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Portland State

Magazine

SPRING 2019

Work smarter,
take a vacation // 10



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 **Portland State**
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Portland State

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President Rahmat Shoureshi resigns

ON MAY 10, Rahmat Shoureshi announced his resignation as president of Portland State University. He is on paid administrative leave until his resignation becomes effective December 14. The Board of Trustees named PSU's College of Urban and Public Affairs Dean Stephen Percy as acting president until an interim is appointed. Faculty and the campus community will provide

input on that appointment. "We understand that a leadership change of this magnitude is deeply felt across our campus," wrote the Board in a message to students, faculty and staff. "We remain committed to the success of our students, to the research and scholarship of our faculty and to the urban mission of Portland State."

Celebrating PSU's research mission



THIS SPRING, Portland State held a week-long series of events to honor and call attention to the exceptional research of our faculty and students.

Through symposiums, demonstrations and lectures, the community got a first-hand look at the work performed in our labs and throughout the Portland region. From testing the air quality in an urban middle school to finding ways to make the Portland Bureau of Fire and Rescue more efficient, PSU researchers are truly fulfilling PSU's mission to Let Knowledge Serve the City.

Research plays an absolutely essential role in making PSU a quality institution. As researchers, we are explorers, problem solvers and changemakers. PSU research brings new discoveries and possibilities into focus, and addresses critical challenges facing Portland and global communities.

People are surprised when I tell them that over the past fiscal year PSU researchers pulled in more than \$60 million in externally-funded grants. More than half of that money paid for faculty, staff, graduate assistant and student wages. Every dollar PSU receives in the form of research grants is a dollar that doesn't need to come from student tuition.

While surprising to some, that \$60 million figure is typical for PSU. But we can do more. In fact, we've made great strides over the past year to elevate PSU's research profile.

PSU launched two new centers of excellence in the fall, focusing research on solving homelessness and creating technological advances for urban living. And in March, PSU was accepted to be part a consortium of more than 100 top research institutions associated with Oak Ridge National Laboratory, the U.S. Department of Energy's largest science and energy lab. Joining this elite group will give PSU access to numerous programs that offer grants, knowledge-strengthening competitions, and interactions with scientific leaders—all of which will enhance the professional growth and development of PSU's faculty and students.

Also in the past year, innovations developed by PSU faculty members led to the creation of three start-up companies: Titania Purification, which uses nanotechnologies in water purification systems; Stark Street Materials, which develops durable, lightweight radiation-shielding materials; and StoneStable, which harnesses the protective power of silica to preserve vaccines. Another PSU spin-off company, DesignMedix, entered FDA phase-one human trials for an antimalarial drug that has the potential to save countless lives.

The research we do with our partners in the community drives changes that improve quality of life. We're looking forward to growing that momentum in the coming year and beyond.

Mark McLellan

Vice President for Research,
Portland State University

LETTERS

An unexpected outpouring

Editor's note: My colleague Julie Smith, director of marketing at Portland State, received this amazing letter from a student who appeared in one of our University advertisements. (Yes, we do use real students.) I had to share it. Aleena will be graduating this spring having completed a double major in computer science and mathematics.

Julie, I am so grateful that you reached out to me for the opportunity to be in an ad. I saw the poster at the airport, and it was surreal.

I took a picture of myself in front of the ad and posted it on LinkedIn. It got almost a million views, over 8,000 likes, and over 400 hundred comments. It has brought me a lot of exposure I did not have before. I've never had much family support, so seeing the poster gave me validation that this thing I'm doing is actually impressive. Impressive enough to be on a poster at an international airport, to be the face of a not typically woman-represented field, and to be an inspiration to others.

I've had so many women reach out to me on LinkedIn. People I don't know (some I do) from all over the world encouraging me. I lost my mom at a young age and having these women empower me (along with you and others in this process) has given me the support I wish I'd had throughout my degree. I am excited to be so connected with the professional world now, especially with the women in tech. I think that the rest of my career will be much more supported after this chain reaction that was started by the ad.

-Aleena Watson '19



My 20 years at PSU

I was surprised, excited, and very honored to see the piece, "New honor for composer," in the winter 2019 *Portland State Magazine* about my recent Global Music Award.

PSU was such a huge part of my life from 1967 to 1987. As an undergrad I gained incredibly deep and critical knowledge about music and life from the music faculty, guest artists and my fellow students. As a master's student and graduate assistant, the process only deepened and broadened while I taught and continued to study alongside colleagues, many of whom remain dear friends. As a doctoral student in the School of Education working toward an Ed.D. in institutional development my connection with Portland State became a major, central part of my life.

Those 20 years of involvement remain paramount and an underpinning for my success as a musician, composer, conductor, college professor, artistic director and music producer. It all traces back to PSU!

The honor of the article reflects directly back to you, my alma mater. And while my formal doctoral studies were interrupted and stopped due to health issues, I feel no loss. The massive impacts of my training there continue to influence every aspect of my professional and personal life

Thank you.

-Eric Funk '72, MS '78



Portland State Magazine wants to hear from you. Email your comments to psumag@pdx.edu or send them to Portland State Magazine, Office of University Communications, PO Box 751, Portland OR 97207-0751. We reserve the right to edit for space and clarity.

PARK BLOCKS



Building through partnership

A FORMER PARKING lot is being transformed into a multi-use, seven-story building through a unique PSU partnership with Oregon Health & Science University, Portland Community College and the city of Portland. Construction started in January at the Southwest Fourth and Montgomery site, across the street from the Academic and Student Recreation Center. The 175,000-square foot building will house the OHSU-PSU School of Public Health, PSU College of Education, PCC dental programs and clinic, and Portland's Bureau of Planning and Sustainability. "This is unlike any other partnership that I have been engaged in," said Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler at the groundbreaking. The \$104 million project is backed by \$51 million in state bonds.





Digging the past

EVEN THE simplest artifacts from the past can speak volumes about how people lived—and may even tell us a few things about modern life. Since 2012, Portland State anthropology students, faculty and alumni have teamed up with community partners to put on the Archaeology Roadshow to excite the public about Oregon's heritage and encourage its preservation. This year's exhibits and activities will center around the theme of daily life. "Our task is to understand these artifacts, and have them tell stories of what people's motives were or why they changed through time," says Virginia Butler, anthropology professor and department chair. The Roadshow takes place on campus June 1 before heading to Bend June 8 and Harney County June 29.



New member in elite research consortium

OAK RIDGE National Laboratory in Tennessee helped usher in the nuclear age when it was founded in 1943 as part of the Manhattan Project. It now taps the expertise of more than 100 top research universities to provide solutions to national priorities in science, education, security and health. In March, Portland State was added to the list when the University was formally accepted as a member of the Oak Ridge Associated Universities. It's a big win for PSU, opening the door to new grant possibilities, government contracts and myriad research opportunities, "all of which will enhance the professional growth and development of PSU's faculty and students," says Mark McLellan, PSU vice president for research.



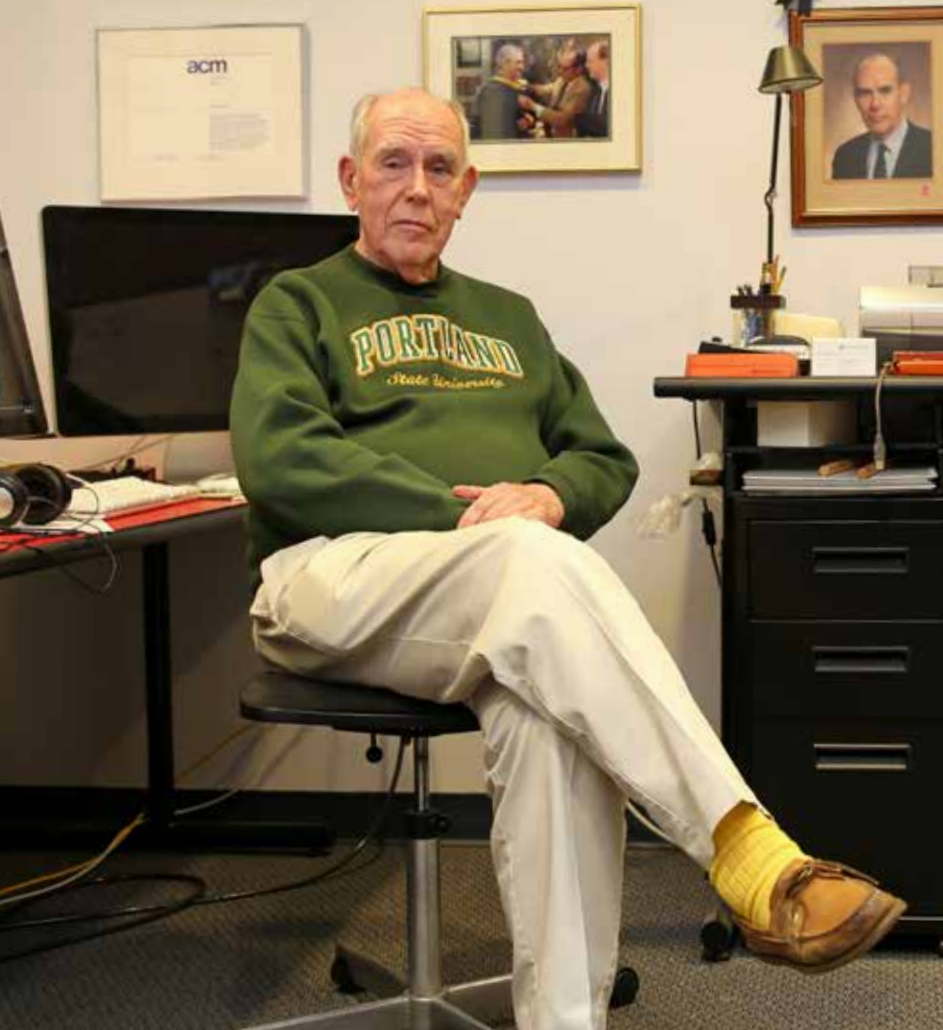
From campus to space

AS ASTRONAUTS aboard the International Space Station perform experiments in zero-g, the Portland State students who helped design them are watching from a lab on campus through a live video feed. The NASA communications lab—one of the few in the United States—is under the direction of mechanical engineering professor Mark Weislogel, pictured here (left) with then-student Brentley Wiles. NASA has funded \$4.2 million in research at PSU over the past 17 years. During that time, astronauts on the space station have conducted more than 100 PSU-designed experiments, some of which could one day unlock the secrets to long-range space travel. “Portland State is totally unique in the country in the kind of work we’re doing,” says Weislogel.

Census may undercount Oregonians

NEARLY 500,000 Oregonians are at risk of being uncounted in the 2020 Census because they live with one or more non-U.S. citizens, according to a study conducted by Jason Jurjevich, acting director of PSU’s Population Research Center. Jurjevich, who was recently appointed to the Oregon Complete Count Committee by Gov. Kate Brown, performed the study partially in response to the White House administration’s attempt to include a citizenship question on the 2020 Census. Asking respondents to report citizenship could reduce participation among already hard-to-count populations, including children, people of color, renters and immigrants, according to former U.S. Census Director John Thompson. The census is required to count everyone.





Honoring a lifetime of achievement

OVER THE PAST 60 years, Ivan Sutherland changed the ways we interact with computers, create art and explore the virtual side of reality. In recognition of his prolific career, the visiting professor in PSU's Maseeh College of Engineering and Computer Science, received the Frontiers of Knowledge Award in Information and Communications Technologies from the BBVA Foundation. This prestigious international award includes a €400,000 prize, which Sutherland has requested go to the PSU Foundation in support of the Asynchronous Research Center, the lab co-founded by Sutherland and his wife and research partner Marly Roncken. Sutherland's early work helped shift computing from text-based interfaces to graphical displays; his current research focuses on the development of "self-timed" computer circuits.

Power from the sea

A NOVEL METHOD of generating electricity from ocean waves has received a \$2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Energy. Jonathan Bird, electrical and computer engineering faculty, will study the feasibility of using adjustable magnetic springs as part of prototype floating devices designed to capture wave energy. The oscillating springs would enable the devices to be smaller and less expensive than other methods that have been tried, cutting the cost. "Nobody has figured out how to generate electricity from the sea in a cost-effective way," says Bird. "Many of the companies that have developed large ocean generator devices have gone bankrupt." ■



FANTASIE



A calendar like no other

AFTER A LIFETIME of painting and a lifetime as a black man in America, Isaka Shamsud-Din '99, MFA '01 has created a Juneteenth Calendar that celebrates black history. Juneteenth commemorates the June 19, 1865, abolition of slavery in Texas. Shamsud-Din's calendar covers the black experience through this century. Starting in June 2019, the calendar features 19 months of his art and information about historic events. Shamsud-Din, now 78 years old, was president of the Black Student Union in 1968, taught Black Studies in 1970-71 and later taught art at PSU. One of his early murals is in the south stairwell of Smith Memorial Student Union. The Juneteenth calendar may be purchased at the PSU Bookstore.

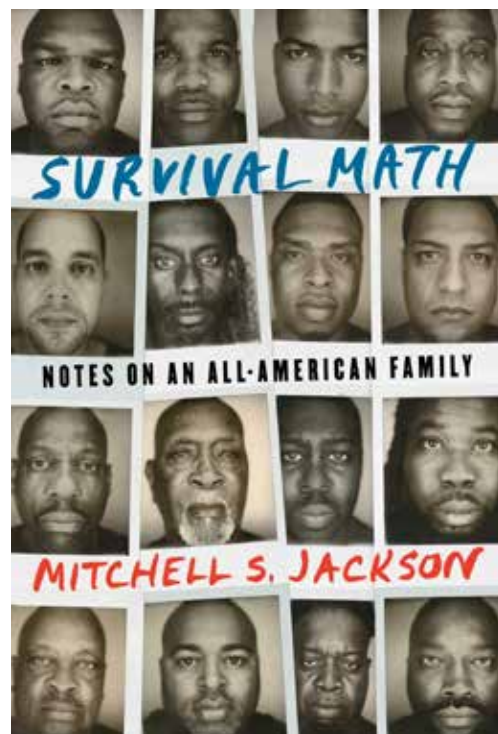


Doctors facing stigma

ALTHOUGH ROE VS. WADE affirmed Americans' constitutional right to legal abortion in 1973, many abortion providers today still face stigma for the work they do. *Our Bodies Our Doctors*, the newest documentary film from psychology professor emerita Jan Haaken, highlights the stories of several generations of abortion providers and the struggles they encountered in the past—and still encounter to this day. Haaken, who directed the documentary, is a clinical psychologist and previously worked as a nurse at a women's health center. This is her seventh feature-length film. *Our Bodies Our Doctors* premiered at the Portland International Film Festival in March.

Growing up black in Portland

IN THE OPENING pages of *Survival Math: Notes on an All-American Family*, author Mitchell Jackson '99, MA '02 describes returning to the Northeast Portland streets where he grew up and seeing yoga studios, bike lanes and other “monuments to privilege,” but not a single black person. The scene contrasts with what he experienced as a youth, which he recounts in *Survival Math*, a memoir which covers some of the same ground as Jackson's 2013 autobiographical novel, *The Residue Years*. This book, published by Simon & Schuster, is a true look at his journey from drug-dealing youth to aspiring novelist—all in Jackson's unique poetic prose: “... working a part-time, and only-time, gig at *The Oregonian's* downtown insert facility stacking pallet after pallet of inky-ass newspapers. For bread to live. For bread to leave.” ■



NEW WORKS

The Social Media Workbook for Teens
By Goali Saedi Bocci '07, Instant Help, 2019

Governing Oregon: Continuity and Change
By Richard A. Clucas (political science faculty) and others, Oregon State University Press, 2019

Gifted Earth: The Ethnobotany of the Quinault and Neighboring Tribes
By Douglas Deur (anthropology faculty), Oregon State University Press, 2019

Under the Burning Sun: The Forbidden Scrolls, Vol. 3
By John W. Fort MST '92, CreateSpace, 2018

Live at the Old Church with Members of the Oregon Symphony
CD by Naomi LaViolette MM '01, LaViolette Music, 2019

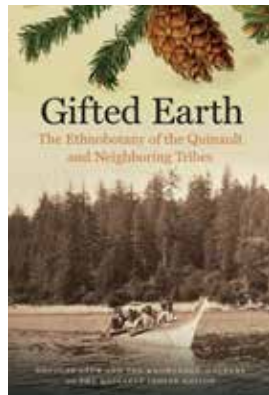
Mother Winter: A Memoir
By Sophia Pfaff-Shalmiyev MFA '15, Simon & Schuster, 2019

Ink Dance: Essays on the Writing Life
By Deborah J. Ross MS '73, Book View Cafe, 2019

As One Fire Consumes Another
By John Sibley Williams MS '11, Orison Books, 2019

The Rug's Topography
By Rana Young BFA '13, Kris Graves Projects, 2019

Made For These Times: A Start-Up Guide to Calling, Character, and Work That Matters
By Justin Zoradi MS '09, Zondervan, 2018



Work smarter, take a vacation

WRITTEN BY MADISON SCHULTZ

Research-backed advice
on how to keep employees
happy, healthy and engaged.

Relaxation during vacations
is important, according to
professor Charlotte Fritz's
research, but mastering a new
skill can also leave employees
even more refreshed.



IT'S SPRING BREAK, and the CEO of Vacasa—a Portland-based vacation rental management company with more than 3,000 employees worldwide—is in Mexico.

"I haven't heard from him since Friday, and I probably won't hear from him until next Monday," says Stephanie Bastin-Wells, Vacasa's head of employee experience.

He isn't missing, though—he's just on vacation.

Americans work longer hours and take fewer vacations days when compared to employees in other Western nations, according to the *Business Insider* article "11 American Work Habits Other Countries Avoid at All Costs." Americans are also notorious for working long after they've left the office, responding to work emails late in the evening or even on the weekend. Although some might praise this work ethic as being indicative of hyper-dedicated employees, the refusal to disengage from work—even for the evening—can lead to burnout, lower life satisfaction and other negative outcomes.

Just ask Charlotte Fritz, industrial and organizational psychology faculty at PSU. Starting when she was a doctoral student in Germany, Fritz has been studying how work breaks influence employee well-being and productivity, looking at everything from vacations to the typical two-day weekend.

According to Fritz, the CEO of Vacasa is doing the smart thing by putting work aside while he's on vacation—not only for himself, but for the whole company. Changing how American employees approach their vacation days starts with leadership.

"It's important to be a role model in terms of setting boundaries and going on vacation yourself," Fritz says. "Encourage employees to take time off. Don't reach out to them while they're gone, and don't expect them to respond to calls or emails."

Time off is key to reducing burnout

Burnout is the emotional and physical exhaustion that employees experience as a result of prolonged stress and frustration at work. In an ideal world, vacations give burned-out employees an opportunity to recharge and return to work feeling refreshed.

Research conducted by Fritz and collaborators suggests that when employees are able to recover well from work demands during nonwork time, they experience improved

well-being, which allows them to return to work focused, energized, and motivated.

Despite the clear benefits of spending time away from work and mentally disengaging from work stressors, employees sometimes worry that if they take too much time off, their managers may conclude that their job is unimportant, Fritz says.

So how can companies encourage their employees to make the most of their vacation days?

"Make it clear that vacation days have nothing to do with job security and promotions," Fritz says.

Also important is what form vacation days take. Some companies allow employees to cash out their unused vacation time, converting paid time off to a larger paycheck.

"If you allow people to translate vacation days into monetary rewards, there's a good chance they will, especially in lower-paying jobs," Fritz says. Companies that want their employees to take advantage of their vacation days should not allow days to be cashed out. Vacation days should also expire rather than stacking or rolling over from year to year, encouraging employees to use them or lose them.

"Vacation days are supposed to be vacation days," Fritz says.

For a company like Vacasa, vacations are built into the corporate culture, says Bastin-Wells. Every Vacasa employee receives a \$250 credit on their birthday and another on their work anniversary, which can be used at any of the thousands of vacation rental properties that Vacasa manages. Employees also receive a discount on property rentals, and salaried full-time employees get unlimited paid time off.

"We encourage people to take time off when they need it and when they want it," Bastin-Wells says. "We challenge our leadership with making sure we're staying close to our direct reports," and employees who are close to the point of burnout are encouraged to take time for themselves to step away and recharge.

Katie Wojciechowski, a copywriter at Vacasa, recently took two vacations with her husband: a two-week trip to Morocco and a shorter, three-day trip to Hawaii. Wojciechowski says that Vacasa's vacation policies make it easy for her to take time off—her supervisor frequently urges the team to take personal time, and unlimited paid time off means less hassle when it comes to planning vacations.





Any experience that puts a person outside of their comfort zone can be enough to give someone a new perspective, refresh their worldview, and recharge their emotional batteries.

Vacasa employees have plenty of other options when it comes to reducing work fatigue. Vacasa's new Pearl District office building features ping-pong tables and dedicated unwinding areas where employees can step away from work obligations, says Bastin-Wells. The office kitchens feature fresh fruit, bagels, yogurt and other convenience snacks, plus an in-house barista for gourmet coffee breaks.

Fritz cautions that some kinds of breaks taken during the work day—browsing Facebook for a few minutes, for example—don't measurably boost employees' energy or productivity levels. Employees looking to step away from work for a midday energy boost would do better to create "positive work moments," Fritz says. That could mean thanking a colleague for help they provided, creating a to-do list of upcoming projects, or thinking about the meaningful contributions one is making. Next time the post-lunch doldrums hit, grab a co-worker for a walk around the block and chat about an upcoming project rather than dwelling on a negative experience.

Getting the most out of vacations

Time off is integral for employees' success, but Fritz stresses that how a vacation is spent can affect whether someone returns to work feeling refreshed or if they come back feeling more stressed than before they left. In other words, there is such a thing as a bad vacation. In addition to the importance of leaving work at work, Fritz says that the best vacations involve relaxation and experiences that help develop a sense of mastery.

When it comes to relaxation and mastery during vacations, "it's not so much about, 'Do I play tennis or do I play soccer or do I read a book'—it's more about the experience you have while doing that," Fritz says.

Relaxation is about calming experiences, while mastery includes experiences that are stimulating but not too demanding or all-consuming.

"This could be a new hobby or really anything that broadens your horizons," says Fritz. "While it may take some effort, it still creates positive emotions."

Employees don't necessarily have to take up rock climbing or go deep-sea diving in order to gain a sense of mastery. Any experience that puts a person outside of their comfort zone can be enough to give someone a new perspective, refresh their worldview, and recharge their emotional batteries. For that reason, Fritz suggests that anyone planning a vacation should reconsider the temptation to book an all-inclusive, English-speaking resort.

"You don't have to try that hard," Fritz says. "Just being in a location that is very different from your everyday context provides opportunities for mastery experiences."

Wojciechowski incorporated both of these strategies into her Hawaii trip. In addition to spending time stretched out on the beach, Wojciechowski and her husband learned to surf. Wojciechowski is adamant about not checking work messages or email while on vacation.

Fritz's research also found employees do better taking several shorter vacations throughout the year as Wojciechowski did, as opposed to one long vacation. Shorter vacations every couple of

months, according to Fritz, allow employees to experience the positive effects throughout the year, and work is less likely to pile up during shorter sojourns.

Having worked hard before she left for Morocco, Wojciechowski faced a manageable workload when she returned and was still feeling the vacation afterglow when she left for Hawaii a few weeks later.

Preventing burnout without leaving home

Not everyone has unlimited paid time off, and twice-yearly vacations can only go so far in improving employees' well-being and productivity. So how can employees reduce burnout and exhaustion between vacations?

Fritz says that one of her own biggest takeaways from her research is the importance of daily psychological detachment from work—in other words, leaving work at work. Fritz, like Wojciechowski, tries not to answer work-related messages after hours, and her colleagues know to only call or text her in an emergency.

She also says that she and her spouse have become more careful with how they talk to each other about work.

"We aren't coming home and venting about the not-so-good experiences, we're just letting them be," she says. "We're trying to focus more on the positives."

Weekends are also important in the fight against burnout. The same principles that apply to a good vacation also apply to a refreshing weekend. Employees should pursue low-effort relaxation as well as look for opportunities to learn something new and challenge themselves.

Even if employees can't make it to Mexico for a two-week getaway, it's possible for them to improve work outcomes and prevent burnout by bringing a little bit of a vacation mindset into their everyday lives. At the end of the work day, they should be mindful of leaving work obligations behind and spend a few minutes during their commute home reflecting on the positive aspects of their job. And perhaps after engaging in a quick mastery experience, employees should find a place to sit in the sun with a magazine and a margarita, knowing that somewhere halfway across the world, their CEO is doing the same. ■

Madison Schultz is a graduate assistant in the Office of University Communications.

Employees at Vacasa have many choices for work and break spaces in their Portland offices, including a rooftop deck.



Tips for Managers

1. Lead by example: If a manager works long hours, answers emails at 10 p.m., and never takes a day off, employees might think they need to do the same in order to advance in the company. Managers should model good psychological detachment behaviors for their employees to emulate instead.

2. Make vacations company policy: Insist vacation days be used as vacation days rather than allowing employees to cash them out. Vacation days should expire instead of indefinitely rolling over to encourage employees to use them.

3. Put employees at ease: Employees should understand that vacations are part of a healthy work life, and that taking time off will not negatively affect their chances for a promotion or their job security.

4. Don't expect employees to be available 24/7: If round-the-clock availability or periods of being on-call aren't part of an employee's job description, managers shouldn't expect them to be checking work messages outside of normal work hours.

5. Allow flexible scheduling: Flexible scheduling, such as allowing employees to work four 10-hour days or work remotely, makes it easier for employees to engage in recovery behaviors.

Tips for Employees

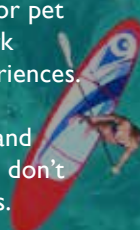
1. Don't ruminate on the negatives: Rather than coming home and venting to your partner, roommate or pet about the bad parts of your day, let go of negative work experiences and choose to focus on the positive experiences.

2. Leave work at work: If possible, turn off email and messaging notifications for work-related accounts, and don't be tempted to check messages during non-work hours.

3. Relax: Engaging in low-stress activities is key to feeling recharged and refreshed the next day. Read a book, take the dog for a walk, or spend some time with friends.

4. Challenge yourself: Participate in activities that contribute to a sense of mastery. This could be as simple as engaging in challenging exercise or learning a new hobby—anything works, as long as it still evokes positive feelings.

5. Use your vacation days: Don't let vacation days go to waste! Rather than taking one big vacation, Fritz recommends taking a few smaller vacations throughout the year to experience its positive effects more frequently. Fritz suggests a combination of long weekends (for example, taking off Friday and Monday) and at least one longer trip. "Seven to 10 days is a really nice chunk of time," Fritz says.





IMPERIAL SHIFT

BY JOHN KIRKLAND

With a history-making abdication and a new emperor on the throne, professor Ken Ruoff explains this new era for Japan.

APRIL 30 marked the end of an era, when Japanese emperor Akihito, 85, citing declining health, abdicated the centuries-old Chrysanthemum Throne. He was the first emperor in 200 years to do so; the position is usually only vacated when the emperor dies.

The next day, Akihito's son, 59-year-old Crown Prince Naruhito, became the new emperor, ushering in the Reiwa reign.

Beyond mere ceremony, the name change is a very big deal in Japan. Chosen by the Japanese government, Reiwa means “beautiful harmony.” It’s used in myriad ways—from commercial marketing to official documents—that touch the everyday lives of all Japanese citizens. One of the most prominent ways is in the Japanese calendar. While the Japanese go along with the rest of the world in using their own versions of May, June, July and so on, their years are marked by the official name of the emperor’s reign.

So while it is 2019 in the rest of the world, it is now Reiwa 1 in Japan.

On the day the Reiwa was announced, the *New York Times* reported “businesses, including toy companies, calendar makers and official stamp producers rushed to introduce versions of their products featuring the new era’s name.”

Although the Japanese emperor has no official governing duties, the position—the longest-running monarchy in the world—is looked upon by the Japanese people as a way of defining who they are. He (the monarch must be a “he”) establishes national identity. The emperor’s birthday is a national holiday.

“There are people in Japan who say this is what makes them special. The emperor defines what it is to be Japanese,” says historian Ken Ruoff, head of Portland State’s Japanese Studies program and one of the world’s leading authorities on the Japanese royal house.

IT’S BEEN a busy winter and spring for Ruoff who, because of the abdication, has been deluged with interview requests from the *New York Times*, *Time Magazine*, Associated Press and other major news outlets. In one interview request, a journalist for the monthly Japanese magazine *Sentaku* called Ruoff’s book *The People’s Emperor: Democracy and the Japanese Monarchy, 1945-1995* “the most important thinking on the Imperial House of all time either here in Japan or elsewhere.”

In March, the Japanese news conglomerate NHK flew Ruoff to Tokyo for several shows it was producing about the abdication. NHK staff interviewed him extensively, as did a crush of reporters from other Japanese media—all because his first book, published in 2003, was so passionately received by the Japanese public. His newest book on the Heisei Monarchy (1989-2019) has been a

best-seller in Japan since its release in January.

And then at the end of April NHK flew him back again to serve as a studio analyst during coverage of the abdication and enthronement ceremonies.

"I realized that through the monarchy, I could learn so many more things about Japan and what it means to be Japanese."

"Almost any time there's significant news from Japan, the Japanese journals come calling to me for commentary," he says.

Ruoff got his first exposure to Asian history as an Ithaca, New York, high school student in the early 1980s. At the time, "world history," as taught in schools was really the history of Western civilization. But when his school brought in a Chinese history professor from nearby Cornell University, Ruoff had an epiphany. He realized that here was this big, fascinating story about a huge region of the world that rarely got mentioned in the high school curriculum.

As a Harvard freshman, Ruoff took a survey course about Japan, and soon after became an East Asian studies major and started learning the Japanese language. He took his first study trip to Japan in 1987.

"I had this amazing host family. They were super kind, and the mom was ruthless about teaching me Japanese," he recalls.

Two years later, while in graduate school, when emperor Hirohito was on his deathbed, a journalist asked the mayor of Nagasaki if he thought Hirohito was responsible for World War II. The mayor said he did, and the public reacted with a visceral backlash. Someone even tried to kill him.

"It made me realize the taboos that existed in talking about the emperor," says Ruoff. "And I realized that through the monarchy, I could learn so many more things about Japan and what it means to be Japanese."

ACCORDING to Japanese myth, the royal lineage is an unbroken thread that goes back 2,600 years, although historians have only been able to trace it back to about 300 A.D.

Throughout the centuries, the emperor was considered divine: a direct descendent of the Sun Goddess, and the pure embodiment of the Japanese people. That is, until 1945 when two atom bombs, the loss of World War II and the Allied occupation forced the country into collective soul searching. Along with this newfound identity crisis, Emperor Hirohito renounced his divine status, but all the other symbolic importance remained.

While Hirohito's 62-year reign saw the country through military expansion, war and humiliating defeat, Akihito was all about peace. His era, Heisei, is roughly translated as "achieving peace," according to Ruoff.

"For 30 years, every other word out of his mouth has been 'peace,'" he says.

In many ways, Akihito brought closure to the postwar era. He issued apologies to Korea and China for Japan's wartime aggression. As crown prince in 1964, he embraced the Paralympics, which began to erode societal stigmas about people with disabilities.

"In Japan in 1964, the common view of the handicapped was that they should be hidden away, kept separate from mainstream society," Ruoff says. "Today, leaders of associations for people with disabilities have publicly credited the emperor for the fact that their position in society has improved dramatically over these past decades."

As emperor, Akihito was known as a man of the people—a stark contrast to his father. While Hirohito maintained his regal bearing from a distance, Akihito mingled with the population, visited social welfare agencies, knelt on the ground with disaster victims and instilled a spirit of volunteerism.

And on the international stage, where right-wing populism has been taking hold in the United States, Europe and elsewhere, Akihito held back.

"He has refused to lend his name to any sort of chest-thumping, Japan-first nationalism," Ruoff says. "He's OK with the Japanese people taking quiet pride in their country."

THE NEW emperor faces a country that is undergoing big changes. The population is aging and the birthrate is low. Immigration is changing the makeup of the country in small but growing ways. And Japan, with an LGBTQ community that is becoming more prominent, is becoming more diverse.

Naruhito already has said that his reign will be about respecting diversity while keeping the country unified, Ruoff says. And he knows it's going to be a big challenge.

In some ways, the new emperor already symbolizes some of the social changes that have been happening in Japan. In a country where sex roles used to be strictly delineated, Naruhito is a hands-on dad. In 2002, photos of him carrying his baby daughter on his back, and laughing as she pulls his hair, went viral. It was such a departure from the manly image of the Japanese male, let alone a crown prince.

"Through giving the princess a bath, taking her for walks or giving her baby food, I myself feel a strong bond with my child," he said at the time.

One thing is for sure: He holds enormous power to steer the country just by his presence.

Says Ruoff, "Because the emperor has such great social prestige, any time he gives a nod or recognition to a social movement, it reinforces that movement." ■

John Kirkland is a staff member in the PSU Office of University Communications.



Professor Kenneth Ruoff is interviewed by Aiko Doden, host of Newline In Depth on NHK World, about the abdication. NHK brought Ruoff to Japan several times for interviews.

A photograph of a forest path with tall trees and ferns. The path is a narrow dirt trail winding through a dense forest. Tall, slender trees with green foliage line both sides of the path. In the foreground, there are large, vibrant green ferns. The lighting is soft, suggesting a dappled sunlight effect. The overall tone is natural and serene.

AWAY FORWARD

Veterans are getting internships on public lands through a program founded by alumnus Brendan Norman.

Written by Cliff Collins

“WANTING to go to work. That is how I wake up every morning,” said U.S. Coast Guard veteran Justin Spedding when he was an intern in the Deschutes National Forest. “I have never felt that way about a job.”

Spedding is not alone. He and more than 200 other military veterans have found a passion and a place in the world through VetsWork, a career development program that places them in internships with national forests and other public lands agencies.

VetsWork is an AmeriCorps-supported program of Mt. Adams Institute, co-founded in 2011 by alumnus Brendan Norman MEd '02. Norman is executive director of the nonprofit organization, located in Trout Lake, Washington. Its mission is to connect people to the natural world not only through career development, but also with educational, service learning and research programs.

Soon after the institute's establishment, AmeriCorps identified veterans and military families as a priority focus and wanted to support organizations that help that population. In 2012, Norman applied for and received a grant to develop a program. VetsWork was officially launched in 2014 with 22 participants in Oregon, Washington and Missouri.

“This was the start,” he says. “We’ve been funded through AmeriCorps ever since based on the success of the program.” He adds that all the federal natural resource agencies support hiring veterans, and “that’s why our program is such a good fit for them, as it helps them prepare qualified veterans for permanent positions.”

As for the benefits for the veterans themselves, “Everyone has different needs,” he explains. “You could talk with 10 different people in the program and hear 10 different stories of what they get out of it. Some would talk about career opportunities, some just about being in the outdoors, and some about seeking a sense of purpose or working for the greater good.”

THE VETSWORK program provides two different paths: 45-week internships with public lands management agencies nationwide, or a 12-week firefighter training program in the Umatilla National Forest. Interns receive a \$300 weekly stipend, basic health care coverage, student loan deferment, an education award to seek further training, and access to GI Bill benefits. That latter benefit “is often the deciding factor that allows veterans to participate in the program,” says Norman.

Not all vets work in the woods. The program also offers internships in an office setting—say, writing news releases or crunching numbers. Other interns may want to do more technical work such as compiling endangered species surveys as a biological technician. The range of opportunities is vast, he says.

For instance, Elamon (White) Barrett, 28, began a new job in February handling timber sales for a ranger district in the Sumter National Forest in South Carolina. She credits VetsWork, where she completed two terms as an intern in a different ranger district in Sumter: “All my life I have always been in love with the outdoors, and I feel that I have found my calling,” she says.

“It’s absolutely amazing the opportunity I was given through the program. It gave me that foot in the door. I did the legwork, but they gave me the opportunity to get where I am today.”

Barrett served four years in the Navy as a lieutenant after completing a Navy ROTC program in college. She chose that route because of its scholarship opportunity, but it came with a post-college commitment of four years. She acquired management experience, but wasn’t happy with what she was doing. After completing her obligation, she searched the internet for the next step, which is how she discovered VetsWork.

The work was physically demanding: Barrett often had to bear a heavy backpack for miles and carry a 25-pound chainsaw while maintaining trails and campgrounds. But she also was responsible for greeting and assisting visitors, and through that role she gained her most rewarding experience: teaching others the skill called “leave no trace.” She obtained a Leave No Trace Master Educator certification and now represents South Carolina as the statewide advocate for the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics.

Barrett says this experience “fueled my fire to get a permanent position” with the Forest Service, because she knew that the agency had pioneered the leave no trace concept, which could make a difference for future generations. “It’s just incredible to think that I, as one person, can truly make an impact on environmental conservation and the preservation of our public lands,” she says.

The institute cannot guarantee a job is waiting for all who complete the program, says Norman. Instead, vets should think



Former Navy lieutenant Elamon Barrett was a VetsWork intern in the Sumter National Forest in South Carolina where she now has a job handling timber sales.

“It’s just incredible to think that I, as one person, can truly make an impact on environmental conservation and the preservation of our public lands.”





Alumnus Brendan Norman brings his love of the outdoors to work every day as executive director of the Mt. Adams Institute. Photo by Erica Bingham.

of their time as “a 45-week job interview” and a chance to learn new skills as well as develop professional networks, which can be a key to finding a job. However, a large majority of veterans who successfully complete the program are offered permanent employment. As with Barrett, often these jobs are in the same places where the vets interned, but could be anywhere in the country.

SURPRISINGLY, Norman, 45, is a born-again nature lover. Raised as one of eight children on a 40-acre Michigan farm with cornfields and a swamp forest, Norman and his siblings spent their days outside—playing, doing chores, taking care of livestock. Although this may sound like an idyllic existence to city folks, it wasn’t what Norman had in mind. “I wanted to be inside, playing video games like other kids,” he admits.

His outlook changed when he moved to Portland in 1996. The Pacific Northwest’s strong environmental and outdoor culture—a stark contrast to his Midwest upbringing—grabbed hold of him and has never let go.

The Notre Dame graduate’s first work experience in Oregon was as an AmeriCorps member assigned to a Portland middle school.

“It’s absolutely amazing the opportunity I was given through the program. It gave me that foot in the door.”

Norman enjoyed interacting with young people, as well as developing relationships with families, counselors and teachers. He decided to return to school, earning a teaching certificate and a master’s degree in education from Portland State.

After making contacts at an annual meeting of AmeriCorps volunteers, he landed a job in Trout Lake with Northwest Service Academy, which was then sponsoring 500 young adults working in the environment.

When the academy lost its funding and dissolved, Norman had by then established what he calls “10 years of building partnerships,” which he and a handful of others from the academy parlayed into the formation of Mt. Adams Institute, which also works with K-12 students in its residential summer camp. He and his wife, Margo Burtchaell, and their two teenage children wanted to remain in Trout Lake, so forming the institute allowed them to do that. His kids regularly hike, ski and kayak, but Norman cheerfully acknowledges that “the draw of social media and screens is a constant challenge.”

The institute plans to expand VetsWork by at least 70 percent in 2020 and is awaiting the official confirmation of a new three-year AmeriCorps grant to do it. This will allow more veterans like Justin Spedding the opportunity to wake up to a job they love. Today, Spedding is an environmental planner with the Colville National Forest in Eastern Washington. ■

Cliff Collins is a Portland freelance writer.

Lifeline

HARDSHIP FUNDS CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN STAYING IN SCHOOL OR DROPPING OUT.

WRITTEN BY KATY SWORDFISK

SHARONA SHNAYDER is an overachiever. At age 19 she's already a junior and averaging 24 credits a term.

"I just can't afford to be in school very long," says the accounting major who is dual enrolled at PSU and Portland Community College.

Shnayder is a cash-strapped student struggling to make ends meet, and like many other students, she's finding that a little extra financial support from the University can mean the difference between graduating or withdrawing.

In response to student needs, two PSU schools and one college—The School of Business, School of Social Work and the College of Urban and Public Affairs—have launched financial hardship funds designed to ensure that students cannot only remain in school, but in some cases, put food on the table as well. Supporting student emergency funds is a giving opportunity for The Campaign for PSU, which is raising \$300 million in philanthropic contributions for the University by 2021.

For years, PSU has had an emergency loan program that allows students to borrow up to \$600, but the hardship funds provide grants to students that they don't have to repay.

"Honestly, if I didn't have that fund, I probably wouldn't be going to school or would be stressed out every day trying to figure out what I was going to do next," says Shnayder.



DUAL ENROLLED AT PSU AND PORTLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE, **SHARONA SHNAYDER** IS SAVING MONEY ON TUITION, BUT WHEN MONEY GOT TIGHT, A HARDSHIP FUND HELPED HER OUT.

SINCE fall 2015, more than \$730,000 has been awarded to 290 students at The School of Business (SB)—the first school to create a hardship fund. Some students receive more than one award, which ranges from \$126 to \$6,200, with the average award being \$1,600.

The business school's funding comes from different sources, including its tuition differential. SB students pay a higher tuition rate than students in some other majors, and the school uses a portion of those fees to give back to students. Funding also comes from the Center for Executive and Professional Education and private donors.

Becky Sanchez, the school's executive director of undergraduate programs who oversees the fund, says the most common use is tuition. But textbooks, child care and personal expenses also top the list. As is the case with many innovative ideas, Sanchez was inspired by the story of one student.

Sanchez was looking at students who had not yet graduated but had more than 225 credits. One name on the list of about 1,000 caught her eye. Sanchez had worked with the student when she was an advisor.

A HARDSHIP AWARD HELPED PAY FOR TUITION WHEN **BECCA HUBINSKY** LOST HER PART-TIME JOB AND STUDENT LOANS WERE NOT ENOUGH.



The student told her that despite having only one class left, she wouldn't graduate. The previous term's bill was outstanding and had been sent to collections, so she got a job to pay the bill and then needed to continue working to pay living expenses.

"That particular case made me think, 'Okay, we're not helping our students if they are dropping out when they have one class left, because they can't pay their bills,'" Sanchez remembers. "So let's create a process where we can help those students."

Sanchez was able to pay the student's \$3,000 bill and the concept for a financial hardship fund was born.

Unfortunately, the fund shrinks as the academic year progresses.

"At this point I have \$10,000," says Sanchez. "I have three

student applications in my email right now, and if I approve them all, I will have no more money."

Fortunately, the dean of the school can help by talking to donors. It's easier for donors to get behind giving funds when they know it's going directly to a student to pay for rent or buy food, adds Sanchez.

THE SCHOOL of Social Work fund operates a little differently than the one in The School of Business. Marina Barcelo, social work's student inclusion coordinator who manages the fund, says their donations largely come from faculty and staff and are on a much smaller scale. Their fund operates entirely off of gift cards to stores like Fred Meyer where students can use \$50 or so to buy whatever they need: food, gas, clothing, personal supplies, etc.

"Students who have accessed the School of Social Work Student Emergency Fund over the past three years have experienced many challenges, including homelessness, unemployment, car and home theft, mental health struggles, hospitalizations, and loss of child care and scholarship support," says

Barcelo. "Many of these students work multiple jobs, living paycheck to paycheck with the constant stress of not knowing how they will afford tuition and complete their program."

During this academic year, the fund has supported 78 students and all told, 138 students since it was started. The vast majority of which, Barcelo adds, are first-generation students.

"We recognize that our emergency fund is a Band-Aid, and does not solve the financial burdens our students face," she says. "However, we also recognize that even simple gift cards can make the difference in a student's day or week."


In the College of Urban and Public Affairs (CUPA), the emergency fund is known as the Dean's Hardship Fund. Dean Stephen Percy started the fund last year as part of the PSU Day of Giving. Three

students have benefited so far with grants of up to \$500.

Percy says that CUPA wants to grow the fund substantially in the next three years.

"Many of our undergraduate majors and graduate students walk a delicate line in supporting themselves, their families, and their education," he explains. "Too many are one financial crisis away from having to leave the University. Research and experience at PSU tells us that if students can be helped to overcome unexpected emergencies, they can overcome their challenge and continue with their studies."

HARDSHIP FUNDS have come in handy for many students, including Luis Patron-Diaz, a senior majoring in finance. Because of his status as a Deferred Action Childhood Arrivals

A man with dark hair, wearing a blue suit, white shirt, and red tie, stands on a modern staircase with a glass railing. He is looking off to the side with a thoughtful expression. The background shows a bright, modern building with large windows and a staircase with a glass railing.

AS THE CHILD OF UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS, **LUIS PATRON-DIAZ** IS NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FEDERAL LOANS OR GRANTS; HARDSHIP FUNDING MADE A HUGE DIFFERENCE.

student, Patron-Diaz, who is not eligible for federal loans or grants, ran out of options to pay for tuition last year. He'd heard about the business school's financial hardship fund through Erica Wagner, associate dean of undergraduate programs. He applied for and received \$1,600. He was able to access the fund a second time and receive an additional \$1,100 to pay his remaining tuition bill—putting him on track to graduate in June.

"It literally changed my life," says Patron-Diaz.

Without the fund, Patron-Diaz says he would likely need to drop to part-time and finish his degree one class at a time. Dropping out wasn't an option. Patron-Diaz wants to attend law school.

Becca Hubinsky, an accounting student, says she tried to make things work with student loans and pinching pennies after losing her part-time job. A \$1,500 hardship award in the form of tuition remission allowed her to breathe—and refocus on school and campus engagement.

"It's already stressful enough being a student worrying that you don't have time, and then to not have money either?" says Hubinsky.

She's grateful for the business school's hardship fund and what it meant for her experience as a student. "This is a sign that I need to stay on helping the school," she adds.

Many of the students seeking assistance are either homeless or on the brink. One of the CUPA students, for example, was able to obtain University housing but Percy says he's still lacking resources for books, supplies and tuition.

A social work Ph.D. student says access to emergency funds prevented a hospital stay because it allowed her to access healthy food and control her blood sugar.

"The gift cards are a lifesaver and I'm forever grateful to those that donated them," she says.

Sanchez, Wagner and education professor Karen Haley studied the impact of emergency funding on student retention.

"The creation of the hardship funding program did more than provide financial relief to students, it had the effect of creating a sense of community and care for these students," they found. "Students reported a desire to give back to the school, to perform better in their classes, and a feeling that the school cared about them as individuals."

Hardship grants not only relieved financial concerns and stress, but deepened their connection to the University.

"I feel really lucky I found this," says Shnyder the young, hardworking accounting major who is on track to graduate in 2020. ■

Katy Swordfisk is a staff member in the PSU Office of University Communications.

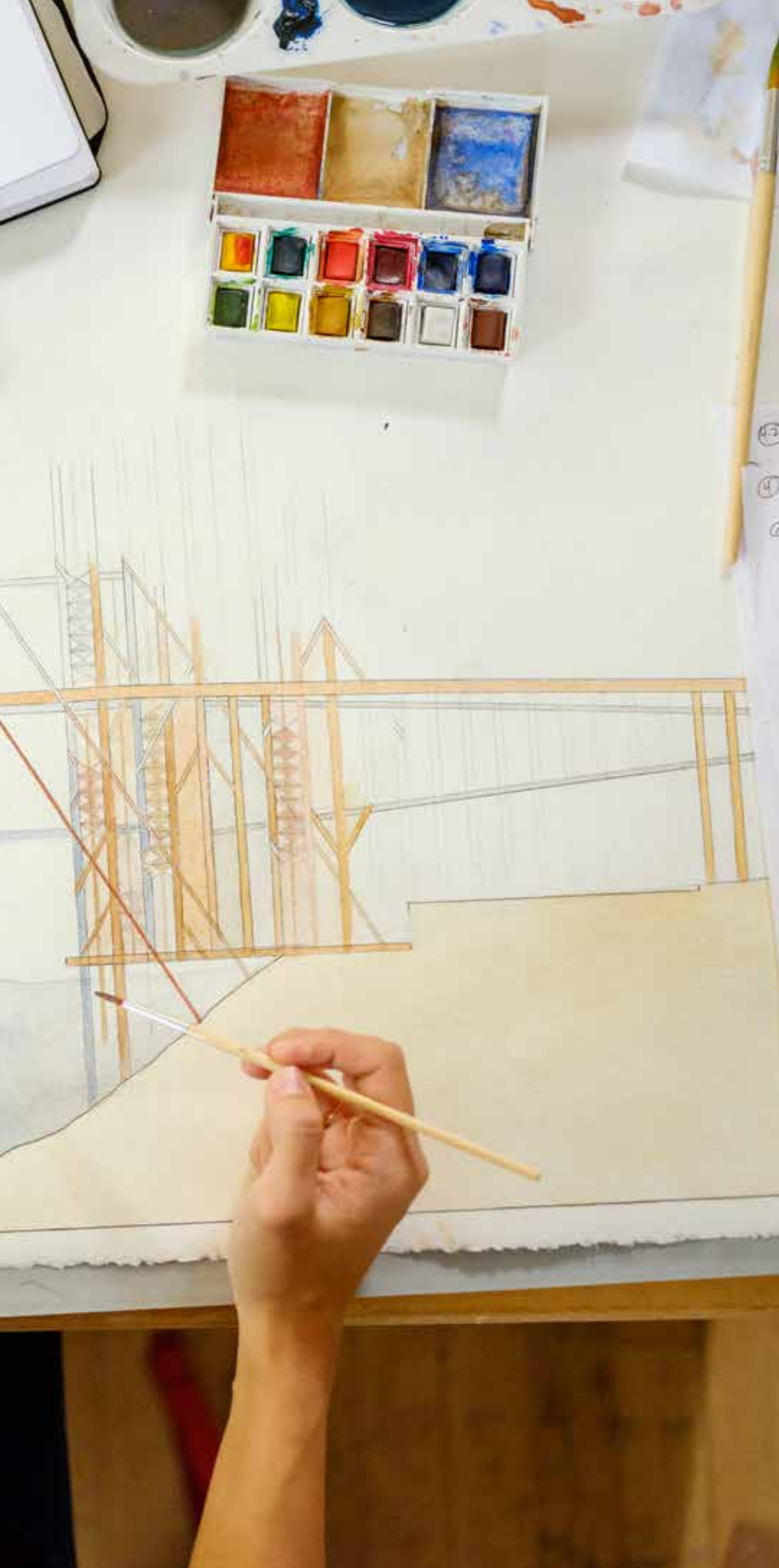
***To support the PSU Student
Emergency Fund, visit
letknowledgeserve.org***



Reimagining

the Burnside Bridge

ARCHITECTURE STUDENTS
REDESIGN THE BRIDGE IN
PREPARATION FOR THE
BIG ONE.



The Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake—whenever it occurs—is expected to devastate the Pacific Northwest and destroy most of Portland's bridges, including the Burnside Bridge.

Expert analysis indicates that the Burnside Bridge is likely to collapse in a manner that would obstruct adjoining roadways since two-thirds of the bridge is over land, and block north-south ship traffic in the Willamette River. Worse, the five-lane roadway is a designated official “regional lifeline route,” intended to carry first responders and needed supplies during emergencies. If the bridge were to fail, that lifeline route would be cut off.

Because the Burnside Bridge plays such an important role in the life of the city, transporting more than 40,000 vehicles and 2,000-plus pedestrians and cyclists each day, Multnomah County engineers are undertaking a major bridge improvement project. And in an effort to generate imaginative ideas for the bridge and spark a public conversation, they enlisted professor Jeff Schnabel and his class of PSU Master of Architecture students to design concepts for the reimagined bridge.



“How do you design a structure that is at once functional, beautiful and iconic?”



Schnabel posed to his students the questions, “How do you make a bridge that meets the needs for right now? What role does it play post-earthquake? How do you design a structure that is at once functional, beautiful and iconic?”

County officials asked for innovative designs that will accommodate cars and transit vehicles as well as improve the experience for cyclists and pedestrians, says Schnabel. “The students also looked at how to integrate the bridge connections with the green spaces on either side in order to enrich that bike and pedestrian experience.”

Because the county is still determining what type of bridge to use, the students’ proposals ranged from operable to fixed bridge designs, keeping in mind how these would impact users. For those who went with a fixed bridge option, they had to address the height needed for water traffic. Others chose a movable bridge, with a vertical lift or a double drawbridge; with this option, students had to contend with potential interruptions to road traffic.

Some of the students designed dramatic light features in their bridges that could act as beacons, while others incorporated digital art panels that could convert to emergency messages. Creating access to water-based transportation was an important part of students’ designs as well.

The idea of a bridge that serves multiple functions was particularly compelling. One such proposal suggested that the bridge could be used as scaffolding—extending alongside

the unreinforced masonry buildings at the ends of the bridge and providing structural support. That same scaffolding would also create temporary market space on either end beneath the bridge, and places for emergency services to be offered.

Throughout the design process, students presented their design proposals to bridge engineers and officials at Multnomah County and got their feedback.

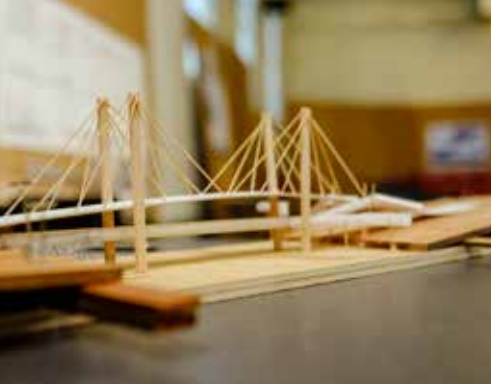
County officials didn’t always agree with the students’ proposals—financial and practical constraints meant that sometimes their designs were nixed. “But that was really the best part of the studio—there was a dialogue,” says Schnabel.

“Naturally, the county representatives were open to new ideas, but they had a clear perspective on their needs for the bridge, and as a result the students confronted more criticism than they would get in a traditional academic setting,” adds Schnabel. “But pedagogically that was a valuable experience. They had to come up with brilliant ideas that would also resonate with the client and meet their practical requirements.”

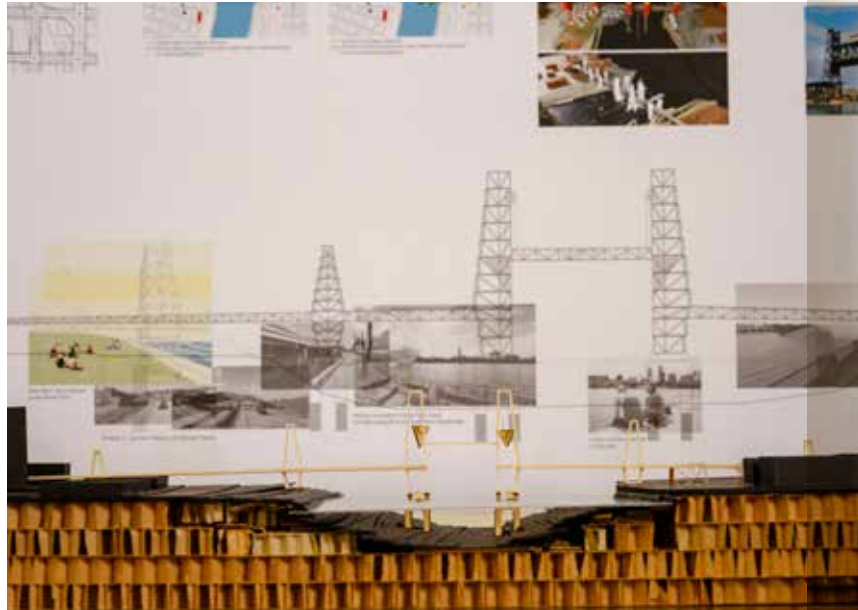
The students’ designs were recently shared with the public in an open house, where the county encouraged community input. ■

Written by Karen O'Donnell Stein, communications and student services coordinator in the PSU School of Architecture.





Some of the students designed dramatic light features in their bridges that could act as beacons.



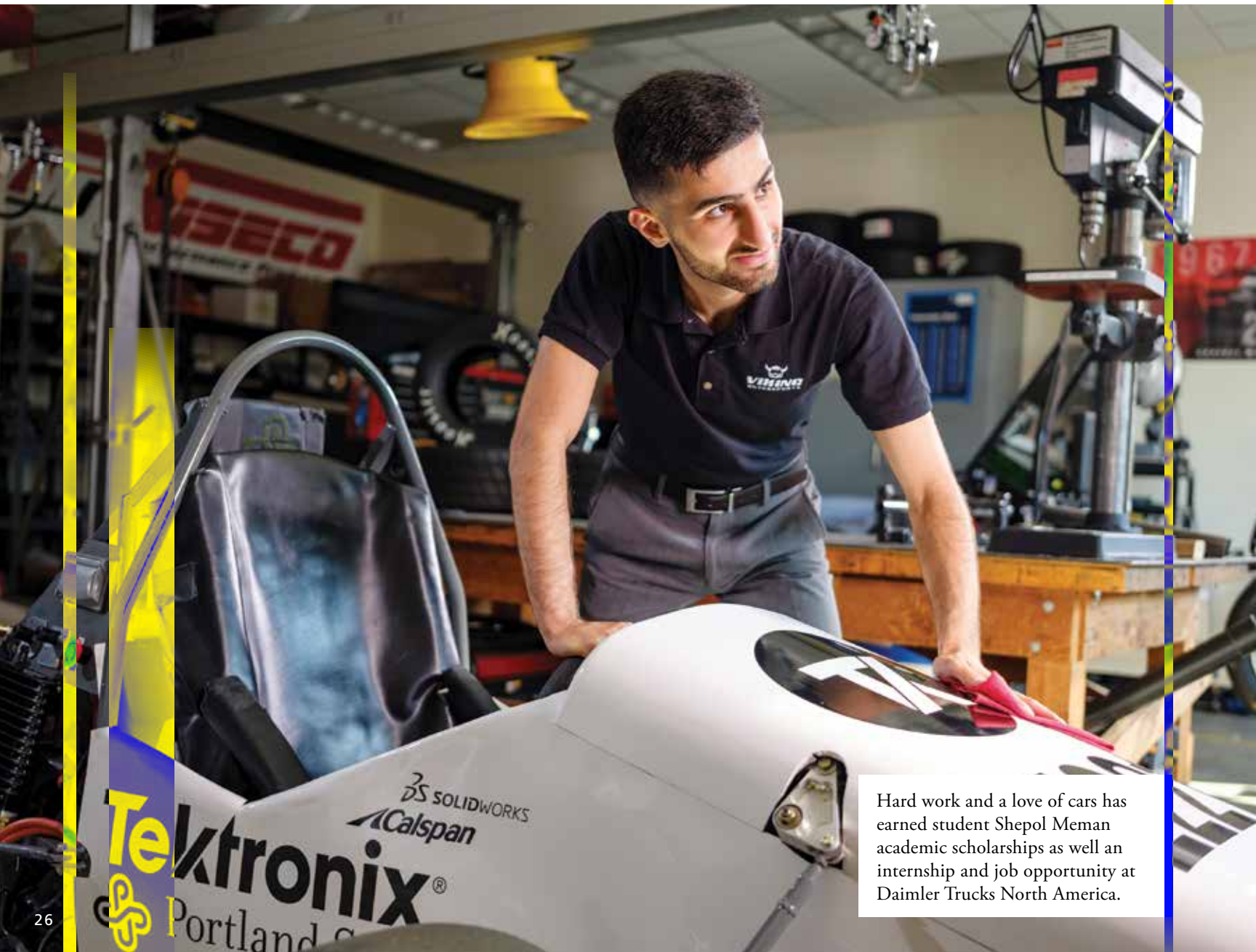
On page 12, architecture master's student Brandon Parker shares his ideas for the Burnside Bridge with interested faculty member Juan Heredia. Timothy Barnett (above) and Emily Waldinger (left) present their designs for critique by faculty, local architects and officials from Multnomah County.



DRIVEN

DRIVEN

Engineering student
Shepol Meman is on the
highway to success.



Hard work and a love of cars has earned student Shepol Meman academic scholarships as well an internship and job opportunity at Daimler Trucks North America.

WRITTEN BY JOHN KIRKLAND

SHEPOL MEMAN'S parents fled Kurdistan in northern Iraq in 1996—a time when Saddam Hussein was in power, and American-related organizations and the people working for them were coming under threat. Meman's father worked for one of them: the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance in the city of Erbil. They left quickly, and didn't take much with them.

Meman, in his mother's womb, was just a few months away from birth.

The family spent two months in an immigration camp in Guam, then moved to San Francisco, and then to Portland—a city, they learned, that was a great place to raise a family. Meman was born soon after.

"When I hear these stories, it brings a tear to my eye," he says. "They came to a new life—a new beginning—with nothing. No opportunity lined up for themselves. They just jumped right in."

That same fearlessness, along with an eye for opportunity, persistence and a willingness to work hard, are the hallmarks of Meman's personality. They're big reasons why he's such a successful student at Portland State.

The 22-year-old mechanical engineering major has a passion for cars. Until last fall, he was one of the leaders of the 40-member student group Viking Motorsports Portland State Formula SAE, which received a \$30,000 sponsorship from Tektronix to build an electric formula car, which the team will take to an international competition in June.

The experience gave him a glimpse into what it's like to be a real-world engineer. He liked it, and looking back, he can't believe his luck.

"I never thought I'd have the opportunity to be working on these vehicles and get hands-on experience with milling machines, lathes, CNCs (computer numeric control tools)—tools directly associated with manufacturing," he says.

Meman also loves the fact that his professors are working engineers with years of experience in the field. A couple of them worked on the Sellwood Bridge reconstruction, and related their firsthand experience to their students.

"It's one of the coolest things for me," he says.

A LOVE for cars and innovation led Meman to Daimler Trucks North America, which employs about 150 PSU graduates. The University and Daimler have had a long, mutually beneficial relationship that has helped shape the curriculum of the PSU business and engineering schools and has produced internships and high-paying jobs for grads. Daimler even bought a company started by PSU students: GlobeSherpa, a mobile app that lets users buy TriMet tickets. PSU and Daimler formalized the relationship four years ago by forming a strategic partnership that could expand Daimler's presence in other parts of the University.

"I never thought I'd have the opportunity to be working on these vehicles and get hands-on experience with milling machines, lathes, CNCs—tools directly associated with manufacturing."

After applying numerous times, Meman landed an internship in Daimler's powertrain product strategy department, where he worked alongside other engineers, performed market research, and pitched project ideas to the rest of the company. In February, he got a different job at Daimler in which he and his team members test the limits of truck systems and components.

"It's really just running the trucks until they die," he says. "We are the last checkbox of all the things that have to happen before production to be sure our trucks are working the way they should," he says.

Meanwhile, he's working with Daimler on his Senior Capstone project in which he's helping develop safety technology that helps truck drivers keep their rigs in their own lanes on treacherous stretches of road such as Portland's Terwilliger Curves.

Meman says Daimler is his dream company, and he wants to continue to work there after he graduates this spring.

The work he's been doing helps pay for college. In addition, he got a full-ride scholarship during his junior year, a John J.

Roberts scholarship for \$2,500, and another \$5,000 scholarship from Gerber, the blade company in Tigard where his parents work.

In 2017, Meman won an Innovation Program Grant through the Maseeh College of Engineering and Computer Science. The grant is awarded to students who come up with functional, innovative ideas and pitch them to a judging committee. He called his project the "SafetyTrckr," a technology to prevent human error in driving, including alerting drivers when they fall asleep at the wheel. He hopes that someday it might be used in the automotive industry.

FOR MEMAN, enrolling at PSU was an easy choice. It's close to home, so it allows him to save money on living expenses. And his older brother, Shalaw—the first one in his family to go to college—graduated from PSU in 2015 with degrees in accounting and finance. He now works for Perkins & Co., Portland's largest locally owned accounting firm.

"My brother is really glad to be there, and PSU gave him those opportunities," says Meman.

The two brothers founded the Kurdish Student Organization on campus, a nonprofit organization to help students of Kurdish ancestry connect with their culture and find professional opportunities. His own Kurdish parents are on his mind as he looks beyond college to a career or graduate school.

"They motivated me. I want to help them—put them in a big house and let them retire happy. That's my brother's goal too," he says.

As he works toward that goal, Meman continues to be an advocate for the University to draw more students to the place where he's found success. He points to the fact that *U.S. News & World Report* named PSU one of the most innovative universities in the country.

"I believe in PSU because of the kinds of graduates it produces," he says. "This is a gateway that offers a foundation for success. Being at PSU, I've never been told 'no.' If you have an idea, go for it!" ■

To provide scholarship support for Shepol Meman and students like him, visit letknowledgeserve.org.



GIVING

Student Trine Parsons (*right*) works with chemistry professor Tami Lasseter Clare on art conservation projects. Parsons impressed philanthropists Janet and Dennis Beetham with her keynote talk at the 2018 Simon Benson Awards Dinner.

Beyond the surface

A recent gift will help scientists analyze wood, concrete and steel—from the inside out.

DENNIS BEETHAM '64 and his wife, Janet, donated \$690,000 to advance materials science research at PSU. The gift will purchase a specialized CT scanner to enable advanced chemical investigations of structural materials as well as rare art objects.

The scanner will be housed in the campus laboratory of Tami Lasseter Clare, a renowned chemist in the field of art conservation. Clare was recently funded by the Mellon Foundation to establish the Pacific Northwestern Consortium for the Science of Cultural Heritage Conservation at PSU. Her laboratory utilizes some of the most specialized spectrometry and imaging equipment in the world.

"The scanner will help us see the insides of objects without cutting into them or breaking them apart," says Clare, "and we'll be able to see

tiny details like cracks and corrosion, which may foretell problems or give us hints on how to prevent catastrophic damage.

"It's hard to say exactly what we will learn, because we're going to discover things that we couldn't have ever seen before."

With a 1,300-pound sample capacity, the sophisticated instrument will be only the second of its kind in use in the United States, and the first on the West Coast. The tool will advance the work of PSU researchers in several academic areas—from structural engineering to materials science.

The Beethams are thrilled to support this work. Dennis is the founder of DB Western, a chemical engineering corporation headquartered in Oregon. He and Janet, who attended PSU as an undergraduate, are longtime supporters of PSU.

"As a chemist and engineer, I understand the importance of top-tier analysis to research," says Beetham. "Janet and I are excited to see what this new equipment can and will make possible." ■

ATHLETICS



Big Sky winners

ON A TEAM with three, all-time great fifth-year seniors, it was freshman Desirae Hansen who hit the game-winning shot with 3.1 seconds to go against Eastern Washington on March 15. With that win, the Portland State women's basketball team earned its first Big Sky tournament title since 2010 and competed in the NCAA Division I tournament for only the second time in program history.

"We started something special four years ago," says Lynn Kennedy, who took over as head coach in April 2015. "It took some time, but I'd just like to thank all of our fans, alumni and community supporters for being there for us all year."

The tournament title completed a meteoric growth for the Vikings, who won only four games during Kennedy's first year, but raised that to 25 with seniors Ashley Bolston, Sidney Rielly, Courtney West and Pia Jurhar this season—a new school record for wins during the program's Big Sky era.

The Vikings went on to lose to the Oregon Ducks in the first round of the NCAA tournament, as the Ducks went on to the Final Four. But just the fact that the Vikings reached the tournament so quickly under Kennedy's guidance was remarkable.

"I'm so proud, humbled and honored to be the coach of this team," says Kennedy. "They'll go down as the best team in Portland State history, and that says a lot about them, their character and their work ethic." ■



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Photos by Scott Larson



ALUMNI

AWARD-WINNING WORDS

AT FIRST, Chelsea Bieker MFA '12 thought the email was spam. It said she'd been nominated to receive a 2018 Rona Jaffe Foundation Writers' Award, an honor that supports women writers whose work contributes to culture and society with a \$30,000 gift.

She got over her initial suspicion and submitted additional writing as requested. Months later came the call: She was one of only six national recipients to win the prestigious award. To this day, she does not know who nominated her for the prize.

"It's really amazing," she says. "It makes me feel like all of the time and sacrifice I've put into my passion was worth it."

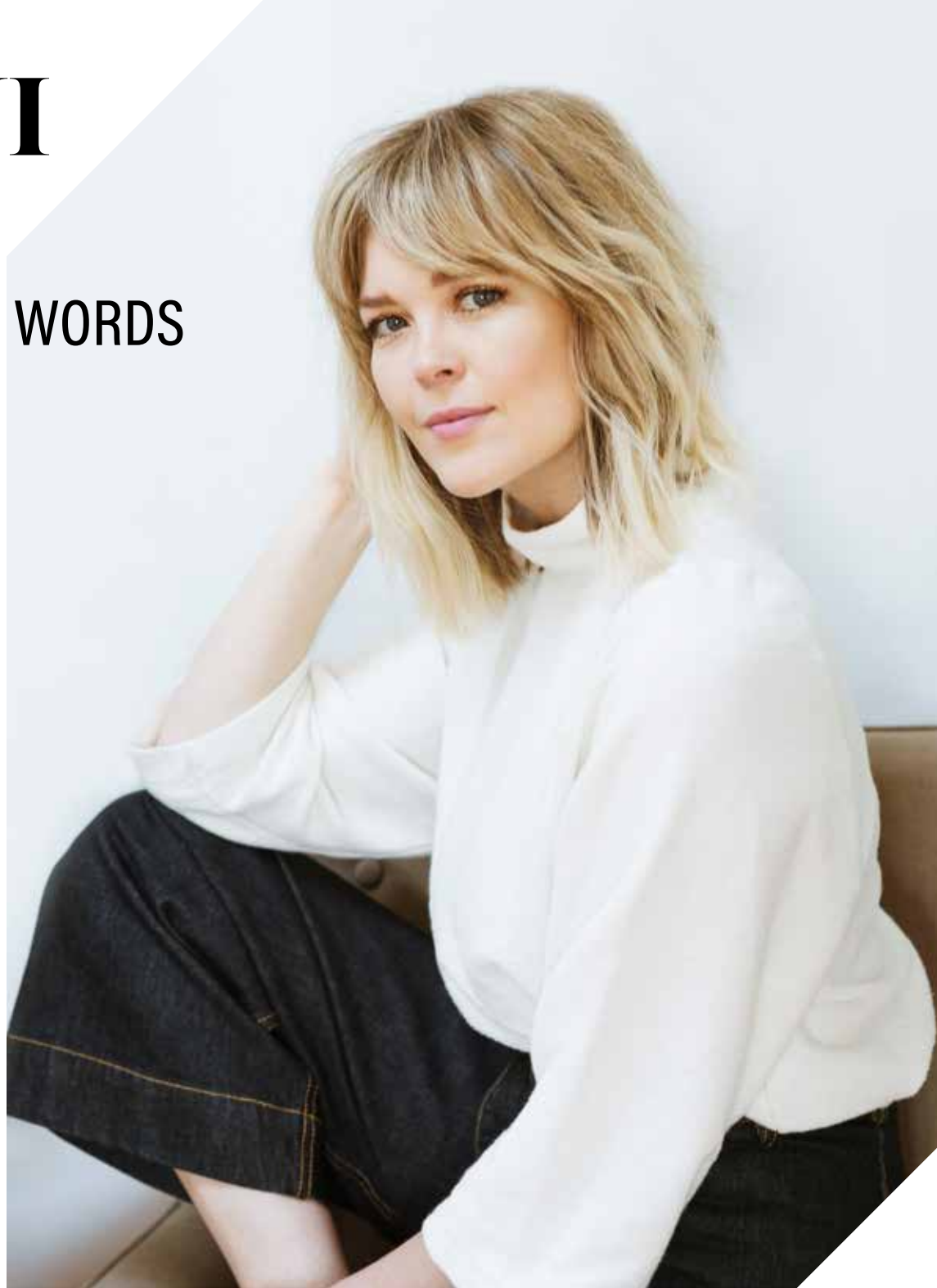
Even though it is early in her career, which is a criteria of the Jaffe award, Bieker had numerous published writings for the judges to consider. Her work has appeared in *Granta*, *McSweeney's Quarterly Concern*, *The Cincinnati Review* and many other publications. Her nonfiction essay *Why We Must Believe Women: My Family's Legacy of Violence and Murder*, published by Catapult, made the *New York Times*' What We're Reading list.

THE PASSION to become a writer started for Bieker in high school with a teacher's encouragement. She went on to earn a bachelor's in journalism from California Polytechnic State University, and there she discovered her passion for creative writing.

Another teacher suggested she pursue a Master of Fine Arts and advised her to follow the writers she loved. "I was a real fan of Charles D'Ambrosio's work and he taught at PSU, so I was drawn to the program," Bieker recalls. D'Ambrosio was her thesis advisor and two other highly respected authors—Leni Zumas and Tom Bissell—formed her thesis committee. "It was a magical time," she says.

NOW, Bieker is the one influencing students. She works part-time as an online adjunct writing instructor for Pennsylvania's Harrisburg Area Community College. She also takes on freelance projects and writes online dating profiles, which expose her to "a lot of interesting ways of being and looking at the world," she says.

"I pick up writing inspiration all the time, but the seeds of the fictional world that I designed in graduate school carry through my creative work today." Bieker's first novel, *Godshot*, is slated for



publication in 2020 and her story collection, *Cowboys and Angels*, will come out in 2021.

The Jaffe award puts an emphasis on providing emerging women writers time to write. It is helping Bieker and her husband with child care costs for their two young children as she completes her books from their Portland home.

“There are a lot of rejections that come with being a writer,” she says. “I’m so grateful for this award. It makes me feel like I’m on the right track.” —written by Kelli Fields, a Portland freelance writer.

ALUMNI IN THE NEWS

RICHARD DEVLIN '76, a former Oregon state senator, is now vice chair of the Northwest Power and Conservation Council, which plans to develop a new Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Program and a new Power Plan this year.

JEAN ROSENBAUM MS '76 is founder and executive director of Gifted Wishes in Portland, a nonprofit that grants the wishes of patients who are in hospice.

WAYNE SCHERTLER '89 was hired as chief operating officer for the Larkin Hoffman law firm in Minneapolis earlier this year. He has over 25 years of law firm management experience.

MARY BOKOVOY '95 recently joined the Hasson Company Realtors in Hood River as a home stager. She is also owner of Hood River reDesign, an interior design company.

JOHN BROWN '98 appeared in the ensemble for a production of the musical *Fiorello* playing at 42nd Street Moon in San Francisco during February and March. He has been performing with companies around the Bay Area since 2001 and when not singing, he is a clinical psychologist.

LEE HEDGMON '03 helped start the Portland SheBrew festival in 2017. A former women's studies instructor at PSU, she is now a distiller and brewer at McMenamins' Cornelius Pass Roadhouse in Hillsboro.

JESSICA (TYNER) MEHTA '05, MS '07 is the visiting poet at Chemeketa Community College for the 2018–19 academic year. A member of the Cherokee Nation, Mehta has written numerous books, leads writing workshops, and is a poetry editor for journals and a local press. She also teaches yoga.

KEVIN BYRNE MBA '10 is raising money to assist the National Multiple Sclerosis Society through his book series, *Never Stop Never Quit*. Byrne, who was diagnosed with MS while a commander in the U.S. Army, has raised more than \$700,000 for the society.

LISA NICO '10 joined KPNX 12 News in Phoenix, Arizona, as a reporter in February. She began her reporting career at KVAL in Eugene. As a communication major, Nico underwent major hip surgery and remembers PSU fondly for the accommodations she received from faculty and students.

ADAM KLEFFNER '12 was hired in February by the Dallas Cowboys as an assistant offensive line coach. He most recently coached at the University of Missouri and Portland State.

HAIDN FOSTER '15, a second-year medical student at University of Cincinnati, recently launched the online publication *Pride in Practice* to offer best practices information in LGBT health care to medical students, residents, physicians and other health care workers.

RICHARD DEVLIN



MARY BOKOVOY



JOHN BROWN



JESSICA MEHTA



LISA NICO



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LOOKING BACK



50 years ago: Portland State becomes a university

ON FEBRUARY 14, 1969, Gov. Tom McCall signed legislation elevating Portland State College to Portland State University. The Oregon Legislature was key in raising the status of the then-college, particularly Sen. Don Willner. He and Branford Millar, president of Portland State from 1959 to 1968, worked hard to show the importance of the college to Portland and the state.

When the bill was signed, Gregory Wolfe was president of Portland State and John Nolan was president of the Associated Students. Both had testified for the bill before the Senate Education Committee, with many faculty and students in the audience.

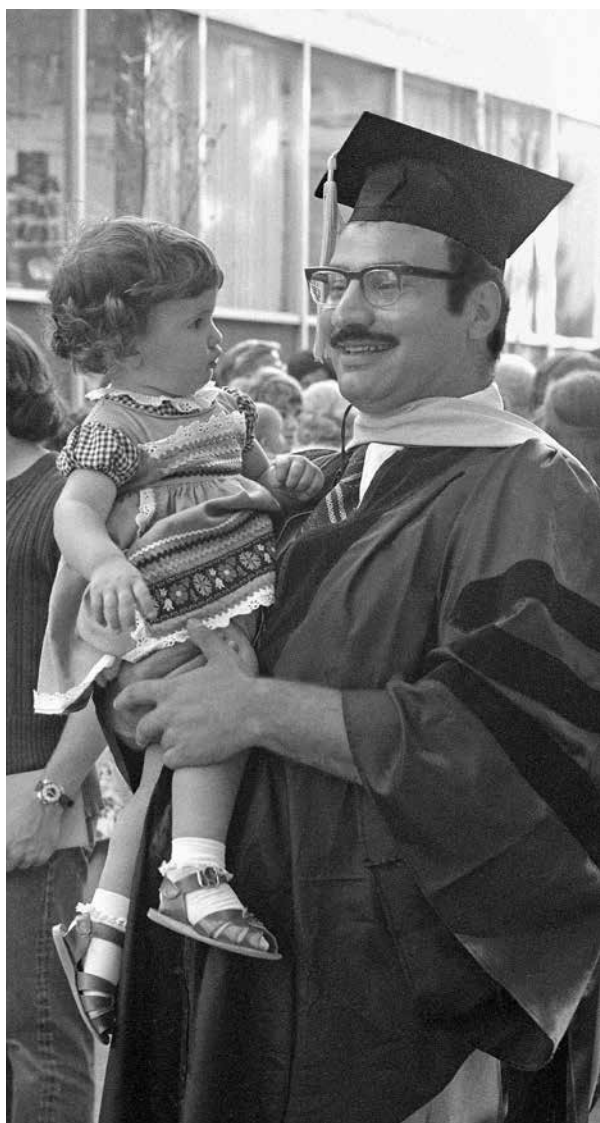
The first doctoral programs for the University were Environmental Science and Resources, Systems Science and Urban Studies.

A party celebrating university status was held for the entire school in the ballroom of the newly renamed Smith Memorial Center. Michael Smith, 1965 College Bowl team member, had died the year before from cystic fibrosis. Cake was served, loud music played and notables spoke, according to the 1969 Viking yearbook.

"The new status guarantees one thing—opportunity," wrote Viking staff. "Opportunity for more grants, opportunity for doctoral programs and opportunity for change and growth." ■



Gov. Tom McCall (above) signs legislation creating Portland State University on February 14, 1969. That same year, Michael Smith's mother (below), accompanied by professor Ben Padrow, unveils her son's name on the College Center. Smith (above left) was a member of the 1965 College Bowl Team and died of cystic fibrosis in 1968. PSU's first doctoral degree was awarded to Chamberlain Foes (below left) in 1972.





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