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EDITORIAL



Agenda 2013

Improve educational funding and function

Unlocking doors to college

Intensive help for disadvantaged, low-income college students in Oregon offers clues to broader success for every community college and university

Jose Esparza, a "success coach" for students at Portland Community College, describes his goal in simple terms.

"We believe in students," he says, "until they are ready to believe in themselves."

Esparza helps disadvantaged students navigate a college campus well enough to earn a degree, get job certification or transfer to a university. This work is part of PCC's mission to help more students thrive in college, rather than simply enroll and fend for themselves.

Efforts like these deserve attention, as Oregon tries to push all of its community colleges and universities to boost their students' graduation rates and job prospects. Though colleges can't easily provide success coaches to all students, they can certainly boost their overall graduation rates by working to lower the barriers that disadvantaged students so starkly face.

PCC offers several programs aimed at assisting first-generation, lower-income students, including a Future Connect scholarship program and numerous partnerships with high schools in the Portland metro area. Despite ongoing funding challenges, PCC's work has received attention from the state for helping students who might otherwise lack the foundation to succeed.

The extra help varies, but it often includes individual counseling, financial aid, career planning and tutoring. Esparza, for example, teaches a college-survival class, where students learn about time management and the importance of persistence. He says he also helps students navigate the financial aid office and deal with any red flags before classes start: Routine problems with class registration or payment can permanently derail a first-time college student.



BETH NAKAMURA/THE OREGONIAN

Portland Community College's Sylvania campus.



Read more of The Oregonian editorial board's priorities at ORne.ws/editorial-agenda-2013

Meanwhile, PCC says it's trying to make registration, financial aid and transferring credits more customer-friendly for all students. It's working especially closely with Portland State University, where many PCC students transfer in search of a bachelor's degree. It's more efficient to simplify the process for everyone, college leaders are finding, rather than maintain systems that require a lot of hand-holding.

Oregon remains in the middle of a massive restructuring of its education system from preschool to college.

The intent is to redefine success around what comes next, so that preschoolers are ready for kindergarten, high schoolers are ready for college or career training, and

college graduates are equipped to land a decent job.

"We just need to step up our game, all of us, pre-K to 20," says retiring college president Preston Pulliams.

This process has exposed some real weaknesses in Oregon's education system, including below-average funding and unsustainable spending. And it has revealed how many teenagers leave high school — both as graduates and dropouts — without the academic preparation, career guidance or personal grounding to be successful adults. Oregon needs significant reinvestment and reform at the K-12 level to boost the state's 68 percent graduation rate and to make sure more high school students know how to pass a college class, nail a job interview and work toward a goal.

Meanwhile, Oregon needs more people like Jose Esparza to fill in the gaps.

And colleges need to care as much about the success of their graduates as they do about the size of their next incoming class.

PortlandTribune

From curb to college to ... Congress?

Created on Thursday, 23 May 2013 11:00 | Written by [Jennifer Anderson](#) |

Last-ditch effort puts former dropout back on track to success



by: TRIBUNE PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER ONSTOTT - Patrick Stupfel's success story has taken him from troubled Portland youth to Legislative intern, but the one-time skater punk still rides his skateboard to school when weather allows.

Patrick Stupfel began skipping school in fourth grade, when his divorced parents were working long hours and he was forced to take the bus to school.

Teachers and counselors and administrators at the 13 schools he's attended over the years — a mix of public and alternative and private Catholic schools in Portland — tried to reach out and help him, but he refused.

He also paid no heed to his parents, who were struggling to put food on the table.

"I was such a stubborn kid," the 20-year-old says now. "I didn't see the relevance of school. ... I slipped through every crack possible."

By his junior year at Franklin High School, Stupfel had just five credits to his name, and he realized his days of acting like a "skater punk" were over.

He'd been skipping school for up to a month at a time, smoking marijuana and drinking, and getting into all sorts of other trouble with his friends. "I'm lucky I never got a Measure 11," he says now.

Fast forward three years, and Stupfel is a high school graduate, a model student at Portland Community College, a youth activist at City Hall and a legislative intern in Salem, with his eye on a career in politics.

"The military school's motto is 'Dream, believe, achieve' — I actually took that to heart; I'm a testament to that," says Stupfel, who splits his time between his mom's house and dad's house, both in Southeast Portland.

Upon the advice of his administrators at Franklin when he hit his rock bottom, Stupfel signed up for the military school — the Oregon Youth Challenge Program, located in Bend.

"Think of 'Full Metal Jacket,' and it's pretty much just like that," he says, referencing the classic Vietnam War flick.

Stupfel spent six months there, earning 10 high school credits and a new work ethic. He returned to Portland to earn the credits he needed to graduate at the Portland Public Schools Reconnection Center and then Portland Night High School, both based at Benson Polytechnic High School.

Once back in Portland he steered clear of his old diversions by transforming himself into an overachiever. He served on not one or two, but six youth leadership committees.

They included the Multnomah Youth Commission, PPS Superintendent Carole Smith's Student Advisory Council (also known as SuperSAC), the PPS Long Range Facilities Planning committee, the PPS Citizen's Budget Review Committee, the PPS Student Union and the PPS Teacher Evaluation Committee.

The work gave him an insider's look at the way policy is shaped — and earned him a personal letter of recommendation from Superintendent Smith.

"He is assertive yet respectful, and very interested in engaging with others with the goal of learning, understanding and sharing," Smith wrote.

"His attitude, drive and commitment are focused on succeeding academically, and these are the traits that define his character; he is a remarkable young man who is bright, hardworking and determined."

Stupfel earned his long-awaited high school diploma in June 2011 in the Benson auditorium, and he already was thinking about the next diploma he'd earn.

College was just a fuzzy goal, however. It wasn't until he registered for an initiative called Future Connect that it began to take shape.

Future Connect was created by former Mayor Sam Adams as a way to connect low-income or first-generation college students with higher education.

Funded by the city and PCC, Future Connect is open to anyone with a high school diploma or GED within Multnomah County or the Hillsboro School District by the end of the year and who will be attending PCC starting this fall.

Stupfel, who's become a poster child for Future Connect, joined a group of students this month to lobby City Hall leaders to continue its \$480,000 per year investment in the program.

The initiative provides students with: scholarship money; a "college success coach;" free classes on career guidance; and access to internships, workshops and summer orientations to college.

Stupfel credits his success coach for helping him to get through the registration and financial aid processes at PCC, and being available anytime for a chat, even about his personal life. He's now one year into his associate's degree, taking classes in politics, something he's always been interested in.

He remembers wanting to be a congressman as a young boy; now he's thinking about law school after spending some time abroad. The Semester at Sea program is a possibility; he also may head to Washington, D.C.

Last summer, Stupfel spent time there as part of the weeklong Bill of Rights Institute's Constitutional Academy, where he met with members of Congress on Capitol Hill, attended lectures and networked with political leaders.

It reinforced his desire to work in government.

This year, in between his PCC course load, he's working in Salem two days per week for Democratic state Rep. Alyssa Keny-Guyer. (He gets to carpool with her in her Prius.)

Stupfel does constituent outreach, which means talking with people from various backgrounds about public policy issues — something he feels well-versed on from his days on the youth commission and other groups.

Occasionally, his own political views differ from what he's working on, but Stupfel doesn't let that get in the way. "Politics is politics," he says. "It's not about the individual; it's about the issues."


Stupfel speaks with the confidence and poise of a politician, not to mention his voice. A natural baritone, he's lately developed an interest in being a voice actor.

As far as old habits go, Stupfel still skateboards to school when the weather allows. But he has no problem switching to his professional role for his days at the Legislature.

"When I started military school, I wasn't used to wearing a (shirt) collar," he says. "Now, I'm wearing a suit with a pocket scarf."

<http://portlandtribune.com/pt/11-features/153065-from-curb-to-college-to-congress>

Future Connect scholarships are critical tools

Created on Thursday, 06 June 2013 04:00 | Written by [Ken Madden](#) | 

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The number of economically disadvantaged students is on the rise in Washington County, and their pathway to obtaining college degrees is getting much more difficult to travel. It's time we tackled the issue head on.

As the state and Gov. John Kitzhaber focus on achieving his "40-40-20" objective (by 2025, 40 percent of the state's adults should have four-year degrees, 40 percent two-year degrees or postsecondary training and 20 percent high school diplomas), it's clear that in order to reach this goal more needs to be done to assist students who may not have the resources or know-how to complete college.

Around 40 percent of Beaverton's students are from economically challenged households, and the benefits of a college education are increasingly out of reach for them. According to the Oregon Department of Education, 60 percent of economically disadvantaged students from the 2010 class in the Beaverton School District graduated from high school. That's compared to a rate of 76 percent for the entire district population and 85 percent for non-economically disadvantaged students.

It's not that they are not capable of going to college, but there are economic and social barriers that prevent them from enrolling and completing college. In Washington County, 45 percent of the high school class from 2009-10 did not attend college. Nearly six out of 10 Washington County high school graduates eligible for free and reduced lunch did not go to college after finishing high school. Similarly, two out of five Washington County high school graduates of color did not pursue postsecondary education.

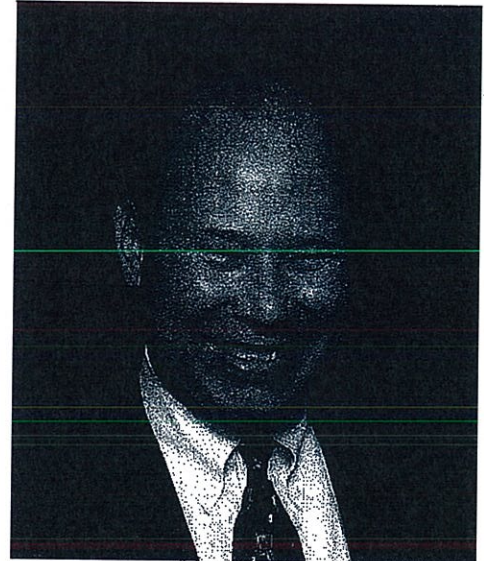
These sorts of trends threaten our region's economic strength and vitality, which depend on educating a trained and talented pool of diverse workers. Washington County is home to some of the world's top companies. It serves as the state's economic engine, attracting investment from industries across the globe, and providing thousands of quality jobs to a highly-skilled workforce. Companies like mine depend on the pipeline of high-skilled workers.

By the end of this decade, more than 60 percent of jobs will require postsecondary education. Four-fifths of jobs paying \$50,000 or more will require at least a bachelor's degree to be competitive. The educational attainment of Washington County's residents is directly related to economic prosperity — a well-educated workforce is critical for high-wage, high-skilled jobs.

Portland Community College has always been responsive to our region's workforce training needs, and its Future Connect Scholarship program is no exception. Future Connect is a highly successful program that provides low-income and first-generation college students with financial support and student services that are proven to increase student retention and completion rates. Local cities supply half the funding, while the college and the PCC Foundation match their investment dollar for dollar.

The program began in 2011 with financial support from the city of Portland, and more than \$1 million has been raised to fund the first four cohorts of Future Connect scholars through 2014-15. This equates to scholarships and services for 744 Multnomah County students to attend PCC. This means they receive two years of individualized academic advising and personalized coaching to help them succeed in class, navigate unfamiliar college resources, overcome barriers to stay in school and prepare for a career or transfer to a university. As a result, Future Connect scholars are being retained in college at a rate three times that of first-generation college students who do not receive these services.

This March, the Hillsboro City Council voted to allocate \$100,000 to Future Connect, which will enable the program to enroll 50 Hillsboro students this fall. The Beaverton City Council followed suit in May with a

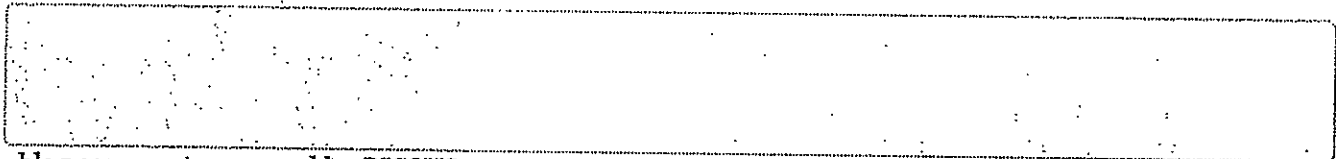


\$50,000 allocation and is now considering an additional \$50,000 in the city's 2013-14 budget to enable the college to bring in 50 Future Connect students from Beaverton.

Like most cities, Beaverton faces its share of difficult budget decisions, but this isn't one of them. The time to invest in our city's future is now.

Beaverton high school graduates, parents, and business and industry leaders need Future Connect to ensure the pipeline of skilled workers remains robust. The program leverages significant private and public sector funds on top of the city's commitment. Future Connect is one tool we can use to help ensure students who otherwise wouldn't go to college earn a degree or certificate. This will not only increase college degree attainment in Oregon and meet the governor's goals, but invigorate our local economy and our community. I hope Beaverton will join Portland and Hillsboro, and ensure our young people have the same chance at prosperity. Their success will be ours.

Ken Madden is the owner of Madden Industrial Craftsman and Madden Fabrication and has served on Portland Community College's Foundation board since 2003. He was recently elected to the PCC Board of Directors.



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Lack of funding jeopardizes PCC's Future Connect program

Oregon's educational system, kindergarten to college, is undergoing a paradigm shift, one aimed at achieving Gov. John Kitzhaber's "40-40-20" objective: That by 2025, 40 percent of the state's adults have four-year college degrees, 40 percent have two-year degrees, and the remaining 20 percent have high school diplomas.

It is an ambitious target that demands rethinking how we help students succeed at every education level. In this effort there are many challenges and opportunities we cannot ignore. One of the greatest opportunities: High school students with the skills to go on to college who don't.

For some, it's due to a lack of financial resources. For others, college isn't viewed as a priority. For many, they would be the first in their families to attend a post-secondary institution.

In Multnomah County we're seeing disturbing trends leading up to college. For every 10 students who start high school, only six will graduate, four will continue to col-

GUEST OPINION

Gregg Kantor
and
Ross Lienhart

lege, and two will complete college. And students of color — who now make up half of our school age population — are especially at risk.

That four out of every 10 students fail to graduate high school is unacceptable. Equally unacceptable is that two of every six students who graduate from high school don't obtain a post-secondary degree or certificate. This represents a huge missed opportunity.

Alarms like these have prompted "how-to" ideas to get more students through the kindergarten-to-college pipeline successfully. One such idea has produced Future Connect.

Portland Community College launched the program in 2011 with financial support from the city of Portland, which was then matched by the college through fundraising efforts. More than \$1.1 million in private funds have been raised for the first four

cohorts of Future Connect, through the academic year of 2014-2015.

This translates into 744 scholarships for Multnomah County students attending PCC. Additionally, it provides two years of individualized academic advising and personalized coaching to help students succeed in their courses, navigate unfamiliar college life, overcome obstacles to staying in school, and prepare for a career or transfer to a university.

As a result, Future Connect scholars are being retained in college at a rate three times that of first-generation college students who do not receive these services.

The city is now faced with cutting \$25 million from its 2013-14 budget. While we recognize the necessity of a balanced budget, we strongly urge the mayor and City Council to maintain full funding for Future Connect.

We know, first-hand, the importance of a trained, well-educated workforce for the prosperity and growth of our region. Future Connect, with its career counseling,

internships and other career development opportunities, should remain a key part of the city's economic development strategy.

The program leverages significant private and public sector funds on top of the city's commitment. At a total cost of only \$2,000 per year per student, it ensures that young people who likely wouldn't attend a post-secondary institution will earn a certificate or degree that will help them contribute to our community in even greater ways. Few investments in education deliver this type of return.

As Oregon's educational system continues to evolve, Future Connect is uniquely poised to connect-the-dots between secondary and post-secondary education. It is a program that aims squarely at the State's 40-40-20 goal and one that should not be lost.

GREGG KANTOR is CEO of NW Natural. **ROSS LIENHART** is retired from PCC Structural, which is part of Precision Casperts Corp.