Growth in programs, renovated home transform College of the Arts

What's in a name? PSU's School of Fine and Performing Arts was recently renamed the College of the Arts, reflecting developments in its academic programs and expansion of its physical space. Barbara Sestak, Dean of the College, spoke to RAPS members at the March 21 meeting on changes in the College that led to its elevation in stature.

The College has been reorganized into four Schools: Architecture, Art + Design, Music, and Theatre & Film. “We have a complexity of degrees and programs,” Sestak said, “all accredited by different organizations.” One of the newer programs is the fully accredited Master of Arts program in Architecture. “We've been fighting for 30 years to get that,” she noted. In the works is a Center for Public Centered Design, housed in the School of Architecture.

When Film Studies was initiated five years ago, the PSU administration was assured the program would produce 100 majors in five years. Film Studies had over 300 majors in its third year and is now fully accredited. The old TV studio on the fifth floor of Neuberger Hall will be remodeled to accommodate film production classes.

A new major called Art Studies cuts across disciplines, serving those students who want to major in the arts without pursuing a highly specialized professional program. It’s also designed for students who wish to teach in elementary and middle schools, knowing they may be asked to bring the arts into their classrooms.

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President’s Message

Maxine Thomas and a few friends are making great progress on setting up a multi-day, multi-play excursion to take place over three nights during summer 2014 at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, Oregon. They are working on a one-price package deal. If you are interested in more information, please contact Maxine, ondangwa@yahoo.com.

Make a note to join RAPS members for an “Afternoon at the Opera” Sunday, April 28 at 3:00 pm when the PSU Student Opera and Symphony Orchestra perform Puccini’s La Rondine (the Swallow). Come early for an open house at the RAPS Office (Koinonia House) from 1:15 to 2:45 pm. Contact Robert Vogelsang, drvogie@yahoo.com, if you have questions. Cost for the opera is $15.00. The reception is free!

We hope to see you at Thursday, April 18 at the President’s Luncheon for retired faculty and staff. This annual event is held at University Place in the Columbia Falls Ballroom. You should have already received an invitation from the President’s Office. Please contact Rachael at 503-725-2172 if you did not.

–Dave Krug

College of the Arts . . . continued from page 1

Programs like these help account for the 40% increase in the number of majors over the last five years, Sestak said.

In addition to new and expanded academic programs, the College’s profile has been boosted by significant advances in funded research, the number of national and international awards received by students and faculty, and leadership in sustainability and other innovative projects.

Sestak cited the work of two faculty members who have designed a new kind of energy-efficient portable classroom. To date 42 school districts across the country have signed up to have them built.

The next step in the remodeling of Lincoln Hall -- the College’s main campus home -- is completion of the glass tower above the Broadway entrance, made possible by a lead gift from Portland philanthropist Arlene Schnitzer. The tower, fully visible from the street, will house classrooms, rehearsal space, and a student art gallery.

“You’ll be able to see the arts on display,” said Sestak. Work on the tower begins immediately after June commencement and is scheduled to be finished before fall term begins.

Moving classrooms to the tower frees up space in the basement for a black box theatre. Plans are to make room for a dance studio as well, with the goal of bringing the dance major back to PSU.

In personal news, Sestak announced she is stepping down as dean this fall and returning to the faculty, allowing her “to concentrate on a few things instead of a lot of things.” Designing for aging and incorporating design theory into engineering are two projects Sestak is looking forward to pursuing. “I’m not quite ready to retire,” she said with a smile.

Take a Seat. During her talk, Dean Sestak acknowledged financial support the College of the Arts has received from RAPS members. She noted that fundraising continues for the Lincoln Hall Glass Tower and the Lincoln Hall Seat Campaign. In the latter, you can be recognized by having your name (or honoring someone else) on a seat plaque in one of Lincoln Hall’s performance venues. Prices range from $125 to $500, depending on the performance space. For more information, contact Ann Prater, Director of Development, at 503-477-7141 or aprater@pdx.edu.

Provost tapped as keynoter for retirement association conference

Provost Sona Andrews will be the keynote speaker at the opening session of the Regional Retirement Association conference, hosted by RAPS at University Place Sept. 19-21. President Wim Wiewel will welcome delegates to the conference.

Ken Ames, professor of anthropology, will provide the keynote speech Saturday, Sept. 21. Volunteers will be sought from within the RAPS ranks to assist with guiding conference participants to no-host dinners and local attractions. Conference sessions will be open to RAPS members for a reduced fee, to be determined.
Bridge Group fans the deck April 9

The RAPS Bridge Club meets at 1:00 pm Tuesday, April 9 at Friendly House (corner of NW 26th and Thurman). For information about the group, please call Colin Dunkeld, 503-292-0838. Newcomers are always welcome. Please call before noon Friday, April 5. This gives us time to invite guests to join us if we need to make up a table.

—Colin Dunkeld

Book Club goes ‘Incognito’

The RAPS Book Club meets at 1:30 pm Tuesday, April 16 at the home of Eileen Brennan, 5945 SW 152nd Ave in Beaverton. Contact her at eileen@pdx.edu or 503-646-6297 to RSVP and get directions. We will discuss Incognito by David Eagleman, described on the dust jacket as follows:

If the conscious mind--the part you consider you--is just the tip of the iceberg in the brain, what is all the rest doing? Neuroscientist David Eagleman plumbs the depths of the subconscious brain to illuminate surprising questions: Why can your foot jump halfway to the brake pedal before you become consciously aware of danger ahead? Why do strippers make more money at certain times of month, even while no one is consciously aware of their fertility level? Is there a true Mel Gibson? What do Odysseus and the subprime mortgage meltdown have in common? How is your brain like a conflicted democracy engaged in civil war? Why are people whose name begins with J more likely to marry other people whose name begins with J? Why is it so difficult to keep a secret? Why did Supreme Court Justice William Douglas deny that he was paralyzed? The subsurface exploration includes way stops in brain damage, drugs, infidelity, synesthesia, criminal law, the future of artificial intelligence, and visual illusions—all highlighting how our perception of the world is a hidden and awe-inspiring construction of the brain.

Looking forward, we will discuss The Paris Wife by Paula McLain in May.

—Mary Brannan

RAPS Hikers walk the plank

On Friday, April 12 the RAPS hikers will walk the East Side Esplanade from the Sellwood Bridge to OMSI and back. At OMSI we will view the train exhibit outside of OMSI and have lunch in their cafeteria before walking back to our cars. We will pass the Oaks Bottom Wetlands in both directions and travel on a wide paved path.

Meet at 9:30 am in the Oaks Bottom parking lot just north of the east end of the bridge, which is slightly closer to the lot than it was the last time the hikers parked there. Bring your binoculars. There is certain to be waterfowl and raptors.

Confirm to Larry Sawyer at 503-771-1616 or larry_sawyer@comcast.net by Thursday, April 11.

—Larry Sawyer

Thanks, Scholarship Donors!

The RAPS Scholarship helps students who are pursuing studies in gerontology. To contribute to the RAPS Scholarship, please send a check payable to the PSU Foundation-RAPS Scholarship to Portland State University, RAPS, PO Box 751, Portland, OR 97207.

Contributions can also be made by credit card by calling the RAPS Office, 503-725-3447, or the PSU Foundation, 503-725-4911.

Wine raffles have become a regular feature of RAPS monthly meetings, with the proceeds going to the scholarship. At the annual President’s luncheon April 18, notecards featuring photography by RAPS member Larry Sawyer will be available for purchase, with proceeds directed to the RAPS scholarship. Below is one of four images that will be available. To view it in color, go to http://www.pdx.edu/raps/raps-sheet-newsletter-archive and click on the link for April.

Photo of Mt. Rainier by Larry Sawyer.
Early Leadership at Portland State College

After Portland State Extension Center became a four-year degree-granting college in 1955, John F. Cramer was appointed by the Oregon State Board of Higher Education as Portland State’s first president. In developing the new college, Cramer oversaw the creation and administration of four academic divisions, complemented by a library with resources to enhance learning.

The early success of Portland State College during these formative years was due in large part to the efforts of seasoned professors who led these important units of the institution.

Willard B. Spalding, EdD
Chair, Division of Education

Hoyt C. Franchere, PhD
Chair, Division of Humanities

Will V. Norris, PhD
Chair, Division of Science/Mathematics

Jean P. Black, PhD
Head, Library

George C. Hoffmann, PhD
Chair, Division of Social Science

--Steve Brannan, History Preservation Committee Chair

PAST TENSE features glimpses into Portland State’s history. To submit a story (or an idea for one), email the RAPS History Preservation Committee at raps@pdx.edu.
In memoriam: Fritz L. Kramer, 1918 - 2013

Fritz L. Kramer, Emeritus Professor of Geography, was born March 18, 1918 in Vienna, Austria and died in Portland Jan. 14, 2013. He was an only child, orphaned at age 12. In 1937 he earned a diploma at the Vienna Handelsakademie.

In 1939, a year after Nazi forces overran his homeland, Fritz emigrated to the United States and sought employment opportunities in an economy not yet fully recovered from the depression. He first settled in New England and luckily qualified for a paying job as a ski patrolman. When the United States went to war in 1942, he enlisted in the Army, served in Italy with the 10th Mountain Division combat medic unit, and was awarded a Bronze Star. After the war Fritz worked as a military translator and intelligence officer in Vienna until 1946.

From 1947 to 1950 Fritz attended the University of Washington, earning a BA degree in geography. He pursued graduate studies at the University of California, Berkeley, and completed MA (1953) and PhD (1957) degrees. While engaged with the National Ski Patrol in 1949, Fritz met and married Mary Deming.


Professor Kramer joined PSU's Geography Department during a time of dramatic expansion. He served as the Cartographic Center’s first director and taught methods and historical geography courses. In conjunction with the German Department, he developed experimental materials for European historical geography classes in that language. Scores of undergraduate and advanced students alike found his coursework and counseling to be highly valuable in furthering their intellectual pursuits and career development.

As a faculty member of the federally-sponsored interdisciplinary Central European Studies Center, Fritz added a significant specialty component to PSU’s study abroad instructional dimension. In 1972-73 he directed the CESC’s extension program at the University of Zagreb in Yugoslavia. In 1977-1980 and 1982-83 he served as resident director of the Oregon Study Center at the University of Stuttgart, West Germany.

After retirement in 1984, Professor Kramer continued to support German cultural outreach programs in the Portland metropolitan region. In 1986 the Portland Consul-General of the Federal Republic of Germany bestowed upon him the Friendship Award, and in 1998 Austria’s Consul-General in Los Angeles traveled to the Kramer home in Lake Oswego to bestow upon him the Silver Medal for Meritorious Service, notably for his role in founding the Austrian-American Society of Oregon.

On their estate home in Lake Oswego, Fritz and Mary raised garden produce as well as chickens, geese and sheep. Mary died in 2007. Fritz is survived by their children Anne, Gretl, and Richard; three grandchildren, and seven great grandchildren. To these family members our organization sends its heartfelt condolences. The University community profited immensely from Professor Kramer’s dedicated service and lasting contributions to the institution, for which we owe him a debt of gratitude.

--Victor C. Dahl, Emeritus Professor of History
In memoriam: John Kenneth Harris, 1934 - 2013

John Kenneth (Ken) Harris, Emeritus Professor of Mathematical Sciences and longtime Budget Director, was born Jan. 7, 1934 in Reno, NV and died Jan. 8, 2013 at his family home in Beaverton following a brief illness.

Ken enrolled at California State University Fresno in 1952 to major in mathematics and physics. Military service (1955-1956) in West Germany interrupted his studies but he completed an AB degree in mathematics in 1958 and an MA degree in 1959. In 1959 he entered graduate studies at the University of Oregon, completing a PhD in 1962 in mathematics and topology.

Ken’s service as a teaching assistant at Fresno State and as a teaching and research fellow at the University of Oregon laid the groundwork for his professional career.

In 1962, Professor Harris joined PSU's Department of Mathematical Science as assistant professor and thereafter deployed his scholarly discipline and training in a career that embraced instruction, research, and academic managerial service. His highly popular classes attracted large enrollments at a time of growing interest in mathematics.

Active engagement in teacher training led to Ken’s directing National Science Foundation Summer Institutes (1968 and 1969) on Mathematics of Computers for Secondary Teachers. He also supervised on campus National Science Foundation in-service institutes for teachers. In 1969 he was appointed to serve as Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies and Research. He was advanced to associate professor in 1967 and to professor in 1974.

The University’s growth and development prompted President Joseph Blumel to reorganize the institution’s central administration in 1974 by merging the Offices of Administration, Business Administration, and Finance, and concurrently establishing a separate Budget Office with wide-ranging fiscal oversight responsibilities. Professor Harris skillfully headed the Budget Office until his retirement.

Ken’s energetic interaction with officials at every level across the university contributed enormously to effective fiscal management and program expansion. Through hard work, he competently worked out solutions to meet complicated problems. For example, to enable international outreach through study abroad programs, he devised appropriate budgetary arrangements for collaborating with other institutions.

A significant highlight of his supportive role in university governance occurred through assisting and advising President Blumel during the institution’s initial collective bargaining sessions in 1978.

The Budget Office mission led him to be well known, and everyone who associated with Ken highly valued his insights. Outgoing and personable, he socialized with campus colleagues and always accepted invitations to events that featured conversation and refreshments. His career and service provided significant support for the rise of PSU’s stature as a comprehensive instructional and research institution.

Professor Harris met his spouse Charlotte when they were students in Fresno. She survives him as do their children, John Harris, Mary Ellen Harriswangler, and Liz Azinger; sister-in-law Sue Olsen; and eight grandchildren. To them, our organization extends it heartfelt condolences.

Ken actively supported community and church programs. Remembrances may be made to Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church of Beaverton.

"Victor C. Dahl, Emeritus Professor of History"