Why not?
The importance of questions

New boomer-U venture promises an intriguing future for retirees, and a brighter one for us all

Short courses and lectures, long friendships

Doggie Dr. Freud

Trading hoops for books
A wonder-full life

Why is the sky blue?
When will it be possible for human beings to fly?
Is there life in outer space?

From the time we are old enough to pepper our parents with that persistent, one-word powerhouse of a question—why?—to our ever-more-sophisticated adult musings, humans look at life and wonder.

Sometimes the most intriguing turning points in our careers, or indeed our lives, come from forming questions and starting on the search for answers.

This drive to discover, the heart of the University community, is witnessed through the public’s sometimes light-hearted (Who put the bop in the bop-she-bop?) and sometimes deadly serious (Is peace in the Middle East and surrounding nations really possible?) questions submitted to the new Driven to Discover Web site. The U’s faculty counter with thought-provoking responses (see the back cover for an example).

Within the U, the College of Continuing Education has always listened to local adults’ individual questions—or continuing education needs—and helped them find answers.

This year will be dramatically different.

This year we’ll be asking some important questions, too. This year we’ll be asking the public – why-askers of all ages, but especially Boomers – to lend their expertise to a new movement called “LearningLife” (page two).

The initial questions we know: What would you do for a bliss career? How could you contribute to a better world? What can the University provide to help you find the answers?

From there, the possibilities for more questions are endless. From there, the possibility for bold leading-edge change is attainable. Our goal, stated in the format every “Jeopardy” fan loves: How can we help society thrive as it ages?

The answers will mean new offerings to complement those that have helped individuals follow their inspiration all along. You’ll see that CCE Current’s pages are packed with examples of folks who must have, in their tender years, evoked in their parents a conflicting sense of fear and pride every time they were determined to get at the root of an issue.

Fear not, we could have told those parents. However, answers are nice. But questions are always better for our sense of wonder.

And a society of curious minds makes life even more wonder-full.

Yours,

Dr. Mary L. Nichols
Dean, College of Continuing Education
University of Minnesota

From the time we are old enough to pepper our parents with that persistent, one-word powerhouse of a question—why?—to our ever-more-sophisticated adult musings, humans look at life and wonder.
In the spirit of asking questions and seeking answers, what follows is an overview of the College's work to provide adults with unique and inspiring educational opportunities.

Q: What is the College of Continuing Education?

A: For those who want to make a change but aren't sure of the next step, it is career and lifework counseling.

A: For students who need a "custom blend" of knowledge, it is bachelor's and master's degrees that allow students to draw on curriculum across the U's many colleges.

A: For those with more traditional career aspirations in existing and burgeoning industries, it is comprehensive credit certificates and "applied" bachelor's degrees.

A: For those "testing the waters" before applying to a degree, it is access to evening and distance learning credit courses taught by the U's distinguished faculty.

A: For professionals seeking career advancement, it is intensive short courses, noncredit certificates, conferences, and seminars.

A: For engaged citizens, it is the opportunity to connect with the U's, and the world's, leading minds through enrichment events such as Great Conversations and Headliners and short courses such as Split Rock Arts Program and Compleat Scholar.

Q: What happened this year?:

A:

July 2006
- The College begins to administer the U's English as a Second Language Center (previously CLA Minnesota English Program) and seeks to expand its capacity.

- The new Multidisciplinary Studies Program starts, giving adults a straightforward path to taking evening courses to finish degrees started years earlier.

- The Split Rock Arts Program welcomes renowned master artists and writers from around the world to lead weekend workshops. Workshops continue through the summer.

- Curiosity Camp entices adults into taking a much-needed vacation day and spending it at the U learning about intriguing topics in energizing full-day learning adventures. Camps continue through the summer.

September 2006
- The College partners with the State of Minnesota to kick off an Emerging Leaders Institute. This comprehensive, seven-month program empowers the generation that will fill the void left by retiring Boomers.

- After extensive research, the College launches 11 new professional development certificates in management and human resources.

October 2006
- A new series, aptly titled Headliners, kicks off. The monthly forums pair University experts and the public as faculty share their research related to the day’s most intriguing news stories. The inaugural presenter, professor Michael Barnett (Humphrey Institute), discusses peace in the Middle East.

November 2006
- At Headliners, John T. Riedl (Institute of Technology) explores the Social Web. His teenage son provides tech support.

- The College hosts the second in its series of community continuing education fairs bringing U advisers out to a community location (here, the Richfield Borders) to answer adults' questions about going back to school.

December 2006
- Meri T. Firpo (Medical School) explains the science behind the political debate over research on human embryonic stem cells at the December Headliners.

January 2007
- David Tilman (College of Biological Sciences) explains the next generation of biofuels—prairie plants—at the January Headliners.

February 2007
- Abdi Samatar (College of Liberal Arts) covers the sobering topic of the conflict in Somalia at the February Headliners.

- The obesity epidemic takes center stage at the season's first Great Conversations event. Allen Levine, dean of the U's College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences, joins former Food and Drug Administration commissioner David Kessler for a public discussion.

- Prospective students sign up for a chance to hear Trent Tucker's story. The former Gopher and NBA champion returned to the classroom after a 23-year hiatus and designed a College of Continuing Education degree around his unique goals. Event attendees also sit in on a career workshop and meet with program staff at an open-house-style continuing education fair.

March 2007
- The U's Robert Elde (Dean of the College of Biological Sciences) invites education visionary Larry Rosenstock, founder of California's High Tech High, to discuss the future of public education at the March Great Conversations.
College in the Schools, the innovative U program that pairs local high school teachers with U faculty to empower those teachers to offer actual U courses directly to their students, marks 20 successful years with a celebratory event.

The College launches the Continuing Education for Professional and Creative Writing Web portal, a gateway to noncredit short courses in writing for work as well as personal interest.

April 2007

- Professor Jane Kirtley (College of Liberal Arts) discusses the Libby trial and its implications for journalism today in the April Headliners event.
- U.N. special adviser on the Prevention of Genocide Juan Mendez speaks with Regents Professor Kathryn Sikkink (College of Liberal Arts) at the April Great Conversations.
- The College forms a New Media Group to focus on the development of innovative uses of next-generation Web technologies in order to enhance students' learning experiences.

May 2007

- Emmy-winner Ruben Martinez discusses the face of immigration with the U's Donna Gabaccia (College of Liberal Arts) in the May Great Conversations.
- College of Continuing Education bachelor's degree graduates cross the stage in an inspirational Commencement Ceremony featuring speaker Trent Tucker, former NBA star and College of Continuing Education graduate.

June 2007

- Richard Bolles, author of What Color is Your Parachute?, joins the U’s Richard Leider (Center for Spirituality and Healing) to discuss finding meaning in one's life in the season’s last Great Conversations.
- The College announces a new movement, to be called LearningLife, which seeks the public's input on creating programs to help participants improve their lives.
- The College makes final preparations for its credit and degree programs, as well as its Information Center, to move to their new home on the St. Paul campus.
2 America thrives as it ages
New and existing U programs help boomers reinvent life, work, and society.

6 Can’t get enough of a good thing
Headliners and Compleat Scholar groups continue the conversation “after class.”

8 Doggie Dr. Freud
Inter-College Program student Ryan Driscoll follows his passion by studying ethology.

10 Trading hoops for books
Trent Tucker, Gopher and NBA star, returns to the U after a 23-year hiatus to finish his degree.

12 Alumni Voices
After decades apart, best friends find each other again, over graduation cake.
Imagine:

the open road and a good map

101 birthday candles, and reasons to smile

One of the biggest, best informed, most socially conscious generations of humans to ever hit the planet is about to find some extra time on their hands. That’s good.

It will be a collection of learning opportunities for boomers and other experience-seekers. It will invite participants to ask the question “is there something more...?” It will be the

sharing something old

a long run for the human race

being surprised at your own imagination

It’s imagining

The nation’s boomers represent an unprecedented storehouse of wisdom, passion, and compassion. That’s the kind of energy we all thrive on. So the U asked itself, how about a joint venture? Let’s close the space between learning and living.

Let’s invent LearningLife.

Now, however, individuals have 20, sometimes 30 or more years of living after they leave the workforce. “It’s as if we’ve been given a ‘bonus life,’” says Leider. “And that’s great—but many people are at a loss as to how to spend the second half of their lives.”

That’s why, on June 5, Leider and his mentor Richard Bolles (author of the best-

Living the Purposeful Life
The changing face of retirement

“People who refuse to rest honorably on their laurels when they reach ‘retirement’ age seem very admirable to me.” (actress Helen Hayes)

At the turn of the 20th century, the average life expectancy at birth was only 47 years. Now, a century later, it’s nearly 80.

Where once the concept of "retirement" was virtually unheard of, we are now faced with a society with the bulk of its workforce rapidly approaching retirement age. “And what’s more,” comments Richard Leider, author, founder of The Purpose Project, and senior fellow at the U of M’s Center for Spirituality and Healing (www.csh.umn.edu), “even as recently as a few decades ago, when people DID get to retire...most of them up and died within 24 months. anyway.”

Continued on page 4.
Join active communities exploring the globe. Create new, on-their-own-terms, “bliss” careers. Make a difference. And more. Imagine the possibilities: a partnership of powerhouses, a turning point, a chance to truly transform our lives. Pleasure. Purpose. LearningLife will bring it together.

The U's College of Continuing Education has been offering adults access to distinctive education for decades, and it still will. But June 5 marked an important moment in its evolution. In a sold-out "Great Conversations" event probing the changing face of retirement (details below left), we asked "what can the College and the University provide to make a difference in the lives of boomers?"

The answers will form LearningLife.

To join the discussion, visit www.cce.umn.edu/learninglife. This site will soon feature an announcement of a thought-provoking event to launch the program. Please join us. You’ll need to bring your imagination. It will be the start of something.

Something big.

The decade past, 10 years from now

Bridging the Gap
New program helps state grow new leaders ahead of boomer retirements

"We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future." (President Franklin D. Roosevelt)

In less than a decade, more than half of Minnesota's state managers will be eligible for retirement. As such, the state is faced with the enormous task of preparing the next generation of leaders to fill the open positions.

Says state economist Tom Stinson, "We’re talking about an eventual loss of a large amount of what we call 'firm-specific human capital.' In other words, we will be losing the people who have not just management skills, but also who are in possession of the real nuts-and-bolts details of how state organizations are run.

"You can replace a person physically," Stinson continues, "but replacing their knowledge base, their connections, their leadership skills...their experience—well, that’s the challenge."

To prepare for that challenge, the U of M's College of Continuing Education partnered with the Minnesota Department of Administration's Management and Analysis.

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selling career guide What Color Is Your Parachute?, met with the public to discuss the concept of purpose in the second half of life at the final event of the 2007 Great Conversations series, sponsored by the College of Continuing Education.

Key: Finding Meaning

"Purpose," Leider says, "isn't necessarily about religion—although it is tied to the idea of spirit. It's about finding the answer to questions like 'why do I get up in the morning?', 'how can I find a balance between saving and savoring the world?', and 'what can I do to give back, make a mark on the world?'"

“To live a vital life in our later years, post-retirement, we need to have the ‘three M’s’: Money, Medicine, and Meaning. We need money to survive, to meet our basic needs and pay our bills. We need medicine to maintain our physical quality of life and our health. But what’s left over? What you do with your time—and that’s the meaning component.”

— Richard Leider

And it’s purpose that is the key, Leider believes, to having an active, fulfilled, and meaningful second half of life. Something especially relevant now, as more and more boomers are leaving the workforce—and living decades longer than ever before.

“To live a vital life in our later years, post-retirement, we need to have the ‘three M’s’: Money, Medicine, and Meaning,” he says. “We need money to survive, to meet our basic needs and pay our bills. We need medicine to maintain our physical quality of life and our health. But what’s left over? What you do with your time—and that’s the meaning component.”

“Finding purpose and meaning is about finding a way to make a difference in some small way," Leider says. "But," he cautions, "it doesn’t have to mean saving the world or building entire villages by hand or feeding every starving puppy you see. It’s just about feeling your life matters—that you’ve touched someone. Whether that means you’re a homemaker or an explorer or a philanthropist…it’s about living a life that is connected. Those people are the healthiest people.”

Trend spans globe and all members of society

Living a purposeful second half of life isn’t solely an American thing, or one relegated to the upper strata of society. "It’s something people all across the globe are facing. I see it when I lead my treks through Africa…tribal elders giving back, figuring out how to be a part of the group. In Japan, where people are retiring in the tens of millions—an unprecedented event. Even in lower-income brackets in the U.S. Yes, you may have to work; many people cannot afford to retire. But the key to longevity and a meaningful life is to find work that keeps you engaged, work that uses your life experiences, talents, and gifts. Dignified work.”

“People are on to discovering purpose at younger and younger ages. And the AARP generations are becoming more and more diverse. They resent the old concept of ‘senior citizen’—they are a highly segmented demographic and extremely complex.

"New and unique opportunities for people to be connected in the second half of life are arising every day. It’s an invigorating time, and I’m excited to be at the front edge of this work.

"Reinventing retirement and aging by promoting the power of purpose is what gets me up in the morning," Leider says. "And I hope people will listen to Dick and me and pick up some of the tips and tools they need for discovering the purpose in their own lives.”

To download their discussion, visit www.cce.umn.edu/conversations and click on “audio from previous conversations.”

For more information on the “Working on Purpose” workshops led by Leider and other trained facilitators (upcoming date: November 5), visit the Center for Spirituality and Healing’s Web site: www.csh.umn.edu.

Richard Bolles
Development division to produce the Emerging Leaders Institute (ELI).

The Institute focuses on what it takes to be a successful and effective leader in the workplace, as well as helps participants create a network of contacts across state agency lines.

“The state has a workforce planning initiative in place, and some departments and divisions have prepared for general workforce changes, but there really hasn’t been any across-the-board training specifically focused on this changeover in leadership,” says Judy Plante, director of the Management and Analysis Development division. “We saw a real need for this type of training, and our division was in the unique position to do something about it.”

The first Institute ran from September 2006 to March 2007. The 30 participants were selected from a pool of several hundred applicants. Nominations were typically submitted by superiors who felt that the prospective applicant had strong leadership potential and could be a change-maker in tomorrow’s state workplace.

According to Plante, the participants attended intensive monthly training sessions, and were also expected to complete independent work each week. During the sessions, they engaged in group work, as well as individual coaching to help develop specific core competencies. Sessions were taught by College of Continuing Education adjunct faculty and by Management Analysis and Development trainers and consultants.

“The participants are very forward-thinking, adaptable people—most good leaders are,” Plante says. “The homework and the sessions gave them the chance to connect with people outside of their home divisions and organizations. The experienced leaders and mentors the Institute participants are talking with and learning from are open in sharing their wisdom and their experiences. They’re quite honest about what it takes to be a leader in a state agency, and that’s invaluable.”

“We will be losing the people who have not just management skills, but also who are in possession of the real nuts-and-bolts details of how state organizations are run. You can replace a person physically, but replacing their knowledge base, their connections, their leadership skills…their experience—well, that’s the challenge.”

– Tom Stinson

According to Stinson, the state’s future success in the wake of the Boomers’ retirement lies in its ability to juggle what he calls “the three R’s”: Retention—providing incentives to keep potential retirees in the workplace longer, so they can share what they know with the next generation; Recruitment—making the most out of the workforce available, keeping graduates in state, bringing in out-of-state grads, and hiring and rewarding bright talent and emerging leaders; and Retraining—teaching today’s workforce how to maximize their productivity and leadership skills for tomorrow.

Institute organizer Plante, and participant Burns, both believe that ELI is one way to move towards fulfilling the three R’s. “As folks continue to retire, the state will be in a tough, very competitive market for new and existing talent,” says Plante. “It’s important we have opportunities like this—the state is different, the people are different. We can’t do the same things we did 20 years ago and expect to be successful.”

Adds Burns, “Public sector organizations in Minnesota—or any state—can’t exist as a collection of separate agencies acting in isolation. We can’t be in silos if we’re going to move forward. The Emerging Leaders Institute is helping us plant the seeds of collaborative efforts and helping each one of us figure out what our strengths and weaknesses are as leaders, and how to see our own creative potential—and bring it out in others.”

For more information on creating programs like this for your workforce, visit www.cce.umn.edu/corporateeducation or call 612-624-1228.
A teacher, a lawyer, and a therapist walk into a College of Continuing Education event...

No, it isn’t the set-up for a joke. It’s the monthly gathering of the “Roseville Headliners Salon,” a group of individuals who meet and attend Headliners, a popular new series featuring University faculty discussing behind-the-scenes aspects of current events.

It all started when Barbara and Mike Kellett received an e-mail invitation for the first Headliners, in October 2006, and thought it would be a fine opportunity to put together a group of friends. They came up with a list of friends who they thought might be interested in attending—but few knew each other.

Then, each month, the Kelletts send out an e-mail asking folks to RSVP for that month’s event, and for dinner. For those interested in attending, Barb gives a heads-up on what the dinner’s main course will be, and they, in turn, sign up to bring side dishes. This season, the group has met at the Kellett’s.

“It’s quite an eclectic mix,” said Mike. “There is a librarian, therapist, social worker, teacher, doctor, lawyer, minister, and businesspeople. No two of them are alike—and they all have a different take on things.”

“Both the dinner conversations and the event itself give me a great chance to learn new things. It’s a unique opportunity to stay in touch with things you otherwise wouldn’t normally know about.”

– Tom Behr

Although they first brought the group together, the Kelletts are quick to point out that the salon is about the group, the conversation, and the sense of community—not any one person or couple. “Lifelong learning is important to us,” said Mike. “To have an opportunity to attend an event like this, and to get these fascinating people together…it’s a great experience.”

The Headliners 2007-08 season will run from October through April at the Continuing Education and Conference Center on the U of M St. Paul campus. Events are held the first Thursday of the month at 7 p.m. Since speakers discuss current news, topics are chosen just weeks prior to each event. To sign up for e-mail notifications, visit www.cce.umn.edu/headliners or call 612-624-4000.

A group of newfound friends makes a monthly date with the experts, and each other

FOOD FOR THOUGHT—AND CONVERSATION

Photo by Tim Rummelhoff

Pictured left to right: First row: Barbara Kellett, Linda Wilcox, Judy and Tom Behr
Second row: Mike Kellett, Sheila McTeague, Mina Ingersol, Don Heywood
Third row: Mike Hannan, Brent Collins, Marta Fahrenz, Ginny and Tom Roach, Jerry Kneisl
In May 2006, 25 adults sat down in a classroom on the St. Paul campus. Enrolled in Professor Emerita Toni McNaron’s Compleat Scholar course, Writing from the Quiet Spaces, they were retirees and working professionals, stay-at-home parents, and long-distance commuters.

They were all different ages, and had a hodge-podge of goals. Some had writing experience; others had none. They arrived as strangers.

“It was a five-session course,” says McNaron, “focused on writing essays about personal and family history. Everyone has a story; has something to share. I’m here to help them learn to develop and trust the voice with which to tell that story.”

The strangers came to trust not only their own voice, but each other. “It amazes me now when I recall how readily we all shared very private, often painful aspects of our stories with one another,” says participant Karen Hays. “Perhaps it was Toni’s own openness, and the joy that she expressed at our writing efforts that made us feel safe to fully explore our stories and our craft.”

Lou Ferril was another participant who felt transformed by the experience. “I started out writing a letter—and now I pretty much have a book! I couldn’t have done that without Toni’s help, and the class. We became quite close. The sense of community, of unity, we built was one of the best things for our writing,” she says.

About halfway through the course, McNaron requested student feedback—and was a bit surprised at their response.

“Deep down everyone wants a mentor. Someone whom they respect and admire, [someone] who is…not afraid to give honest feedback, someone who is dedicated above all to keeping them working, and exercising their art, for the sake of the art as much as for themselves…. For our writer’s group, that person is Toni.” – Karen Hays

I

“We overwhelmingly responded that the class was too short, and we wanted more,” says Hays.

After only a bit of thinking, McNaron readily agreed to help out, and offered to extend the class through the summer for those who were interested. More than half the class continued to meet, every other week, with McNaron until August. Still, the writers craved more.

Nearly a year later, a significant portion of the original class still gets together monthly to share their writing and discuss what they’ve been working on and challenges they faced. McNaron joins them every other month.

“The College now offers an expanded slate of writing opportunities through the Continuing Education for Professional and Creative Writing Web site. For details, visit www.cce.umn.edu/writing. Compleat Scholar continues to cover an eclectic mix of topics from art, literature, and history to science, nature, and travel. Courses run fall, winter, and spring. To be placed on a list to receive the fall schedule, or a schedule for the “sister” Curiosity Camp summer program, call 612-624-4000.”

A Compleat Scholar course turns into a collaborative effort
Doggie Dr. Freud
Student searches for the meaning of (puppy) life
Can I teach an old dog new tricks?
What makes my goldfish eat until he explodes?
Why does my kitten go crazy with catnip?
Former NBA star Trent Tucker uses degree in work with urban youth
Growing up in Flint, Michigan, Trent Tucker realized how lucky he was to have positive role models in his life. “My parents taught me early on the importance of making positive choices and having a support system,” he says. Even so, “growing up, college wasn’t something that was really in my plans. Every day, I was faced with negative situations: drugs, alcohol, and other tragic events.”

However, Tucker’s father, a part-time carpenter and employee at General Motors, and his mother, a homemaker, fostered a strong sense of community values and stressed the importance of education. They also encouraged his athletic pursuits. At age seven, he first picked up a basketball—and immediately found his calling.

“When I started receiving college recruiting letters in the 10th grade,” Tucker says, “I realized basketball would give me the opportunity to go on to college.” After much consideration, Tucker chose the University of Minnesota, and in 1978 became a student athlete. For Tucker, as for many people, college is direct preparation for a future career. Unlike most people, however, Tucker’s career aspirations were to play in the NBA. After leading the Gophers to a Big Ten championship in 1982, Tucker left the U and entered the NBA draft, where he was selected in the first round by the San Antonio Spurs and the New York Knicks.

What followed was a highly successful 11-year professional basketball career. Known as one of the greatest three-point-shooters in basketball history, Tucker also played with the San Antonio Spurs and the Chicago Bulls—with whom he won a championship ring in 1993.

Despite his success as a pro athlete, Tucker never forgot where he came from. Eager to give back to the community, he began donating his time and his support to youth organizations. He founded the Trent Tucker Basketball camp for youth in the mid-1980s, and in 1998, a few years after his retirement from the NBA, he founded the Trent Tucker Non-Profit Organization, which was designed to help urban youth maximize their abilities, make positive choices, and realize their potential.

“I was motivated to use my celebrity to help those who were less fortunate. It was a natural progression for me, really, because I realized I couldn’t have made it to where I was without the opportunities that had been given to me…I felt it was important to educate our youth and make them understand…there is a bigger picture out there for them to see.”

It was working with kids and his nonprofit that made Tucker realize that he wanted to go back to school to finish his degree—more than two decades after his last stint in the classroom.

“I was lucky to be able to play sports at the highest level,” he says, “but I knew that an education would be able to take me places basketball couldn’t. It would give me the credentials to do different types of things I’d love to do—coaching college basketball, working with kids.”

So in 2004, after a 23-year hiatus, Tucker returned to the U of M to get his degree. Seeking something that built upon the human services course work he had been interested in his initial degree studies, he enrolled in the College of Continuing Education’s Inter-College Program (ICP), an interdisciplinary, self-designed bachelor’s degree program that draws course work from across the University’s colleges and departments.

“The ICP allowed me to further my education in things I’m involved with, and enjoy doing—like working with my youth programs. In it, you’re able to build a degree that fits you. I didn’t have to fall into a certain category and I could study things that were important to me, and my career after basketball,” he says.

I enjoyed the challenge of going back to school, testing my limits, and especially meeting and working with other students and the professors. You’re never too old to learn, to grow. I loved the program; I had a ball.” – Trent Tucker

Still, returning to the classroom as an adult was not easy—even for a former professional athlete and celebrity. “It was a challenge. Walking into a classroom after so many years…looking around and asking myself, ‘Do I fit in here?’, ‘Do I belong?’” Tucker laughs, “that first day I walked in and sat down and the students kind of looked at me for a minute, like they were thinking ‘what’s HE doing here?’, and then one of them asked ‘are you the professor?’ And I just kind of laughed and told them I hadn’t quite achieved that status—yet.”

In 2005, Tucker graduated with a bachelor’s degree blending courses in educational psychology; personnel work; and youth, coaching, and sport. It’s a degree he puts to use daily, both in his nonprofit organization and in his continued involvement with basketball. “This degree gave me a chance to do different things that I truly enjoy doing. It’s given me an even better understanding of how to reach kids and communicate with them.”

In 2007, Tucker had the chance to give back to his alma mater yet again when he served as the commencement speaker for the College of Continuing Education on May 5. “Having a degree from the U of M is a very special thing, and I’m proud of it. I was happy to speak.”

“I enjoyed the challenge of going back to school, testing my limits, and especially meeting and working with other students and the professors. You’re never too old to learn, to grow,” he says. “I loved the program; I had a ball.”

The Inter-College Program now has a Multidisciplinary Studies track designed for working adult students who, like Tucker, are returning to school after a hiatus.

For details, visit www.cce.umn.edu/mds or call 612-624-4000.
Sometimes, life conspires to pull people apart. Other times, it brings them together.

And for some, like College of Continuing Education graduates Bonnie Wilkins-Overcott and Jane Weiner, it does both.

It was mostly happenstance that brought Wilkins-Overcott and Weiner together as students at the U back in the 1960s. “Bonnie and a friend had rented a big duplex in Dinkytown...they needed roommates, and a friend and I fit the bill,” says Weiner.

Weiner, who enrolled in the University College, and Wilkins-Overcott, a journalism major, hit it off immediately. Fast friends, they lived together for several years.

The pair even traveled together and spent a summer living in Washington, D.C., with Weiner’s sister and brother-in-law. “We were pretty much inseparable,” says Wilkins-Overcott. Adds Weiner, “Even when we were no longer living together, we lived a block apart. For the better part of 10 years, we were best friends, roommates, and neighbors.”

But, in the mid-1970s, life got in the way. All four of the roommates had eventually dropped out of the U. “I was first,” says Wilkins-Overcott. “College was expensive, and I needed to work. And then I got married, had a son, and, well...life just sort of happened.”

Although they attended each others’ weddings and tried to keep in touch, after Wilkins-Overcott’s move out to the north...
side of the Twin Cities the two women gradually drifted apart.

"Nobody intends to lose touch," says Weiner. "But sometimes life, careers, families...they get in the way. I remember every so often, I would say 'I really should look Bonnie up, see what she's up to.' But for many years, it just didn't happen."

One thing the women did not lose touch of, however, was their desire to finish their university degrees. "I had been taking community college courses to fill my lower division requirements," says Wilkins-Overcott. "And then there came a moment when my son was growing up, and there were major changes at work, and I decided if I was going to go back—now was the time."

Wilkins-Overcott enrolled in the Program for Individualized Learning and designed her own degree through the College of Continuing Education. And in 2006, 40 years after first enrolling at the U, she received her bachelor's degree in labor studies and communications.

For Weiner, in some ways, it was as if she never left the U. "My roommates and I may not have kept in touch," she chuckles. "But the U and I have always had a lasting relationship. I just couldn't stay away. Slowly, gradually, I chipped away at my degree. I went back in the '90s for a couple of years, tinkered with my degree plan, then left again."

Weiner always considered the Inter-College Program (ICP) in University College, later called the College of Continuing Education (CCE), her "home base." "It's such a creative program," she says. "I've been a part of the College's interdisciplinary degree program pretty much from day one...and I knew that when I decided to go back to school, that's where I would fit in."

And after her daughter left for college, Weiner did, indeed, re-enroll in the College of Continuing Education in 2005, and she graduated with a B.S. degree from the ICP in 2006.

It was at the reception for 2006 graduates that life intervened again for the two women. "I was supposed to go to the reception with a friend, and at the last minute got cancelled on. I wasn't going to go alone, but I finally said 'well, I've come this far, I CAN'T skip it now.' So I went," says Weiner.

Wilkins-Overcott was also at the reception, attending with her sister and other family members. "We were just sitting there, chatting and having a good time, and all of a sudden my sister says, 'Hey! Isn't that your old roommate, Jane, over there?' For a minute, I thought she was crazy—but sure enough, it was."

"There I was, just eating my dessert...when all of a sudden someone calls my name out," Weiner says. "I was confused enough to begin with—I had come alone, I didn't really know anyone at the reception—but when I realized it was my college roommate, I was pretty much shocked."

Although neither woman had known it, life had taken them on separate, yet similar journeys. Both had married, had a child, and then returned to school—the same school, the same college, at the same time. And now, here they stood, having graduated together more than 40 years after they first started school—and more than 20 years after they had lost contact.


And after all these years, what's next? Both women plan to keep in touch, and Weiner says she is looking up one of the other roommates they lost contact with who still lives in the area. "We were so absorbed in our own lives," says Wilkins-Overcott.

Concludes Weiner, "But now, our kids are grown, off doing their own thing. Going back to school was a way of picking up our 'selves' again, of reconnecting. Finding each other again...that's an even more amazing reconnection."

From the Director of Development

Dear Friends,

Excitement, pride, relief, satisfaction, joy, and even a little sadness...these were the emotions I saw on the faces of the 300 graduates and their families and friends the morning of the College of Continuing Education's undergraduate Commencement in early May.

You would have been proud of them, hearing their interdisciplinary degrees called out as they walked across the stage. All were smiling. All were confident accepting their diplomas. All of their handshakes with the Regent and the Dean were strong and sure.

This was a day that most have been working towards for many years. This was a day that, without your help and your support, would not have happened. Thanks to you, those 350 students who completed their undergraduate B.A., B.S., or B.A.S. or Master of Liberal Studies this spring will have a brighter future and the chance to make a bigger difference in the world.

So today when you ask yourself, "was that check I sent to support scholarships or a gift to help students design and achieve a truly unique degree worth it?" The answer can be a resounding – yes!

I sat on that stage, clapping for the students, smiling for their families, and thinking of you and your generosity. It was the best of days.

Wishing you a wonderful summer and fall,

Kathleen Davoli
Director of Development
College of Continuing Education
When will it be possible for human beings to fly?

The Wright brothers had it right. It’s planes for us.

"From an evolutionary perspective, it seems unlikely for this to occur. Humans and their ancestors have been terrestrial for millions of years, and none of our adaptations appear useful for flight. It would take a huge number of mutations and selection pressure for humans to become ‘flight-ready.’ Although I never like to say never, this seems about as close as you could get.” - Robert Zink, professor of ecology, evolution and behavior, and curator of birds, at the Bell Museum of Natural History.

Taken from the University of Minnesota’s Driven to Discover Web site. To see the public’s other questions and U experts’ responses, or to post your question, visit www.umn.edu.