter!



F-1 International Student Alumni

👤 Meet **Lareina Chen**, a PCC alum from Taiwan.

Lareina needed somewhere to take prerequisites for the graduate program she wanted when a professor who had enjoyed living in Portland told her to consider studying here. PCC had the classes, student work opportunities, and the community she needed to get started in the U.S.

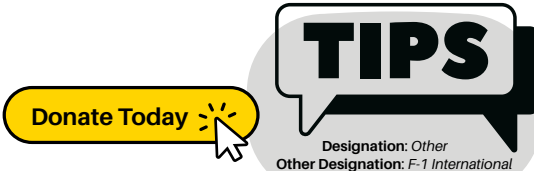
Now an optometrist at Kaiser by day and online Master of Public Health student at Johns Hopkins by night, Lareina continues to enjoy the people, nature, and pace of the Pacific Northwest. She looks forward to completing her degree and working to remove barriers for her patients. She still keeps in touch with PCC staff and friends- and we are so glad she does!



F-1 International Emergency Fund

The OISS participated in the PCC Foundation's Big Give Day in March to raise funds for our F-1 International Student Emergency Fund. We raised \$1,110 this year!

Thank you so very much to those who donated to the F-1 International Student Emergency Fund! It was such a successful fundraiser we enjoy participating each year. Your contributions mean so much to our team and our students!



Why donate?

International students often face significant financial vulnerability. Ineligible for federal financial aid, most scholarships, and many forms of emergency assistance, they have limited options when unexpected expenses arise—such as family job loss, currency fluctuations, rent increases, or car repairs. Visa restrictions require them to maintain full-time enrollment, pay out-of-state tuition, and limit employment to on-campus jobs. As a result, OISS staff frequently encounter students in urgent need with few available resources to provide.

Despite these challenges, international students remain deeply committed to their education and express strong appreciation for the support and kindness of PCC faculty and staff, which plays a critical role in their ability to succeed.

PCC's International Community Spotlight

☀️ Meet **Miwako Nakamoto** (she/they), a **Career Specialist** at Rock Creek Career Services! Born and raised in Osaka, Miwako challenged herself to live in the US as an F-1 student, wondering if she was capable of more than she had ever allowed herself to believe and try.

How has your experience as an international student shaped your career at PCC and the way you support students in your role today?

As an international, first-generation student, my journey through the ESOL and community college system deeply shapes my work at PCC. I am a true beneficiary of that support during a time when everything felt new and unfamiliar. That experience instilled in me a strong sense of empathy, compassion, and responsibility, especially for students navigating cultural transitions and career expectations. I understand how challenging it can be to build confidence, communicate your strengths in English, and adapt to U.S. workplace norms. Because of that, I see myself as a bridge, helping students build self-assurance, develop practical skills, and find their voice while navigating a new professional and cultural environment, all while honoring the identities they bring with them.

Is there anything else you want to say to our community?

Colin Powell once said, "We are proud that the high quality of American colleges and universities attracts students and scholars from around the world. These individuals enrich our communities with their academic abilities and cultural diversity, and they return home with an increased understanding and often a lasting affection for the United States. I can think of no more valuable asset to our country than the friendship of future world leaders who have been educated here."

Simply asking, "Hi! How are you doing?" or offering a warm smile can make international students feel so welcome and seen.

Are you a former international student? Let us know by emailing oiss@pcc.edu! We would love to share your story.

