From the Desk of the Dean

Earlier this month, President Wim Wiewel released the President’s Progress Report 2014 in which he discussed the impact of PSU’s faculty and students. Recent recognition of this impact includes PSU ranking among the nation’s top 10 “up and coming universities” by U.S. News & World Report. This is PSU’s second consecutive year for receiving this ranking. President Wiewel states, “the rank is meaningful because it comes from an annual survey of top U.S. university officials who recognize the rise of PSU for making significant progress in academics, faculty and student life.”

I would like to take this opportunity to join President Wiewel’s recognition of PSU’s faculty, staff and students for their impressive work over the past year. I would also like to note that you, families of students, can also positively influence the academic success of your students. To quote our Student Spotlight (page 4) Natali Pardo, “something as simple as a note or text is all your son or daughter might need to give them that extra push in order to succeed.” As we head into the final term of the 2013–14 academic year, it is an ideal time for us all to consider how we can continue to impact and support our students.

In this edition of the PSU Family newsletter, you will hear about some ways student services works to impact the success of your student. Additionally, you will read about how current PSU students are already making positive impacts. The articles include:

• Lissa Kaufman, Director of Student Legal Services and recent recipient of the Judge Mercedes Diaz award
• Tips from Student Financial Services
• Conservation through Community, a national sustainability competition in which six PSU residences buildings participated
• Help on choosing the right major
• Natali Pardo, one of our amazing students from the School of Business Administration

If you have suggestions or article ideas, please email these to family@pdx.edu. Your comments and feedback will provide us with direction for future PSU Family articles and contribute towards our ultimate goal for this newsletter—to be an opportunity for a dialogue between members of the PSU extended community. Further, the Office of the Dean of Student Life staff are available to assist your student. You can reach us by calling 503.725.4422 or emailing AskDosl@pdx.edu.

Sincerely,

Michele Toppe, Dean of Student Life

Money Matters
Student Financial Services: Tips for Success

Paying for college may be stressful, but we’re here to assist you and your student with any questions you may have! Student Financial Services consists of Student Accounts, Student Collections, ID Card Services and Cashier operations; we’re here to assist you in understanding the many facets of your account. We can be reached at 503-725-3440 or studentfinancialservices@pdx.edu. Here are some tips for your student to be successful with their student account:

• Activate their HigherOne Refund Card and select a refund preference
• Have them check their Banweb Account monthly by going to banweb.pdx.edu > Student Services > Student Accounts
• Have them check their PDX Email regularly for official PSU Communications
• Have your student complete a Release of Non-Directory information form and submit it with a government issued ID to allow parent/guardian request of account information
• Know registration deadlines for adding and dropping courses with/out penalties.
• Update all personal information such as address, preferred email and phone number with both PSU and HigherOne.

Resource Spotlight

PSU Dental Clinic:

SHAC staff understands that being both a student is very time consuming and we want to help your student find time to maintain their oral health. SHAC’s Dental Clinic is open Monday through Saturday, 8am–5pm and features licensed, experienced, professionals committed to providing PSU students with individualized, affordable, convenient oral health care. Fees at SHAC’s Dental Services are typically 30-50% lower than other dental offices. Charges get billed to your student account. If you have private dental insurance, staff will work with your student on helping fill out claims for possible reimbursement.

Visit pdx.edu/shac/dental for more information.
Thinking of traveling overseas?

Go Green abroad! The PSU Alumni Association offers exclusive travel packages and discounts to alumni and friends of Portland State to a variety of locations in small groups. Experience the world while staying connected to the PSU community.

2014 destinations include Italy, France, China, Africa, and Switzerland. Find out more information here: pdx.edu/alumni/travel

Tell your students about the Future Alumni series!

The Future Alumni series is dedicated to serve the career and professional development needs of students and recent graduates of Portland State. Students will learn experiences directly from alumni on a variety of topics from networking to writing resumes.

More information here: pdx.edu/alumni/students/future-alumni-series

Campus Spotlight

Conservation through Community

By Laura Gleim and Heather Spalding

Portland State students living on campus participated in a national conservation challenge with peers from colleges and universities across the country. Hosted locally by PSU’s very own EcoReps, the challenge encouraged students to reduce the amount of water and electricity consumed in campus residence halls. Students in Ondine, Broadway, Blumell, Montgomery, St. Helens, and Stephen Epler were part of Campus Conservation Nationals (CCN) along with more than 150 other campuses throughout the U.S. and Canada.

This year’s challenge saw double the number of participating PSU buildings—six up from three in last year’s competition. Estimated utility bill savings from PSU’s water and energy reductions during the 2013 competition totaled more than $2,700. This year, the estimated savings measured over $4,700. Kudos to Blumell Hall with the greatest energy reduction—a total of 20.6%! Weekly progress of each building was tracked by PSU’s utilities manager and logged on an interactive dashboard that can be seen here.

“The numbers are great,” said Kristen Purdy, EcoReps coordinator for the Sustainability Leadership Center, “but there’s more to the competition than that. Students get to see how sustainability plays into their everyday lives. They learn how to compost, turn out the lights when they leave, take a refillable water bottle with them—a lot of little things that everyone can do to make a difference.”

The challenge began with a candlelight dinner in Victor’s dining hall in Ondine. With a Valentine’s Day theme, Victor’s staff turned off the dining hall lights, and EcoReps lit the tables with (non-flammable) candles. Residents then had the opportunity to make a sustainability pledge. Pledgers were entered to win great prizes that included reusable mugs and bottles, I <3 Compost t-shirts, coupons for local and sustainable products and businesses, and reusable bags. Over one hundred students took the pledge.

The EcoReps also supported an event hosted by the Institute for Sustainable Solutions called Fortified: True Stories of Climate Action. This storytelling event allowed everyday heroes to share personal accounts of how climate change has affected their lives and communities.

The challenge continued with a workshop where students were able to make their own laundry products and learn about how to choose environmentally- and health-friendly products. The EcoReps also hosted Pedal for Power, where students could use a bike that generates electricity and blend their own smoothie with local and organic ingredients. The final CCN event, held on March 7th, encouraged students to turn off their lights and join the EcoReps for a night of board games. They even provided family-friendly board games for students with children.

CCN has become a campus tradition since it began in 2011. With over 2,000 residents living on campus, this event offers PSU a time to reflect on our many blessings and think about how we can live a little more sustainably. Sustainable living is a great way to build community!
Tell us a bit about yourself/what were you doing before coming to PSU?

I am originally from the east coast and I still wear this like a badge of honor despite the fact that I have been in the PNW since 1991. I went to law school at the UW and began my legal career right after graduating and moving to Oregon. I started out working with farm workers on housing and employment issues and transitioned to criminal defense and juvenile court work. I loved working in that context but needed a change after almost a decade as a public defender. I wanted to work with people who were hopeful and taking steps to improve their situations—PSU Student Legal Services clients embody this sentiment and provide so much incentive for me to continue working in the public interest. They are my inspiration.

What is the most fulfilling aspect of the work you do for PSU, especially as it relates to students?

I am fulfilled every day by watching students succeed. This pertains to students who succeed in resolving a nagging and disruptive legal issue as well as students who are interns or Explore the Law participants who graduate and go to law school or obtain work in the legal field. It is also tremendously rewarding to watch students transform during our work together on a legal matter. We ask students to take responsibility for assisting with the resolution of their cases. Seeing students persevere and take ownership in these matters is why I do this work. I keep up with as many students as I can and it is amazing to see them obtain academic goals and move out into the world with more confidence than ever.

Congratulations on recently receiving the Judge Mercedes Diaz Award from the Oregon Women Lawyers organization. Will you explain how your work at PSU connects with this award?

I am so happy that I have been a conduit for connections between the legal community and PSU. The obvious examples have to do with the Explore the Law initiative, a collaborative project between the Multnomah Bar Association, the Oregon State Bar and PSU. The legal community wants our PSU students who are underrepresented in the law to succeed and they donate their time and money to prove it. This is a win-win because our students in ETL are so eager that the participating attorneys feel the contributions they are making to diversifying the bar in the state and county. I have connected lawyers with PSU in some other capacities that benefit minority students interested in the law by arranging for other partnerships with programs like Bridges.

How does SLS work towards supporting student success and providing a unique college experience?

I want students at PSU who interact with SLS in any capacity to know that there is someone here who cares about their success and is invested in seeing that student meet their potential. This means different things to different students. It can mean that a student recognizes that SLS assisted them in a custody case that was interfering with their ability to fully participate in their college experience. It could mean that SLS provided an internship that a student could put on an application for graduate school or a resume. It could just mean that someone here referred them to the right place on campus or elsewhere.

What advice would you give students and families of PSU students or individuals thinking about attending PSU? Any helpful tips regarding student resources or such?

Obtaining a college or graduate level education should be the primary purpose of any PSU student. However, students and their families should make a concerted effort to familiarize themselves with the resources and events available to support students in this endeavor. This may mean a student or family member must be proactive in seeking out services, groups, events or activities. Once a student finds their place on campus — whether through a study group, a service (like SLS) or a friendship, that student’s time here will be much more enriching and productive.

Avoiding “Major” Regret

In a national survey, almost 40% of college graduates surveyed said they would choose a different major if they could start over. Encouraging students to reflect on their major and their career goals will help them make more satisfying decisions and better prepare for life after college. So after talking with a student about WHAT their major is, spend some time talking about WHY!

Here is a brief set of questions to help encourage reflection and understanding:

• Why did you choose _____ as a major?
• How do you know _____ is a good fit for you?
• That’s great! You think you would like to be a [doctor, teacher, architect, engineer, nurse, lawyer, lion tamer, actuary...] Have you sat down and talked to someone in that field about their job/career path/education to get some first-hand advice on how to prepare for that job?
• What are some local companies that have internship opportunities that match your interests?
• Are the general education courses you have signed up for going to help you reach your career goals? (Are there classes that might be more challenging or starting at an unfavorable time that would be a better fit?)
• Is there a student group or professional association you can join to strengthen your connection to your goal?
• Are you doing absolutely everything you can do ensure your success?

Some often overlooked possibilities:

• Going to professor’s office hours and asking questions.
• Starting/ joining study groups.
• Using the free on-campus tutoring services. pdx.edu/tutoring
• Attending lectures or workshops on campus. pdx.edu/events
• Checking in regularly with your academic adviser. pdx.edu/advising
• Talking with a career counselor, finding an internship, learning about the connection between majors & careers. pdx.edu/careers
• Getting involved in student groups and activities. pdx.edu/student-leadership

Choosing a major, choosing a career, finding a job—Advising and Career Services is here to help. pdx.edu/advising-career-services
Student Spotlight
Natali Pardo, Senior
School of Business Administration

Where are you from and why did you choose to study at PSU?
I’m from Beaverton, OR, and one of the reasons why I chose to study at PSU was to stay close to home. Making the decision to keep living at home has been one that I don’t regret since it has saved me tons of money that I can use to pay for other things and not increase my student debt. Since PSU is in the city, there’s always something to do around the area, whether it’s going to Blazers/Timbers games or taking the streetcar to the Pearl district or even taking a walk along the waterfront.

Explain how you decided to get involved on-campus and what has been your greatest learning experience through these opportunities
Starting off as a freshman straight out of high school, PSU was a major change to what I was used to. Even though I lived in the metro area, I had only been downtown twice and I never even knew where the campus was located. Due to all the changes and deciding to attend PSU last minute, I felt lost in what I considered a huge place and I didn’t know anyone that was also attending. My first year was definitely a new experience in which I got to meet different people, but it wasn’t until my second year that the connections I made with staff and departments made me feel comfortable on campus. Thanks to these amazing people I was able to acknowledge my potential, and I learned that if you put yourself out there, and do it with a genuine attitude, you can be part of a variety of things, and help positively change yourself, and those around you.

How do you balance the demands of your academics in SBA? What are your favorite campus resources?
My calendar and planner have been my best buddies throughout the year. Other than having my schedule written down, I think it’s important to remember that although it might be a crazy week and your list seems never-ending, you should always take breaks and do something to relax and forget about school for a bit. I’m heavily involved with the Diversity and Multicultural Student Services, and anytime I need to refresh my mind, I visit my family/community at the DMSS. They help me put everything in perspective and when I feel overwhelmed with an assignment or life in general, they fill me up with the motivation need to help me get back on track.

What do you hope to do after PSU? Why?
Once I complete my undergraduate degree this spring, I want to continue my studies and pursue the Postsecondary Adult and Continuing Education (PACE) program here at Portland State. Thanks to the many positions I’ve held and the variety of events I’ve participated and volunteered in, I’ve had amazing role models in various departments throughout campus that have made me want to stick around past graduation. My ideal career would be to work with prospective/current students in a student affairs position at PSU.

What advice would you share with families of current PSU Students?
The most important thing that families can do is to understand there are many changes that will happen and realize that sometimes it’s difficult to get everything done without spreading ourselves thin. When I started at PSU, it was weird for my parents that I wasn’t going to be home at 4pm every day. With group projects and different assignments, it was necessary for me to stay on campus later than normal and it started to take a toll on my relationship with my family. I once went almost a full week without seeing my father! Even though we live together, our schedules were completely opposite; he would be gone by the time I woke up and he would be asleep by the time I got home. As a first generation college student, there were many things my parents didn’t know or understand but they tried their hardest to relate to my situation. They started helping me with simple tasks (such as doing some of my chores, or even making me a sandwich or tea) when they saw that I had stacks of readings to do for the night. Even though this was something that seems insignificant, the intention behind the action made me know that they were cheering me on and being my biggest supporter without the need of actually stating it. Like they say, actions speak louder than words, and sometimes something as simple as a note or text is all your son or daughter might need to give them that extra push in order to succeed.