

The Reach for Sustainability: Recycling and Contamination

Meet PVCC's
 New President,
 page 9

Laurel Molloy, assistant editor

On March 3, PVCC launched its new recycling and trash disposal program. They are partnering with Waste Management, Inc., a waste disposal organization in Charlottesville, to set up recycling across the main campus.

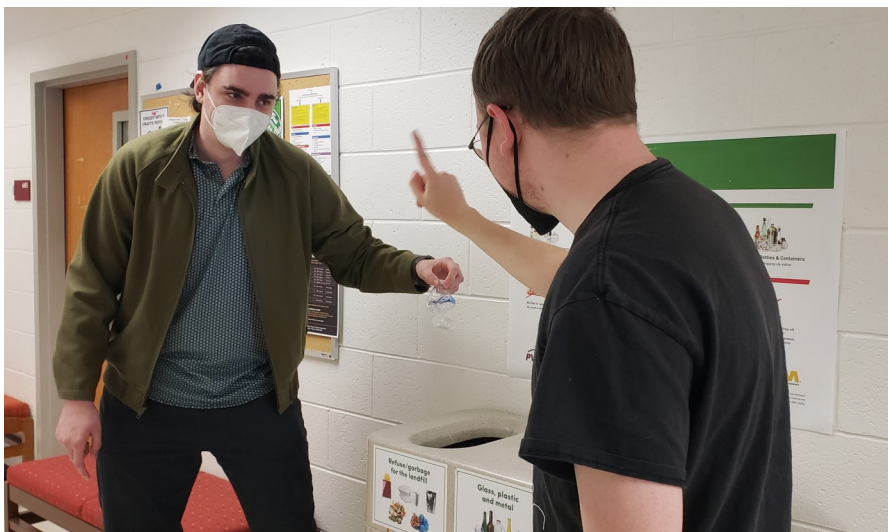
The Facilities Manager at PVCC Kim McManus wrote over an email that recyclable materials like “Paper, cardboard, glass, metal, and some plastics may be discarded in designated bins throughout all buildings on the main campus.” These objects will then be picked up by Waste Management Inc. who works with single-stream recycling, meaning all recyclable materials do not need to be sorted into many different recycling groups.

Materials are only sorted into three groups when being placed in the PVCC bins. Glass,

plastics, and metals are grouped together, then papers and cardboards to be recycled, and lastly trash and most other objects that cannot be recycled will go to the landfill instead.

The reach for sustainability at PVCC has not always been straightforward. Benjamin Grewal, a PVCC alumnus, brought to PVCC’s attention last year that although PVCC offered divided recycling bins the materials went to the landfill instead, glass, plastic, and cans alike. Grewal discovered that materials were not being recycled through an analysis on environmental impacts at PVCC he did as a capstone project for the Entrepreneurship Certificate Program. The analysis, “Environmental Impact Analysis: Piedmont Virginia Community College,” pointed out that PVCC still has a lot of work to do to make the community sustainable. It also

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Maxwell Walpole pretends to chide Jaime Plumb-Planas for putting a plastic bottle in the wrong bin. Photography by Laurel Molloy

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DATES TO REMEMBER

— **Annual Student Exhibition *** —
April 15 to Sept. 9, Dickinson Galleries

— **PVCC Academic &
Leadership Awards Ceremony *** —
April 28, 4 p.m., Dickinson Building Main Stage

— **NSLS at PVCC Presents:
Volunteer Day with CSPCA *** —
April 29, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., CSPCA

— **Carpool Cinema: *Shrek* *** —
April 29, 7 p.m., PVCC Lot 3

— **Flying in Place: Liberating Voices from
Virginia's Prisons ^** —
Apr. 29-30, 7:30 p.m., Dickinson Building Main
Stage

— **Final Exam Week** —
May 2-9

— **PVCC Program Spotlight:
Health Information Management and Medical
Administrative Support Assistant *** —
May 2, 6:30 p.m., Virtual

— **Graduation *** —
May 13, 6 p.m., John Paul Jones Arena

— **10-week Summer Classes Begin** —
May 23

— **Memorial Day: College closed, no classes** —
May 30

— **Independence Day: College closed, no classes** —
July 4

— **16-week Fall Classes Begin** —
Aug. 22

*Free Event ^Student Vouchers Available

Editor's Note

Laurel Molloy, assistant editor

I have always loved writing. Since I was a child, I wrote poems, short stories, and pieces of creative fiction. Even before that I would play games with my sister making up stories and strange lands together. However, for a long time I thought writing as a career was only for authors lucky enough to get famous. I was wrong. Writing is a skill that is used in many fields.

I started taking journalism classes at PVCC in the fall of 2021, and now I will be graduating high school with an associate degree and pursuing writing at a four-year college. Taking ENG 121 – Introduction to Journalism and ENG 122 – Introduction to Journalism II, I have learned how much dedication and creativity journalism takes. Journalism tries to evoke emotions and get across points just like all good writing does.

As the assistant editor for *The Forum*, I experimented with interviewing, reporting, and writing in different styles. I have grown as a writer and become more confident at getting information for articles. The neat thing about journalism and writing in general is that you can be creative with it. I can use my own writing background to shape the articles I write.

Although college and life can be hard, there is much to discover and create. I am happy to have found journalism because it is a great mesh of different skills. I hope everyone finds a creative niche for themselves where they can be expressive.



Spring 2022 Phi Theta Kappa Events

Johnson Li, staff writer

Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) is one of the biggest student organizations at PVCC. Alpha Epsilon Tau is the official name for PVCC's chapter. This year, the PTK President Daisy Dudley and all fellow PTK officers, including myself attended the National PTK Catalyst 2022 held at Denver, Colorado. The event started on April 7 and ended on April 9. During the PTK first general session, there were 1,233 chapters present, approximately 350,288 members. There were many great education forums including applying for scholarships, transfer sessions, and starting a college project.

This year, PVCC hosted the 42nd induction ceremony on April 13 at 3 p.m. 130 new members were inducted this year. President Frank Friedman attended this event to remark on his last year serving as the president of PVCC.

The guest speaker for the event was Bruce Robinson, a retired information literacy professor and a previous PTK adviser. Robinson made a speech that encouraged students to be more active members in PTK, such as holding an officer position to make PVCC a five-star chapter. In addition, Robinson encouraged all PTK members to attend both PTK regional and national conferences to enrich their knowledge of PTK and use the knowledge that they learned from it to



Johnson Li with President Frank Friedman.
Photography by Shazila Nadia Muzafar Shah

improve their PTK chapter.

My position in PTK is the vice president of scholarship. My fellow PTK officers and I collaborated to host a scholarship night on April 29 to help both current members and transfer members to apply for PTK scholarships.



PVCC President Frank Friedman congratulates and addresses new Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) inductees.
Photo courtesy of PVCC Marketing and Media Relations

Recycling, Continued from page 1

suggested some possible solutions like banning Single Use Plastics Items (SUPI), removing small trash cans, having reusable trash bags, using motion sensitive lights, and more. Grewal reached out to NBC-29 as well with his concerns getting an article written to try and raise awareness.

On Feb. 23, the PVCC Sustainability Committee met to talk about recycling at PVCC. Lindsey Horne, an education solutions representative from Waste Management Inc., came and talked with the committee to come up with ideas and discuss problems with recycling.

Horne said that the biggest problem with single-stream recycling is contamination. All plastics, metals, and glass are placed in one container, and likewise all papers and cardboards are placed together in another container. Anything that does not go into these two categories must be thrown into the trash, because of this a banana peel or other non-recyclable material left in a recycling container can contaminate all objects around it. This can cause the entire load to be sent to the landfill instead of being recycled.

Contaminants can be wet papers, half-filled liquid containers, unfinished foods, plastic bags, and items from the wrong group placed in the incorrect bins. With PVCC's single-stream recycling program, being mindful of what people put in the recycling bins is important.

The Director of Marketing and Media Relations at PVCC, Susain Brooks, said that we need to get "internal education ... in place" about recycling. People need to know that bottles have to be emptied of all liquids, containers emptied of food, and banana peels simply thrown away. Although counter intuitive, it is sometimes best to throw items away instead of trying to recycle them because unwanted items can contaminate the rest of the recycling.

Executive Order 77 (EO-77) is a state order that calls for all single-use plastics to be eliminated before Dec. 31, 2025. Now canned water is being used instead of plastic containers, but Grewal said that many vendors supplying PVCC are not even aware that they have to be phasing out plastics at the moment.

With the start of PVCC's recycling program, the small bins will be removed from classrooms and offices to try and reduce and soon eliminate disposable plastics and trash bags. This step is to

help reach the goal set by Executive Order 77.

Grewal said he was impatient to see change. He told people about the recycling bins lack of real recycling properties in October and wanted to see improvement sooner. He said, "I think it needs to be a priority." Quoting Greta Thunberg, a 19-year-old Swedish environmental activist, saying, "'we need to be acting like the house is on fire because the house is on fire,'" he continued saying, "we need to be radically shifting" to change our environmental footprint.

"I think the next best step is to start a sorting station," he said. Grewal has worked at sorting stations for several different music festivals. There people could come up and learn about recycling and sort the recyclable items. He said that this can raise awareness and cultivate active participation in creating sustainability.

McManus wrote, "Each of us can make a difference. We can contribute to a sustainable future. Our efforts will be best realized when we are mindful of how important this is to our world and how important the correct process is to its success. When in doubt, put your items in the garbage and more materials will be recycled."

If people want to get involved in helping the environment, they can go to the PVCC Sustainability Committee meetings to discuss next steps as well as join the Horticulture & Environmental Club. This club is about building a better future and environment through planting and bringing awareness to environmental issues. Information can be found on their website, their PVCC club page or you can contact one of their staff advisors David Lerman and Jeremy Taylor.

According to McManus, "Learning opportunities will be made available to students, staff and faculty." The Sustainability Committee will also be setting up informational occasions in the future, but the specifics and dates are still to be confirmed. Active participation was stressed by McManus and the Sustainability Committee.

McManus wrote, the "Key to the success of [PVCC's new recycling] program is participation by the entire PVCC community - students, staff and faculty. The commitment includes education on recycling and mindfulness and discipline with how we dispose of recyclables and trash."

Read the complete article on Piedmontforum.com.

Deliberating to Benefit Future Generations

Shazila Nadia Muzafar Shah, staff writer

On March 25, around 25 students and faculty of PVCC gathered in the North Mall Meeting Room for a deliberative dialogue. The topic for this semester's dialogue was "Youth and Opportunity: What Should We Do for Future Generations to Thrive."

Prior to this event, a group of students and faculty met in room M249 on February 25 for a deliberative dialogue facilitator training. The group was coached on ways to handle the dialogue by ensuring that it does not escalate into an argument or debate, and by provoking opposing viewpoints if there is too much agreement.

The dialogue began with introductions by the organizers: Jennifer Koster, professor of English and Writing Center coordinator at PVCC, and Crystal Newell, the director of library services at PVCC. Before the official commencement of the event, Koster gave a land acknowledgement to the Monacan Nation who are the custodians of the land which PVCC is built on.

After the acknowledgement, a slideshow and video was presented in order to explain and introduce the topic and the itinerary of the dialogue. Koster gave great emphasis on the difference between a debate and dialogue.

"In a debate, each side states a specific opening position around an issue and argues against the opposing view. In a deliberation, people gather with an open mind to listen and learn about other perspectives. They weigh the benefits and trade-offs of solutions to difficult problems, and they share what matters most to them when they know they can't have everything they want. Participants learn to see the people behind these often polarizing issues, and they come to understand that they aren't entirely unlike the people they disagree with. Democracy

requires us to work together and it requires compromise," said Koster.

Once this was completed, the large group was divided into three smaller groups, each with a trained facilitator and a notetaker. They were separated into three rooms to begin the dialogue.

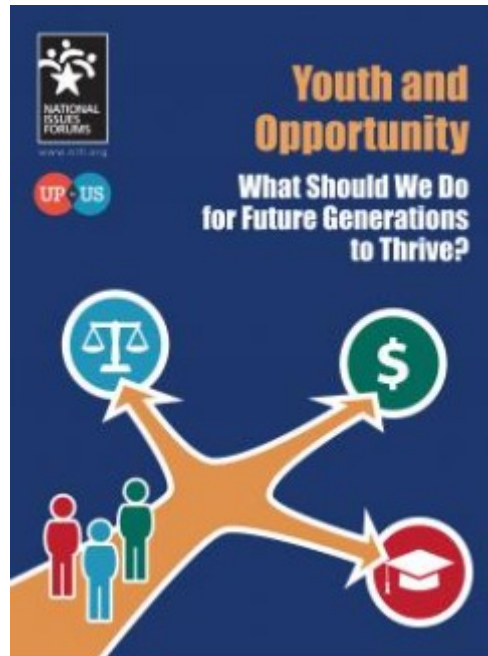
Each group began by going around the table with introductions, and their personal stake in the matter. After the introductions, each person took turns reading a possible action that could be taken from each option followed by its drawbacks from the given issue advisory. The first option was to equip people to succeed, the second option was to give everyone a fair chance, and the third option was to focus on economic security. Then, each group had 20 minutes to deliberate each option and

the actions that could be done.

Participants were lively and engaged in the discussion, talking about the pros and cons and other solutions for each option. Whenever a group was in too much agreement, the facilitator would ask the participants to think about why someone might not have the same beliefs so that there is more than one perspective in the deliberation. To conclude the dialogue among the small groups, each group was given around 20 minutes to review and reflect on the group's deliberations.

Following the conclusion of the small group discussions, all groups assembled back in the North Mall Meeting Room to share their thoughts and ideas. In the end, students and faculty alike agreed that it was a pleasant experience where they felt respected and heard. Some even continued their deliberations as they walked out of the room.

Those interested in learning more about the recent deliberation topic may visit the issue guide page on the National Issues Forums Institute's website where you can also learn more about deliberative dialogue.



Student Forum: Dr. Patrick Tompkins

Laurel Molloy and Jaume Plumb-Planas, assistant editors

The search for PVCC's new college president has begun in person at PVCC. The first finalist to arrive at PVCC, Dr. Patrick Tompkins, spoke to students and faculty at the student forum. The event was April 4 and started at noon in the Bolick Student Center.

Tompkins got his start in education teaching as an associate professor at John Tyler Community College in 1993. He was previously the dean at Thomas Nelson Community College from 2013 to 2018 and then provost at the Historic Triangle Campus. Since then, Tompkins has been the vice president of academic, student and workforce education at Eastern Shore Community College in Virginia. He earned his bachelor's degree from Villanova University, a master's degree from both Iowa State University and Virginia Commonwealth University, and a doctorate from Old Dominion University.

There were 11 preset questions for Tompkins that were passed out for the audience to ask. Once those questions were discussed, people asked additional questions.

Tompkins explained that he started as a teacher and only began management after other people told him he had a talent for it. He said, "Leadership is teaching," and if someone has the talent for it, they should use it.

To Tompkins, the president's job is not just about administrative duties, it is also about setting the tone for the college. "The president doesn't just run the college. The president leads the college," said Tompkins. To him, this means it is not solely about managing, but about creating a culture that the president works to maintain.

"Piedmont, when we look at the staff, it's gotten more inclusive, but it doesn't really reflect the student population at Piedmont, and we don't get there by just saying we need to be more diverse, and we don't get there by just trying to hire people for diversity; it's about creating a culture," said Tompkins

"Leading is about setting the tone," he said. He does not want to tell people to be more diverse, but instead he wants to have a culture of diversity and inclusion. He said, "We are in a people business," inclusion, hospitality, and

transparency are extremely important.

Tompkins expressed the importance of having students back on campus, as well as providing accessibility to campus resources. "We have locations where students can see an individual and get that personal help, so I'm curious as to what's going on in those rural areas and if there is an opportunity for the college to have an actual physical presence in some of those areas," said Tompkins. "I had a conversation with the president's cabinet, and one of the things I said was we need students back on campus, we need students engaged, ... we need college to be a fun place. What we know about higher education is the more time you spend on campus, the more successful you will be."

Tompkins suggested that the college focus on high-demand degrees such as those in cybersecurity and tech fields. Tompkins said, "Cybersecurity is now more important than ever. What about blockchain? Are we doing anything related to blockchain and crypto?"

Tompkins conveyed the necessity of ensuring that community college degree programs remained relevant to the job market and that they had a reasonable graduation and job placement rate. He said, "There are a couple of programs here that did not have a single graduate last year; why not? Why are people not graduating from the program? Is that program obsolete? ... You have to look at those programs and see that people are spending this time and this money, accruing debt, and they're not getting a job."

As the audience asked questions, Tompkins made an effort to ask each person's name that spoke up, and sometimes he had follow-up questions on what they said. As he talked and listened, he slowly paced between and in front of the audience leaving the throne-like chair in the back alone.

"I already know what I think," he said. He wants to know what other people think. We need to "learn how to disagree," he said. Saying that as a society we are losing the culture that allows disagreement and honest discourse. He said that both Democrats and Republicans alike are not helping this problem. Instead of having a side that is right, he said there needs to be thorough and thoughtful conversations happening.

Read the full article on Piedmontforum.com.

A Conversation with Dr. Julie Leidig

Gabriella Barber and Lillian Downey, staff writers

On Wednesday March 6, Julie Leidig formally introduced herself to the PVCC student body as a candidate for the presidency of the college. While introducing herself, she went over her history at other schools, such as Northern Virginia Community College where she currently works. She is the provost, or a senior administrative officer on campus. She has been in Virginia for 12 years, but has a background in many other states, as well as time spent in both Mexico and Japan. When asked why she wanted to come to PVCC for the presidency opportunity, she explained that she enjoys working in college towns and what opportunities working in a college town can bring to a community college.

Once she started speaking with the students, Leidig focused on students succeeding in their fields. One question that was discussed was the distance some students have to drive to make it to PVCC and how Leidig would help students with this. Leidig responded with, "Not one solution will fit all," and discussed ideas such as Zoom classes for those with internet access. For those who do not have internet access, she discussed ideas such as setting up rides for students to get to PVCC by collaborating with transportation providers and internet hubs in different counties for easier access to classes.

Another student asked, "How do you prioritize funding for student engagement activities including student travel to professional conferences or organizations?" In response to this question, she spoke on the idea of paid internship opportunities. When Leidig was asked "What strategies would you implement to educate students on the various paths offered at PVCC and ensure that students are in the appropriate program for their ultimate career goals?" Leidig responded with a similar plan, a "Job for a day" opportunity that allows students to shadow a professional in the field they are interested in.

One student asked about opportunities for studying at the school, and the difficulties that come with taking classes, such as studying, taking notes, and keeping up with course work. In response to this, Leidig reminded the student of the many opportunities already available at

PVCC. She mentioned tutoring services, the Writing Center, and talking to faculty, reminding the student, "The thing is, not to give up."

Student comfort within the school was also a frequent subject while Leidig was answering questions. One student asked about mental health and how she would help students struggling with their mental health while also taking classes. Leidig responded to the student with care. Leidig spoke on how the Virginia Community College System did not originally allow the school system to help students with mental health, but recently they have changed this. She suggested the idea of presentations and workshops to help raise awareness for mental health and different issues that can be helped.

A student asked about how Leidig would support civil liberties on campus, "How do you intend to support vital civil liberties here on campus, like freedom of speech?" To this Leidig responded that her goal was to not change anything. She explained that if a student feels that their civil liberties, such as freedom of speech, are being violated by a teacher or student then they must speak to the dean.

The last topic that was discussed was how to recruit students and professors. Leidig focused on money while talking about this. She said, "You're usually not going to be able to pay the salary that they would get paid in their field." However, she explained that instructors could be attracted by other means, such as offering better hours and other bonuses.

For recruiting students, and keeping them at the school, Leidig suggested using our already existing network of previous students. She suggested we allow alumni and previous students to help at the school. Leidig expressed the belief that students connect best with other students and the power of that connection should be used. She said that simply having Alumni out in the community sharing information about PVCC creates a "word of mouth" recruitment system.

There are four candidates being interviewed for the presidency role at PVCC. The formal interviews for this position are during the weeks of April 4, and 11. More information about each candidate, including their qualifications and personal history, can be found on the PVCC Presidential Search page.

The Hunt for a New President: Dr. Walt Tobin

Carlos Banda Montes and Laurel Molloy, staff writer and assistant editor

On April 13, at noon, the final student forum took place to help determine Dr. Frank Friedman's successor as president of PVCC. Dr. Walt Tobin, the last candidate to come to PVCC, took open and pre-set questions for 50 minutes in the Bolick Student Center. He was wearing a suit and reddish bowtie, occasionally sipping water.

Tobin is currently the president of Orangeburg Calhoun Technical College in South Carolina. Tobin has been in education for over 20 years and has a doctorate in Education Administration from the University of South Carolina.

Student leader Hadrien Padilla ran the predetermined questions and asked them for the first part of the student forum, and for the last part, available students asked questions of their own. The event was also being shown over Zoom, so people could interact there as well.

"We are here to serve the needs of the students," Tobin said. He explained that it is important to have the right environment for students and teachers alike so people can learn and grow as effectively as possible.

He said he wants to reduce the number of students in developmental programs and lessen the amount of time people are in those programs. He also stressed several times that the faculty, facilities, and students must have the right resources to help them succeed, especially on the first day of school. He has proposed ideas such as "mandatory orientation courses," so that "students start right" and have "access to materials on the first day." He believes "students should feel welcome and supported" and "emergency funds" should be available to students. He thinks partnering with community organizations like the Salvation Army can help. He said that at Orangeburg Calhoun Technical College, "We have tried to make students feel supported."

He said the main roles for a president are to work to set and fulfill a vision for the college, create a good environment for people to learn and to take feedback from students and listen to them. He said, "I will be professional," and that student advice is important. If students feel something is needed at the college, he will find a way.

"As a college we are looking for a greater

sense of connection," Tobin remarked, saying that student success and connection are closely woven together. He said he likes to leave his office and meet with faculty and students.

One of his goals is "making an investment in ourselves" at the college. He said it is vital to keep good salaries for teachers and to create awards to push students and faculty forward. He wants to make sure the staff are just as invested in the process as the students. He asks himself, "Does it meet the needs of the students?"

When asked about students with bad internet that come from rural areas, he said that at Orangeburg Calhoun Technical College, "we had laptops that we would loan out" and 100 hotspots for students with bad or no internet. He did remark that hotspots could only do so much when some neighborhoods had so little reception.

One of his main points was the "focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion." Tobin intends to "set a vision." He said that "A vision is a shared experience." Many people help to create and sustain a college, not just the president. He explained the difference between equity and equality; "Equality is [when] everybody gets treated the same." Equity is about giving people what they need specific to their situation, not the same things as what everyone else needs.

The questions continued with open topics from the audience. When asked about better resources for people with disabilities, Tobin said, "Federal law requires us to [assist] students [with] needs." Tobin said that it is his job to give everyone with needs, both physical and mental, "all the tools [they] need to succeed." He made a point that he prioritizes the needs of all students.

Another open question touched on mental health. "Mental health is a thing for everybody." He said, "It has to come out of the shadows." Sometimes, people must take a break to keep their sanity, students and faculty alike. When talking about self-care he said, "If we don't feed ourselves, we can't feed others." He explained that "We all need somebody to talk [to]... we all have mental health issues."

More information about Tobin and the other presidential candidates can be found online. The pick for PVCC's new college president will be announced when all deliberations are finished.

Read the full article on Piedmontforum.com.

PVCC's New President Dr. Jean Runyon

Kristofer Jones and Jaume Plumb-Planas, staff writer and assistant editor

With PVCC finalist interviews winding down, it was time for students to meet the third presidential candidate, Dr. Jean Runyon. The student forum was held on Monday, April 11, at noon in the Bolick Student Center. All were welcome, and refreshments and pizza were provided for those who attended the event.

Runyon earned her bachelor's degree from Bloomsburg University in 1980 and began teaching at the College of Southern Maryland in 1985. While working at the College of Southern Maryland, she received her master's degree from George Washington University. In 2000, she became the director of the Innovative Teaching Center at the College of Southern Maryland. From 2007 to 2015, she worked at Anne Arundel Community, holding successive leadership roles in the college while simultaneously earning a doctorate degree from Northcentral University. She is currently the campus vice president of Front Range Community College in Colorado, a position she has held since 2015.

Runyon began by explaining her connection to the area, namely her father's 30 years of service in the Navy, her attendance and graduation from Princess Anne High School in Virginia Beach, and her sister's residence in the area.

To Runyon, the president must lead with equity. At Front Range Community College, she had worked on the college's plan for achieving equity of outcome. She emphasized her experience transitioning from Anne Arundel Community College to Front Range Community College. She had to determine where the college was at in terms of meeting its diversity and equity goals as a whole, and talk to the college community about what they felt should be addressed immediately. "As president, it is always important to move forward with equity in mind but also to understand where we are as an institution and to engage students and their voices as well in that journey," said Runyon.

Runyon stated that as students are coming back to campus, it is important to help rebuild the college community by engaging students in campus activities. "It really is about engagement. If we can host events, if we can sponsor activities,

the engagement of all the clubs here will make this a really vibrant campus community," said Runyon.

When asked about how she thought PVCC's program competitiveness and performance could be improved Runyon said that although PVCC has a very diverse portfolio of programs available and a high placement rate into jobs in the community, that it is important that the college stays aware of the employment opportunities and needs of the community. "When you leave this college, we want to make sure that you can join the workforce, that there will be a job for you," said Runyon.

"When we bring on these programs, we work with our community partners to identify programs that have high needs in the area that will result in jobs for our students ... We also want to look at our program health, we want all our programs to deliver on our promises for each one of you. We are not a destination, we are a bridge to what you want to do," said Runyon.

In her current position at Front Range Community College, Runyon strives to be present in the community by attending all student events and regularly meeting with the Student Government Association. Runyon said, "College is for you, student engagement is extremely important, and it is at the heart of what I do and something I value." As PVCC's president she plans to uphold that value by engaging with the student body of the college.

The last question was what was one thing that Runyon would change or that she believes needs changing at PVCC. Runyon emphasized that she did not have a specific action plan in terms of what she wants to change yet. It is important for her to hear the feedback of both what is working for students and what needs the college has yet to fulfill in order to better serve both the students and the community at large. Through student engagement with the college president, she hopes to figure out both where the college is now and where it needs to be.

"I can't say what I want to fix. I want to start, learn, and celebrate, and then also have a chance to get alongside the college community to also see what the next 50 years will look like, and set together a shared vision for what PVCC will be in the future," said Runyon.

PVCC Job Fair Offers Opportunities

Johnson Li, staff writer

On Wednesday March 30 at 10 a.m., recruiters and representatives from more than 80 companies filled the PVCC main building campus and outdoor space marked PVCC's 37th Annual Job Fair. PVCC's Annual Job Fair dates back to 1984. Due to COVID-19 Pandemic, the 2020 and 2021 Annual Job Fair had been canceled. PVCC's career services managers, André Luck and Gigi Davis, planned several months before launching the Spring 2022 job fair event.

Companies from many different career fields were present in the job fair to allow students, local community members, and out of town visitors to meet and talk. For instance, representatives from Triple C Camp, Director of Operations Eryn Rothenberg, and Director of Camp Programs Kasey Massih, shared great opportunities for people who like to work with children. Triple C Camp is an education company that offers children from kindergarten to ninth grade fun activities exploring the outdoors and having a camping adventure. The camp runs from June to August.

A popular and big recreation company, acac Fitness and Wellness representatives Ashlie Crouch, Kerri Kirkeide, and Courtney Valladares discussed many employment opportunities in their company. Valladares, director of team development said, "acac has great services such as the waterpark, spa, summer camp for children in grades K-sixth, which provides endless job opportunities for people to work here."

From the healthcare side, Commonwise Home Care representatives Clay Conner and Macy Drey shared the company's mission and requirements. Conner said, "Our company provides non-medical services in home care. Our mission is to help older adults in the community. No skills needed. We will provide training in house!" Home Instead representative Kecia Hembry talked to people about the job opportunities to be a caregiver for elderly people in need.

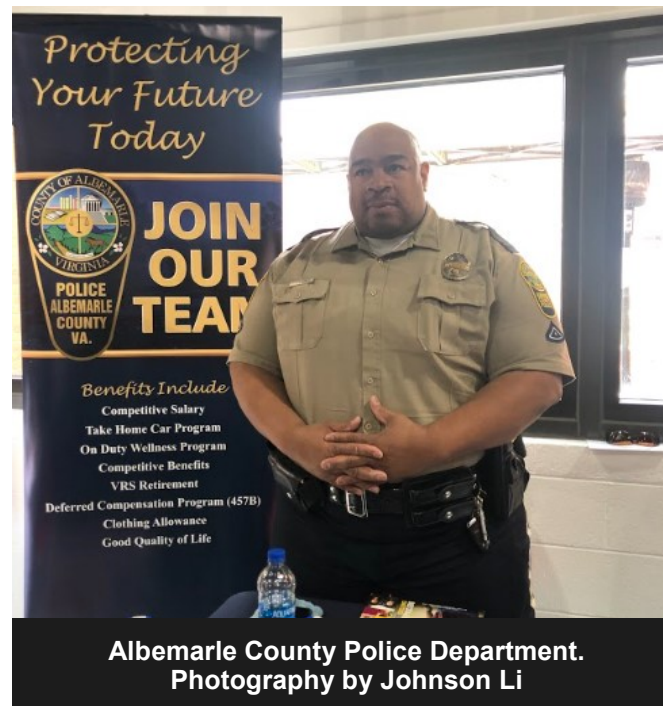
Another job opportunity that falls under hospitality and retail is Wintergreen Resort. Sarah Thorp, the recruiter shared to people that Wintergreen is a beautiful place to work, especially in the winter. Wintergreen offers a variety of jobs including chief, maintenance

technician, and sales associate.

Goodwin William Staffing recruiter Chris Pinto discussed the role of the company, "Goodwin William Staffing is a company that aims for helping clients to get hired by a company that they partnered up with."

The job fair offered many opportunities for those interested in criminal justice careers. The UVA Police Department representatives Jamie Kennison and Cassy Chan are looking for people expressing interest in protecting the UVA community operations on both day and night shifts. Albemarle County Police Department representatives Curtis Kenney and Jo-Ann Steiff were available to help people with criminal justice degrees to become a police officer. Police officer Kenney had served in the military for 20 years and he enjoys helping people in the community. That is why he became a police officer. RMC recruiter Daisy Duitsman informed people about working part time or full time for security at UVA sports events and campus safety.

The PVCC's 37th Annual Job Fair might have ended at 2 p.m., but that does not mean career-focused events are over. Luck and Davis have planned to launch a summer job fair event in April for students interested in getting a job in the summer.



Students take on the Charlottesville Cardinals

Kristofer Jones, staff writer

All were welcomed to PVCC basketball courts on Wednesday, April 20, to play the Charlottesville Cardinals in a game of basketball. The event was hosted by Susan Hannifan, the director of student accessibility and accommodations at PVCC. This basketball game provided students with the opportunity to try out wheelchair basketball against a professional wheelchair basketball team, the Charlottesville Cardinals. According to Hannifan, the Cardinals have been hosting this event for ten years, but this was the first since last year's game was canceled because of COVID-19 restrictions.

The captain of the Cardinals, Tom Vandever, is one of the men who started the basketball team in 1979. He said, "The city hired a therapeutic director and started having basketball nights for people with disabilities, and I volunteered. We got a bunch of guys in wheelchairs, and after a few months I said let's start a team, and that's what we did."

He took the time to explain some of the rules of wheelchair basketball. He said, "Traveling is when a player controls the ball but uses more than two pushes in any direction to move with the ball without taking a dribble or losing control of the ball."

The team is now in their 41st year of spreading the word on wheelchair basketball.

PVCC student and participant Jessica Hladky said, "It's an event to bring people together and

try something different." She talked about the accommodations available at PVCC. Hladky said, "They do a fantastic job. My disabilities are not always physical, but the experiences I have had have been fantastic."

The Charlottesville Cardinals have performed for over 175,000 people. Since its start, over 700 area athletes with disabilities have participated with the Cardinals. What started out as six local guys in a gym and a love for basketball has turned into spreading awareness for people with disabilities all over the world.

Hladky said, "Even though you might see someone with a disability, there's some ability in there as well."



Students playing wheelchair basketball with the Charlottesville Cardinals. Photography by Kristofer Jones

Chocolate returns to the Student Art Exhibition

Jaume Plumb-Planas, assistant editor

On April 15, PVCC students, faculty, staff, and members of the wider community gathered together to enjoy chocolate and art in the Dickinson building art gallery for the first time since the annual Chocolate Chowdown's two year hiatus.

PVCC's Art Gallery was adorned with over 85 pieces of student art ranging in medium from acrylic paintings to motion graphic video. While some attendees browsed the various pieces, others sat down in the common area, chatting, coloring, and eating the wide variety of chocolate sweets.

Student artists walked the halls viewing both their newly framed art and their audience. These artists were easily identified by glittery stars that had been given to them by one of the event organizers, Associate Professor of Art Fenella Belle. "Some students are very happy to participate, and some students maybe need a little encouragement, and they maybe don't realize that their work is good enough to put up," said Belle.

Due to concerns over COVID-19 transmission and COVID-19 lockdown, the Student Art Exhibition has been hosted online for the past two years. The first year, Belle gave chocolates to all the student participants in the exhibition because of the fact that it had to be canceled due to COVID-19.

Currently, the Annual Student Exhibition has both an online and physical showing of the student art to provide greater accessibility.

To the benefit of the art connoisseurs in attendance, almost all of the student artwork was available for sale, with a few exceptions. As of opening night of the exhibition, five pieces had

already been sold.

Belle said, "Some students have put a lot of hours into their pieces and don't want to sell. For some students, we can take their pieces and make a scan for digital prints instead of the original, and for some of these, I ask students if I can make a digital print and put them up around Piedmont in different offices."

"I went through the whole exhibit, and it looks really good. There's quite a variety, there's a diversity of mediums as well as styles, and I'm happy with it. It looks really strong," said Belle.

All artwork will remain up in the PVCC Gallery located in the third floor North and South Hallways of the Dickinson Building until Sept. 9.

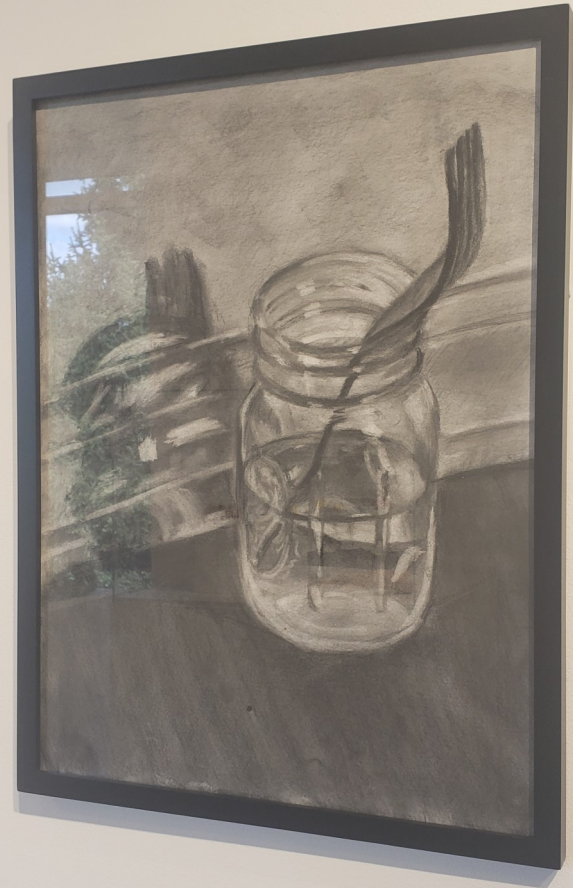
For any individuals wishing to purchase one of the works, contact Professor Belle at fbelle@pvcc.edu. The online exhibit can be found at <https://www.pvcc.edu/art-show-view/914639>.



Attendees gathering for chocolate and conversation.
Photography by Jaume Plumb-Planas



**South Hall Gallery.
Photography by Jaume Plumb-Planas**



**Charcoal drawing "Fork" by Lee Kassay.
Photography by Laurel Molloy**



**North Hall Gallery.
Photography by Jaume Plumb-Planas**



**Attendees gather to eat chocolate and chat.
Photography by Jaume Plumb-Planas**

A Familiar Face at PVCC: Bonnie Tomlin

Gabriella Barber, staff writer

At PVCC there are many people that work together to make student life comfortable and convenient. One face many students see daily is Bonnie Tomlin's. For those who do not know Tomlin, she is the fun loving lady that works as the front desk receptionist inside the South entrance of the main building at PVCC. She is at PVCC Monday to Friday in the mornings until noon to help guide students and campus visitors.

"The students are most important to me," Tomlin said between phone calls. Tomlin's job is to answer phone calls from students, parents, staff, and community members and direct them to the appropriate extension they need. If she does not send someone to an extension, she can often provide the information needed herself.

Tomlin also directs students and visitors to classrooms, staff offices, and other locations in the school. Every so often she has to walk people to their destinations because the school is not

simple for everyone to navigate.

Tomlin also has a life outside the school that she is willing to talk about with anyone who takes a few minutes to speak with her. She has a son, husband and a couple of pets that she loves.

When asked about her family, she said, "My son? I'm proud of him every day. He'll do anything I ask him to do; everything he does makes me proud. My husband is a good person, and very thoughtful. He recently bought me a new Jeep." This Jeep means a lot to her because she has dreamed of having one since she was a child.

Tomlin has been working with PVCC for three year to date this April. When asked how much longer she was planning to stay at PVCC, she said, "I have no idea, until I stop enjoying it. Currently I do enjoy it, the students make me happy, and I have bonded with many of them."

Although Tomlin describes her job as "Not incredibly demanding," it is an important part of keeping student life running smoothly.



Bonnie Tomlin at her desk. Photography by Gabriella Barber

Kim Hoosier on Sociology

Gabriella Barber, staff writer

Kim Hoosier is a sociology professor at PVCC who teaches a variety of different courses on the subject. Hoosier has been working at PVCC since 1999. She has been teaching five courses per semester at PVCC since she started working full-time in 2004, four introduction courses and one sociology elective.

Hoosier started studying sociology at Appalachian State University and received her bachelor's degree. She then continued with her education in sociology at both American University and the University of Virginia, receiving both her master's degree and doctorate in sociology.

Hoosier has stayed interested in the field since then and finds it important to study sociology.

She said, "Hopefully, when you take a sociology class you think about the world a little bit differently, you see things, how things are connected, you see how society shapes individuals, and you see this big role of institutions. So I think if we don't study sociology, we are missing a really very important perspective."

As stated before, Hoosier teaches five classes, but she has a new favorite class that she recently developed and started teaching last year called Sociology of Gender. Hoosier said, "I taught it last year in the Fall, and it was great. I've got a lot to learn; I'm still learning, but the students were very engaged, and they were happy to help me along with some of the new terminology and development... they were very, very helpful."

Hoosier is excited for the opportunity to teach this class again next Fall because of the evolving state of gender in the world. Hoosier does recommend taking Introduction to Sociology - SOC 200 at PVCC before taking this class though, because it goes over many theories and



Photo courtesy of Kim Hoosier

terms that are used in Sociology of Gender.

Sociology of Gender - SOC 225 (45331) will be available to take on campus in Fall 2022 on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

Hoosier is planning to stay at PVCC until she feels that she has stopped doing good work. She enjoys teaching students who are engaged in her classes and can connect the class to their own lives.

For those interested in taking a sociology course and who are wondering if it meets a class requirement for their degree, this information can be found within each student's Student Information System (SIS).

The Chess Players of PVCC Welcome You

Lillian Downey, staff writer

The game of chess is often thought of as an elitist pastime, unfriendly to beginners; however, the PVCC Chess Club flips the script on one of the world's greatest strategy games.

The Chess Club meets on Wednesdays in room M158. Starting at noon, the organizers set up several tables around the room, each boasting a chess board. Players face each other on a first-come-first-serve basis.

All player levels interact throughout the course of the 1 hour meeting. This means that every game can be a learning experience. According to Kevin Jelinek, the president of the Chess Club, the entire vibe is very relaxed. Many of the regular players are new to chess themselves, so there is no need to be intimidated.

It is not necessary to sign up for a table or arrive at a certain time. People drift in and out as their schedules allow. For anyone interested in joining Chess Club, Jelinek encourages them to just stop by and say hello. He said, "No one has to

sign up or sign in. There's no commitment or anything like that, you can just come in and talk to people."

Jelinek has an interest in seeing the expansion of the Chess Club in the future. He would like to add another meeting day and a time to discuss strategy and game-play in a more structured way. There is also the possibility of participation in tournaments if other club members would like to. Jelinek said, "I would love to ... engage in in-person tournaments somewhere or at the very least virtual tournaments."

Anyone who is interested in playing should not be intimidated by the idea of Chess Club. Everyone there is happy to chat over the chessboard and more experienced players are always willing to give tips to less experienced players.

If a student has specific questions they are welcome to email them to Jelinek at kjj2352@email.vccs.edu or the club's staff adviser Zack Beamer, associate professor of mathematics, at zbeamer@pvcc.edu.



A game of chess at Club Day 2022. Photography by Gabriella Barber

Crack into Geology With PVCC's New Club



The Geology Club on an outing at the Ragged Mountain Natural Area. Photo courtesy of Mara Cox

Lillian Downey, staff writer

Although PVCC has seen various iterations of a Geology Club in the past, the club's newest form is setting out with fresh determination and plenty of trips and presentations on the calendar.

Geology Club meets on the first and third Tuesday of every month. Meetings are held in room M850 starting at 12:30 p.m. There are several geology students in the club, but several non-geology students participate as well. All levels of geological knowledge are welcomed.

The club president Mara Cox encouraged anyone interested in the club to check it out. She said, "Show up, participate, have fun." The two words that Cox wanted to focus on in the club are inclusivity and chillness.

According to Cox, the club meetings are generally short and to the point. There are snacks as well as time to discuss upcoming trips and events. There is also time for club members to discuss topics they are interested in.

The Geology Club recently went on a

geological outing to the Ragged Mountain Natural Area. Cox described it as a very relaxed outing. Callan Bentley, assistant professor of geology, guided the hike. He pointed out geological features along the route and explained geological terminology.

The goal is to have more outings, some like the hike at the natural area but others might be larger in ambition. Cox explained that the club is hoping to have events ranging from talks and movie nights, to fossil hunting trips and overnight camp outs.

Coming up on April 12 is a presentation for club members from a planetary geologist. Those interested in attending this talk are encouraged to stop by a club meeting first to get details.

Questions are always welcome in Geology Club. Anyone with questions about the club is encouraged to reach out or even stop Cox in the hallway to ask. Cox can be contacted at mac2636@email.vccs.edu. Bentley, the club's staff adviser, is also available for questions at CBentley@pvcc.edu.

Information about Geology Club can also be found on their club page.

The Mystery of Student Produced Theater

Jaume Plumb-Planas, assistant editor

“Okay, well the goal this semester is to not have to mop up any real blood,” said PVCC student playwright and director Tori Freimuth to members of her cast, as she leaned over a table filling vials with fake blood, “At least the fake blood smells nicer.”

It was Thursday, March 31, and members of PVCC’s Drama Club’s latest production were preparing both backstage and on stage for their first showing of *The Mystery of Muhammad Ranch*, Freimuth’s modern rendition on the cult classic *The Mystery of Irma Vep*. Sporadic backlights would brighten the backstage, usually followed by sound effects as members of the cast and crew hurried around with a sense of urgency, occasionally gathering around the spectacle of their castmates’ interviews before going off to practice their lines and cues.

The play was written by Freimuth last semester, an experience that Freimuth said involved both alcohol and copious amounts of stress. Once she had put the final touches on it, she then introduced the script to the president of the drama club, Zach Zartler, who was excited to introduce an original play to the group.

From there the play evolved into an almost entirely student run affair, with Zartler and Freimuth working together as directors. “The toughest challenge of this play has been that it’s separated from the rest of the shows that have been happening here,” said Zartler.

The only professional help with the show was with the lighting and occasional input from Associate Professor of Theatre Arts Brad Stoller, who serves as the drama club’s staff adviser and primary director.

“Other than that, all the things have been student done, which is remarkable, but also the hardest part,” said Zartler.

Due to the nature of having an unpracticed set of directors, things fell behind schedule. According to Zartler, most theater productions typically have their first run through at least one week before opening night; however, the cast of *The Mystery of Muhammad Ranch* was doing their first full rehearsal the night before opening night.

“This is one of these learning experiences

where newbies are giving it their best go-about. Four days ago the set was put up, two days ago everyone was wearing costumes, and now we’re doing music and lights with all of that together. These people are being true improvisers because they’re taking that and running with it, and it’s amazing how little fear they have,” said Zartler.

“I think what’s remarkable about this show is that we are getting to the point where we need to be, behind schedule, and every person here kicked into high gear, but it’s been crazy,” said Zartler.

As Zartler finished speaking, lightning light effects flashed across the stage, followed by the rumble of thunder from the speakers behind the set pieces, signaling an actor to move to their set marking to help progress the plot.

The basic plot of the play revolves around events around Muhammad Ranch, the home of Jessie, an alien hunter obsessed with discovering the body of an alien princess that may have been lost in the Bermuda Triangle.

The newlywed Jessie is still recovering from two familial deaths, that of her son, who was seemingly killed by her husband’s pet wolf, and her husband soon after.

While Jessie is out hunting the wolf that has seemingly killed her son, Jordan (Jessie’s new husband) is assaulted by a werewolf. The hunt for this werewolf and for the killer wolf leads Jessie on a journey that involves secret admirers and rivals, an alien princess encased in stone, two country bumpkins that may or may not be suffering from lycanthropy, and a confusingly dead-but-not dead husband.

After going late into the night running through the script, some new line additions, the professional lights effects (courtesy of Josh Reid, the assistant technical director that is a part of the theater departments staff), and the plans for opening night, the cast headed home for some much needed sleep and self-preparation for opening night.

In spite of the many challenges facing these student thespians, the opening night was an overall success, with many from the PVCC community in attendance.

“As far as opening nights go, for an inexperienced cast of students who are just having fun and putting on a play for themselves, it went really well,” said Zartler.

Native Plants are Vital to the Environment

Gabriella Barber, staff writer

On March 20 from 11 a.m. to noon, both Georgann Eubanks and Kat Maier stressed the importance of preserving and using different native plants. They stressed this in not only what they said, but what they wrote. They spoke at the Virginia Festival of the Book event that took place at the Riverview Farm in Charlottesville.

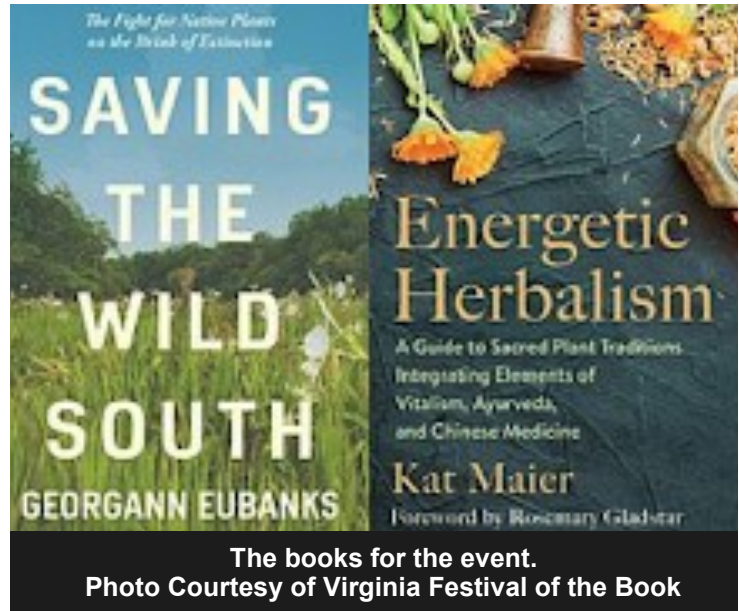
First, Eubanks spoke about her book *Saving the Wild South*. She said, “I make a living as a writer based on my ignorance. All of the books I have done, and this is number five, have been journeys to learn something I didn’t know.” She then described her journey from North Carolina to Charlottesville for the event, mentioning how often she saw rivercane on her way up.

Her book often mentions rivercane, and is also a local native species of bamboo, which she said is “A great flood mitigator, a carbon sink, a wind break, and it is not endangered.”

She then read a passage from her book about the importance of rivercane to different species of animals and bugs that depend on it. This also included the importance of rivercane to humans. She read about canebrakes being “Reliable hunting spots for Native Americans who formed arrows, spears, blowguns, and darts from rivercane.” She also read about her personal use of the rivercane as a fishing pole, with fond memories of her grandfather in mind as she spoke.

When moderator Lilia Fuquen, asked her about how she chose the 12 plants in her book, Eubanks responded with, “Well I was aiming to cover six states: North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, and Tennessee... and looked for plants that had really good stories, in this case Rivercane had a personal story.”

Next, Maier began to speak about her book, *Energetic Herbalism*, and said, “This is my three year curriculum; it is herbal medicine, and it’s also for individuals because I really feel when we understand that we really literally are fire, wood, air, metal, we can deeply, deeply relate to our environment...” She then talked about how many of the chapters in her book go over “Chinese medicine, and describing the systems,” but the



one she reads is “one of her favorite chapters”, hinting that it is slightly different from the others.

She shared an excerpt from the book saying, “Plants are the ultimate alchemists, in the land the plant calls home is part of its medicine story, this is really where the apothecary practices begins.” Then she shared how she engages with herbal medicine, through observations of not only the plants themselves, but where the plants grow, saying, “We can taste and smell the very topography of the place these plants call home...” She also went over a list of plants and their qualities that she has encountered, and why their locations make them as useful as they are.

Lastly, Maier tied people into the chapter by reading about how although people may not own land, or run a farm that has been passed down through generations like Bobby Wooding’s farm that she brings her students to yearly, they can still get in touch with nature and its locations. She read, “There is no requirement though, to own land to begin to relate to place, and where you begin to relate to place does not matter.”

For those interested in listening to the full reading, along with the question and answers portion, it is available on the Virginia Festival of the Book website at <https://www.vabook.org/2022/03/20/preserving-and-using-native-plants/>. Both *Saving The Wild South* and *Energetic Herbalism* can be found online through a simple Google search.

What Makes or Breaks a Book?

Laurel Molloy, assistant editor

Many people discard a book if they are not drawn in by the first chapter or an article if the first couple of paragraphs are boring. Those first words stalking across the page are what sets the tone for the rest of the piece and what draws the reader in or makes them sigh and put the book back down.

This was the topic of discussion for “The Write Start: Moseley Speed Critique Panel” on March 13 from 4-5 p.m. over Zoom. It was a free event for writers of all levels. The panel took writing submissions from the first 100 words of developing writers' works to discuss what was done well and what needed to be improved upon.

The panel was led by Susan Deutsch, the program manager at The Muse Writers Center, with four panelists: Deborah Prum, an award-winning writer whose writings air on NPR; Betty Joyce Nash, who has published fiction and journalism pieces and works at Writer House Inc., a local writing organization; Jody Hobbs Hesler, who also works at Writer House Inc. and has work published in the *Los Angeles Review*; and Meredith Cole, who writes both shorter and longer pieces and was nominated for an Agatha award.

The clips of stories that were sent in varied greatly from someone watching a Halloween event, kids running through the woods, an insect-like creature talking about “the human purge,” to someone talking about chewing tar as a child. The styles of writing changed like the settings and the characters from one piece to the next.

The panelists discussed 16 pieces in the hour they had. But they could not cover all the works that had been submitted. Prum said, “About 84% more [participants] than last year” submitted pieces to be critiqued. The panel sent critique and encouragement over email to everyone who submitted their work.

There were several common comments the panelists made. They told people to get rid of all cliches

unless completely needed and cut out all the unnecessary words like were's, really's, and was's. “Make every word work,” said Prum. They also repeatedly stressed to not tell the reader what happened instead encouraging people to show the reader. This includes the character's surroundings and the five senses which makes scenes more real and vibrant. They also said not to hide whose point of view the reader was seeing from. They emphasized that the reader wants to be grounded at first.

They gave more specific advice for writers as well, like instead of having dialogue tags (who said what) people can have a character doing a chore to mark who they are. In one story, they talked about if an unreliable narrator is present the reader has to be “confused with her instead of by her.”

This panel is part of the Virginia Festival of the Book, as a program of Virginia Humanities and the University of Virginia, and has reoccurred annually for over 20 years. This year events are both in person and online. Most events for the Virginia Festival of the Book are free but donations are welcome to help support and keep the festival going. More information about the festival can be found at their website <https://www.vabook.org>.

Virginia Festival of the Book

The Write Start: Moseley Speed Critique Panel

Sunday, March 13, 4 PM ET
FREE TO ATTEND ON ZOOM

Hosted by  the muse
WRITERS CENTER

as part of the
2022 Virginia Festival of the Book's
Virginia Writing & Publishing series

LEARN MORE AT [VABOOK.ORG](https://www.vabook.org)



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Title card for the event. Screenshot by Laurel Molloy

Power of the Small: Writing Microfiction

Laurel Molloy, assistant editor

The Virginia Festival of the Book presented “Keep it Concise: Microfiction & Short Stories,” a discussion about the art of writing short stories on March 16 from 6 -7 p.m. over Zoom. The event hosted three authors who talked about their new books and the craft of writing short stories.

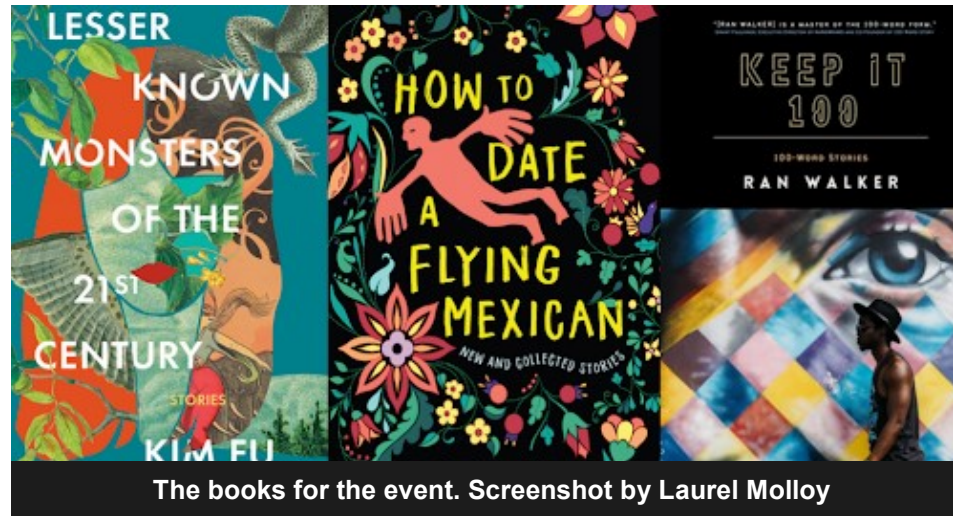
The authors included Kim Fu, a Canadian author. She published her fourth book this year called *Lesser Known Monsters of the 21st Century*, a collection of short stories. Fu said her book has genre-bending pieces with each story including a monster, either fantastical or extremely human in nature.

Another author Daniel A. Olivas talked about his tenth book called *How to Date a Flying Mexican*, which is also a collection of short stories. The book has a variety of different types of short stories with themes that explore Mexican culture.

The last author to talk in the discussion was Ran Walker, who wrote *Keep It 100: 100-Word Stories*, which he published in 2021. He has published 25 books since 2012. In this book there are 100 short stories, each exactly 100 words long. This is a type of fiction called a drabble where writers must write a piece of prose in exactly 100 words. This form of writing is meant to experiment with the writer’s conciseness while keeping power and importance within the piece.

After introducing themselves, each author read an excerpt from one of their short stories or, in Walker’s case, a couple of the stories since they were so short. They then delved into questions about short fiction.

Walker said that he started out writing novels and longer works but he was motivated to turn to short stories because, “I got tired of writing things that were much longer than I really felt they should be.” He said, “I felt like I was really forcing a lot of the story out.” Instead, he wanted to be more like a poet but with prose.



“When it comes to actually writing stories, I feel more like a kite,” Walker said when comparing his writing process now that he writes short fiction. He said, “It’s just resting and then when the wind blows or the muse hits then I start to take flight.”

Fu agreed and said that any writing, both long and short, is about selection. She asks herself what is important and what is not to a story. She said that to start writing short fiction the best way to get into it is to read a lot of short fiction thoughtfully. “Develop your own taste,” she said.

“First drafts, I am trying to focus on story and character,” said Fu. She does not focus on specific themes. She also said, “Literature in general is uniquely suited to be inhabiting other people and expanding your sense of the world.”

Olivas said the world seen all around is not all there is to work with. Writing can explore deep concepts like love, sexism, and culture. He takes inspiration from his youth within Mexican culture and dives into different ideas. He said that magical realism can bridge the gap between what is seen and what is not.

“Keep it Concise: Microfiction & Short Stories” and other events can be found at <https://www.vabook.org/by-type/recaps/> where people can watch the recordings of past events. Events from past years are also available to watch and learn from there as well.

“There is a true art to short fiction ... [In] a beautiful perfectly balanced short story every sentence matters: every word matters,” said Olivas.

Peacock gives *Bel-Air* a new look

Kristofer Jones, staff writer

Peacock took a '90s classic and gave it a new look. *Bel-Air* is full of Easter eggs that will instantly connect with people who loved the show *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*. Viewers will see that one little fight that Will's mother feared drove Will from Philadelphia. With all the same characters, and some new twists, this show will not be disappointing to people who grew up watching the '90s classic.

Jabari Banks does a great job taking over the role of Will. His version of the character gives great details about Will that the first show was unable to do due to time restraints. *Bel-Air* now gives the names of Will's friends, the name of his former high school in Philadelphia, and shows details of what it took for him to become the prince of Bel-Air.

The casting choices for *Bel-Air* were well done, and I could not see anyone else as Vivian Banks (Cassandra Freeman) or Uncle Phil (Adrian Holmes). Vivian Banks is now an art teacher, not a lawyer. She has traded her passion for painting in for raising her family and helping Uncle Phil with his campaign. The new Uncle Phil is a former lawyer who switched careers to run for district attorney of Los Angeles, California. I like how he calls in his highly questionable favors, with sometimes mixed results.

One of my new favorite characters is Jeffery played by Jimmy Akingbola. He is no longer the Bank's butler, he is now Uncle Phil's security man, fixing any problems that the family might want to keep out of the public eye, problems like their nephew fleeing the state to avoid drug dealers that want to harm him.

The casting for the Banks children is great. Olly Sholotan as the new Carlton Banks could not have been a better choice. The struggle of adapting to his cousin invading his world is a new struggle that he was not prepared to deal with. Will's arrival only adds to his anxiety and his addiction to Adderall. Hilary Banks worked for a local television station in the '90s sitcom, but now is a social media influencer in *Bel-Air*. She is struggling with wanting to move out on her

own, and dealing with an overbearing mother. Coco Jones's Hilary Banks is unapologetic about wanting a life that was not set up for her by her parents. Akira Akbar as Ashley Banks is good too. I hope in season two they give her character more screen time and a bigger story.

The possibilities about the direction of *Bel-Air* are endless because it is on a streaming platform. That means the show can take more risks in how it is presented. I cannot wait to see Will become the prince of Bel-Air. I saw that classic Will and Carlton friendship starting to form at the end of the season, and that is what I was waiting for. The untimely incidents that Jeffery will cover up for the family. I hope that they choose to go away from other story lines and keep it about the Banks Family. Viewers of *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* will also enjoy this show. It was fun watching *Bel-Air* and picking out all the Easter eggs that will remind people of the NBC classic.



Photo courtesy of Peacock

Morbius Faceplants in Venom's Footsteps

Jaume Plumb-Planas, assistant editor

Like anything else to have come out of the recent Sony standalone movies, *Morbius* was bad. It was not bad in a visually appealing and entertaining way like *Venom*, or in a “Look at this dumpster fire” kind of way that might cultivate a cult following like Tommy Wiseau's *The Room*, but in a “Holy crap, I can not believe I wasted \$13 and 90 minutes on this movie” way. *Morbius* was intended to be an addition to the Sony Spiderman Universe (SSU) (which was revealed to be a separate timeline/universe to the MCU in the End Credits) but may have actually worked to undo all the hard work of *Venom* and *Venom: Let There Be Carnage* in getting fans invested in the SSU.

Morbius stars Jared Leto as Dr. Michael Morbius, a man with a rare blood disease that leaves him disabled and requires the use of seemingly constant blood transfusions. As a child, Morbius meets a young boy, who he nicknames Milo (played by Matt Smith). After saving Milo's life, Morbius suddenly gets very attached out of nowhere to the younger boy and gets sent off to a gifted school. The movie cuts forward 25 years, and Morbius has become obsessed with discovering a cure for his disease, and Milo, who as it turns out is rich, funds all his research studies. Both Milo and Morbius have become desperate, and are willing to go to extreme lengths to cure their disease. The movie follows the mishap that turns Morbius into a vampire, Milo's betrayal that leads to him becoming a vampire, and the ethical struggle that Morbius and Milo have over the consumption of human blood.

Watching this movie, you can tell that Sony has tried to make lightning strike thrice. The action sequences and basic structure follows that of *Venom* (and pretty much any other cookie cutter superhero movie from the past decade), but lacks what made *Venom* enjoyable: a likable hero, some sort of stake in what is happening, action sequences where you can tell what is going on, humor, and some sort of competency at any point in the writing/acting/directing/editing process.

From watching *Morbius*, it is made clear that the only lessons Sony has learned thus far is that plot is unimportant in their movies. We have no reasoning for why Morbius has any semblance of a moral code, why he is not behaving as unhinged

as Milo. We also do not know why he's so attached to a character that we only see for 10 minutes before he becomes the main villain.

While Matt Smith struts around with the charisma of some villainous version of The Doctor, Leto spends the vast majority of his time with his powers sulking and having some kind of false moral dilemma about drinking human blood, despite it being abundantly clear that his position as a literal Hematologist provides him with ample opportunities to steal bagged blood for himself without harming innocent people. Jared Leto's real life personality is about as unlikeable and uncharismatic as Morbius', and the only real achievement he can claim from this film is that he's managed to tank films in both Marvel and DC (as The Joker in *Suicide Squad*).

From the action sequences, it is not clear that Sony understood what made the action from *The Amazing Spiderman* or *Venom* appealing to audiences. After becoming a vampire, Morbius spends most of his time in vampiric form surrounded by colored smoke. This visual effect would be a nice reminder as to why Jared Leto has a frankly obnoxious amount of facial prosthetics and CGI, if it was not for the fact that the majority of the action sequences are shot with such poor lighting that it becomes difficult to discern who is Morbius, and who is Milo. The effect has a sort of pinging sensation to it, which is supposed to remind us that Morbius and Milo have echolocation powers (or bat radar as they call it in the film), but instead, it reminds us of the \$75 Million dollar budget that was apparently blown on this muddy wet mess of surprisingly bad CGI.

All in all the whole movie is a mess unlike *Venom*, which was an entertaining mess. Sony has clearly demonstrated that they lack the competency to create a Spider-Man Universe film without the adult supervision of Marvel Studios, and my hope as a Spider-Man fan is that Sony either hires competent writers and directors for the next few films, or that Sony decides to stop making more SSU films.

With the film netting only 25 million in profit globally according to Forbes, it would not be a huge surprise if that latter ended up being the outcome.

Read the full article on Piedmontforum.com.

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