Kenai Peninsula resident appointed to UA Board of Regents

By Suzie Kendrick
KPC advancement programs manager

After more than two decades, the Kenai Peninsula once again has representation on the UA Board of Regents. Among the four Alaskans recently appointed by Gov. Bill Walker to fill vacant seats on the board is longtime Soldotna resident Lisa Parker.

The peninsula has previously been represented only twice since 1917—when Leo Rhode, from Homer, served from 1948-1955, and when Robert Williams, from Kenai, served from 1985-1993.

A lifelong Alaskan, Parker is no stranger to the University of Alaska system. “I was fortunate to serve on the KPC College Council for six years and also the Mining and Petroleum Training Services Board in the past,” she said. “There are models from KPC which could be replicated in other areas in Alaska – if anything, I think it would be through sharing of what KPC has learned along the way. The next three to five years are going to be tough for the university, so it will be learning how to do more with less.”

Parker is currently employed by Apache Corporation as external affairs and government relations manager. She has extensive background in natural resources development and state and local government, including eight years as government and community relations manager for Agrium USA and as former planning director for the Kenai Peninsula Borough.

Serving on the BOR is a big commitment, but Parker says she is up to the task. “It is overwhelming in terms of the learning curve,” she said. “From budgets, which will dominate a great deal of discussion, to selection of a new university president, I am fortunate in that I have had the opportunity to previously work with existing regents as well as those recently appointed.

“I am also fortunate to have had the opportunity to work around our great state in a variety of careers, but primarily in the natural resource arena. The Kenai Peninsula is a microcosm of the entire state – tourism, fishing, timber, oil/gas, and mining – with the next ten years seeing the Kenai being at the forefront. I hope with the model that has been developed at KPC there is a way to utilize this across Alaska – without any additional costs.”

All the governor’s regents appointments have been confirmed by the Alaska Legislature. Each regent seated on the 11-member board serves an eight-year term, with the exception of the student regent who is nominated from his/her campus and serves a two-year term.

Closing one chapter, beginning a new one

KPC commencements honor students’ and pioneer’s achievements

By Suzie Kendrick
KPC advancement programs manager

Graduating from college is a big deal. It is a huge sigh of relief to finally receive the degree or certificate a student has worked hard for. For some, it may be the first step toward the next stage of their education; for others, it’s the final step that affords the opportunity to directly enter a career field.

The 45th annual KRC graduation ceremony will be held at 7 p.m. May 7 in the Renee C. Henderson Auditorium at Kenai Central High School. The keynote speaker will be Dr. Jane Haigh, KRC assistant professor of history. The KRC valedictorian for 2014-2015 will be Hunter Hamrick, who is graduating with an associate of applied science degree in process technology.

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KPC graduates from the class of 2014 line up to enter the auditorium.

Jean Mirella Brockel is the recipient of the 2015 UAA Meritorious Service Award for her support of education and the arts on the Peninsula and her service to Kenai Peninsula College.

Lisa Parker will be the sole regent representative from the Kenai Peninsula.
Commencement: Celebrating students graduating and facing fiscal realities

By Gary J. Turner
KPC director

Once we hit early April at the college, it’s a quick and furious downhill race to commencement, which this year is May 6 at KBC and May 7 at KRC. Winter may seem long, but commencement shows up on our doorway almost overnight.

Commencement is a time of celebration for our students, their families and friends, but also for faculty and staff. We take this time to celebrate and acknowledge students’ success and ours knowing our graduates will soon reap what they’ve sown, whether it took them months or many years to reach their academic goals.

While many see commencement as an end, the term really means “a beginning or start.” When our students walk across the stage in May, it signals not a time to stop, but to charge forward and face the new challenges ahead.

KPC and the rest of the University of Alaska are also facing a “commencement” of their own, due to the fiscal realities in our state. We are preparing to face the challenges of greatly reduced budgets, and the next two or three years will not be an easy time. We may wind up referring to the last 10 years when it comes to funding as the “good old days,” not just for the university but for state agencies and organizations across the state. The term “the new normal” is being heard a lot.

For the last six months KPC has been strategically reviewing what we may look like in the future, and I have written about some of these efforts in this column. We will handle the budget reductions with which we are dealt, with not only an eye on the dollars but also the KPC faculty and staff who make this such a great institution.

I am unsure yet what we will look like once we come out on the other end of this budget dilemma, but I know that many smart people are working hard to figure that out with the least impact on our most important resource, our employees.

KPC has been here for 51 years and has a proud history; we look forward to at least that many more serving the residents of the Kenai Peninsula Borough and the great state of Alaska.
KPC to offer top-level oil-and-gas industry workforce training this summer

By Joseph Thornton

KPC workforce development & training coordinator

As KPC’s Workforce Training Department develops, addressing the need of a skilled workforce for employers is the template that provides both specific career education with relevant training and high-level transferrable skill abilities for industries. With that in mind, KPC has partnered with Oil and Gas Training, LLC (OnGT) to provide a training program in July that focuses on key hot topics that many companies face as challenges today.

For years many companies have focused on the safety training necessary to meet various governmental requirements, providing more compliance training versus competency in the field/workflow. Believing that competency translates into compliance, OnGT is offering a shift in training to competency in the field and to workflow to help create greater success from the field operations. Despite the costs involved, OnGT considers this move an investment in the employees who are holding the keys to the cash register for the company’s profitable bottom line.

The primary instructor for the training program will be OnGT petroleum engineer Jane Williams, who has a wealth of experience in many areas of the oil and gas industry. Williams worked as a mechanical engineer directly for an oil and gas production company for 25 years, and then as a consultant/instructor for 15 years, passing on her extensive knowledge to the industry.

Williams’s expertise covers multiple aspects of producing, processing and custody transfer of oil and natural gas, and her abundant field experience gives her a strong understanding of the real-world applications. She has a unique ability to explain engineering concepts in an easy-to-understand way for field personnel to implement into their daily workflow.

Williams has chaired and is a key player in many committees with the American Petroleum Institute (API), International School of Hydrocarbon Measurement (ISHM) and Gas Processors Association (GPA), and is very active in developing key standards for the industry. Many view her as an industry leader and rely on her technical knowledge and experience.

A variety of courses will be offered July 15-24 ranging from one day to eight days. Another program will be offered in January 2016 with dates to be determined. Those who participate in the programs will benefit from the ultimate in industry training and enjoy state-of-the-art residential and conferencing facilities at KRC while surrounded by the best of what the Kenai Peninsula has to offer this summer season.

For more information contact Joe Thornton at 262-0212 or jwthornton@kpc.alaska.edu. Additional details and registration are available at http://kpc.alaska.edu/training/.

Innovations: The guided field experience for future educators

By Peter N. Snow

KRC assistant professor of education

Because reading about teaching in a book is very different from spending time in a room with, say, 25 third-graders, I employ guided field experiences in EDFN A101, Introduction to Education, and EDEL A205, Becoming an Elementary Teacher. Guided field experience is a carefully outlined ethnographic approach—a systematic study of people and cultures—to classroom culture, an opportunity for students who are thinking about becoming teachers to get exposure to actual elementary school classrooms early in their college careers.

In this approach, students use ethnographic methods to gain a better understanding of classroom interactions and how these interactions shape teaching and learning. They are required to spend between 10 and 20 hours each semester in elementary school classrooms in the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District. I work closely with Stephanie McDowell, Kenai Peninsula Borough School District human resources specialist, to place my students in local schools with excellent teachers.

Prior to entering the classroom, we spend some time thinking anthropologically about things such as culture, socialization, human interaction, participant-observation, emic and etic perspectives and other fun things.

While the placements are arranged for them, my students must still head into the school on their own and introduce themselves to the principals and teachers. These initial interactions are wonderful opportunities for my students to begin to understand the role of professionalism in their future career. They learn how to dress appropriately, how to communicate effectively, how to show up for scheduled appointments at the correct time—all vital aspects of becoming true professionals.

During the field experience, students are asked to focus on the details of classroom culture, such as the learning environment, instruction, the curriculum, techniques for communicating with children. After observing and taking field notes, students bring actual data about teaching and learning to class for our discussions.

Students who love teaching love the field experience. Students who don’t love the field experience probably won’t love teaching, but at least they will have learned this early in their college careers.

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A Day in the Life:
David Clark: Busy with one major, three minors, grad school plans and public office goals

By Janice Maloney High
KRC associate professor of English

College sophomore David J. Clark is currently in Washington, D.C., but not just to see the cherry blossoms. He is spending the spring semester as an intern in the Native American Political Leadership Program at George Washington University. Specifically, he is serving with the White House Initiative on American Indian and Alaska Native Education, at the U.S. Department of Education. At the same time, he is completing, online, KPC’s “Introduction to Literature” course, as well as political science and sociology courses from UAA.

The sociology major is also pursuing three minors. The first is Alaska Native Policy. “Because my family is Alutiq Alaska Native and has lived throughout the journey to statehood, it is important to learn as much as I can about the complicated relationship between Native Tribes and the U.S. government, and somehow to use both of these to help create positive social change.” His second minor, Japanese Language, is a reflection of his love of travel. The third, Gender Studies, reflects his passion for social justice.

Clark also plans to pursue a master’s degree in public policy. “I have fallen in love with politics and the idea that you can create positive social change with an elected position,” Clark said. “I hope to one day hold public office in Alaska so I can work with Alaska Native and social justice policy.”

Along the way, he also plans to earn a graduate certificate in autism education. “I want to be a mentor to other kids with Asperger’s Syndrome, and let them know that they can achieve whatever they want in life, as long as they work hard, earn good grades, and work to improve their social skills through building better relationships and learning from mistakes.”

Meanwhile, his D.C. days are full, starting with an 8 a.m. metro ride to the Department of Education, completion of his job duties, followed by two hours of evening classes. Then it’s another metro trip back to his GWU residence to tackle homework. “After 11 p.m., I put the homework away, hang out with my roommate, or watch Saturday Night Live sketches on my phone,” he said.

Weekends often start with a Netflix movie, seeing the D.C. sights, or taking low-cost trips to nearby cities. Recently, he planned to spend a day in Baltimore for a Bob Dylan concert—a round-trip adventure costing $20 in bus fare.

Clark will be back in Alaska by fall semester, to continue his academic pursuits.

KBC hosts visit for elementary students looking to the future

By Kimberly Frost
KBC Student and Enrollment Services coordinator

Children are often asked, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” More recently, a few children were also asked, “What type of postsecondary training and education would you need in order to realize that vision?”

That’s actually a question that fifth- and sixth-graders at Chapman School in Anchor Point and sixth-graders at West Homer Elementary have been exploring over a six-week period through a Sallie Mae Fund-sponsored program called Kids2College.

With a program goal of raising early college awareness and sending the message that postsecondary training is important and attainable, Kids2College alumni are more likely to discuss college preparation with parents and teachers and to understand college is possible for them. For those children whose families may not have a college-going history, it’s an important opportunity to learn first-hand about the career avenues and life experiences offered by a postsecondary education.

This is the second year that KBC has worked with the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education and the UA College Savings Plan to organize the program in Homer. KBC hosted a visit to the campus April 10, and about 70 students spent the day taking fun, age-appropriate college classes. KBC faculty offered an exciting schedule of courses that included Marine Biology, Alaska History and Geography, Psychology, Communication and Computer Science.

To prepare for the visit, students explored various career pathways, presented the information they learned to classmates, and were visited by community volunteer professionals who talked about their own college and career experiences. Students considered how the academic choices they were making now could set them on a college path and discussed a variety of financial aid options available to Alaskan students.

Kids2College organizers said they believed that the children jumped into the program with energy and enthusiasm because it was the kind of program that can empower young people to believe in themselves and set challenging goals for their own futures.

The Kachemak Bay Campus welcomes participants to their day on campus.

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Word on Campus:
“What is the quality of your relationship with KPC faculty?
What qualities do you most admire in your instructors?”
Compiled by KPC advancement department

Mercedes Becker, KBC, associate of arts
“I admire the time and care the instructors take to help students be successful.”

Keeven Joshua Lee Macik, KRC, associate of applied science paramedic technology / bachelor of arts biology
“For me, the faculty at KPC are like a family and, as a family, I admire the dedication, loyalty, honesty, and love each exemplary instructor provides to their students. I have never felt more supported at any university than I have at KPC.”

Jared Sekula, AES, associate of applied science process technology
“The quality of the relationships I have built with the KPC faculty are remarkable. I admire their dedication and commitment to the student's education. Through the few years I've spent at KPC, I have witnessed time and again the staff as well as instructors stay late to assist with questions, homework and to proctor tests for students whose work schedules are conflicting. They also go above and beyond to ensure my classmates and I are prepared for future jobs upon graduation.”

Calvin Johnson, KBC, bachelor of arts justice
“My quality is that of growing friendship. I most admire the way they connect with their students.”

Amanda Dorough, KRC, associate of applied science paramedic technology
“I feel like the faculty at KPC are very friendly and always willing to help. I really admire their commitment to their fields and their enthusiasm in raising up the next generation of professionals.”

Bruce Nibert, KBC, bachelor of arts business management
“Over 99 percent to the good. The willingness to help out with questions in relation to assignments.”

Ricardo (Rick) Cornejo, AES, associate of applied science process technology
“The quality of my relationship with my instructors is great due to the small class sizes. I admire the instructors and especially appreciate the hands-on instruction.”

Kyle Potoczek, KRC, associate of applied science process technology
“I admire ease of talk-ability and like that I feel comfortable around my professors.”

Climate Change Symposium hosted by KPC Student Union and League of Women Voters

By Dave Atcheson
KRC evening coordinator

When the Kenai Peninsula League of Women Voters first approached the KRC Student Union about participating in a local Climate Change Symposium back in October, the idea was to find out more about what is happening in their own backyard.

In addition to learning about possible causes, those attending the end-of-March symposium could also see what solutions there might be, especially to the problems evidenced more and more as the Earth’s climate changes. Some of those issues, such as increased wildfires, coastal erosion, and fisheries concerns, definitely hit close to home and would be the main topics covered during the event.

The next step was to elicit help from local scientists, such Branden Bornemann, an adjunct instructor with KPC, and Dr. John Morton, a lead scientist with the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. Along with their staffs, they immediately began to recruit fellow researchers to present information on the day of the event.

When the symposium was under way, participants included U.S. Geological Service climatologist Dr. Jeremy Littell, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service forester Mitch Michaud, and Cook Inletkeeper science director Sue Mauger. The keynote address was delivered by KBC adjunct Nancy Lord, a past Alaska Writer Laureate and author of Early Warming.

There were also information tables set up in the Brockel Commons that included various groups from around the Kenai Peninsula, from the Homer Electric Association to the Soldotna High School Green Club. There was even a lunch break featuring fresh local ingredients, such as Cook Inlet salmon and salads made with Alaska-grown potatoes and carrots.

The day concluded with a panel discussion featuring Borough Mayor Mike Navarre, as well as representatives from the cities of Soldotna, Kenai, Seward and Homer.

Over the course of the day, about 200 people attended the various activities. Many of the participants said they hoped that the event was just the beginning of a critical dialogue about changing climate and the steps that might be taken in the future. They even set up a website where people can get more information or become involved: http://kenaichange.org/
KPC process technology program receives national industry certification

By Jeffrey Laube
KRC assistant professor of process technology

After an extensive audit of KPC’s process technology degree program, the North American Process Technology Alliance (NAPTA) has endorsed and certified the programs at both KRC and AES. The certification award was based on the results of a 2014 audit of both programs. KPC is now one of only 17 colleges in the nation to receive the NAPTA endorsement.

NAPTA is a national organization of process technology education (PTEC) providers and their business, industry and community advisors attempting to develop a diverse, qualified process technology talent pool to meet workforce needs in North America. According to the NAPTA website, the organization is the standard-bearer of PTEC curriculum and provides audits of programs and endorsements of those that meet its criteria.

The audit also examines each course in the process technology program, including an inspection of the curriculum, textbook lecture material, hands-on aspects and all course assessments. The audit scrutinizes faculty credentials and includes interviews with current process technology students, alumni and employers.

Through collaboration of industry, educational institutions, government, and others, NAPTA develops standards for PTEC programs that assure quality graduates and regularly evaluates conformity to those standards. NAPTA also evaluates and improves the NAPTA curriculum, supports educational materials to meet the needs of industry and educational partners, participates in activities that advance process technology career awareness, and drives instructional excellence by providing professional development opportunities.

Annually, NAPTA hosts an Instructor Skills Conference (ISC). This conference helps industry trainers and college educators improve their PTEC training skills. The past three years, Jeffrey Laube, KRC assistant professor of process technology, has been invited to deliver ISC workshops. This September, Laube will deliver two more workshops.

The partnership of the NAPTA and KPC helps to maintain the highest standards of process technology education to meet the needs of Alaska’s PTEC workforce.

The endorsement award will be presented at the NAPTA quarterly meeting on April 24 at the Isle of Capri Convention Center in Lake Charles, LA. For more information about the meeting, visit http://naptaonline.org/meetings.php

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Pictured left to right, Dorothy Ortego, NAPTA standards and quality, industry co-chair, Sasol North America; Jeffrey Laube, KRC assistant professor of process technology; Tommie Broome, NAPTA standards and quality, education co-chair, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College.
Photo provided by Jeffrey Laube

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A Typical Day at KPC Res Life:
Video racing game teaches drunk driving effects

By Timothy Alsobrooks
KRC residence hall student

On the evening of March 27, police cars litter the KRC Res Life parking lot. Inside, three Alaska State Troopers stand imposingly in front of a group of eleven KRC residence hall students conducting what appears to be an interrogation.

But the troopers aren’t here to investigate a crime or lay down the law; they’re here to inform the students about the dangers of drinking and driving. Inside the multi-purpose room, the atmosphere is one of excitement and solidarity—not fear or hostility.

“Some people are huge fans of movie stars or musicians. I’m an Alaska State Troopers fan girl,” remarks Kirsten McBride, a senior in the psychology program at KRC.

The event begins with a question-and-answer session, wherein students learn the legal blood alcohol content limit while operating a vehicle—0.08 percent—and whether or not it is possible to receive a DUI citation on a bicycle (it isn’t).

As the Q&A session comes to a close, anticipation builds for the highlight of the troopers’ visit: the Drunk Goggles Mario Kart Competition. Two at a time, the students don “drunk goggles,” which simulate visual impairments corresponding to blood-alcohol levels above the legal limit, and play Mario Kart, a video racing game and a Res Life favorite.

Cole McCrary and Mitchell Ogden, both second-year students in KPC’s process technology program, are among the first to race.

“This is impossible!” Cole exclaims with his head craned to the right as his Mario Kart swerves off the road. Mitchell’s Mario Kart endures more than a few accidents, but he manages to win the race.

“You have to control your speed in this game. This was a cool idea,” he says. “It definitely showed that you can’t drive safely when you’ve been drinking.”

Milestones:
Sara Reinert marks 25 years of service to KPC

By Janice Maloney High
KRC associate professor of English

When Sara Reinert, KBC associate professor of mathematics, offers a viewpoint about higher education, people listen. She has the experience to back up her views, having just completed her 25th year of fulltime service to KPC.

After many summer visits, the Kansas school teacher moved to Alaska in 1986 for a short-term job as a Homer High School volleyball coach. Six months later she was hired by KBC as an adjunct instructor. Three years later came the fulltime math position.

Among her favorite classes to teach is Statistics, with its ability to engage students in current real-world applications. “For example, every semester I am able to update the climate change models we create using the latest data from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change,” Reinert said.

Statistics is a difficult course, and not without student resistance. Yet such pushback is the source of one of her favorite teaching memories. “One student in particular was quite noisy in his complaints. But then, three years later, when he was in graduate school, he called to thank me for teaching him, giving me credit for being ‘right’ in everything I had taught him,” she said.

Also with its rewards has been the KPC growth—new buildings, more faculty and more programs. “However, that has also meant growth in things like extra bureaucracy and trainings; things that takes us away from our students.” In terms of the overall University of Alaska management, she sees more challenges than rewards. “By following a business model approach, the organic and creative nature of teaching and program development has become more orchestrated and canned. While this may be more sound financially, I believe the quality of our ‘product’ suffers,” she said.

Beyond business and bureaucracy, Reinert values the relationships she has forged. Besides valuing her students, Reinert also enjoys “the high quality of coworkers it has always been my pleasure to spend every day with.”

Reinert’s quarter-century of KPC experience provides with solid perspectives. She urges new faculty members to learn the full depth and breadth of the UAA system. “Get outside the comfort corner of your own workspace. Join committees, serve on Faculty Senate, talk to people outside your field. To understand the big picture, gather a lot of little ones. You will see what works and what does not in this massively complex UAA organization.”

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My Trip to Photoshop World:
The industry's largest Photoshop, Lightroom and photography training conference

By Jesse Glaves
KRC communications
information systems professional

Like most things computer-related, software changes at a rapid pace, and it's extremely important to keep my finger on the pulse of the industry. My trip to Photoshop World in Atlanta, Ga., provided me with an opportunity to do just that.

I first started using Photoshop in 1998, when the version was 5.0. Seventeen years and ten versions later, I'm still a frequent user of the software. My duties in the advancement office at KPC require me to design layouts for newspapers, magazines, web banners, motion graphics, postcards, annual reports, brochures and more.

Despite the name of the conference, Photoshop World is much more than Photoshop. It's touted as the only place to find anything anyone ever wanted to know about Photoshop, Lightroom and photography under one roof; it was the photography that I was particularly interested in. For me, photography is a passion born out of necessity. After losing access to KPC's professional photographer several years ago, I inherited the job of being KPC's main photographer. I absolutely love it, but there is a lot to learn, especially when stepping into the shoes of someone who has worked professionally for so many years.

Thankfully, Photoshop World hosts some of the world's greatest photography instructors, including Joe McNally, an internationally acclaimed photographer whose career has spanned 30 years. He has shot cover stories for countless magazines and has contributed to National Geographic for 23 years. At the conference, McNally was my personal workshop instructor.

The day before Photoshop World began, I accompanied Joe and a small group of conference attendees on a field trip to a remote Atlanta warehouse, filled with the world's best equipment and several professional models. The workshop was entitled “Characters On Location: Telling Stories With Light.” Each student had personal access to Joe, and direct control over each shoot that was set up. He taught us how to work with light, how to pose and communicate with models, and how to be confident in difficult situations. It was an invaluable experience.

The next three days were equally rewarding, as I navigated the seemingly endless array of training opportunities, offered by more of the world's most well-known photographers and software gurus. By the end of the conference, I was full of ideas and more confident than ever to return to my job at the college.

I made friends with some of the other conference attendees. A man from New Jersey and a group from Australia became my dinner-mates. I entered contests on the expo floor, including the Westcott (equipment vendor) Shootout Competition, a popular annual Photoshop World in which Westcott creates shootout bays featuring live models, elaborate themes, and backdrops. Guests are invited to shoot and to submit photographs taken at these booths. The top three participating photographs are chosen to win prizes and recognition at the end of the conference. It was a great honor to be selected from hundreds of submissions as the third-place winner with my Pocahontas composite submission.

I hope to attend the conference again someday. Software and photography will continue to evolve, and I will need to stay at the forefront of these technologies. The conference provided a great opportunity to slow down and truly focus on things I rarely have the time to do. My trip to Photoshop World is not one I will soon forget.

Glave’s third-place entry in Wescott’s Shootout competition.
Photos provided by Jesse Glaves

Adobe’s booth on the expo floor.

Lighting setup at Character’s on Location workshop.

On the bus returning from the workshop.