

P O R T L A N D C O M M U N I T Y C O L L E G E

COMMUNITIES

Putting on the Glitz

Instructor Kevin Cook (aka Poison Waters) shines a spotlight on Portland's famous drag scene

see page 6

Nursing Students on the Front Lines

see page 2

Transfer Degrees Are Hot Commodities

see page 55

PCC Celebrates 60 Years

see page 60



**Portland
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PCC Community Ed

Classes held remotely and in person

June – Aug. (see pages 7 – 53)

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A MESSAGE from the President

Dear Readers,

We're celebrating a birthday – Portland Community College is turning 60 years young this month! PCC began by serving just a few hundred adult learners in 1961 to becoming the largest post-secondary institution in Oregon in 2021, providing pathways to degrees and career-technical education training to millions.

As times change, so does PCC, and it continues to align efforts with best practices to serve students equitably. Thanks to impressive college-wide collaboration – during a pandemic, no less! – PCC has created a new long-term strategic plan and vision centered on nurturing a culture of belonging, creating a learner-centric system, cultivating sustainable practices, and responding to workforce needs nimbly.

The summer issue of "Communities" reflects these initiatives. You'll read about how our nursing staff supported students to graduation and helped them find critical frontline jobs in health care. I was particularly inspired by the piece on Nahlee Suvanjej, who used PCC's Portland Metro Workforce Training Center to find a new career ... and a new lease on life. And, our cover article on Kevin Cook, also known as Poison Waters, is a nod to the long history of drag performance in Portland.

So, take a look at the interesting and rewarding non-credit classes like Cook's that can put an exclamation point on your summer learning, as well as our full lineup of profiles and features. For 60 years, we have provided pathways to opportunity for all of Portland, and we hope to celebrate with you!

Sincerely,

Mark Mitsui
President, Portland Community College

Managing Editor
James Hill **Senior Designer**
Katrina Harsha

Contributors
Sarah Rose Evans, Celina Baguiao, Mike Phillips, Alfredo Moreno

Design & Photography Contributor
Justin Eslinger

Cover photo by Carlos Silvas

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A Badge of Courage

Nursing's selfless work and dedication to others is alive and well at PCC

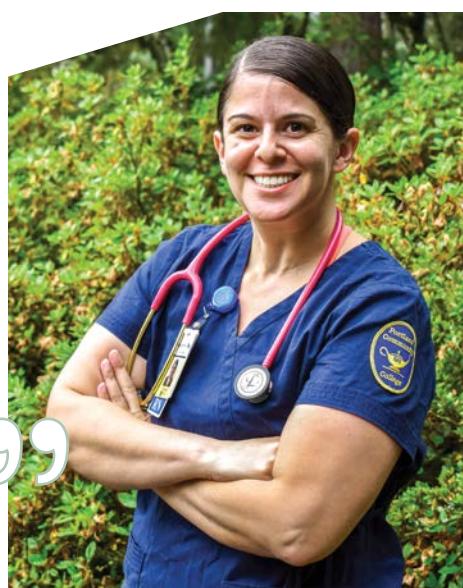
On the sleeves of the uniforms worn by Portland Community College Nursing Program students is a trademark badge. It depicts the lamp of Florence Nightingale – a symbol for nursing's selfless work and dedication to others (Nightingale would visit her patients at all hours carrying an oil lamp).

As the COVID-19 pandemic struck last year and PCC went to remote operations, the symbol became even more important as nursing students, like Chris Immonen and Alena Hasson, were left wondering if they could ever graduate and help coronavirus patients.

In spring 2020, the two were in their final term and worried about graduation being postponed. But thanks to the grueling work put in by faculty and staff, thousands of classes were shifted online to allow as many students as possible to continue their education and complete their degrees. The college's goal of balancing the safety and health of its students with meeting their educational needs wasn't easy, but the Nursing Program was able to shift to a remote format to enable students to finish their degrees.

66 I was a medical assistant at the Portland Clinic for a little over seven years, but now that I have my RN, I was able to secure a position in urgent care.

— Alena Hasson,
PCC Nursing Alum



"My responsibility is to care for them, keep them safe, and deliver on our mission to provide a high-quality nursing education," explained Nursing Director Heather Reynolds. "We transform individuals into caring nurses, who meet the evolving health needs of our community."

Graduating for these students was important as many of them had been working toward their degrees for years. Many were also facing financial hardship, so it was critical for students to finish and join the workforce soon.

"I worked part-time during nursing school, but due to COVID, like a lot of us, I got laid off," Hasson said.

Prior to nursing school, Immonen struggled to land a job in numerous competitive fields. PCC's Nursing Program had appealed to him not only as a way to help others, but because of the career opportunity it presented.

"My wife is a hair stylist and she pushed really hard, doubling up on clients, so I could concentrate on nursing school," Immonen said. "I needed to finish. I was ready to begin my career."

Immonen and Hasson succeeded in graduating in June 2020 and then passed the NCLEX-RN exam, which is a rigorous examination of medical, surgical, pediatric, psychiatric and obstetric knowledge.

"We studied our tails off to nail these exams," Immonen recalled. "PCC is up there with the best of the best as far as preparing us for it. Pushing us pretty hard was the best thing they could have done for us."



“

I couldn't be happier. I feel like I hit the lottery and literally did a backflip that I got that job. 99

— Chris Immonen,
PCC Nursing Alum

Hasson and Immonen pivoted and began looking for work. In the upheaval around the pandemic, it was actually more difficult to find a nursing position in a hospital because residency programs were being paused as hospitals sought out more experienced candidates.

However, Immonen landed a position with PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center in Vancouver, Washington.

"It's in the emergency department," he said. "I couldn't be happier. I feel like I hit the lottery and literally did a backflip that I got that job. It is so important to have instructors who help push you along, genuinely care and want to see you succeed."

Not to be outdone, Hasson transitioned into a new role with her former employer.

"I was a medical assistant at the Portland Clinic for a little over seven years, but now that I have my RN, I was able to secure a position in urgent care," Hasson explained. "We see a lot of suspected COVID cases. We're on the front lines, all the way from putting patients into isolation rooms to notifying the Oregon Health Authority if their tests are positive."

"PCC has changed my life," she continued. "I was able to learn and grow and get my career started. I met some amazing people. It's changed my life for the better in every way." ◆

Virtual Admissions

New and returning PCC students have access to one-on-one appointments, guidance on degree pathways, information sessions, and video tutorials. [Learn more: pcc.edu/admissions](http://pcc.edu/admissions)

Good Neighbors

Nahlee Suvanje uses PCC's career and academic resources to relaunch life



“

What were once barriers in my life now serve as knowledge and insight to help others who may be experiencing similar sets of challenges.

99

— Nahlee Suvanje,
Career Launch workshop student

Nahlee Suvanje drove to her Northeast Portland education location – the Portland Metro Workforce Training Center – to find not only a degree but a new lease on life.

The Humboldt Neighborhood resident had overcome past addiction issues and mental health challenges to move toward a frame of mind where she could start looking for a career. The 38-year-old entered the “Discovery Options” class at the center, receiving intensive one-on-one coaching and guidance that allowed her to build skills, examine interests, and create a plan.

“What were once barriers in my life now serve as knowledge and insight to help others who may be experiencing similar sets of challenges,” said Suvanje, who previously earned an associate of transfer degree from Mt. Hood Community College in 2007. “My personal lived experience is valuable knowledge I can draw upon to inform my professional decision-making and understanding of others.”

In 2019, Suvanje participated in the center’s Career Launch, which is a one-week workshop held exclusively for non-traditional and non-credit students who are interested in either an academic track with the college or other vocational training. Staff help them identify career

goals and create a personalized plan for success in college, and introduce them to key PCC services like financial aid and academic advising.

Career Launch, which serves about a half dozen students per workshop, is a precursor to a career training certificate or college degree program.

“I had a point of contact who knew my situation and created a positive experience,” Suvanje said. “I think this made a major difference, and I felt connected to a larger community throughout the entire journey.”

Tracee Wells is part of PCC's Community Workforce Development team that connects people to living-wage jobs. Through a partnership with the Department of Human Services (DHS), her team offers career coaching and exploration, skills workshops, and ongoing wrap-around support.

"This is pretty much the idea behind Career Launch," Wells said. "Students focus on which academic program or other vocational training track they would like to pursue."

After completing Career Launch, participants who have a high school diploma or GED work with their coordinator on navigation assistance related to financial aid and college services. The division's work echoes the college's commitment to equitable student success with 83% of the students being served identifying as women, 56% people of color, and 23% persons with disabilities.

"Everyday, we serve some of Oregon's most marginalized and vulnerable students," Wells said. "Nahlee symbolizes the successes we strive to gain from the workshop, as many of our non-traditional students may have multiple academic and employment barriers and can most greatly benefit from an on-ramp class to better prepare for school."

"We also work closely with our partners like DHS, who provide students with a means to receive an income, food subsidies, health care, transportation and other critical support service assistance while they are in school," she continued.



After Career Launch, Suvanje completed the "Peer Support Specialist" and "Basic Life Support" training certification through HealthCareers NW, which is another college workforce development program that is supported by Worksystems. She then moved on and finished the "Foundations in Human Services" Career Pathway Certificate at PCC before transferring to Portland State University's Child, Youth and Family Studies baccalaureate program while maintaining a 4.0 grade point average.

"All of the supportive staff at PCC Metro provided the tools needed to encourage my career path forward," said Suvanje, who is targeting a job in the human services field. "My dream of completing a bachelor's degree seemed unrealistic due to barriers. Through the information, support and resources of the session, I discovered and planned my academic pathway." ♦

Neighborhood Career Resource Hub

In 2022, the Portland Metropolitan Workforce Training Center is being redeveloped into an opportunity center to better serve its community. A new two-story facility will be built with classrooms, offices and meeting rooms for both PCC staff and community partners, as well as affordable housing for the community.

Learn more: pcc.edu/bond



Renderings by Bora Architecture & Interiors



Portland's History of Drag

Kevin Cook, aka Poison Waters, explores the artistry and politics of local drag scene in new PCC course

The class also explores the joy, glitz and artistry of the performances.

"I hope students will walk away from my class with a strong understanding of the contribution of American drag culture to Portland, and its positive impact on the community," said Cook, aka Poison Waters.

Cook highlights the Stonewall Riots in New York City in 1969 where a drag performer, Marsha P. Johnson, and many people of color took a brave stand against local authorities, signaling a renewed march toward LGBTQ+ rights. During the 2020 social justice protests, Cook said drag performers selflessly volunteered their time on the front line in support of those expressing their First Amendment rights.

When he isn't teaching, Cook is a co-hostess at Darcelle XV in Portland where he made his big splash as Poison Waters, his drag alter ego, in 1988 and has been

performing regularly since the 1990s. He grew up in the Parkrose neighborhood and has lived in Portland for more than 40 years.

Cook said part of his class illuminates how drag performers often serve communities by acting as a unique facilitator across cultural divides.

"I grew up extremely poor, and my family benefited greatly from social services and various nonprofit groups," he explained. "I've always felt a connection to organizations that help the needy, and I try to give back when I am able."

Community Education Director Leslie Mestman said the class embodies the essence of her division's 2021 programming.

"It's a locally focused topic with local expertise," Mestman said of Cook's class. "We want to explore a subject from many angles and be inclusive of a wide array of students and their perspectives." ♦

In the late 1940s, Portland Mayor Dorothy McCullough Lee used her influence to threaten liquor licenses for clubs that featured female impersonators. In the 1960s, drag professionals were often relegated to trusted homes or underground clubs to safely ply their trade.

Fast forward to 2020, the city's longest-running drag club Darcelle XV Showplace, which opened during those tumultuous times (1967), was designated a national historic site for its role in the city's LGBTQ+ history.

But what happened in between?

In instructor Kevin Cook's three-week summer class, "Histories of Drag Performance in Portland" (page 11), students learn about the origins of the local drag scene, beginning in the 1950s and expanding to the 2020 social justice movements.

Explore Community Ed

PCC's Community Ed Program offers hundreds of non-credit and Continuing Education classes each term and enrolls more than 20,000 non-credit students each year.

Learn more: pcc.edu/communityed

Photo by Carlos Silvas



Create your career in less than a year

Portland Community College's Career Pathways program gives you a faster path to advance your career and income. Choose from 50+ short-term certificates, get personalized support to complete your education, and connect with in-demand jobs and internships.

See the list of career options and learn how to get started:
pcc.edu/career-pathways



On the Right Road

One student is taking the long, but rewarding, avenue to her academic goals

It seems Meredith Houk is always on the road. Whether she's riding a fixed-up motorcycle or moving about the country searching for her next career opportunity, Houk is comfortable marching to her own, self-directed beat.

Houk grew up in the Midwest, graduating high school in Missouri before traveling and landing in San Diego to find better employment. In 2020, amid a pandemic, she moved to North Portland to enroll at Portland Community College.

Her move to Portland and PCC came after participating in National University's underwater diving program to explore a career using hyperbaric chambers. The training, however, didn't fulfill her professional desire, which was to find employment in health care; Houk was inspired by the frontline coworkers combating the spread of the coronavirus.

"The effects on businesses due to COVID-19 have been devastating, and I didn't want to wait any longer to get back in class," Houk explained. "I knew I needed a career that could make it through even a pandemic. PCC has felt like home ever since."

The 26-year-old enrolled at PCC last fall and is working toward an associate of transfer degree. She plans to take full advantage of PCC's dual enrollment agreement with Portland State University, where she will finish her four-year degree. Eventually, she would like to find a nursing program or another kind of health care program to finish her training.

"When I finish my education, I hope to have a career that can positively affect my community and better the world in some way," she said. "I want to be an active part of something that is bigger than myself, something that will live on after me."

At PCC, incoming students like Houk can take many of the freshman and sophomore courses they'll find at universities everywhere. In total, more than 5,000 students transfer PCC credits to four-year colleges or universities every year.

It's been a long, often difficult road for Houk to travel. The Missouri native said she came from a well-educated family; her father worked as a prominent veterinarian who emphasized education. But tragedy upended their lives and fractured the family. Her parents eventually split, leaving Houk's father as the primary caregiver for the children. Soon thereafter, Houk and her siblings were sent to live with other families.

"I moved a lot, and the emphasis on education in each family I lived with varied. And it was often hard to think



about school with so much going on," Houk recalled. "It just wasn't possible (to stay together). My sister and I were sent to live with other families, and my dad provided the expenses."

Over many years, Houk grew up in different cities, living with new families and attending a variety of schools. The experience taught her to be self-reliant – and made her yearn for structure.

"This is a hurdle in life that has taught me the most," smiled Houk, who is a professional dog trainer and volunteers at animal shelters. "You won't always have someone backing your dreams, but if you can learn to propel yourself forward on your own, you can do anything you set your mind to. Never give up on yourself." ♦

Did You Know?

PCC helps students seamlessly transfer to four-year colleges. Many schools visit or present at the college throughout the year to assist with the application process. In addition, PCC provides an "Academic Track" that explains the difference between its degrees and how to choose one.

Learn more: pcc.edu/university-transfer

Profile From a Distance

Working from home in 2020, Freddy Abayare looks forward to rejoining his PCC family

As Portland Community College's remote operations continue due to the pandemic, the planning for the renovation of the college's largest building, the Health Technology Building (HT) at the Sylvania Campus, hasn't stopped.

Athletic Facilities Coordinator Freddy Hofsneider Abayare has taken advantage of the college being closed to work on projects that will prepare the facility, which is home to physical education, nursing and various sciences programs, for its upcoming renovation. He took a moment to reminisce about the past year and how the college has continued to serve the community.



Photo by Brittanie Abayare

HOW HAS YOUR JOB CHANGED WITH THE COLLEGE BEING IN REMOTE OPERATIONS?

FREDDY ABAYARE: When the pandemic first hit we did a deep clean of all the athletic facilities and Exercise Science Program spaces and equipment prior to closing our doors. A majority of my work was being done from home. During that time I was able to take classes and get certified through the American Red Cross as a First Aid/CPR/AED instructor.

Early on, I was able to help with preparations for repairs and maintenance of HT's diving pool.

Due to the HT Building remodel, we have to relocate equipment into temporary spaces. One example was the move of equipment from the fitness center and the group exercise, yoga, dance studio, to be temporarily put in the gym, which will allow us to continue to have classes, as well as a functioning fitness center.

We also had to get equipment to our instructors to help prepare them for remote teaching. Another project was getting cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and automated external defibrillator (AED)/First Aid equipment mailed to exercise science students enrolled in our "Emergency Response for Fitness Professionals" course.

“The pandemic has taught me about the adaptability, strength and resiliency of our staff here at PCC.”

— Freddy Hofsneider Abayare,
Athletic Facilities Coordinator

WHAT DO YOU MISS MOST ABOUT NOT WORKING IN PERSON?

ABAYARE: I miss seeing and interacting with the PCC community. I most especially miss the camaraderie and energy from my physical education, exercise science and athletic facilities family. Team-work makes the dream work. We are a family in my department. The positive energy we give one another helps all of us stay engaged and motivated in the work that we do. We all work effectively and cohesively together to achieve our goals. With this spirit of camaraderie, trust and understanding, we can collaboratively provide the best service possible to the PCC community.

HAVE YOU DABBLED IN ANY HOBBIES WHILE AT HOME?

ABAYARE: One thing I was able to do during the pandemic was to provide translations for the CHamoru community (indigenous population of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands) here in Oregon (for example, creating a “COVID-19 Stay Home Save Lives” flyer and video for the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization with information for the 2020 U.S. Census and details about free COVID-19 testing for Pacific Islanders). I was also able to learn from my mother how to make my own coconut oil (lañan niyok), a traditional herbal medicine used by the CHamorus.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED DURING THE PANDEMIC?

ABAYARE: It is very difficult to effectively communicate and show support for one another when we aren't physically in front of each other. It may feel like you're isolated. We all are sharing some struggles and challenges but have found ways to get past those barriers.

The pandemic has taught me about the adaptability, strength and resiliency of our staff here at PCC. We have found ways to continue to serve students and provide support on their journey to academic success even in a remote environment. ◆



HT Building Renovation

- ◆ Construction on the Sylvania Campus building, first built in the late 1960s, is underway and ends in summer 2023. Renovation covers 100,000 square feet of academic and career health training areas.
- ◆ Renovation will modernize the interior of the east side of the building for the campus. The modernization will offer improved accessibility, updated classrooms and labs, a more welcoming atrium for better way-finding, and sustainability features including energy-efficient lighting and a roof solar array.

Learn more: pcc.edu/bond/sylvania



Rendings by Hacker Architects

pcc.edu | Summer 2021

Remembering Pat Kraft



Last winter, Portland Community College lost one of its mainstays – Pat Kraft.

Kraft was an award-winning Machine Manufacturing Technology instructor and program chair. From the time he started at PCC in 2003, he helped to cultivate a popular program that features the latest technological advances, like 3D printing machines and various rapid technologies.

He's best known for coordinating the annual FIRST Robotics Camps for area high school students, leading teacher educator camps, and instructing creative tech workshops designed for underrepresented groups, like Latina high school students, to encourage their interest in technology fields. In 2014, he earned the Oregon State Award for Outstanding Leadership in Career and Technical Education for his work in educating students,

partnering with schools, training teachers, and creating pathways to employers for his graduates.

In the early 1960s, it was the machine manufacturing program and other career-technical programs that were the foundation for the college when PCC was established on May 15, 1961. Then, PCC was primarily a vocational-technical education college housed in an old portable structure in the Benson High School parking lot. Thanks to the continued work of leaders like Kraft, the college's career-technical education programs have grown immensely since those days, and now serve thousands of students and partner with hundreds of businesses.

After such a dedicated career serving PCC students and the community, Kraft will be sorely missed. ♦

No Food Left Behind

Following last winter's snow and ice storm that knocked out power and communications systems to hundreds of thousands of Oregonians, PCC discovered a serious compressor malfunction with three walk-in refrigerators and two freezers at its Sylvania Campus in Southwest Portland. To be repaired, the appliances had to be shut down.

But what to do with the food, so that it didn't spoil and go to waste? PCC staff jumped into action, quickly leveraging its strong community partnerships. They arranged for the Blanchet House to pick up 47 cases of food – valued at more than \$1,500 – and ensure it reached those in need.

Kudos to PCC's Public Safety officers and food services staff for their quick thinking and assisting the community. ♦



PCC's Darin Rose (left) and Tony Clifford (right) provide Trevor Noakes of the Blanchet House with the donated food.

Energy Efforts Pay Off

PCC's Strategic Energy Management (SEM) team was honored by the Energy Trust of Oregon for its sustainability efforts. PCC won top prizes for "Most Engaged Energy Team," "Exemplary Employee Engagement for Remote Workers," "Earned All Milestone Incentives," and "Attended Most Operations Calls."

The Energy Trust supports SEM efforts across the state and facilitates cooperation between participating organizations. Since enrolling in the program in 2016, PCC has saved 2,384,680 kilowatt hours' worth of electricity and 862,117 in natural gas (measured in therms). In total, the awardees from all over the state were responsible for 5,000 tons of CO₂ avoided and more than \$1 million in savings and incentives. ♦

Read more: pcc.edu/news/2021/02/sem-awards



Facilities Operations Maintenance Specialist Jimmy Hood brought home the "Above and Beyond" award by the Energy Trust of Oregon.

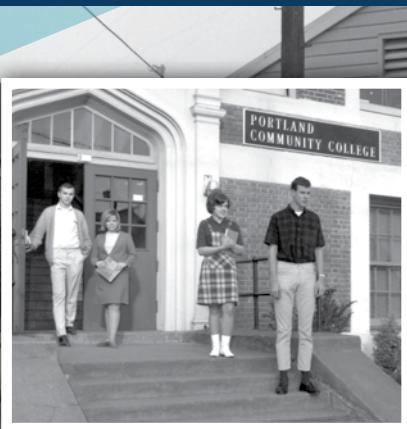
College's Dental Clinic Needs You



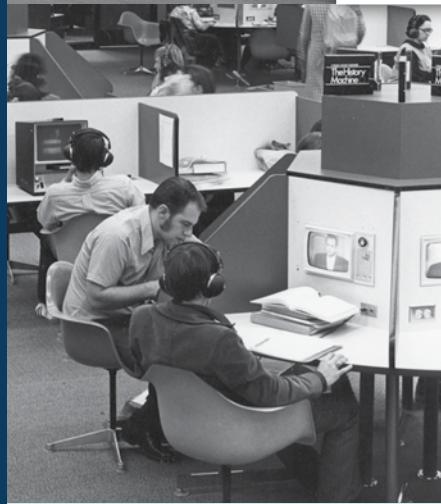
PCC's brand new dental clinic is up and running at the Vanport Building in downtown Portland (1810 SW 5th Ave., on the third floor). The clinic offers low-cost dental care to community members who, by booking appointments with the program, help train the college's talented dental hygiene and assisting students.

At the clinic, students provide low-cost dental services, like free dental exams, dental X-rays, cleanings, small fillings and sealants, under the supervision of licensed medical professionals. The cost is no more than \$25 for a visit, and often less. Appointments are three to four hours long, and work may require multiple visits. ♦

To make an appointment, call 971-722-4909 or email dentalclinic@pcc.edu.



1960s



1990s

PCC Turns 60

The state's largest institution of higher education continues to be an economic driver

When most 60-year-olds are planning for retirement, a particularly influential sexagenarian is just getting going. In 2021-22, Portland Community College is celebrating its 60th academic season serving the Portland metro area and the state of Oregon.

When Oregon's Legislature approved the formation of community colleges in 1961, Portland Public Schools converted its adult and vocational education program into PCC. From its humble beginnings of serving a few hundred students in an old portable building

behind Benson High School, PCC has grown to be the largest post-secondary institution in Oregon with an annual enrollment of nearly 60,000. And, in six decades of operations, the college has an estimated 1.6 million graduates.

"The PCC story is a fabulous story," said Oregon Historical Society Director Kerry Tymchuk back in 2012 when OHS showcased PCC's 50th anniversary. "Portland wouldn't be Portland and Oregon wouldn't be Oregon without the number one educator in Oregon."

Whether it's 60 years ago or only 10, PCC's educational and economic impact has been profound for Portland and the surrounding region. A study by labor market analytics firm Emsi found that the college creates billions of dollars in value for the state's economy and plays a key role in helping students increase their employability and achieve their goals.

Based on 2018-19 data, it found that PCC added \$2.1 billion in income, or supported 24,169 jobs, to the region's economy (Clackamas, Columbia, Multnomah, Washington and Yamhill counties). This contribution is a value approximately equal to 1.4% of the region's total gross regional product.



And as times have changed and priorities shifted, PCC too is changing to better align with best practices to serve students in an even more equitable way. For more than a year, the college developed a new Strategic Plan with a five- to 10-year vision. Throughout the process, students, faculty, staff, community leaders and interest groups contributed their insight.

The results were profound. PCC created four major areas of focus – nurturing a culture of belonging, creating a learner-centric system, cultivating sustainable practices, and responding to workforce needs nimbly.

“It is vital that we move in this direction as the digital transformation of our world continues to change the way we live, work and learn,” said Loraine Schmitt, PCC’s executive dean of instructional and student affairs innovation and technology. ♦

PCC’s History Lessons

Learn more about the college’s interesting history and the characters who shaped its development in a special “History Series” of key moments. From a school named “Failing” to a “battle” to form its campuses, PCC has a rich history serving its community. [Read more: pcc.edu/60](http://pcc.edu/60)





P.O. Box 19000 Portland, Oregon 97280-0990

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.



project: YOU

MY PROJECT:

"Share how cooking healthy, plant-based dishes can be easy, fun and affordable."

— Linda Tyler, Plant-Based Cooking (pages 19 – 20) instructor

MAKE YOU THE PROJECT!

If you can dream it, PCC Community Ed's hundreds of remote and online classes can help you achieve it.

Visit pcc.edu/communityed to get started on your own Project: YOU this summer.



PCC Community Ed