Old ties, new beginnings

English professor’s lengthy career marked by energy, fierce individuality

Wayne Gilbert is lamenting his forgetfulness, having left his black hat that resembles a 1930’s G-man accessory somewhere other than the CentreTech Rotunda, where he’s about to give his final full-fledged poetry slam as a CCA professor.

The fashion oversight sparked a conversation among students gathered to watch Gilbert, now clad only in an all-black suit with black shoes and a silver, patterned tie as accouterment.

“Why all the black?” the student inquired.

Gilbert explained that it makes the tie pop.

“Wayne is such a non-monochromatic person,” another observer chimed in. “It just doesn’t work.”

The bland description truly doesn’t begin to do Gilbert justice. To borrow from his poetry thesaurus, he’s unique, inimitable, distinctive, rare and irreplaceable, though the latter will occur now that the beloved English professor’s career is ending.

He'll leave CCA on June 1 after 26 years, and do so as the longest-tenured full-time faculty in school history.

And yes, he’s been one colorful character. He's less lecturer than performance artist, attacking his subject matter with the aggressive means he delivers his poetry, which now spans

Graduation student speaker Jamie Corchado is intent upon meshing the present with the future in his parting words to CCA students. “The point of the ceremony is not only congratulating you on what you’ve done, but it’s also to announce to the world what you’re capable of doing now,” he said.

Graduation speaker plans message of hope

As Jamie Corchado prepares to head to Colorado School of Mines for the next chapter of his academic career, he does so already having been, in a roundabout way, to a four-year institution.

That’s because Corchado’s history at Community College of Aurora dates all the way back to 2008 as a concurrent enrollment student through the ASCENT program.

He first took a tax-preparation course for credit, and it started him on a journey at CCA that propelled him into his current mechanical engineering path all these years later.

Still, there's one more loose end to tie up before he departs the Aurora campus.

Corchado will serve as the student speaker at this week’s graduation ceremony at the Arapahoe County Fairgrounds. He already has a clear idea of his message to his fellow students.

“I want to leave them with the idea that anything that they’re trying to accomplish now is possible,” Corchado said. “They’ve worked really hard. Now it’s just the final struggle between the career or the next school.

“I know some students aren’t sure what they’re going to do,“ he added. “I’d like to guide them toward the idea that they have to just decide on what they want to do and they’ll be able to go through with it.”

Corchado’s academic path began with the thought process that he’d one day inherit the family tax business. That’s why his first association with CCA as part of the Tax Help Colorado program seemed like a no-brainer: It could serve as training for his future career.

But the college experience immediately appealed to Corchado, even while simultaneously attending Aurora Central High School. The more courses he took at CCA, the more convinced he became that playing with robotic
two books.

“The first time I observed him in the classroom as part of a supervisory review process I came away both inspired and depressed,” said Scott Reichel, English Department chair. “Because I wasn’t sure if I’d ever be able to do it the way he did it.”

Not many could. It wasn’t just the delivery. It was how heartfelt he was about getting the message through to anyone that entered his classroom doors, and ensuring that process occurred with patience and persistence.

“He’s taken broken students and helped by giving them a voice,” longtime CCA history professor Geoff Hunt said. “No one at the college has done a better job with that.”

One of Gilbert’s favorite poems that he’s written, “Whole Sentences of Their Own,” was a nod to those types of students – folks who needed a push in the right direction.

“People who came to us beaten down with life’s experience – without confidence to really go to college but they came somehow; he reaps them in and builds them up,” Hunt explained. “The students go on and graduate and credit Wayne for their success, not at college, but in life. That’s not a bad legacy.”

Gilbert responded by saying that the flattering description defines what he’s tried to be about.

“Have I achieved that much?” he asked. “I hope so.”

Gilbert’s half-jokingly referred to his teaching career as “third-world missionary work,” which also happens to be the title of his teaching memoir that already spans 180 pages.

“I’ve always said I don’t want to teach students who don’t need me,” he said. “I want to teach students who need me.”

Gilbert’s exit from the classroom isn’t fully by choice. Gilbert has Parkinson’s disease, which makes his high-wire teaching style all the more tiring these days. A stool is never far away now to deal with that fatigue. He has to sit down, too, after going through several emotional, fist-pumping, foot-stomping recitals of his poetry at his April 10 farewell performance.

“I’m not happy that it’s the reason I’m leaving, but everybody has to have some reason, I guess,” Gilbert said of his condition.

He then compared his exit to a quarterback who has to acknowledge Father Time. “I’ve got to be able to ‘play’ or I’m not going to be here.”

Just don’t expect Gilbert to lead a quiet life of seclusion in retirement. Besides the teaching memoir, he’s just penned his second book, ‘From The Ashes,’ which borrows heavily from the emotional toll left by the death of his mother. He still has poetry performances on tap. He’ll continue teaching a course in Educational Psychology once a semester as an adjunct at University of Colorado-Denver. He remains on the board of directors of a group called ‘Artist Action,’ and within those confines has started a dance class for people with Parkinson’s.

One of his longstanding dreams is to travel around and do workshops entitled ‘Healing the Wounded Teacher.’ But he’s also looking forward to “several weeks, maybe even a year of way more solitude than engagement of any kind.”

To many, Gilbert will be known not just as a longstanding CCA teacher, but his alter egos, ‘magmamystic,’ or ‘magmamapoi,’ which emanated from views of volcanoes in Hawaii.

“The deep bubbly stuff that oozed out to the surfaces was a metaphor that resonated,” his wife of 33 years, and CCA math instructor, Alice, explained.

Wayne Gilbert’s post-retirement business card shows that the flow will continue. It lists performances, talks and workshops in free-jazz spoken word; poetic healing and wellness; and tales from the teaching life among his specialties.

If that isn’t colorful, neither is psychedelic art, which just so happens to hang over Gilbert’s desk from an old performance-art piece he did with an old band of buddies.

The theme was unity among chaos, kind of like his CCA career.

“I think of myself sort of as someone who built this place,” Gilbert said. “I’m proud of it from that standpoint. … We were nothing like we are now. In the early years, we had a very strong sense that we were creating something really special that hadn’t been here before and would be here long after we’re gone. I’m kind of proud to be there near the beginning.”
Corchado’s grasp of graduation’s meaning resonated

Continued from page 1

machines beat playing with numbers any day.
This was a person, after all, who could recall at age 5 thinking about the intricacies of eye surgery, and whether the blue that one person saw matched his own vision.
Corchado’s thoughts have since advanced to dream-worthy levels in which he imagines “the awesome things you get to build,” while testing the newest and greatest innovations that one day could become useful in people’s lives.

Those same dreams include one day melding the human brain with computer-chip technology, so that simple calculations and inspiration can co-exist simultaneously.

“He’s going to go far,” said Valerie Sangiuliano, CCA’s graduation coordinator.

There were 16 applicants and 11 auditions that took place in the search for a student commencement speaker. A panel of 10 judges scored on content, delivery, credibility of message and personal spin.
Sangiuliano described Corchado’s speech as “very thought out, very practiced and well-researched.”

“You could tell he put his heart and soul into the content, but it also had his own personal spin and wasn’t just a ‘graduation speech,’” Sangiuliano explained. “He put a context into the significance of graduation.”
Corchado immediately Googled the word ‘ commencement’ after receiving his invitation to audition for the student-led graduation speech. He’d use that answer -- “to begin” -- as the core idea of his speech, encompassing the notion that graduation isn’t an ending but a start.

“The point of the ceremony is not only congratulating you on what you’ve done, but it’s also to announce to the world what you’re capable of doing now,” he noted. “I just thought it was a natural fit to the ceremony.”

Corchado, who turns 20 at the end of the month, has spoken publicly on behalf of CCA on numerous previous occasions: at a Futures’ workshop; a College in Colorado seminar; as emcee of the 2011 Successful Student Awards; at a panel discussion at Regis University and other workshops promoting CCA’s ASCENT program.
It was when he delivered an address in front of the statewide community-college board that he first met the former president of the School of Mines, who wrote an influential recommendation letter on Corchado’s behalf.

“During high school, I remember (friends) saying, ‘Why are you working so hard? Or, ‘We have a huge party next weekend. Want to come?’ And I’d say I had to study or wake up for class, stuff like that. They’d say, ‘You’re lame. You’re a loser.’ Stuff like that. But now that we fast forward a few years and they’ve seen all the things I’ve been able to do, now they wish they would have gotten their act together or stayed in school.”

Corchado already has refined his graduation address with a speech instructor. Some of the likely advice he received had to do with delivery, such as turning his head from side to side to span the audience and promote engagement in his words.
But Corchado already knows he’ll have some lesser focus on his 11-year-old brother, Sebastian Jr., who once saw himself as a future garbage collector and now wants to follow Jamie’s footsteps and give mechanical engineering a try.
In fact, being a role model for his brother was the first thing Corchado mentioned when asked about the reasoning behind his desire to present CCA’s student graduation speech.

“Every time he sees me do something that implies accomplishment, he always is motivated to do the same and more,” he explained.

Corchado considers his other public addresses as more or less informational speeches or talks, adding that this speech will be different “just by its purpose.” An address by former school president Dr. Linda Bowman will augment Corchado’s words.

“I get to leave a mark in the student body’s memory,” Corchado said. “I’ll get to express my gratitude to CCA for what it’s done. And I feel many of the students will share that gratitude with me.”

Eager students already know what’s in store

The CCA Bookstore was abuzz with activity in the weeks leading up to the graduation ceremony. Students tried on their caps and gowns while representatives from Jostens, such as Shelley McClellan, helped them find the perfect fit. Jose Parra Gonzalez (above) gives the thumbs up to his upcoming look. He’ll be receiving an Associate of Science degree. Nicole Walker, left, laughs as she ensures her gown flows properly. She’ll be getting her associate degree in General Studies with a certificate in Human Resources.
Judging mock trial a (not) guilty pleasure

Community colleges are a passion for Simmons

Judge LeRoy A. Simmons likely will be known in perpetuity for his oversight role in the celebrated gascompany case that became the Oscar-winning movie “Erin Brockovich.”

But dig deeper into his bio, and you’ll discover the renowned judge also possesses strong community-college roots, helping explain his recent appearance at CCA as part of its so-called “murder investigation.”

Simmons worked concurrently as a professor at Victor Valley Community College in Victorville, Calif., in their paralegal program for five years while serving on the California Superior Court.

He also spent, during a career in jurisprudence that began in 1967, four years as the chair of the board of trustees at Barstow Community College, where his wife, Barbara, taught business subjects for 27 years.

So, Simmons didn’t blink when neighbor and CCA faculty Elizabeth Hirsh asked him to take part in the mock CSI exercise.

His role in the mock trial as judge culminated the school’s interdisciplinary undertaking, which over several weeks pulled together Paralegal, Archaeology, Anthropology and Criminal Science into one unified classroom experience.

“I couldn’t see how it was going to mesh,” Simmons admitted. “But it was clear from the way in which the evidence was presented, relying on the scientific disciplines, that you did see a good mesh of the legal minds and the scientific community. I thought it was an excellent way to do it.”

At the same time, originality and execution of the exercise at CCA came as no surprise.

“I know from personal experience that community colleges provide instructors who are skilled in their subject matters. There’s no less quality education that comes out of the college, in my opinion, as the same courses in a four-year college,” he maintained.

As evidence, he pointed to a study in California by its community college system that looked at high-ranking four-year institutions such as Stanford, USC and UCLA. Community-college students taking similar courses as those offered at these bigger schools, then transferring, maintained their grade-point averages once switching campuses.

“They were not over-challenged when they got to those four-year colleges,” Simmons said. “And it demonstrated that the educational quality that kids and adults were receiving in the community college was every bit as strong as they were getting when they went on to the four-year institution. All of which is more affordable and easier-access for community purposes, and so forth.”

Simmons called CCA’s crime-scene experiment a credit to the faculty and administration in pulling the exercise together so quickly and creating something that was “good, innovative thinking and stimulating to students.”

The mock trial ended with the defendant being cleared of a first-degree murder charge but convicted on lesser counts. After it was over, Simmons jokingly remanded the murder suspect into custody when the trial ended.

The only downside is that Simmons just might have supplanted his role in “Brockovich” with newfound fame as CCA’s mock trial judge.

“Could be,” he responded with a laugh. “I’m just as happy with that.”

CCA’s interdisciplinary CSI investigation closed April 14 with a mock trial at the Fine Arts Building. The event was presided over by LeRoy A. Simmons, a longtime California judge whose name is synonymous with the so-called Erin Brockovich case. At left, Simmons confers with counsel, from left, played by Erik Cansler, Margaret Uchner and Carolyn O’Hara. Below, evidence of the alleged victim’s remains appear on a video screen above Simmons’ head.

Information bank

Josh Evans, the Adult Education Coordinator for the Center for Workforce Development, will be hosting multiple “Learning to Achieve” trainings on June 1 and August 17 from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m in the Todd Bergren Room on Lowry campus.

The sessions are geared toward CCA faculty and staff interested in Learning to Achieve as well as Universal Design for Learners in classrooms.

The Learning to Achieve trainings are based on best practices in teaching those with learning disabilities, but are consistent with best practices in explicit instruction within a UDL framework for all learners. These are national recognized certifications in instruction and valuable to any instructor of adults.

The trainings are formatted into modules and interested parties can sign up for both or one entire day of training or any combination of modules.

Sessions include: Definitions of Learning Disabilities; Legal Issues and Learning Disabilities; Self-Determination; Workforce Preparation Strategies; Explicit Instruction for Strategy Learning; Content Learning; Written Expression and Disabilities; and Reading instruction and Disabilities.

For more information, please contact Evans directly at Joshua.Evans@CCAurora.edu or 303-340-7576.

All new first-time college students, part-time and full-time, will be required to participate in a new mandatory orientation program, beginning with fall semester.

Betsy Oudenhoven, vice president of student affairs, announced in April there will be 30 three-hour programs over the next three months, running through July 19th. An abbreviated version of orientation called ‘Express’ will take place in the month prior to classes starting.

Faculty, adjuncts and staff are all invited to attend a session.

Each three-hour program, designed to help newcomers smoothly transition to CCA, can accommodate up to 60 students. General, technology, student life and advising presentations will be held both at the CentreTech campus, mainly in the Fine Arts building Forum and Student Centre Rotunda, and at Lowry, in the West Quad, Rooms 112, 101, 109 and 200.

The spring semester student exhibition will run through May 7 at the Donna Moravec Gallery at Lowry.

Student artwork in classes such as drawing, painting, ceramics, digital photography and jewelry design are among the items on display, representing the works of students of all levels of experience.

The 15th Colorado Learning and Teaching with Technology Conference (COLT'T) is offering scholarship funds to qualified applicants for registration to this year’s conference. The event will be held Aug. 1-2 on the University of Colorado campus in Boulder. Funds are limited and will be allocated on a first-come, first-servicebasis, with a waitlist as necessary.

Two finalists for the CCA’s president’s vacancy have been forwarded by a search committee to Dr. Nancy McCallin for consideration, it was announced April 26.

McCallin, president of the Colorado Community College System, will decide in consultation with the State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education between the two finalists: Dr. Christine Chaisell, currently the district vice president for academic and student affairs at Portland (Ore.) Community College; and Alton Scales, the acting CEO at the Summit Campus of Colorado Mountain College in Breckenridge and Dillon.
Concert Series gets jazzed up; ready for big finish to semester

The Eric Erhardt Quartet – with Clint Dadian on guitar, Mark Simon on standup bass, Trent Antony on drums and Erhardt on saxophone, flute and clarinet – works through its setlist for the group’s April 14 concert as part of the CCA Concert Series. All but Simon are adjuncts in music. The Performing Arts and Humanities Department continues its slate of diverse performances as the spring semester comes to a close. The annual student showcase will be held Friday at 7:30 p.m. and combines the best of dance, theater and music performances from previous showcase events. The series’ finale is scheduled for Saturday with the CCA jazz band concert, also at 7:30, in the Larry D. Carter Theatre. All performances are free and open to the public.

High school students get the hard cell

ShyDa’Sha Davis, left, and Sydney Dearing, right, of Rangeview High School get some assistance from CCA Science Department laboratory coordinator Tara Croom-Sanchez during the April 13 Xcel Energy Camp on the Lowry Campus. Students conducted a DNA isolation experiment using human cheek cells during their half-day of activities on campus. Croom had the students use Gatorade, Woolite and alcohol to draw out the DNA, then had the students transfer five microliters of liquid into a reader, which identified cell markers. Croom-Sanchez also talked to the students about biotechnology research and how scientists venture to change potentially harmful bacteria into useful, life-enhancing purposes. The Rangeview contingent also went through a workshop on career opportunities in Computer Science and toured the Colorado Film School as part of the day’s activities.

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Up close and very personal

Chris Turnquist, a master instructor at the Parker Academy of Martial Arts, dons futuristic-looking protective gear during a self-defense session as part of the “Take Back the Night” rape prevention and awareness event April 19 at the CentreTech Rotunda. CCA student Sydni Jackson demonstrated the techniques Turnquist taught, including eye and knee strikes that are simple to execute and affect sensitive areas of the body. “It was really helpful,” Jackson said of her tete a tete with Turnquist, who posed as her attacker. “The techniques he taught I wouldn’t have even have thought to use. I would have just flailed my arms.” “Take Back the Night” also featured informative posters made by CCA students, calling attention to the issue of rape in numerous countries, locales and industries worldwide. There were also informative presentations made by police and nurses who handle sexual-assault cases, as well as an open-mic forum to discuss the issue in emotional depth.
Plaudits and accomplishments at CCA

Dr. Nancy McCallin and Angie Tiedeman

McCallin, above, third from left, the Colorado Community College System president, and Tiedeman, above, fourth from left, were award recipients at the 2012 Phi Theta Kappa annual convention in Nashville, Tenn. McCallin was feted with Distinguished State Community College Director honors. McCallin’s nomination submission noted her involvement in the PTK’s annual USA Team luncheon, hosting of the annual Colorado Student Leadership conference and efforts to increase scholarship opportunities.

Tiedeman was one of 30 nationwide winners in the Distinguished Advisor Award category. Her encouragement and support in helping CCA students develop scholastically as well as leaders in service to the school and community bolstered her nomination.

The ceremony was held at the Gaylord Hotel from April 12-14 and also hosted the executive board members of CCA’s Alpha Pi Pi Chapter. CCA’s branch group is part of PTK’s Five Star Chapter Development Plan.

Muborak Gani

A first cohort of the Integrated Nursing Pathway, Gani produced a video for a nationwide Joy of Nursing contest sponsored by the National Student Nurses’ Association. Gani’s work, titled after the competition itself and designed to demonstrate nursing spirit, was selected as one of the five finalists, along with entrants from Hunter-Bellevue School of Nursing in New York; University of California-Bakersfield; Georgia Health Sciences University College of Nursing in Athens, Ga., and Mohawk Valley Community College in Utica, N.Y.

Ryan Manzanares

Manzanares in April was elected president of the Student Government Association for the 2012-13 school year. Manzanares currently is the president of Phi Theta Kappa and will serve concurrently as VP of leadership in that organization starting in August. Rob Hatcher, who was the CCA Film Fans club president and that club’s representative for SGA, will serve as student-government vice president. The rest of the SGA executive officials are:” Desiree’ Mayberry, secretary; Chandra Muller, treasurer; Ramona Urias, SSAC representative; Kaylin Cleary, John Lyons and Dusty Swarner, senators.

Ted Snow and Ana Martin-Mejia

Snow and Martin-Mejia collaborated from the beginning with Global Village Academy, an Aurora Public Schools charter school, to develop studies in Chinese language and culture that could then segue into concurrent enrollment at CCA.

A federal grant funded those activities in immersion Chinese curriculum before monetary cuts threatened the program. Yet, the pair was instrumental in ensuring the intended work continues. CCA will hire an instructor to design courses in Chinese language and culture, and the college will be starting a new Chinese program in the fall.

Janet Brandau

Appointed the Associated VP of Instruction, Brandau is responsible for administrative oversight of key academic processes, including catalog, course scheduling and concurrent enrollment. She will supervise and provide leadership for the associated dean of online learning and the director of learning resources while still maintaining her role as Perkins Grant administrator.

Danielle McCusker, Chandra Muller and Gloria Thompson

The three CCA students led the school’s Phi Beta Lambda team to a first-place finish in the Colorado state competition on April 14-15 with their presentation on Integrated Marketing. PBL is the oldest and largest national organization for students preparing for careers in business and compete for awards and recognition at the local, state and national levels in more than 50 event categories. Nick Wilhoit won second place on the topic of Microeconomics; Justin Rojas took fourth for Accounting for Professionals. CCA also received recognition as the largest community college chapter in the state.

Mike Manaton is the club’s faculty advisor.

Regina Edmondson

Accepted the position of Associate Director of Development for the CCA Foundation. Edmondson has been working temporarily in the position for the past several months and has an extensive background in business development that will assist her in identifying, cultivating, soliciting and stewarding scholarship and major donors for the Foundation. She will also be responsible for the overall management of the Foundation Scholarship Program.

Fernando Garcia, Jazmyn Collins and Derek Sanchez

Daniel Sandoval, second from left, director of the TRiO Student Support Services program, bestowed three major honors to program participants during a April 27 awards banquet. From left, Fernando Garcia was named the program’s Rising Star, given to a student with a minimum 3.0 GPA and exceptional educational and community work; Collins was bestowed the North Start Award, for overcoming significant obstacles and staying true to their core beliefs; and Sanchez was given the Shining Star Award for academics as well as commitment to the CCA community. TRiO in its first year provided tutoring and mentoring for 160 students dedicated to their success.

CCA’s 7th Annual Scholarship Recognition Luncheon brings an amalgamation of achievement, generosity

Rob Hatcher isn’t your atypical community college success story.

He was unemployed worker without a college degree, after bouncing around to fill-in jobs that strained his body, mind and budget to maintain his family lifestyle. But after two decades, he walked into CCA looking for a fresh start at a school that had the class variety and proximity to home he desired. He now holds a 4.0 grade-point average and was recently elected vice president of the Student Government Association.

One of the biggest reasons his life is taking a 180-degree turn, aside from his self-determination to change, is the financial support of the Helen K. and Robert B. Johnson Scholarship.

That financial gesture and the resulting impact is one of hundreds of compelling stories that are brought together into a single ballroom each year from willing donors and appreciative students.

The CCA 7th Annual Scholarship Recognition Luncheon only featured a small segment of those affected by the generosity of others.

Danielle McCusker at the banquet spoke of the meaning of the Dr. Linda Bowman Scholarship. Ryan Manzanares (Citywide Bank), David Williams (Helen K. and Arthur E. Johnson Foundation), Crystal Braswell (Women over 40), Edward Rummel (Veterans), Christina Lynn Dupree (Freedom) and Cody Hays (Aurora Rotary) wrote passionate notes appearing in the Foundation program on the impact of the financial boost they received.

And they’re not alone in their gratitude. This spring and fall at CCA, more than 400 scholarships were given totaling in excess of $320,000, most of whom make huge differences to students with their own compelling stories to tell.