Ironically, choices in higher education are more abundant than ever, while at the same time accessibility for students of varying economic backgrounds is becoming more precarious. Now more than ever, public institutions of higher education, particularly community colleges, are socially compelled to deliver a high-value, high-quality education for all who seek the transformational power of learning.

I frequently have the pleasure of receiving correspondence from students and alumni about their educational experience at Onondaga Community College. A recent letter from a first-time college student in his final semester at Onondaga captured the essence of the College and the difference it makes for thousands of local students each year. An excerpt from this student’s letter follows:

Following my graduation from high school in 1965 I was employed at three different companies for a total of 38 years. I was released from Carrier Corporation in 2004 because of a corporate decision to ship our jobs to China. As a result, I was given the option of either finding another job or attending college with full tuition and books, all paid for by the company. I chose college even though I had never attended a school for higher learning before.

I registered at your college and began attending classes in the fall of 2004. My first day was filled with apprehension, fear of the unknown and attending school with much younger students. However, soon thereafter my fear and apprehension were erased by caring and loving staff. If it were not for them I do not know if I would be graduating in December. Everyone, and I mean everyone, gave me encouragement and hope.

I will never forget my experience at your wonderful school and the caring people who helped me along the way. Thank you!

Letters such as this affirm Onondaga’s unique place in public higher education. Whether they are recent high school graduates, individuals seeking a career transition, or displaced workers, Onondaga Community College provides a solid educational foundation for thousands of citizens, helping them to explore, discover and transform.

Onondaga Community College’s middle name is literally “community.” Therefore, it only made sense that as the College sought to fully understand its unique identity in Central New York and within the fast-changing world of higher education, we actively solicited the guidance of members of the community – students, faculty, businesspeople, community leaders, government officials and citizens.

The community’s vision for Onondaga Community College has resonated throughout the campus and the region, providing a sense of clarity and energizing College constituencies toward common goals like no other time in the history of Onondaga. In 2005, Onondaga Community College unveiled a new College crest, and adopted and introduced a new credo: “Explore. Discover. Transform.”

This has been a year of extraordinary transformation.

Building upon the College’s historic reputation for excellence in undergraduate education, transformation began in 2000, with a new president taking the helm. The College challenged itself by setting forth a clear and aggressive plan for the future: A Framework for Success.

This Framework identified three overarching priorities for Onondaga Community College:

- A Student-Centered Environment
- A Learning-Focused Institution
- A Community-Oriented Approach

Over the past six years, each of Onondaga’s goals has been measured against these criteria to ensure that goals are met and results are achieved. 2005-06 was no exception.
Ironically, choices in higher education are more abundant than ever, while at the same time accessibility for students of varying economic backgrounds is becoming more precarious. Now more than ever, public institutions of higher education, particularly community colleges, are socially compelled to deliver a high-value, high-quality education for all who seek the transformational power of learning.

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Sincerely,

Debbie L. Sydow, Ph.D.
President

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A Student-Centered Environment

Loud and clear. Research has revealed that Onondaga students choose to attend the College for its commitment to affordable excellence in higher education and because of its demonstrated ability to support students in their efforts to make decisions that will lead them toward a life of living well and loving what they do.

Providing Onondaga’s students with an environment that is optimally conducive to learning is among the highest priorities at the College. Buildings constructed nearly 40 years ago were in need of renovation and renewal to meet the needs and expectations of students and faculty in the 21st century.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

This year marked the completion of Phase I of the Onondaga Community College Facilities Master Plan, a document designed to support student success. The cornerstone of the plan featured a dramatic renovation of the Gordon Student Center, which has served tens of thousands of students since its opening in 1971.

Student Central, a 16,000 square-foot addition to the Gordon Student Center, consolidated 14 formerly separate offices into a “one-stop” enrollment services hub that provides convenience and efficiency for today’s busy students. Since opening, Student Central has served more than 25,000 students at its expansive counter — literally the College’s front door — handled 75,000 calls in the new state-of-the-art call center, and 13,000 e-mail inquiries from students and the community.

The completion of this phase of the Facilities Master Plan also included extensive upgrades to science laboratories located in Ferrante Hall. Onondaga has embarked on Phase II of the Facilities Master Plan, securing $15.8 million that enables the College to move full-steam ahead with the renovation of the Academic Building (dedicated as Mawhinney Hall in October 2006), as well as planning for the newest College acquisition of 14 acres of adjoining property, purchased in the summer of 2006. All future renovation and construction projects at Onondaga will be guided by the Classroom Standards and Guidelines, finalized in 2006, which ensure that all classrooms are optimally conducive to student learning.
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Literally completed in 11 months by local developer Hueber-Breuer Construction, three ultra-modern residence halls were on a fast-track schedule and construction was capped off in August 2006 with the formal dedication ceremony. The $16.6 million project, led by the OCC Housing Development Corporation (OCCHDC), opened at capacity over Labor Day weekend 2006 and welcomed its first 500 student residents in the history of Onondaga. Transitioning from construction to management and operation, the OCCHDC and the College’s new Office of Residence Life have established a comprehensive residence life program designed to fully complement the academic focus of the College and integrate with the greater campus community.

Inclusion of people from all backgrounds and traditions is one goal of the Diversity Council, established in 2005. The Council has begun development of a Diversity Master Plan for the College. Arts Across Campus has hosted numerous events focused on diversity and multiculturalism, including Gertrude R. Swedroe Visiting Professor and senior editor of National Geographic magazine, Bill Douthitt, and the College’s first Fulbright Scholar, Professor Irfan Habib of India.

Residence halls at Onondaga have helped to fuel an enrollment surge, with projections for fall 2006 showing a 14 percent increase in full-time enrollment. The number of students enrolled in online learning courses increased by 26 percent. More than 3,700 students took advantage of online credit course offerings last year. The newly-formed OCC Association, which serves as the umbrella organization for the OCC Student Association, Athletics and Arts Across Campus, among others, is establishing a firm foundation for student life at Onondaga. Students, faculty and the entire community came out in full support for the undefeated NJCAA National Champions OCC Men’s Lacrosse team, led by Coach Chuck Wilbur, who was also named NJCAA Coach of the Year. In addition, the Onondaga Men’s Tennis team placed 2nd in the Region and participated in the national tournament, and college teams fielded eight All-Americans and two National Players of the Year.

The prowess of its athletic teams and the emergence of residence halls on the Onondaga campus are significant assets for the College as it prioritizes the development and full implementation of a comprehensive Enrollment Management Plan. In 2005, the College completed an extensive research phase and hired an enrollment manager to set a firm foundation for the plan, which will result in establishing and implementing optimal enrollment goals and strategies in accordance with the Onondaga Community College Strategic Plan.
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At its essence, learning is about discovery — of interests, skills, needs, aptitudes and the world around us. Onondaga Community College strives to provide the programs, resources and services that encourage students to discover what they are interested in, what they are good at, and what they love to do.

As an institution of higher education, the College itself also continuously seeks to learn and discover how it can best meet its mission, support student success and serve the local community. Throughout the year, the College focused on continuous learning and continuous improvement in support of its mission.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2006, Onondaga Community College successfully completed the first year of a required three-year process to achieve reaccreditation by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, one of the premier accrediting bodies of colleges and universities in the United States. The Middle States Steering Committee, chaired by Dr. Crystal Etzel, chair of the faculty, led the development of a self-study proposal and research design document. Middle States approved these key documents in 2006. Once again a leader, Onondaga is forging new ground with a self-study that breaks from the traditional format undertaken by most other colleges undergoing reaccreditation. Onondaga Community College is taking a bold approach and will focus in the coming year on identifying and recommending steps to remove any remaining barriers to fulfillment of the College’s credo, Explore … Discover … Transform; and the Promise of Self-Discovery. This extensive self-study project will be completed in 2007, with the College’s evaluation team visit scheduled for spring 2008.

Students who explore their interests and discover that a career in education, communication or health is for them will find at Onondaga five new academic programs introduced in 2005-06: two Liberal Arts and Sciences associate of arts programs in Adolescence Education and Childhood Education, which are jointly registered teacher preparatory programs with SUNY Oswego; an associate of applied science program in Professional Communication; an Early Child Care certificate program; and a one-year Health Studies certificate designed for students interested in any of the health professions.
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Students entering Onondaga in these new academic programs, or any other program, will be guided by “The Principles of Community,” established in 2006 by a faculty-led task force that sets forth expectations for personal responsibility and mutual respect on campus. Further enhancement of the campus environment to ensure recognition and opportunities for all included the development of a new Distinguished Retiree Award to honor careers dedicated to excellence and to student success. The College partnered with the Onondaga County Health Department on a $56,000 grant from the New York State Department of Health to promote smoking cessation among students and employees, and to work toward becoming a smoke-free campus.

To better facilitate exploration and discovery, Onondaga launched in early 2006 a newly designed College Web site and three custom-designed portals for students, faculty and employees. With an ever-increasing number of students choosing the convenience and flexibility offered by the Web, electronic communications is a high priority. The improvements to the College Web site are the cornerstone for Virtual OCC, an initiative to more fully incorporate student services and campus life into the electronic medium.

Enhanced learning through the arts continued with the completion of the third season of Arts Across Campus, which included more than 40 concerts, exhibits, performances and events. This year saw the premiere of a new film series, “Reel World: Documentaries with a Difference.” Onondaga’s Public Arts Master Plan was completed and four new pieces of monumental sculpture, “Maiden Syracuse” and “Nelson” by the late artist Rodger Mack, and the kinetic “Whirled Peace” and “Here Comes the Sun” by North Carolina artist Mike Roig, were unveiled in fall 2005.

A learning environment supported by technology is an imperative in the 21st century. The College opened a new state-of-the-art Data Center, designed to provide the critical back-end support for the campus’ extensive technology and computing requirements. Enhancements to comprehensive emergency after-hours support, and the initiation of a data warehouse pilot project were also implemented this year.
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Community-Oriented Approach

The hallmark of community colleges is commitment to community. First and foremost, community colleges serve the academic, personal and economic needs of the citizens in their local communities.

As Onondaga looks to its 50th Anniversary in 2011, the thorough review and update of its Strategic Plan, A Framework for Success, is among the top priorities. A survey with the goal of obtaining input from the College’s diverse stakeholders – students, faculty, staff, community leaders, business leaders, educators and the general public – yielded nearly 500 responses. It is clear that the community has a vested interest in the College's success and the College's future.

Accomplishments

With the leadership of new SUNY Chancellor John Ryan, an increase in state support, $175 per full-time equivalent, was secured in support of community college students throughout New York state. In addition, as proposed by Onondaga County Executive Nicholas J. Pirro, the Onondaga County Legislature approved increasing its operating support by $230,000.

The College actively engaged in private fundraising through the OCC Foundation, which achieved record fundraising in 2006; the OCC Alumni Association, which raised a record $33,000 at the 15th annual OCC Scholarship Classic, and also completed the necessary groundwork to launch a Capital Campaign in 2007.

Support for economic development within the community is an important priority. This past year, through the efforts of Corporate and Extended Learning, customized training and workforce development opportunities were offered to nearly 1,000 students in “Lean Training.” In addition, this past year saw a 231 percent increase in full-time equivalent students through the JOBSplus! program.

Students transformed by their educational experiences are eager to reach out in service to the local community. Onondaga achieved statewide prominence for an initiative launched by Student Association President Larry Fuller. A free HIV/AIDS testing program at the College received attention from colleges throughout the state and has become a model for the entire SUNY system. Electronic Media Communications students furthered their commitment to service by partnering with the Syracuse Choice program to provide mentoring, tutoring and supervision to students in the Syracuse City School District. Service learning at the College grew to 370 students who contributed more than 3,800 service learning hours in the community.
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Mission

Onondaga Community College will be recognized as a leader in higher education and as one of the nation’s most innovative community colleges. Students will discover at Onondaga highly credentialed faculty who have chosen to dedicate their careers to teaching, employees who focus on the value of and service to a diverse student body, and an inclusive and welcoming environment that supports achievements of highest potential. Lifelong learning will be nurtured by personal connection, innovative technology, global perspectives and open minds. Through its unique stewardship and public responsibility to prepare citizens for productive careers in this region, Onondaga will serve a primary role in enriching and enhancing the quality of life for all who live and work in Central New York.

Vision

Athletic Accomplishments

Three coaches named Mid-State Conference Coach of the Year.
15 All-Conference student-athletes.
31 All-Region and 3 Regional Players of the Year.
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1 National Coach of the Year.
56 percent of athletes received an athletic award this year.

Men’s Lacrosse
6-time undefeated Mid-State Conference Champion.
NJCAA 2006 National Lacrosse Champions.

Women’s Basketball
25-6 record season - the most wins in the history of the program.
Mid-State Conference Champions.

Women’s Tennis
4th at the Region III tournament.

Women’s Volleyball
Mid-State Conference Champions.
Undefeated season.
Third in the Region III tournament.

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