Penelope Thurber might as well have spent part of her past working in the gift-wrapping department of a major department store, given the degree of professionalism with which she spruced up an ordinary birthday present.

Clad in a colorful dress, the diminutive Thurber stood in front of her Public Speaking class last spring, and while fulfilling her obligation to explain a three-dimensional object, showcased sharp corners, eye-popping colors and a seemingly magical ability to make Scotch tape disappear without a trace.

As professional as it appeared, the class wasn’t all that impressed when she completed the task – until Thurber gave everyone what they wanted.

She pulled out a decorative bag with tissue paper sticking out (otherwise known as the lazy man’s wrapping job) and asked the class which one of the gifts it would prefer to receive. Thurber answered their obvious reply with a karate kick that sent the bagged gift on a flight pattern across the room and under a table.

The room went into a frenzy. The event was captured on a camera phone and replayed for classmates wanting a second or third glance at her handiwork. But no one blinked at the seemingly incongruous action that deftly merged delicacy and destruction.

They knew Thurber’s backstory, or at least a good portion of it. And, in reality, a karate kick delivered in
Thurber

From Page 1

a fancy dress by the 60-year-old Thurber was a dichotomy that perfectly summed up the two sides of a life that’s been equal parts military and motherly over the last 40-plus years.

“I went from G.I. Jane to Suzy Homemaker,” is the way Thurber described that journey.

There may have been some dropped jaws earlier in the semester during Thurber’s introductory speech to the class, when she began to reveal her past.

She talked at the time about her rough childhood that led her to become orphaned, and discussed joining the military as equal parts escape and escapism.

She explained the very specific set of skills she accumulated around the world, and ultimately her return back to the States to serve others and fulfill her own ambitions as a lifelong learner.

Thurber reminds her children now that she’s been a homemaker and wife longer than a soldier. Truth is, Thurber always considered herself a traditional domestic person who was forced to do untraditional domestic tasks as part of her military duty.

Along the way, she discovered not only the inner strength to overcome her parents’ murder-suicide, but found within herself the sturdy woman who would become a power-lifting champion while training and working among a nearly all-male cast of snipers and special-operations forces.

“My life’s been a lot of obstacles and a lot of work. Busy. I’ve had to turn the obstacles and stepping stones into something positive, which I’ve had the ability to do,” said Thurber, who is working towards an associate degree with Spanish designation at Community College of Aurora in hopes of becoming a bilingual interpreter or home-care provider.

“One of my favorite sayings – I don’t know who it’s from – is, ‘The sun shines not on us, but in us.’ I’ve always embraced life, and I’m so grateful about everything that’s been given to me!”

Rough start

Thurber got a raw deal at an early age. Trouble at home meant she was one of those kids tossed from family to family. Both parents, she said, were alcoholics and, borne out of that dysfunction was the feeling beginning at an early age that she needed to protect her mother from her father’s abuse.

As a little girl, she spoke Spanish as her first language and was painfully shy about speaking English. She kept herself and infrequently spoke to others growing up in West Denver and attending Adams City High School.

Something she does recall with great detail is this: her resemblance to her father. The obvious physical connection meant not only having to endure the guilt brought upon by the death of her mother, whom she believed she had failed. But, at her parents’ double funeral, the stares of family members were clearly fixed upon her because she served as a reminder of the perpetrator that tore apart the family.

“So I left for the military,” Thurber said, “never forgiving myself or wanting to show my face again to my distraught family.”

In a first-person account of her life, typed in three single-spaced pages, Thurber talked in heartbreaking detail about joining the Army after having been orphaned.

When she departed, she did so with a combination of innocence and ignorance. She had never been behind a steering wheel and was unfamiliar with how a checking account worked.

She was naive about the dangers of being a soldier and unaware that she often would be the only female in her unit, with the Women’s Army Corps only beginning in the nascent stages of her military career, she quickly learned how to use specialized training, connections gave her access to specialized training, and she learned how to use everything from knives to Nunchucks, from fighting sticks to throwing darts.

“I was at the right place at the right time with the right people,” she said.

Finding her way

Thurber initially was shipped to Fort McClellan, Ala., for basic training and Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio for combat medic training at age 18 in 1973.

Over the next dozen years, she would be stationed in Frankfurt, Germany; Vicenza, Italy; Fort Belvoir, Va.; Stuttgart, Germany; Fort Huachuca, Arizona; Fort Carson, Colo.; and throughout South Korea.

She initially wanted to be a nurse, but the wait list was too long. So, despite working in a small hospital in the nascent stages of her military career, she quickly trained as an engineer. It was during her first guard-duty assignment in Stuttgart when a drunken local national tried to steal her weapon outside the barracks.

Thurber pinned the man against the wall with his own crutch to defuse the situation.

“I was a little bad-ass,” she said with a laugh.

Her most recent assignment probably occurred along the demilitarized zone be-

Clockwise from left: in Stuttgart, Germany, with the XII Army Corps of Engineers in 1976; in rural Tong du Chon, South Korea, in 1984; accepting a promotion to Specialist 4 and graduating from the Non-Commissioned Officer Academy.

Army Corps only beginning to transition into a true code force back in the early 1970s.

“When all my classmates were going to college, I was learning the ‘art of war’ and how to defend myself to protect my country,” she wrote. “When my friends were learning how to survive in the business world, I was learning the body’s pressure points, so that I could be a silent defender in combat. … When my friends were engaged to be married and having children, I was in foxholes, soaked in mud and slugs, and throwing grenades, firing weapons and training troops.”

But, in retrospect, there’s no hint of remorse. Thurber was stationed with elite forces and trained with NATO Air Force collaborators, including Special Forces units from Nigeria, Korea and Saudi Arabia. Those connections gave her access to specialized training, and she learned how to use everything from knives to Nunchucks, from fighting sticks to throwing darts.

“I was at the right place at the right time with the right people,” she said.
Thurber
From Page 2

tween North and South Ko-
rea in the early 1980s.
At dinners, she would sit
with the Nigerian beret forc-
 es as they provided hints on
how to use whatever was at
her disposal in order to pro-
tect herself.

“It was like the movies,”
she said of the suggested
methods of self-defense.
“Actually, I think American
movies reveal too much.

By 1984-85, she had as-
cended to a Sgt. E5 and
led the motor pool. Part of
her responsibilities were to
usher hardened criminals
to Fort Leavenworth, Kan.,
to their incarceration, which
she actually enjoyed be-
case it meant a trip back to
the United States.

She once was apprehend-
ed by a soldier on the North
Korean side of the border
when she took a wrong turn
after being sent to pick up
an officer.

“He lit a cigarette and
laughed at me and told me I
was in the wrong place,” she
recalled. “He called me a few
curse words in Korean. But

The gymnasium became
her refuge.

Even as a child, she had
been physically gifted in
terms of speed and strength
for her age and size. Yet, her
parents rarely upgraded
her prescriptions when it
came to her sight, so the
eyeglasses she
wore often were ill
fitting and her sight lacked
clarity, which adversely af-
ected her classroom perfor-
mance.

Thurber’s feeling that she
developed keener senses of smell, hearing and
reflexes to compensate for
that deficit.

The gym was also a way
to escape being tormented
and teased. But like many
of those obstacles she dis-
cussed, she managed to
turn them upside down.

She participated in every-
ing thing from mixed martial
arts to kickboxing. Lifting
weights became her most
obvious talent. It not only
helped her feel bigger than
her smaller build and sti-
ture – “5-foot-4, 118 pounds,
soaking wet” – it raised her
profile in the eyes of her
fellow soldiers, who once
 teased her to the point that
Thurber had to flip one of
them over during a flag
football game to demon-
strate she wasn’t going to
take kindly to being called
a smurf.

“A lot of my confidence
 came from being physi-
cally and emotionally fit and
healthy,” she said.

It was during her 1976-
80 deployment in Stuttgart
when she augmented her
position working as a drafts-
man/illustrator with the VIII
Corps of Engineers a true
commit-
tment to

She had a place in Thurber’s life.
A place of solace

Drugs and alcohol never
had a place in Thurber’s life.
The strict household rules
she followed growing up,
and the tragedy that fol-
lowed, cemented that foun-
dational principle. But, once
in the military, working out
like a madwoman was a
means to separate her from
the smoking and drinking
habits of her fellow soldiers.

The gymnasium became
her refuge.

Thurber had four children,
ages 40, 28, 25, and 18.

Doctors once told her that
due to her childhood abuse,
she wouldn’t ever become a
mother. She considers them
her “medical miracles.”

But life back in the States
had its own challenges out-
side of the military. She was
forced to raise her three
youngest children alone.

“It’s been hard. My fam-
ily is still recovering and
healing. I can’t thank them
even enough for the humor,
help and forgiveness they pro-
vided in the many years we
stood alone.”

Eventually, Thurber em-
arked on a job search and
was hired by Denver Health
as a registration and insur-
ance clerk.

On the sly, she supple-
mented her income for sev-
eral years by housecleaning
and pulling off a few risky
stints as a bouncer.

She spent 12 years at her
primary job, working her
way to a position as an ad-
ministrative assistant at the
hospital before opting to re-
tire in 2014.

But the extra time off was
tedious, and she looked for
ways to fill the hours. For
two years, Thurber became
the first-ever female chap-
lain at her VFW post. She
volunteered in the trauma
and emergency department
at University Hospital at An-
schutz, where she hopes to
be hired once she earns an
interpreter’s license.

That’s when the idea of
giving it a real try as a col-
lege student was hatched.

Thurber enrolled at CCA
for the Spanish translation
piece. She also signed up
for medical billing and cod-
ing classes online at Front
Range Community College
and was taking the course
work simultaneously with
the hopes of comple-
ting her degrees by 2017.

“The first few weeks were
scary for me because I didn’t
think I could handle the
homework load,” said Thurb-
er, who was forced out of
summer classes due to two
hospitalizations.

“But I was excited to go
to the bookstore to get my
lead pencils and to be able
to sit and learn. The teach-
ers were awesome, and I felt
from the class participation
aspect of it that my experi-
ences and stories were awe-
some for the class. … I felt
like moms to everybody.”

She’s even gone the ex-
treme during the holidays
by helping needy students
secure Thanksgiving meals
and passing out Christmas
presents.

One can only assume ev-
everyone got a good kick out
of that.
A June 24 EF-1 tornado ripped through the Lowry campus and caused damage to trees, cars and buildings. The weather event affected a five-block area and was marked by extremely high winds. The threat of downed power lines and accompanying heavy rains prompted the cancellation of all classes after 5:30 p.m. (Photos courtesy of Jeff Simpson, Pony Anderson and Traci Fielden)
Second time is charm for incoming VP Risse

College's new financial head well-versed in CCCS

Duane Risse's association with Community College of Aurora is only just beginning.

It's also a start that has been nearly six years in the making.

Risse is the college's incoming vice president of Administration, replacing Richard Maestas, who left in June for an executive position at Colorado Mountain College.

The pair's paths have intersected previously. Risse interviewed at CCA for the job Maestas eventually filled for the last half-dozen years.

Not that things turned out badly in the interim for Risse. He had an impactful stay at Community College of Denver (CCD), where he served as vice president of Administrative Services and chief financial officer.

He's tentatively scheduled to start his new CCA position Sept. 1.

“I thought about it not long ago and it hit me, ’Wow, full circle here,’” Risse said with a laugh. “At the time it stunk, but the older you get, the more you realize that things work out for the best.”

The goal now is that good things come to those who wait. At the very least, Risse's approach at CCA is that things should be interesting, which was a large part of the draw to apply a second time for the position.

“There are some things that are being looked at – expanding, maybe building another campus or having another site – and I felt I could bring my experience to those possible initiatives and get some good things implemented,” he explained.

“I'd like to take what Richard did and continue and build on them. I'm looking forward to it.”

Risse, 54, built a career in the banking industry in Florida for 17 years before a family job offer in Colorado prompted a move west. Since May 2003, he has worked nearly exclusively at Colorado Community College System institutions, first at Front Range and then CCD.

He was the director of budgets and contracts and Business Services at various points during his tenure at Front Range.

At CCD, those responsibilities expanded to include all fiscal operations of the college.

DUANE E. RISSE'S CAREER AT A GLANCE

COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF DENVER
Vice President of Administrative Services, Chief Financial Officer
April 2010-August 2015
Responsible for all fiscal operations of the college, including accounting, budget, purchasing, contracts/leases, payroll, grants, auxiliary operations, human resources, information technology, facility planning, and construction activities.

FRONT RANGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Director, Budgets and Contracts
January 2008-March 2010
Organized, advised and managed the coordination, planning, preparation, and submission of the college's annual budget data document; prepared all supplemental budgetary information and analyses relative to budgetary matters; compiled and provided historical financial and budget data to college administrators.

FRONT RANGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Director, Business Services
February 2005-January 2008
Managed all aspects of the college's auxiliary operations to include three bookstores, two cafeterias and a copy center. Reviewed, wrote and negotiated terms and conditions of multi-party contracts, leases and other agreements entered into by the college.

COLORADO DIVISION OF BANKING
Financial/Credit Examiner III
October 2004-February 2005

FRONT RANGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Director, Business Services
May 2003-October 2004

FRONT RANGE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Budget Director
September 2000-April 2003

“I really like higher education. It’s a lot different than what I was doing in the banking world, at least on the regulatory side, and I find it very interesting. A lot of it is seeing students around and knowing that all of the things you’re doing really are for the students.”

Some of his primary responsibilities for two decades plus have included a focus on annual budgeting, management of auxiliary operations, such as bookstores, cafeterias, information technology, and human resources, and construction activities.

Despite his love of banking and penchant for mathematics, Risse believes he’s found the proper landing spot within CCCS. He’s not only been able to number crunch, but, over the last several years, also assist on large-scale projects with the other university tenants on Auraria Campus.

“I really like higher education,” he said. “It’s a lot different than what I was doing in the banking world, at least on the regulatory side, and I find it very interesting. A lot of it is seeing students around and knowing that all of the things you’re doing really are for the students. You get involved in a lot of different things and there’s not a whole lot of ‘stovepipes’ when you end up on the business side of things – in other words, you’re not always doing one thing.

‘The higher up you go, the more things you get involved with and can have an impact on. I like that variety.’

Perhaps Risse’s proudest accomplishment to date is his involvement with major construction projects at Auraria that resulted in the remodeling of CCD’s South Classroom Building (now the Cherry Creek Building) and the erection of a state-of-the-art Student Confluence Center, which opened in May 2013 and provides instructional, student and office space.

Risse had oversight of those two projects, which encompassed about 237,000 total square feet at a cost of around $48 million.

“It’s helped change the outlook on the campus,” Risse said proudly.

Risse has a rosy outlook these days himself, with new opportunities coming his direction.

“There’s always new adventures, and I just think there are some things at CCA that are going to be really interesting,” he said.

“CCA is primed for some growth. Aurora is the third-largest city in Colorado and CCA certainly isn’t the third-largest community college. That doesn’t mean you go out and grow like gangbusters. But looking at different things, I’ve done a lot at CCD and the timing was right to look at other opportunities.”

Risse expects to bring in some processes to the budget that will be helpful, and also is comfortable offering his expertise on any future building projects.

“I’ve got a pretty good overall level mind about how things should be done, and I want to come in and see what kind of challenges there are and make something good out of them,” he said.

It’s clear that CCA believes it’s found the right person for the job as the college and his one-time competitor Maestas simultaneously move towards the future.

“Duane comes to us with impressively strong recommendations from direct reports, colleagues and supervisors,” CCA President Dr. Betsy Oudenhoven said.

“He is described as smart and hard working, as well as personable, collegial and fair. We’re extremely lucky to have him and the commitment we know he’ll bring to the work we do and the students we serve.”
Yolande Ngounou has been in the CentreTech Rotunda numerous times as a CCA student during her ongoing pursuit of a future in nursing. Never once did it cross her mind that one day the room would represent a locale that will forever hold a special place in her life.

June 24 changed all of that. For Ngounou, a native of Cameroon, and 27 other immigrants, the Rotunda became the place where they walked their first steps as American citizens.

Judge Donna J. Schmalberger, a Denver district court judge, administered the oath with the blessing of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services.

The group was presented certificates marking the occasion, making the changes official. The participants and their families waved flags. A roll call of countries read like a mini-version of an Olympics opening ceremony, marking the last time they would say those names as foreigners on American soil.

And, in just a few minutes, it was done.

The paths to that moment certainly weren’t as quick and painless.

It wasn’t for a 91-year-old Mexican woman who spent the last 25 years in the country she couldn’t call home until that afternoon.

It wasn’t for the three other CCA students who went through Irene O’Brien’s citizenship classes at the Aurora Language Center at Lowry to learn the necessary skills to pass the test that cemented their status as naturalized residents.

It wasn’t for Ngounou, who wasn’t sure when or if this moment would come and was beaming now that it had materialized.

“I made it,” she said. “So it’s good.”

Right after her new status came to pass, Ngounou got a huge hug from her little girl, clad in a dress resembling a July 4 bunting and complemented by a shirt that ex-

See Citizens Page 7
claimed, “Red, White and Cute.”

There were other outward reminders that this was no ordinary day. A young man wore a gray t-shirt with the word ‘American’ draped across the back. A little boy’s white shirt was accented by stars and stripes down the left sleeve.

“You are citizens of the world,” Dr. Betsy Oudenhoven, CCA’s president, told the assembled group. “Now you’re citizens of the United States.”

CCA played host to a citizenship ceremony for the first time because of its part in a two-year grant that also includes the Colorado African Organization (CAO) and Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountain (LFSRM).

Jill Fricker of CAO summed up the mood of the day well in her prepared remarks when she thanked the newly minted citizens for their “consistent passion and ongoing belief in opportunity and possibility.”

One of those individuals was a 24-year-old man whose father worked at the American Embassy in his home country of Iraq. The youngest woman to become a lawful permanent resident was a 22-year-old from Eritrea.

Erhart proudly led the Pledge of Allegiance, and after watching the proceedings, seemed to feel just as much a sense of pride as when she was awarded her citizenship.

“It’s very important, and I’m glad we had the ceremony here because we have a lot of students who Irene O’Brien taught, and due to her efforts, became citizens of the United States,” Erhart said. “And for me, I know how difficult it was. My mom was already in her 70s when she became a citizen, and it’s very difficult, especially for older people to be able to understand and remember all the questions, they’re so nervous. But it’s wonderful that we’re having this ceremony at Community College of Aurora because this is part of our community.”

As the ceremony came to an end, Maria Belen Marquez Sanchez stared at her vital statistics on her new certificate of naturalization and smiled.

Five minutes into her fresh start, she was asked whether she felt any different than she had only a few minutes earlier.

“Yes,” she responded with a laugh. “I feel great. I’m very excited.”

Sanchez started O’Brien’s classes in October but had been in the United States for two decades before going through the citizenship process.

“I thought it was time to be a U.S. citizen and to be part of this important nation,” she said. “I want to be here forever.”

Clockwise from top: 91-year-old Emeteria Hernandez’s 25-year wait to become an American citizen ends as she shakes the judge’s hand and utters “Thank you” in English; a flag, We The People and more; Maria Sanchez waves the stars and stripes proudly during the call of nations; Bertha Garcia (center, blue dress) stands among proud company.
Ethan Ruzzano, in his new role as director of Marketing last September, took the first tangible steps at moving beyond the book to a place more reflective of Community College of Aurora’s mission and vision.

The landing spot after 10 months of meetings, consultations with internal stakeholders, surveys, and iterations in style was a consistent brand platform now emphasizing “potential realized” as the institution’s main message.

Four brand drivers support that positioning statement and touch upon what makes CCA unique—a culture of success; exceptional educational value; support and cultivation of community; and a diverse learning environment that helps prepare students for a global society.

“The branding in the past was outsourced to a company that did not interview or consult with the college. There was no community buy-in. So we had to create something that the college had a voice in and could create as an entire body that would then be approved,” Ruzzano said.

The “Go Beyond the Book” campaign has been in place since late 2009. But the time seemed ripe for change with new college leadership in place, the introduction of a revised strategic plan, and a revamped Communications staff that includes Jaclyn June providing strong visuals, Nicole O’Reilly-Barash content and web design, and Ryan Elam video and animation.

In addition to the new messaging, there is a new CCA logo, with accompanying rules on its placement, scale and usage in publications.

Guidelines for the appropriate use of color were developed to ensure that materials reflect a cohesive brand and comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) when displayed on the web and digitally.

CCA’s website launched anew in June to showcase the new branding campaign in its totality.

“Every employee, whether faculty, staff or adjunct, is a brand ambassador for the college, so it’s all of our jobs to effectively communicate the right messages, and that’s where the brand promise and brand drivers come in,” Ruzzano said.

“It’s to help each individual employee speak to students, the community and the rest of our constituents.”

To aid in spreading that consistent messaging, the Marketing department is in the process of creating laminated, fold-out business cards that will include the college’s mission and vision on one side and the new brand drivers on the other. The cards will be distributed at an upcoming all-college meeting.

Templates on MyCCA also have been created in PowerPoint, brochure and letterhead forms to aid departments in creating their own collateral materials.

“We hope that the first action is to contact us for collateral materials, but we’re not always able to meet every need, and that’s where those materials come in,” Ruzzano said.

Department-specific logos that support the overall mission of the college can use a secondary logo but must contact Marketing to have it created.

Externally, the goal is “about getting people to hold associations and attitudes in their minds about our organization,” Ruzzano explained.

And, through the consistent look and messaging, the hope is that people not normally motivated to remember something about CCA begin making positive conclusions.

“I think ‘Potential Realized’ as a brand promise is really strong,” Ruzzano said.

Additionally, two logo variants of a new fox mascot were introduced. The Student Government Association participated in the discussions surrounding their approval and introduction.

The mascot redesign ended up succeeding on two fronts, meshing with the overall aesthetics of the new campaign, while emanating from a vote of about 400 respondents encompassing both students and staff on potential logo choices.

“So, we think we have strong buy-in with the new mascot.”
CCA students Thomas Horning (glasses), Jason Colque Garcia and Gregoria Olivas were treated to a once-in-a-lifetime night out in Las Vegas, courtesy of Frontier Airlines. The three NASA scholars were featured in a CBS report that was watched by a local airline executive, who invited the trio for 24 hours of fun as part of Frontier’s 21st birthday celebration. In Vegas, Horning, Garcia and Olivas saw many space oddities ... and even ran into a familiar name.
Improved IT experience fast approaching

Speed and connectivity improvements should be substantial when the $1.9 million computer network infrastructure project that’s currently ongoing on both campuses is completed in October, Director of Information Technology Samuel Thomas said.

Subbing out switches and modernizing the wiring ultimately will take the college’s connectivity from one gigabyte to 10 in terms of bandwidth.

In layman’s terms, it means the project goes from ostensibly pushing liquid through a straw—with water representing data—to now inserting a one-inch garden hose to help increase flow, Thomas explained.

It’s not just what’s being installed, but how the wiring is being configured that also will increase efficiency. The map has been greatly simplified, further enhancing the flow of information.

The configuration previously daisy-chained together numerous floors in campus buildings before entering the data center. Each floor now will have its own uplink or “hose” connecting directly to the data center.

“So essentially what we had going on was we were taking the capacity of four hoses and trying to push it through one hose,” Thomas said. “Now, each closet has its own hose and each floor has a closet linking directly to where the data is stored.”

Faster switches to the client and the storage unit, plus improved links between those direct connections, will result in “a significant increase in speed” for CCA employees, Thomas said.

The project was approved last November and remained in the planning phases for several months before closet upgrades began in the Classroom Building at CentreTech in June.

Those upgrades will continue at various sites throughout Lowry and CentreTech through mid-October. Work on all three floors of the Classroom Building, the Fine Arts Building, and the first floor of the Administration Building was completed in mid-July.

The proposed schedule now includes Lowry Building 903 (July 20-24) and the CentreTech Student Centre (July 27-31), followed by Lowry’s Building 859 (Aug. 3-7), 901 (Aug. 10-14) and 965 (Aug. 17-21).

The second-floor Administration Building will be modified last, from Oct. 9-11.

Thomas said the temporary pain associated with employees having to move away from their areas temporarily to accommodate technological change will be worth it in the long run.

Upon the project’s completion, the average CCA employee “is going to have a computer that appears to be faster, especially when they’re doing things like file share, Internet and Banner, those kinds of things, because we’ll be able to deliver information to their desktop a lot faster than we were able to in the past,” Thomas maintained.

Employees will be able to work more efficiently and equipment will run better, particularly at the end of previous “daisy chain” configurations, he added.

IT Director Samuel Thomas said that infrastructure improvements, once completed, will allow information to be delivered to employee desktops much faster than in the past.

Study soon will start on what to do with the various access points related to wireless connectivity.

That will represent the third and final phase of the overall project, following a monitoring phase aimed at allowing quicker future response to network issues, and the upgrading of the switching infrastructure.

The wireless work will “really ramp up in the fall semester, so that by the spring semester, the wireless experience people have on campus will be dramatically different,” Thomas maintained.

Diesel program adding extra cohort

Students have ability to complete degree in truncated 11-month span

Community College of Aurora is opening up its signature Diesel Power Mechanics program to all students.

Prospective students are encouraged to enroll quickly to ensure their participation.

Classes begin the end of July. Space is limited to 25 per cohort.

CCA and Wagner Equipment Co. have been working together for years to immediately place graduates into the workforce through hands-on diesel power mechanics training.

Now, the exclusive program, unique curriculum and coursework will be filled by a second cohort, which is expected to work in concert with other local industry leaders.

Upon the projects completion, the average CCA employee “is going to have a computer that appears to be faster, especially when they’re doing things like file share, Internet and Banner, those kinds of things, because we’ll be able to deliver information to their desktop a lot faster than we were able to in the past,” Thomas maintained.

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осто лошадь и его жеребенок.
The United States Department of Education on July 16 awarded $2.2 million in grants over the next five years to the Community College of Aurora’s TRiO program as part of a nationwide competition resulting in 906 funded projects.

CCA’s two grants are part of $289.7 million in allocations during fiscal 2015 to aid low-income and first-generation students and individuals with disabilities. The two CCA awards will be split evenly between a renewal of the college’s successful Student Support Services (SSS) programs over the last half-decade housed at the Student Success Center and new funding earmarked for English as a Second Language students.

Just eight percent of the total financial outlay by the Department of Education was earmarked for new programs. Just eight percent of the total financial outlay by the Department of Education was earmarked for new programs.

“‘We see students all the time who come to CCA not knowing what their purpose is here, not knowing what a degree means, or how it fits into their lives. Once they become a part of the program, you can see the ‘ah-ha’ moments, and how the college can help better their lives and those of their families.’”

- Nnena West, director of TRiO Student Support Services

The existing TRiO program, which first received funding in 2010, serves 160 students annually.

Nnena West, director of TRiO SSS, is excited about the prospect of helping additional individuals.

“‘We see students all the time who come to CCA not knowing what their purpose is here, not knowing what a degree means, or how it fits into their lives. Once they become a part of the program, you can see the ‘ah-ha’ moments, and how the college can help better their lives and those of their families.’”

- Nnena West, director of TRiO Student Support Services

Both programs will receive $219,998 annually from Sept. 1, 2015 through Aug. 31, 2020 to support academic development, assist students with college and career placement, and guide students toward the successful completion of their postsecondary education.

The CCA ESL project will provide assistance each year to 140 students for whom English is a second language and/or who are of limited English proficiency. The existing TRiO program, which first received funding in 2010, serves 160 students annually.

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The Office of Outreach and Recruitment has permanently implemented a Welcome Center model that was first introduced last spring. The centers are housed at Lowry and CentreTech campuses and are designed to encourage further enrollment, while improving upon current department initiatives. Each center is staffed with a full-time staff member, graduate assistants and student ambassadors to provide resources to both current and prospective students for extended hours beyond what had been currently offered, including evening and Saturday hours.

Dr. Derrick Haynes, formerly executive director of Advising, was promoted to dean of retention and student success, and Janell Lindsey hired as director of the Student Success Center as part of a restructuring of the Division of Student Affairs. Dr. Elena Sandovall-Lucero, Student Affairs vice president, announced the changes in an email to college staff July 6.

According to Sandoval-Luce- ro, Haynes’ primary role will be to “collaboratively develop, lead and coordinate efforts to help the college to retain students, empower students to persist in their educational goals, and facilitate increases in graduation, transfer and employment rates.” Haynes will supervise the advising areas at CentreTech and Lowry, Military and Veteran Services, Career Services, and the Student Success Center.

Lindsey begins her new position Aug. 10. She comes to CCA with a wealth of higher education experience that spans student development from recruitment to alumni. She has leadership experience in outreach and admissions, student academic success and retention, and alumni relations and development. Lindsey will complete her doctorate in Higher Education at the University of Denver in 2016.

Mary Westendorf is moving to a new position as an assistant to Mike Davis, who is filling in as interim director of Facilities. In a related move, Denise Oakley—a former CCA employee—has been hired temporarily as Westendorf’s replacement as administrative assistant covering multiple academic departments. Their new duties began July 20.

Fiscal Affairs hosted a “New Year’s celebration” on July 1 in the CentreTech Rotunda to ring in the changing of the fiscal calendar to 2016. Controller Lisa LeFevre said the event was held “because you have more available budget that day than on any other.”

English faculty Brandon Feres and Dr. Casey Sacks, project manager for the Colorado Community College System, delivered comprehensive training, education, and advising services to college students and staff. She holds a master’s in Education from University of Phoenix in Tempe, Ariz.

Mark Ortiz, historian and longtime CCA adjunct instructor, has published a scholarly article in the publication “Praxis, Praxis: Policy in Action Volume 2” the title of his article is “U.S. Military Assistance and Arms Transfers.” It covers the time period of the 1970s to 1990s, looking at military assistance and arms transfers as an instrument of American foreign policy.

Rachel Newlon in June was named the new Academic Learning Center coordinator. Newlon has spent nearly two years as an adjunct, teaching English and College Composition and Reading (CCR).

Cynthia Villegas and Kristopher White were hired as full-time English faculty in the School of Liberal Arts. Villegas has a master’s in English from Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Ariz., and a bachelor’s in English from Westmont College in Santa Barbara, Calif. White joined CCA as an adjunct in Fall 2013 after earning his B.A. from Purdue University in Lafayette, Ind., and a master’s from California State University, Fresno.

Aurora Mental Health’s Katie McLaughlin began counseling CCA students 20 hours per week beginning July 6. Services available are: one-on-one sessions between counselor and student; crisis management, short-term counseling; wellness services; off-campus referrals; and informational presentations for students to learn more about topics related to mental health and wellness.

CCA will host a barbeque for members of Buckley Air Force base and their families July 31 in an effort to increase the pipeline between the two nearby institutions. Those stationed and working at Buckley are invited to enjoy free food and activities for the kids while receiving information on the college. Staff will be on hand to answer questions and give tours of CentreTech. The event runs from 4:30-7:30 p.m.

Members of the local Ethiopian community met with members of Cabinet and other CCA employees July 6 to discuss educational opportunities at the college.

About a dozen individuals, largely from the Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Denver (now located in Aurora) were in attendance, including members of the church’s Career Development Committee and Associate Pastor Ermiyas Amanuel.

Some of the church members had attended the Model United Nations sendoff event in March. The 90-minute discussion included issues relating to obtaining Colorado residency, English as a Second Language, transferring credits from Ethiopia higher education institutions to CCA, financial aid, and communicating information about CCA to their community.

Cheryl Tomlinson, supervisor of the Testing Center, was presented with a gift bag from co-workers during a July 14 sendoff at a local restaurant. Tomlinson is moving to Illinois. During a 15-year career, she also worked in Academic Affairs, Admissions, Concurrent Enrollment, and Recruiting.
Around campus

Clockwise from top: Instructor Valerie Gantzler poses June 17 with two graduates celebrating the completion of Sterile Processing and Patient Services certificates as part of CCA’s initial healthcare bridge cohort. The program was made possible by adult education funding made available for the first time in Colorado. Rep. Rhonda Fields, who helped sponsor House bill 14-185, was one of 72 attendees at the ceremony; KCNC-TV reporter Karen Morfitt shares a moment with Science faculty Victor Andersen (and his daughter, Morgen) during a break in filming June 17 in Building 859 at Lowry; Maura Hess (second from right, bottom row) gets a sendoff from friends June 26 as she leaves the college to complete her doctorate in Psychology at the University of Colorado Denver; Victor Vialpando and Veronica Russell of the School of Professional Studies and Sciences arrive at Lowry on Bike to Work Day on June 24.