

Veterans Success on Campus

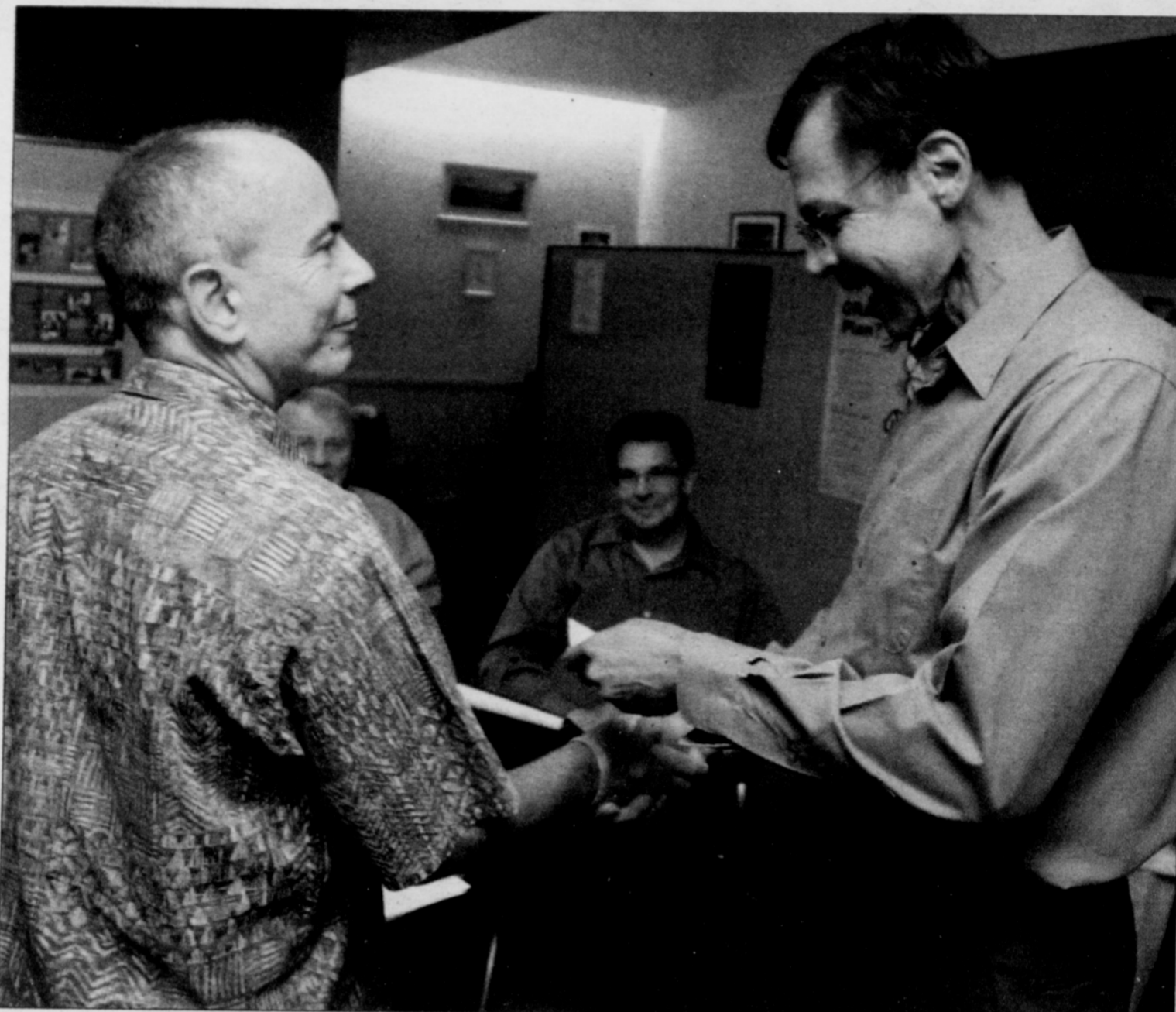
PCC counselors ease transition to student life

Portland Community College is one of 94 colleges and universities nationwide chosen to take part in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' VetSuccess on Campus program.

Counselors in the program help ease veterans' transition to student life and assist them in achieving their educational and career goals through the VA's Post-9/11 GI Bill, and other education benefit programs. The counselors also maintain close relationships with local VA Vet Centers and VA medical facilities, referring veterans as needed for counseling or medical services and providing assistance enrolling in and applying for VA medical and nonmedical benefits.

"We are very excited about having this resource on campus," said Bert Logan, the college's director of Financial Aid and Veteran Services. "This gives us the extraordinary opportunity to provide our student veterans and their families with an all-encompassing and holistic experience at PCC."

Logan said PCC has more than



Steve Gordon (left) meets Bert Logan, the director of Financial Aid and Veteran Services at Portland Community College.

1,400 military vets on its campuses.

During the last few years, the college has improved systems to

streamline certification of educational benefits and was an early adopter of President Obama's Ex-

ecutive Order 13607 "Establishing Principles of Excellence for Educational Institutions Serving Service

Members, Veterans, Spouses, and Other Family Members."

Many of the principles in the Presidential Order were already in place at PCC through its own initiatives, Logan said.

One of the college's cornerstones in serving military vets is the Rock Creek Campus Veterans Resource Center - the first, and only, one-stop resource center at the college that provides a space dedicated for student veterans to network and relax. There are plans to create full-service Veterans Resource Centers on other campus sites thanks to the current work by the college's bond program.

In addition, the college has active veterans' clubs that meet at locations around the district where students come together to support one another, share information and promote strategies for improving the veteran experience at PCC.

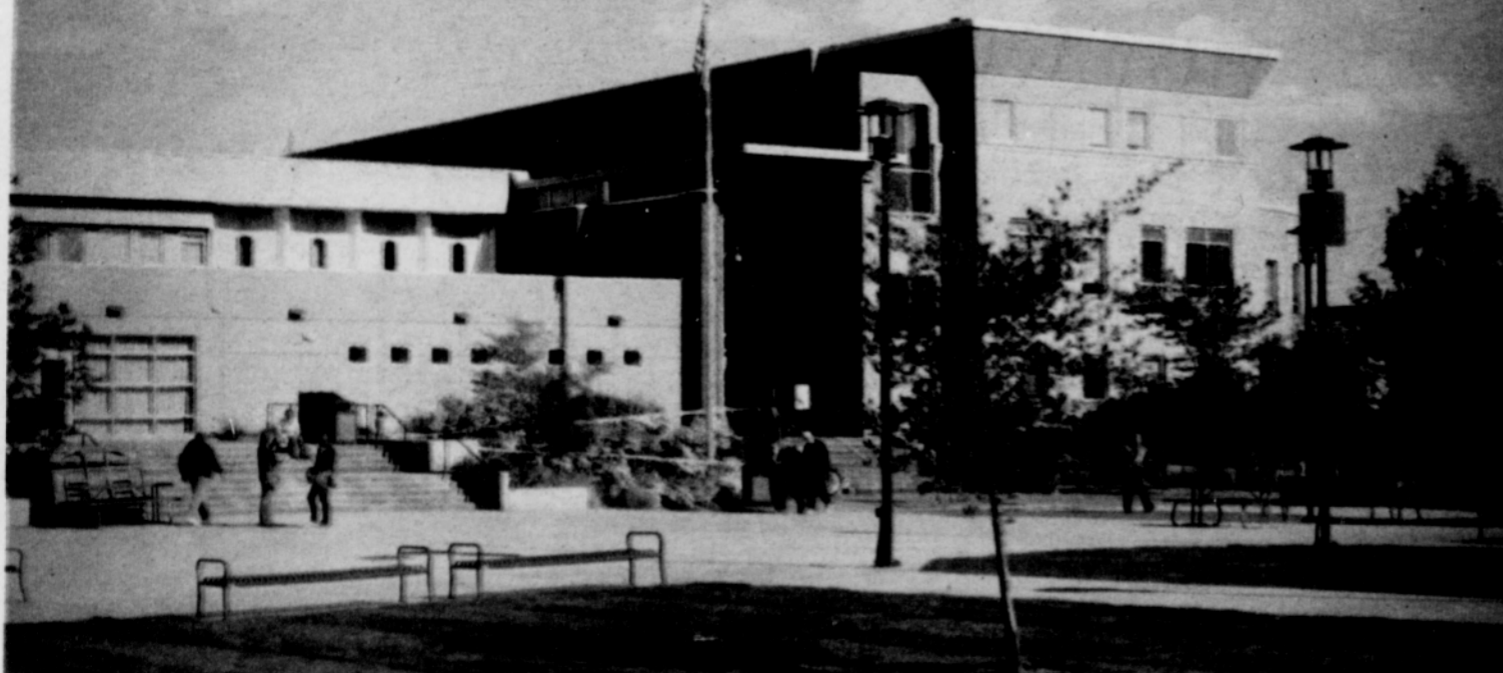
"For many veterans, the transition from military life to the academic world can seem more challenging than a boot camp obstacle course," said Julie Barber, faculty advisor for the PCC Sylvania Veterans' Club. "Connecting with other veterans, and especially with those who have successfully navigated that rocky route, can help immensely."

Registration for Winter Term 2014 begins Nov. 12. Visit pcc.edu/admissions for more info

PUT YOUR G.I. BILL TO USE



Get connected with your military education benefits. Veterans' benefits advice is available every 2nd Thursday from 8 a.m. - noon in the Student Center. Visit pcc.edu/vets to learn more.



Cascade
Campus
Salutes
America's
Veterans



Decorated Veteran

continued **▲** from front

military.

"It's been a lot of luck really, being in the right place at the right time," Watson told the Portland Observer on Veterans Day Monday. Her parents, Dorothy and Michael Watson Sr., and a sister, still live in Vancouver.

In a time honored military tradition called the Change of Command, Watson was formally and symbolically handed authority over the Ft. Eustis operation on Oct. 19. As practiced today within the Coast Guard, the change of command is a transfer of total responsibility, authority, and accountability from one individual to another.

During a July Fourth ceremony at the White House last year, she met President Barack Obama who recognized her for being one of the first American-American women to graduate from the Coast Guard Academy. He also spoke of her exceptional service during Operation Enduring Freedom. Watson earned her military degree in government in 1996 after moving from Portland where she attended Tubman and other elementary schools.

She said meeting the president and first lady was exhilarating, even though it came during a period of exhaustion for her personally, less

than 48 hours after she arrived in the United States from an assignment in Kuwait where the temperature was 140 degrees. She said they discussed the connections they had to Chicago where she and the first family also lived.

Watson's 17 year military career has included a variety of operational and staff assignments that have taken her across the country.

She has been recalled to active duty on four occasions, including the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks over New York City, Washington, D.C. and Pennsylvania; Operation Enduring Freedom; Operation Iraqi Freedom; and the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill.

As a civilian, she has held various positions within the manufacturing and logistics communities and is currently employed with Office Depot Corporate Headquarters in Boca Raton, Fla. as a senior manager for Supply Chain Operations Support for all of North America, including the Dominican Republic.

Some of her personal awards include Joint Commendation Medal, Army Commendation Medal, the Coast Guard Commendation Medal, four Coast Guard Achievement Medals, and two Coast Guard Letters of Commendation Awards.

Donovan M. Smith also contributed to this story.