Message from the Interim Dean

What an exciting year for the College of Creative Studies! We have welcomed a new cohort of students into our community of junior colleagues, hosted two Transdisciplinary Fellows already, and were wowed by the first annual CCS Research and Creative Activities Conference (RACA-CON, see page 27). Sixty-seven students from all eight majors presented their creative and research efforts to an audience of almost 300 attendees. Anyone who has doubts about this generation of young people and their ability to make a difference needs to meet these students!

We have many more special events scheduled throughout the year, and I hope you can join us at least once. I encourage each of you to share a story about your CCS experience on the CCS 50th website (ccs.ucsb.edu/50).

In reading the stories already posted, I am reminded that CCS offers students the opportunity to drive their own education, while preparing them for unexpected journeys. The common threads since 1967 are curiosity and passion. Perhaps this is the true essence of CCS—to nurture these core human characteristics. As a living entity, CCS evolves, but students continue to thrive in the framework that remains centered on this aspect of individualized curiosity and passion. How do we measure this? I believe it is best viewed not through the lens of awards or rankings, but through a lens of individual success. Can students take what they’ve experienced and learned and then apply it to what they end up doing? Do they continue learning? We have no idea what a student will need to know 10, even 5 years from now, except that communication skills, problem solving, ability to learn, creativity, and critical thinking will be required. The CCS stories reveal that there is no single path to a particular career and, often, no way to predict where paths will lead. Rather, the fearless spirit and sheer persistence that flows from the confidence to pursue a passion (and a realization that failing does not make one a failure) result in the myriad of success stories. People who continue to learn, who can communicate across disciplines, and who think creatively can contribute most effectively to solving the many complex challenges of our world.

Another common thread revealed in the stories is the “CCS experience”—the opportunity to work with faculty as junior colleagues throughout the undergraduate years. CCS is recognized as an integral part of the UCSB campus, providing an educational path for students who wish to immerse and accelerate in a discipline. UC Santa Barbara is internationally recognized as a top research university and faculty across campus welcome CCS undergraduates into their studios, offices, and laboratories to create new knowledge and conduct research. On behalf of the College, I thank campus leadership, faculty, staff, graduate students, and postdoctoral scholars who have made it possible for CCS students to experience this aspect of a world class university. It clearly makes a difference. Support for students to travel to professional conferences and to pursue summer research is the result of the generosity of donors, and on behalf of the many students who have benefited from these programs over the years - thank you! The Create Fund, a new initiative in CCS, will expand the opportunities for students to carry out research and pursue creative and entrepreneurial work across all eight majors (see more on page 34).

Enjoy this special 50th Anniversary edition, and also browse the CCS 50th Anniversary web page for photos, stories, videos, and more. COME VISIT! CCS would love to welcome you home.
The College of Creative Studies (CCS) topped off another outstanding year by conferring degrees to a phenomenal cohort of graduates at the 2017 CCS Commencement Ceremony on Sunday, June 11, 2017 in UCSB’s Campbell Hall. 92 graduates, some wearing beach attire and others in full graduation cap and gown—the College does not limit its graduates to traditional graduation garb—celebrated the conclusion of their CCS journey. Chancellor Yang opened the ceremony, the first of eight UCSB Commencements, by thanking CCS Interim Dean Kathy Foltz for her dedication to the College.

Interim Dean Foltz has spent her tenure at the helm of CCS trying to explain what exactly the College is. Her first commencement address was no different. “It is hard to define this College—each student has a unique story and path,” said Foltz in her speech. “But that is part of its beauty and its strength. I believe, though, that there is a common thread that runs through the students here.”

The biologist pointed to a quote from Rachel Carson, one of her favorite authors, to describe a commonality of all CCS students: “A child’s world is [...]. full of wonder and excitement” but for most of us the “true instinct for what is beautiful and awe-inspiring is [...]. lost before we reach adulthood.” Dean Foltz believes CCS students, through their desire to make and discover, have maintained “that sense of wonder.” Dean Foltz urged the graduates to use the tools and experiences CCS provided them to keep wonder alive in their day-to-day lives and to remember that they are “part of something good. CCS. This cool little College on a wonderful campus, joined in the collective battle against ignorance.”

Following her remarks, Kathy turned the podium over to Norman Badler (CCS Mathematics ’70), who gave the annual Alumni Speech. The Rachleff Professor of Computer and Information Science at the University of Pennsylvania was one of the original 50 students when the College opened its doors in 1967. Badler, the founding Director of the SIG Center for Computer Graphics, said that many commencement speeches that talk about “following your passion” are missing one vital piece: how to find your passion. “People don’t really have enough time or experiences to find [...] their passion,” he said. He used the idea of ‘creativity’ to address this question.

While there are six universal expressions—surprise, sadness, disgust, anger, joy, and fear—fear is the emotion that, according to Badler’s thesis, often brings about sadness, disgust, anger, joy, and fear. “Passion because the mind and body must become powerful to break the emotion,” he explained, “and creative because responsive actions may not come from rote or typical actions.” To Badler, “creativity is often the impassioned response to fear; the body must become powerful to break the emotion,” he said. He went on to explain the force that brings together “challenge that triggered awareness of the unknown, the consequent fear of meeting that challenge and the passion to bring my skills, my past and, yes, others to address it.” He advocated that the graduates seize their fear about their future and turn it into an opportunity to “make that unknown future” their passion.

Then three graduates, Qicheng Zhang, (CCS Physics), Corrine Guichard (CCS Literature), and Jiajie (Jerry) Luo (CCS Mathematics), sequentially took the stage to give their remarks. Each student focused on how CCS impacted his or her life. Although they studied a range of disciplines, each student conveyed how CCS helped them harness their passion while pushing them to achieve their goals.

Zhang, who is now pursuing a PhD in Planetary Science at Cal Tech, posited that every day in CCS there is an opportunity to learn. “In CCS, a new today means a new opportunity to learn, to leave our comfort zones, to grow,” he said. He quickly learned that passion and excitement only get you so far and perseverance is needed “to get the job done.” Luo closed by urging his fellow graduates to “dream big and dream wide, but more importantly [...] remember why we had these dreams in the first place.” Because those dreams give them “a reason to get back up when we fall.”

The final student speaker, Guichard continued on the theme of passion. In CCS “so many people are pouring themselves into what they are doing just for the sake of passion,” Spectrum’s (CCS’ Literary Magazine) Editor in Chief explained. “CCS is full [...] of people searching for meaning beyond their homework assignments.” While there are eight distinct disciplines and each with students truly dedicated to their field, every student in the College is united “through the search for something greater.”

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Luo focused on how one needs to harness passion and perseverance to achieve ambitious goals. When he entered CCS, he and his classmates “were passionate [...] and thought we could take on the world.” When he met the older students, he noticed that many had lost most of this passion. At the time Luo wondered, “How could someone who had so much passion and excitement just settle for so much less?” As he progressed through CCS he realized, he had personally experienced this phenomenon “not once, not twice, but pretty much every quarter.” He was burnt out from the same subjects he recently was so passionate about. He quickly learned that passion and excitement only get you so far and perseverance is needed “to get the job done.” Luo closed by urging his fellow graduates to “dream big and dream wide, but more importantly [...] remember why we had these dreams in the first place.”

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Although the answers are often unsatisfying, CCS prepares...
its students to solve real world problems. “We will have to use our creativity and the skills we’ve learned from CCS,” she said, “to solve problems that don’t necessarily have straightforward answers.”

The student speeches were followed by two musical pieces written and performed by CCS Music Composition students. A tradition dating back to the early days of CCS, the musical numbers add a personal touch to the ceremony each year. This year, Maddie Marcin performed her piano piece “San Francisco, Someday” and Helen Tanubrata played her song “Hitchhiker” on the piano, assisted by Sara Bashore on the violin and Claire Garvin on the bassoon.

Chancellor Yang and Dean Foltz then bestowed the annual UCSB and CCS awards. Chancellor Yang began by bestowing the Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Research, an award given to one UCSB student each year and recognized as the highest academic honor an undergraduate can receive, to Daniel Spokoyny (CCS Computer Science). During his time at CCS, Spokoyny worked on fact checking the web, led seminars on natural language processing and machine learning, and published several manuscripts. He is now working on his PhD at Carnegie Mellon University. Dean Foltz, on behalf of the CCS Faculty Executive Committee (FEC), honored Morgan Brubaker (CCS Physics), Sammy Guo (CCS Computer Science), Amy Peterson (CCS Biology) and Qicheng Zhang (CCS Physics) with the CCS FEC Commendation of Excellence Awards. This accolade recognizes students for their truly outstanding performance in their overall intellectual and creative endeavors. The CCS Student Service Award—the afternoon’s final award—was given to Gabby Najm for her contributions to the intellectual and social functions of the College.

The event concluded with the moment all of the graduates (and their families) had been waiting for. Years of hard work and dedication to their fields had led up to them shaking hands with Chancellor Yang. Adding a personal touch to the proceedings, Interim Dean Foltz personally read the names of each graduate and informed the crowd of their future plans.

For a full recording of the ceremony, visit ccs.ucsb.edu/events/commencement.
Lifelong Learning

CCA Art Faculty member, alumnus, and renowned artist shares his CCS experience and how childhood shaped his art

Hank Pitcher (CCA Art ’71) was one of the original 50 students when the College of Creative Studies (CCS) opened its doors in Fall 1967. He joined the CCA Art faculty upon his graduation in 1971 and has remained with the College ever since. Now a renowned landscape painter, he teaches Art in CCA. Pitcher, a native of Isla Vista, graciously invited us to his studio on UCSB’s West Campus to talk about how the College has evolved over the past 50 years and how his early experiences impacted his work.

How did you first hear about CCS?
Well, when I was a senior in high school, my mother showed me a small article in the Santa Barbara News Press announcing a newly formed College of Creative Studies at UCSB and that seemed interesting to me. In high school, representatives from different colleges and universities were coming in to talk to students, and I used to go to those meetings. A week or so after I saw the announce-

ment, [Marvin] Mudrick [the founder of CCS] came and spoke to a small group of students, and he was very inter-
esting. It was something that I hadn’t experienced before. The way he talked, his energy, and his intellectualism were so impressive.

At that point I was a senior at San Marcos High School and looking at different colleges to go to mostly focused around football because I was offered a lot of good football scholarships. I was looking at big powerhouse schools across the nation. UCSB had a football team at the time and they had wanted me to play there, but it wasn’t a time program and I figured if I was going to play I wanted to play with the best. Ed Loomis, who was the chair of the English Department at the time, set up a meeting with me and said that he had heard from Mudrick that I was inter-
est in the CCS program so he wanted to talk to me. Both Loomis and Mudrick were much more interesting than the football recruiters. It was a different kind of dialogue than I had with any other adults. The more I found out about CCS, the more interesting it got to be. The people who were recruiting me to play football were talking about how there were weight rooms in the dorms and easy classes. The emphasis was on how easy the classes were going to be and I was not interested in easy classes. I was inter-
est in learning about art and literature. The College wasn’t about being easy—it was about being rigorous. Over the years, what has surprised you about what has changed and hasn’t changed?

The first year, he came for about two weeks and every evening he would go into this room and he would look around at the audience and then he would close his eyes and just start talking. Occasionally he would open his eyes, which were magnified by his thick glasses, and he would look intently at people in the audience to see if they were following him. Then he would close his eyes and take off again. He would go on wild tangents but always end up tying every-
thing together in a remarkable new way of seeing the world. I am still thinking about things he said back then.

Over the last 50 years, there has been pressure to make CCS more conventional, more like everything else. I am sur-

prised that CCS has been able to resist things like chang-
ing the name and having grades—making it more conven-
tional. A non-punitive grading system was a radical idea in 1967 and still is. One change that I miss is the tradition of un-
usual / humorous course titles and descriptions. “Walking Bi-
ology” has survived. But John McCracken, now considered one of America’s most important sculptors, was criticized for teaching “Astral Traveling.” That course description was very good.

With turnover in the faculty and students, why do you think the College has stayed so true to Mudrick’s ideals?
It is a funny thing. The College just attracts certain people. Around Coal Oil Point where my studio is, they did some restoration and took out some exotic/invasive plants. All of a sudden all of these animals started showing up that nobody had seen for years and years. Where did they come from? How did they know? The College is like that. The thing about Mudrick is he had the highest respect for students. He was really interested in students and he believed that they could do great and valuable things. Don’t tell them what they should do; find what they want to do. Ask them questions, let them ask you questions and free them up. I think the faculty at the College have the same feeling. They aren’t coming in as authorities, they don’t have all the answers, they are coming to learn and to develop colleagues. You invest a lot of time in a student because you want them to get to the point where they can ask you hard questions and you can start to learn from them. The best Creative Studies teachers are teaching new and different classes all the time and are evolving, even when it is the same subject.

Did you become a faculty member right after you graduated in 1971?
When I was a senior, getting ready to graduate, I started traveling around and looking at graduate programs and visiting other Colleges and I wasn’t finding anything that was really exciting to me. For the last 50 years, including when I was a student, there has been a theme in academia

Buckminster Fuller speaking at CCS, late 1960’s.

From what we have seen, the Buckminster Fuller lectures were very important in the early years of the College. Can you tell us more about these lectures?

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that painting is dead. I was not interested in that idea. It is still being talked about, but painting continues to be, in some ways, the most popular and the most economically important field of visual art. I was lucky as an undergraduate to work with Paul Wonner, who was a significant painter, and I learned a lot from him. The other programs I was looking at were not so interested in painting. I was thinking about this one afternoon and Mudrick came to me and he asked me if I was interested in staying on for the year as a lecturer. I was having some recognition and success professionally, and I thought, ‘Well that might be a good idea,’ because I could continue to do the work I wanted to do and I could keep looking for a place to go for graduate work, find a better place. But one thing led to another and I just haven’t found a better place to be, so I am still here.

A lot of people would be burnt out after teaching for over 45 years. What keeps you coming back?

I have only taught half time over these many years. My primary focus is on my own work—painting this landscape, this lifestyle, and this part of the world. I think if I had a traditional full time teaching position and I had to give grades and I had to deal with students who wanted a grade to stay on a sports team, I wouldn’t do that. I am just so uninterested in that kind of teaching. In every class that I teach here, by and large everyone who is in that classroom is there because they want to be. The students ask interesting questions and I can ask them questions. It is stimulating—intellectually and artistically. Additionally, the faculty that are on campus, many could teach anywhere in the world, have decided to teach here. They choose to be here because they want to be. The students ask interesting questions and I can ask them questions. It is stimulating—intellectually and artistically. Additionally, the faculty that are on campus, many could teach anywhere in the world, have decided to teach here. They choose to be here because the place—it is a privilege to get to know them. Over the years, I have taught classes with people from other disciplines. From Bruce Tiffney I have learned about geology, botany, and other aspects of science that are thrilling and important to me. I don’t know of and can’t imagine a place where it could be as good as that.

I am of that age now where a lot of my contemporaries are retiring. I think you retire when you are doing something that is not interesting or that you don’t want to do or maybe can’t do anymore. If you are interested in what you are doing, you want to keep doing it. It is more than ‘life long learning’ it is just being alive. Being alive is being curious.

How do you approach teaching a typical CCS class?

Most students are used to classes where they are told what they should do to get a grade. I discuss what they could do to expand their own work and increase their understanding of the history and tradition of drawing and painting.

Take us through the class that you taught with Bruce Tiffney.

We did that class for almost 20 years. It evolved into three weekend meetings during the summer. The first weekend we would meet on West Campus for an introductory lecture and then paint all day with two critiques. It was a run through for the following two weekends when we would go up to the Sedgewick reserve and stay there from Friday through Sunday. We woke everyone up before dawn to paint the sunrise.

Bruce gave a lecture every afternoon about the botany and geology we painted. Things like the different types of oak trees and the subduction zone that ran through the reserve. After a break in the middle of the day, we would paint until sunset. Then we had amazing meals. A benefactor donated money to allow us to cater all organic local food from a French trained chef. Then we often sat outside and looked at the stars and talked. That was the basic structure of the class.

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What was an example of one of these classes?

Well I taught a class with Charles Garabedian titled ‘Man, Tragic and Heroic: Narrative Paintings and War Movies.’ We watched old war movies and looked at narrative painting and looked for connections between them. It was a fabulous class and I learned a lot about war movies and
World War II because he was a gunner on warplanes flying over Germany.

What do your paintings focus on?

My paintings are about the natural and social history of this part of California—mostly the beach. I see surf and the beach as mythic subjects and I see the Greek myths acted out constantly on and just off shore. Also I am interested in the incredible biodiversity and the geology here. In the stretch of beach between Campus Point and slough on West Campus there is more invertebrate biodiversity than anywhere else known on the planet.

You were raised in Santa Barbara... Yes, I grew up about 400 yards from where we are sitting—in Isla Vista.

How did growing up here influence your work?

When I was young, UCSB was still primarily focused on teaching and at that time there was a very strong relationship with the IV elementary school. At that time there was a very strong relationship with the IV elementary school—was a negative. We were very young and naïve. Later I came to realize that the landscape into the students. When you learn a little bit about nature, when you get exposed to it, you realize it is really interesting. It is much more interesting than, well, Game of Thrones. So being out in nature is much more interesting than TV. I think in some ways I understood that the construction was not going to do more to any good or the landscape any good, but painting it and being excited about painting it and sharing that enthusiasm with people outdoors sort of changes the discussion.

How do you think paintings compare with photography?

It’s very different. A photograph is usually a fraction of a second and it documents where everything was at that exact moment. Paintings take a long time, and are about experience over a period of time and moving things around in the picture to talk about experience. It’s a generalization – there are definitely photographs with long exposures and that have been manipulated in many ways, but I think that photography is more about documentating and painting is more about contemplation.

How did the fact that you have seen that destruction first hand affect what you paint?

Well it has affected me in complex ways. When we were kids, the university came in and destroyed what we were sacred ground—these fields of wildflowers, eucalyptus forests, and vernal pools full of frogs. And the crowds of people outdoors sort of stripped the beaches clean of crabs and abalone and mussels. As kids we would try to save our beloved landscape. We snuck out at night and moved surveying stakes around, hid tools and buried supplies. Once we got a tractor started and drove it over the cliff. We were very young and naive. Later I came to realize that painting, celebrating the landscape by painting it, not in a sentimental way, but in a truthful way, helps preserve it.

Anything else you would like to say about CCS?

Early on I was surprised that there wasn’t a line down the street of students wanting to enroll here. After a while I realized that not many undergraduate students are sure about what they want to do in their life. A few do, and they quickly understand that CCS is a place for them and they want to enroll there. This I relate to those students because I was one of them.

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When Norman Badler (Mathematics ’70) arrived at the beautiful UCSB campus in fall 1966, he, like so many first year students before and after him, was unsure about what classes he needed to take. Badler made friends in the dorms and they helped him decide on a schedule—it was the story of a typical first year college student. One of his new friends, Virginia, told him about the College of Creative Studies (CCS), a new experimental learning program set to commence on the campus the following year. Badler had been involved in experimental math programs since elementary school so he jumped at the opportunity to apply to CCS. He was admitted and a year later was part of the inaugural class of CCS.

In 1967, Marvin Mudrick, the founding provost, welcomed Badler and the original cohort of 50 CCS students to his educational experiment. The College offered a hands-on learning environment to students in seven disciplines—Art, Biology, Chemistry, Literature, Mathematics, Music Composition and Physics—all still offered, in some form, today. A few of these first students recently shared their experiences of the early days of the College and what they have been up to since graduation.

Fresh and Unconventional

Students were attracted to the College for a variety of reasons. Some wanted to experiment and challenge the status quo. John Nava (CCS Art ’69) recalled the reason he chose to join the inaugural class, “It was the sixties – it was unconventional, experimental, non-institutional, ‘creative,’ anti-establishment.” But this was not the case for all of Nava’s classmates. Others joined to immerse themselves in their field of study and to receive a more personal level of instruction. Jan Cornish, a Mathematics major, simply remembered, that she “was excited to be able to concentrate in studying mathematics.” David Holt (CCS Biology ’71) shared this sentiment, “The College of Creative Studies gave me a chance to combine my interests in biology and art.”

The original CCS building was a temporary U.S. Marine barracks building, which Ethlie Vare (Literature ’71) described as a “Quonset hut.” The building was left...
over from when the campus was a military base during World War II. Gerald Edgar (Mathematics ’70) characterized the original building as “a large, but ancient, building […] that had) space for many things, such as a dance studio, an art studio, classrooms, and of course the College office.” When the original CCS building was demolished to make way for the expansion of the UCSB Library in 1975, the College moved to the present site, a (slightly) larger and (slightly) less temporary former U.S. Marine barracks building.

Many of the classes, while small, did not fit within the confines of the building. “Classes were tiny and often held outside,” remembered Vare. Students were encouraged to challenge themselves academically. “Some teachers had you attend their classes for UCSB graduate students,” said Holt. “Others taught classes just for CCS students and some had individual sessions with CCS students. It was exciting and fun.”

Marvin Mudrick, the founder of the College, had a profound impact on many of these students. Ross Robins (Literature ’70) described how he thought of Mudrick while he was a student: “I was awestruck by him because he was such a powerful and original thinker, and so effortlessly articulate in conversation.” Mudrick truly believed in students’ ability to create new knowledge. He did not let traditional norms impede what he thought would help students be creative. “His greatest contribution, in my opinion, was his belief that creativity was not isolated by discipline but arose as well through exposure to a variety of creative talents,” said Badler.

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Daniel Farkas (Mathematics ’70) characterized the original building as “a large, but ancient, building … that had) space for many things, such as a dance studio, an art studio, classrooms, and of course the College office.” When the original CCS building was demolished to make way for the expansion of the UCSB Library in 1975, the College moved to the present site, a (slightly) larger and (slightly) less temporary former U.S. Marine barracks building.

Many of the classes, while small, did not fit within the confines of the building. “Classes were tiny and often held outside,” remembered Vare. Students were encouraged to challenge themselves academically. “Some teachers had you attend their classes for UCSB graduate students,” said Holt. “Others taught classes just for CCS students and some had individual sessions with CCS students. It was exciting and fun.”

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Straight From Them

Students give insight on the CCS experience

Chloe Avery, Class of 2018
CCS Mathematics

I adore being a part of the College of Creative Studies because it is an environment where everyone around you is excited about what they are doing, whether or not it is the same thing that brings you excitement. CCS really is a community and we all support each other. In mathematics in particular, the classes are designed to be challenging. But rather than being a competitive environment, people are encouraged to work together and learn from each other. Mathematics really is a collaborative subject, so having the space and support to do that is one of the amazing things about CCS and helps create this sense of community.

In CCS, I have also been gifted with these amazing professors who care deeply about my education and actually get to help me shape it by way of an advising meeting every quarter. This has allowed me the freedom to take courses at a pace where I can quench my thirst for knowledge without getting in over my head.

My ultimate goal is to get a PhD in math and CCS has been invaluable in preparing me for graduate school. Because I am in CCS, I have been able to do research for all three summers that I’ve been here and take a bunch of graduate math classes. One of the unique things about CCS is that it provides you with rigorous courses, but is not self-contained in that we are encouraged to use the resources of the rest of the university such as the fact that we have a great graduate school. CCS has given me the freedom to learn as much math as I wanted, a community of passionate people, and the preparation for the next step in my education.

Juan Silverio, Class of 2018
CCS Art

Ever since transferring to the CCS Book Arts program, my life has definitely moved about so much more fluidly. I think one of the benefits of being in the program has been being able to navigate different spaces within the university a lot more dynamically. CCS has pretty high expectations and nurtures students to be ambitious and self-motivated, and I think I exemplify that as best as I can. Ultimately as an artist, student, and scholar CCS has opened new gateways and connections to faculty and to departments that have allowed me to be a lot more flexible and more interdisciplinary.

I think the connections with faculty and the small class sizes are some of the best things about the program. A lot of the classes I’ve taken through this college have been a lot more intimate and beneficial because I have someone who can keep me accountable, someone who is really persistent, who wants to check up on me and cares about me. Having advisors follow up on the work I’m doing in and out of the classroom has been really beneficial to my growth as a scholar and artist.
Although he won a 2017 Daytime Emmy for his song “I’m Not Very Nice” on the television show The 7D and toured the world as the lead singer for the band Nerf Herder, UCSB alumnus Parry Gripp (CCS Literature ’92) doesn’t think of himself as a good musician—at least in the formal sense. But this is not a fair assessment: his music and his career are anything but formal.

A native of Santa Barbara, Gripp entered UCSB after graduating from Dos Pueblos High School and felt lost during his first few quarters as an undeclared freshman. “I was really failing and floundering,” explained Gripp. “I was just taking general education classes and had no idea what I was going to do.” He had the inkling that he would get into the sciences, but he was not passionate about any of the classes he was taking. That all changed when he took a general education English class from Bob Blaisdell, Blaisdell, a CCS Literature faculty member, noticed Gripp’s writing and invited him to apply to CCS. “He basically grabbed me and picked me up and took me around town, you were in a band. There were a ton of really good music scene,” he said. “If you were just a guy walking down the street, you noticed Gripp’s writing and invited him to apply to CCS. That all changed — he was great.”

He decided to CCS and had a strong personality. Gripp summed it up succinctly, “he was great.”

Champagne in Limousines

While at UCSB, Gripp began to dabble in music when he started taking CCS Music Composition classes. At the time, Blaisdell was also the Arts Editor for the Santa Barbara Independent. Knowing Gripp was interested in music, Blaisdell, who at the time needed a music writer, asked him to start covering local concerts and bands. Gripp began to many of the Santa Barbara musicians and bands through his writing gig with the Santa Barbara Independent and eventually started playing in some of the bands as well. “It was the mid-90’s and there was a really good music scene,” he said. “If you were just a guy around town, you were in a band. There were a ton of bands and everyone was in one.”

Once at CCS, Gripp began to thrive. He blossomed with the independence and flexibility that the College offers. He recalled fondly that there was “a freedom to do what you wanted to do,” and was encouraged to explore opportunities that may have been frowned upon in other, more scripted majors. He went on, “I really didn’t fit in anywhere else.”

One of Gripp’s most memorable experiences at CCS was taking a writing class from Marvin Mudrick, CCS founder and first Provost, during Mudrick’s last year teaching at UCSB. “To us, he was a saint of the place and everyone was always talking about him,” said Gripp, “so it was neat that I got to take one of his last classes.” Gripp remembers Mudrick as an intense person who was passionate about CCS and had a strong personality. Gripp summed it up succinctly, “he was great.”

Nerf Herder began with little expectations of mainstream success. “We were just a local band at the time,” recalled Gripp, “It was just a fun thing for us to do and we never in a million years expected to be signed and tour.” But that is exactly what happened. They were signed to a major record label and were touring all over the world after one of their songs titled “Van Halen” hit the national music scene in 1996. Once the song got a lot of playtime on MTV, the rest was history. They soon were being flown around the globe, drinking expensive champagne in limousines and meeting famous people. Nerf Herder even wrote and performed the theme song for the popular television series Buffy the Vampire Slayer. They had made it — or at least that is what Gripp thought.

Reinvention

Jump to 2003: The band had retired and Gripp realized this part of his life was over—‘he wasn’t drinking champagne in limos anymore.” I was like, “Woah, maybe I haven’t made it.” He felt incredibly lucky for what he had experienced — most bands never reach that level of success — but he realized he had to reinvent his career.

Surprisingly, his career reinvention was not something he did consciously. He saw himself as a serious musician and did not want to be thought of as anything else. While at CCS, Gripp played a song he wrote for one of his CCS classmates and when he finished the song his classmate said, “You should write music for kids.” In the moment, this upset Gripp, who wanted to write and perform rock songs for people like himself. “I was so angry because I thought I was cool and I wanted to write cool music for adults,” he said. He did not know it at the time, but his classmate was right.

Gripp’s music after Nerf Herder began to morph; instead of rock n’ roll, he was creating jingles simply to entertain himself. Gripp thought it would be fun to put videos of these songs on Youtube. Over time the videos became very popular, accumulating millions of views. As of this writing, his songs “Nom Nom Nom Nom Nom” and “Baby Monkey (Going Backwards on a Pig)” have about 30 million and 25 million views, respectively. Although children weren’t his intended audience, those who found the videos could not get enough of the tunes. Slowly, people in Hollywood began recognizing the Santa Barbara’s originality and he began getting advertising and television gigs. His songs have been featured in Amazon Echo commercials and he has written jingles for restaurant chains. Gripp recounted an example of how he gets gigs, “A Disney executive really liked my videos. He thought they were funny, so he brought me in to see what types of ideas I had. I went to talk to the executive and he had me try out for different things and I ended up getting hired for the show The 7D.”

After his career transitioned in a new direction, Gripp realized that his former CCS classmate who encouraged him to write songs for kids was right all along. “It became really obvious that she was right because kids really liked the songs,” he admitted. Having the flexibility to go wherever his career took him, even if it was not his first choice, and not sticking too one type of music enabled Gripp to recreate his career. “You have to be open-minded to what works,” he stated. “I definitely have a niche, but it is not what I would have expected.”

Naiveté Leads to an Emmy

Although he had worked on many television series over his career, The 7D was Gripp’s first time being a part of the creative process of a show. While on the show, the writers would leave gaps in the script for Gripp to fill with a song — or that is how it was supposed to work. Not knowing this process, Gripp naively wrote a variety of extra songs thinking that maybe the show runners would
When I was an Undergrad...

“My undergraduate years were over a half-century ago, yet I still remember them vividly. I was what is now called a first-generation college student, and I was initially overwhelmed by the thought of pursuing higher education. A high school teacher tried to talk me into applying to Harvard, where she was sure my academic record and her family connections would get me in, but I couldn’t imagine it. Instead, I attended a small liberal arts college in Michigan. My immediate appreciation for CCS grew out of that early experience of being part of a small academic/living community. In those days and in that place, community also meant dressing for dinner, obligatory chapel attendance, and an 11 p.m. curfew for the women!—all of which I found less than appealing. Somehow, I screwed up enough courage to expand my horizons by flying to New York (my first flight) and sailing to France, where I spent my junior year. The Civil Rights movement was underway, and the French and international students were keenly interested in discussing it. That fall, President Kennedy was assassinated. I remember being glued to the television in the student lounge and being impressed by how well Jacqueline Kennedy spoke French. While I had a good undergraduate education, undergraduate research was an alien concept back then. In fact, I really didn’t know what research was until I attended grad school. In that regard, CCS students have a leg up on undergrads of my generation.” —Bill Ashby, former CCS Provost (Alma College)
A class where Arts and Humanities students collaborate. A class dating back to the beginning of CCS. This is Walking Biology.

Designed around beloved UCSB and CCS Professor Beatrice Sweeney's (1914-1989) informal chats with non-science students, this field class is an opportunity for CCS students to learn by doing. Although it has been around for nearly five decades, it has seen only three instructors —Sweeney, Christina Sandoval and Claudia Tyler (the current instructor). While the general structure of the class has remained, each faculty member evolved the content around personal and professional experiences.

Informal Chats
Walking Biology can trace its origins back to the first days of the College. Hank Pitcher (CCS Art Faculty) was an Art student keenly interested in learning about subjects outside of his discipline. Before it was an official course, he would go to Sweeney's office to ask her a variety of ecological and biological questions. "It was really informal," remembered Pitcher. "I used to go to her office to ask her questions about this or that because it was so interesting to talk to her. Then, in order to explain something she would say, 'Well let's go walk down to the beach.'" The class evolved from this idea of students walking around campus and picking Sweeney's brain about the surroundings. Pitcher recalled: "It really started with curious Art students going and asking [Sweeney] questions."

Sweeney was passionate about Biology from as early as she could remember. However, since she did not take a formal Biology class until she was a freshman at Smith's College, she lived her "early scientific life entirely out of school," she said in her 1987 autobiography. This included identifying and recording flowers around her New England home and attempting to create a bog in her backyard. Sweeney was revolutionary for women in science. Her college botany professors, she explained, “were fine women, but they were all spinsters without private lives.” She vowed to be different—to be a scientist and have a family. "After all, men in science did not have to give up family life." Over her career, Sweeney published 139 scientific manuscripts and was a champion not only for women in science, but for any young person who had an interest.

Sweeney was also committed to teaching undergraduates at CCS. She took an interest in every student that came to talk to her. "She always had a smile on her face [...] it wasn't that she made you feel important, it was the excitement of what is possible. I would just go to her office and talk to her because it was so interesting," recalled Pitcher fondly. "She seemed to be interested in what I had to say, too. She was just so remarkably open and it was just fun for her to talk about it with us." The biologist enjoyed chatting with students across disciplines. "Their questions enlivened discussions and their ideas were an inspiration," Sweeney wrote of CCS students in her autobiography.

Modern Iteration
Sweeney became emerita in 1982 continued to teach the class until she passed in 1989. The reigns were then passed to Sandoval who taught the class for about five years. She then left the College to become the full-time Reserve Director at the University of California Coal Oil Point Reserve.

Since Walking Biology is quintessential CCS, Tyler was recruited to CCS based on her enthusiasm for the class when Sandoval left the College. "I was initially hired to do Walking Biology," said Tyler. "We did not have the CCS Introductory Biology series yet, [...] so they needed somebody to teach Walking Biology and then a couple other classes." Once she was hired, Tyler was able to use her 1
training as a community ecologist to evolve the class even further.

Tyler’s iteration of Walking Biology explores the UCSB campus as well as the greater Santa Barbara area. “I absolutely wanted to talk about, in general, ecological principles and evolutionary concepts,” said Tyler. “I really wanted to get students to see the diversity of habitat types that we have in this region.” The class is offered once a year and, although there are some places she visits every year, Tyler’s goal is to see a variety of places in our beautiful county. She always takes students down to the Carpinteria Bluffs to see the harbor seals and to Coal Oil Point; sometimes they visit Knapp’s Castle, Lizard’s Mouth, or Arroyo Hondo Preserve.

“Sometimes the biology students are the ones that are a little bit tougher. It is really easy [for them] to hear something and go, ‘Oh yeah, I know that, I’ve heard that before,’ and then not listen. That is how they miss stuff.”

The class, like all CCS classes, is not taken for a grade, but rather for variable units, allowing Tyler to focus on concepts rather than memorization. “It gives students a little bit of room to breathe and to absorb a little bit more of the patterns.” Students are required to write journal entries each week, asked to identify two new species, and encouraged to draw sketches and write haikus. Some even bring out watercolors and paint. The only other requirement is attendance and a group final at the end of the quarter. “Maybe one more requirement,” Tyler joked, “is they all have to be able to identify poison oak!”

The first-annual RACA-CON, held on November 4, 2017, at the beautiful seaside Loma Pelona Center on the UC Santa Barbara campus, featured 33 student talks, 55 research posters and pieces of original work, and two alumni keynote speakers. Each of the almost 300 guests listened to talks and viewed posters from all eight CCS majors—Art, Biology, Chemistry/Biochemistry, Computing, Mathematics, Music Composition, Physics, and Writing & Literature.

Conference planning started last Spring and although most academic conferences focus on one topic, the RACA-CON organizing committee set out to establish an interdisciplinary conference to bring together and celebrate all majors. “From the beginning, we wanted to highlight talks and posters from both the sciences and the arts,” said Tengiz Bibilashvili, CCS Physics faculty and member of the RACA-CON Committee. “The interdisciplinary sections were intentional and our goal always was to organize the discussions that already happen every day between students in the College.”

RACA-CON opened and closed with alumni keynote talks by Alex Filippenko (CCS Physics ’79) and Parry Gripp (CCS Literature ’92), respectively. Both inspiring lectures demonstrated how the non-traditional CCS education can, for the right student, provide a path for success. Filippenko, a Miller Senior Fellow in the Miller Institute for Basic Research in Science at UC Berkeley (UCB), spoke about how he turned his childhood passion for science into a career as an astrophysicist. Filippenko, who has won the most prestigious teaching awards at UCB and is one of the most cited astronomers in the world, shared anecdotes about his time at CCS, including a story about how he published his first paper while a CCS student. Gripp is an Emmy-winning songwriter and recording artist. His talk followed a similar theme—how CCS helped him get to where he is today. While describing how he reinvented his career from being the lead singer of the 90’s rock band Nerf Herder to winning an Emmy for a children’s television show, he shared a number of videos from his YouTube channel, which has over 450,000 subscribers and 200 million views.

From a discussion on the discovery of a kilonova to readings of an unpublished novel to explaining convex binary code, each of the 33 student talks was the culmination of many hours of hard work by both the students and their faculty and research mentors. CCS Art student Bailey Clark gave a talk on her fellowship at the Penland School of Crafts,
Coy, a CCS Math student who spoke on her research in physics terms meant in my presentation,” said Phoebe. “I made sure to explain what all of the math and science term meant so that anyone could follow along with the talk.”

Hence, the students were instructed to organize and present their talks at a level appropriate for a general audience. “This was not lost on the students. “[Speaking to a general audience] is an important skill to develop,” Inlow pointed out. “In order for any scientific research project to be successful, it must be delivered in a way that will make it seem important to the people as it is to the scientists!”

Since the event coincided with UCSB’s annual Parents Weekend, many CCS parents were in attendance to see the research and original works their students have been working on while at CCS. Although April and Brian O’Dea attended to see their son Nick, their son encouraged them to come regardless. “Nick wanted us to have a chance to learn about the projects being done by CCS students and to come regardless. “Nick wanted us to have a chance to learn about the projects being done by CCS students and to come regardless. "Nick wanted us to have a chance to learn about the projects being done by CCS students and to come regardless. "Nick wanted us to have a chance to learn about the projects being done by CCS students and to come regardless. "Nick wanted us to have a chance to learn about the projects being done by CCS students and to come regardless. "Nick wanted us to have a chance to learn about the projects being done by CCS students and to come regardless. "Nick wanted us to have a chance to learn about the projects being done by CCS students and to come regardless. "Nick wanted us to have a chance to learn about the projects being done by CCS students and to come regardless. "Nick wanted us to have a chance to learn about the projects being done by CCS students and to come regardless. "Nick wanted us to have a chance to learn about the projects being done by CCS students and to come regardless. "Nick wanted us to have a chance to learn about the projects being done by CCS students and to come regardless. "Nick wanted us to have a chance to learn about the projects being done by CCS students and to come regardless. "Nick wanted us to have a chance to learn about the projects being done by CCS students and to come regardless. "Nick wanted us to have a chance to learn about the projects being done by CCS students and to come regardless. "Nick wanted us to have a chance to learn about the projects being done by CCS students and to come regardless. "Nick wanted us to have a chance to learn about the projects being done by CCS students and to come regardless. "Nick wanted us to have a chance to learn about the projects being done by CCS students and to come regardless. "Nick wanted us to have a chance to learn about the projects being done by CCS students and to come regardless. "Nick wanted us to have a chance to learn about the projects being done by CCS students and to come regardless. "Nick wanted us to have a chance to learn about the projects being done by CCS students and to come regardless. "Nick wanted us to have a chance to learn about the projects being done by CCS students and to come regardless. "Nick wanted us to have a chance to learn about the projects being done by CCS students and to come regardless. “I then discovered a school called College of Creative Studies at UCSB. Turns out that its facilities happen to sit right next to a beautiful right hand point break. This is a great thing if you’re a surfer, which I am. So I got better at art, surfing and socializing. When I arrived at Art Center College of Design, it was like coming home. Maybe it was the back lit Helvetica signage? Or the Craig Elwood bridge-building? In any case, I was hooked, and spent the next three sleepless years pouring everything I had into learning design.

Throughout my career I’ve been called a designer, art director, creative director... I like to tell people that I help brands come to life, that I help companies express the very best of themselves, to be truly seen and heard by the people who matter most. That a magical mix of art and commerce can create stories full of distinction, intrigue and attraction. That great design can be the difference maker for a company.

CCS is honored to showcase 50 individuals and activities during our 50th Anniversary to share our rich history and amazing people responsible for making our unconventional College possible!

"My teaching was focused on presenting the fundamental principles of physics clearly and rigorously. Each course was accompanied by a weekly two hour long problem-solving seminar, where the students would present and defend solutions to the problems assigned for the week. At times it amazed me to see that some students who started out having difficulties caught up with the pace and level of the class over time and were able to present their solutions clearly and to answer questions that I put to them. At other times I actually learned from the students because they presented solutions which were highly innovative and elegant, solutions that I hadn’t thought of. Teaching the CCS students presented me with a great opportunity to learn physics in greater depth because I would have to answer their insightful questions and to prepare classes really well."

Francesc Roig, CCS Physics Faculty

See all of the 50 for 50 showcases: CCS.UCSB.EDU/50
How Hard Can It Be?

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Earlier this year, CCS alumna and MacArthur “Genius” Fellow Angela Belcher (Biology ’91) returned to CCS under The Transdisciplinary Fund for a workshop with CCS students. Belcher talked about a range of topics, including how the College impacted her PhD and career. Below is an edited version of the conversation.

How has CCS impacted your life?

I would say the best career decision I ever made was Creative Studies. It has meant so much to me in terms of how I think about science—think about the world, and my career, in general.

If you ask me what I think is the single most important part of my success, I’ll say College of Creative Studies, and the reason is because it taught me very early on that you have the power to set your own way of thinking, that there are no boundaries between disciplines, and that you can have a really, really positive relationship with your professors and your mentors where you’re treated more as a person and colleague. I give at least one talk a week at a university or someplace, and they always introduce me and say, “She has a degree from the College of Creative Studies, and now you’ll see why when she starts to speak.” I’ve always been so proud of that, because it’s always an interesting talking point. The audience goes “Wow, what’s Creative Studies? How did you do it?” I always tell the story of having the ability to write my own education and figure out what I think is the most important thing for my learning and my life—that’s been really important for me.

Why did you choose to come to CCS? How did you find out about the College?

I heard about this idea of being able to “design your own major” and this sounded really good to me because I don’t like to follow rules. So fewer rules was an attraction. Part of it was through field research out on Santa Cruz Island when I met Adrian Wenner, the CCS Provost at the time, and he said, “Sure, you can come here.” And he had me transferred to UCSB. And the rest is history. I guess he kind of saved my life by inviting me to CCS.

What was your favorite aspect of CCS?

I was a student in biology, and I was really interested in the origin of life since about middle school, how you got from […] small molecules to cells in humans. And there’s not really a major for that, and so I was excited to be in the College of Creative Studies where I could do chemistry and biology and extra physics. I was also interested in studying geology, and I was really interested in getting to understand those ideas.

And the thing that I loved the most at CCS was I took graduate-level biochemistry. I was the first undergraduate to ever take the class. They said, “You can’t take this class. You don’t have any of the prerequisites.” The professor called the provost and he said, “Yes, she can.” I sat in the front row and taped the lectures. It was so hard, having not had undergraduate thermodynamics yet. It changed—it really changed—my life, because it was in that class that I fell in love with molecules. I really fell in love with large molecules, and thought this is what I really want to do. I want to study molecules. And what the interfaces of those molecules look like, with maybe the rocks and formations, things that led to the beginning of life. I took the advantage of working in biology, physics, chemistry, and ecology labs here and during my fifth year my advisor said, “You know, there comes a time when every mommy bird has to kick a baby bird out of the nest, and your time has come.” So they made me graduate. I even said, “Well, this is the best job I’ve ever had.” And he said, “It’s not a job you know—this is school!”

Where and what did you study as a graduate student?

My PhD work is my connection to the origin of life and the love of molecules. You have probably seen the red abalone that comes right from the coast. Its shell is mostly inorganic material. It’s basically made out of calcium carbonate, but it’s 2% by mass organic, 2% by mass protein, yet it’s 3,000 times tougher than its geologic counterpart. The organisms make these beautiful nanomaterials that are encoded by their DNA, and they make these exquisite structures. I spent my PhD trying to understand how these structures were made. But wait—what does that have to do with the origin of life?

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Well, it was about 500 million years ago, during the Cambrian geologic time period, the explosion of life, that organisms started making hard materials. For billions of years before that, things were soft and squishy. Photosynthesis and other complex systems evolved, but organisms couldn’t make calcium carbonate—something hard. Well, the reason they started learning to make calcium carbonate is the ocean changed. There’s increased calcium, iron, and silicon in the environment, and organisms adapted to it. They took proteins they already had, and they started pushing them outwards and grabbing onto these toxic ions, like iron and silicon and calcium, and they started building structures. They repurposed these proteins, to build structures. And then, from there, we had teeth, and we had bones, and glassy silica-based structures. I wanted to figure out how to use proteins to make better, smarter products, like batteries and semiconductors.

I was naïve, and I didn’t expect pushback. That’s one thing I’d like to tell students—that you’re in a really special circumstance here [in CCS at UCSB]. Everyone is supportive, and it’s not always going to be the case once you leave. Or even in another department. You may get a little more pushback outside of Creative Studies, or later on. But that doesn’t mean that it changes the way that you look at the world... For example, the technology we built to image cancer cells deep inside the body was based on technology we built for solar cells, and we learned some interesting things about solar cells, and said, “Well, let’s apply this to cancer imaging.” And, to me, it’s a normal step because I’m a materials scientist, so everything’s a material—everything has a material solution. Cancer cells deep inside the body... for solar cells, and solar cells, and I don’t look that different to me from the materials perspective. People gave me a really hard time at first, saying “You don’t work on cancer.” Again, I just say, “I know, but I can learn. You know, I know I can learn it.” That’s CCS.

Anything else you would like to say about CCS?
The thing that I take away most from my Creative Studies time is all the research experience that I had. I didn’t specialize. I got as many different experiences that I could have. And the other thing that I take away that was very, very valuable, the most empowering thing was of someone saying that I was in charge of what I thought was most important about my education. Take advantage of that, and embrace that spirit.

Grandmother from Syria
By Maya Theresa Garabedian
Soft, young woman, the sun that browns your body and dries your apricots and your laundry, has brought you to the window sill of a stuffy home, and filled your ears with the downstairs neighbor’s screams, her brown face entangled in the branches of the man she had to marry. You sit in the sun and turn the radio louder, even when you don’t feel like music.

Soft, young woman, the sun that browns your body keeps you at the window sill, the echo of each slap, each dish breaking with the force of a falling tree, the man, the shop owner opposing the tenacious roots of the woman, noisy neighbor, doesn’t bother you, you’ve learned you only get a good beating when you’re bad.

My heart holds your stories, I see your strength, hear your rich, coarse voice, bruised pomegranate, sweet and sure like your neighbor, the sun, the music, like your children and their children, like me.
CCS is proud to announce the launch of The Create Fund during its 50th anniversary.

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Because radical curiosity and passion matter, imagine a society of citizens who radiate radical curiosity and passion. These people demonstrate the confidence, persistence, and risk-taking necessary to advance knowledge and produce profound research and creative works. This is the inspiration behind CCS, and The Create Fund contributes to this vision.

CCS is known for its signature undergraduate experience: an experiential learning model embedded within a tier one research university. Project-based learning and undergraduate research are considered superlative pedagogy, and CCS has been putting it into practice for 50 years! Students enjoy one-on-one faculty mentoring that leads them to investigate questions, take risks, create new possibilities, and make significant contributions as junior colleagues and creators in their areas of expertise.

CCS students create at UCSB as a core learning experience. With support from our dedicated philanthropic investors, over 540 students have received funding since 1985 to participate in the College’s Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship Program. We seek to build on this momentum and launched The Create Fund to:
• Make available summer fellowships to students in all 8 majors (traditionally available only to STEM majors);
• Expand fellowship opportunities to include creative works and entrepreneurship-focused endeavors in addition to research; and
• Build on the College’s success in which CCS scholars and creators are guided by exceptional UCSB faculty.

The combined practice of education and experience results in alumni who go on to shape society and the future.

Why Create?

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