

Willamette.

THE MAGAZINE OF WILLAMETTE UNIVERSITY

SUMMER 2025



*Willamette
is all over the
new PDX*



*In 5,000
postcards, a
cross-country
friendship*



*Meet six alumni
who made bold
career pivots*



Stories of places and people in motion →



Award-Winning Excellence.

Willamette magazine took home a host of honors from the Society of Publication Designers and Folio's Eddie & Ozzie Awards. We're proud to share this recognition with you, the readers who inspire every page.

SOCIETY OF PUBLICATION DESIGNERS

Medal Finalist
Design, Educational,
Entire Issue,
Spring 2024

Merit Winner
Design, Story,
"The Leaf Blower,"
Spring 2024

Medal Finalist
Redesign, Entire Issue,
Winter 2023

Merit Winner
Entire Issue Design,
Institutional/
Educational,
Winter 2023

FOLIO'S EDDIE & OZZIE AWARDS

Winner
Eddie, Longform
Feature Writing,
"The New Forestry,"
Spring 2024

Honorable Mention
Eddie, Full Issue,
Spring 2024

Winner
Ozzie, Design,
Single Magazine
Issue, Spring 2024

Honorable Mention
Ozzie, Cover Design,
Spring 2024

Willamette.

THE MAGAZINE OF WILLAMETTE UNIVERSITY



**WILLAMETTE
UNIVERSITY**

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ILLUSTRATIONS ON COVER AND THIS PAGE BY SAM ISLAND; PHOTOGRAPH BY PATRICK RECORD



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We Can Do Big Things Here

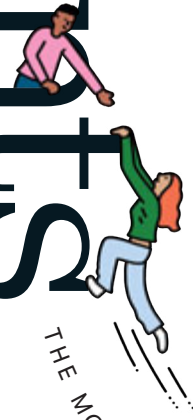
From entrance to gate, Willamette people have shaped the new PDX.
BY CHARLOTTE HERROLD

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"I Think of You Every Day"

A story of friendship and 5,000 postcards.
BY ERIKA BOLSTAD

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY (FROM TOP) NASHCO, PAUL MCKEAN

Willamette.

THE MAGAZINE OF
WILLAMETTE UNIVERSITY

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Send address and name corrections to alumni@willamette.edu.

Send feedback and letters to the editor to magazine@willamette.edu.



PUBLISHER'S NOTE

If we aren't growing and moving, then we aren't evolving.

That's why we wanted the three features in this edition of the magazine to be all about movement. So peek inside the renovated PDX as travelers move to and from Portland. See the remarkable postcards that travel daily from Vermont to Salem. And meet six alumni who, in changing careers, made bold moves of their own. We'll show you how Willamette itself is growing, moving, and changing, too.

I'm also excited to share an update. In 2023, we published "The King," a short story excerpted from a novel in progress by Scott Nadelson. The completed book, *Trust Me* (Forest Avenue Press, 2024), recently won the prestigious Edward Lewis Wallant Award. Nadelson is Willamette's Hallie Brown Ford Chair in Writing. You can still find "The King" at magazine.willamette.edu, and I'm confident that reading it will make you want to read the novel.

Tyler L. Reich

TYLER L. REICH BA'06
Executive Director,
University Relations



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Postcard Perfect

FOR “I THINK OF YOU EVERY DAY” (p. 46), Elayna Yussen visited the Salem home of Bonnie Hull, widow of Professor Roger Hull, to photograph some of the thousands of postcards that Ellen Crocket has sent to her longtime friend over the years. “I could’ve easily spent many more hours digging through Bonnie’s incredible collection of postcards from Ellen, all neatly cataloged in Doc Martens shoeboxes,” says Yussen. “She was a wonderful host from the moment I walked in—sharing stories, helping me find specific cards, and letting me turn her tidy system into temporary photo-shoot chaos. And as if scripted, when she walked me to the door a brand-new postcard from Ellen was waiting in her mailbox.”

CONTRIBUTORS



Kezia Setyawan
Photographer, “A Moment,” p. 8, and “We Can Do Big Things Here,” p. 30

Setyawan, raised and based in Portland, has been taking photos for more than ten years. Her memories of Willamette include wading in the Mill Stream during a high school yearbook retreat. As part of her shoot of the renovated PDX airport, she got to know Honor Jackson MBA’21 and Lowell Jackson Sr. of Jackson Shine Co. “It was so delightful to meet and take photos of Honor and his dad,” she says. “I admire the work they do to help travelers put their best foot forward before heading off to their destination.”



Hannah Wallace
Writer, “The Interview,” p. 20

Wallace is a Portland-based journalist who covers regenerative agriculture, climate issues, food politics, female founders, and more. You might

know her name from her bylines in *Bloomberg*, *Civil Eats*, *Inc.*, *Reasons to Be Cheerful*, *Wired*, and other publications. You might also know her father, Charlie Wallace, who retired after twenty-seven years as the Willamette chaplain.



Sam Island
Illustrator, cover and features

Island is a freelance illustrator based in Hamilton, Canada, with more than twenty years of experience. A former student of Sheridan College’s illustration program, he has collaborated with clients around the globe, creating illustrations for everything from books and magazines to clothing and apps. When he’s not working on commissions, you’ll likely find him drawing comics or spending time with his family. His creative process starts with quick, quirky doodles—often indecipherable to anyone but himself—which he then refines into sketches to share with clients. His favorite moments are when an idea makes people smile in a way they didn’t see coming.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ELAYNA YUSSEN (POSTCARDS)

FEEDBACK



Cooperating Across Difference

Last night I read the Spring 2024 edition of *Willamette* magazine: great job. During the past several years I have read and heard too many stories of increased political polarization and the greed of people—including people who obtained a first-rate education from an esteemed institution and went on to commit monstrous crimes or to propose laws and policies that seem entirely selfish and destructive. The conviction of Sam Bankman-Fried comes to mind—a brilliant young man who had every benefit imaginable growing up in the shadow of Stanford. Then I read *Willamette*. The stories contain multiple references to what students, faculty, and alumni are doing that help address our challenges. I learned how Punit Renjen MM’87 is leading efforts to change environmentally damaging practices in India that are essentially similar to Oregon’s former field

burning practices. I saw references to cooperation, first in an article about fostering communication, and then in an article about Willamette alumni who are timber executives and environmental advocates. So I am feeling good that people with ties to Willamette are able to work together despite political and ideological differences. But I am dismayed that so many of our elected officials and their supporters are unwilling to communicate, collaborate, and address serious problems together. Willamette’s motto—“Not unto ourselves alone are we born”—is something I always think about when joining in causes that benefit others without creating financial or other benefits for myself (apart from the occasional recognition). In short, the motto sets Willamette University apart in a positive way from many other institutions. —Patrick Pine BA’74, MBA’76 Tehachapi, Calif.

A Wellspring of Tradition

While I applaud the professionalism and depth of your new magazine, it saddens me that you make no room for what alumni in fact turn to first: class notes and, yes, obituaries. I’m not going to scan some bar code and go online! Tradition is the wellspring of a small school like Willamette. It is hard enough to stay connected—so please bring back class notes. As the generation that first embraced LinkedIn, we all look for names we might have known and enjoy the profiles, however fleeting. And where is there a tribute to Jerry Hudson, arguably the most significant school leader since G. Herbert Smith?

Tell us what you think

We love to receive letters to the editor. Submit them for publication to magazine@willamette.edu. Letters should be 250 words or fewer and must address the content in the magazine.

He came after my time as a student but did so much to restore our reputation after a couple of tawdry presidential tenures. I worked with him on the alumni board and was a trustee through the mid-’90s. He served most of twenty years. Willamette never had a more dedicated friend. My relationship with Willamette runs deep. It began in December 1970 when I chose early admission and entered with honors into the class of 1975. I went on to serve as editor of the *Collegian* before graduating with a BA in history. Two of my three siblings followed, as did both sisters in law. I served as alumni board president and as a trustee, now thirty years ago. And I was active recruiting WU alumni into my business and profession (valuation). My niece graduated in 2015. I have religiously attended all reunions and look forward to my 50th this year. I hope it celebrates the long tradition of which we are so proud. *Willamette*. (is that it with a period?) is perhaps a bit pretentious and misses the point of generational fellowship. You guys can do better. —P. Barton DeLacy BA’75 Des Moines, Wash. Editor’s note: Jerry Hudson, Willamette’s eighteenth president, died March 9, 2024. Find the university’s April 2024 tribute at magazine.willamette.edu. You’ll also find another letter to the editor.

What's the best advice you've ever received?

Alumni share words of wisdom once shared with them.

Working for a Living

Fill out the form, apply, take the chance.
—Annabelle ByrneStrong BA'21

What pays the bills doesn't have to be your passion—just be sure that you make the space somewhere in your life for that passion, because that's what will keep you going.
—Sabrina George BA'19

If you think you have it figured out and you know what you're doing, you don't know what you're doing.

—Anna Peterson BFA'21

Most of these answers were captured during conversations between alumni and students via the university's student caller program—as were many others that we did not have the space to include. Thank you to everyone who answered the question!

Finding Balance

Find time to enjoy all the small things in life and live in the moment.
—Derek Ludwig BA'20

Do not neglect your inner life and independence. Your boss, kids, and partner can't have all of you; you must retain your center. Do not forget yourself.
—Kimberly (Wilson) Cruciani BA'85

The best piece of advice I ever received as a young attorney was that your reputation is everything.
—Ryan Krametbauer JD'12

Choose a career that positively impacts the greatest number of people on a personal level: try teaching. This was the advice that Atkinson Professor Marc Choate gave me in 1980. I followed his lead. Over 12,000 students served.
—Larry Schuetz MBA'80

Wins & Losses

Failure is important in order to grow and expand. Not everything is a success, and that's okay. You have to keep on pushing and exploring through trials and iterations to find true success.
—Sarah E. Eaton BFA'05

It's better to make bad art that's really genuine—that's the best expression of you as an artist—than to make formally perfect art that is not genuine.
—Bryce O'Connor BA'22

In most experiences in life, you have to be like water: flexible and persistent.
—William Lamb BFA'03

Whenever you're faced with a big decision, there's never a wrong answer. There are always going to be good and bad consequences to whatever you choose.
—Morgan Richards BA'23

Just Do It

My dad always told me that when faced with a problem or challenge, work to find solutions rather than worrying or complaining about it.
—Erin Good BA'93

Save for retirement, no matter what you think you don't have at the moment.
—Kristen Flora BFA'08

Leave spaces better than how you found them.
—Bella Green BA'20

Model the resiliency of nature.

—Brandon Culcasi BA'22

Be Yourself

You're more powerful than you know.
—Travis Rice BS'96

If you can identify your authentic meaning in life and follow it, then you can transcend time.
—Doug Kirkpatrick JD'82

If everybody likes you, you're probably doing something wrong. Basically, if you're standing up for what you believe in, it's inevitable that someone will disagree.
—Lily Painter BA'21

Own your story and speak your truth.
—Luz Reyna BA'17

Connecting with Others

Don't block a blessing. If someone is trying to help you, don't be the one to block it for yourself.
—Michael Sewell JD'22

Every interaction you have with someone always matters. These moments last and will always have an effect.
—Andrew Baudoin BFA'06

Work to understand others' perspectives.
—David Deits JD'75

Be so authentically yourself that others feel comfortable being themselves too.

—Mallory Kennaday BA'18

You're always interviewing! This essentially means to treat everyone with respect and see every interaction as an opportunity to learn something, share something, and make a connection for yourself or someone else. You never know who you're talking to or what could come of it. This advice came from M.K. Guth, a former PNCA professor, but I think she may have heard it from Emily Ginsburg (also PNCA faculty).
—Lydia Rosenberg BFA'10

Keep Going

Hands down, the best advice I ever received came from Mary Eyre, BA 1918, in her 1975 Willamette commencement address. The diminutive retired teacher exhorted graduates to "always reserve the right to be wiser tomorrow." I suppose we might have had a more high-profile, even famous speaker, but I wouldn't have carried away as much gold as I did from Mary's speech.
—Mitzi (Chalmers) Barker BS'75

Continue your education as far as it will take you.
—Levi Wiens BA'70

Do the next best thing that you can.
—Adam Hardwicke JD'97

Stay curious. Anything around the corner could be the next idea.
—Erica Stacy BFA'10

?? NEXT QUESTION:

Help us choose the question for our next issue!

Send your idea for a question to magazine@willamette.edu. If we ask it, you'll win a Willamette T-shirt.

Since we last spoke

By TUFTON BEAMISH

A MOMENT

8 a.m.,
January 9,
2025

Willamette has a new, bustling home base in downtown Portland.

Willamette's Graduate & Professional Center in downtown Portland has become a hub of activity since its official opening last summer. The newly renovated space, on the second floor of the Ecotrust Building, two blocks from the Pacific Northwest College of Art, expands the university's footprint in Portland. The building is home to Willamette's graduate programs in business management, computing, and data science.



PHOTOGRAPH BY KEZIA SETYAWAN

Snippets

→ **FEBRUARY** A NEW HEALTHCARE LEADERSHIP CERTIFICATE AIMS TO MEET INDUSTRY-WIDE TRAINING AND RETENTION NEEDS.

MARCH THE 2025 ALUMNI AWARD WINNERS ARE ROBERT G. PACKARD BA'73, KELLI J. CAMMACK BS'88, DAVID J. MORAN BA'79, JOHN A. WEST BM'73.

FASHION

PNCA put its mark on the Paris Olympics.

Danielle McCoy and Jordan Jackson—who together run the Portland-based Amen, Amen Studio and co-teach a popular design course at PNCA—created apparel for the Nigerian Olympics team at the 2024 Paris Olympics. The outfits were unveiled as the team crossed the Seine at the Opening Ceremonies. Back at PNCA, McCoy and Jackson help students bring their own ideas to life. “We think our approach prepares students for real-world experiences with clients and projects, whether you’re working freelance, in the context of an agency, or at an apparel company,” McCoy says.



IMAGES COURTESY OF LEKKI GARMENT FACTORY/WINNIE OREKOYA (TOP) AND AMEN, AMEN STUDIO (BOTTOM ROW); PHOTOGRAPH OF ATKINSON BY JAMES O SHEA

Clockwise from top: staff at Lekki Garment Factory in Lagos, Nigeria, inspect Opening Ceremonies pieces for Team Nigeria; PNCA’s Jordan Jackson and Danielle McCoy, the designers; rubber block test prints of the eagle motif (the national symbol of Nigeria), ultimately used on the team’s village wear and casual tees; and final sketches of looks for the Opening and Closing Ceremonies.



Did you know?

Willamette ranks No. 10 among small colleges in producing 2025 Peace Corps volunteers.

AWARD

President Steven Thorsett won a Portland Business Journal honor and renewed his contract.



Portland Business Journal selected Thorsett as one of its Executives of the Year for 2025, in recognition of his leadership in higher education and contributions to Oregon’s academic landscape. During his fourteen-year tenure, Willamette has expanded both its footprint in Portland and its curriculum to better serve the evolving workforce needs of the Pacific Northwest.

In January, the Willamette Board of Trustees renewed Thorsett’s contract for five more years, noting that Willamette has defied national trends of declining college enrollment, achieving a 28 percent increase in undergraduate enrollment during the past three years. “President Thorsett hasn’t just led Willamette—he’s helped transform it,” says Kevin

Smith BA’79, chair of the university’s board of trustees.

MILESTONE

The Atkinson Graduate School of Management turned fifty.

Atkinson marked its golden anniversary with a string of superlatives: It is Bloomberg Businessweek’s top-ranked management school in Oregon. Inc. Magazine recognizes two of its entrepreneurship courses as among the best. Out of more than 1,100 accredited programs in the U.S., Poets & Quants ranks Atkinson No. 76.

Perhaps most notably, Atkinson remains the only MBA program accredited by both NASPAA (for public policy education) and AACSB (for business education).

Atkinson serves MBA students at all career stages. It offers joint degree programs, too, including a BA/MBA, JD/MBA (in partnership with Willamette Law), and MBA/master’s in data science (with the School of Computing & Information Sciences). Among its newest offerings is a STEM MBA.

“Many perceive MBA programs as teaching people how to line their own pockets—and we’re not about that,” says Dean and Associate Professor of Accounting Romana Autry. “We’re about how to run organizations effectively, whether in the for-profit, not-for-profit, or government sectors, and how to use management to help organizations accomplish their missions.”

Atkinson has also made a Salem-campus move: from the Mudd Building to Kaneko Commons.



The Atkinson Graduate School of Management made a Salem-campus move to Kaneko Commons.

This brings all faculty and classes into the same space, creates additional square footage for growing programs, and provides students with more modern facilities. Plus, with the opening of Willamette's Graduate & Professional Center in Portland, Atkinson has expanded its presence in that city, too.

SCHOLARSHIP

Law professor Laura Appleman earned a major honor.



Appleman was elected to the American Law Institute after being nominated by Willamette Law dean emeritus Symeon Symeonides. The ALI produces scholarly work about the law, and its members are lawyers and law professors. The election honors Appleman's own contributions to legal scholarship. For example, two of her recent articles, published in *Hastings Law Journal* (2024) and *Maryland Law Review* (2025), center on the role of "Big Capital"—private equity, large publicly traded corporations, and

international insurance companies—in providing privatized prison services.

RANKINGS

The university became a top producer of Fulbright U.S. Scholars.

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs recognized Willamette as one of the colleges and universities with the highest number of faculty and administrators selected for the Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program. Willamette was the only institution in Oregon and one of three in the Pacific Northwest to earn the recognition.

The Fulbright Program is the U.S. government's flagship international academic exchange program. Fulbright U.S. Scholars teach or conduct research in affiliation with institutes abroad. "My Fulbright experiences have changed the way that I think about creative development, they've improved the quality of my teaching, and they've provided me with the space and time to make artwork," says Kate Copeland, senior associate dean and associate professor of printmaking and

Construction is under way on the new Renjen Career Center in the Putnam University Center on the Salem campus.

Did you know?



photography at PNCA. Copeland has held Fulbrights in India and Belgium and is now a Fulbright Scholar Alumni Ambassador. Willamette also has a long record of preparing students to successfully complete Fulbright fellowships, with fifty-five students and alumni receiving the honor since 1959. Grantees have worked in dozens of countries teaching English and researching everything from

international studies to biology to public administration. A student helped preserve endangered plant species on Kaua'i. Environmental science major Laulea Miike BS'27 returned home to Kaua'i to study pollen germination at Hawai'i's National Tropical

TOP PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF LAULEA MIIKE; PHOTOGRAPH OF SCIS STUDENTS BY MARIO GALLUCCI

Research by Laulea Miike BS'27 is helping to preserve an endangered plant species on Kaua'i.

not found anywhere else in the world. She focused on Hawai'i's endemic hōlei tree, whose pollen conservation physiology was previously unknown. Experts believe that only 150 hōlei trees remain. Through field and lab work, Miike discovered optimal conditions for preserving this species.

RANKINGS

The School of Computing & Information Sciences ranked among the best.

It is the only school in Oregon and the Pacific Northwest on

Fortune's 2025 list of Best Master's in Data Science Programs. Willamette ranks No. 14 nationally on the Fortune list, up eight from last year's ranking. Fortune evaluated programs based on factors such as admissions criteria, retention, and graduation rates. Willamette also received high marks in affordability, ranking at No. 23 on Fortune's list. Data science is one of the most in-demand fields and fastest-growing professions in the United States, and Willamette's undergraduate and graduate programs in the field aim to meet the region's needs for data and computer scientists.



CHANGES

Provost Carol Long announced her retirement, and Jennifer Jacobs Henderson was named the next provost.



Long (left) arrived at Willamette in 1972 as an English professor. She went on to serve as department chair, associate dean, and dean of the College of Liberal Arts until 2009, when she moved East to serve as provost and vice president for academic affairs—and then president—of the State University of New York College at Geneseo. Retirement was on her mind when President Thorsett asked her to return to Willamette to become the university's first provost. She couldn't resist the opportunity. Now, after nine years in the role, Long will retire as provost in July. Henderson will assume the role of provost and senior vice president. She joins Willamette from Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas, where she has been vice provost and professor of communication. Henderson brings extensive experience in academic leadership and strategic planning. She holds a bachelor's degree from Drake University in advertising, public relations, and English, and a master's degree and doctorate in communication from the University of Washington. The Willamette search committee highlighted her track record of turning innovative ideas into actionable results.

SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT AND JEFFREY DOBBINS WAS NAMED DEAN OF WILLAMETTE LAW. BOTH WERE INTERNAL HIRES. MAY MAEGAN PARKER BROOKS, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AND CHAIR OF CIVIC COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA, WON AN ARNOLD L. AND LOIS S. GRAVES AWARD IN THE HUMANITIES.

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How to Solve a Legal Crisis

There aren't enough public defenders in Oregon. Why that matters,
and what to do about it.



tHE BIG THUMP. It’s how new public defenders describe their first day on the job, when they’re greeted by a thick stack of cases on their desks. And it’s among the reasons there are such high levels of burnout and turnover among new lawyers who pursue a career defending people who cannot afford a private attorney.

“The practical reality is most public defenders will probably quit within the first few years of their practice. It’s really hard work,” says Kurt Wohlers, assistant professor of clinical law. He is in charge of Willamette Law’s new Criminal Defense Clinic, a for-credit practical skills clinic that pairs law school students with people who need defense lawyers.

Oregon lawmakers authorized short-term funding for three such clinics at the state’s law schools to help address the state’s public defense crisis, part of a plan to overhaul the state’s public defense system. Each month in Oregon, thousands of criminal defendants go without defense lawyers, violating their state and federal constitutional rights.

More than 90 percent of people charged with crimes in Oregon rely on public defenders to represent them, according to a state report. And a 2022 report by the American Bar Association shows the state had only 31 percent of the public defense attorneys it needed to handle caseloads. Similar studies found that public defenders in Oregon were taking on too many cases, threatening their ability to provide adequate representation to their clients and leaving people in jail without

Erika Bolstad is a journalist and author in Portland who writes frequently for Stateline, a national news nonprofit that covers state policy matters.

legal representation. Despite the cash infusion from the state legislature, more than 4,000 people lacked a lawyer in February 2025.

Willamette’s new clinic aims to address some of the systemic issues, Wohlers says, even as it fulfills the law school’s mission to provide practical, real-world experience to its students before they graduate. The clinic puts second- and third-year law students to work defending people facing misdemeanor charges in Marion County. The hope is that the clinic will not only prepare graduates for careers in public defense but also ease the burden on the state’s strained indigent defense system.

The clinic fulfills the loftier mission, too, of carrying out the U.S. court system’s constitutional promise to those accused of crimes. Anyone facing criminal charges who cannot afford a lawyer has a right to an adequate attorney at government expense. It’s a right established in the Sixth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1963 *Gideon v. Wainwright* decision.

In the long run, the clinics at Willamette and the state’s other law schools are building a feeder system for new lawyers to become public defenders, says Brook Reinhard JD’09, former executive director at Public Defender Services of Lane County and now a lawyer in private practice. Reinhard took part in a different clinic during his years at Willamette, and he says it offered practical, supervised legal experience that was pivotal in his growth as a new lawyer.

“Law school doesn’t actually teach how to be a lawyer; it teaches you how to think like a lawyer,” Reinhard says. “And so the vital part about a clinic is it actually teaches you real-world skills in being a lawyer.”

In addition to the law school clinics, the Oregon Public Defense Commission has boosted the number of



public defenders on its payroll; until recently, almost all public defense work was done by individual lawyers or nonprofit agencies and consortiums of private defense attorneys. Twenty such public defenders have joined the Oregon Public Defense Commission since 2023, says Aaron Jeffers JD’11, chief deputy defender for the agency and a board member of Legal Aid Services of Oregon. The governor’s budget calls for the Oregon Public Defense Commission to hire an additional forty public defenders.

WILLAMETTE LAW’S CRIMINAL defense clinic attracts a mix of students, including those who know they want to be public defenders and those who haven’t yet chosen a post-graduation path. During class, students review their assigned cases; they’re partnered up so that two students represent one client. They learn how to review evidence and discovery, including police reports and body camera footage. Then, they interview clients and prepare a defense. Wohlers attends

“The practical reality is most public defenders will probably quit within the first few years of their practice. It’s really hard work.”

client meetings and any court appearances and helps students prepare defense and trial strategies. In general, though, students take the lead.

They also spend class time discussing how to avoid burnout and how to manage secondary trauma caused by the constant exposure to traumatic events experienced by their clients. No class can fully prepare students for the whirlwind pace of a public defense job, but the clinic offers a glimpse, Wohlers says.

“There are a lot of times where you’re rushing around between courtrooms and you’re filling out documents in one courtroom and running over to the other,” he says. “And you don’t get that perspective when you’re in law school, but you really get to see it when you’re in court every single day.”

Wohlers says that many students enter the clinic “a little bit scared to walk up there in front of a judge and a courtroom filled with people.” But by the end of the semester, their courtroom confidence blooms.

“Getting to see how the students develop is really, really rewarding,” Wohlers says. “The confidence level is something that you cannot teach in a law school course. You just have to do it multiple times.”

Occasionally, clients worry that their defense might suffer because they’re represented by students. But they’re often getting superior representation for misdemeanor cases, Wohlers says, because there are two law students for each defendant, both supervised by an experienced public defender.

“And,” he says, “you also get two students who are really excited to represent you.” ●

Animation Marathon

Simulating the work of professional shops, students spent forty-eight hours creating animated shorts.

IT'S 7 P.M. ON A SATURDAY in February, and the clock is counting down. In quiet corners and lively computer labs at the Pacific Northwest College of Art in downtown Portland, students sew puppets, draw fantastical scenes, and experiment with stop-motion animation. Need a break? Mattresses and sleeping bags are ready, and two friendly dogs scamper around.

Over forty-eight hours, PNCA's second annual Animation Jam tested students' ability to make short films together under time pressure, simulating the work of professional animation shops. Teams included undergraduate and graduate students across PNCA, as well as illustration students from Willamette's Salem campus. The event was organized by Piper Haswell BFA'25, Mya Katz BFA'25, and PNCA faculty members Christiane Cegavske, Yer Za Vue, and Marilyn Zornado. This year's theme of "Once Upon a Time" inspired short films about fairytale heroes, darkly murderous wolves, and one surprisingly friendly sleep paralysis demon.

1. Fifty-two students took part in the Animation Jam. "I see the students taking skills they learn in class and combining them in new ways to make their films," says animation faculty member Marilyn Zornado, herself an award-winning animator. She is pictured in the back, wearing a scarf.
2. A student works on a drawing. In addition to hand drawings, the films employed digital art, puppetry, stop motion animation, and more to tell their stories. Original music, sound effects, and voiceovers were produced in PNCA's own recording studio.
3. The mood in PNCA's Arlene and Harold Schnitzer Center for Art and Design was festive and joyful even as the job at hand was serious. Many students arrived in pajamas or costumes (note the Cousin It outfit) and everyone took plenty of time to laugh together as they worked.
4. A student creates a digital illustration. At the end of the forty-eight hours, the teams screened their work in a public film festival. The event provided "a wonderful way for students to see what they're capable of creating," says one of the organizers, Piper Haswell BFA'25.
5. Students make puppets for their stop motion film *Twisted Tales*, which also featured paper cutouts and pine cones to create a surrealist horror retelling of several fairy tales.
6. These are storyboards for *Be Tender*, one of the films made during the Animation Jam. It is a love story between a wizard and a bartender set in medieval times. The soundtrack? A medieval-style rendition of Sabrina Carpenter's "Espresso."

Story and photographs by PAUL MCKEAN BA'11, MBA'23



Be Tender tells a love story between a wizard and a bartender.

michael

THE INTERVIEW

“For me, success is if the idea is original
and I brought something of myself into it.”

Interview by HANNAH WALLACE

Photographs by NASHCO

curry

Page 20.



Michael Curry BFA'81, photographed March 12 in his Oregon workshop. ↗

Designer Michael Curry BFA’81 has helped bring to life the Olympics, *The Lion King*, the Eras Tour, and much more, winning two Emmy Awards in the process. At Michael Curry Design, his 55,000-square-foot workshop in Scappoose, Oregon, he and sixty-three employees invent, create, and repair puppets, costumes, props, and sets. Curry, who lives in Portland with his wife, Julia, is currently producer and designer on *Awakening* in Las Vegas. He’ll also be playing a big part in Portland’s renaissance, starting with leading an initiative to renovate the city’s iconic Keller Auditorium.

What did you study at the Museum Art School, now PNCA?

I was a fine arts major—a sculptor and painter. I went there because they offered a formal, classical art education that required life drawing. In those years, we were studying drawing from cadavers up at Portland State. Abstract Expressionism was having its heyday, so it was hard to find instructors who could give good instruction in figurative classical work. I did take an illustration class, and I’m glad I did, because I learned a great deal about the world of commercial art and the economics of art.

How did you move into theater from there?

I was successful as a gallery artist. I went to New York and continued showing in galleries. I’ve always been fascinated by movement—I was a champion wrestler when I was young. In New York in the ’80s, there was a lot of avant-garde work on the street. I loved it! Long story short: I started making sculptures that moved. I did a series of floating heads that I put in the Hudson River—giant Styrofoam heads of philosophers. I did angels that had wings that would open. I did street performances. Then, in 1988, I was offered an amazing opportunity to work on the Siegfried and Roy Show in Las Vegas. The world’s leading production designer at that time, John Napier, invited me to come to his studio. He took me down a row of about five

big things in development, and I had an opinion about how I would create all of them. I got the job.

What was it like to collaborate with director Julie Taymor on *The Lion King*?

I had done three shows with Julie before *The Lion King*. Julie was the avant-garde wunderkind—she was just emerging. When the producers said, “We would like to invite Julie Taymor,” I laughed my head off. I said, “It’ll be the greatest decision you ever make, but you are going to have to let her do what she wants to do.” She’s brilliant. Admittedly, I’m a lot more technical than she is. I do the lion’s share—no pun intended!—of the engineering. Julie is the costume designer. I’m the puppet and mask co-designer. Anybody else, I would say, “It’s a completely equal partnership.” But she’s Julie Taymor! It’s literally like working with Picasso. She’s been a huge influence to the art industry in general.

***The Lion King* has now been on Broadway for twenty-eight years. What happens when the puppets fall apart? Do you repair them?**

Absolutely. We still do the principal puppets and the masks. We have over fifty shows out there in the world, many of which are in fifteen- to twenty-year runs. So we’ve rebuilt

and replaced and refitted and rehearsed. We used to cast the masks in plaster, put straws in your nose and all that. But we do a lot of digital scanning now. We’ve embraced technology in a great way, and it’s made us a viable player out here in Oregon. You don’t have to be in New York or L.A. anymore.

As research for *The Lion King*, you studied the African art exhibits at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In what other places did you find inspiration?

We went to the Bronx Zoo a lot. I went to Africa. I’ve always been a fan of animal anatomy and human anatomy. I studied it in school diligently—and it paid dividends. It’s weird how many stories are told through animals. Fables and mythology—they’re often told through animals.

How do you define success in a production?

There are two measures: my own gut and then the audience’s reaction. In theater, people are very vocal; they let you know right away. But for me, success is if the idea is original and I brought something of myself into it. I want to discover through the process. If I know the outcome, it’s less exciting for me.

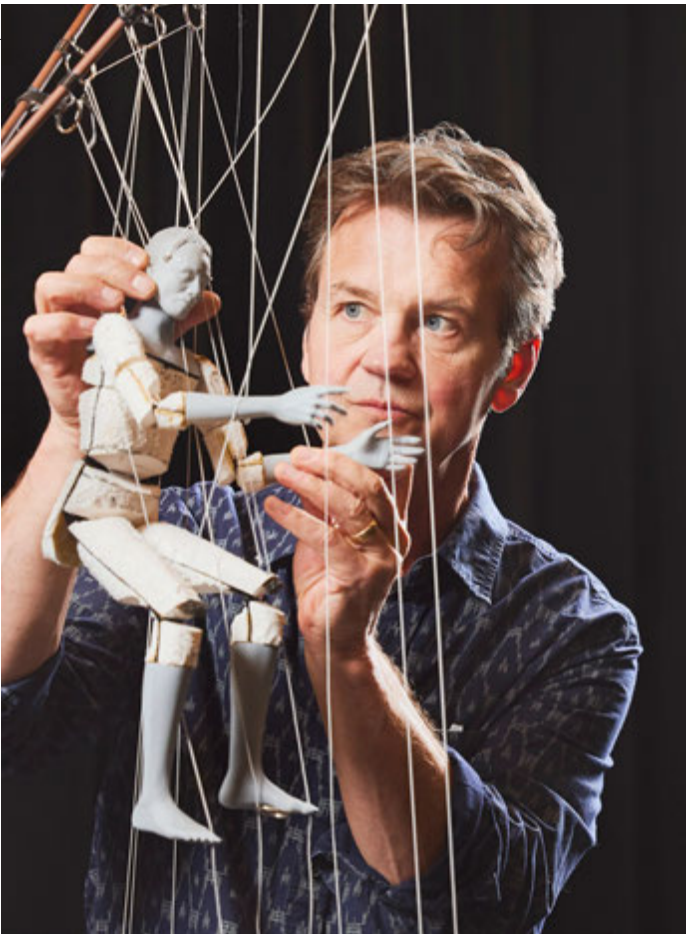
You’ve worked on the Super Bowl with Madonna, Katy Perry, Alicia Keys, and others. Do you have a most memorable halftime show?

The lion from the Katy Perry show was astounding. That was the most watched event in history at the time.

What was it like to work with Taylor Swift on the Eras Tour?

The whole process was great, and the outcome was extraordinary. I like her message, and she’s a great person. What’s amazing about meeting these extraordinary people is that they’re quite approachable. They want to be the best. And so if they’re told that you’re the best in your business, they take you really seriously and treat you with respect. I do what’s called production design. And that might be scenery; it might be costumes. For Madonna, we do scenery. For Taylor, we did scenery and props. It’s hard to define, because many times, we create a character

Hannah Wallace is a Portland-based freelance journalist. She writes about arts, culture, agriculture, climate, and more.



“I’ve always been fascinated by movement—I was a champion wrestler when I was young.”

and the environment that it lives in, and the costuming of the performers who are either performing it or are a part of the picture. This is what I learned in art school: composition. The foundational training I got at PNCA was key to it. I would not have the success I’ve had without those foundational skills.

What do you say to young people who want to pursue the arts?

Learn to draw. And learn to speak about your work. Most artists have this acceptance that they’re socially awkward and misunderstood. That’s baloney. Learn to speak clearly and precisely about your work, because you’ll find there are many points in your career where your success will be dependent on that moment. ●

Jasmine Ames



From Sacramento to Salem to Seattle, a lesson on maximizing time and impact.

The sun is dipping low in the sky as I pull into Salem, but Jasmine Ames MBA'18 is nowhere near the end of her day.

Shortly before 6 p.m. on a Thursday in March, I meet Ames outside Kaneko Commons, where she's about to teach a four-hour class on entrepreneurship. She greets me with a bright smile and very full arms. She's carrying two phones, two bags, two laptops, and her second set of car keys for the day.

It's fitting, since Ames squeezes enough for two lives into each of her days—at least.

"I just flew in from Sacramento," she tells me as she flashes her keycard and leads me through the glass doors of the building.

Ames' day started at the Housing California Annual Conference, where she met with clients for her job as vice president and senior DPS (deposit and payments solutions) relationship manager at US Bancorp, her employer for the past fifteen years. She started as a

By EMILY HALNON / Photographs by CELESTE NOCHE



Even when her day begins hundreds of miles away, Jasmine Ames MBA'18 comes to Willamette every Thursday evening to teach a four-hour course on entrepreneurship.

bank teller during college and worked her way up, gravitating toward positions that enable her to serve others. Now, Ames manages an affordable housing portfolio for the impact finance division and supports entities that invest in affordable housing across the Southwest.

“I grew up in a single-mom household with a lot of financial hardship, so tackling housing insecurity feels deeply personal to me,” Ames says. “A big reason I love banking is because banking touches everyone—and there are so many meaningful opportunities to help people through this industry.”

From the Sacramento conference, Ames returned her rental car and hopped on an afternoon flight to Portland, where she retrieved her own car and drove to Willamette to teach “Developing New Ventures” at the Atkinson Graduate School of Management. Tomorrow, she’ll lead a class on public management through the university’s Executive Development Center before driving to Vancouver, Washington, where she helps take care of her mother, who is ill and disabled. She spends half of each week in Vancouver with her mom and the other half in Seattle.

“I know I-5 so well, I could drive it in my sleep,” she says, sliding her car keys into one of her tote bags.

We get to the classroom and find seats in the front row. Ames relaxes into a hard plastic chair and turns to me with another warm grin. She does not look like a woman who just commuted across state lines and got stuck in traffic along the way.

The classroom environment is a familiar, and beloved, place for Ames. She pursued an MBA at Atkinson as a way to deepen her knowledge of strategy, finance, and marketing, and she went on to complete a doctorate in law and public policy at Northeastern University in 2024.

“After finishing my doctorate last fall, I was immediately asking myself, ‘How do I stay in academia?,’” she says. The answer was to teach, and the transition to moonlighting as a professor has been pretty seamless. Given that she spent three years squeezing a PhD into her spare time, she’s adept at maximizing the hours outside of her 9-to-5. She also somehow manages to

“A big reason I love banking is because banking touches everyone—and there are so many meaningful opportunities to help people through this industry.”



Emily Halnon lives, writes, and runs out of Eugene, Oregon. She is the author of the memoir *To the Gorge: Running, Grief, Resilience & 460 Miles on the Pacific Crest Trail* (2024, Pegasus Books), a USA Today bestseller.



maintain a fulfilling social life and to exercise nearly every day (“Peloton, because I can do it anywhere, or hot yoga,” she says).

This is her first full semester teaching, but you’d never guess she’s new to it—or that she describes herself as an introvert who doesn’t love public speaking. When 6 p.m. hits, Ames moves to the front of the room and starts talking to her students with confidence and ease.

Tonight’s lesson is on developing platforms for entrepreneurial ventures, a subject she knows well, having launched Panthera Beauty Accessories two years ago. Panthera offers a line of brushes, silk bonnets, and other hair accessories catered to women of color.

“I’ve had three Red Bulls and seventeen shots of espresso today,” she tells the class as she flips to her opening slide.

I know it’s a joke, but I can’t help thinking that’s exactly how much caffeine I’d need to get through her day.

“I’m grateful that I’m able to contribute and be involved with things that matter to me,” she’d said before class. “I couldn’t show up like this for things

“I’ve had three Red Bulls and seventeen shots of espresso today,” Ames jokes as she flips to her opening slide. When she’s not moonlighting as a professor, Ames is a vice president at US Bancorp.

that I didn’t care about.” Ames is motivated by her own upbringing and by how much her mom, as well as outside support systems, helped get her to where she is now. That’s why she serves on several boards, including those of the Salvation Army, Community HousingWorks, Share, and Willamette’s Board of Trustees. She remembers that similar organizations provided her with clothes, food, and school supplies when she was young.

As I watch Ames teach, it’s clear that all the caffeine in the world couldn’t help her fake the enthusiasm and energy she radiates for her work and her life.

At the end of our two hours together, a guest speaker takes over the class, and I get in my car and drive south on I-5, thinking about how it’s almost my bedtime, but Ames still has miles to go before she sleeps. ●

____ Why did Thomas Jefferson and James Madison embrace religious freedom as a central cause?

Reading the Founders

fORTY YEARS AGO, I began my graduate studies at the University of North Carolina with the goal of studying, writing, and engaging in church-state matters. I grew up in a religious household with several relatives who were clergy (including my father). I was inclined toward politics and law rather than to the ministry, and to focus on church-state matters as a scholar and lawyer seemed like a natural fit.

Since then, I have never looked back. My wife reminds me how fortunate I am in having found a niche that has inspired and sustained me for so many years. That is due in no small part to the seemingly intractable controversies surrounding church and state interactions in the United States. According to the Pew Research Center, 55 percent of Americans support the idea of church-state separation, with only 14 percent opposing it. (The remainder hold mixed views.) An even higher number—69 percent—agree that the government should never declare an official religion. At the same time, more than half of Americans believe (to one degree or another) that this is a “Christian nation” and that the founding documents and/or founders were inspired by biblical principles.

This tension plays itself out on an almost daily basis in the trenches of America’s cultural wars. Even though the U.S. Supreme Court declared some seventy-five years ago that the government should not fund religious instruction, and more than sixty years ago that public schools should not promote religious activities, both issues remain contentious and serve as fuel for partisan legislation. So the Louisiana legislature has required the posting of the Ten Commandments in every public school classroom; the Texas legislature has authorized public school chaplains; and the Supreme Court has split 4–4 on whether Oklahoma can fund a Catholic-run charter school. And as our nation’s commitment to diversity and equality has

grown, an increasing number of religiously affiliated entities that serve the public—hospitals, nursing homes, etc.—and businesses owned by religious conservatives—for example, Masterpiece Cakeshop—are claiming religious exemptions from nondiscrimination and other salutary regulations.

Fueling these immediate controversies is the above-mentioned philosophical divide: should America’s public institutions and policies reflect (and support) religious values, and if so, which ones? This implicates the question of whether the long-held idea of separation of church and state is the correct model to follow. Despite its general support, it has become increasingly controversial, with Justice Clarence Thomas calling it a “so-called” constitutional principle.

In 2022, Cornell University Press published my sixth book, *Separating Church and State*:

____ By STEVEN K. GREEN / Illustration by MARK HARRIS

A History, in which I examined the historical impulses for the idea of church-state separation. Those include Enlightenment thought, Radical Whig political theories, and dissenting Protestant traditions. These impulses informed our nation’s founding documents and directed later relationships in

the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I arrived at the conclusion that the bona fides of church-state separation are significant, notwithstanding current criticism.

That book led me to undertake my most recent book, *The Grand Collaboration: Thomas*

Jefferson, James Madison, and the Invention of American Religious Freedom (University of Virginia Press, 2024). For decades, historians and jurists have considered Jefferson and

Madison to be at the forefront of the nation’s development of religious freedom. Jefferson wrote the Virginia Statute for Establishing Religious Freedom and popularized the phrase, “a wall of separation between church and state.” Madison was instrumental in writing the First Amendment, which contains the Free Exercise and no-Establishment clauses.

More recently, critics of church-state separation have sought to minimize Jefferson’s and Madison’s impact. Their criticism takes two tracks. The first is that the two men were largely outliers when it came to contemporary attitudes about church-state relations—that they were unrepresentative of the founding generation. The second argument, somewhat at tension with the first, is that

neither man was as separationist as he has traditionally been depicted.

In a nutshell, the first critique mischaracterizes Jefferson and Madison: while they were at the forefront in their views about church and state, they were hardly outliers. The second critique is simply wrong.

In writing *The Grand Collaboration*, however, I sought to avoid engaging in the current legal debate. Rather, the book addresses several questions: What experiences influenced Jefferson and Madison to

embrace religious freedom as a central cause, particularly when they faced so many pressing issues related to creating a new government? Why would two religiously heterodox and nominally observant men, immune from any threat of religious persecution thanks to their social standing and putative affiliation with the dominant Anglican Church, possess such a deep commitment to religious freedom and work so assiduously throughout their lives to advance that principle? Finally, what were their understandings of the concept of religious freedom, and what other values did that concept reinforce?

To find answers, I examined many of the 2,300 letters between the two men contained in various collections and compiled on the National Archives website Founders Online. I also looked at correspondence between each man and other acquaintances (such as John Adams and James Monroe) that discussed how religion should interact with government policy.

My conclusion is that Jefferson’s and Madison’s support for religious freedom was tied to its connection to freedom of inquiry and conscience. “Reason and free enquiry are the only effectual agents against error,” Jefferson wrote in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*. Similarly, Madison declared “the freedom of conscience to be a natural and absolute right,” not one granted by governments, and a healthy separation of church and state was key to ensuring freedom of inquiry and conscience.

As the current Supreme Court continues to rewrite church-state law, it should not ignore the legacy of the two founders, who did more to secure America’s much-envied regime of religious freedom than any other figures. As Justice Sandra Day O’Connor observed in her final opinion concerning the Religion Clauses: “Those who would renegotiate the boundaries between church and state must therefore answer a difficult question: Why would we trade a system that has served us so well for one that has served others so poorly?” ●

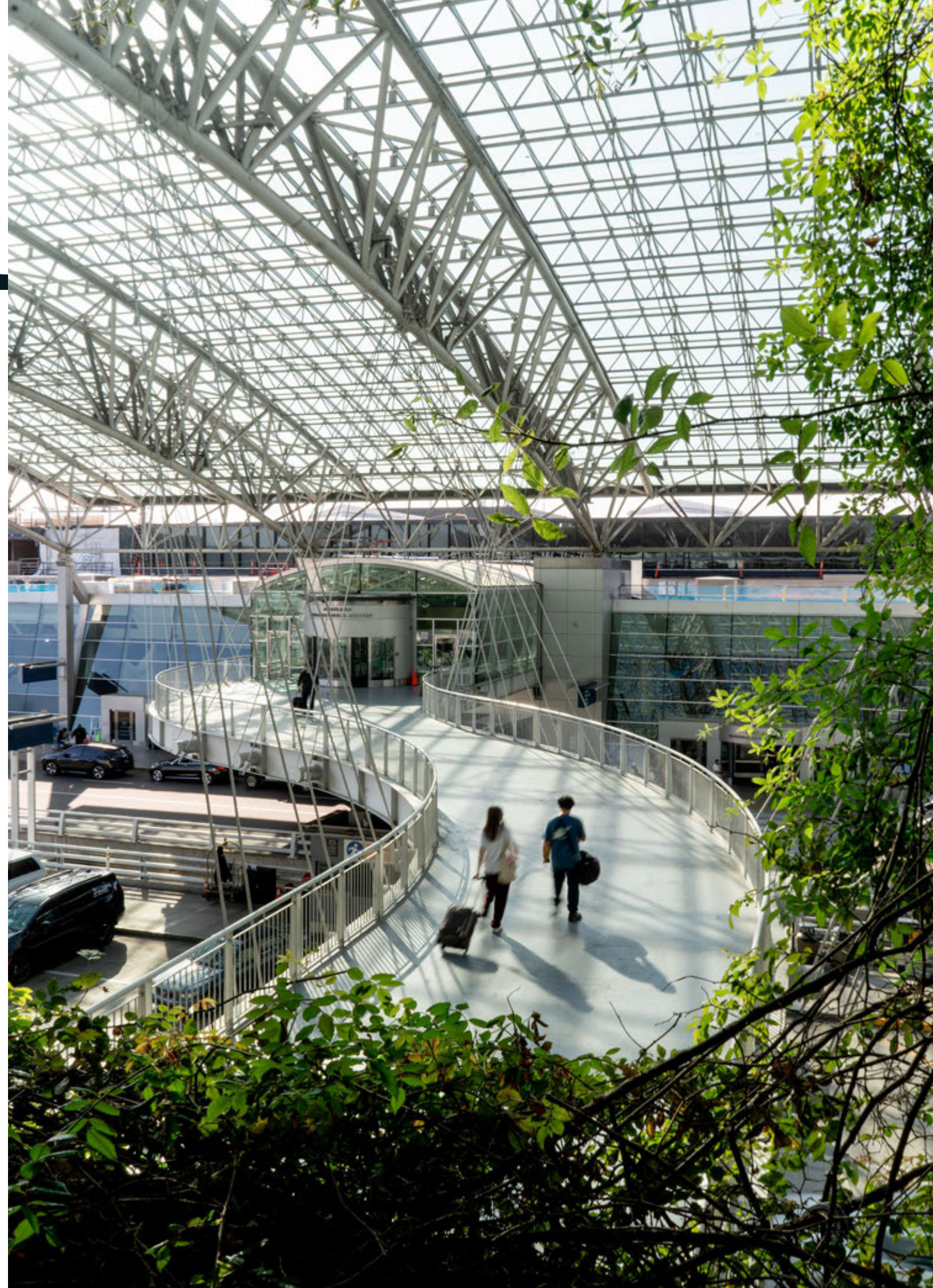
Steven K. Green is the Fred H. Paulus Professor of Law and Affiliated Professor of History and Religious Studies at Willamette.



From entrance to gate,
Willamette alumni have
shaped the new PDX.

BY CHARLOTTE HERROLD
PHOTOGRAPHS BY KEZIA SETYAWAN

ILLUSTRATIONS BY SAM ISLAND





WITH ITS SOARING timber rooflines, emphasis on natural light, and curated local vendors, the newly redesigned main terminal at Portland International Airport (PDX) is more than just a gateway—it tells a story of innovation, sustainability, and community. And many of the storytellers behind it share a common chapter: Willamette University.

At the forefront of the ambitious \$2 billion transformation—the first phase was unveiled in August, with final renovations due in 2026—are Bob Packard BA’73, managing partner and architect at ZGF; and Dave Drinkward JD’07, president and CEO of Hoffman Construction.

“It was a privilege to be a part of creating this new front door for the region,” says Drinkward. Now, travelers enter Oregon beneath an undulating canopy crafted from nearly 2 million feet of mass timber, sourced almost entirely from within the state—including a portion from the 305-acre Willamette University at Zena.

Drinkward, who leads one of the largest construction companies in the Pacific Northwest, credits Willamette with teaching him to see the big picture and to navigate the many stakeholder interests in a project of this scale. The original charge for the terminal redesign was relatively straightforward: increase passenger capacity and make the structure resilient to a major earthquake. But as collaborators began to dig in, the project evolved into something even more ambitious.

“The mandate organically grew once we started asking, ‘How do we create a space for travelers that reflects the values of the Pacific Northwest?’” says Packard, whose firm is known for sustainable design. He emphasized the role cross-disciplinary thinking played in getting to the answers. “Willamette gave me that curiosity,” he says. “It was an environment where I could be exposed to everything and ask questions.”

Packard’s team sought to solve the technical challenges by creating a space that was sustainable, intuitive, and grounded in its surroundings. Local timber helped satisfy those ambitions. The infrastructure incorporates beams with flexible joints and specialized hardware designed to move with seismic waves. This “rocking wall system,” as Packard calls it, can absorb and dissipate energy.

“Mass timber is not just beautiful,” he says. “It also sequesters carbon.”

Strategically placed skylights—forty-nine of them—let in tons of natural light, dramatically reducing energy consumption. And the terminal’s biophilic design includes hundreds of native plants and trees specifically chosen for their ability to filter the air and calm the human nervous system.

The terminal is economically transformative, too. “We awarded over \$250 million in contracts to small businesses, and about \$100 million of that went to local, minority-owned firms,” says Dave Robertson BA’89, chief public affairs officer for the Port of Portland. PDX is now a showcase for homegrown Oregon businesses such as Powell’s Books, Blue Star Donuts, and Pendleton Woolen Mills.

Willamette roots run deep here, too. Four generations of Pendleton’s founding family have served on the university’s board of trustees. Other family-run operations in the terminal are affiliated with Willamette MBA alumni: Honor Jackson MBA’21 is one third of the father-and-sons team behind Jackson Shine Co., and Carter McEntee MBA’22 manages the beloved coastal staple Mo’s Seafood and Chowder, which has an outpost in the new PDX.

The project also catalyzed innovation in Oregon’s timber industry. Zena Forest Products, a small hardwood company based near Willamette’s campus, received support from the Port to purchase new equipment for manufacturing the modular wood tiles used in the terminal’s floors. Zip-O-Log Mills in Eugene produced the massive glulam beams for the ceiling—some up to eighty feet long. “At first they said it was too complicated,” Robertson recalls. “But then they came back and said ‘We can do it.’ They cut a hole in the side of their shop to fit the beams.”

The renovation has already improved passenger flow, with upgraded TSA checkpoints, intuitive signage, and new accessibility technologies. But more than that, it’s bolstered a spirit of ingenuity and collaboration to the region.

“This project shows we can do big, bold things here,” Robertson says. “It proves the Northwest is full of ambition, talent, and innovation. And that when we lead with values, we create places that reflect who we are.”

Charlotte Herrold is a writer, editor, and digital content strategist from Toronto, Canada. She has an M.Sc. in creative writing from the University of Edinburgh.



→ Skylights were deliberately placed and angled to let in natural light, reducing the demand for electricity while preventing glare on wayfinding signage.



→ Wood sourced from the Willamette University at Zena property was harvested with the help of students and faculty. After the harvest, students replanted trees at the property, which is certified for sustainability by the Forest Stewardship Council.

↗ Sculptural installations by conceptual artist Sanford Biggers decorate the glass-walled corridor connecting the concourses. The quilt-like patterns were inspired by old textiles from the Oregon Historical Society.





➤ The seventy-five-year-old family-owned Mo's Seafood and Chowder chain, managed by Carter McEntee MBA'22, operates a bustling counter-service location at PDX.

➤ Pendleton reopened in the main terminal with a warm and welcoming outpost that stocks its iconic blankets and wool shirts, plus travel essentials like tote and duffle bags.



You Can't Eat Jokes

NATHAN BRANNON BA'06

Comedian → Gardener

Nathan Brannon performed a stand-up set at the Burbank Comedy Festival in California in 2018. He had just bought a house in Walla Walla, Washington, “the smallest town I’ve ever lived in by at least 100,000 people,” he told the audience. “I said a phrase this past year that I’ve never said before in my entire life; I said, ‘Damn it, the neighbor’s alpaca has gotten into our yard again.’”

Brannon got his start in stand-up at Willamette and went on the road after graduation. The accolades stacked up. He produced two comedy albums, toured with Dave Chappelle, and earned the title of Portland’s Funniest Person.

But when COVID shuttered comedy clubs around the country, Brannon lost his primary source of income. “My kid was one and a half, and you’re sitting there kind of, ‘What do I do? I can’t make anybody laugh right now.’”

Since the early 2010s, Brannon had also been a hydroponic and aquaponic gardener. He figured he could contribute to household expenses by growing healthy food. The more he grew, the more he realized there were “other parents out there in the exact same boat.” Brannon started a social media campaign, “Dig It with Nathan,” to take “the stigma and mystery” out of gardening.

Today, Brannon is an education manager for the Sustainable Living Center’s Farm to School program in Walla Walla. In this role, he runs the gardening program at a local school—the poorest in the district, Brannon says. He also works with incarcerated youth to build hydroponics systems: The teens learn to harvest spices and start fruit trees. “When they’re released,” he says, “they can enjoy the fruit of that tree with their families.”

Brannon gives talks about gardening, too. He especially likes to introduce young gardeners



PHOTOGRAPH BY PATRICK RECORD

to George Washington Carver. Born into slavery, Carver rose to prominence after the Civil War as the agricultural scientist who urged Southern farmers to plant nitrogen-fixers like peanuts and soybeans to restore soil depleted by cotton monocropping. Brannon tells his young audiences that Carver “was written off by the same farms he ended up saving later on,” and he shares this message: “The idea is that you have a talent; you probably don’t even know you have it yet.” Then he hands out legume seeds and says, “When you look at this plant, when you walk outside and you see it growing, I hope it reminds you that you have something of value.”

As it turns out, teaching people to grow food is not so different from comedy. “With standup,” he says, “it’s not enough to think of good ideas or express your experiences, if you can’t figure out how to find the spots in an audience’s experience where they overlap.” He connects with families by sharing the story of economic distress he and his family felt during the pandemic. In a community where many have experienced food insecurity, they know exactly what he means.

“When you look at this plant, when you walk outside and you see it growing, I hope it reminds you that you have something of value.”



Cultural Exchange

JORDAN SCHOTT BA'21

U.S. Senate staffer → teacher in Spain



When Jordan Schott graduated from Willamette, she went into government—to continue a project she’d started as a politics, policy, law, and ethics major.

In Professor Melissa Buis’s “Restorative Justice” course, which enrolls a mix of Willamette students and inmates of the Oregon State Penitentiary, Schott initiated an effort to amend the Oregon constitution. Together with Niki Kates BA’20, Riley Burton BA’20, and members of the penitentiary’s Black cultural club, she formed Oregonians Against Slavery and Involuntary Servitude. Their goal was to remove the constitution’s slavery exception clause, which permitted compulsory and uncompensated labor in Oregon prisons. After years of work, their efforts paid off on Election Day in 2022, when Oregonians voted to remove the slavery exception from the state constitution.

That project landed Scott a position on U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley’s legislative team. She moved to Washington, D.C., to become a legislative aide in Merkley’s office, where she hoped to achieve the same reform on the federal level. But after the 2024 elections, she knew the timing wasn’t right for federal reform.

So, Schott moved to a small town near Valencia, Spain, to teach English in public schools. Sometimes, local teachers ask her to prepare presentations about life in the U.S. And every day, the cultural exchange teaches her something, too, including about government programs in a place far removed from D.C. When the time comes for her next pivot, she’s sure to bring this experience with her.

Life in the ER

JOHN TURNER BA'04

Public policy → Emergency physician



Before he became a doctor, John Turner worked for one. Oregon State Sen. Alan Bates was a family physician in Southern Oregon for twenty-five years before he joined the legislature, where he operated an ad hoc medical clinic for staff and legislators in the State Capitol.

“He had a pager and a black doctor’s bag, which would be up in our office,” Turner recalls. Together, Turner and Bates would respond to minor injuries or health emergencies, like, once, a fall down the stairs. “We’d be the first responders before the first responders would show up. Being there to take care of somebody really had an impact on me.”

Turner considers his greatest policy achievement to be his work to expand insurance coverage to low-income Oregonians through the state’s Medicaid program. House Bills 2009 and 2116 passed in June 2009, resulting in health coverage for 95 percent of Oregon children.

But “there was part of me that always wanted to be a doctor,” Turner says. In 2009, he left the Capitol to pursue that dream, and eventually, he earned an MD at Oregon Health and Science University.

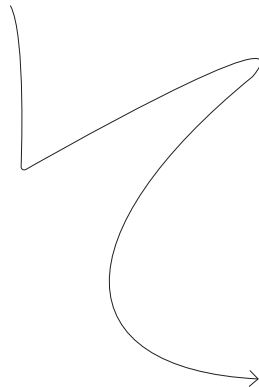
Today, Turner is an emergency physician in the Willamette Valley and a medical director for EMS agencies in Clackamas County. “I love emergency medicine because I never know what I’m going to get,” he says. He might treat cardiac arrest in one patient and a mental health crisis in the next.

Turner also trains EMS responders to provide treatment for patients with substance- and opioid-use disorder. As Turner explains, people who have experienced a non-fatal overdose are at the highest risk of fatality for the next forty-eight hours. He is part of a project that aims to prevent this by treating withdrawal symptoms and protecting against future overdose.

He still has a foot in the door in politics, serving on the executive committee of the Oregon Medical Association and working with the Oregon College of Emergency Physicians. It’s important for doctors to maintain a relationship with Oregon legislators, because, he says, “if you’re not at the table, you’re on the menu.”



“Life is unpredictable, impermanent, and short. I didn’t want to look back and say I didn’t venture down this path and fully explore it.”



PHOTOGRAPH BY NANI WELCH KELI'IHO'OMALU

Comfort at the End of Life

BLAYNE HIGA BA'97

Legislative aide → Buddhist minister

Blayne Higa was working as a senior legislative aide in the Hawaii House of Representatives when he received word from his mother that her longtime partner was nearing the end of his life.

Higa flew from Honolulu to his hometown of Hilo, Hawaii, to be with them. This was in 2010, and Higa, who was raised Buddhist, was at the time serving as a layperson at his local temple. As Higa watched his mother care for her ailing partner, he felt called to care for others in a similar way. For the first time, he began to seriously consider the ministry.

“Life is unpredictable, impermanent, and short,” Higa says. “I didn’t want to look back and say I didn’t venture down this path and fully explore it.”

He pursued ordination, a multiyear process that involved traveling to Kyoto, Japan, to spend time at the head temple of the Hongwanji-ha tradition of Jōdo Shinshū. Back in Hawaii, he became a part-time minister while working full time at a nonprofit. Then his family asked Higa to perform the end-of-life service for his 100-year-old grandmother.

“To do that for her was challenging and difficult—but also the most meaningful thing I’ve done,” Higa says. “After that experience, I knew what I needed to do.”

Higa quit his job. He enrolled at the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley, California, where he earned a master of divinity degree. He then received additional certification in Japan.

Today, Higa is resident minister of the Kona Hongwanji Buddhist Temple, a Shin Buddhist temple on Hawaii’s Big Island. He spends his days consulting with community members on questions of faith and listening to their concerns. The temple also functions as a community center, including as a place of respite for the unhoused.

Higa especially values the chance to work with families at the end of life—a sacred transition, he calls it. “Old age, sickness, and death are eternal truths that the Buddha taught,” he says. “The role of a spiritual caregiver is to listen with compassion and attentiveness, to be present with suffering in all forms.”

Helping Leaders Shine

STACY WEST BA'06, MBA'12
Executive director → Executive assistant

Stacy West began her career as a study abroad advisor at Willamette. She went on to serve as executive director of the Oregon Symphony Association in Salem and, later, as a recruiter for a study abroad company. There, she also developed and marketed a Spanish language program for professionals.

But with two young children, that work no longer felt like the right fit. “You’re going through a life shift,” she recalls. “I wanted to find a job that would allow me flexibility.”

Through a series of professional connections, she became an executive assistant at the New Orleans-based incubator Camelback Ventures, where she tapped into communication skills she’d honed in international education.

West loved being able to free up Camelback founder Aaron Walker to “go be a leader,” she says. And she wasn’t the only one who saw the impact of her role. In fact, Walker’s wife, Ify, wrote a post about West that went viral on social media. It described not only how West enabled Walker to manage his company but also how she purchased books for the Walkers’ young children, set aside blocks in Walker’s calendar for date nights, and answered emails on Walker’s behalf—even those sent by Ify herself. “She was privy to all the inner workings of our life,” Ify wrote. “Trusted without reservation.”

West calls Ify’s public expression of gratitude “one of the most touching moments of my career.”

Today, West has moved on from Camelback to work as a contractor in executive support and as a consultant in organizational operations. She manages her clients’ calendars and travel, coordinates events, and helps them prioritize their projects. Her work in organizational operations entails more systems-based work, such as building project-management structures, writing standard operating procedures, and restructuring clients’ email inboxes to manage large volumes of correspondence.

For West, the joy arises from solving the puzzle of a client’s competing responsibilities. In doing so, she can “free them up to do their superpower.”



PHOTOGRAPH BY JOANNA KULESZA



“She was privy to all the inner workings of our life. Trusted without reservation.”



Lights, Camera, Classroom

MICHAEL ROSS BA'04
TV writer → English teacher

Just after Michael Ross’s camera flickered on for our Zoom interview, something behind his screen caught his eye. He saw one of his students outside the classroom door, nose to the window. A teacher’s half-smile—somewhere between sternness and affection—crossed Ross’s face.

Ross teaches English language arts at a South Los Angeles charter school, but it was the film industry that brought him to the city. As an MFA student in screenwriting at the University of Southern California, Ross presented a speculative script for *Grey’s Anatomy* to a literary manager for whom he was interning—and earned representation. He went on to write for a range of TV dramas (*Switched at Birth*, *Firefly Lane*, *Relationship Status*, *Day of the Dead*), working fulltime in TV for fifteen years.

Over time, he saw the industry change. Shows used to run for ten seasons. “And it started being the case that every show I got on was only one season. It’s hard to move up, and the work’s inconsistent.” In 2023, the Writers Guild of America and SAG-AFTRA strikes halted production across the industry. Ross’s husband, an educational consultant, suggested teaching. Ross liked the idea.

Now, Ross is a high school teacher in a school with a predominantly Latino population—a demographic largely excluded from the Western canon. He teaches a mix of literary classics and contemporary works by writers of color, and he approaches the classics from a modern lens. “With *Frankenstein*,” for example, “I’m trying to tie some of what we’re teaching to the AI debate: Are we creating something that we’re going to regret, or are we buying into something that we’re not going to see the consequences of?”

Ross also teaches a film-as-literature elective. In one unit, students learn to storyboard, shoot, and edit original short films. “We live in L.A.,” he says. “I want to teach these kids about jobs in the film industry that are not being a movie star.”

I asked Ross if he ever misses TV. “My job was literally sitting in a room with seven to ten other people making up stories all day,” he answered, and then smiled—no need for a teacher’s stoicism this time. “I love nothing more than when we get to do creative workshop days in here. As the kids start writing short scripts, I’m in my zone.” ●

Chris Ketchum BA'15 is a poet and writer from Moscow, Idaho.

→ **Your Move** Have you made a personal or professional life shift? Tell us about it at magazine@willamette.edu.

It's often said that friendship is never an accident.

Bonnie Hull and Ellen Crocket began their friendship three decades ago, while working together at a café near Willamette.

For many Willamette alumni, Hull is nearly as well-known as her husband, the beloved late art history professor Roger Hull. She owned the café with another friend, and Crocket worked there, helping out during the early, intense days of its launch. But then Crocket's marriage ended. She left behind her in-real-life friendships in Oregon, decamping first to a family cabin in Maine for a winter of healing, and eventually to Vermont, with stops over the years to care for grandchildren in Wyoming.

Despite the distance, Hull and Crocket remained in touch. That first lonely winter, Crocket spent as many as three hours a day writing letters to friends and family, including Hull, from a typewriter at the cabin. It was the beginning of their ink-on-paper connection, as well as a glimpse at how their future correspondence would unfold.

Their friendship drew others into its orbit. The Hulls visited Crocket on the East Coast. Crocket remarried, and she and her husband, Larry, visited the Hulls, too. They traveled cross-country from Vermont by car, stopping to see friends and family along the way to Oregon. Crocket often purchased postcards on their cross-country journeys, but she didn't always send them.

Then, in 2009, Hull began blogging about her daily life as an artist in Salem and her travels with Roger. At the time, Crocket had limited access to high-speed internet at the cabin in rural Vermont where she lived with Larry, a retired pastor she met at a singing camp. Her analog response to Hull was "the Snail Blog," handwritten dispatches on those old postcards. Her notes depicted a very different life from that in Salem, a small-town New England life marked by church potlucks and choir practice.

A phone photo of Bonnie Hull (left) and Ellen Crocket taken by Willamette vice president Shelby Radcliffe when the trio gathered in Vermont this fall. In anticipation of the trip, Radcliffe wrote her own postcards to Crocket.



Crocket pledged to send 100 cards from her stash, writing: *Lucky you. I'm actually going to do this: send you every one of the stockpiled postcards left over from all those road trips. ... Bon, gird your loins for the Snail Blog.*

So began the first of thousands of daily postcards from Vermont to Salem. This analog response to Hull's chatty blog continues sixteen years later, the connection between these two women deepened by the daily commitment of a New Englander who found her voice as a writer and an Oregonian eager to receive what she viewed as an art project of a lifetime.

"It didn't take too long for me to realize that this was something remarkable," Hull says.

When Crocket hit her 100-postcard goal, on July 1, 2009, she understood that she didn't want to stop. The daily practice had become a ritual for her, as well as for Hull, the recipient. *It has been oddly pleasing to mark each day in a few words, in a way I did not expect*, Crocket wrote on the 100th postcard. Crocket had never seen herself as a writer, not until the postcard project. She didn't even keep a journal.

"I never was able to do that, because I always got stuck with the question of, 'Who is this for? Who's the audience?' And that had implications as far as, 'What do you need to explain? Is it really just yourself that you're writing to, or is it posterity? Is

somebody going to read this someday?'" Crocket says. "So that kind of got in my way, but writing everything on a postcard and sending it to Bonnie didn't have that problem. I was writing it to her, and I knew when I needed to explain who someone was and when I didn't."

From the start, Hull delighted in Crocket's turns of phrase. A *nightgown day*, for example, is "when she can sit and read all day," Hull says. "And those are few and far between."

Then there's Postcard No. 894, written during what Crocket describes as *a day without walls*, her description of open-ended hours that bring no obligations outside of the home. She wrote about how the sky was gray, not unlike Salem in winter. *We did rustic things: stacking the last cord*

of wood (thereby evicting a family of voles) and canning the apple butter I'd been cooking down off and on since Tuesday.

Postcard No. 5,074 is a recently arrived dispatch that Hull read aloud during our phone interview: *A slow morning got speeded up in order to get to the dump. Very necessary before closing time. Lots of other people came at this deadline moment. Too little reading, too many chores.* "If you're doing it regularly, like Ellen does, you can tell an awful lot in three sentences," Hull says. "They're typically not much more than three sentences, but a feeling is conveyed. You get the sadness or the joy."

As the years passed, the circle of friendship grew to include Shelby Radcliffe, Willamette's vice president of advancement. While visiting Roger Hull before his death in 2023, Radcliffe caught a glimpse of a stack of cards from Crocket. Like his wife, Roger read the postcards daily. Bonnie Hull invited Radcliffe to look at the cards, too, stored chronologically in shoeboxes.

As Radcliffe thumbed through the contents of the boxes, she got hooked on the story of Crocket's life in Vermont and wanted to meet her. She persuaded Hull that they should travel together to Vermont to visit Crocket in person. In preparation for the trip, Radcliffe began writing daily postcards of her own to Crocket in Vermont. Radcliffe and Crocket formed their own friendship via handwritten note. And Radcliffe ended up the subject of more than a few of Crocket's cards to Hull.

I got number 34 from Shelby today. I'm really starting to like her, Crocket wrote.

"I was hopeful that they would hit it off," Hull tells me. "I kind of knew they would."

Hull and Radcliffe flew to Vermont in fall 2024. The trip offered Radcliffe a glimpse

Bonnie Hull reads from one of the postcards sent to her by Ellen Crocket. "It didn't take too long for me to realize that this was something remarkable," Hull says of the letters. She calls them "a brilliant record of a life."



of Crocket’s small-town life—not to mention a taste for Vermont’s signature frozen treat, the maple creemee.

“She was very warm and very open, as if we had known each other for a while, and that was surprising, because I’m this person who’s just shoving myself into her life,” Radcliffe says. “She was quite funny and candid”—exactly as Crocket had come across to Radcliffe in Hull’s collection of postcards.

Consider the wry observation of Postcard No. 785, from 2012: *All films narrated by Morgan Freeman are stirring, are they not?* Or a postcard written during holiday bazaar season, a time of year that keeps Crocket busy as one of her town’s chief cookie bakers: *What would Jesus do? Well, this is usually a rather imponderable question, but I do think we can be certain of one thing. He would not hold a Christmas bazaar.*

This summer, Hull and Radcliffe plan to assemble a selection of Crocket’s postcards for an exhibit at Bush Barn Art Center in Salem.

“I’m kind of an archivist at heart,” Hull says. “At one point I offered to give them all back because I felt it was such a brilliant record of a life, a life very different from my own life. And she said, ‘No,’ that, for her, it ends when she puts it in the mail slots. She didn’t want them back. So I just kept keeping them.”

“I’ve assured her that I do not want them,” Crocket confirms. “If she sends them to me, I’ll have a large bonfire.”

For Crocket, the writing ritual begins when she selects the day’s postcard. Fewer places sell postcards now, so she often relies on friends with their own unused cards. Crocket organizes the cards by image theme: Couples, Boston Series, Barn Series,

National Parks, Fishing Series. She keeps the cards stacked by theme in a tin on her dining room table.

Radcliffe is especially charmed by the whimsy of Crocket’s “poultry bonus cards.” This is the poultry-themed stash that Crocket dips into when she can’t fit all of her news on one card, to accommodate the overflow. There are lupine bonus cards, too, because Crocket has collected (or been given) an outsized number of cards depicting these purple flowers.

Crocket has a signature writing implement—the Sakura Pigma Micron Pen, which she adopted while working in an architecture office in Wyoming—as well



Hull keeps the postcards in shoeboxes, organized by date. “They’re typically not much more than three sentences,” Hull says, but “if you’re doing it regularly, like Ellen does, you can tell an awful lot in three sentences.”

as signature penmanship: precise block lettering. “I usually write the address and put the stamp on it,” she says, “and then I think, *Well, what will I say?*”

Despite the daily ritual, Crocket doesn’t view herself as disciplined. “Most of my

Hull sometimes knows more about Crocket than her friend knows about her—and vice versa.

For Hull, receiving the cards and organizing them for exhibit has been a solace in the time after her husband’s death. And for Crocket, who has become a caretaker for her own husband, who has Parkinson’s disease, the cards she writes serve as a welcome distraction from the burdens of caretaking.

“We have come to believe that as long as she has a stack of cards to write, and I am reading them, we will stay alive,” Hull wrote on her blog in 2015, an electronic response to Crocket’s 2,000th postcard. In that milestone postcard, Crocket had written that she couldn’t have imagined *how deeply woven into the cloth of my daily life this little writing project would become.* She joked about how it guaranteed them *life everlasting.*

This sentiment became more poignant as 2,000 cards turned into 3,000 and then 4,000 and then 5,000.

“I count on them now,” Hull says. “I want to know what she’s doing every day.”

Our deepest friendships are often formed in our youth, when we have what seems like endless time. Or they emerge at times of crisis, intensity, or midlife transition, when we’re most receptive to welcoming new people into our lives, as Hull and Crocket were thirty years ago. If we’re lucky, our friendships deepen as we share experiences over time. But it’s

not always easy to remain connected. To sustain a daily correspondence across time and distance is a rare act of holding another human in one’s heart. It requires commitment and care.

Every day, Hull is thinking about Crocket. Every day, Crocket is thinking about Hull.

“I can say perfectly honestly to Bonnie: ‘I think of you every day,’” says Crocket. “And how else would you be able to say that to somebody for twenty years, that you honestly think of them every single day? But I do, and that’s something very precious to me.”

“It isn’t just sentiment,” Hull says. “Although each in our own way has sentimental feelings about the other and about the lives we’ve lived, that’s not what this is about. It’s about something else: The connections we make are really all we have. That’s all that’s left of us at the end of it all.” ●



Send Your Own Postcard

Pick a card and a pen and compose a note to a friend who lives far away. Unsure what to write? Annette Hulbert, director of Willamette’s Writing Center, offers these three tips:

1. Give a general sense of your location.

Although you don’t need to disclose specifics (a postcard is, after all, a public form of writing), it is always appropriate to open your brief letter with the formula “Greetings from _____.”

Regardless of whether you are writing from Spain or from campus, the context will be appreciated.

2. Include a specific detail.

What can you see from where you are writing? Give your reader a tidbit from your life.

3. Consider your reader.

Space is extremely limited on a postcard, but adding in a question might inspire your reader to write back. Jane Austen frequently opened her letters with inquiries and ended by imploring a response: “I shall be extremely impatient to hear from you.”

ILLUSTRATION BY SAM ISLAND

Erika Bolstad is a Portland-based journalist and the author of the memoir *Windfall*, which was a finalist for a 2024 Oregon Book Award.





Drop-Off Day

— A short play by E.M. LEWIS BA’94

Illustrations by GRACE J. KIM

CHARACTERS

Soo-Min Park, age eighteen, a Korean American girl about to start college. She is wearing a brand new college T-shirt, straight from the bookstore, with jeans and flip-flops.

Barbara Park, age thirty-eight, Soo-Min’s mother. White. She is wearing a brand new college Mom T-shirt, straight from the bookstore, with slacks and good but sensible shoes.

TIME

Present day.

SETTING

Barbara Park’s Honda Civic—not new, but very well-kept.

Barbara Park sits alone in the driver’s seat of her car, looking forward, hands in her lap. There aren’t any keys in the ignition. She has a large mom-sized purse on the floor of the passenger seat. There’s a campus map on the seat beside her with one of the dorms circled in red.

Outside the car, Soo-Min (Min) opens the trunk, looks inside, then closes it. Then she opens the passenger door and looks in at her mom.

SOO-MIN: Okay!

Min gets into the car and closes the door.

BARBARA: Okay!

SOO-MIN: Mom...

SOO-MIN: That’s everything.

Barbara wipes her eyes.

Barbara nods.

Min hands her mother the keys, which have a pretty flower fob on them.

BARBARA: I’m just fine. You can go in. Are you and that girl—

SOO-MIN: Marlene.

SOO-MIN: Okay.

BARBARA: —Marlene going to eat dinner together down in the cafeteria?

BARBARA: I’m not going to cry.

SOO-MIN: I’m going to be *fine*.

BARBARA: You’re going to be great. You’re going to be...

SOO-MIN: Twenty-eight miles away.

BARBARA: Twenty-eight point three.

(beat)

Not that I’m counting.

SOO-MIN: Yeah.

BARBARA: This is going to be the best time in your life.

SOO-MIN: I’m going to miss you, too.

BARBARA: *(sharply)*

Don’t get sentimental. We promised. No crying.

Min lies down with her head in her mother’s lap. Barbara smooths her hand over Min’s hair.

BARBARA: You can call me any time. Three o’clock in the morning. Anytime. And I will come and get you, if you need me to.

SOO-MIN: I know.

BARBARA: Even if you’re drunk.

SOO-MIN: Mom!

BARBARA: I’m not telling you to get drunk. You should never get drunk. But if you are drunk, you can still call me.

SOO-MIN: Okay.

BARBARA: But don’t take drugs.

SOO-MIN: Will you please—

BARBARA: I’ll still pick you up, but—

SOO-MIN: You are going crazy.

Barbara looks out the window. Sniffles.

BARBARA: No crying.

Min sits up, sitting backwards and cross-legged in the middle of the front seat, right beside her mom. She wipes the tears off her mom’s face with her fingertips.

BARBARA: I am so proud of you. Did I tell you that?

SOO-MIN: Yes.

BARBARA: Don’t get pregnant.

SOO-MIN: You are killing me, here.

BARBARA: But if you do, you call me. Don’t change your major without telling me. Tommy Collingsley changed his major from Accounting to Cinematic Arts and they didn’t know it until he walked at graduation and they called his name at the wrong place, and they thought there had been some mistake, because for five years they thought they were paying for—

SOO-MIN: I *like* biology.

BARBARA: I know.

(beat)

I know you like biology.

(beat)

But this is the moment when everything... changes for you.

SOO-MIN: *(a long pause)*

Maybe I should go to community college. It’s closer...

BARBARA: No!

SOO-MIN: Maybe I should—

BARBARA: You’re going *here*.



SOO-MIN: It’s really, really expensive.

BARBARA: You have a scholarship.

SOO-MIN: Which doesn’t even start to cover—

BARBARA: You are worth it! You are worth... everything. I will do anything for you. I will do...

SOO-MIN: I’m scared.

Barbara grabs Min’s hands and clutches them to her heart. A long moment.

BARBARA: I didn’t go to school.

SOO-MIN: Mommy...

BARBARA: But you... You are so smart! You are—

SOO-MIN: What if nobody likes me?

BARBARA: Everybody is going to like you!

SOO-MIN: What if they don’t?

BARBARA: You are the prettiest, smartest girl at this whole school. And you are going to meet wonderful friends. And teachers. And you’re going to have great classes.

SOO-MIN: I know.

BARBARA: Your dad would be...

Min buries her head in her mother’s shoulder.

BARBARA: Your dad would be so proud of you.

A moment.

BARBARA: Don’t start smoking, even if everybody else is doing it. It’s really hard to stop.

SOO-MIN: Okay.

BARBARA: And always open your own drinks. Never take a drink that somebody else poured. They could put something in it. I read an article.

SOO-MIN: Okay.

Min pulls away.

SOO-MIN: Are you going to be okay?

BARBARA: I’ll be fine.

SOO-MIN: Really?

Barbara nods.

BARBARA: You should have a car.

SOO-MIN: I don’t need a car. I’m living on campus.

BARBARA: I’m going to try to talk your uncle into giving you his old car when he gets a new one.

SOO-MIN: Okay. But I don’t need one.

BARBARA: I feel like I have ten minutes to tell you everything I should have spent the last eighteen years telling you.

Min smiles.

BARBARA: Oh! Give me my purse.

Min finds Barbara’s purse and gives it to her.

Barbara opens her purse, and pulls out a shoebox, covered in pretty wrapping paper. She hands it to Min.

SOO-MIN: What is it?

BARBARA: Open it.

Min opens the package. Inside, she finds a ragged, much-loved stuffed animal. She takes it out and hugs it.

BARBARA: Okay.

SOO-MIN: Okay, what?

BARBARA: Now you’re ready for college.

Barbara nudges Min’s chin up.

BARBARA: Are you ready?

Min nods. She pushes back into the passenger seat. Then she gets out of the car and closes the door behind her.

A moment.

Then Barbara digs in her purse and takes out her cell phone. She dials from memory and puts the phone to her ear.

Min’s phone rings, and she turns back toward the car.

BARBARA: I forgot something.

Barbara hangs up, then gets out of the car, closing the door behind her. She leans against the door as Min returns. Barbara opens her arms and hugs Min, and hugs her. Finally, Min pulls away and is gone.

Barbara gets back in the car and puts the keys into the ignition but doesn’t turn on the engine. She smiles, and begins to weep at the same time.

End of Play. ●



ABOUT THE PLAY

I wrote *Drop-Off Day* when I was living in Los Angeles. Working at USC, I had a front row seat to the yearly ritual where parents dropped their kids off at college for the first time. It was always such an emotional process! Parents wanting their kids to go forth, into the world—and wanting to keep them close at the same time. This play was written for a special project that the theater company I belonged to at the time, Moving Arts, was putting together. It was called “The Car Plays”—and consisted of a whole bunch of short plays that our company members and friends wrote to be performed in cars, to an audience of two at a time. The most intimate theater you can imagine! It’s been a pleasure to see a number of different sets of actors bring this play to life over the years. It’s still a favorite of mine! I hope you’ll like it. —E.M. LEWIS

E.M. Lewis BA’94 is an award-winning playwright, teacher, and opera librettist. Her work has been produced around the world and published by Samuel French. She received both the Steinberg Award and the Primus Prize from the American Theater Critics Association, a Hodder Fellowship from Princeton University, an Oregon Literary Fellowship, and a Distinguished Alumni Citation from Willamette. She’s currently part of the Mellon Foundation’s National Playwright Residency Program, in residence at Artists Repertory Theater in Portland. Lewis teaches playwriting at Lesley University and lives on her family’s farm in Oregon.

Distinctive Alumni

Find the crossword solution at magazine.willamette.edu.

ACROSS

- 1

Quite a long time
- 5

Poison ivy relative
- 10

Heedfulness
- 14

Goopy gunk
- 15

Oranjestad is its capital
- 16

Work without ____ (take risks)
- 17

Willamette University grad (BA'80) currently on the Oregon Governor's Commission on Senior Services
- 19

Make sweaters
- 20

Vision-related
- 21

Neolithic period
- 23

____ del Mono (licorice-flavored Spanish liqueur)
- 25

Apply hastily, as paint
- 26

Dig in solidly
- 30

Actress Mireille of the 2010s AMC drama *The Killing*
- 31

Plumbing problem
- 32

Taylor Swift world tour that concluded in Vancouver BC in December 2024
- 34

78 percent mark
- 37

Frankenstein torch bearers
- 38

Instructive comparison
- 40

"Great" member of the hominids
- 41

Sty sound
- 43

Hand, in Honduras
- 44

Get caught on something
- 45

"You ____ what you sow"
- 47

Sought advice from
- 49

Fairy tale bridge beasts
- 51

Abbr. in a bank window
- 52

Like doves, so to speak
- 54

Pope after John XXIII
- 58

Cartoonist Goldberg
- 59

Willamette graduate (BA'97) who became Oregon Secretary of State in 2025
- 61

Algerian seaport and setting of Camus' *The Plague*
- 62

Mistake
- 63

Unburden
- 64

Concave kitchenware
- 65

Aardvark's feature
- 66

1965 Beatles concert stadium

1

Tomatoes, in food fights

2

Avocado dip that costs extra at some chains, informally

3

Light tan shade

4

Bird that's subject of a Shelley ode

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14					15						16			
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58						59		60						
61						62					63			
64						65					66			

- 5

Finnish-American St. Louis Arch architect Eero
- 6

Ending for press or fail?
- 7

Coffee holders
- 8

Helps in mischief
- 9

Beautiful: The ____ King Musical
- 10

Baked good on a stick
- 11

Willamette University grad (BA'99) and Director of Research at the Blanco Public Policy Center at University of Louisiana-Lafayette, studying the intersection of economic and environmental issues
- 12

Monarch's tenure
- 13

Suffix after kitchen or Smurf
- 18

Pride and Prejudice author Austen
- 22

Mystery solver Drew
- 24

"Get outta here!"
- 26

Desire Under the ____ (Eugene O'Neill play)
- 27

Second-lightest noble gas
- 28

American artist dubbed "the Michelangelo of digital art" who graduated from the Pacific Northwest College of Art (BFA'10)
- 29

Designation of some meat markets
- 33

Words before a character name in some sequel titles
- 35

Get ____ the crack of dawn
- 36

Lily that is Utah's state flower
- 38

____ of Two Cities
- 39

Key moment of a story you may want to skip ahead to
- 42

Becomes usable again, like a bridge
- 44

Locks down
- 46

Tectonic movers
- 48

Sedona and Sorento, for example
- 49

Town home to Cape Cod's oldest lighthouse
- 50

Disdain
- 52

Place for a ship's figurehead
- 53

Spain's longest river
- 55

Remini of "The King of Queens"
- 56

Bouquet holder
- 57

Notion
- 60

Promissory note acronym

Matt Jones BA'98 writes the syndicated *Jonesin' Crossword*, as seen in alternative newsweeklies across the country since 2001. He studied music education at Willamette.

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**WILLAMETTE UNIVERSITY** Alumni

MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW!

ALUMNI REUNION WEEKEND

JUNE 11-12, 2027

Reconnect, reminisce, and rediscover your Willamette pride at Alumni Reunion. Join classmates and friends for an unforgettable celebration of community and spirit. Here are the cohorts you will celebrate with at our next gathering in 2027!

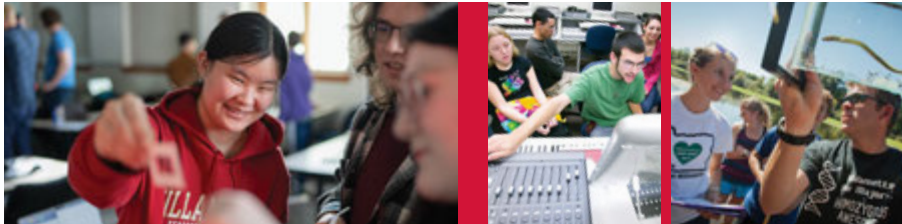
Heritage Club: Classes prior to 1975
50th Reunion: Classes of 1976 and 1977
45th Reunion: Classes of 1981 and 1982
40th Reunion: Classes of 1986 and 1987
30th Reunion: Class of 1995, 1996, and 1997
25th Reunion: Classes of 2001 and 2002
20th Reunion: Classes of 2006, 2007, and 2008
10th Reunion: Classes of 2016 and 2017



Scan for Early-Bird Registration

**WILLAMETTE UNIVERSITY** Alumni



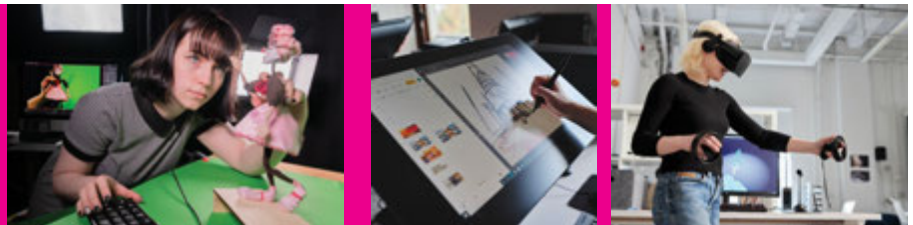


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The top-ranked residential undergraduate liberal arts college in the region. BA and BS degrees. Located in Salem.

PACIFIC NORTHWEST COLLEGE OF ART

The premier college of art and design in the Pacific Northwest. BFA, MA, and MFA degrees. Located in Portland.



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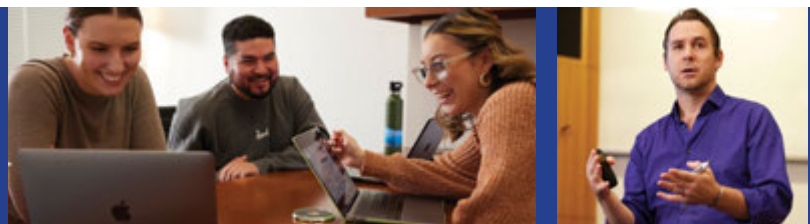


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