CCA welcomes new faculty, staff

CCA welcomes the following individuals who have joined the faculty and staff of CCA since October:

Mercy Abraham, controller
Lorraine Evans, administrative assistant, Instruction
Kathy Snow, job transition specialist, Center for Workforce Development
Barbara Guion, program assistant, Center for Workforce Development
Richard Maestas, vice president, administrative services (profiled in the July 2009 InterCom)
Veronica Sanchez, administrative assistant, Film/Video
Catherine Trouth, research analyst, Institutional Research
Matthew Gianneschi, vice president, student services and enrollment management (profiled in the December 2009 InterCom)

Also joining CCA are:

JoAnn Burkhart, director of online learning
Kelly Gaer, administrative assistant, Student Services
Ethan Ruzzano, webmaster/graphic designer/social media coordinator, College Communications
Alice Gilbert, developmental math faculty
Scott VanOrdstrand, previously equipment and technology manager and adjunct professor, Colorado Film School, now associate professor and technology manager

Trained volunteers at CCA are once again preparing and e-filing taxes for eligible individuals and families free of charge through the Tax Help Colorado program.

The service, which is offered through March 20, is quick and confidential.

Families receiving the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) or who earn less than $49,000 a year are eligible to have their taxes prepared and filed electronically for free at CCA’s Lowry Campus. Tax Help Colorado, a service of the Piton Foundation, helps families save hundreds of dollars that they might otherwise pay to have their taxes prepared.

The Foundation sponsors numerous tax assistance sites around the state. Tax Help Colorado volunteers include CCA students who have completed a series of accounting courses that teach them income tax preparation. These courses are accredited and certified by the Internal Revenue Service. As participants in the Tax Help Colorado program, CCA volunteers last year prepared and e-filed taxes for 556 families and individuals that refunded $1,004,361—the first time a Tax Help Colorado site broke the $1 million mark.

Tax assistance is available at the Lowry Campus, 710 Alton Way, Bldg. 903, Room 113, on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. until March 20 and on Mondays and Wednesdays from 6 to 9 p.m. until March 17.

Tax Help Colorado volunteers ask that people using the program bring the following documents with them when using the service: W-2 and 1099 statements; information on any other income; Social Security cards for all family members; information for all deductions such as child care and student loans; and a copy of last year’s tax return, if available.

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From left: Tamra Schmitt talks with Jo Ann Rankin and her daughter, Khadijah Phifer, about when they can expect their 2009 tax refund.
CCA President Linda Bowman was a featured panelist at a Jan. 21 Aurora Town Hall meeting on the topic of “The Future of Higher Education in Colorado.” The meeting, held at the Aurora Public Library’s Central Library location, was sponsored by state Sen. Morgan Carroll, state Rep. Sue Ryden, and state Rep. Karen Middleton.

Bowman was joined on the panel by Dr. Roy Wilson, chancellor of the University of Colorado Denver, and Andrew Bateman, Metropolitan State College of Denver student and chair of the Associated Students of Colorado. “We are faced with difficult choices” given the state’s budget challenges, Bowman reported. Among the measures that colleges and universities are considering are capping enrollment, increasing tuition, and “getting rid of the notion of public higher education,” Bowman said, adding that there are some who think college should be a private venture.

Bowman told the full house that she is “proud of the great work that (CCA) faculty and staff do every day” despite an uncertain future. “Our people are still maintaining high quality for our students with a nearly 24% increase in enrollment,” she added.

Harnessing the sun: solar tech program first in CCA renewable energy series

Green economy, green-collar, going green: Career opportunities in the United States are undergoing a shift, and leading the pack are the emerging prospects in the Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EE/RE) fields. To help fill an anticipated increase in the number of “green” jobs in the Denver/Aurora metro, CCA has created a new solar technology certificate program.

According to CCA’s Renewable Energy Program Coordinator Phil Myers, the college’s new Solar Photovoltaic Systems Technician certificate was designed with direct input from industry partners across the region. Myers explains that a student in the program will learn practical skills to become a competent entry-level technician for a photovoltaic (PV) dealer, installer, or contractor.

CCA’s course of study starts with the basics: What is energy? Where does it come from? How is it distributed? Classes also emphasize practical career or technical mathematics, essential for a career in the renewable energy industry.

The program so far is attracting a number of students considering “encore” careers—students who have held positions in other industries. Myers says he is teaching people who have been in more labor-intensive situations, such as former oil rig workers now looking for careers in which they can have a safer and longer-term future.

The Solar PV certificate is the first in CCA’s Renewable Energy series to be launched over the next two years. An advisory council, with representatives from industry, professional organizations, the workforce, and the City of Aurora, offers guidance to the program.

According to Shelley Wood, director of strategic partnerships for CCA, the Council aims to maximize the recruitment network for students to the Solar PV program and capitalize on opportunities for internships and hiring of program participants. “The Council also works to ensure that our program meets the industry need for competent, well-trained entry-level workers,” she says.

Myers is passionate about the program, not only because of developing career opportunities, but because “green-collar” jobs offer economic stability in the local job market and at the same time reduce the effects of global warming and pollution.

"Workers in this field will devote their time to increasing energy efficiency and renewable energy options, as well as to reducing dependence on fossil fuels, which will benefit the planet and provide a better world for generations to come,” he explains.

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Sarah Simmons, single mom, embraces CCA; will head to J-school in Chicago

We’ve heard the story before: "I didn’t do too well in high school, so I didn’t think I should go to college.”

It’s a tale often told, and it’s CCA student Sarah Simmons’ personal story, as well. Yet it has a happy ending: Simmons soon will move to Illinois to attend Columbia College Chicago, the nation’s largest and most diverse private arts and media college, to which she has been accepted. Once there, Simmons will pursue a bachelor’s degree in journalism.

Simmons’ high school years were defined by frequent moves and upheaval. “I worked a lot, partied a lot, and didn’t see the importance of school – why go, if I’m working and making money?” she says. But in her senior year, she got pregnant, which changed everything.

Raised by a single mother herself, Simmons felt that, as a result, she and her brother were “bad.” By contrast, she wanted her child to be “raised right.” With her daughter, Aliyah Lana, for inspiration, Simmons’ schoolwork began to improve. “I knew her father wasn’t going to be there for her, so I had to really start thinking about our future,” she says. With the support of professionals at her high school, Simmons began considering college.

During this time, Simmons saw how she didn’t want to spend her life. “When I turned 18, me and my daughter were living with my mom, and we spent a lot of time applying for welfare, standing in line for food stamps, applying for WIC,” she says. “We were just so broke all the time, and that was no way to live.”

So with high school diploma in hand, Simmons completed beauty school, earned a cosmetology degree, and worked at a few salons. And she concluded: is this all there is? Shortly after moving to the Aurora area, she considered CCA. “In spring 2009 I enrolled in two classes and loved it,” she reports. She took history and psychology, two fields of study she has always liked.

She embraced the opportunity, and Simmons is now a fixture at CCA. She is vice president of fund raising for the college’s Phi Theta Kappa chapter; treasurer of the Student Government Association; and president of the college’s new journalism club and editor of its publication, “CCA Chronicle.”

With spring graduation from CCA around the corner, Simmons is looking ahead and is eager to take advantage of the journalism internships offered through Columbia. She may also study marketing to build on her early experience in the cosmetology business, and admits she’s pretty good at it, “because it was an essay on marketing I wrote at CCA that got me into Columbia.”

In the meantime, Simmons is taking advantage of every moment at CCA as she plans her move to Chicago. She needs to find an apartment and secure daycare for her daughter who turns three in May. She then will enroll part time at Columbia in the summer, and jump into school full time come fall.
To the edge of space: BalloonSat missions launched

Its anticipated trip to Kansas or Nebraska at 100,000 feet above planet Earth didn’t quite pan out, but the BalloonSat mission launched by four Colorado community colleges at sunrise on Jan. 16 was impressive nonetheless.

Included on the launch were two CCA student-built payloads, alongside experiments from three other community colleges. The high-altitude balloon traveled some 33 miles south, then east, and reached an altitude of 77,847’ before bursting. FAA clearance had been obtained in advance of the launch.

Immediately following liftoff, numerous volunteers, primarily from the non-profit, Denver-based group Edge of Space Sciences, joined the students and their professors on a “track and chase” of the balloon so that mission payloads could be retrieved for analysis. A scientific recap of the flight can be seen at www.eoss.org/ansrecap/ar_160/recap149.htm.

With the balloon ascending at some 1,300’ per minute, observers noted that it wouldn’t be long before the latex structure, filled with helium and launched from Deer Trail, Colo., traveled high above the commercial jets seen overhead.

Following its burst, a parachute enabled the string of payloads to descend at a rate of 950’ per minute. The recovery site was to the east of County Rd. 190, an unpaved road near the Elbert/Lincoln county line, northwest of Limon.

Experiments among participants varied, and analysis now will be conducted on each. CCA Team A launched a bacteria strain to determine its reaction under extreme climate conditions. Team B’s project carried a substance similar to what is found on the surface of Mars, along with an onboard Geiger counter to measure how well the contents were shielded against high-altitude radiation.

CCA was selected in 2009 as an affiliate institution of the Colorado Space Grant Consortium, which is funded by NASA. The two CCA teams have worked on their projects since September. Following analysis, data from the launch will be presented by the students to scientists at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California.

The CCA teams have worked under the direction of Victor Andersen, CCA faculty member in astronomy and physics and space grant affiliate director to the Consortium.
New web site nears for CCA; new “MyCCA” portal will launch concurrently for students, faculty, staff

A brand new look is on the horizon for www.CCAurora.edu, and the anticipated unveiling of the site is April 5 with a soft launch late March to coincide with the launch of the college’s new portal interface with Banner, “MyCCA.”

The new www.CCAurora.edu has been undergoing extensive redesign and reorganization since last summer.

CCA’s external users and internal users alike will be pleased with the redesign. While the current site has been useful over the years, the new look will be strikingly different and vibrant, per the intent of the web design committee, comprised of Victor Vialpando, dean, Art & New Media Design, Computer Science, and Film Video Technology, Patrick Loehr, chair, Art & New Media Design, Sarah Grace Pretzer, coordinator, Public Relations, College Communications, Justin Sherrill, adjunct instructor of Computer Web and IT Help Desk, Kristen Cusack, director, Admissions and Records, Liz VanLandingham, director, Marketing and Communications, Keren Guzman, CCA student, and newly added staffers JoAnn Burkhart, director, Online Learning and Ethan Ruzzano, webmaster/social media coordinator/graphic designer, College Communications.

According to VanLandingham, the new www.CCAurora.edu will employ a stronger marketing emphasis to reach out to potential students. “The site’s look and content will be designed to showcase the benefits and opportunities of attending college here with the hope visitors will choose CCA over other colleges. We are gearing the new website to make information easily accessible to visitors at the site,” she explained.

Extensive online content for current students, faculty, and staff will be available on MyCCA instead of the college website. MyCCA will provide a convenient and secure way to access important information for those already affiliated with the college.

Some of the benefits MyCCA will provide employees and students include:

- Faster accessibility to information
- Customized information to fit individual needs
- Easy access email (employees & students)
- Easy registration
- Easy access to finances
- Easy access to class grading, rosters, tools, and resources
- Easy access to forms
- Centralized information
- Easy access to budget management system

In addition, MyCCA supports the college’s initiative to go “Green.”

Sneak Preview
Good December weather afforded a large turnout for CCA’s Dec. 14 holiday party. A buffet dinner and a visit from Santa were enjoyable, but the evening’s highlight was the recognition of five-, 10-, 15-, 20-, and 25-year employees, along with recent retirees and the announcement of employees of the year. The 2009 Classified Employee of the Year honor was presented to Christopher Hunt from the Facilities Department, and the Exempt/Administrative Employee of the Year honor was presented to Director of Library Services Jay Devaughn.

President Linda Bowman addressed guests at the annual Legislators’ Breakfast in the Student Centre Rotunda on Jan. 11. Other presenters included Kevin Hougen, Aurora Chamber president, and members of the Eastern Metro Delegation, including state Rep. Nancy Todd; state Sen. Nancy Spence; state Sen. Mary Hodge; state Sen. Suzanne Williams; state Sen. Morgan Carroll; state Rep. Su Ryden; and state Rep. Cindy Acree. Topics of discussion fell under the umbrella of the state budget, with an emphasis on the funding challenges that exist for P-12 education, higher education, and transportation.

Dir. of Student Life Angie Tiedeman shares important information about the college with new students at a recent orientation session.

Komla S. Codjie of Togo, West Africa, currently living in Aurora, didn’t realize the importance of signing up for a free CCA student e-mail. He was simply taking advantage of the free, secure method of communication between CCA and its students. When he checked his e-mail on Dec. 4, he discovered that he had been selected at random to win a new iPod Nano, just for using his free CCA e-mail account. Pictured here, Mr. Codjie was presented the iPod by the instructor who signed him up for the e-mail, Gary Brady-Herndon, who teaches ESL and English at CCA and works part time as the ESL Technology Lab Support Specialist.

Seen Around Campus
Journalist Ethan Casey to share adventures in Pakistan on Feb. 10

Visiting scholar and journalist Ethan Casey will visit CCA on Feb. 10 to discuss his experiences in Pakistan. Casey is the author of Alive and Well in Pakistan (2004). Although out of print, the CCA library has copies of his book available for checkout. For more information about Casey, visit www.aliveandwellinpakistan.com. While here, Casey will visit classes, attend a reception, and give an evening presentation at the Aurora Public Library.

Feb. 12 Math Day for Girls event to host outstanding professional women

The third annual Math Day for Girls will be held at CCA on Feb. 12, and this year’s event is titled “Maps, Weather, and Satellites.” The featured speaker is Dr. Cathleen Cravotto, assistant professor in mathematical sciences at the University of Northern Colorado. Career panel participants will include J’ne Day-Lucore, a software and systems engineer with Raytheon and a member of the Raytheon executive leadership team based in Aurora, and KUSA-TV/9 News meteorologist Becky Ditchfield.

During the course of the day, students will build a structure within a proposed budget and test its ability to withstand a tornado-force storm. Students will serve as the engineers and researchers for the project.

Gabrych, Hunt, VanOrdstrand honored with annual Bowman award

Sandra Gabrych, assistant professor and program coordinator for the Colorado Film School, Geoff Hunt, chair of social sciences, and Scott VanOrdstrand, instructor, IT manager, and cage manager for the Colorado Film School, have each been awarded the Dr. Linda and Roger Bowman Faculty Award. The annual award recognizes members of the CCA faculty who have made a significant difference for CCA students. According to President Linda Bowman, this 2009 award will be shared by Gabrych, Hunt, and VanOrdstrand in recognition of their extensive work on the documentary “The Wars We Fought.” The film was crafted on behalf of the Colorado 7th Congressional District’s Veterans’ Oral History Project and was produced for the Library of Congress.

Study abroad in Costa Rica!

CCA offers an opportunity to participate in a Field Studies course in Costa Rica from May 17-27 with CCA faculty and professionally trained bilingual scientists and scholars. Students will work alongside scientists studying endangered leatherback sea turtles, study Costa Rican cultures, volunteer with a coffee cooperative, and much more! Space is limited, so students are encouraged to enroll now. Students can earn 3 credits in one of three classes (anthropology, biology, or Spanish). For more information, visit http://www.ecoteach.com/2010/Aurora.htm.

STUDENT LIFE CULTURAL SERIES.

Black History Month with the Black Hands Drum Duo. 12-1 p.m., Feb. 17. Student Centre Rotunda.

HIGH LINE CANAL CLEANUP.

March 20, 8 a.m. at CCA’s CentreTech campus, Student Centre building, 16000 E. CentreTech Pkwy, Aurora. To volunteer, contact Angie Tiedeman at 303-340-7523 or angela.tiedeman@ccaurora.edu.

THE AURORA FOX PRESENTS THE GRADUATE.

Feb. 12 - March 14. 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 2 p.m. Sunday. The Aurora Fox, 9900 E. Colfax Ave., Aurora. This play brings the movie hit of the 1960s to the stage. Call 303-873-6622 for more information.

CHINESE NEW YEAR CELEBRATION.

Feb. 13, 2-3:30 p.m. Aurora History Museum, 15051 E. Alameda Parkway. The Denver Chinese Cultural Center presents folk dances, storytelling, and crafts. $4 for Aurora residents. Call 303-739-6666 for more information.

A NATIVE PAST: AURORA’S ANCIENT BURIAL.

Feb. 17, 12-1 p.m., Aurora History Museum, 15051 E. Alameda Parkway. Native American tribes roamed the area that is now Aurora as early as 670 A.D. Learn about an ancient burial found along the banks of the West Toll Gate Creek in 1982. Call 303-739-6666 for more information.

JOHN ADAMS UNBOUND.

Through Feb. 19 at the Aurora History Museum, 15051 E. Alameda Parkway. A traveling panel exhibition explores President John Adams’ personal library and his lifelong dedication to reading and books. Call 303-739-6600 for more information.