Ex-CCA student Bita Ashouri Rivas now practices counseling at CU-Colorado Springs and at a shared practice with her husband.

A Matter of Degree(s)

In a post-secondary academic career encompassing 14 years, Bita Rivas finally found her niche, earned a bachelor’s, master’s and Ed.D and discovered true contentment.
Degrees

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hearing loss, meaning resentment and anger could no longer be her sole companions.

But at CCA, she sought out a support system and found it. She moved forward in her life, sought paths far removed from the ones she desperately wanted to avoid and took them.

And when she eventually became a licensed professional counselor just last year, under her married name Bita Ashouri Rivas, she found what she had sought for so long—her calling, and a sense of peace in a profession in which she has an unabashed passion.

“I don’t think I knew what I wanted to do,” Rivas said, reflecting back on her jumping-off point academically at CCA about 15 years ago. “I knew I needed to go to school and pick something so I could support myself, but I just didn’t know what that looked like. Part of that is developmental. Part of it is not having the guidance around what your goals are. But I was kind of unstable at that time, too.

“I was 19. I had a kid. I had to support my daughter. I had to work. I had to find babysitting. Those things get in the way of someone who’s 19 and doesn’t have those responsibilities and can figure out what they want to do.”

Rivas would be considered an atypical student at some schools, but her background made her a typical CCA student, given the college’s wide-ranging demographics.

“That’s the beautiful thing about adolescence is you don’t see past your nose,” she said with a laugh. “I didn’t.”

What she did know clearly back then was she didn’t particularly like school; also, that she was determined to stay in college only two years before bolting classrooms for good. Sticking it out for a long haul beyond that just wasn’t in her DNA at the time. The plan was to quickly figure out a career and pursue it.

What that would ultimately resemble when she reached the finish line of her personal and professional search was completely unclear.

“Statistically, I should have dropped out and been the typical teenage mom with lots of kids that didn’t finish,” Rivas maintained. “Statistically I shouldn’t have even finished high school. I did barely finish high school. I shouldn’t have finished college. I’m a statistical anomaly.”

In 2014, she stands as an inspiration to what is likely a considerable group of students at CentreTech and Lowry searching for answers in their own academic lives and attempting to envision futures paved with attainable possibilities.

If Rivas proved anything emphatically during her journey is that success doesn’t have to occur overnight. There’s a victory in itself that comes with slogging through to the very end.

Her search just to find a career that suited her would take nearly nine years.

That teenager who once vowed to stick and move academically instead stuck around and continued to move forward. She went through majors like mints after heading to Metropolitan State University in Denver in 2001. English. Speech Pathology and Audiology. Biology. Psychology. Rivas looked into pharmacy school and teaching. She had waited tables and worked at K-Mart on the side, cementing her hatred of the retail trade as a possible profession. She even worked graveyard shifts at Denver Health when she considered nursing.

“I just didn’t want to be a worker bee,” she said.

But, in a sense, she was just that—if only in the classroom and at home. Rivas would have two more children, a husband, and max out her undergraduate credits and student loans by the time 2007 rolled around. It was her last semester at Metro, and even though she ended up earning a bachelor’s degree in Biology with a minor in Chemistry, her future direction was no clearer with that piece of paper in hand.

She opted to continue plugging away, doing the family thing, studying, and continuing to search.

Once Rivas discovered her passion—offering professional counseling to individuals and families with backgrounds that had tinges of her own life embedded within—look out. Her bachelor of arts occurred right around the time she made that career epiphany and spurred a flurry of academic activity her 19-year-old self once would have snickered at.

She earned a Masters in Clinical Mental Health Counseling in just two years and finished her doctorate in a blazing 38 months, both at Argosy University. Rivas moved quickly into her field, too. She taught Psychology as an adjunct at CCA. She was hired full-time by University of Colorado-Colorado Springs. She opened a clinical practice with her husband.

“All it takes is perseverance,” Rivas surmised. “It doesn’t take any great intelligence. It’s not a mass feat. It’s not huge. It’s just jumping through hoops, breaking it down and taking it one step at a time.”

Love in Financial Aid

John Young was just beginning his second year at CCA as a counselor in Financial Aid when he hired Rivas as work-study in the late 1990s. Little did he know held also be playing matchmaker, too, having also hired Rivas’ groom-to-be, Anthony, in the department.

“I knew they would do well because when they were here they had pretty good work ethics overall,” said Young, now the college’s director of Financial Aid. “They would always show up on time and when they were working they were hard workers. She was a very hard worker.”

Young was an early influence especially on Bita, helping her with mundane tasks such as comparing credit cards for interest rates and fees. More than that, Young and the work-study program helped her feel a connection to, and investment in, CCA that had been missing in previous academic arenas.

Having Anthony around as a sounding board helped the maturation process along.

“It would be apropos to say we were in the same place at the same time: cognitively, developmentally and physically—location-wise,” Anthony recalled.

CCA was a place where the couple got their bearings and bought in academically.

“The one thing that we really have in common is just that belief that we can do something,” Anthony explained. “And knowing students that do go to community college and start out there, I think that just having someone to believe in them or the ability to believe in themselves is probably going to be their greatest asset, because if you believe you can or can’t do something, you’re right either way.

“Both Bita and I believed we could do it,” he added. “What it would look like, maybe she wasn’t sure. I had a little clearer vision, though not 100 percent. But we both believed we could do it.”

Anthony’s academic path began with his own failed trial at Metro before switching to CCA. He and Bita then transferred back to Metro and in Dec. 2003, Anthony earned his bachelor’s in Psychology. He would go on to serve as director of advising at The Art Institute of Colorado while concurrently enrolling in the counseling
Fulbright honor in TEFL floors adjunct

Ruby Eichenour, a sixth-year adjunct in Community College of Aurora’s ESL program, has been awarded a Fulbright Global Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) award. She is expected to begin her three-month teaching expedition in Chile sometime in the spring of 2015.

The Ministry of Education in Chile is seeking to increase English language fluency across the entire population within one generation, according to the Fulbright website.

Eichenour’s role will include training English teachers-in-training in both methodology, theory and more in hopes of raising the English level of pre-grad teachers.

She will provide instruction at San Sebastian University in Valdivia once she is vetted by both the United States and Chile and receives visa clearance.

“Professionally, this is something I couldn’t have conceived of 10 years ago when I had just started to contemplate a career change,” Eichenour said via e-mail from Mexico, where she is currently teaching. “Personally? Wow. I get to go to Chile. I hear Valdivia is the most beautiful city in the country.”

Eichenour received the 2014-2015 grant after an extensive application process that required three references, a resume, a competitive essay for which she received coaching from the Fulbright organization, and attendance at webinars and face-to-face meetings relating to the submission of a successful application.

She also made contact with the university in Chile to receive an invitation and submitted a sample syllabus touching upon what she might teach should she receive an award.

For more than 65 years, American academics, administrators and professionals have taught and conducted research abroad through the Fulbright Scholar Program.

The Fulbright organization maintains that scholars have benefited from: an enhanced appreciation of the global impact of their academic specializations, a reinvigorated classroom presence, and a desire to become major participants in their home campuses’ internationalization.

Past Community College of Aurora Fulbright recipients have included former college President Dr. Linda S. Bowman and ex-chair of World Languages Amy Rell.

Dr. Bita Rivas poses at Alchemy of Healing Counseling in Lone Tree.

Dr. Bita Rivas, “they’d say, looking into Bita’s eyes. “Dr. Rivas,” they’d add, turning their attention to Anthony.

It’s a scenario made all the more surreal, Anthony said. “I’ll joke with Bita sometimes because it is so surreal. How did these kids with all these things in their lives do this? Bita was a single mom when we met. And these two kids just made it happen. Looking back then, I think I thought it could happen, but even looking at it today, I’m still amazed it did happen.”

When Bita taught Psychology at CCA from 2010-13, she made sure to tell her students that it was the place where her academic journey really began. One of her biggest takeaways from her classes was hearing her students’ stories about struggle, cultural assimilation, and yes, indecision about their future paths.

She couldn’t help but see herself in them. Her journey coupled with those of her students represented a full circle of life.

“There was a lot of fumbling, and it was hard, and it was tedious. And sometimes I would make excuses up why I wasn’t in class,” said Rivas, who recently became a full-time faculty member at CU-Colorado Springs in its department of counseling and human services. “But, for the most part, I was in class. I rarely missed a class. I have clocked in 142 to 143 credits, as a child.”

But, for the most part, I was in class. I rarely missed a class. I may have jacked up my homework assignments or didn’t do well on tests but I was there in class. And I say this to students all the time: Being there is just half the battle.”

Degrees

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program at Regis University. By ’07, he had his master’s in Psychology in hand along with certificates in Professional Advising and Ethical and Cultural Perspectives.

It was right around that time that Bita finally would begin to figure out her preferred path. A case study in an anatomy lab was the tinder to what would become an emotional flame.

“I found that my way of thinking about the case looked different than everyone else,” she recalled. “Someone had fallen off a horse and I started thinking about the other conditions that might have led to it. I thought about his mental health. No one else, “ she recalled. “Someone had fallen off a horse and I started thinking about the other conditions that might have led to it. I thought about his mental health. No one else, “ she recalled. “Some-
Janet Brandau, left, and Elena Sandoval-Lucero are eager to help move CCA forward in their VP roles.

DAILY DOUBLE

‘A Thoughtful, Experienced and Committed Team’ Became Full-Time Vice Presidents on Feb. 4

Their paths – one academic-centered, one student-oriented – didn’t cross much during several previous years working together at Community College of Aurora.

Janet Brandau and Elena Sandoval-Lucero always were courteous, friendly and respectful. But they had separate roles, besides some collaboration on concurrent enrollment a while back.

That dynamic began to change seven months ago, when President Betsy Oudenhoven gave Sandoval-Lucero (Student Affairs) and Brandau (Academic Affairs) interim titles as vice presidents in their areas. And since Oudenhoven’s Feb. 4 announcement that the two would be entrusted with permanent positions, Brandau and Sandoval-Lucero have adapted the joint philosophy that they’re very much in this together.

“How much so? Just the other day, Brandau called Sandoval-Lucero, which prompted the latter to remember that she, too, had something to discuss.

A few minutes passed when an e-mail popped into Brandau’s in-box.

“That awkward moment when you’re not sure if you’re not sure if you actually have free time or just forgetting everything,” illustrated with a Victorian era woman sitting on a couch, looking forlorn.

The exchange speaks to how far their relationship has come, helped along by a interview process that put both candidates for vice presidencies in front of audiences on both campuses in January.

Now, they both possess increased responsibilities and are more interconnected professionally. They can share a laugh, since one knows what the other is experiencing during these early days of leadership and discovery as full-time executives.

“We’ve realized how much we have in common,” Brandau said of her burgeoning relationship with Sandoval-Lucero. “We’ve taken different paths but very similar paths. We’ve done a lot of similar things and love education. We went to the same undergraduate school. But we also realize that Betsy has confidence in us to do this, and without a formal interview process.

“And, for both of us, the feeling is, ‘Wow, this is really special.’”

Sandoval-Lucero spent 25 years in higher education before getting this opportunity. Her role means a slew of departments fall under her auspices: Accessibility Services; Admissions and Records; Advising; Campus Safety; Career Services; Counseling; Financial Aid; Lowry Student Services; Military & Veteran’s Services; Outreach and Recruitment; Student Conduct; Student Life; Student Success Center; and Testing.

Yet all of Sandoval-Lucero’s prior experiences have neatly led up to this moment and allowed her to impart the knowledge gleaned from her assorted higher-ed roles, particularly those gleaned during 14 years at the University of Colorado-Denver.

Sandoval-Lucero listed her main role as the chief student affairs officer as broadly communicating CCAs vision within her division and removing any obstacles toward its achievement.

“Our job in Student Affairs isn’t to work in isolation,” she said. “It’s to collaborate with our academic colleagues, our colleagues in the Foundation, the folks in Institutional Effectiveness, to make sure that we are developing strategies that increase our bottom line – what we get measured on by the System,” she said.

Overarching goals include creating strategies that increase retention, completion, transfer, and employment.

“Part of what drives me every day is that I always picture graduation,” Sandoval-Lucero said. “One of the photographers who was at the ceremony last year told me that he loves shooting community college graduations more than any other because they mean so much to everybody. So, I picture those students walking across the stage knowing the challenges they faced to make it to

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Mayor sees good things with stability

The City of Aurora and Community College of Aurora have enjoyed a strong partnership through the years. And with Dr. Betsy Oudenhoven now in place as college president and the rest of her leadership team taking form, Mayor Steve Hogan is hopeful that the two entities can solidify the relationship to the benefit of both parties in the short term.

Hogan, speaking at a Tax Help Colorado event on the Lowry campus on Feb. 4, said that he’s ‘seen and heard good things’ about Oudenhoven, adding that he’s hopeful that with improved continuity within the college that the bond between city and college can be strengthened.

Aside from Oudenhoven’s full-time role as president, CCA in the last several weeks has promoted three to vice president’s roles – Elena Sandoval-Lucero (Student Affairs), Janet Brandau (Academic Affairs) and Chris Ward (Institutional Effectiveness). Additionally, Catherine Trouth has been promoted to director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness), further stabilizing the college’s power structure.

“It’s been difficult the last 15-18 months with the changes in leadership, so the continuity is obviously going to help,” Hogan said. “I think Betsy’s confident she made the right decision and we look forward to working with her. The city had a great relationship with Linda Bowman when she was president, and part of that was continuity. So you keep that continuity and things happen.”

Aurora and CCA have partnered on a couple of projects in recent months: improving signage and landscaping at Lowry, and with the city hiring three interns from the college to help the Aurora Sister Cities Program get off the ground.

“Getting some programs and some projects going and completed just helps makes everybody feel not just good but better and think, ‘Now we can move on to the next one,’” Hogan said.

Oudenhoven noted that in the seven months she’s occupied the president’s office she’s received nothing but support from Mayor Hogan and city officials, adding that she’s looking forward to establishing an even stronger working relationship.

“It is clear to me that the city of Aurora values the Community College of Aurora, and I know the college will continue to discover rich opportunities for partnerships with the city, our school districts and our employers,” she said. “The will is definitely there on both sides to do the best we can for our students and the residents of our city through collaboration and win-win partnerships.”

One idea that Hogan mentioned was forging a three-way cooperative partnership not only between CCA and the city, but including Aurora Public Schools into the mix. Both the college and APS have worked well independently with Aurora, but Hogan sees those three pieces possibly fitting together in a real way.

“It could tie together three-way things, not just two-way things,” he explained. “There are already a number of APS students who have a lot of hours with CCA by the time they graduate as a senior in high school. That just can be, and ought to be, expanded. And as we the city find ways to do internships with APS, as well. So if we can do it with each one individually, we all just become stronger if we do it together.”

The notion of tying the internship pieces into a three-way partnership already has been discussed, Hogan noted. “There are those nasty little details that always have to get worked out, but yeah, there have been discussions and I think everybody’s interested. It’s not a question of a lack of interest. Sometimes these things take time.”

Oudenhoven said that she is “very grateful” for the assistance provide by Aurora in both the landscaping project at Lowry and the new Sister Cities partnership. She believes that with the input and expertise of the likes of Mayor Hogan, City Manager Skip Noe, members of the City Council, and numerous city employees can only prove beneficial “as CCA charts our future direction.”

APs and CCA recently worked together to help promote the successful concurrent enrollment program that now accounts for about 25 percent of the college’s enrollment.

Cable giant CNN is working on a segment that celebrates that successful partnership in a soon-to-air, prime-time special report. An airdate for the piece is likely to occur either March 23 or 30. The Aurora-APS-CCA link is expected to be showcased in a Fareed Zakaria hour-long program that examines aspects of society that are working in the United States.

Programs in Sioux Falls, S.D., New York, Houston, and Nashville are expected to be included along with the Aurora segment on CNN.

“It’s very fulfilling individually,” Hogan said of the recognition the city will receive. “But, more so, it’s the recognition of how the city – and I intentionally use that word as opposed to suburb – is growing up. We’ve been a city for a while; we just didn’t realize it. And when things like this happen, it helps everyone to realize just how big and complex and creative and opportunistic, in a good sense, we are. We make things happen. We do things differently than other people do them, and we make them successful.

And it’s time other people learned that as well.”
Just a few images set a serious tone at the emergency medical skills for law-enforcement training dubbed “Save-A-Cop” at Community College of Aurora’s Lowry campus Feb. 24.

Before life-saving skills were practiced in various stations, before mannequins appeared to bleed. Before actors clad in makeup screamed in fake agony, and scenarios depicting potential carnage from man-made and natural disasters were put forth, a video was shown to 40-plus officers from around the Front Range.

The clip showed film taken from the street and included real officers in the midst of experiencing darker moments in the line of duty.

“It was gripping and got their attention immediately,” said Oklahoma City’s Bill Justice, who has a 35-year background in fire rescue, emergency medical services and law enforcement and served as one of five trainers for the preparedness exercise. “It’s our folks that we see, no matter what agency you work for, being injured and killed. So it’s real-life stuff. We then take that and put it into the training. That’s why these scenarios are so realistic.”

CCA provided that level of realism through pre-written scenarios involving an active shooter, domestic terrorism, domestic violence, and a tornado. The trainers’ experience then took over, with an overarching goal that future real-life incidents potentially can be mitigated or averted through the use of trauma management on scene in what is known as the “red zone,” or the scene as it appears when first responders arrive.

Tactical Critical Care (TCC) training is designed to provide immediate life safety and is a major initiative for Homeland Security’s North Central Region. Most law enforcement entities within that organization are adapting TCC, though it remains optional and at the discretion of each individual agency.

There were no such capitulation about the training’s potential significance during or after Save-A-Cop. Officers represented police departments from Denver, Golden, Palmer Lake, Lakewood and Wheat Ridge; sheriff’s departments from Jefferson and Montrose counties; the Aurora Fire Department; the Federal Bureau of Investigation; and more.

All these groups gathered through the efforts of CCA’s Director of the Center of Simulation and Disaster Management Institute Pony Anderson, who also wrote the scenarios.

“There’s a good way to mix medicine with law-enforcement tactics,” said Mark Gibbons, a 22-year member (retired) of the Maryland State Police and a lead instructor nationally for the Tactical Officers Association Tactical Medicine Course. “There’s a right way and a wrong way. And this is the right way.”

Law enforcement from the assembled departments first participated in skills stations that provided instruction on sucking chest and neck wounds; lifting heads and chins to open airways; nasal airway insertion; and applying tourniquets and packing wounds.

The four scenarios then were held simultaneously, with different groups rotating stations inside Lowry’s Building 900. Lessons from the morning were put into place while noises, poor lighting, human interactions, smoke, and the appearance

First responders gauge the damage while immediate medical assistance is offered to a severely injured student after a “bomb blast” hits the basement of Building 900 during a simulation exercise Feb. 24.

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Save-A-Cop

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of the badly injured tried to derail the main objectives, which were to secure the scene and implement this important advancement in life-saving procedures.

“I was blown away. This is incredible,” Justice said, just after completing the final scenario. “From the participant side, I guarantee they were surprised. But as an educator, (Feb. 23) was when we walked through it and were absolutely blown away. We usually don’t have the use of this type of complex and local talent we can draw from like CCA has here. It’s amazing.”

All the trappings were included. CCA used high-tech simulation spaces, its ability to transform Building 900 into believable ‘scenes,’ and community members and students serving as actors to create a stunning facsimile of a real scene that could augment the top-notch training being provided.

“Under normal circumstances you can’t find places to train like this. This is invaluable,” said Lakewood Police Department’s Paul Barben, one of the day’s participants. “We can’t do this in our annual training. ... It’s hard to get training venues that are this available and real.”

The exercise was geared toward officers with no medical experience but there were ranges of experience in the training, and numerous tactical objectives faced within the scenarios.

“I’ve had the opportunity to teach all over the world and the facilities here are phenomenal,” added Gibbons, who has assisted with implementation and operations of Tactical Emergency Casualty Care in Pinellas Co. and St. Petersburg in Florida, as well as with the FBI in Baltimore. “We experienced diversity and realism in the scenarios. So it gives you a lot of options.”

Adding to the realism was the inclusion of a new high-fidelity mannequin provided by Gaumard Company. There are only two such prototypes in existence, while the mannequin provided by Gaumard is in the scenarios.

“The focus is on three things,” Justice said. “Stop the bleeding, fix airway problems, and in that order – and so they do. Those are the biggest-ticket items we have today for trauma management.”
Love, laughs under the stars

The upcoming play “Almost, Maine” at Community College of Aurora this March will delve into relationships, providing warm, funny and candid glimpses into nine disparate couples ranging from the “butterflies” stage of first attraction to long-term pairs standing the test of time.

Theatre director Stacey D’Angelo labeled the stage production a “great little date night,” calling the tone of the play “very funny, sweet and quirky.”

“Almost, Maine” intentionally provides a stark contrast from some recent college productions – “Glimpses,” “Eurydice” and “The Little Prince” -- that often ventured into heavy, raw, dark, and real material covering such aspects as sadness and loss.

This production is, by contrast, lighthearted. It will feature a large cast, with 18 student actors portraying the couples at these various stages within their relationships.

“This isn’t about balls and whiskers, ensembles, dances or special effects,” D’Angelo said. “It’s all in the acting chops and creating comedy and touching moments through the acting and writing.”

All of the couples featured in this adaptation of John Cariani’s work find themselves at a turning point or magical moment in their relationships at exactly the same time: 9 p.m. on a Friday, as the Aurora Borealis appears in the night sky in northern Maine.

“Anyone who’s been in a relationship with someone else, whether it be a romantic relationship, or an intimate, close friendship, is going to relate to those tender, awkward and comical, absurd moments,” D’Angelo maintained.

“Things that come out of the characters’ mouths you have said once upon a time. And it gives you a chance to laugh at the moments that have been challenging in your relationship. It also gives you a chance to reminisce about the early days. It just brings you back. And it’s really, really funny.”

There is a down-to-earth feel to the characters portrayed in “Almost, Maine” but “they’re not simple by any means,” D’Angelo added.

The core message in featuring different ages, definitions of couples, and stages of connection is to define what relationships mean and resemble in this day and age.

There are hearts broken and egos bruised, so not everyone escapes free and clear.

Still, that’s also part of the humor. “You just need a good laugh sometimes,” D’Angelo said.

Another tweak relating to this particular production is that the admission price has been waived for all CCA students with valid identification. Only the first 30 in attendance previously received free tickets for the last several plays held at the Larry D. Carter Theater on the college's CentreTech campus.

“We want more students to come out, knowing they have a guaranteed seat.”

WorldDenver group gives Pace a chance

Fellowship opens mind, door to opportunity

Dr. Bobby Pace sees his acceptance as a prestigious WorldDenver Fellow as a win-win-win.

On one hand, it will serve to increase his knowledge of global matters affecting the Aurora community, while highlighting the greater Denver area as an international city.

It also represents a golden opportunity for his diverse group of Political Science students at the Community College of Aurora, who Pace hopes will rub elbows with potential new contacts ranging from lecturers, authors, journalists, academicians, and ambassadors that possess real-world experience on subjects germane to his discipline.

An ancillary side-benefit: His participation should enhance the college brand as a whole.

“This is a really important way to get us out there as an academic institution with an international focus,” Pace said.

The WorldDenver Fellows Program, in its second year, identifies mid-career Denver professionals such as Pace and provides them with unique access to all manner of international experts. Fellows are encouraged to develop personal and professional connections with both local and international leaders.

Through this collaborative program, Fellows participate in monthly trainings, lectures, workshops, roundtable panels, and engage international visitors to expand expertise on how international affairs affect national, state and local interests to become globally minded leaders.

CCA recently became affiliated with the WorldDenver program. Pace has a doctorate in International Studies with a concentration on human rights. He formerly lectured and advised at the University of Denver’s Korbel School of International Studies, and has spent the last three years as lead faculty and coordinator of CCA’s Political Science department. His courses at CCA have covered American Government, Comparative Politics, International Relations, and more.

Pace also has been instrumental in organizing the state’s only Model United Nations at a community college, which will take place a second straight year at CCA’s CentreTech campus April 4.

“It will connect me on a personal level with business, academic and political leaders both here in the Denver area and globally. So from a personal perspective, I see this as a great opportunity for me to develop professional training on a variety of global issues that affect Aurora,” he explained.

“But it’s also a chance to reach out to people who can be resources for our United Nations that we hold here.”

Pace can further promote classroom excellence by introducing facets that heretofore weren’t part of his academic history.

“ar background and focus is on human rights. That’s my training. So very much bring a human rights perspective,” he said. “What I hope to get out of it is more of a perhaps international economics perspective, or that business side. I don’t personally have the business acumen. I would like to get that.”
Celebrating Black History Month

College events during February were an eclectic mix celebrating Black History Month: (clockwise from top) Dr. Jonathan King presented "The Albany Movement During the King Years, 1960-1965: A Personal Account," a depiction of significant events that led up to the Civil rights struggle in Albany, Georgia; Herbie Gill took a varied look at mundane events through a comedian’s prism; Grand Design, under the direction of Dr. Barbara Shannon-Banister, sang historic spirituals, modern gospel and original scores; the Colorado Humanities sponsored Black History Live, featuring eminent national humanities and Chautauqua scholar Charles Everett Pace portraying Malcolm X.
CCAs Division of Institutional Effectiveness and Division of Student Affairs hosted the Colorado Regional Assessment Council (CORAC) meeting Feb. 21 CORAC is a group of academic affairs, student affairs, and institutional effectiveness staff and faculty members at Colorado institutions who meet quarterly to share best practices in assessment of student learning. Faculty from the Art and New Media Design and Communications Departments presented on their recent innovations in assessment of student learning in those departments.

Staff from Outreach and Recruitment, Orientation, and Accessibility Services represented the Division of Student Affairs and presented on assessment efforts in the division over the last two years.

CCA hosted the Immersion Excursion conference on Feb. 14 with 125 attendees from across CCCS. The conference highlighted progress and lessons learned from the $2.5 million State Board for Community College and Occupational Education (SBCCOE) investment in 33 immersive and game-based learning projects with an emphasis on piloting new initiatives and scaling proven practices.

Dr. Nancy McCallin introduced Dr. Jeff Borden, the event’s keynote speaker and a national expert on instruction and academic strategy.

Community College Week will feature the statewide immersive and game-based learning as the cover of its March 3 edition, which is the publication’s annual technology in education issue. The Denver Post wrote an article appearing in its Feb. 27 editions on the initiative.

Libby Klingsmith, director of the CCA Student Success Center, has published an article on student success with colleagues from several other institutions. The article in The Journal Of Social Media In Society discussed undergraduate students’ perception of social media use in their academic success.

Dr. Betsy Oudenhoven, CCA president, joined two high-profile local boards: the Arapahoe/Douglas Workforce Investment Board and Aurora Chamber of Commerce Board.

President Oudenhoven attended the Greater Aurora Legislative Town Hall meeting on Feb. 20 at East Middle School in Aurora where she participated in a panel discussion with Senate President Morgan Carroll.

The event centered upon Senate Bill 1, otherwise known as the College Affordability Act.

Some of the issues discussed were funding higher ed and limiting tuition increases. Other representatives at the event included: Michael Carrigan, chair of the University of Colorado Board of Regents; Jeffrey Thompson, government and corporate relations director of University of Colorado Health; and Nigel Daniels, president of the Colorado State University student body.

The Office of Outreach and Recruitment hosted the annual College Goal Sunday on Feb. 9 in conjunction with the Colorado Department of Higher Education. The event focused on helping families complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in preparation for transitioning to college.

The office hosted its 2014 Spring Transfer Fair on March 5 on both campuses, helping students, staff and community members meet face-to-face with representatives from over 30 four-year colleges and universities.

Among the schools expected to be on hand are: Metropolitan State University of Denver; both University of Colorado Boulder and Colorado Springs; Regis University; Adams State University; University of Northern Colorado; Colorado School of Mines; Western State; DeVry University; Colorado State University; University of Phoenix; University of Denver; Columbia College; Colorado Technical University; Colorado Mountain College; Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design; Johnson & Wales, and more.

As a follow up to the passage of Amendment 64, CCA’s Security Office will have an officer from Aurora Police Department on hand March 20 to give a presentation on distracted driving and marijuana. The officer also will answer questions about what the legalization of marijuana in Colorado means to students.

Taxpayers at Lowry filed 88 2013 returns during the opening period of Tax Help Colorado from Jan. 25 to Feb. 22. CCA is one of 26 colleges offering free tax sites statewide. Those helped at Lowry have pocketed $975,850 in federal refunds, plus an additional $487,352 in Earned Income Tax Credits.

The Aurora Mental Health Center and CCA Counseling Services office presented to our community on Recovery and Resilience on March 5 at the CentreTech Rotunda. The presentation will be repeated March 11 at 1 p.m. in Lowry’s Todd Bergren Room.

Students and staff are invited to learn about the long-term effects that daily stress and negative events can have on an individual and a community. Also learn how to find support within ourselves and in those around us and discuss how these approaches can help make us stronger in the future.

Please contact Sarah Gallegos at sarah.gallegos@ccaurora.edu for more information.

The Office of Accessibility Services along with Aurora Public Schools and Cherry Creek School District hosted their annual Transition Fair in February. The Fair helps students with special needs transition from high school to college or community support resources.

The event has grown over the years and has gotten so big that next year’s event will require a larger venue.

Voting ends March 15 for the new student-designed and student-driven CCA Mascot Competition. There are four options in all and they can be viewed via https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/CCAMascot.

Selections also can be made via smartphones via a QR Code Reader scanner app.

Student Life presented a living history presentation featuring Elsa Wolff as Amelia Earhart on March 4. The performance was part of the Women’s History Month Series, which continues March 11 with a portrayal of Golda Meir.
Clockwise from top: Elena Sandoval-Lucero, Janet Brandau and Cindy Hesse listen as new Colorado Community College System vice presidents Dr. Jerry Migler (Academic Affairs, center) and Keith Howard (Student Affairs, left) visit CentreTech; pieces from Chinese New Year: A Show By Joan Kresek at the Donna Moravec Gallery; Beth Lattone, Barbara Williams, Chris Tombari, and Mary Graham share a lighter moment at a congratulatory celebration for Brandau after the latter’s permanent designation as vice president of Academic Affairs; longtime Director of Advising Rene Simard and Counseling Services clinician Sarah Gallegos say their goodbyes at a party recognizing Simard’s hiring as a vice president with the Aurora Chamber of Commerce; Science administrative assistant Pat Machledt gets her college sendoff Feb. 27 after more than 10 years assisting the Science department, with the help of Cindy Smith, Rhonda Hattar, Kevin Andrews and a large group of supporters.