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Dr. Karin Edwards, the new president of Portland Community College's Cascade Campus, embraces a campus 'without fences or gates' as it welcomes all students and integrates educational services for north and northeast Portland residents.

PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Inviting People In

New college leader
sees PCC Cascade
as go-to place

BY OLIVIA OLIVIA
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Dr. Karin Edwards, the new president at the Cascade Campus at Portland Community College, has travelled a long journey in her pursuit of providing higher education to the public. She started her first semester with

PCC this fall, and says she has long appreciated the way community colleges serve students in need and transform lives.

"I've seen drug dealers become drug rehabilitation counselors, English learners become English teachers, through community colleges," Edwards says of her passion for community colleges and the positive transformations students have earned by enrolling in classes.

Edwards herself was raised in the South Bronx of New York City, the last of eight children. Her early experience in education was in New York City public schools. Her life changed when a science teacher found an opportunity many children in Edwards position would not have – a chance to attend a private prep school in midtown Manhattan.

"What a difference education makes," said Edwards reminiscing on her luck. "It was my exposure to a quality education system

that opened me up to other things, got me into college and through college," she said.

Edwards would go on to get her doctorate in Educational Leadership from Johnson and Wales University in Rhode Island, along with a master's degree in Higher Education Administration from the University of Albany-SUNY.

"So many of my friends who stayed in the South Bronx did not see similar outcomes. The only difference was education, the route I took, and the route I was allowed to take," she said.

By knowing how education affected her, she uses her own experience to send a message that it doesn't matter where one starts.

From high school, Edwards went on to attend college in Albany, N.Y. At the time, she wanted to be a guidance counselor. She

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