

Welcome to the first edition of Bits and Bytes, the official newsletter of the PCC STEM Center. We're so happy you're here! We have created this newsletter to provide you with information and opportunities to make your experience at PCC and within the STEM Center more productive and enjoyable. We hope this information is useful. We can't wait to see you in the STEM Center (AB 150)!

### **The STEM Center and STEM EDGE program:**

First off, what is STEM? STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. We have created the STEM EDGE program for the benefit of all of the students at PCC. The STEM Excellence in Development, Student Growth and Equity (EDGE) program at PCC was created to promote awareness and increase student achievement in STEM education. Our team is here to guide you on your journey in STEM by providing support in advising, tutoring, undergraduate research, course development, and transfer advice. You will have access to state-of-the-art technology, tools to aid your education, and workshop opportunities that will help you in life.

### **What is available as part of the STEM EDGE program?**

- Advising
- Career development/  
Work-based learning
- Internship
- Transfer
- Tutors
- Undergrad research
- Workshops



Our **Academic Career Experts** can help you with registration, schedule changes, and advising for you degree! The ACE can tailor your STEM experience by helping you be career ready with resume building, career searching, and interview preparation. The ACE is here to give you the opportunity to connect with your chosen institution for transfer and be prepared to take on your academic and career journey expertly. Come meet your ACE today!

## Micro BattleBotz Club:

The BattleBotz Club is a student-run organization in the STEM Center. Students do not need to be STEM students to participate. If you are interested in coding, robot building, engineering, math, using 3D printers, creative design, battling robots, and working with like-minded individuals, then come check us out! We work with Kitronik Move mini MK2 and micro:bits. We will also be electing board members for the 2022 school year in the first month of meetings during fall 2022. Contact Parker Banas at [parker.banas@pueblocc.edu](mailto:parker.banas@pueblocc.edu) with any questions.

## President's Leadership Program:



The President's Leadership Program at PCC provides a network of academic courses, activities, and service learning opportunities that address intellectual and pragmatic issues of leadership and followership in American life. To be eligible for PLP, a student must provide evidence of outstanding extracurricular involvement, volunteerism and/or successful work experience.

STEM students of PLP is a four-semester program that focuses on a STEM field. It includes two required core leadership courses (totaling six credit hours) and two elective courses that the student selects from a wide choice of academic courses offered at PCC. The two required courses are Leadership (Management 224) and Introduction to Civic Leadership (Public Service 230). PCC students who successfully complete their STEM degree program as specified are also eligible to apply for a Destination CSU Pueblo scholarship.

Participants receive scholarships for completing the requirements. If you have any questions, please contact Joey Mathews at [joey.mathews@pueblocc.edu](mailto:joey.mathews@pueblocc.edu).

## Meet the Staff

### Joey Mathews, M.S.



Joey is the director of STEM Career and Technical Education as well as the project director of the STEM EDGE Title III grant at PCC. Joey started at PCC as a part-time professor 20 years ago, teaching many biology classes such as anatomy, physiology and microbiology. Her other experience includes the role of chemical analyst at KMG Chemicals and laboratory analyst of an environmental cleanup project at the Pueblo Chemical Depot.

Joey received her Bachelor of Science in biology and her Masters of Applied Natural Science from the University of Southern Colorado (now CSU Pueblo). Her thesis included the study of the effects of linear furanocoumarins on *spodoptera exiguas* cytochrome p-450 enzyme. For her efforts, she was acknowledged in the Handbook of Toxicology by the book's author.

Joey enjoys running and hiking. Whether it is road running, Spartan Obstacle Course races or hiking up the Manitou Incline, she likes it all. Joey resides in Pueblo with her fiancé, Chris Masters, and has two sons, Hunter and Nate.



## Parker Banas, M.S.



Parker is the STEM outreach coordinator for the STEM EDGE Title III grant at PCC. Previously, he had many different roles including resident assistant and assistant community director at Michigan State University, varsity lacrosse

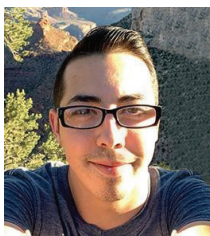
coach, senior sales consultant at Paychex Inc., and international conservation and social science researcher in Mpumalanga, South Africa.

Parker received his Bachelor of Science in kinesiology and his Master of Science from the Michigan State University. His thesis, Local Perceptions of Environmental Insecurity and Wildlife Conservation in the Mnisi Tribal Authority, Mpumalanga, South Africa, included the study of the interplay of local perceptions from the MTA and looked into understanding the relationship between various viewpoints while interpreting and analyzing the perceived risks to design policies that aid in insecurity reduction at local, regional and global levels.

Parker is a published author and photographer. He has won various photography contests and hopes to tie in his passions of international travel, photography and cultural awareness and understanding with his current position.

In his free time, he loves to hike fourteeners across the United States, explore new countries with his wonderful girlfriend, try new foods and stay as active as possible.

## Jimmie Romero



Jimmie is the Pueblo campus STEM EDGE Title III grant academic and career expert (ACE) for STEM programs under the science division. He has had the privilege of working in K-12 and higher education for eight years.

He has been a teaching assistant, research assistant, implement coordinator, community advocate, academic success coach, and now ACE. Jimmie had the pleasure of working alongside education officials in pursuit of programs that aid students' goals and careers by providing resources for families to be

successful in their students' academic careers.

Jimmie gave presentations on several research topics surrounding counseling education, pedagogy on clinical psychology, and suicide/ bullying prevention methods. He worked with a 501(c)(3) nonprofit to implement a program on compassionate acts through the form of student leadership and active demonstration by high school seniors.

He served as a chair for the set-up committee of the Rocky Mountain Psychological Association with his mentor, Dr. Krista D. Bridgmon (CSU Pueblo), for two years. He also taught in higher education for more than two years in upper-division psychology courses and has dedicated his life to helping students achieve their goals through holistic and compassionate coaching.

In his time in education, he has found himself understanding how important it is to be authentic with students. He strives every day to provide students with possibilities and optimism through not just advising but friendship. He has found that in his own educational career, mentorship and friendship with advisors, success coaches and faculty are not just about opportunity but also lifelong growth.

Jimmie leads his life with the things he has gained in his experiences and the heart of his mentor, who taught him to be compassionate and kind with a hint of crazy.



## Melissa Watters, M.S. PCC Southwest

Melissa is the STEM academic and career expert (ACE) for the PCC Southwest locations. Originally from Chicago,

Melissa earned her B.S. in civil engineering from the University of Illinois and her M.S. in environmental engineering from Northwestern University.

After working as an engineer for Argonne National Laboratory, Melissa realized she most enjoyed engaging students and inspiring the next generations of STEM professionals, so she changed careers and became a math and science educator, incorporating the engineering design process into all of her classes.



Before joining PCC Southwest, Melissa found another passion in helping students understand their strengths and interests as they relate to careers and helping them find their way on their career paths. You can see why STEM ACE really is the perfect job for her!

Melissa lives in Dolores with her husband and two dogs. They're often found exploring the beautiful southwest landscape together.

### **Chris LaRose** **PCC Southwest**



Chris is the STEM outreach coordinator for the STEM EDGE Title III grant at PCC Southwest. Chris has been in education for 21 years specializing primarily in science, math, and STEM education.

He had a variety of roles including coordinator, director, teacher, volunteer, and mentor. Chris has worked in a wide range of educational settings, including science schools, public schools, charter schools, international schools, health and technology centers, and summer camps. Chris created and implemented lesson plans using STEM education including Sumo Bots, cryptography, bioengineering, science fair, environmental science, and biomimicry.

Chris has a B.S. in education and a master's degree in science education; he currently holds a professional teaching license in Colorado.

Chris is passionate about STEM. He enjoys sharing knowledge and helping students explore and discover the world around them. He understands the importance of developing a student's love for learning through positive experiences. Chris loves to see students use their imagination to create new inventions because we need student inventors to help solve real-world challenges.

When Chris is not doing STEM activities, you can find him outside enjoying the mountains, deserts, rivers, and lakes. He likes to whitewater kayak and snowboard; he recently started learning how to sail. He also loves to travel with his family and explore different cultures. Chris lives in Dolores with his wife, Maggie, and four children – Taylor, Keira, Ranger, and Johanna.

### **Sara Balquin**



Sara is a work-study in the STEM Center at PCC. She is majoring in psychology and is deciding whether to pursue her associate or bachelor's degree. This is

her first year in college and her second semester.

She enjoys life in general and feels life is too short not to appreciate the beauties of nature. She enjoys nature walks, being with her kids, gardening, art, puzzles, riding bikes, hiking, kayaking, cleaning her home, and learning anything new.

