

Bloomfield Messenger



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Priceless 12 pages

BACK TO UHART - AND THESE STUDENTS MAY SURPRISE YOU!



By Meg Aldrich

Board Member, Presidents' College
When Sten Caspersson retired as a nuclear engineering project manager, he knew he wanted the next stage to be as busy and fulfilling as his work life. The Bloomfield resident wanted to remain both intellectually and socially engaged.

When Caspersson took his first course with Presidents' College—the lifelong learning program at the University of Hartford—he found just what he was looking for. Taught by professors and community experts, the Presidents' College offers lectures and short non-credit courses to adults of all ages. Topics include the arts, history, current events, literature, science, and—his favorite—engineering.

A new Presidents' College semester is about to begin, with a Sept. 14 kick-off reception and course registration now open. Course and lecture options can be seen at Hartford.edu/pc.

"I've always been really into the sciences, so the Presidents' College courses on topics like space travel, artificial intelligence, and the Webb Telescope

Photos: (above) Sten Caspersson (left) and two other students chat after class with Professor Paul Slaboch (second from left) (right) Professor Paul Slaboch appreciates the lively engagement and wealth of experiences that older learners bring to class.

Photos provided by Meg Aldrich

are favorites," noted Caspersson. "However, I enjoy sampling courses in areas less familiar to me. With no tests or grades, Presidents' College is all that I loved about college with none of the pressure."

According to the Transamerica Center for Retirement Research, 10,000 Baby Boomers turn 65 every day. Caspersson is part of this large demographic that's reported to be more affluent, healthier, and expected to live longer than predecessors. Like so much else they've redefined, the Baby Boomers are reshaping retirement. And with 40 percent of Connecticut's population over the age of 50, according to the CT Data Collaborative, their impact is growing.

The Presidents' College was



started over 30 years ago by then-university President Humphrey Tonkin. Tonkin himself taught the first courses. Since that time, the program has grown tremendously, with a typical semester offering 15 courses and eight lectures. As one of the most extensive lifelong learning programs in New England, the Presidents' College is distinguished by its high-quality offerings and breadth of its course portfolio. Attendees can stay current on the latest in cases being argued before the Supreme Court, climate change research, or political developments in the U.S. or Ukraine.

"I love that the Presidents'

College takes learning beyond the classroom," said Bloomfield resident Marcia Cornell. "I've attended classes in opera, theater, dance, drama, and musicals, and then joined classmates at the Bushnell, Hartford Stage, The Hartt School, and Opera Connecticut for live performances. Plus we get to learn from some of the best in their fields. Having the chance to watch dance Professor Stephen Pier conduct a dance recital or renowned saxophonist Javon Jackson demonstrate the nuances of Charlie Parker's

described some of the issues and constraints he and his engineering team faced in making astronaut suits for the Apollo 11 Mission. Moments like that remind me of the incredible wisdom that these remarkable students bring to the classroom."

Classroom discussions spill over into coffee or lunch afterwards, and friendships bloom. Students in one of the literature courses found such a sense of camaraderie that they started a monthly book group that's still ongoing. The program is launching its own lunch series this year called the Presidents' College Café.

Courses are short, two or three sessions, so that students can work them in around travel and volunteer commitments. Each class session lasts 1.5 hours during the day or early evening hours. There is no membership fee, and students pay a modest fee for each course with free permitted parking.

The Presidents' College partners with other organizations, on and off campus, to bring authors and speakers to campus. The program introduced a Silent Book Club, aka "Happy Hour for Introverts," inviting attendees to show up with a book, mingle and enjoy wine and cheese for 30 minutes, then read silently for an hour. The last half hour is for readers to chat with other attendees about books (or anything else) if they choose.

For more information on the lifelong learning program and fall semester courses, visit www.hartford.edu/pc. Email pcollege@hartford.edu or call 860-768-4495 with questions or to be added to the Presidents' College mailing list.



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