

PORTLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE
COMMUNITIES

Going Boldly

Leslie Smith switched careers to go where few women have gone before

see page 4



PCC Community Ed
Classes start
April – June
Find them inside:
Pages
7–77





A MESSAGE from the President

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the spring issue of Portland Community College's "Communities" magazine! Within the following pages you'll have the opportunity to read about a variety of students and graduates whose studies represent a multitude of disciplines at PCC. Their pathways to college vary, which beautifully illustrate the depth and diversity of PCC and our mission: to serve you, our students, and the greater community of Portland.

From an apprentice-in-training to a neuroscientist-in-the-making to an art student testing new methodologies to create sculptures, this issue is sure to offer something of interest for all readers! Other news includes a recent PCC Foundation fundraising success, phenomenal work from the college's Planning & Capital Construction office, and Community Education MakerLab classes that transform creative ideas into tangible objects through rapid prototyping machines.

Sustainability is also touched on, something that is top of mind given my recent trip to the Conference of the Parties 25 in Madrid, Spain, for the latest round of United Nations climate negotiations. I was invited to represent American community colleges and the nonprofit Second Nature as part of the "We Are Still In" movement. My participation stemmed from PCC's strides in sustainability, a longtime priority for the college, which is considered a national leader in this field. This "spirit of green" is captured in the article on our Auto Service Technology Program, with its hybrid and electric vehicle repair training that prepares students for jobs in highly technical and ever-evolving industries.

Just like this issue of "Communities," PCC offers a myriad of interesting courses and disciplines. Consider us your pathway to higher education, be it for fun or for credit. Education is the ticket to making our greater community strong, stable, and vibrant!

Sincerely,

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Spring 2020, Vol 36, No. 2
"PCC Communities" (USPS 001-624)
is published quarterly by:

Portland Community College
12000 SW 49th Ave
Portland, OR 97219
Periodicals postage
paid at Portland, Oregon.

POSTMASTER:

Send address changes to:
PCC Communities
P.O. Box 19000
Portland, OR 97280-0990

Table of Contents

- 2 Eyes of the Panther
- 4 Going Boldly
- 6 Maker of Things
- 79 Pinball Wizard
- 80 The Brain Doctor
- 82 History Corner & Spotlights
- 84 Repairing His Education

Schedule (pages 7 – 77)

- 8 Register and Pay

Arts

- 11 Dance
- 13 Music and Theater
- 14 Photography
- 15 Visual Arts
- 18 Writing

Home and Garden

- 21 Home Improvement
- 22 Do It Yourself (DIY)
- 22 Style and Beauty
- 23 Emergency Preparedness
- 23 Food and Drink
- 25 Garden, Nature, and Yards
- 26 Hobbies and Crafts
- 27 Woodworking and Metalworking

Language and Culture

- 29 Cultural Exploration
- 29 Languages

Travel (page 35)

Recreation and Wellness

- 37 Adult 55+ Fitness
- 37 Health
- 38 Mind-Body Wellness
- 39 Sports
- 41 Work Out

Swim (page 45)

Teen (page 46)

Summer Teen Program (page 48)

Traffic Safety (page 50)

Work and Life Balance

- 57 Careers
- 58 Career Skills
- 60 Computer Skills and Technology
- 62 Continuing Education and License Renewal
- 64 Professional Development
- 65 Personal Development
- 66 Personal Finance
- 67 Test Preparation

Policies and Student Information (page 68)



Shaw credits the small replicas of Aztec helmets and Mexican alebrijes as major artistic influences.

Eyes of the Panther

Student Hal Shaw used the college mascot for an ingenious art project

There isn't a technique or artistic medium that Portland Community College student Hal Shaw isn't interested in trying. From mixed media to spray paint to sculpting with wood or plaster, Shaw wants to experiment with all of them, making the art student a natural for Crystal Schenk's "Sculpture: Metals" class taught at the Sylvania Campus in Southwest Portland.

Schenk is known for her willingness to research and explore techniques to help students achieve their visions.

"We wanted to learn something no one in the class had ever done before," said Shaw, a native of Newberg. "Ms. Schenk encour-

aged me to learn how to anodize, because none of us knew how to do that. And she helped my sculptures turn out better than I had hoped for."

Nineteen-year-old Shaw, who uses the pronouns they, them, and their, created a series of panther heads bearing a striking resemblance to PCC's popular mascot, Poppie the Panther.

Why panthers and this kind of artwork? Shaw's Mexican heritage provided the inspiration.

"I go to Mexico to visit my family, and I saw sculptures that inspired the panther heads," Shaw said. "I was intrigued by the shape of the panther heads and began to research them."

Shaw attributes the design to two influences: small replicas of helmets that the Aztecs wore into battle and alebrijes sold by craftspeople in Mexico. Alebrijes are brightly colored Mexican sculptures of mythical creatures. Made for nearly 100 years, alebrijes were originally created and named by Pedro Linares, whose fevered nightmare inspired him to create brilliant, fantastical folk art.

To create the heads, Shaw used investment casting, a process that started with a wooden statue. They made a mold of the statue with silicone caulk, then filled the caulk mold with wax. In order to make a mold that can withstand molten metal, Shaw repeatedly dipped the wax sculpture into a thick, soupy plaster liquid that is resistant to heat. They melted the wax out of the plaster mold, leaving a negative space perfect for melted aluminum and bronze.

When the metal cooled down, Shaw broke open the molds to retrieve the metal pieces. Some of the sculptures were left rough, and others were polished.

The bronze sculptures were given a patina with copper sulfate and ferric nitrate, after which they were coated in wax to seal them.

Shaw put the aluminum sculptures in a bucket of sulfuric acid and attached it to their car battery. The action of turning on the car sent a current through the piece, allowing color to bond to the metal. It took an hour of soaking in the dye bath for the color to be fully bonded. Shaw then sanded the teeth and eyes with a grinder for contrast and put it in boiling water to seal the dye.

In addition to the panthers, Shaw also made a bronze bunny and an aluminum wolf for the class.

Shaw is currently earning enough credits to transfer to a university, in addition to working toward a certificate in Java programming. Someday, Shaw hopes to be a video game designer, fusing their passion for art with technology.

It wasn't all about PCC in the beginning for Shaw. Raised in Brush Prairie, Wash.,

they graduated from Jesuit High School and enrolled in a local art college. The experience didn't click, and Shaw took a break before bouncing between PCC and four-year colleges. Finally, Shaw found their groove at PCC, where they can focus on art and programming with the support of instructors like Schenk.

"I needed more motivation, confidence, and teachers like Ms. Schenk, who recognize that things are not always as they look," Shaw said.

Schenk said the panther heads started off as a skill-building exercise where students learned to make silicone molds of objects. From there, Shaw ran with it.

The Art instructor said that Shaw has taken the metal sculpture class three times now, "and it has been great to watch them progress in both their ideas and skills. Hal has been extremely driven and hard working – learning metal casting and now welding. Their dedication to the class, willingness to explore avenues of creativity, and experiment with techniques is something all teachers hope for and is inspiring to fellow students." ♦



Art at PCC

Art courses are offered at Cascade, Rock Creek, Southeast, and Sylvania campuses. They provide technical, aesthetic, communication, and problem-solving skills applicable to many career opportunities. Alumni have pursued careers in the visual arts, exhibited their work, and received awards.

Learn more: pcc.edu/programs/art

Going Boldly

Leslie Smith switched careers to go where few women have gone before

Not so long ago, Leslie Smith was really cooking. Since the age of 14, Smith had worked in restaurants – from fine dining to burger joints, to everything in between – in the United States and overseas. In Europe, she earned a master rating in traditional Italian cuisine so she could work in the kitchens of Michelin star-rated restaurants.

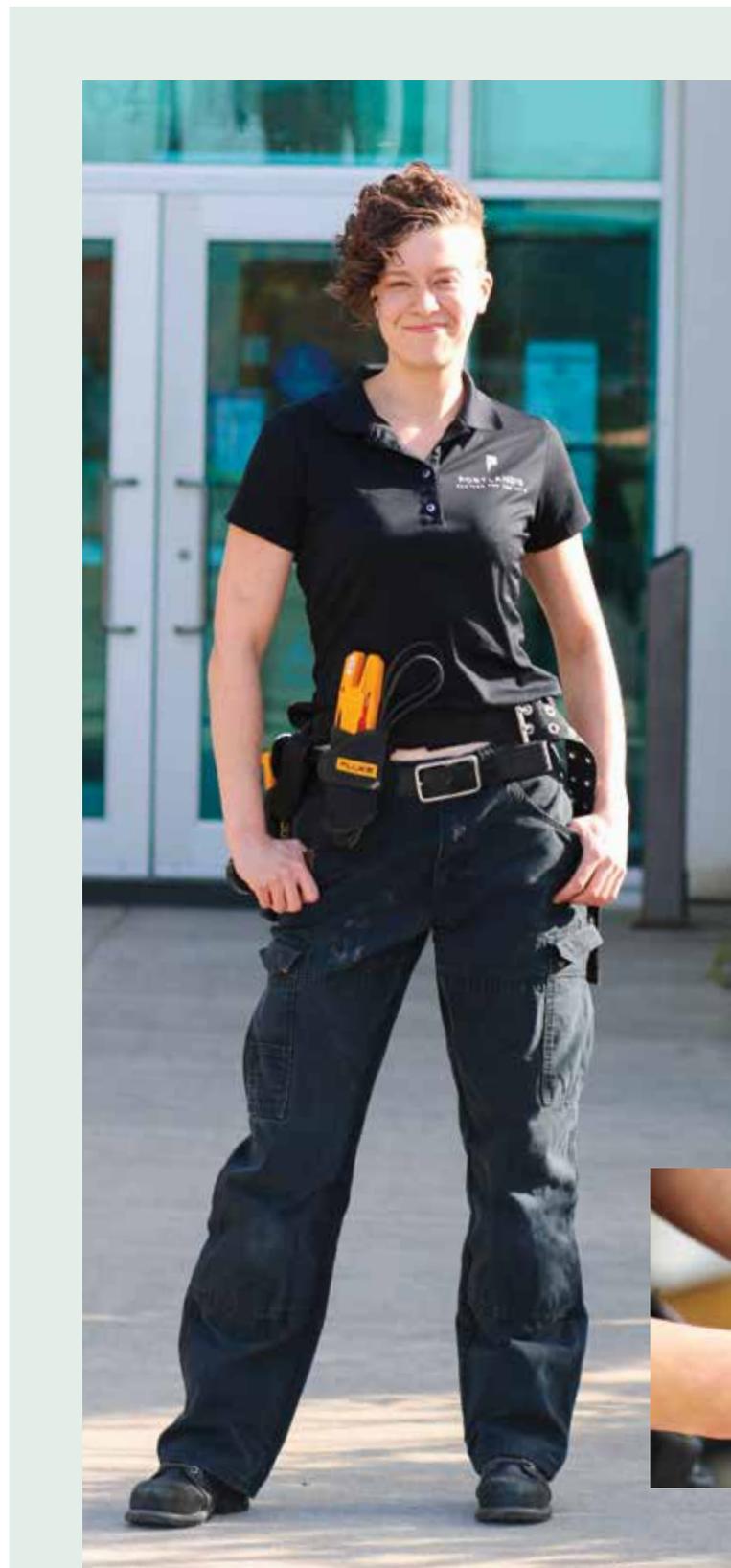
But this career path wasn't cutting it for the 31-year-old.

"I realized no matter how high I flew in the restaurant industry, I was never really going to have the quality of life that I was looking for," Smith said. "The experiences I had were really tough. You never feel stable because they kind of give you the impression that they could drag anybody off the street to replace you."

"I think the biggest hurdle was letting go and deciding to find something new," she explained.

After spending more than a decade in the restaurant industry, Smith chopped her cooking career. She settled in Hillsboro and found work as a custodian for the Portland's Center for the Arts, which operates the city's five main theater venues. As she started her job, Smith found training opportunities through Oregon Tradeswomen Inc., where she was exposed to a range of trades that helped build her skills.

"And that's something that I love about my job now – that I feel really valued," Smith said of her work with Portland's. "This is something I wanted to do."





Pre-Apprenticeship & Trades Program

PCC provides pre-trade opportunities to students who seek careers in the trades or an apprenticeship. Classes help students build skills needed to meet the minimum entry qualifications for a trade or apprenticeship program. Info sessions are held every term.

Learn more: pcc.edu/pretrades

Determined to continue expanding skills in her new job, Smith transitioned into the Portland Community College Career Pathways Program HVAC Certificate which is based at the Swan Island Trade Center. Career Pathways is a job training program that allows students to earn job-ready certificates in less than a year.

Portland's took notice and created an apprenticeship on top of her certificate classes so she could qualify to be a full-time stationary engineer, which maintains building systems.

Portland's joined the Metro Limited Building Maintenance Electrician (LBME) Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee (JATC), which partners with PCC. Smith's employer became one of the committee's registered training agents, who select qualified and motivated workers like Smith within their own ranks and have them enroll in PCC apprenticeship classes, which are also held at Swan Island.



The program is critical. As the current population of experienced tradespeople nears retirement age, companies are scrambling to hire and train skilled workers. The Metro LBME JATC's effort helps reward their workers while developing their own workforces. Any area employers can sign up to be registered training agents through the Metro LBME JATC and train their own apprentices.

"The employers provide the supervision, training, and competency while the apprentices go to school here," said Carrie Weikel-Delaplaine, director of PCC's Apprentice & Trades Program. "They also pay for the majority of the schooling."

The Metro LBME JATC is not open to the general public. However, PCC's Pre-Apprenticeship Program is open to anyone interested in developing similar trades skills.

"It makes people more competitive for an apprenticeship opportunity," added Weikel-Delaplaine of the pre-apprenticeship classes. "It's a great way to go."

The Metro LBME JATC requires 2,000 hours of on-the-job training hours. According to PCC trades program specialist Emma Gray, the employers on the committee struggle to recruit women into the program.

"We are working hard to change this," Gray said. "Most manufacturing and trades industries in Oregon cannot fill all of the available jobs, and will never fill the jobs until they start expanding their recruitment efforts to include populations that have historically been excluded.

"Leslie is everything you could want in an apprentice," she continued. "She is not only a role model for aspiring women apprentices, but she is a role model for all apprentices."

Smith is no longer bouncing from job to job and has found a great employer who values her skills. She sports a 4.0 grade-point average and soon will possess nearly a dozen safety, electrical, HVAC, and building licenses required for her position. Eventually, Smith wants to pursue an associate degree in Facilities Maintenance Technology and hopes to one day work as a facilities manager.

"This is a job that I could have for the rest of my life," she said. "I realized pretty early on that my very best option was PCC, which is responsible for opening a lot of doors for me. When I needed to get an education and some experience under my belt, PCC was there for me." ♦

Maker of Things

Inviting the community to create beautiful projects through the latest tech tools

The Portland Community College MakerLab at the Sylvania Campus is a large space, full of cool machines and tools. From 3D printers, to vinyl and laser cutters, to sewing machines, the MakerLab is where our community can turn plans into reality.

As the MakerLab coordinator, Amy Petit leads and facilitates the use of the space and teaches classes and camps. She works with students and the college community to print or cut both pre-designed projects and projects from scratch.

“My favorite part of the job is giving tours, because I can help people see how the equipment works and how easy it is to get started,” Petit beamed.

The MakerLab is available for students, staff, and faculty during open lab hours. The community can access it as well, through a slate of Community Education Program classes. Petit teaches three courses open to the public as non-credit offerings that involve laser and vinyl cutting or using the lab’s 3D machines.

These are fairly new, but Petit said, “I’m excited to see how much interest and enthusiasm there are for these classes.”

Petit’s most recent class was “Laser Cutting: Holiday Edition,” in which students designed their own snowflake ornaments and made a garland of stars, each laser-cut from thin sheets of wood. And, her students used her assistance to

work on their own personal design projects. In previous classes, students have made decorative lantern candle holders that project stars onto walls when lit.

Last winter, Petit taught a “Laser Cutting: Jewelry” class where students made necklaces, pendants, and earrings out of wood and acrylic. She also led a vinyl cutting class where students made custom stickers, stencils, and T-shirt designs. This spring, PCC’s Community Ed Program and Petit will host three classes at the Sylvania MakerLab – “3D Printing for Beginners,” “Vinyl Cutting: Introduction,” and “Laser Cutting: Introduction.”

In addition to Petit’s work, other instructors host similar classes at PCC’s Cascade Campus FabLab in North Portland.

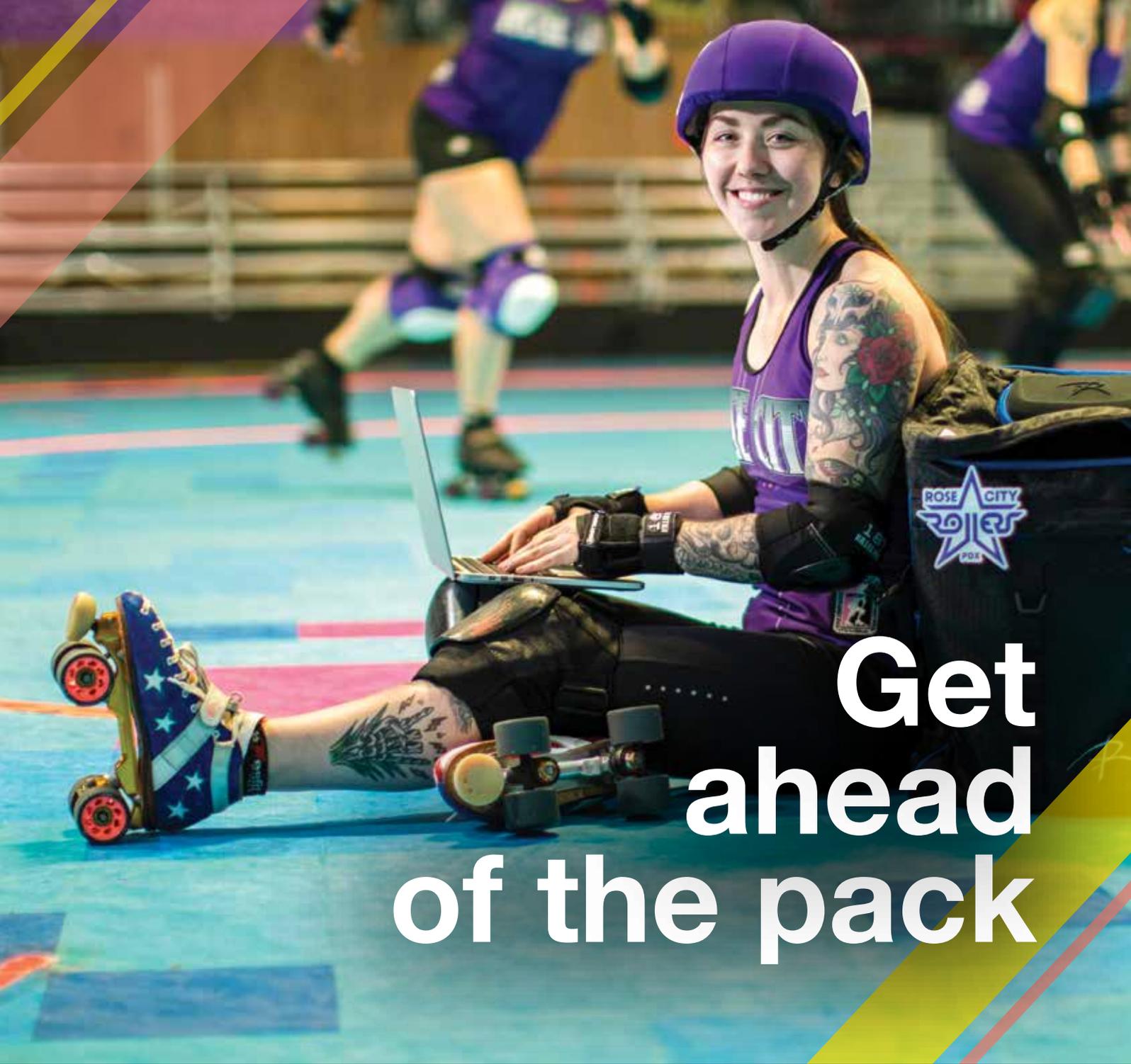
Petit has worked at the college for almost nine years. With experience in graphic design, a bachelor’s degree in Studio Art, and a Master’s in Sculpture, she is all about combining disciplines to create amazing projects.

“This space is open to all areas,” she said. “It is vital. People from different disciplines are able to work together, which makes it a rich environment for learning.”

For more information on laser and vinyl cutting, as well as 3D printing and the PCC MakerLab see page 22, or visit pcc.edu/communityed. ♦



MakerLab Coordinator Amy Petit shows off a laser-cut lantern created in one of her non-credit classes.



Get ahead of the pack



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Community
College**

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pcc.edu/learn-online

Pinball Wizard

Luke Christensen has his eyes on his own pinball factory

This Portland Community College alum really loves repairing a “mean” pinball machine.

Luke Christensen, 32, graduated from PCC’s Electronic Engineering Technology (EET) Program last June and one day hopes to own a pinball machine factory. He began noodling on the idea after hearing a personal gaming hero speak at a 2016 Portland expo about the inner workings of pinball machines. This prompted Christensen to explore the older gaming art form.

“Like many people of my generation, I grew up playing video games,” said Christensen, who wasn’t exposed to vintage pinball machines as a youth in rural Iowa. “But pinball machines are very intriguing.”

His interest in making pinball machines led him to PCC in 2017. Christensen already had a bachelor’s degree in Theater Arts, but when he was laid off from Portland Public Schools, he enrolled in PCC’s EET program, which gave him options to re-career into an in-demand field. Christensen used scholarships and guidance from Worksystems’ Reboot Northwest, the Workforce Investment Act, and the PCC Foundation to succeed in his classes.

His 3.8 grade-point average earned him a spot on the President’s List and a National Science Foundation Award. Christensen, who mentored fellow students in the STEM Club at Sylvania’s MakerLab, was named a member of the 2019 All-Oregon Academic Team. This was followed by a national 2019 New Century Workforce



Christensen at home tinkering with one of his many vintage pinball machines.

Pathway Scholarship, with Christensen ranking as the highest scoring scholar from the state.

After graduation last summer, he quickly found work at an electronics manufacturer, Cascade Systems Technology, in Hillsboro. As the lead of its test department, Christensen is learning the ins and outs of manufacturing.

In his spare time, Christensen fuels his pinball passion by refurbishing old models. He looks for pinball machines built in the 1970s and 1980s, then uses the skills he learned at PCC to troubleshoot their vintage wiring and components. Christensen likens the process to a mechanic fixing a car, since both require regular maintenance and fine-tuning.

“It’s like a sculpted piece of art that lights up,” said Christensen, who enjoys discovering the different narratives the machines present as part of their game-play engineering.

“It’s a really interesting all-American art form. My plan is to keep restoring games, add features to them, and then sell them, until I am ready to build my own from scratch,” he said. “I see a lot of opportunities to introduce more, and younger, people to pinball. I think it will be a beautiful thing when it catches on with the next generation.” ♦

The Brain Doctor

Britt Gratrek applies her personal experience with trauma to better understand the brain

No matter the obstacle, Britt Gratrek will not be stopped.

She has applied that philosophy not only to her studies but to the outdoor activity she's passionate about – cycling. When that philosophy was put to the test in 2014, Gratrek pushed through and turned tragedy into a positive.

The Portland Community College alum had transferred to Portland State University and was riding her bike to class. Gratrek made a sharp turn at a high speed and slipped on an oil patch. She was thrown from her bike, landing on her head.

“My classmates told me that I showed up to class covered head to toe in oil and speaking total nonsense,” recalled Gratrek, who sustained a traumatic brain injury as a result of the accident, despite wearing a helmet. “I never felt the same again.”



Above: (Left to right) Britt Gratrek and fellow classmates at the University of Arizona College of Medicine.

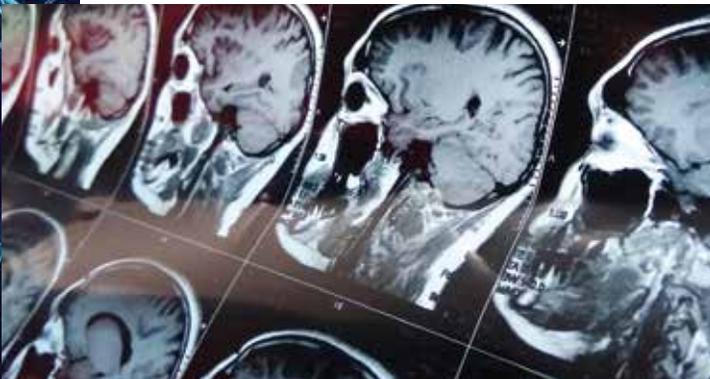
Below: Gratrek (right) is an avid cyclist.

The injury caused neurofatigue, or “brain fog,” and intolerance to sunlight and sound. It forced Gratrek to pause on applying to medical school as she spent months in rehabilitation. She gradually recovered, and in early 2015, was even cleared by physicians to cycle again.

Just a few weeks later, a second round of misfortune struck. This time Gratrek was hit by a reckless motorist as she biked to class, causing her to lose consciousness. Ironically, Gratrek had just presented research at PSU about the adverse effects to the brain when successive, back-to-back brain traumas take place.

Gratrek would again recover, with the latest injury solidifying her interest in the medical field.

“The experience only amplified my call to medicine and treating the brain,” she said, “but it was a nightmare, and to a degree, still is.”





“I continue to deal with seemingly permanent effects from my injuries, which has made nearly every aspect of my life harder, and makes medical school pretty tough, too.”

That medical school is the University of Arizona College of Medicine in Tucson,

where Gratreak is researching why traumatic brain injury (TBI) recovery can be variable, especially for women. She is in the first year of a combined MD/PhD program, beginning and ending with medical school training. The middle section, about three years, is made up of PhD lab work focused on neuroscience.

“It’s like a PhD sandwich!” she chuckled.

When Gratreak completes the Arizona program, she wants to lead her own research lab and contribute to creating inclusivity for women and people of color.

Such a mission was born from Gratreak’s childhood. Raised on the outskirts of east Portland, she was chronically ill as a young girl. Doctors couldn’t seem to help Gratreak devise her own protocol to manage her symptoms. A complicated relationship with her mother led the strong-minded 16-year-old to move out of her mother’s house and take control of her future.

“My family did not want me to attend college,” she said. “I did not have their support financially or socially then. But when I hit my head and couldn’t get to appointments, my mom and brother really swooped in to help. It brought us all closer together, and now they are rooting for me.”

In 2011, she was awarded financial aid and found a work-study position with the PCC Cascade Library to pay for school. Despite this, rising costs of living in

Portland made her five years of college a struggle.

“My finances barely covered rent and food,” Gratreak remembered. “At one point I had five roommates.”

But she immersed herself in her PCC classes and quickly found her interests.

“I received a great foundational education in science at PCC,” she said. “It was the willingness of instructors to give me space to be amazed and ask questions that helped me thrive.”

She advises college students suffering brain trauma to connect with disability resources for accommodations as soon as possible.

“The first step of asking for help is the hardest, but it does get easier from there,” Gratreak shared. “Brain injuries are invisible, which makes it even harder to get the help you need and find your community, but you are not alone. My injuries helped me understand the struggles that patients feel when they don’t feel heard by their doctors.”

In spite of setbacks, Gratreak’s internal strength to pursue her educational journey also gave her the fortitude to continue biking. She still rides her bike every day to school in the hot desert sun.

“Even if it is over 110 degrees!” she laughed. ♦

University Transfer

Like Britt Gratreak, more students are discovering the best place to begin a bachelor’s or advanced degrees is at PCC. Many take the first- and second-year courses that are offered at universities, including art, science, music, literature, and writing, as well as the prerequisites needed to start a medical career.

Learn more: pcc.edu/university-transfer

History Corner: From the Basement to the Skies

In 1963, the college's Aviation Maintenance Technology Program began at Benson High School. Instructor John Lipney (pictured) was instrumental in initially building the coursework and securing equipment. By 1968, the program moved to the old Multnomah Building in downtown Portland where classrooms had to be cleaned by hand to get them ready for classes, and the shops in the basement were lit by light bulbs hanging from precarious wires.



But Lipney and staff would not be deterred as his program reconditioned the building, room by room, into a completely functional training facility. Today, Aviation Maintenance is housed at the college's Rock Creek Campus in a spacious (and spotless) hangar with classrooms, planes, equipment, and jet engines. ♦



Grand Openings That Are Child's Play

PCC celebrated the opening of brand new child care facilities at the Sylvania and Rock Creek campuses that will provide day care to more than 120 kids every year. Sylvania's state-of-the-art Childcare Development Center is 14,000 square feet of space that will serve children ages 6 weeks to 5 years old, as well as provide a learning laboratory for students in PCC's Early Education and Family Studies Program. At Rock Creek, the 7,800-square-foot child care facility welcomed its first cohort of 67 infants, toddlers, and preschoolers last fall.

Both buildings were funded by voter-approved bond measures in 2008 and 2017. ♦

Campaign to Fight Hunger

This past winter, the PCC Foundation and Portland Trail Blazers personality Lamar Hurd teamed up to combat student hunger with help from the Oregon Food Bank. Through Fred Meyer's Zero Hunger/Zero Waste Initiative, the grocery chain gifted \$300,000 to PCC's Panther Pantry, the college's food pantry that helps students experiencing food insecurity. Fred Meyer's donation will improve student access to food, grow pantry infrastructure, and expand the pantry's hours of operation.

At PCC, two thirds of all students have reported experiencing food insecurity. In 2018-19, students visited the pantries more than 16,000 times, accessing more than 120,000 pounds of food donated by the Oregon Food Bank. ♦



Building Momentum in Columbia County

Last fall, more than 350 excited high school students took part in the second annual "Manufacturing Day" at the Oregon Manufacturing Innovation Center R+D facility in Scappoose. Students explored 3D printing, laser cutting and virtual welding, as well as the latest advanced manufacturing machines and tools.

"MFG" Day has turned into the largest of its kind in Oregon. More than 25 local companies and educational institutions were on hand to showcase the future of training and careers. PCC is building a nearby Training Center of Excellence for Advanced Manufacturing, to offer on-the-job training along with classroom and lab instruction in an innovative apprenticeship model. ♦



Repairing His Education

Salomon Luna is now on track to earn a PCC auto service degree



The college's Sylvania Campus shop is equipped with 40 test vehicles, numerous above-ground hoists, computerized four-wheel alignment racks, a chassis dynamometer, and many other specialized tools. It has been the regional epicenter for learning about alternative fuel vehicles and has earned national recognition for its hybrid and electric car battery curriculum.

"One of the primary goals of the automotive department is to prepare students to be 'job ready' upon program completion," said Jay Kuykendall, automotive service instructor. "With most major manufacturers selling one or more hybrid or electric vehicles, it is as important as ever that students are ready to work on these vehicles. This training helps make students much more attractive to potential employers, including Tesla."

In 2017, the program added a course called "Introduction to Hybrid and Electric Vehicles" to help students better prepare for these future jobs. Students like Luna, who wants to someday work for Tesla, are excited about the possibilities ahead once they graduate.

"My current job is exhausting, but with this program I can get a job earning decent money, and still have energy left at the end of the day," Luna said. "I can work on cars all day, and then go home happy."

Even though cars are his passion, the road to this career wasn't always clear to Luna. His family moved to Beaverton from Virginia when he was 12, and he had trouble succeeding in high school.

Salomon Luna understands the importance of going green for his degree, and Portland Community College's Automotive Service Technology Program is there to provide him with the skills necessary to reach his goal.

"It's the future," said Luna, who is in his second year in the program and wants to work for an electric or hybrid carmaker. "I don't think gas is going to be around for too much longer."

PCC's Auto Service Program focuses on training students in the latest technology, including hybrid and electric vehicles.

“When I dropped out of high school around 17, I started working as a Certified Nursing Assistant,” Luna said. “But working at the hospital is mentally and physically draining for me, and I wanted to find something more sustainable.”

After five years working as a CNA, he decided he needed to go back to school to earn his GED.

“The biggest hurdle for me was getting my head back into the game for studying,” he said. “I never thought school was going

to be for me. Once I got fed up with my job, where I was doing something I didn’t truly want to do, it kind of just came to me [to go back to school]. You’ve got to push yourself.”

After earning his GED from PCC, Luna saved up to buy the tools he needed and enrolled in PCC’s Automotive Service Technology Program. Since starting at the Sylvania shop last year, he has immersed himself in the training, especially the hybrid and electric vehicle classes.



Salomon Luna feels right at home in PCC’s auto shop.

“I’m just focused on school,” said Luna, who works on cars at home in his spare time. “PCC is a lot better than what I thought college ever would be.”

To help pay for his classes, Luna earned a PCC Foundation scholarship. He still has to work part-time in health care, but the scholarship money takes the stress out of his life as he transitions careers.

“Not having to worry about paying for college gives me more time to study and work on cars,” he added.

After taking Kuykendall’s class, Luna wants to further his education. He’d like to earn a bachelor’s degree in Electrical Engineering from Portland State University after graduating from PCC with an associate degree. He said this will give him the skills he needs to eventually work on, and design, future cars for manufacturers like Tesla – his dream job.

Luna credits PCC for being there to help him train for his new career and put him on the right road to achieve his goal.

“Anyone who asks me, I tell them to start at PCC,” he smiled. “There’s a lot of resources, like tutoring or counseling, and you can talk to your teachers to help you out. It’s your best bet, especially if you plan to transfer. It’s a good stepping stone.” ♦

Auto Service Technology

Automotive service technicians play a vital role in solving electrical and mechanical problems in vehicles. Technicians ensure vehicles run at optimal performance and are safe. PCC’s program trains students to be skilled automotive service technicians, providing the fundamental skills necessary to succeed in the industry.

Learn more: pcc.edu/programs/auto-service

PCC mails this schedule of classes to households four times each year to let you know about upcoming Community Ed classes and share what's happening at PCC. It is printed and mailed for about 30¢ per copy and can be recycled. Because it is addressed "Residential Customer," we are not able to remove individuals from our distribution route. We hope you find it informative and enjoy the stories inside.



OUR PROJECT:

“Learn survival Portuguese (in an enormously fun, entertaining, and music-filled class) for our trip to Brazil!”

– Garrett Gregor, Virginia Somes, and Judith Bradshaw,
students in Portuguese Conversation, page 33



project: YOU

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.