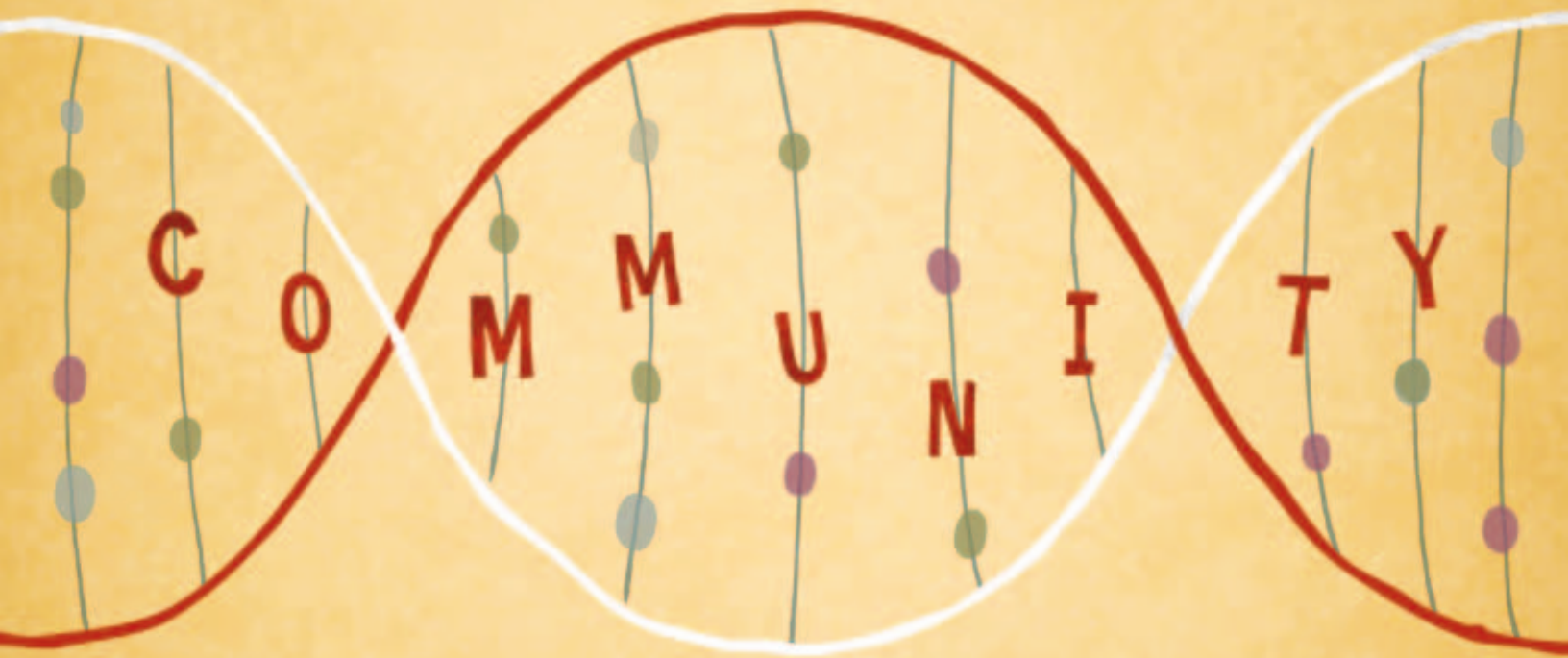


FALL 2011

VITAE

THE MAGAZINE OF
VALENCIA COLLEGE



Embracing the new,
without changing our DNA

VITAE

Rooted in the Latin word for “life,” vitae (vee-tay) means: the course of one’s life or career; a short account of a person’s life; a résumé. Because the purpose of this magazine is to keep you connected to Valencia, the title Vitae reflects the collective résumé of alumni, faculty, staff and students who have proudly walked through our doors.

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Vitae is published biannually by Valencia's Marketing and Strategic Communications Division in coordination with Alumni Relations for approximately 37 cents an issue. Opinions expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect the official position of Valencia College or the Valencia Alumni Association.

The Valencia Alumni Association provides opportunities for lifelong personal, educational and professional growth for alumni and students of Valencia College.

Valencia is a member of the Florida College System.

VALENCIACOLLEGE

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ABOUT THE COVER

Reaching out to the community has become a standard part of Valencia’s mission, a mission that continues following a recent move to rename the institution “Valencia College.” As President Sandy Shugart has said, “You can take community out of the name; you can’t take it out of our DNA.”





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The Osceola Campus is ready to expand.

VALENCIA NEWS

High Graduation and Transfer Rates Bring National Recognition

Valencia College has been named a finalist for the \$1 million Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence which seeks to recognize the nation's most innovative and effective community colleges.



Valencia stood out, said Aspen officials, because it helps students graduate or transfer to other institutions at a rate nearly 12 percent above the national average.

“Valencia has proven that when an institution holds itself to high standards for student outcomes, it can achieve remarkable results,” said Josh Wyner, executive director of the Aspen program, who also praised the college for being an “engine for workforce development in Central Florida.”

The recognition earned Valencia President Sanford Shugart an invitation to the White House in September to brief senior policy officials on innovative learning strategies.

The 10 finalists for the inaugural Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence include community colleges from around the country. Only one other college in Florida, Miami Dade College, is on the list. The winner and three runners-up will be announced in December.

Valencia Greets First Baccalaureate Class

Eighty-six students began taking classes this fall in Valencia's new bachelor's degree programs, which are Radiologic and Imaging Sciences, and Electrical and Computer Engineering Technology. While the primary focus will remain associate programs, the college decided to offer the bachelor's degrees after

budget woes led UCF to phase out similar programs that Valencia's graduates often entered.

Employer demand for workers trained by the programs proves to be strong, with 801 projected job openings by 2014 for radiologic and imaging occupations, and 215 for electrical and computer engineering.

Valencia hopes to add a bachelor's degree in Cardiopulmonary Sciences in 2012.

New Buildings to Spring Up Soon

In the span of seven months, Valencia will have broken ground on three major new buildings. The first, with a prime location within Lake Nona's Medical City, can already be seen rising from the dirt. When it opens next fall, the Lake Nona Campus will offer advanced science and math courses and serve some of the training needs of the surrounding research facilities and hospitals, as well as Orlando International Airport.

Also underway is Building 4 at the Osceola Campus. The new four-story building will be the largest on any Valencia campus – with 150,000 square feet in academic and support space. Expected to open to students in spring of 2013, the building will house the campus library, cafeteria, bookstore, classrooms and even a UCF wing.

Finally, a new three-story building on the West Campus will be completed in 2012 for Valencia's Continuing Education division, which is currently based out of a rented space on Sand Lake Road.



Rendering of Osceola Campus' Building 4

Long term, the college looks to add future campus sites in Apopka and Poinciana. With a credit student body of 41,178 (up seven percent from last year), Valencia continues to grow and the active construction phase is evidence of that growth.

'We Say You Can' is Uplifting Message of New Ad Campaign

When Valencia Community College officially became Valencia College this fall, the college introduced a new ad campaign that encourages students to view college—and especially Valencia—as a vehicle to achieve their goals. More than 60 real students are featured in the campaign, which includes television ads, outdoor billboards,

bus shelter ads, cinema advertising and online ads. The campaign underscores Valencia's belief in each student's potential. One spot, speaking to those who struggled in school, begins with the words, "They say you'll never amount to anything. They say you'll fail," and ends with the declaration, "We say you can." The campaign was produced by the college's marketing team and its ad agency, Push. To view the 30- and 60-second commercials, go to youtube.com/valenciacollege.



Valencia student Meguydeline Dessources is featured in one of several new commercials.

Video Contest Offers a Shot at Free Tuition

Are you a Valencia student with an interesting story to share? Put it on video and you could win free tuition – up to 60 credit hours. Launched in September, the contest invites students to post their videos on Facebook, where viewers can vote for their favorites, with the five best selected by a panel of judges.

The contest is open to current and former students (as long as they attended within the last five years, are at least 18 years old and U.S. residents). Videos don't have to be fancy. Instead, judges will focus on originality, creativity and best use of the theme – "Why College? Why Valencia?"

To submit your video, go to the contest website (facebook.com/valenciacollege), to complete an entry form and upload your video. Last day to enter is Oct. 21 by noon, with the five winners announced on Nov. 15.

Last spring, 1,000 Valencia employees spent an afternoon sprucing up Moss Park in southeast Orange County. Nonprofit group Hands On Orlando organized the clean-up, as part of the college's annual Learning Day event.

How the Community Shapes Who We Are

By Kristen Manieri



Collaborations with local business

As one of the largest producers of educated workers serving Central Florida's business community, Valencia has an interest in creating partnerships with local industry. These collaborations take on many forms such as creating tailored courses that support the training needs of local employers such as Universal Orlando and Walt Disney World.

Valencia's relationship with Northrop Grumman, a global company whose Apopka plant manufactures defense electronics for the military, is a perfect illustration of the extent to which Valencia is capable of partnering with its business neighbors. Not only does the college provide a customized training program

No school exists in a vacuum. While all colleges impact the communities in which they reside, some aim to be highly intentional about this impact, seeing not only an opportunity to become better but also acknowledging a responsibility to make life better for its surrounding community. For Valencia College, being engaged in the community is far from an afterthought. In fact, partnering with the community is a strategic goal. Or as President Sandy Shugart says, "it's in our DNA." That's a great description when you start to peel back the layers of all the ways Valencia partners with and contributes to Central Florida.



for Northrop Grumman employees, but it also supplies a handful of senior-level interns from its Electronics Engineering Technology program each semester, many of whom transition into employment with the company.

In 2009, Valencia, Northrop Grumman and the Orange County School Board collaborated to create Wekiva High School's Laser Photonics Academy, a dual enrollment program between Valencia and Wekiva High School which allows students to earn college credit toward an Associate in Science degree while completing high school courses. These students will eventually begin to decrease the shortage of laser photonics technicians in the Central Florida area.

Industry advisory committees

Each year, nearly 500 Central Florida professionals serve on Valencia's industry advisory committees that bring deans, faculty and business leaders together to exchange important information about current workforce needs and trends.

"This connection with local industry helps me to determine exactly what the industry is looking for and tailor the curriculum and programming accordingly," says Professor and Program Director of Hospitality and Tourism Jim Inglis, who also serves on two major hospitality boards to further his ties with industry people. "I'm talking to the hotel and restaurant managers who tell me what their needs and wants are, and tell me about new technology."

"Valencia is doing a great job of looking at current trends and making plans to respond," shares Michael J. G. McLaughlin, account executive at Heart of Florida United Way and president of the Valencia College Alumni Leadership Team. "A good example is the coming Lake Nona Campus, where courses will be provided for the valuable training needed in the growing medical and research sectors."

Valencia's extensive involvement with local business has made the college a pivotal partner in recruiting new businesses to Central Florida.

"Valencia College is a valuable community ambassador and partner for the EDC," said Brian Walters, executive vice president, Innovation and Business



Pamela Garcia, Northrop Grumman laser technician and Valencia alumna.

“We’re defined not only as an academic institution but as a genuine part of the community.”

— John Stover,
Bridges to Success

Development, Metro Orlando Economic Development Commission. “Beyond playing an integral role in developing tomorrow’s workforce, Valencia plays a tremendous role in the recruitment and retention of companies in this region.”

Since 2009, Gaby Hawat, special assistant to the president for strategic initiatives and economic development, has designed and facilitated an economic development forum every eight to nine months. This past May, Valencia hosted its third such event, this one focusing on homeland security.

The day-long event consisted of panel discussions led by industry experts such as Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Federal Security Director John J. Daly Jr., who formerly served as a director on the Homeland Security Council staff at the White House. This powerhouse assembly of industry giants explored the latest available technologies and issues related to intelligence and information sharing, cyber security, cargo security and workforce development.

“The purpose of these forums is to engage the public in topical conversation of national and local interest,” Hawat explained. “We are part of the community. It’s inconceivable to me that any institution isn’t thinking or acting as a partner.”

Hawat’s Emergency and Disaster Management Forum is planned for February 24, 2012.

Creating access and hope

In the 33 years since John Stover joined Valencia College, he has become an icon of community outreach. Besides overseeing the wildly successful Bridges to Success program, Stover serves on eight boards, is regularly involved with 22 community organizations and works with an additional 15 community groups on a special projects basis.

What Stover is most proud of is that through endless volunteering and limitless generosity, Valencia has forged for itself a reputation for being an institution that is deeply committed to its community.

“We are known in our community as being a good school and one that produces successful graduates,” Stover shares. “We’re defined not only as an academic institution but as a genuine part of the community, which is a big difference.”

Stover is keenly aware of the impact that the hundreds of Bridges to Success students have on the community each year. Not only do these students play a huge role in contributing to the Head Start program, providing incoming kindergartners with backpacks filled with school supplies as well as gifts at Christmas time, but the more than 700 Bridges students collectively contribute thousands of volunteer hours each semester.

“The contribution we make to the economy with 750 students volunteering is staggering,” Stover says. “And whether the students we touch end up coming to Valencia or not, we have an obligation to make a contribution to our community. Many do select Valencia, but that’s not our main goal.”

Linda Downing could not agree with Stover more. As assistant vice president of College Transitions, Downing spends her time wholeheartedly focused on encouraging Central Florida’s youth to aim for college. Through a multitude of unique and successful outreach programs and special events, she and her staff find every opportunity to encourage the area’s underserved populations to believe that a college education is not only possible, it’s now more important than ever.

“Studies predict that by 2018, 59 percent of jobs in Florida will require a post-secondary education,” Downing says. “If we don’t work to get students to think we can get them to college, this community won’t survive economically. This is an integral part of our work.”

Downing and her Transitions team start achieving this goal by making regular presentations at every area high school and middle school with one key message: A college education is possible for you. The team also hosts field trips from local schools, which are customized tours of Valencia and presentations involving current students.

College Night, an annual college fair showcasing more than 100 colleges, brings thousands of prospective students and their families to campus, not just to consider Valencia as their post-secondary choice, but to learn about all of their educational choices after high school.

To assist college-bound hopefuls with securing financial aid, Downing hosts a series of free events on select Fridays in January and February intended to help families fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

“During FAFSA Frenzy Fridays, our financial aid staff are on hand in computer labs to help students fill out their financial aid applications,” explains Downing. “And they don’t have to be Valencia bound.”

More than 500 people attend each session. “Central Florida needs an education. But if we can’t help them pay for it, they’re not going to get it.”

And if that wasn’t enough goodwill and outreach, Downing is also quick to share details of the Take Stock in Children program.

“We start with students in middle school, often low income, first generation in college and at risk of not finishing high school or getting to college,” Downing explains. “Then we partner that student with a mentor who goes to the school to meet with them once a week until they graduate from high school. We purchase a Florida pre-paid tuition plan in that student’s name which gets them access to the “2 + 2” plan—two years at a community college and then two years at a school like UCF.”

But none of the Take Stock kids are restricted to Valencia, Downing said. They can use the tuition money at any school of their choosing. All this is done with locally raised money, including contributions from

founding partner Florida Citrus Sports Foundation, Mears Transportation Group, Full Sail University and Orlando Magic Youth Fund.

Forever a ‘community’ college

As the third largest of Florida’s 28 public colleges, teaching more than 70,000 students a year, Valencia has come a long way from its humble beginnings on West Oakridge Road in 1967. Yet regardless of how big the college becomes, it remains inextricably tied to the community that nurtured its growth through the years.

In July, Valencia was renamed Valencia College to reflect the recent launch of its own bachelor’s degree programs. And while the word “community” will no longer be a part of the school’s official title, the community is, and always will be, Valencia’s primary focus and purpose for being. ■

Photo courtesy of Lorenzo Perez Mammarella



Lorenzo Perez Mammarella, shown here on Wall Street, did an internship last summer with Aegis Capital while studying for his stockbroker’s license.

Jovanna Sayan, director of philanthropy for Full Sail University, volunteers as a mentor to Boone High School student Justice Donald, as part of the Take Stock in Children program.



VALENCIA EVENTS

OCTOBER

Month of October - Valencia Homecoming Month

Visit valenciacollege.edu for month-long events



October 14 - Latin Night

7 - 11 p.m.
Hosted by the Latin American Student Organization (LASO), in celebration of National Hispanic Heritage Month.
Osceola Campus Cafeteria Courtyard
nsepulveda@valenciacollege.edu

Drowsy Chaperone, Music and Lyrics by Lisa Lambert and Greg Morrison, book by Bob Martin and Don McKellar

October 21, 22, 27, 28 & 29 at 7:30 p.m.
October 23 & 30 at 2 p.m.
East Campus Performing Arts Center
Tickets: \$12 general admission, \$10 students, faculty/staff, alumni and seniors
Box Office: 407-582-2900
valenciacollege.edu/arts

October 21-December 9 - Selected Fine Art Faculty Exhibition

Opening reception at 6:30 p.m. on October 21
Anita S. Wooten East Campus Gallery
Admission is free.
valenciacollege.edu/arts

October 20 - Lecture by Visiting Scholar Dr. George Lopez

Reception at noon, lecture 1 p.m.
Dr. Lopez is a professor from Notre Dame University's Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies. The title of his lecture is, "Can There be Peace in a World of Terrorism?"
East Campus, Building 6, Rooms 110-112
Admission is free.
valenciacollege.edu/PJI/events

October 27 - Wagner's Music and Anti-Semitism in Film

1 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.
Join Humanities Professor Matt McAllister for a presentation on Wagner's music and anti-Semitism in film.
East Campus Bldg. 6 Rm. 110
Admission is free.
njackson18@valenciacollege.edu

NOVEMBER

November 4 - House Band Concert

7:30 p.m.
East Campus Black Box Theater
Admission is free.
valenciacollege.edu/arts

November 17 - "Lift the Veil and Set the Prisoned Free": Jefferson Pinder's Invisible Man.

1 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.
Scholar, curator and alumnus Jeffrey M. Hayes will provide a visual and contextual reading of Pinder's seminal video performance, "Invisible Man," a work inspired by Ralph Ellison's novel.
East Campus, Bldg. 6, Rm. 110
Admission is free.
njackson18@valenciacollege.edu

November 18-19 - Choreographers' Showcase

8 p.m.
East Campus Performing Arts Center
Tickets: \$10 general admission, \$8 students, faculty/staff, alumni and seniors, \$6 children 12 and under
valenciacollege.edu/arts

DECEMBER

December 1 - Winter Choral Concert

7:30 p.m.
East Campus Performing Arts Center
Admission is free.
valenciacollege.edu/arts



Print by Barbara Brainard,
"Baronne Street 2"

December 9-10 - Fall Opera Workshop

7:30 p.m.
East Campus Black Box Theater
Admission is free.
valenciacollege.edu/arts

February 15-26 - A Raisin in The Sun, by Lorraine Hansberry

February 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24 & 25 at 7:30 p.m.
February 19, 25 & 26 at 2 p.m.
East Campus Black Box Theater
Tickets: \$10 general admission, \$8 students, faculty/staff, alumni and seniors
valenciacollege.edu/arts

JANUARY

January 20-March 9 - New Orleans Portfolio: Works by Barbara Brainard

Opening reception at 6:30 p.m. on January 20
Anita S. Wooten East Campus Gallery
Admission is free.
valenciacollege.edu/arts

February 24 - Emergency and Disaster Management Forum

8 a.m. - 3 p.m.
West Campus Special Events Center
By invitation
events@valenciacollege.edu

December 2 - Culinary Arts Grande Buffet and Culinary Alumni Reunion

11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. with networking until 1:30 p.m.
West Campus, Bldg. 9, Rm. 106
Admission is \$20 per person.
valenciacollege.edu/alumni

December 6 - Fall Symphonic/Jazz Band Concert

7:30 p.m.
East Campus Performing Arts Center
Admission is free.
valenciacollege.edu/arts

FEBRUARY

February 7 - Music Student Showcase

7:30 p.m.
East Campus Performing Arts Center
Admission is free.
valenciacollege.edu/arts

February 28 - Music Faculty Recital

7:30 p.m.
East Campus Performing Arts Center
Admission is free.
valenciacollege.edu/arts

MARCH

March 23-24 - Valencia Spring Dance Concert

8 p.m.
East Campus Performing Arts Center
Tickets: \$10 general admission, \$8 students, faculty/staff, alumni and seniors, \$6 children 12 and under
valenciacollege.edu/arts

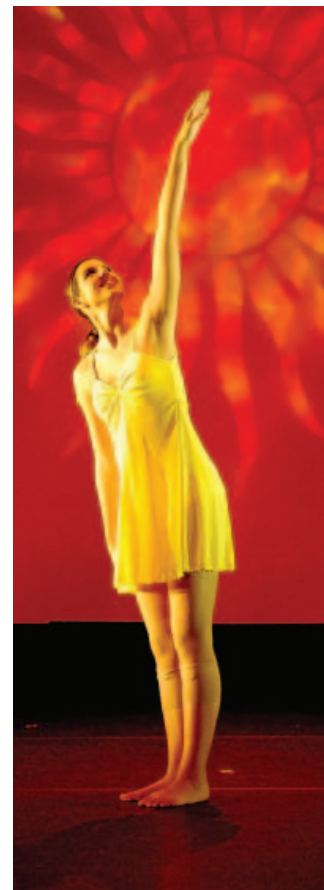
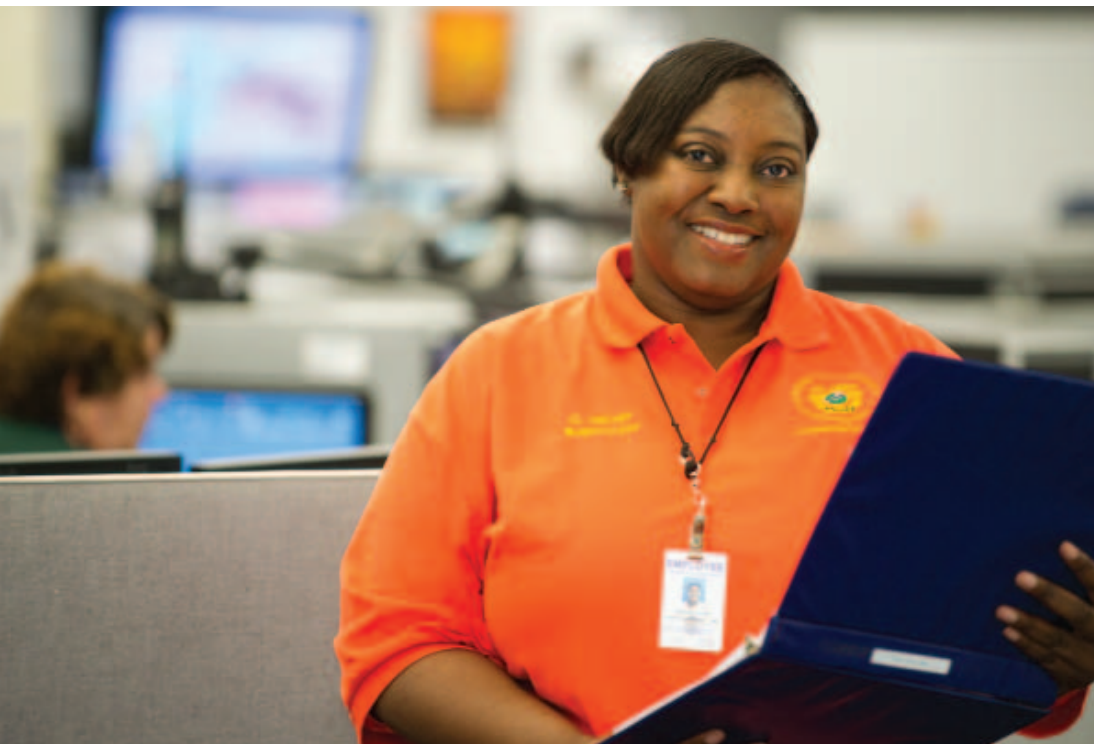


Photo by Nikki Infante

For the Love of Learning

Lifelong learners and Valencia's Continuing Education program

By Kristen Manieri



Charleen Oliver

There are two types of students in this world: some who count the days until graduation, eager to be out of the classroom once and for all. And then there are others who believe learning isn't an event that happens over a few decades of formal schooling, but rather a lifelong pursuit of self-betterment.

Valencia College Continuing Education exists for the latter. Each year, hundreds of lifelong learners participate in training and development courses that not only make their jobs better, but their lives as well.

Take Charleen Oliver, for example. She's a communications supervisor for the Orlando Police Department. Over the past decade, Oliver has completed more than 20 Valencia courses ranging from half-day workshops to two-year certification programs with sessions scheduled every few months.

"Continuing education has made me a much more well-rounded individual," says Oliver. "It gives me ideas for how to motivate others and myself."

The training has also helped her learn to manage stress in her workplace. Oliver oversees emergency and non-emergency calls for police, fire and medical response.

"In an instant you can go from nothing happening to a hostage situation," Oliver explains. "We always have to be ready to handle any situation as it occurs. That's why ongoing training is so important to me."

While much of Oliver's courses at Valencia are paid for by her employer and she's allowed to use work hours for the time she spends in class, she's not given a raise each time she completes a workshop or achieves another certification. So why does she keep going back for more? Oliver just loves to learn.

"I've taken these courses for my own personal improvement and development. I never want to be stuck in a box of my own making," Oliver says. "You should never stop learning."

Oliver will soon pursue her master's degree and makes no secret of her desire to own her own business one day.

"I'm a frustrated entrepreneur," she says with a laugh.

Like Oliver, Robert Jeffrey is a huge fan of continuing education. A communication supervisor for the Orange County Sheriff's Office, Jeffrey has been furthering his education for as long as he can remember.

“When you stop learning, you stop growing,” he firmly believes. “No amount of knowledge is too much.”

Through the years, Jeffrey has taken several courses at Valencia but the one that stands out for him as being particularly helpful was a course he recently completed titled “Generations at Work.”

“I’m in my 40s but I work with people ages 21 to 81,” Jeffrey explains. “Right now I supervise a squad of two people who are the audio custodians in charge of audio requests.”

When someone requests a copy of a 911 call, for example, he has one of these two staff members perform that task.

“What I learned from the Generations course is how important it is to balance two very different work styles. One of the women in the audio room is very young while the other is months from retirement. The course has helped me keep harmony where two people are very different doing the same the job.”

Jeffrey gets such tremendous value from Valencia’s Continuing Education program that he’s always encouraging his staff to enroll as well. Just recently he enrolled one of his team members in a debt management course after the employee confided



Jennifer Garrison

Education courses over the years including PHR (Professional in Human Resources) and SPHR (Senior Professional in Human Resources) certification prep classes.

“When I’m in the classroom, being exposed to anything new, I feel alive, engaged, more self-confident and motivated to be the best I can possibly be.”

Sibley gets a thrill out of striving for and achieving goals. “Continual education over the years has forced me to realize my potential, intelligence, strengths and weaknesses,” she says. “It has provided me with the courage to face

ranks, it really helps to have these classes once you’re in your new role,” says Garrison, who is an emergency communications specialist at the Orlando Fire Department Communications Center. “I feel really ready for my next promotion because of these courses.”

The mother of four describes herself as “one of those people who is constantly looking towards my next goal,” said Garrison, who always knew she wanted to be in management. “I could see so many things that needed to be improved but I had no power to make those changes.”

In August, Garrison will graduate from the Certified Public Managers program which she says has helped her to become a better trainer.

“I do a lot of positive reinforcement now and the trainees respond really well to it,” Garrison said. “What I learn impacts my job, my stress level and helps me to understand people better.”

For over 40 years, Valencia College Continuing Education has been dedicated to helping individuals achieve their professional and personal goals. Whether one strives to be the best at their job or to reach their highest potential, Valencia is on the journey every step of the way. As the Chinese proverb says “Learning is like rowing upstream: not to advance is to drop back.”

“When you stop learning, you stop growing.”

— Robert Jeffrey, Orange County Sheriff’s Office

in him about how much stress his mismanaged personal finances were causing him.

“These classes are about making yourself better,” Jeffrey said.

“I believe that unless you are exposing yourself to new skills, thoughts, ideas, information, people and technology throughout your lifetime, you begin to stagnate,” says Linda Sibley, executive assistant at Dual Corporation. Sibley has taken several Valencia College Continuing

life obstacles and challenges head on. Valencia has always been a huge part of my life journey to becoming the best I can possibly be.”

Of course, lifelong learners like Jennifer Garrison are keenly aware of the ways continuing education can pave the path to advancement and create opportunities for professional growth.

“I’ve taken every supervisory course I can get my hands on because to work your way up through the

GOO



Rendering of new Osceola Campus Building by Hunton Brady Architects.

D TO GROW



With the fastest growing student population in one of the fastest-growing counties, the Osceola Campus is ready for expansion.

By Joseph Hayes



Hheavy machinery is once again rumbling through the busy Osceola Campus of Valencia College, tucked on the eastern end of U.S. Highway 192, as a much-awaited new addition begins to rise.

Construction began this fall on Building 4, with a scheduled opening of early 2013. At 150,000 square feet, it will be the largest building on any Valencia campus, housing a new library, a comprehensive academic support center, classrooms, science labs, food services and a bookstore.

Dr. Kathleen Plinske, president of the

Osceola Campus, is excited about the continued growth of the campus, and her role in it.

“I’ve never had the opportunity to design a building before,” she said with a laugh.

Since arriving from the Chicago area in 2010, the campus president has taken a hands-on approach to every aspect of life on the 100-acre Kissimmee location. She holds several degrees, including a doctorate in educational technology, which has come in handy in her new position.

“No one can try to fool me by saying, ‘that’s not technically possible,’” she says.

“I speak the language. I was able to look at the plans and say we need electrical outlets every four feet and wireless access points throughout the building. It’s hard to have a crystal ball for technology, but I’m trying.”

The fastest growing campus

The Osceola Campus, founded in 1997, is Valencia’s third largest campus, with about half the number of students (12,000) of its larger sister campuses in east and west Orange County. But in the last three years, it has shown double-digit increases

in enrollment, including an 18 percent enrollment increase this summer.

Edward A. Moore is the executive director of the Osceola Center for the Arts, and a member of the board of directors of the Kissimmee Chamber of Commerce. He was on the Valencia College board of trustees for 12 years, until retiring last year, and understands the impact this campus has on the community.

“Having the physical plant here is a wonderful opportunity for Osceola County students to get started with college or training,” Moore says. “It’s an opportunity for local students to get an education without having to take the time or spend the money to travel to Orange County. And it’s great for morale. People are very proud to say, ‘This is our college.’”

The original 1980s Valencia Osceola location wasn’t much more than a storefront in a strip mall. When plans were drawn up for a new enlarged campus in 1993, the design envisioned 10 buildings, and, slowly, those visions are becoming a reality.

Fourth building finally underway

Building 4 has been in the pre-construction stage for six years, with at least two false

starts. While the building project was finally approved last year for about \$21.8 million in state money, the final state appropriation of \$4.2 million to finish the project was vetoed by Florida Gov. Rick Scott in 2011 due to reduced revenue projections.

To make up the difference, the college will pull money from its reserves and use capital improvement dollars collected with student tuition. Osceola County government also helped move the project forward by partnering with the college.

Plinske has a strong view of the campus’ tenacity. “Our attitude is ‘We’ll do it.’ All odds may be against us, but we’ll do it.”

The University of Central Florida, a partner at Osceola since 2001, also stepped in by committing \$7.5 million to the project, funds that will be used to expand the building’s square footage and provide additional classroom space for UCF baccalaureate programs.

Plinske looks forward to including some basics, like a full-size cafeteria (the current one is in a temporary building) and additional parking. There are times now, she said, when the number of students in classrooms exceeds the number of available parking spaces.

With the building’s opening in January 2013, the dire need for space will finally be alleviated with an additional 18 classrooms, a tutoring center, a state-of-the-art library and science labs. Even the hallways, with murals of the human skeletal system and the periodic table, will be places to learn.

“We want this to be a place where students will want to stay, with cushy chairs and reading nooks and computer stations,” says Plinske. Open areas in the library and academic support areas will encourage collaboration, with whiteboards, projectors and computer facilities readily available.

“Collaboration is how I learned to learn,” Plinske says. “Research shows us the incredible power of the social aspect of learning.”

Students were able to suggest several features now in the plan, such as a “quiet room” in the library, where no cell phones, laptops or conversations are allowed, as well as a lounge area where they can read, relax, spend time with friends and access the Internet.

“We are loading the place up with technology,” Plinske proclaims. “Not just because the future of education will be delivered digitally, but also because of the



Kathleen Plinske,
Osceola Campus president

“We are loading the place up with technology. Not just because the future of education will be delivered digitally, but also because of the realities of life in Osceola County.”

— Kathleen Plinske



A tutor works with a student at the Osceola Math Depot.

realities of life in Osceola County. We can offer students the ability to study and learn on their own terms, especially those students who may not have technology at hand or at home.”

Meeting community needs

Plinske explains that 25 percent of entering students struggle to read, write or use math skills at college level, and rarely make it to a degree. To support these students, the campus is piloting a cohort-based REACH (Recognizing Each Academic Challenge Head-On) developmental education program on the Osceola Campus.

Melissa Pedone, dean of science and math, plays a key role.

“Our size is such that we can be more innovative with pilot projects,” Pedone says. “We will work to take students from second- level prep courses in the fall through college-level courses in the summer.”

The program of preparatory courses in English, reading and math is designed to move students to college level in three semesters, and at the end of the summer the student will have earned 21 credits and be a third of the way to a degree.

“There’s no real, scientific evidence yet that this will work,” Plinske says, “but we are willing to try it, and if it does work, how wonderful that will be.”

Plinske currently spends one weekend a month at the University of Florida in Gainesville working toward an MBA, and

believes that the UF program, designed as a cohort package of classes pointed towards a specific goal, seems like a model that would work for students on her campus.

“In any case we’ll learn and adapt. These students who traditionally haven’t been as successful, now can be.”

Plinske’s master’s degree in Spanish has proved to be just as important as her fluency in technospeak. Hispanic students make up more than 27 percent of enrollment throughout Valencia and more than 40 percent of enrollment on the Osceola Campus alone. The college is second in the nation in the number of associate degrees earned by Hispanics. Valencia College’s Osceola Campus was recognized by the Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities with its Outstanding HACU-Member Institution Award in 2009 for its efforts on behalf of the Hispanic community.

“I’m here—we’re here—to benefit every student on campus,” Plinske says, “and to close the achievement gap that unfortunately exists, not just here but across the country. I’d heard about what a great school Valencia is even in Chicago. Everybody is here to make sure our students succeed. This shouldn’t be impossible for anyone.”

Making it to the finish line with an associate degree can lead to another path, one offered by UCF. Edgar Martinez, director of the UCF regional campus at Valencia, says that 120 students a day

inquire about UCF programs available through the DirectConnect to UCF program.

“It’s a seamless transition to completing a full degree, without leaving the Kissimmee campus,” he says. “A graduating student from Valencia is guaranteed a place at UCF. Business is the most popular major, with psychology a close second.” The new UCF classrooms in Building 4 will offer expanded programs and as many as 12 full-time UCF instructors on campus.

Hector Alfaro, a senior instructional assistant at Valencia’s “Math Depot,” says a team of learning assistants—students, student-employees and faculty—helps students change their attitude about learning.

“We get everybody: new students, adults going back to school, retirees, military vets. The help they get here makes them a lot happier to engage in the learning process.”

The 24-seat developmental math center sees thousands of students during a term, and will expand in the new facility.

A bright future ahead

While she walks across the existing campus, Dr. Plinske can envision the new additions very clearly.

“Oh, the landscaping!” she says with glee. “We’re adding so many trees, some that, being from Illinois, I’ve never seen before.”

Plans call for outdoor learning spaces, with power outlets, wireless Internet and glass slabs that will serve as whiteboards for collaborative projects.

Students at the Osceola Campus share Plinske’s excitement. Mena Khalil, at the student development desk, is part of the Welcome Team. “We try to help students find what they’re looking for,” she said. “I talk about the volunteer programs and the clubs. I do as much as I can when I’m not in class. The things that are going on here are very exciting.”

A fellow student leader, Julian, shouts out from across the room, “We love our campus!” ■

From Darkness to Life

“Renee” to debut at Valencia’s 17th annual film festival

By Linda Shrieves Beaty



Renee Yohe

Renee Yohe isn’t a household name. But she has a powerful life story.

As a teenager, Renee loved music and fairy tales – and found joy when she pulled on her headphones and imagined a life that ends happily ever after. But Renee couldn’t escape depression, and turned to drugs, alcohol and even self-mutilation to cope with the pain. At one point, she tried to kill herself.

Finally, in desperation, she reached out for help – and a circle of friends banded together to save her.

Now, thanks to a team of screenwriters and producers – and the work of Valencia College’s film production technology program – Renee’s story is being told on film. The movie, titled “Renee,” is expected to debut at Valencia’s 17th annual Film Celebration in spring 2012.

It’s a movie that Ralph Clemente, film industry veteran and director of Valencia’s film production technology department, believes has a chance to make headlines. “That film is going to make a lot of waves,”

Clemente said. “It’s a very serious film.”

The film tells the story of Renee (played by Kat Dennings of “Nick and Norah’s Infinite Playlist”), who tries to get into an Orlando treatment center, but is told that she can’t be admitted with cocaine still in her system. So she turns to David McKenna, a recovering alcoholic and former addict, and surfer/musician Jamie Tworowski, who, along with her friends, agree to spend a week helping Renee get clean and sober.

The movie – which is part dark, harrowing tale and part fantasy – chronicles those five intense days and what one producer calls “the ultimate random act of kindness” as McKenna and Tworowski work together to change Renee’s life. The experience propelled Tworowski to write a blog called “To Write Love On Her Arms.” The blog touched teens and young adults – and launched a charity that has become a movement in the music industry.

The script also attracted some big name stars, including Rupert Friend (“Pride and Prejudice”), who plays McKenna, and Chad Michael Murray (of TV’s “One Tree Hill”) who plays Tworowski. Supporting actors include Corbin Bleu (“High School Musical”) and Mark Saul (“The Social Network,” “Grey’s Anatomy”).

Produced by McKenna, David Nixon and Cameron “Kim” Dawson, the movie is a departure from the faith-based films that Nixon and Dawson have done in the past. For Dawson, the movie “was nitty-gritty, hard street stuff,” but the message was so powerful that he felt compelled to produce the project.

With a \$3.4 million budget, the film was shot primarily in downtown Orlando with a 70-member union crew and 43 students from Valencia’s film program. The students tackled jobs that professionals usually handle, from payroll clerk to handling all the contracts and travel arrangements. Whether they were working in the sound department or with set decorators and prop masters, the students learned alongside the pros.

“The value of this is immeasurable,” Clemente said. “Not only did the production pump more than \$3 million into Orlando’s economy, it also benefitted my



students. They were working alongside professionals who became mentors and free faculty for me.”

And the students got to shine – and show off for potential employers.

“We discovered diamonds in the rough,” Dawson said. “The kids in the program rose to the occasion and took advantage of the opportunities we gave them. The film business is all about work ethic and those kids worked really hard.”

Matt Whalen, a Valencia student, served as electric production assistant on the “Renee” set and discovered how much he liked the electrical end of the business. “My goal right now is to become a ‘best boy,’ – the chief assistant of the lighting and electrical departments on a film – “and my ultimate goal is to become a director of photography or a gaffer” – the head of electrical equipment on a production, said Whalen, 21.

Students outside the film program were recruited as extras for a number of scenes, including one musical festival scene that required 1,000 extras.

“Renee” was one of three films the Valencia students worked on during the 2010-2011 school year, all of which will be shown at Valencia’s upcoming film festival. Also showing will be “My Fair Lidy,” a film about a straight man who stumbles into the world of gay drag queens. And then there’s the low-budget, high-schlock “Return of the Loch Ness Monster from Outer Space,” which Clemente says could be a surprise hit.

But it’s “Renee” that Clemente, a member of the Directors Guild, believes could speak to legions of teenagers. “I had no idea that cutting had become an epidemic,” said Clemente. “But this film deals with it straight on – using music and Renee’s story – and it tells her story powerfully.”



Shown: 1. Kat Dennings, 2. Chad Michael Murray with crowd, 3. Student crew: Whitney McElveen, Sound PA, Brian Swanson, Boom Operator, and Sergio Burgos, Sound PA., 4. Director Nathan Frankowski consults with the actors.



EXPERTS SPOTLIGHT

CJI's Dynamic Duo *By Linda Shrieves Beaty*

They may not be caped crusaders, but Jeff Goltz and Dave Heffernan are a dynamic duo at Valencia's Criminal Justice Institute (CJI).

But what do you know about them?

Goltz, who became director of CJI in 2008, started his law enforcement career in 1988, after serving four years in the U.S. Air Force. He rose through the ranks at the Orlando Police Department, working his way up from beat cop to captain, and overseeing a number of units, from the SWAT unit to the bike patrol. For 15 years, Goltz studied at nights and on weekends, earning his bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees as a part-time student.

Heffernan followed a different route to CJI, starting his career as an Air Force pilot after graduating from the University of Hawaii with a degree in psychology. In addition to working as an instructor pilot, he flew combat support missions in Panama and Operation Desert Shield and was awarded the Air Force's Air Medal.

After the Air Force, Heffernan began a career in juvenile justice, working in Oklahoma and Florida as administrator of a juvenile jail. For the past five years, Heffernan has been the Criminal Justice Institute's assistant director.

In addition to training future police and corrections officers, they've overseen some changes at CJI. Starting

in 2008, CJI instructors began training airline pilots and flight crews in self-defense techniques, to deal with threats ranging from drunken passengers to terrorists. Eight CJI instructors – who have been trained by the Federal Air Marshal Service – now teach defensive tactics to airline employees at JetBlue's training facility at Orlando International Airport.

Goltz and Heffernan have also organized seminars to train current police officers, particularly mid- and upper-level managers. Seminar topics range from forensic science – with a discussion featuring Orange County Medical Examiner Dr. Jan Garavaglia – to a session on the growing number of “sovereign citizens,” people who don't believe in government and don't believe they have to obey U.S. laws.

In addition, Goltz and Heffernan have pushed for more physical training for CJI students, by putting in a running track around the campus and an obstacle course behind the building. Incoming students must be able to run 1.5 miles in 18 minutes or they will not be admitted.

“There's been a huge spike in violence against police officers across the country,” Goltz said. “And with that increase, we've stepped up attention to physical fitness. The goal is to have an officer who's physically and mentally fit.”

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

A BRIEFING FOR ALUMNI, RETIREES, FACULTY, STAFF, AND FRIENDS OF VALENCIA



What are the issues facing Valencia when the state legislature convenes in January?

One of the biggest issues for Valencia will be capital funding for the Florida College System (FCS), says Bill Mullowney, vice president of policy and general counsel for Valencia College.

In the 2011 legislative session, legislators directed a study to examine the funding formula used to award money for the state colleges' capital (or construction) projects. That study will be completed by the FCS Council of Presidents and the results turned in by Dec. 31, 2011, but it's not clear that the legislature will act on that in the upcoming session.

What's at stake: Student access at Valencia and the state's other large colleges, such as Miami-Dade College and Broward College, which have been unable to keep up with huge spikes in enrollment. At Valencia, for instance, enrollment has grown dramatically in the past five years – resulting in a crunch for classroom space. But the state has not taken that growth into consideration when doling out construction money, Mullowney said.

Instead, the state relies on a list of projects for its Public Education Construction Outlay (PECO) and has awarded money to every school on the list, regardless of relative need, Mullowney says.

"The whole issue is about equitable funding," he said. "Essentially, the way it works now is

that everybody gets something, and the colleges like Valencia with critical needs continue to fall further behind in facilities available to support learning."

Construction isn't the only hot topic in funding.

In addition to funding for construction projects, the college – like most of its peers in the state college system – is facing an operational funding crisis. Since the start of the recession, the state's two-year colleges have seen enrollment jump by 96,000 full-time students – an increase of 34 percent – while state funding has declined 25 percent for each full-time student.

At fast-growing colleges, such as Valencia, those budget cuts have hurt – and created a crunch for both classrooms and instructors. "We've been growing by leaps and bounds, at the same time that budgets were being cut," Mullowney said. "It creates an access issue."

Who's the boss?

Also on the horizon: Watch for state legislators who want to revamp the current governance system for the state's colleges and universities. There may be a move to place some of the FCS institutions – many of which are now issuing bachelor's degrees – under the umbrella of the Florida Board of Governors, which oversees the state's 11 universities. The state's 28 FCS colleges, locally governed by their respective district boards

of trustees, are currently under the jurisdiction of the State Board of Education.

As the Legislature considers these and many other issues, it will also be focused on the major issue of reapportionment – the redrawing of district lines for state House and Senate seats and U.S. House and Senate seats. Given the topics that the Legislature will consider, "we can be sure that this session will be quite important for Valencia and the citizens of Florida," Mullowney said.

For updates throughout the legislative session, go to valenciacollege.edu/generalcounsel



Photo by Jimmy Wayne

New Faces—and Approaches

By Erin Heston

As students return to the campuses of Valencia College this fall, they will be greeted by new faces and fresh approaches to teaching. Here are just four of the dozens of new professors joining the Valencia faculty.



Carla Walker, *English*

Carla Walker describes her teaching style as open and engaging, with a healthy dose of debate. It's a combination that ensures a full classroom.

"I've been fortunate," Walker says, smiling. "My classes are always well attended."

Good fortune probably has little to do with it. Walker fosters a "learning community" through lively discussion and mutual respect. To illustrate points and complicated concepts, she often uses YouTube clips and popular music in her presentations. And she encourages students to choose their own topics for writing assignments.

"In my experience, students learn best when they are engaged," she says. "And their writing is best when it is about a topic that really means something to them."

Walker, who began teaching this summer, is excited to start "from the ground up" at Valencia's new campus adjacent to Lake Nona High School (opening fall 2012). As the English department's sole member at the Lake Nona location, she is anxious to make her mark and begin a student/professor dialogue that is stimulating for both sides.

"I don't ask students to sit quietly while the professor lectures," Walker notes. "Each semester, I learn as much from my students as they learn from me."

Location Valencia at Lake Nona High School

Career Highlights In her 10 years of teaching English at St. Louis Community College, Walker also supervised tutoring as Academic Center coordinator and helped under-performing students prepare for freshman coursework as the developmental education coordinator.

Location East Campus

Career Highlights This Florida State University doctoral candidate has received many grants and fellowships, including the International Dissertation Semester Research Fellowship, which provided him the opportunity to study and teach in Spain.



Jeremy R. Bassetti, *Humanities*

When it comes to their studies, many college students feel pulled in all directions. Topics such as history, communication, technology, science, economics, philosophy, religion and the arts all interest those with a thirst for knowledge. These curious students will feel right at home in Jeremy Bassetti's Humanities course, which he describes as a cultural spectrum of each of these captivating topics.

"As a student, I was sort of all over the place," Bassetti explains. "Humanities is the perfect match for me because it is an interdisciplinary look at the way people lived centuries ago...and how their cultures affect us today."

Exploring the link between past and present took Bassetti to Spain last fall, where he began researching

his dissertation and teaching. He traveled throughout the country, studying archives in Madrid and teaching English in Seville. His research was integral to his dissertation about the way historians at Spain's Royal Academy of History used coins to write the country's history.

A Central Florida native, Bassetti attended Valencia ('02) and UCF before earning his master's and doctoral degrees in humanities at FSU. In addition to teaching a variety of humanities courses as a graduate assistant in Tallahassee, he also developed his skill as a photographer and musician.

"I hope to show my students how their unique blend of interests – music, art, technology, business, healthcare and all the other disciplines – are connected," Bassetti says. "Humanities allows us to scratch the surface of those connections and better understand our culture."



Her future students can look forward to performing virtual surgeries.

Location West Campus

Career Highlights Brantley's diverse background includes biology research at Dartmouth and Duke universities, teaching anatomy at both the university and community college levels, and work in computer programming.

Betsy Brantley, *Anatomy and Physiology*

Though she's traveled the world and taught anatomy and physiology throughout the country, Florida native Betsy Brantley always knew she would return to her home state. And while Brantley looks forward to being back in sunny weather, her future students can look forward to performing virtual surgeries, delving into the layers of the human body through 3D animation and playing zany online anatomy games such as "Whack-A-Bone."

The professor's embrace of high-tech teaching tools, online instruction and credentials such as a Florida nursing license set her apart from other instructors in her field.

"The old school folks are skeptical about teaching A&P online; they believe in a strictly hands-on approach," Brantley says. "But online courses are a fantastic option for visual learners...and those of us who are less than enthusiastic about dissection."

Brantley has demonstrated her online learning expertise to fellow members of the Human Anatomy and Physiology Society through numerous presentations at the organization's national conferences. She honed these skills teaching A&P and environmental science at institutions in Michigan, Louisiana, Vermont and Virginia.

"I've always been fascinated by how the human body works," Brantley explains. "And the best part about anatomy is that it's completely applicable as students prepare for healthcare careers."

Location Osceola Campus

Career Highlights A master of language, DiLiberto puts her extensive education in English, French and Italian to use as a commercial and literary translator. She is writing her doctoral dissertation on the use of technology in literary translation.

Stacey DiLiberto, *English*

When it comes to language and communication, Stacey DiLiberto is a master. Her varied communications experience and studies abroad have given her a global perspective that she hopes will bring language to life for Valencia students.

“Language is culture,” DiLiberto says. “It is embedded in our way of knowing ourselves and relating to others. I have a passion for showing students how language and literature impact our daily lives and make us who we are.”

In addition to her experience in the worlds of publishing and corporate communications, DiLiberto’s résumé includes teaching English at Barry University and working in administration at UCF. Having a background that spans all aspects of language and communications informs her approach to teaching and the way she relates to students.

“I hope to help my students develop a 360-degree perspective about communication,” DiLiberto says. “Together we will explore the different types of language and writing that are appropriate for different situations.”

Understanding that today’s students are “digital natives” who communicate through social networking, texting and blogging, DiLiberto looks for ways to integrate technology into her teaching.

“There’s no doubt that these constantly evolving methods of communication are changing language,” DiLiberto explains. “Our challenge is using technology to teach more effectively and to illuminate the world of literature for our students.”



“I hope to help my students develop a 360-degree perspective about communication.”

— Stacey DiLiberto

CLASS NOTES

1 John LeRoy Brackin '69

John retired after serving 35 years in full-time vocational ministry. He is presently co-owner of Bridge Builder Academy in the Dallas area, Plano, Texas.

Anne Elizabeth (Reed) Allen-Horn '77

Anne is a registered nurse who has enjoyed serving for 34 years in intense and progressively more diverse nursing positions. She recently took a position in a pediatric neurology clinic as a clinical nurse coordinator and looks forward to many more years of nursing practice.

2 Waymon Armstrong '82

Waymon is founder and president of Engineering & Computer Simulations, Inc. (ECS), an award-winning software development and solutions company located in Orlando with a mission of providing advanced learning technology solutions to its customers.

Waymon's service within the community touches his church family, the military and government as well as numerous civic and business organizations. He serves on the board of several organizations including: Valencia College's Digital Media Technology Advisory Committee; Orlando Regional Chamber of Commerce Board of Governors' Modeling, Simulation and Training Committee; the Metro Orlando Military Affairs Advisory Committee; Digital Media Alliance of Florida; the Executive Committee of the Sunshine Chapter of AUSA; and Missionary Ventures International. He was recently named chair elect of Orlando, Inc.

In 2010, Waymon became the first Central Floridian and the first Modeling and Simulation Company to be selected by the Small Business Administration as the National Small Business Person of the Year.

3 Aubrey Harry Ducker, Jr. '94

Aubrey continues his practice of law in the areas of Elder Law, Family Law and Guardianships from his Winter Park office. He was elected to the Board of Directors of The Mustard Seed of Central Florida Inc. in October of 2010, and serves on the Strategic Planning Committee.

Aubrey serves on the Board of Directors of The Christian Ethics Today Foundation as he has since March of 2001. His review of The Church of Facebook was published in the Spring 2011 issue of "Christian Ethics Today."

4 Wesley Stanton Johnson '98

Wesley is a student in the master's program in Exercise Physiology at the University of Central Florida. He also has a baby on the way in October.

5 Eddie Ruiz '99

Eddie is the principal at Jackson Middle School in Orlando, his former middle school as a teenager. He is currently in the doctoral program at the University of Central Florida and anticipates receiving his degree in 2013. Eddie feels his life reflects the words of Walter Elliott, "Perseverance is not a long race; it is many short races one after another."

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Faith Amon '94

Faith recently returned from a five-week communications consultancy with CARE International in Sierra Leone. Building her consultancy with her local boutique advertising company – Frecklefoot Creative – the work in the western African county spanned training staff about CARE branding standards, developing a country office communications strategy and photographing and interviewing program participants in the field. The stories and images were then used to create collateral materials designed to elevate the country office’s national and international profile. Here, Faith is shown receiving a chicken from the son of a village chief, as thanks for visiting his village.

6 Francis Angibeaud Montjen '02

Francis currently resides in London, England with his wife Michele and his son, and is studying for his master of arts degree in banking and finance at Queen Mary University in London.

7 Siobhan Morgan '03

Siobhan transferred to Pace University in New York after graduating from Valencia to study marketing. She is currently employed as a junior account executive at Macys.com for jewelry, shoes and handbags.

8 Sandra Hart '06

Sandra has been teaching medical law and ethics, anatomy and physiology, medical terminology and phlebotomy at a private college in Jacksonville for the past three years, where she was awarded Teacher of the Year.

9 Latoya Aneka Gordon '06, '08

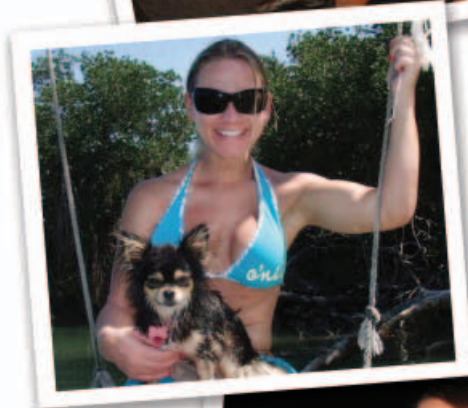
Latoya works as a registered nurse. While she is mostly working with hospice patients, she has cared for patients at Florida Hospital and St. Cloud Regional Hospital within the past six months.



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10 Tamara S. Nelson '08

Tamara is a graduate student at UCF working on a master's in Mental Health Counseling.

11 Kelly Lyn Rabe '08

Kelly is currently living in Key West and is the general manager for Divers Direct.

Milena Zaleckaite-Perkins '08

Milena started her academic journey as an international student at Valencia College, where the first English word she learned was "hurricane." Now she is back at Valencia as an EAP associate professor, teaching students who are just like she was seven years ago—struggling with the language barrier, yet with a strong will to succeed. Milena always says that life is the best story teller and that her story is a success story that started at Valencia.

12 Darryl (Sposato) Rudd '09

Darryl is majoring in Marine Science-Biology at the University of Tampa, while working as a legal assistant and office manager for a brokerage company in Orlando. She also works as a model and has been internationally published. On the personal level, she says: "I have a 2-year-old daughter who is my world and am dating the man of my dreams and best friend."

13 Ashley Danielle Wood '09

Ashley is enrolled at Rollins College on an academic scholarship where she is the vice president of marketing/public relations/special events for the Communication Honors Society, Lambda Pi Eta (Kappa Xi Chapter). In addition to school and a part-time job, she is working on a jewelry line and creating designs for a clothing company while also building a modeling portfolio.

Kimberly Ann Caldwell '10

Kimberly is currently working on obtaining her B.S. in Business Administration from UCF.

14 Joseph Gonzalez '10

Joseph has been working for a company that plans and executes large themed corporate events while seeking other employment opportunities.

Kristina (Rothermel) Stockford '11

Kristina was accepted to UCF's Nursing Program that began in fall 2011.

All class notes photos courtesy of featured alumni.



Chuck Norman, '03, '07

Chuck, who graduated from both Valencia's RN and EMT programs, recently summited the highest mountain in the continental United States (Mount Whitney at 14,508 feet). This was Chuck's second attempt – his first in 2009 was cut short when he chose to descend and render aid to a fellow climber who had suffered a major medical condition. It was the training that Chuck learned at Valencia that saved his fellow climber's life. Chuck climbed Mount Whitney as a fundraiser for the American Cancer Society and raised over \$4,000. In total, Chuck has raised over \$12,000 for medically related conditions through his charity, The Snow Shoe Club, www.thesnowshooclub.com



LET EVERYONE KNOW WHAT YOU'VE BEEN UP TO!



To be featured in Class Notes visit valenciacollege.edu/alumni/class_notes.cfm and fill in the submission form or mail to: Class Notes Editor, Valencia Alumni Association, 190 South Orange Avenue, Orlando, FL 32801.



If you wish to include a photo, please use the following guidelines:

- Candid shots of you interacting in an authentic setting are preferred. Avoid sending traditional portraits.
- If sending electronically, files should be in jpeg or tif formats. Files should be 300dpi resolution at 4" x6" (this would be a file approximately 1mb to 3mb in size).

The Alumni Association can also help to spread the word! Let us know about your meet-ups, networking events, annual retreats, reunions and save-the-dates that your

fellow alumni might like to attend or did attend with you. Whether it's getting a group together for sporting events, charity fundraisers, a day at the parks or just brunch and lunch, let us know. And if you send pictures we might just include them in the next issue. We can share your adventures and good times with our readers so next time they can plan on joining in on the fun!

And don't forget if you have an idea for a future article, please contact the Alumni Association. Send all suggestions to alumni@valenciacollege.edu.



Mary Lee Wilson (center) with friends and family at the Eden Bar in Maitland.

Mary Lee Wilson, sparking a flame for opera *By Linda Beaty*

Patrons at Enzian Theater’s Eden Bar may have been startled one evening last December to look up from their drinks and discover they were in the middle of opera’s version of a “flash mob.”

Without warning, the bartender and members of the Florida Opera Theatre – disguised as bar customers – began belting out the “Drinking Song” from the operetta, the Student Prince.

The mission behind that little bit of “pop up opera”? To unleash classical music on unsuspecting customers.

That event was just one of the events put together by the Orlando-based Florida Opera Theatre – and one of the people working behind the scenes has been Valencia retiree Lee Wilson.

Although Lee taught nursing at Valencia for 22 years, she has branched out beyond the health-care field since retiring in 1996. Soon after retirement, she served on the board of directors of the Mustard Seed, a Seminole County nonprofit organization that helps displaced families settle into and furnish new homes. After several years with that organization, Lee turned her attention to another nonprofit, Canterbury Retreat, an Episcopal retreat and conference center in Oviedo. Then a friend suggested she serve on the board of the Florida Opera Theatre.

Before long, Wilson was hooked on opera. Now she has seen many operas, including a visit to New York’s Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, where she marveled at the staging, costumes and the music. “I was like a country bumpkin with my mouth hanging open,” she says with a laugh.

Today, Wilson is helping Florida Opera Theatre raise money and bring opera to Central Florida. Although Orlando hasn’t hosted its own opera company since the Orlando Opera shut down in 2009, Florida Opera Theatre is collaborating with other local opera groups to put together opera events for Central Florida. For instance, the organization has partnered with First Coast Opera in St. Augustine and Vero Beach Opera to co-produce Rossini’s “Barber of Seville” in January.

“Our goal is to someday be able to have grand opera back in Orlando,” Wilson said, “but in the meantime, our goal is to sponsor operas in small places.”

For Wilson, volunteering has brought her new friends and, to her surprise, a new passion.

“I wanted to meet some new people and I figured that would be nice,” she said. “And it’s really been great.”

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Save the Date

Saturday, March 31, 2012

Join in as those of all ages and physical abilities come together for the Alumni Association's annual Run, Walk and Roll to raise scholarship funds for Valencia students. Participants and guests can also enjoy refreshments and children's arts and crafts activities.



Run, Walk & Roll

In Memory of Justin Harvey
– Former Alumni Association Board Member

Valencia's West Campus

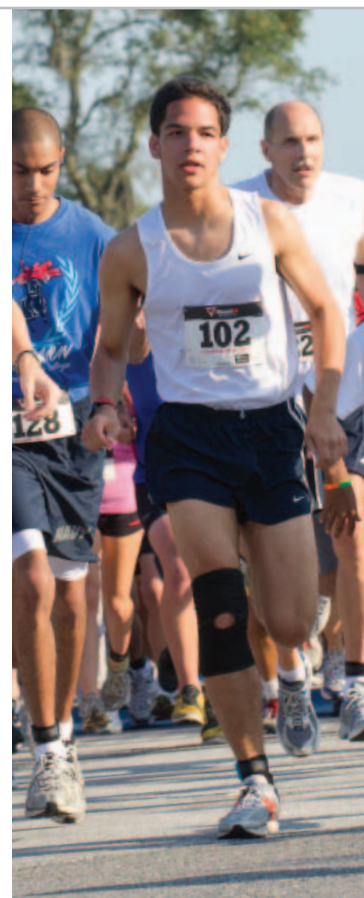
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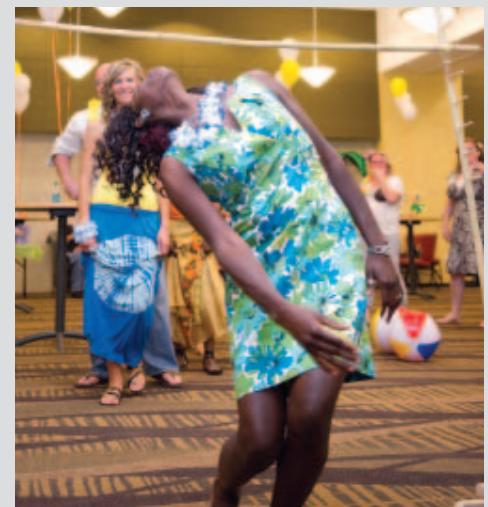
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2011 EVENTS SNAPSHOTS

Valencia 5K



Honors Luau



Luau photos by Colin Dever



Bridges to Success Reunion



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