Making College Completion a National Priority

On January 24, the National Commission on Higher Education Attainment, released its long awaited report, “College Completion Must be Our Priority” The report calls upon colleges and universities to improve completion rates by challenging institutions to be more creative and flexible in meeting the needs of an increasingly untraditional student body.

The Commission included senior representatives from the following higher education organizations: American Council on Education (ACE), the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), the Association of American Universities (AAU), the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (A·P·L·U), and the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU). State colleges as well as New Jersey were represented by George A. Pruitt, President of Thomas Edison State College and Vice Chair of AASCU.

Noting an economic and moral imperative, the report notes, “There is much that we can and should do to graduate more students: changing campus culture, improving cost-effectiveness, and making student success the central academic priority at every institution. To this end, we call on each and every institution to assess its success at retaining and graduating students, identify changes that will improve student achievement, and implement them without delay.” The report also notes the need for improved access to higher education while acknowledging the challenges that continued disinvestment in the sector present.

At Ramapo, the College has already implemented its Adult Degree Completion Program aimed at meeting the needs of nontraditional students by offering customized class scheduling, online instruction, transfer counseling, and support services.


Learning Outside the Classroom: Sierra Leone

Students of Ramapo College continue to push boundaries by putting concept into practice outside the traditional classroom. In May of 2011, a group of 15 students, including President Peter P. Mercer, his wife, faculty
and alumni, travelled to Sierra Leone to participate in a two week study abroad program. This program was designed to introduce students to a third world health care system.

The nursing school at the University of Sierra Leone was destroyed during the country’s civil war over the last decade. Since then, the University has been rebuilding the school. Ramapo College participants helped conduct health clinics and participated in conferences during their visit. They assisted in the treatment of persons with malaria, hypertension, malnutrition, and more. Nearly 300 people lined up during the first health clinic to have their height, weight, and blood pressures measured and for cholesterol, glucose, and body mass index screenings. For many of the patients, the clinic was the first time in years that they had any formal medical treatment, according to the Ramapo College Magazine, Winter 2012 Edition. “They really got into what they were doing,” the Mercers said of the students. “They seemed quite determined to get the most of the experience. They were adaptive in a way we would hope they’d be adaptive.” All of the students who participated in this trip enjoyed the experience, encouraged peers to join the following year and according to them, it was “worth it!”

**Ramapo Students Teach Art to Bergen County Inmates**

Ramapo College students and faculty members continue to provide “Art & Interaction” classes to local inmates in northern New Jersey jails. The program is considered the first of its kind. Launched over 40 years ago, it has extended to other organizations like psychiatric centers, homes for the elderly and shelters for abused women and children.

"My idea was to expose students from the inside out to the major issues from our time," said Judith Peck, program founder and art professor. “While the prisoners and mental patients are learning to express themselves by painting and sculpting, the college students are learning about the roots of crime, mental illness, violence and other issues,” Peck said.

Through the leadership of Ramapo faculty, students learn different methods of teaching art and will eventually lead their own classes. It provides students working towards their degree with the opportunity to gain new experiences and skills. To read the full article, please visit the following website: [http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2012/12/nj_prisoners_college_students.html](http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2012/12/nj_prisoners_college_students.html).

**Roadrunners Start Season Strong**

The Ramapo College basketball team is enjoying a winning streak. The Roadrunners won their seventh consecutive game against The College of New Jersey men’s basketball teams during the December and continued winning ten other games over the past month. Their rankings have gone up, placing them at #11 in the D3hoops.com Top 25 National Poll.

Senior guard Will Sanborn, Red Bank, NJ, ranks second in the conference. He has led many scores this past season and recently scored his 1,000th
career point. Sanborn becomes the 17th Roadrunner in men’s basketball history to achieve the 1,000-point plateau. Approximately six games are left in the season. Follow the team’s roster, schedule, and stats at www.ramapoathletics.com.

Ramapo College Alumna Wins Emmy Award
This past year, Kailin Chieco, ’09, won a Mid-Atlantic Emmy award for her work with journalist Sara Lee Kessler for the hit TV show Decoding Autism. “When I heard, ‘... and the Emmy goes to ... Decoding Autism!’ I was speechless. The long hours, hard work, and obstacles that the Decoding Autism team put in were recognized in a big way,” Chieco said.

Chieco served as the associate producer and was responsible for setting up shots, interviews, editing, and more. She thanked Edna Negron, professor of journalism, for instilling in her the tenets of responsible journalism.

Learn more about the award-winning documentary by visiting the KPBS website here: www.kpbs.org/news/2011/apr/07/decoding-autism/

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