Dr. Paul Landen is moving into KRC residence hall

By Tammie Willis
KRC associate director of Residence Life

Kenai Peninsula College proudly welcomes the newest resident of Kenai Hall, Dr. Paul Landen, KRC associate professor of psychology. Dr. Landen, as KPC’s first Faculty in Residence, will be moving in just in time for the start of the Fall 2014 semester.

“The Faculty in Residence program is designed to provide mentoring and support for students who are interested in having a more informal, casual relationship with a faculty member,” Landen said.

As the Faculty in Residence, Landen will teach a psychology class in the residence hall and host regular activities, serve as a liaison between residential students and faculty, participate in hall events, and visit regularly with students.

“I simply plan to be around a lot,” Landen said. “I’ll be taking students to shop or to the movies and simply being an active part of the life of the residence hall.”

Dr. Landen will be the first smiling face attendees saw at the 2013 Advice & A Slice. Stuive is the principle organizer of the annual event held at the KRC.

Prospective students and their parents are encouraged to attend the information packed event to get a real feel for college life at KPC.

The event is geared toward high school seniors, but it is open to the public. Advice & A Slice is designed to allow prospective students to envision themselves as members of the KPC community and to encourage current students to deepen their engagement.

Calling all high school seniors: Learn about KPC, eat pizza, spend a night in the dorm at Advice & A Slice

By Christina Stuive
KRC assistant professor of counseling

What do you get when you mix pizza with a room full of KRC faculty and staff members and student association representatives? The second annual Advice & A Slice will be held from 4-6 p.m. on April 11 at KRC. Advice & A Slice provides prospective students with a relaxed open-house environment that showcases academics and resources at KRC.

While munching on free pizza, attendees can chat with faculty members about potential majors, discover how the library and Learning Center provide academic support, begin planning internships, and receive beginning career advice from the Career and Community Engagement Center.

Financial aid staff will field questions about scholarships and FASFA applications. In addition, parents and students can learn from representatives of the Counseling and Advising and the Student Health Center about resources that keep students healthy.

Students from rural communities can meet with the Rural and Student Services coordinator and see how KRC is committed to every student’s success.

Prospective students can also learn about some of the opportunities afforded by the big changes KRC has undergone in the last year, such as the addition of the Career and Technical Education Center and the residence hall. Students interested in the residence will have the chance to experience a night there after attending Advice & A Slice.

Students who spend the night will enjoy breakfast served by Native and Rural Student Services staff and Counseling and Advising Department faculty. However, space is limited, so reservations must be made to ensure accommodations through Counseling and Advising (262-0383).

Also at Advice & A Slice, door prizes will be awarded. Attendees have a chance to win KPC logo items and food prizes, and one grand-prize winner will receive a tuition waiver valued at more than $500.
UA budget reductions continue to grow
By Gary J. Turner
KPC director

In my last column I wrote about the UA budget and the impact of the budget reduction proposed by the governor. Since then, both the House and Senate finance committees have added an additional $1 million to the reduction making it $15.9 million, less than requested by the Board of Regents. This is definitely not the direction we were hoping to see in Juneau.

However, both committees provided $6.9 million in “new” money to partially cover new expenses, such as scheduled employee pay raises and operating costs for new buildings slated to open this year. There are some variations in each committee’s proposal, but at this time UA will suffer a net cut of $8 million below the FY14 funding level. This is by no means the end as the budget will continue to be discussed over the next few weeks.

Administrators and faculty members at UA campuses across the state have been meeting on their respective campuses to discuss how to handle this major reduction. It is a painful, but necessary process.

As I wrote last month, KPC has addressed its share of the reduction, and we are optimistic the steps we have taken will get us through the next year and maybe one more. That is if the reduction amount doesn’t increase, and we won’t know that for sure until the governor signs the final budget in May.

In the last few weeks it was estimated the state would run a $2.3 billion deficit in this fiscal year, so painful cuts are expected across all Alaska government. If UA continues to receive greatly reduced budgets, the impact on the University and KPC will be deep, painful and long lasting. Programs will need to be cut and people laid off, and those moves will affect virtually all Alaskans, not just our students and employees.

I know many of you have testified or written comments to our legislators and governor supporting full funding of the university, and I sincerely appreciate that. I believe we will need to ask for your support next year and the years after.

When UA suffered similar budget reductions in the 1990s, it was called the “Decade in the Desert.” I’m hoping this isn’t the first year of another ten-year drought.
‘Showpiece’ memory photo quilt planned to celebrate KPC’s history

By Clark Fair
KRC adjunct writing instructor

The medical history of Patty Dombovy led to her interest in quilting. The history of Kenai Peninsula College, where Dombovy works as faculty secretary for KRC's Business and Industry Department, led to her most challenging quilting project: a queen-sized “memory photo” quilt to celebrate the college's 50th anniversary. Once the quilt is completed, it will be displayed at KRC.

When she was five years old, Dombovy developed a limp that concerned her parents enough to prompt a series of tests that revealed the absence of a complete hip socket on her left side. As a six-year-old patient who spent seven months in the Shriners Hospital in Minneapolis, Dombovy noted that every bed her large ward was covered with a handmade quilt crafted by hospital volunteers.

“When my mom would visit me, we always admired the talent of those who created them,” she said. “She taught me to sew at a young age (and) I started making very basic quilts in my early teen years.”

Dombovy called her mother’s quilts “very utilitarian”—more practical than decorative—and decided in the early 1990s to teach herself how to make “pretty” patterned quilts instead of just blankets. At that point, she “fell in love with the craft” and in 2003 created a memory quilt for her mother-in-law’s 80th birthday.

In 2013, she heard about historical photographs being gathered for a KPC history book and investigated the creation of a “showpiece” quilt from some of those photos. After KPC Director Gary J. Turner green-lighted her project, she contacted the book’s authors and requested some images to work with.

Dombovy has researched layouts for her quilt and will do all the design work and sewing. Once the top is complete, she will have it professionally machine quilted. For fabric she plans to use school colors, mostly variegated white-on-white with blue accents, and employ some KPC art student batiks to frame the photos with a “nice pop of color.” The photos will be printed on actual fabric with a paper backing that will be removed once the ink has dried.

“I am honored to be able to make this memory quilt for KPC's 50th anniversary,” said Dombovy. “What a great time to be a part of the history of the college.”

KRC professor ready to join congregation of nerds in Florida

By Dorothy Gray
KRC assistant professor of English

Scholarships were a huge help to me when I worked on both my undergraduate and graduate degrees, so it's probably no surprise that I would apply for another scholarship even decades later. However, it might shock some to know that this time I sought a scholarship to attend Nerd Nation. For those who know me, I don't consider myself much of a nerd, but here's how I got involved and, I guess to some degree, became a nerd.

As the new advisor for the Phi Theta Kappa honor society here at KRC, I had a chance to apply for a scholarship to attend the 2014 PTK annual convention at Walt Disney World in Orlando Fla. In the dead of winter, what right-minded Alaskan wouldn't take a chance to escape for a few days to a warm climate?

In early January, I was notified that I was among 20 other new advisors chosen to attend this prestigious event, but the best part of this scholarship was that I would be able to take a PTK student with me to Nerd Nation, where the motto is “IT’S COOL 2B SMART!”

An application was sent out to our local PTK members, and Jessica Ramos-Cortez was chosen to attend. Jessica is a new student whose family moved to the United States from Colombia just two years ago.

Jessica’s selection was based upon her strong educational goals, the first of which is to earn a bachelor's degree in science with an emphasis in forensic chemistry. She also plans to expand her knowledge of laws and government, which will be helpful for her career in the criminal field as a forensic chemist. Jessica also wanted to attend the PTK National Conference because this annual event offers the opportunity to grow as a leader and explore myriad paths to success.

From April 23-26, Jessica will join the ranks of other PTK scholars from all over the country and celebrate “IT’S COOL 2B SMART!”

Editor’s Note: The first use of the word “nerd” was in the Dr. Seuss story, If I Ran the Zoo. The narrator wrote how he would bring a Nerd from Ka-Troo to the zoo. The Nerd was illustrated as a grumpy creature wearing a black T-shirt and having disheveled hair and sideburns.

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A Day in the Life: Aaron and Erika Mason
Navy veterans welcome the challenge of higher education

By Janice Maloney High
KRC associate professor of English

A move from San Diego to Wasilla might seem like a big change for most people. But for Aaron and Erika Mason, change is nothing new. The two are U.S. Navy veterans. Between them, they have 18 years of naval service, including deployments in support of Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. Aaron, born and raised in Anchorage, and Erika, a native of Ashland, Ore., met while on duty in Singapore. The veterans, both experienced diesel mechanics, are now making use of the G.I. Bill to pursue their joint goal of becoming engineers.

The Masons take some face-to-face classes through the UAA MatSu College, as well as online process technology and communication courses through KPC. “We try to take all of our Internet classes together, and we have to take different classes on campus so while one of us is at school the other can take part of our three daughters, ages five, two, and seven weeks,” said Erika.

Being together in the online courses means each can critique the other’s work and help the other stay on track. On the other hand, “It can be difficult to change an idea or come up with a new one to separate our work from one another,” said Aaron.

Whether the course is online or face-to-face, there is one thing that really matters, said Erika. “I prefer having a professor that stays involved. If the professor is actively engaged in teaching and communicating, it is great.” The Masons have a “ton” of homework, which they tackle late at night or early in the morning, when the children are asleep.

In October the family made the move to Wasilla, where Aaron’s parents live. They do miss the sunny days in San Diego but appreciate the snow and seasons in Alaska. “We are the typical Alaska family; the winter is all about sledding and having fun in the snow,” said Erika. Even in recreational activities, the two are in sync. “We have recently gotten into bow hunting, so it should be interesting to see who takes down a moose first this year.”

KPC veterans featured in Murkowski’s ‘Veteran Spotlight’

By Clark Fair
KRC adjunct writing instructor

Last fall when she first heard she was being considered for inclusion in U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski’s monthly “Veteran Spotlight” feature, KRC librarian Jane Fuerstenau doubted that her story was important enough to tell. “It has been over 25 years since I was discharged from the Navy,” Fuerstenau said. “And I was only in for five years. I never fought in a war and have done many other things since I left the military. I thought my experience was pretty typical.”

But Murkowski’s interviewer, Andrea Gusty, arrived on campus a short time later, and Fuerstenau, a former Navy jet mechanic, found herself in front of a video camera, telling her story. Last month that story appeared on the senator’s website.

In October, Fuerstenau’s colleague John Pollock, a retired Marine colonel and KPC veteran services coordinator, was also featured. In November, the interview of 82-year-old Kenai resident Herb Stettler, an Army veteran of the Korean War, made the website.

“It was an honor to be selected as KPC’s first Veteran Spotlight personality,” said Pollock, who served three tours in Iraq during his 25-year military career. “My children knew very little about my combat service, and when they watched the interview it provided them new insights about where their dad disappeared to when they were younger. Sen. Murkowski’s initiative provides Alaskans with a window into the challenges and sacrifices veterans faced during their service.”

Other KPC veterans interviewed for later inclusion in Veteran Spotlight are: retired Navy commander Bill Howell, KPC director of Student Services; Army medic Paul Perry, KRC assistant professor of paramedic technology; Air Force electronics specialist Henry Haney, KRC assistant professor of process technology; Navy machinist’s mate Dave Stang, KPC facilities/maintenance supervisor; and retired Air Force captain Gary J. Turner, KPC director.

In conjunction with the Library of Congress’ Veterans History Project, Veteran Spotlight features biographies and interviews with Alaskans who served the United States abroad. Created in 2000, the Veterans History Project of the American Folklife Center collects, preserves and makes accessible the personal accounts of American war veterans.

To view interviews in the Spotlight series, visit http://www.murkowski.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=spotlight-veterans. Once interviews have been posted on the senator’s website, they are also made available at www.youtube.com.
**Word on Campus:**

“What did you do on Spring break, and what was the best part of it?”

Compiled by KPC advancement department

Geary York, AES, associate of applied science process technology
“During my Spring Break I worked on the Slope, studied and took care of my daughter. Of course the best part of Spring Break was being with my daughter.”

Morgan Reed, KBC, associate of arts
“It spent my spring break doing homework. The best part of break was getting to play more chess!”

Kate Mueller, KRC, associate of arts and corrections certificate
“I worked over Spring Break. The best part of break was the one day I got to sleep in!”

Mallory Drover, KBC, associate of applied science paramedical technology
“Visited my hometown, and the best part was coming back to Homer and remembering why I love it here!”

Amelia Tyrer, KBC, associate of arts
“During Spring Break I worked on my homework and finished a paper and blog I needed to do for this week. The best part of Spring Break for was, for me, practicing Spanish.”

Brett Fleming, KRC, associate of applied science process technology
“I spent spring break building a rock climbing wall. The best part was when I finally got to climb it!”

Will Hastings, AES, associate of applied science process technology
“During Spring Break I took care of my 4- and 7-year old children and worked out. The best part of being home during Spring Break was when we got 11 inches of snow.”

Matt Parshall, KRC, bachelor of arts psychology
“I spent my spring break doing homework. The best part of break was getting to play more chess!”

**Bringing dorms to KPC was a decades-long struggle**

By Clark Fair and Tony Lewis

KPC 50th anniversary history book authors

The four-decade effort to bring housing to KPC began in 1969, before a campus even existed, with its first advisory board meeting. But the notion was quickly dismissed when it was determined that enough local housing existed to meet student needs. UA President William Wood praised the decision: “Once you get into the dorm business, life becomes very, very complicated.”

Nevertheless, when Alaska oil development created a need for more industry-related jobs, Kenai Peninsula Community College revisited the housing issue. Expecting an influx of students to its vocational programs, the college in 1975 pushed the idea of leasing dormitory facilities from the Kenai Native Association at the former Wildwood Army Station.

A year later, British Petroleum wanted to train workers at KPCC but found the college’s facilities inadequate. “Lack of housing makes it extremely difficult to take advantage of the courses offered,” a BP training specialist wrote to KPCC’s vocational coordinator, Tom Wagoner.

It was evident to Wagoner, however, that neither the state nor university would fund the project, so he proposed alternatives he claimed would be cost-effective and create needed housing rapidly. But his ideas were rejected, and KPCC entered the 1980s with a burgeoning enrollment, fewer student-housing options and a greater determination to build an on-campus dorm.

Because of high rental prices and low vacancy rates in the early 1980s, many KPCC students struggled to find adequate housing. It wasn’t uncommon for four or five students to cram into a two-bedroom apartment. Some students who lacked electricity and running water showered on campus before classes. One student lived in a tent on college property.

As an emissary for the college, vocational instructor John Williams traveled to the Legislature armed with a housing study, a plan for a $5.2 million, 200-unit on-campus dormitory, and a stack of resolutions and letters of support from major organizations and every peninsula city council and chamber of commerce. Still, UA refused to budge.

When oil prices bottomed out in the mid-1980s, state budgets were slashed and the housing topic disappeared. It resurfaced briefly in the early 1990s under Ginger Steffy’s administration, but tight state finances meant newly renamed KPC had to be realistic about its chances of securing construction money.

Then in 2003 Director Gary Turner returned to the housing topic. Hoping to make KPC a transitional college for Alaska Natives and rural students, Turner needed student housing.

For several years Turner’s plans fizzled under the scrutiny of UA brass before President Mark Hamilton started responding in 2007 to Turner’s reasoning and reams of documentation. Speaker of the House Mike Chenault brought funding for the residence hall to state voters, who also approved a $15.25 million career and technical education center in a general obligation bond. Construction of a 96-bed, $18-million facility was completed in the fall of 2013.

KPC’s first Residence Hall opened in August 2013 at KRC.

Photo by KPC advancement
KPC introduces new staff and faculty members

Compiled by Clark Fair
KPC adjunct writing instructor

KPC IS Net technician

1. What are your duties?
My duties include desktop support, classroom audio/visual support, and core infrastructure support. In other words, keeping computers working, building new classroom setups and fixing old ones, and maintaining the equipment behind the scenes in the telecom room that allows everything else to function.

2. What was your last position? Where?
Before this job, I worked as a teaching assistant for the UAF Computer Science Department while I finished my bachelor’s and master’s degrees. In my other life, I am a commercial tour boat captain during the summer season.

3. Where did you go to school?
I recently completed my BS in computer science with a mathematics minor and an MS in computer science at UAF. I was a part of their five-year BS/MS combo fast-track program, so I received both of my degrees when I graduated in Spring 2013.

4. What brought you to Alaska?
I was born in Homer and have spent the majority of my life there with a few brief, and some not-so-brief, breaks in Washington, Indiana, Taiwan and Fairbanks.

5. What are your long-term goals at KPC?
I'm a product of the UA system, and I am excited to be in a position where I can start to give back to it. I enjoy working in an educational setting where I can help to educate individuals as well as work on the basic hardware/software side of things. Over the long run, I hope to assist in fully integrating modern technologies both in and outside of the classroom to benefit students and staff alike.

KRC associate professor of mathematics and CIOS, and process technology

1. What are your duties?
To educate students.

2. What was your last position? Where?
I taught with the Kenai Borough School District at Nikiski Elementary and Mountain View Elementary. I was a science/technology teacher, instructing all ages how to use computers, software and Internet. I also conducted simple experiments and labs as well as demonstrations of all areas within the scientific realm. And I was a media librarian/teacher.

3. Where did you go to school?
I started my education at Montgomery College in Germantown, Md. Then I transferred to Embry Riddle Aeronautical University, the Daytona Beach campus. I majored in avionics engineering technology. While in an aviation career, I obtained my airframe and power plant license and later my IA (inspection authorization). When I had kids, I returned to school, the University of Florida, and finished a master’s in education.

4. What brought you to Alaska?
I was in junior high school when I somehow learned about Alaska. I subscribed to Alaska Magazine. I contacted travel agencies to obtain free literature, pictures and information about traveling to Alaska as well as places all over the world. I fell in love with traveling and developed a love of learning about other people's cultures, rhythms and daily lives. After my husband and I endured HOT summers and endless spiders and big bugs and very FLAT terrain in Florida, we headed north.

5. What are your long-term goals at KPC?
I enjoy trying to inspire students to develop and grow a love of learning, not just trying to pass to “check off” the requirement. I continue to try to find ways to knock down barriers student have with mathematics. I would also like to work towards making the new instrumentation lab into a dynamic dimension and ignite insight into the elementary workings of instruments and controlling process.

KRC testing center assistant

1. What are your duties?
The testing center provides a proctored environment for e-learning tests, remote university proctored tests, and a testing alternative for students in face-to-face classes. I provide support for the testing administrator. Duties revolve around the many aspects of a secure and professional testing environment, from logging students into secure test sites to making a pot of coffee.

2. What was your last position? Where?
I retired last year from a teaching career with the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, where I spent 18 years as an elementary teacher-librarian and science teacher. Children and books are both simply amazing, and I continue to work in the library at Kaleidoscope School of Arts & Science, a charter school in Kenai. As one of the founders of the charter, I remain involved and committed to alternative choices in education.

3. Where did you go to school?
I started school as a kindergartner at Lewis & Clark Elementary School in Richland, Wash. There were quite a few years of sometimes fine, sometimes forgettable education to follow. Eventually, I had the privilege of attending KRC, where I obtained a bachelor’s in elementary education. I had attended a large university some years earlier and am forever grateful for the community atmosphere and accessibility of KRC instructors.

4. What brought you to Alaska?
The gypsy lifestyle brought our family here. As a young family, we moved around a bit, trying out different places and experiences. When we landed on the Kenai Peninsula, our second journey to Alaska, I had no idea we would stay.

5. What are your long-term goals at KPC?
I enjoy the opportunity to be part of the staff at KRC, and I continue to take advantage of the educational resources available by taking classes of personal and professional interest. Time will tell what the future holds.
The approaching end of the current semester holds special significance for two long-time members of the KRC family: Bill Howell, KPC Student Services director, and Deborah Sonberg, KRC assistant professor of computer information and office systems. Both are retiring.

For Howell, the decision follows 10 years of service to KPC. During that time, the college student population has increased from 1,600 to almost 3,300 students, bringing with it a corresponding growth of duties for the office.

"No matter what our size," said Howell, "the college and this office have never lost sight of our focus: to help each of our students to reach their individual goals."

Howell has for several semesters, taught a beer appreciation class. In addition, he has published a series of "Beer on the Last Frontier" books, and has recently contracted to write a book on the history of Alaska brewing. "Retirement will give me more time to pursue my writing, as well as my class. I became a grandfather last fall, and retirement will give me more opportunity to enjoy this new experience," said Howell.

The appeal of adequate grandparent time also played a role in Sonberg's retirement decision. She and her family also look forward to the luxury of traveling anytime they want, not just during official breaks in the school year. But leaving is not that easy.

"I get such energy from my students," she said. "The classroom interaction is invigorating."

Sonberg has also played a key role as the KPC coordinator for the UAA Program Assessment Committee. "I will be available in the fall, if need be, to help transition someone new into that program assessment role," she said.

Meanwhile, she is happily booking cruises and planning visits to her grandchildren.
Travelogue:
Costa Rica: A dental vacation to remember

By Suzie Kendrick
KPC advancement programs manager

Dental and vacation in the same sentence? That’s what I said when my husband told me there was a more affordable option for the dental work we both needed. Two of his family members had successfully traveled to Costa Rica for dental work at a fraction of the cost they had been quoted in Alaska.

Doug needed more extensive work than I did, not that I was a poster child of dental health. He needed several teeth pulled, two implants and two bridges to get his smile back. He had gotten a local quote of $9,000 for one bridge leaving him feeling like we’d never be able to afford all the work he needed.

I had been unable to chew on my right side without pain for several years. Two dentists had evaluated me locally and each had proposed vastly different treatment plans that left me with little confidence. I felt depressed and unsure of how to proceed.

After a lot of research, including checking with our insurance company, we decided to contact Advance Dental, located in San Jose, Costa Rica, a preferred provider of dental services for our carrier. Our first contact was via e-mail and we asked lots of questions. This was our first out-of-country health adventure and we wanted to make an informed decision before traveling so far.

Advance Dental requested all recent dental records, and Dr. Eugenio Brenes, D.D.S., M.S., called for an extensive consultation to discuss our options. Brenes, a specialist in prosthodontics trained at Loma Linda University in Los Angeles, studied our cases but was careful to point out that until we were sitting in the office he could make only limited determinations. He explained his conservative, evidence-based approach to dentistry: “The best dentistry is the least dentistry.” He had me at “least,” and by the end of the conversation Doug and I both felt this was the way to go.

Tickets were purchased and reservations were made to stay two weeks at the Che Tica Ranch, an all-inclusive wellness center catering to medical tourists—a thriving industry in Costa Rica.

We arrived late on Sunday evening and were met by a driver who took us to Che Tica. Our host, Ruben Martin, showed us our lovely Alaska-themed cottage, The Ketchikan, and we devoured the dinner they had saved for us. Suffice it to say we loved everything about the Ranch; visit their website to see why.

As part of our stay, the Ranch provided all transportation to and from appointments. At eight o’clock the next morning we were having exams, x-rays, photographs and thorough medical history evaluations. By 1 p.m. I was having a root canal on one of the teeth I had been told I would lose. This all-day visit was the first of seven sessions I would have; Doug had five more sessions.

As for the vacation part of the trip, it wasn’t all dental-centric. As part of our package, Advance Dental provided a free tour that we got to choose—Tortuga Island off the Pacific coast proved to be epic. In addition, we did another trip into the rain forest for canopy zip-lining and a 12-mile white-water raft trip.

The take home: I can chew without pain and lost no teeth. Doug got two implants placed and temporary bridges until he returns in September to have the implants crowned and the permanent bridges installed. I guess we’ll have to go back to Costa Rica to finish our wonderful dental adventure. And we can’t wait!