Pacific Portraits: The People Behind the Scenes at Pacific University (Volume Two)

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Pacific Portraits: The People Behind the Scenes at Pacific University (Volume Two)

**Description**
Did you know that the Assistant Director of Student Activities doesn’t own cable or have Wi-Fi at home? Or that the Director of Outdoor Pursuits is readying himself to climb a rocky crag called Aguja Poincenot in Patagonia this December? Or that the Senior Administrative Assistant of Humanities has a pet python named Cleopatra? Come to know the staff members who work behind the scenes at Pacific University depicted by Pacific’s own creative writing and photography students. Building upon the first volume in the series, this book showcases the talents of both our staff and our students through collaborative and creative efforts. We hope you enjoy reading the second collection of personnel and their personalities.

**Disciplines**
Arts and Humanities | Photography

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The People Behind the Scenes at Pacific University

VOLUME TWO
Pacific Portraits: The People Behind the Scenes at Pacific University (Volume Two)


Essays by Lauren Anderson, Gray Ashford, Kadie Backlund, Kjersti Chippindale, Darcy Christoffersen, Nicole Corpuz, Wynton Davis, Charli Elliott, Melissa Hood, Clara Howell, Matthew Jensen, Kourtnie Jury-Hale, Kayla Luttringer, Vincent Nguyen, Hunter Peterson, Claire Pillsbury, Thomas Radke, Kyle Riske, Kelsi Roth, Amber Tate, Madison Thompson, and Alexis Zmuda.

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Our treasure lies in the beehive of our knowledge. We are perpetually on the way thither, being by nature [...] honey gatherers of the mind.

Friedrich Nietzsche

The “Bee Tree”, an iconic ivy-covered tree that stood on the Pacific University campus for many years, was already old and hollow when pioneer Tabitha Brown arrived in Oregon in 1846. Mrs. Brown started a home for orphans that would grow into Pacific University. According to the Forest Grove News-Times, the tree was “said to have housed a swarm of bees who furnished the little old lady with honey which she sold to buy provisions for her orphan children.”
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Jim Flory and Brent Johnson would like to thank the following people for their help and cooperation for this collaborative project between our two classes. The second year of the project has been a great deal of work but well worth it to highlight the great staff that Pacific has helping all of us. It is quite a task to schedule all of the meetings, classes, interviews, and photography shoots with all involved. Thank you very much to all of the staff members, photography and writing students. We would especially like to thank Emily Coats for her tireless efforts helping the students involved and keeping us all on schedule throughout the project. Thanks also to the library staff for their help with the reception in the Library.
“You dropped your phone in the toilet.”
—Bill Carrigan, Helpdesk Customer Services Supervisor

“Education isn’t something you can run on a bottom line.”
—Sam Stein, Senior Administrative Assistant of Humanities

“If I was just doing this audit in the computer and sitting behind and not ever dealing with the people…it wouldn’t be a job I would have stayed at.”
—JoLynn Graham, Assistant Registrar

“I can bring in my Elvis collection.”
—Cindy Schuppert, Director of Facilities Management & Campus Public Safety

“It’s experiences like these that make the trip, the hard work, and all the long hours worth it.”
—Keith Buckley, Head Football Coach

“I’m learning the names of My Little Pony right now.”
—June Dressler, Associate Director of the Career Development Center

“I don’t have internet and no cable either. I don’t like the distraction.”
—Pete Erschen, Assistant Director Student Activities & Multicultural Interests

“I’ve always thought the ideal existence would be having a time machine.”
—Stephen Prag, Director of International Programs

“I think it’s good to do some things in life that scare you.”
—Phil Friesen, Director of Outdoor Pursuits

“[Joanne] and I were married at the Church of Elvis in Portland which was officiated by a homeless man dressed up as Elvis, and three Japanese exchange students as our witnesses.”
—Ryan Kimberly, Campus Public Safety Officer

“I get to supervise really great people who are energetic and ‘Pacific Positive.’”
—Karen Dunston, Assistant V.P. of Enrollment for Undergraduate Admissions
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I've always been wary of sequels. Rarely are they worth the price of admission, replaying the same storyline until what seemed fresh and nuanced the first time around becomes stale and cliché. When Jim and I talked about remaking Pacific Portraits for Volume II, I worried over how we would keep the process fresh, how we'd recreate that “magic” and excitement that comes with doing anything a second time. What I've found is recreating that magic is harder, that's true, but, luckily, what takes its place is a bit of wisdom, of learning what worked and what didn't and improving as you go. Coordinating schedules ahead of time, having samples to share from the year before, padding the calendar for workshop during a busy time of the year: these were things we learned putting this second book together and we hope the experience for the staff and students has improved.

But what kept this Volume II from becoming a *Jaws* sequel that should have never occurred or another *Bridget Jones* mistake was, of course, the staff members and students themselves. They are perpetually fresh, with new stories and original takes on those stories. When Jim and I were selecting who might be profiled for Volume II, we realized again how many talented people it takes to ensure Pacific runs as well as it does. From Hanson Stadium to Bates House, the people at Pacific deeply care about the students they serve. I heard from students tears were shed in the Registrar and saw an excited email or two thanking students for bringing back memories they hadn't relived for some time. I, for one, came to see that I share this campus with a group of educators that extends far beyond the classroom, and I thank them for sharing their time and stories in the project.

And I want to thank the students, too. They’ve adjusted their schedules, dealt with tight deadlines, and produced pieces in this volume that honor the staff they’ve profiled, showcasing through their words and photographs what unique people we share this campus with. We’re blessed to work with such creative, determined students and hope that when their time comes, they’ll remember that no matter what profession they are in, they’re educators, too, there to guide others.

The second time I was privileged enough to visit Rome wasn’t like the first. The Coliseum occupied a different place in my imagination; Trevi Fountain seemed touristy compared to my inaugural trip. But, Rome revisited was still exciting, just in a different way. I returned to places by memory and thrilled when I actually found them. I came across the same old man pressing salami into paninis and the smell sent me five years back. The sequel can be a trip back but also forward, moving into something that’s familiarly fresh, as paradoxical as that sounds. So, here’s to the staff and to the students—may we return to this book the way we do to our favorite places and the people who live there.

Sincerely,

BRENT JOHNSON, Associate Professor of English

JIM FLORY, Assistant Professor of Art
It isn't about him. He doesn't do it for him. It's not about the legacy he will leave behind at Pacific University after resuscitating a deceased football program in 2010. It's not about his win-loss record as a head coach. It's not even about the glory of winning championships.

Arms crossed in poise, Keith Buckley presides over his factions in the east end zone of Hanson Stadium. He stands next to his defensive coordinator, substitute players behind, calmly watching the hot breath of work ethic dissipate in the November air.

“Green 18! Green 18! Set, hut!” The quarterback receives the gun snap, looks left, and fires to a slanting receiver crossing the goal line. Touchdown.

“Reload it!” Buckley yells, breaking his reverie. The Pacific University football team is in the midst of their final
segment of practice. During team defense, touchdowns are enemies. Coach Buckley returns to his commanding stoicism and observes, trusting his coaching staff to do their jobs as the opposing squads realign their formations. The evening fog slowly settles beneath the lights. A slick condensation has covered the turf. The field is an island illuminated against the darkness of Lincoln Park.

“Green 18! Green 18! Set, hut!” The quarterback receives the snap, looks left, and fires to a slanting receiver crossing the goal line. Incomplete pass.

“There you go! Good!” Buckley claps his hands in approval, a whistle and keys dangling from his neck near the Pacific football logo covering his heart.

Legs crossed, Keith Buckley sits across from me in the chairs of his office, a coffee table between and a cluttered desk forgotten to the side. Pictures of Pacific football players, a whiteboard, and trophies adorn the walls and bookshelves. I ask him why he coaches. He pauses, then his hazel eyes look at me. After a bit of extrapolation, his final answer is simple, “Impact.”

At the completion of practice, Coach Buckley calls his troops to the center of the field. He addresses them about the schedule for the following day, about preparation for their battle on Saturday, about how the team has one more opportunity to show the conference who they are. What was striking was how he finished.

To conclude the team talk, Buckley asked his players to “…do a little extra for Chad on Saturday.” Chad, a key player, was injured earlier during the practice, barring him from playing in the team’s final game of the season. A little more preparation, a little more focus, a little more effort.

As the group broke their huddle to meet with their position coaches, and as those meetings broke to calls of “Team” and “Family,” Coach Buckley sought out Chad. He approached him, he hugged him, and he talked with him for a while. As Chad walked away, there were tears running down his face.
He's not all about football.

In the springtime the troops and their leaders take time off to celebrate their victories throughout the long season. Pads are hung, cleats abandoned, and helmets are shelved as the flowers start to bloom. It is during this time you can find Keith Buckley sitting around the dinner table with his family.

In the offseason Keith tries to “make up for lost time” as much as he can by spending it with his family. He and his wife cherish their two daughters, Kristen (12) and Kaitlyn (10). The subtle qualities of a proud parent start to emerge as he talks about his daughters. The girls are kept busy in a variety of after school activities, and so is Keith supporting them whenever he can. “I watch them play basketball, volleyball, dance, soccer, and my youngest daughter even played flag football this past season.” Faint lines begin to appear at the corners of his mouth, leading into a modest smile.

Keith enjoys the annual gatherings and trips he spends with his family. One of their most treasured traditions has occurred for the past 10 years on Fourth of July weekend. They celebrate our country’s independence and watch fireworks burst into the night’s sky with some of Keith’s closest friends from college and their families. While the girls are on spring break, the family makes the trek down to Sunriver to soak up some sun and enjoy each other’s company away from their busy lives at home.

Sometimes, Keith and his wife get to take their daughters on more extravagant getaways. This past summer they spent some time in Hawaii, on the island of Oahu. Before their trip came to an end he sat on the beach next to his wife as they watched their daughters surf for the first time. “I could tell they were nervous before they got out there. But they were really excited.” Kristen and Kaitlyn spent hours standing on a surfboard, gliding through the water towards their exuberant parents before paddling back out to begin again. “It’s experiences like these that make the trip, the hard work, and all the long hours worth it,” Keith says.

It’s those little moments that he truly appreciates.

“For me, it’s not about taking my family out on these big trips every summer. It’s just about spending quality time with them.” So whether he’s dressed up in downtown Portland on a date with his wife, vacationing in exotic places like Hawaii or the Caribbean this summer, or whipping out the grill on a cool spring evening, you can bet he’s enjoying his time away from the football field.
Downstairs in the basement of Marsh is the TIC. There, students can get help with technology problems, check out equipment, or attend class in one of the computer labs. Bill Carrigan, dressed in a plaid shirt, his brown hair combed to the side, sits in one of the plush red chairs that’s near the helpdesk. He’s stiff, his arms on the chair. His blue eyes shifting around like an aperture, waiting to take a snapshot of the moment. He has a comfortable atmosphere around him. He loves learning new things, for his job and his hobby.

Bill works in the TIC as the Customer Service Supervisor and manages the work study students. Bill says with a smile as he relaxes, his hands moving as he speaks, that he’s the “front line.” He’s the person who makes sure that the problems get solved.” The hardest part of my job at the helpdesk,” Bill says, “is having patience with people.” Bill jokes about having worked in an Apple Store and how people get protective over their phones. “You dropped your phone in the toilet,” Bill tells us, his hands waving in front of him, a faint smile on his lips. “No, I can’t give you a new one.”

A 2002 alumni of Pacific University, Bill studied media arts. After graduating, he worked at a summer camp in Maine, teaching photography to upper-middle class and upper class children. During the year, however, he taught photography in Virginia. After four years, Jim Flory began talking about retirement, so Bill returned to Pacific to teach and potentially take over the position.

Bill is now a professor at Pacific. He’s been teaching classes since 2008 and brightens when he talks about photography. “Teaching the thing that I enjoy,” he says with a grin. “The hard part is making
things interesting for the students.” Bill enjoys taking photos in his free time, and that passion comes over as he talks about his classes. He likes learning new technology in Photoshop and Illustrator, as well as finding new techniques that he can share with his students.

Before teaching at Pacific, Bill and his partner, Holly, worked jobs in different walks of life. “The best part about my job now is the consistency.” He goes on to say that he and Holly worked jobs where they would pass each other by, “One of us would be going to work and the other would be just getting home.” He smiles happily as he says that he enjoys getting off at the same time every day and having weekends to himself.

Growing up, Bill was a quiet child. His parents “handed” him a camera when he was six. But Bill began focusing on photography in the eighth grade. Taking photos when he was young allowed Bill to engage with people. He smiles as he says, “People were always happy when I would give them a photo.” He says that photography is a way of “being in the moment and around people.” He loves looking for the pictures that most people wouldn’t be able to notice without really paying attention. How the light refracts in a certain picture, how a tree or a leaf looks at a different angle than the one from the road. One of his favorite things to photograph is live action sports. As an ex-athlete, I can attest that the real action in a game is between the plays with how players interact with each other and how they adjust to what is going on in the moment. These are the times he looks for his prime subject.

Bill likes taking pictures of people and sports. He was an outfielder and played high school baseball and played until his Junior year at Pacific. Now, he watches almost any type of
Bill Carrigan | The People Behind the Scenes of Pacific University

sport and is slowly trying to get into soccer. “I’ve never really been one to watch soccer, but with the Thorns here I’m trying.” When I asked him about the Timbers, he gave a slight chuckle, “You can put this in the article if you want, I really don’t like them, they got rid of my Beavers. Now I can’t go watch my AAA baseball games.”

Leaning forward, Bill grins. “The fun part of photography is the exploration.” He said that he’ll be taking pictures, leaning over an edge in an awkward position, and people would come up to him while he would be completely focused. They would ask him if he was about to fall and Bill would say no. The people would ask if he was about to drop his camera. Bill told us with a laugh, “Only if you touch me.” He described how, in his travels with Holly, they were at a cycling race. In cycling you get one chance for a shot and then the racers are gone. So, on those trips, after Holly passes where he is at to take photos, he will go walk around during the rest of the race looking for more photo opportunities.

Bill, at first glance, may seem ordinary, but when he starts talking about photography, or sports, or his students, he lights up and his eagerness and passion shines through. He loves learning new things for the sake of himself and for his students. Bill is a self-proclaimed people person. Easy to talk to and easy to get along with. Like the photos that Bill loves to take, he has many layers and many different angles.
The door to June’s office is perpetually swung open. Her desk is stacked with files and half-filled paper pads overlapping, her bulletin board sheeted with thank-you notes and framed certificates and two crayon drawings (one of a smiling sun, one of butterflies). Professionally clean, intricately personal. There is a round, wooden table just inside and to the right of the door with three chairs pushed up to it (though she has a fourth one in the hall she’ll readily drag in) that she welcomes us to sit at.

Dressed in a starched, blue jacket and white turtleneck, loafers and perfectly straight hair, June is an expert in eye contact. She turns to and locks eyes with whomever she is speaking to, forging a fleeting moment of connection through her small, warm smile and her steady gaze.

June is the Associate Director of the Career Development Center; a career counselor who helps students manage their interests with their job prospects. The woman who sits across the table, hands folded together calmly, looking at you unwaveringly to let you know how much she means it when she asks what it is you want to do next.

“I used to think my job was to help the undecided become decided.” Gentle concern lingers in her eyes, the quirk of her smile, as she adds, “And I’ve learned I need to help the decided when they’ve foreclosed too soon.”

June explains that most of the students she meets with are either struggling with a lack of information or fixated on a single career path that might not be the best for them. June likes to listen to their life stories, likes to analyze the way others take in information and make new decisions. She encourages students to make connections wherever they can, communicating with advisers and experts alike for their expertise.

“I get them to job shadow, internship—to see people, and then to do what they’re able to.” Her hands...
move in circular gestures, handing us her words. “To convince themselves, ‘this is a place I could thrive in. This position is something I’m put together to do.’”

June had to explore a bit herself before she discovered her love for counseling. Starting in Alumni Relations, she moved from Executive Administration, to Development, and then finally to the CDC, where she found her niche and was motivated by her mentor, Ellen Hasty, to return to school for her Masters in Counseling.

“And I guess I couldn’t stop, because now I’m working on my doctorate,” she explains proudly, her hands clasped in front of her. “I’m almost done with it.”

Despite being on track for a Ph.D. in Counselor Education, June is resolute that her thesis research and career counseling will not take time away from her personal life. In fact, her home has taken on a life of its own thanks to the efforts of herself and her husband, Rob.

June’s home sits on a grassy, green corner in the heart of Forest Grove’s Historic District. Beautifully renovated and home-tour ready, her house is full of vintage treasures and thrift. “I like the treasure hunt and restoring things, recycling things, using things that others would get rid of. Sand and paint and put it together.”

We move through rooms of upcycled items and rare finds as June lovingly describes not only her favorite pieces of furniture but the house itself. From the old cupboards to the glass door knobs to the treasure trove bins, this house is an assemblage of foundations and finds from all over. June pauses to pass a hand over the edge of a patchwork quilt, old but in loved condition, hanging over a metal rack. “I stayed with and helped my aunt, and she gave me this blanket as a thank you,” she says, quiet words and even quieter hands.

Back downstairs, June offers coffee and cookies, but our attention has been caught by the fridge. The surface is almost completely covered in photos and mementos, and the first picture she points to is that of her two daughters. With that, we are quickly introduced to the glossy faces of June’s many grandchildren and extended family. The house itself was a project imagined with them in mind—meant to provide a space, a place where they would feel safe and loved.

Soon we are sitting on the porch, looking out on the street and breathing cool, clean air. By now it’s easy to pick up on the passions that light June’s eyes. We circle around the topics of home and family, and June once again mentions her grandchildren. “I’m learning the names of My Little Pony right now,” she says cheekily. We laugh as she rattles off a few of their names from the top of her head, giggling at the end.

That same light lingers in her eyes as we shift to the topic of her job again, but her voice slows the same way it did when she spoke of the quilt. “One of my favorite files is thank you cards. They mean a lot to me.” Her hands find each other at the base of her vest, fingers lacing together.
tightly. “I strive to do the best I can to meet people’s needs. I can’t give them a test and tell them what to do, but I can share resources and share support and listen.”

We leave June that day standing on her porch, waving to us as we round the corner of her yard. Her house stands tall and beacon-like behind her, history and tradition and tiny treasures that fill up the vacant spaces so beautifully. I think of the thank you notes lining the corkboard in her office. I think of the pink and white patchwork quilt just beyond the second story window.

I think of steady eyes and a hand held out to me, smiling and ready to help me through the next step on my journey.
Karen Dunston is the focus of the room with her mischievous eyes and boisterous laughter. The image is one of a hunter: she hunts for future students and for her unique passions. She sips her Diet Peach Snapple—one of these passions—and is immediately in charge; this woman has experience, power. The title that Karen Dunston holds, “Assistant Vice President of Enrollment for Undergraduate Admissions,” is a mouthful that does not capture Dunston’s full responsibilities. “Really, what that means is that I’m like the Director of Admissions,” Dunston says. “We’re running everything that has to do with all new students coming to the university through the undergraduate front door.” Her words are faster than her hands, which move rapidly through the air, emphasizing the fading East Coast patter in her voice.

She supervises thirteen to fifteen people at a time, seven of whom are in charge of traveling to search for potential
future students. “I get to supervise really great people who are energetic and ‘Pacific Positive,’” Dunston says. “Pacific Positive” is the motto of Dunston’s office building, Knight Hall, and the motto rings true in their eager faces.

Dunston’s background is in social work. “I am a helper at heart. I like to help people,” she says. Today, she helps people by searching for those who belong at Pacific and showing them the great things about it. She goes beyond this, helping staff as well. “I like to empower the people that work here,” she says.

“I like people to take the natural skills that they have and use them professionally,” Dunston states, stroking the label on the Snapple glass—glass bottles are superior in her eyes. She has done the same by taking her own natural skills and using them in her job. Dunston is a huntress in the office and out; in her free time she is on the prowl for the perfect antique.

Dunston and her friends, many of whom work at Pacific, have travelled across the country as well as to London and Paris to find antiques. Her favorite piece she has collected is her miniature replica of Degas’ sculpture, *The Little Fourteen-Year-Old Dancer*, not just because of its connection to Paris but because of its more meaningful connection to Pacific. The sculpture is of a young ballerina, her feet loosely in fourth position, and made of bronze. Her gaze is cast upward, her hands behind her back.

“When I first worked in Undergraduate Admissions, Eva Krebs was my boss. She had [the miniature replica] in her office; this exact one, this size, everything. I saw it every day and I always wanted it. I looked at it and thought, ‘I’m gonna mention to her how much I like that.’ Unfortunately, she had breast cancer and she passed away. I never got to tell her that I liked it. It disappeared, so when I saw it at a flea market I was like,” Dunston vocalizes angelically, gesturing toward the heavens, “I had to have it! I thought it was a little sign from her.”

After learning about Dunston’s role selecting students for the university, it is impossible to look around a room without seeing her handiwork. Much of what she sells about
Pacific is the intangible aspects of its community. That very community is built upon the worthy crop of undergraduates she seeks out. There is a cycle there, like a garden or a family, one that is guided by her values.

Dunston has a bag full of treasures, things found at rummage sales, antique stores and junk shows. She spreads them out on the table in her office, humming with pride. Most of them, she explains, come from a recent visit to France. Buddy, the poodle mix who wears a beret in the portrait on her shelf, puts his paws up on the table to be included in the conversation. With every piece, she picks it up and explains its value. A painting of Paris shows her love for the city. The polo and cricket balls are fascinating for their novelty, as things she has never seen in the States. “I only buy things I love. If I don’t love it, I don’t need it,” she says.

Dunston’s fascination with these small and beautiful things extends beyond the initial collection: she takes vintage buttons, purchased en-masse at junk sales, and turns them into elaborate kitchen magnets. Each one is truly a unique piece of art, a stack of buttons topped with a little trinket or other delicate thing, tastefully colored and built with a clear desire to emphasize the beauty of the original materials. They are reminiscent of the people she hand selects and the eagerness and talent that she cultivates.

Dunston, even with her cheery demeanor, is a hunter. Even through a short conversation about her job and hobbies it is easy to feel her determined and talented nature. Her job at Pacific, for example, is the payoff of an incredible leap of faith. Twenty years ago she left Philadelphia and came to Oregon without any concrete plans. She was determined to succeed, and was able to turn a purely informational interview about an already-closed job position into a career at Pacific.

Karen Dunston has taken on several roles since then and she has stayed at the university for twenty years, helping staff and future students alike. This hunter searches for things she loves enough to keep: a student, staff member, or antique that has the potential to become something amazing.
“No day is the same,” he says, hands moving explicatively as he speaks. Pete Erschen, in his blue jeans and a blue athletic shirt, looks towards commotion at the door. A student pops his head in looking for a location to turn in food waiver requests. “That’s also very typical about my day,” Pete chuckles as he turns back towards the table, leaning back into the wooden chair.

A man of many titles, Pete is the assistant director of Student Activities, works with the ACE Board, advises the Greek Senate, participates with Event Management Services, and cooperatively organizes social justice retreats for Pacific University. At any school function, Pete works tirelessly behind the scenes, guiding students to the production of a successful event. Though diverse in roles, all of the jobs have a common theme. “Honestly, I love working with the students,” he continues. He leans on the back legs of his chair with arms resting on the two chairs beside him, a balancing act.

Down in the lower floor of the University Center, the large office actually feels very small. Boxes, and papers, auxiliary cables pile throughout the room like a small diorama of a large city. A golden Boxer statue sits obediently across the room greeting people at the door but more importantly guarding Pete, whose wind beaten hair sticks up in all directions. There is a sense of chaos in the air, but to Pete even the chaos seems controlled and managed.

“I feel my attention is divided in a way that I can’t do everything I wish
I was able to do,” he laments. Pete sits up in his chair, straightening his back and hovers over the table while intertwining his fingers. “There’s never enough time to give everyone enough time of day, and you need to also give time to yourself,” he adds. On top of dealing with time constraints, he balances the responsibility of “serving too many masters.” Students pull him from the left and administration pulls him from the right. Yet, balancing such an act requires skill which Pete holds in his back pocket.

“I hope I’m not just helping but I hope I’m empowering [the students] to shape the environment here, and that’s a difficult thing to know,” he says, unfolding his hands and straightening his back again. He leans back into the groove of his chair. Trying to reach compromises between all of the student demands does take a toll, and he realizes the importance of not burning out.

At the start of another school week, the gray Oregon clouds filled the sky barely emitting light through Pete’s windows. Again Pete made his way to the dining table, crossed his legs on his chair, and adjusted the curls that hung freely across his forehead. Behind him positioned a perfect backdrop with a bulletin board the size of a chalk board that hung his favorite collectibles: running bibs, ti leaf leis, torn coloring pages of Boxer (at least four of the same picture), and a Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays card from a loved one just to name a few.

When asked about his hobbies, he blurted “hiking” as like a reflex still trying to process the question. His eyes widened trying to illustrate with his hands the size of King’s mountains in Oregon, his favorite spot.

Not only does he also enjoy hiking Kilauea Iki on the Big Island of Hawai’i, Pete enjoys everything related to the Hawaiian culture, that of which multiple ti leaf leis older than a couple years made its way the famous bulletin board. “I am blessed by the way they share the culture” he shares while mentioning his experience in luau fixing his eyes on the dried out leis. “It was amazing. When you participate in luau, it’s a bonding experience because there are the practices and you work together.” Although
admiring opportunities to teach students, he equally loves it when he's the student. “There were four of us staff members who did poi balls those two years with the students but it was one of the times where I got to enjoy because I wasn’t necessarily in charge of that aspect of the event. I wasn’t teaching the dance, I was learning too, just like all the first year students so it was one of those fun experiences of being on the same par...and getting to know them and not having responsibilities for me being in charge of something,” he confesses.

After a long day at work, you may think Pete unwinds at home watching television or via the internet, but he doesn’t have any of those. Our eyes widen in disbelief when Pete confessed, “I don’t have internet and no cable either. I don’t like the distraction.” Definitely his way of unplugging is different but Pete is no different than us.

Pete returns to his desk with paper skyscrapers surrounding him checking his emails.

Then we look outside his windows hoping someone will learn to love his story.

Pete Erschen | *The People Behind the Scenes of Pacific University*
“You never want your survival to depend on a single cookie.”

Phil Friesen, the director of the Outdoor Pursuits program and the outdoor leadership minor, sits on a low brick wall outside the office, one ankle resting on his opposite knee. His lack of hair on top of his head is more than made up for by a bushy beard. A hand to his mouth, his eyes look soberly off into the distance as he describes what he says was “the worst mistake of [his] career.”

The weather was rainy, a little cold, and very unpredictable. He was trying to cross a large stretch of mountain, traveling from one group of students to another. “The other group had my food, and my map had gotten wet and was deteriorated, in fact I couldn’t read it at all.” He slept on top of Observation Peak that night in his tent and sleeping bag, “but the only food I had were these four homemade cookies.” He chuckles, immediately erasing the furrows in his brow. “I knew I should eat them slowly and keep some for the next day in case I didn’t match up with this other group, but I ate three of them right away in...”
panic.” When he woke up the next morning, it had snowed eight inches, and what had previously been a difficult climb became all but impossible. “I got turned around trying to get back out and soon found myself in a ravine. I was lost. And it was one of the most difficult things. You know, you’d think that, as a professional—at that point I’d been doing this for over sixteen years—that I should never get lost. I shouldn’t be alone. I should have a map. What are people going to think of me? And also, shit, I’m in trouble.”

Phil often speaks of “real” and “perceived” limits. They are his greatest challenge as an outdoorsman and his greatest joy as a teacher. Watching students do more than they thought they could, be it summiting a mountain, flipping a kayak in a rapid, or simply peeing in the woods—is what makes it all worth it for him. Later, as he stands in front of a massive whiteboard detailing every trip for the next six months in the carefully organized chaos of the Outdoor Pursuits office, he explains that his job is not to lead students. It’s to train them to lead, either through the outdoor leadership minor, or simply through their taking one of many trips with the Outdoor Pursuits program. The leaders of the trips detailed the whiteboard are all student pairs—Phil is simply the one on call in case something goes wrong. But he rarely gets those calls.

His students came through for him that time on the mountain—a testament to how good he is as a teacher—calling the search and rescue team and leading their own students, most of whom were inexperienced outdoorsmen, to safety.

It is situations like this one that have taught Phil the awesome power of nature. “It keeps you humble,” he said, “reminds you how small you are and how big nature is.” It is this feeling that draws people of all abilities to the outdoors. Being outside brings out something primal in people and breaks down barriers that exist in “real life.” Sitting around a campfire lends itself to philosophical discussions as well as a healthy amount of silliness. People
are able to let loose in a way they can’t otherwise, with people they might never have talked to.

All the ups and downs become part of the “incredible journey” that has brought Phil to this point in his life. No matter what, he learns from the experience and turns his focus on climbing the next peak, something that he tries to teach his students.

For him personally, the next challenge is a towering rocky crag called Aguja Poincenot in Patagonia. As he flips through a dog-eared and heavily flagged book, Phil talks about his upcoming climb and the challenges it presents.

“I’m scared to death,” he says, finally finding the picture. As he splays the book out for us to see the mountain, it’s easy to understand why. To the inexperienced eye, it looks unclimbable. But this December, Phil will spend two weeks pushing past his own preconceived limits and attempting to summit.

Phil is no stranger to challenging himself. He’s climbed Liberty Ridge on Mt. Rainier, which has the most deaths per climb in the Northwest. He’s guided Cotopaxi, an active stratovolcano in Ecuador, seven times. No matter the challenge, every time Phil crests a peak and looks out over the clouds, or even when plans get deterred because of bad weather, he is struck by the immenseness of the world. “There’s nothing as powerful as climbing,” Phil says.

He shuts the book and turns to us. The walls are lined by paddleboards and staged gear. Shelves overflowing with huge bags of dry pancake mix and tortillas line the open store room. Awe-inspiring pictures from various trips hang on the walls. Phil sighs, looking around the world he has created. “I think it’s good to do some things in life that scare you.”

Phil finds the greatest lesson he’s learned from climbing is humility. Being in nature and being able to learn and grow with students creates an environment where each moment becomes precious and important. He has too many good memories to count. For Phil, while the mountains and the challenges they present are enticing, the real joy of alpinism comes from small moments like these, shared with friends who have made the journey beside him. “That’s one of lessons you learn from outdoor adventure—we’re not here forever, you do die, and we should make sure that we’re enjoying each moment we have on this earth, each moment we get with each other.”
Anyone who has spoken to JoLynn Graham knows she enjoys being a part of history. You can see it in her eyes.

The main floor of Marsh Hall flooded with seniors during graduation check. Two students stood in line, waiting to have their degree audited.

“I’ll take you back to JoLynn,” a woman says, ushering the student to a small room near the back wall. Flowers and plants lined the windowsill and a thin, glass frame holding seven photographs of Graham’s first six grandchildren sat off to the right.

The student was immediately met by Graham’s devoted smile and compassionate stare.

“I’m happy to see everybody when they stop by,” says Graham who has been working in the Registrar’s Office since 2000. “Eons ago,” she smirks. Her historic home only five blocks away and her persistent daughter are what initially drew her to Pacific University.
“She had her eye on the tuition remission [so] I applied for a position in a different office, but there was a big turn-over in the Registrar’s Office around the same time, so they pulled my application and called me for an interview,” Graham says. “It ended up being a great fit!”

Graham is an Assistant Registrar and had been working nights and weekends when graduation check rolled around. But to her, the time and stress was worth it.

Graham is the online checkmark of degree audits or the “police” she says. “We have to audit that everybody is following the rules.”

Tucked away in her office, a large portion of Graham’s day is spent behind her computer screen. But to her, watching students make history and graduate from Pacific, like her daughter did, is the most rewarding part of her job.

“Getting y’all lined up and ready is quite fun,” Graham says, her light eyes hugging the tears that grip the rim of her kind gaze, hand near her heart. “If I was just doing this audit in the computer and sitting behind and not ever dealing with the people…it wouldn’t be a job I would have stayed at.”

Even though her lips were taut, you could see in her eyes. She was smiling.

“I like working with students and I like the people I work with,” Graham says. “I feel like it challenges me mentally and at the same time, it gives me an outlet, so I do see myself staying here until retirement.”

Graham’s smile lines reveal the joy people—her grandchildren especially—bring her. She even works 80 percent to have Fridays off to spend with her youngest grandchild.

“To have my Friday where Greyson comes and I’m holding my nine-month-old, I find myself at the end of the day just smiling and totally not a care in the world,” she says.

Graham’s attentive eyes expose a love of history that is almost as visible as her dedication to her family, two subjects that are the main attraction in her home.

The house was built in 1912 by her husband, Dan’s, great-grandparents and had been in the family for every generation until Dan’s parents sold the home.

Since the age of 12, Dan was raised there and became overjoyed when he and JoLynn were able to buy it back in 2005. Just in time to give their
grandchildren the opportunity to grow up immersed in family history.

“It’s more house than we need, but we feel more like caretakers of it, like we are caring for it for the family,” Graham says.

Graham begins the tour of the house, winding her way through the first floor, showing small parts of her life scattered throughout each room.

They have been featured on the Forest Grove Historic Home Tour twice since 2007, so there is a feeling of preservation in the tidiness of the home. Children’s toys interrupt this museum-like sterility with drawings scattered among the hundred-year-old telephones and antique portraits. Graham sees no need to baby proof the family heirlooms.

“It will get thrown away anyway if they don’t connect with it,” she says.

In the first room there is a picture of the U-2 Dan’s father flew over Cuba and Vietnam adjacent to crayon portraits from their grandchildren. Upstairs there is an unfinished painting by Graham’s grandfather hanging above a pencil sketch of an owl done by her granddaughter.

“It’s so precious to me that they’re connecting with the things that we connected with,” Graham says, re-emphasizing this point many times. She was often prompted by something that was rendered imperfect by her grandchildren “connecting” with it.

Even her husband serves somewhat as a prompt. When asked about her story, Graham’s eyes fixed on Dan, looking at him for a long, loving moment before she began to describe her life in Forest Grove. She was raised just on the other side of town, but after she graduated high school her family moved to the Netherlands.

“So I moved there and he and I had dated through high school. They say absence makes the heart grow fonder,” she says. “So I left not knowing what would happen—” Dan interrupts, “I never changed my mind.”

They both burst into laughter, their eyes meeting to share a quick, knowing look before turning back to their enchanted audience.

Our time with Graham lasted a little over an hour, but it is clear that we had barely scratched the surface. There are innumerable layers of her family and work-life embedded into the history of her home. At the end of our tour, she leads us to her backyard and points out the neighboring houses of other Pacific faculty and staff.

Although Graham will say that her time outside of work is devoted to her family, it is clear from her eyes that her time is always devoted to making everyone she meets feel like part of the family.
The first thing Ryan Kimberly did when I saw him is take two thwacks at his deep red vest to show the plates of body armor that give the vest its shape. Ryan is a CPS officer, which stands for Campus Public Safety. His office is peppered with red too, that and the off-white of an office not changed since the eighties, at least. The only offsets to the scheme are the window and the computer monitors, sitting comfortably, just like Ryan, who didn’t stand up until about halfway through the interview. Until he mentioned it, too, the tan hearing aid in his right ear seemed a natural complement to the black radio headset nestled in his left, official gestures perfected over several years drawing attention to neither. Instead, what stood out was his animated face, telling his story with on-the-spot spontaneity that
almost seemed to betray the profession. Ryan is one of those people that brings a lot of who they are into the job they have, and manages to mix it in. His Timbers tattoo, and photos of his family, are as prominent as they are natural. In fact, a lot of the CPS office is kept with a certain warmth and congeniality. When asked what he liked most about the job, he said it was the “feeling moments,” when he would just talk with a group of students or faculty out in the open like he was, like at the gazebo that was up outside Walter until just last year. I was shocked with the diversity of the work he did, meeting him everywhere from in-office, to on a walk, to surveying a football game, each requiring a strange middle-ground between relaxation and rapt attention. He used to work the night shift, but was switched to the day shift recently. Inevitably, the night shifts felt longer, and were either “cold and quiet” or “warm and active,” with little middle-ground. There was a lot more to enforce on nights, too, he said, it was still about safety, but a different kind. Safety, to Ryan, is one of the most black and white things in his life. Even on the night shift, where you’d expect things to be gray, the line between safe and unsafe is still crystal clear. He said he doesn’t miss a thing about the night shift.

Students don’t know Ryan by name, but with just a little bit of description, they’ll know exactly who you’re talking about. You’ll get him most often by either “the one who tells the most deadpan jokes.” Most recognize him after you mention “guy with two dogs” or “the one with the big dog” for the students around town.

His daughter was visiting the first day of the interview, she was recently accepted into Pacific, receiving tuition remission because of his position at the school, and will be starting in the fall. Ryan was, and is, delighted. He was beaming throughout the interview, all smiles, and never really changed that demeanor anywhere, unless he was talking about the more stressful moments of being an officer.

On the east side of the football field behind the grey metal barriers lined with eager kids waiting to high five the players as they take the field is Officer Kimberly. He tugged on the collar of his armor as he watched the excitement grow on the children’s faces.
Ryan's childhood was local. He went to high school at Grant from 1990 to 1994. His wife, Joanne, graduated from Forest Grove High School. They met at a concert on September 25th, 1993 for a band named “Completely Groceries.”

“But we didn't make it official until 1994.”

Back at the CPS office, Officer Kimberly dove deeper into his romantic history.

“[Joanne] and I were married at the Church of Elvis in Portland which was officiated by a homeless man dressed up as Elvis, and three Japanese exchange students as our witnesses.” He laughs, and his eyes trail off into the distance.

Immediately following the ceremony, they swaddled their oldest who was two at the time, and paraded around Powell's with cans tied to their ankles and signs that said ‘Just Married.’

Twenty-two years later, they have three kids and two dogs. All his kids have played soccer, which is what sparked his interest in the Timbers. Luckily a friend of his offered up some of their season ticket seats which paved the way for his family getting their own.

He shrugs nonchalantly, and almost as a side note says “People like me, I don’t know why!”

His wife, Joanne, is the head of the youth soccer club in town. This makes it particularly hard to keep his home life separate from work, so much so that most of his family opted out of being photographed due to safety concerns.

As he’s telling me about his short time spent in Kansas as a boy scout in the troop run by Dennis Rader, the BTK killer, his daughter, Mya, and dog, Danny, walk through the door. His eyes lit up and he popped out of his seat.

“Danny boy!” he shouts. “Sometimes we call him Snoop, ‘cuz he’s from Long Beach. He has a hashtag too, it’s #dannybulldog, but you don’t have to put that in there.”

While Officer Kimberly was demonstrating Danny’s impeccable self-control in the presence of cheese, a young lady walked in. His attention immediately shifted to her.

She was inquiring about an escort to and from work early in the morning. In a stern and comforting voice, he told her “you can give us a call any time, that’s what we’re here for.”
Behind the expansive staircase in the recently renovated Scott Hall, lies an office of unknown wonders: the study abroad office. Once inside, you are transported from the dreary Oregon day outside to the mysterious countries framed in posters. Right in the center of this lies the office of Stephen Prag, the Director of the Study Abroad Program. With his legs crossed and his hands folded together on his knees, with piles of paperwork forming miniature mountains on his desk, Stephen looks prepared to guide us around the map of his schedule.

“I used to dream of having a job where I would be travelling all the time,” said Stephen, his English accent occasionally faltering to American. He came to America because he was “obsessed with the U.S.,” and “had this dream of living on a ranch and being a cowboy.” With this dream in mind, Stephen moved first to Montana. He then met his wife, who is from Japan, and after becoming fascinated with Japan, started to study Japanese history and language at the University of Iowa. It was there he got involved in international programs. His first job was in the financial aid office at the University of Utah, where he became involved with the international offices, pushing for more opportunity for students to study abroad. After also working at Portland Community College and the University of Wisconsin, Stephen came to Pacific University as the first international student recruiter in 2003.
Stephen has been at Pacific for thirteen years. He has created almost all of the study abroad programs that we have here at the university, and has personally gone to each program to oversee the creation of a new opportunity for Pacific students. Most of his work involves helping students decide which program fits best with their academic goals, creating the annual budget, putting out fires abroad and at home with students, and working with the English Language Department.

“Right now is a heavy time for talking to students. And then for helping them decide what programs they want. Trying to match them up, trying to match up the sites with their academic interests.” The monotone accent and distinguished older gentleman look of him emphasizes his trustworthiness as a guide.

With all the excitement that goes along with flying around the world and helping people choose their own adventures, Stephen says that “we always have emergencies that we have to deal with.” His hands begin to tighten on his knees and his mouth turned down. “We had a very sick student we had to deal with last semester—we had earthquakes, political unrest in Egypt, for example, three years ago we had to get a student out of Egypt because there were political disturbances in that part of the world. These things can happen anytime.”

Nowadays, Stephen is mostly a guide to students in helping them choose their own adventures. But, he is still quite the adventurer himself.

Stephen often mixes personal travel with work travel; if he has to travel to Europe for work, he'll stop by England to visit his family, or he'll tag along with his wife when she travels for her job. Stephen and his wife also go to Hawaii and Japan every year; his wife’s parents live in Japan, so they enjoy visiting them.

“I love going away to tropical islands and looking at fish,” Stephen said. “You stick your head beneath the water line, and it’s like you’re in a completely different world.” Snorkeling is one of Stephen’s favorite activities; he’s been snorkeling in different places around the world, like French Polynesia, where the water is completely clear and there are sharks and massive stingrays. Stephen loves how there’s something different and new to be seen every time he takes a trip under water.

As well as taking planes, trains, and cars to faraway places, Stephen also enjoys travelling via book, especially the ones about U.S. history. “I’ve always thought the ideal existence would be having a time machine.” Stephen laughs and remarks that he would probably find out how horrible the past is and be ready to come back.

Stephen’s eyes light up as he reflects on the adventures he had with his children when they were younger, having “Build-a-Bear parties” and taking the kids to soccer games on Saturday mornings. Sometimes, when the referee didn’t show up,
Stephen would step in. “I grew up as an English soccer fanatic,” he said; he now records the games and watches them on the television.

Stephen has had many memorable adventures abroad, even before he had a travelling career. “I actually ran away when I was fifteen years old.” Stephen tells the tale of running away from his family during a trip to L.A. to visit his aunts. “I ran away the day before we were supposed to come back to the U.K.… I just basically walked away with my brother’s wallet, with all of twenty-two dollars.” After catching a bus to Phoenix, Arizona, Stephen met a young man at the bus station who was “really dirty…wandering around asking for money.” After discovering they were both English, Stephen continued to talk with the man.

“I spent a couple days wandering around Phoenix with this guy,” Stephen reflects, chuckling at his own insanity. The man took Stephen to his sister’s trailer to show him a newspaper cutout of Pearl Harbor, his most prized possession, but after being stopped by some cops, the man advised Stephen to go home. He arrived back in L.A. at about three in the morning, tired and “emotionally distraught.” After accidentally knocking on the wrong door and being found by the police, he finally made his way to his relieved grandmother’s apartment. “I’m sort of proud I was a little terror at that age,” Stephen concludes with a smirk.

At the end of exploring his adventures, Stephen shakes our hands and turned to his office, ready to guide the next student to their own adventure.
Cindy Schuppert can be found in her office on Sunset Avenue, located next to the athletic fields she once called home. A caramel coffee aroma wafted throughout the tiny office as Cindy led us into a small conference room. She sat down across the table and tucked her feet under her chair, she nervously fiddled with her ring on her right hand, waiting for us to ask a question. Her hair was slightly frazzled as she adjusted the black glasses on the crown of her head as she thought about her job.

“Getting to see the results. Getting to see what my team was able to accomplish,” is what she deemed to be her favorite part of her job.

Cindy works as the Director of Facilities Management and Campus Public Safety. Facilities Management, Facilities Engineering, Motor Pool, Custodial Services, Mail Services, Printing Services, and Campus Public Safety are all departments that fall under Cindy’s jurisdiction.
“I would say that first and foremost my job is to make sure these departments are doing their jobs, to advocate for the employees within the departments and when need be, trouble shoot problems and deal with personnel issues and to support in any way I can,” Cindy said when asked what she felt the main role of her job was.

While she’s been at this position for three years, her relationship with Pacific is one that began when she was in high school.

In her sophomore year of high school, Cindy, along with three of her teachers, helped to refurbish the front of Knight Hall. Rotting wood was removed, handrails were added, and the front was painted to strategically highlight certain architectural details of the old Victorian.

Two years later, Cindy attended and graduated from Pacific as an exercise science major. She tried out and joined volleyball, basketball, and softball. The most rewarding part of being on a team?

“Getting to see people from all around come together to work as a team.”

Cindy favored softball. She played in college, coached, and played on a recreational team with many of her friends until just a few years ago. Cindy was the catcher. Giving silent signals to the rest of her team. Like her job at Pacific, a lot is placed on the catcher’s shoulders. A ball that gets past the catcher is a ball that may also result in an advancement from the other team. Nothing should get past them. If anything gets past Cindy, there will be certain consequences.

She is the team captain and it is her job to act as a leader, an advocate, and to always be there to help and encourage her team. She’s there to take the hit and never lets her team work alone. If her team is out shoveling snow or sprinkling ice melt on all the sidewalks, she is there right alongside them, supporting them as best she can.

Moving from work to play, Cindy was asked what her hobbies were, or if she had any collections that she kept. She perked up in her seat, “I can bring in my Elvis collection.” In a swift movement she was out the door.

“Thank you, Thank ya very much,” Cindy mimicked as she brought the box of her collection into the room. Cindy and the man who had opened the door for her exchanged a laugh before she set down the box and unpacked the collection of Elvis memorabilia onto the table. Her eyes lit up, looking over each item as she pulled it out, like the catcher glancing over the different players on the field. Each item placed on the table creating a set of fond memories as if several people
stood in the room with Cindy. Once everything was out of the box, she took her seat and glanced from the items to us. She looked them over, waiting and analyzing her field, ready to relay a message to the pitcher. “He was someone who was ahead of his time.” Despite the dreary day outside, Cindy’s stories brought a lightness to the room.

Another thing she enjoys is attending weekly trivia held at Waltz Brewing with her friends. They actively participate in the game, beers in hand, enjoying the night. She smiles as she recalls the evening before, another night spent with friends. Her smile faded. She began to fiddle with the jewelry the athlete was unaccustomed to wearing. Cindy told us how she got the bracelet on her left wrist, and that it was a gift from her late grandmother. She would clarify with a hint of sadness, looking down at her tattooed forearms, as they gave a nostalgic comfort. In memory of her family, she bore the tattoo of a purple hummingbird on her left wrist to signify her grandmother, and an eye with three crosses to represent her father on the right. Being easily visible while she typed at her desk, they were a timeless reminder of her family. Cindy’s words and soft expressions made it evident family and community are very important to her.

Work is a large portion of her life and she loves it because of the close-knit community it brings. They are a team of people that always “stick their necks out” for one another, and that will always brighten her day. With the work she does, she is able to be part of such a wonderful circle of friends who make an impact on peoples’ lives, and she greatly enjoys that. Cindy loves her work, and with a bright, squinty-eyed smile she said, “Love is the essence of life.”
If you walk straight into Bates House, take a right down the short and narrow hallway, and follow it into the tiny little office, there’s a woman somewhere behind that desk. It’s hard to see over it, so stacked with files and paperwork, but I promise you she’s somewhere under there.

The office is small, cluttered, but not in danger of feeling cramped. It feels alive. The windowsill hosts a menagerie of eccentric knick-knacks—a skull, a garden gnome, feathers—the trappings of the being who dwells here. The walls are adorned with art. Like a late 90’s punk-rock fairy, she may appear in a flash of silver hair, facial piercings, and rosy cheeks. She grants many wishes, well, grants for one thing—like the Elise Elliot grant, which helps to select student and faculty applications to be awarded funding for their academic enrichment projects. Proposed projects often include but are not limited to, trips, conferences, and guest lecturers in all areas of the arts and sciences. The Elliot grants fund projects that would likely not be possible otherwise. Beyond that, a lot of what Sam does consists of typical office work, such as budgeting and bookkeeping, personnel contracts, and ordering supplies.

“I have a lot of autonomy,” she says happily.

A free spirit through and through, Sam didn’t go to college right out of high school. She’d had quite enough of the traditional education and wanted to do something else, if only just a change of scenery. She tried working retail, which, in her own words, “totally sucked” and then decided to start looking at office jobs.

Eventually, the search brought her to work at Pacific University’s very own TIC. In January 2007, she took over the administrative position of Arts and Humanities, back when the two
were grouped together. She’s now the Senior Administrative Assistant of Humanities.

Sam takes solace in the fact she is able to contribute to her community. She strives for goodness wherever she can. To her, the best part of the job is helping others. While she admits her own job might not be world changing, she knows she is able to make a difference in small worlds.

“That’s an easy thing to do. You can do that anywhere,” she says, matter-of-factly. “Why be a dick when you don’t have to be?”

Despite the loud landscaping that happens outside her window, Sam Stein loves her job. “My time and effort is valued—it makes a difference—and that’s worth getting up in the morning for,” she says, her pressed lips curling into a smile. However, when the curtain closes and the light’s go off, you may not be surprised by where you’ll find her behind the scenes.

Behind seemingly stern blue eyes lives a whimsical character whose life outside her office is driven by a passion for theater and love for the world around her. “Thank you, Ellen,” she says in reference to the theater degree she earned while also serving as a university employee. Although you won’t find Sam on-stage, you can find her at the roots of productions at Theater in the Grove, HART Theater, and South Meadows Middle School. The behind-the-scenes work of theater tech, stage managing and directing is what she dedicates her time to while not serving as an important staple and resource to the Pacific community.

“Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead is my favorite—it’s surreal and weird and absurd and intelligent, while also funny and violent,” she explained, “Also Hamlet; I love plays where everyone dies in the end because it’s like life.” Sam said that she would love to direct Iphigenia and Other Daughters, another production that sits in a level of darkness with her other favorites.

Sam lives with her husband of whom she’s been married to for twelve years, their two cats Budder and Mistah, a sixteen-year-old “weird spaniel mix” rescue named Max, a twenty-year-old ball python named Cleopatra, and a final remaining fish in the tank. “No children, THANK GOD,” she includes, “I realized early on I didn’t want them, and it’s better to know you’re not going to be a good parent than to screw up.”
In addition to the stacks of boxes lining the room, Sam’s office is filled with plants, playful decorations, and other items that pay tribute to her light spirit. On her desk is a plastic coffee cup displaying Jack Skellington from *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, and you’d be quick to notice that matching pictures hung on one of the gray metal cabinets pushed against the wall. In 1993, Sam had the privilege of attending one of the first showings of the movie at the famous El Capitan Theater in Hollywood. Next to the window are leaves and vines and flowers, overflowing into one another, and amongst them small figures of bunnies and owls and other small creatures.

Behind her, it’s impossible not to notice the cork board, covered with different quotes, sayings, artwork, and pictures that Sam has collected over the years. Included on the board are various pins and buttons, stickers sporting things such as “Keep Abortion Legal” and “Save Tibet” and “Ban Fracking Now”, Ellen Margolis’s contact information, various quotes including one from *Alice in Wonderland*, a Happy Bunny sticker “because everyone needs some sass in their life”, and a paper bag monster that her husband made as a school project. Each has their own personal story. “I give to a lot of charities, and typically get a lot of free stuff from it,” she mentions, noting that many of the stickers she’s pinned to her board originated that way.

The messages on this board and items displayed in her office relate closely to Sam’s beliefs in love, equality, and hope—all the things she loves about working at Pacific University. “Education is something you can’t run on a bottom line. Good education makes you a better person,” she says, “I’m glad to be a part of something like that.” Sam’s work isn’t seen front and center, but without her, the show couldn’t go on.
Did you know that the Assistant Director of Student Activities doesn’t own cable or have Wi-Fi at home? Or that the Director of Outdoor Pursuits is readying himself to climb a rocky crag called Aguja Poincenot in Patagonia this December? Or that the Senior Administrative Assistant of Humanities has a pet python named Cleopatra? Come to know the staff members who work behind the scenes at Pacific University depicted by Pacific’s own creative writing and photography students. Building upon the first volume in the series, this book showcases the talents of both our staff and our students through collaborative and creative efforts. We hope you enjoy reading the second collection of personnel and their personalities.