Today the state of the college might be described as one of volatility mingled with ambiguity and, occasionally, dissimulation. Beginning with the external context, we have the primaries where only a few months ago, the Republican frontrunner was apparently headed for oblivion. Instead, he has changed places with the former leading candidate whose star is fast fading. And on the Democratic side, the once sizeable gap between the top contenders has been closed so that they are running neck-and-neck with each day bringing new reports of who might be gaining.

Nor is there any tranquil escape to be had in the world of professional sports. Not when one of the most thrilling Super Bowl contests in history is won by a team whose supporters at mid-season questioned their ability to even make it to the playoffs.

Then there’s the stock market where daily swings of several hundred points in the Dow average have become almost commonplace. We are told that the current economic malaise has two primary causes: consumers aren’t spending enough and U.S. citizens aren’t saving enough. And we’re all figuratively lined up on the edge of town craning our necks to catch a confirming glimpse of the headless horseman called “recession” (who many say may already have arrived).

Finally, we also know the state of the State: broke. Although there does seem to be one educational priority that legislators and policy-makers have clustered around, that of course being a new football stadium for Rutgers.

How bad is it? I am reminded of the joke about it being so cold that a lawyer was seen with his hands in his own pockets but even that line doesn’t work on a February day when the temperature in some parts of New Jersey has hit 70 degrees. Volatility indeed.

And the result, I think, of all that volatility whether it is unprecedented or not, is to make us feel somewhat pessimistic or at least to give us a sense of foreboding. My wife and I went to India and China and visited a number of universities with whom we have relationships in the early part of this year. One of the striking things is despite infrastructure problems, particularly in large city India, that we would find overwhelming a kind of buoyancy and a sort of optimism that is almost infectious. And because of the sub-prime meltdown here and all the various social problems that we think we have compared to perhaps some golden era which I imagine is more a figment of our imagination, we run the risk of becoming so pessimistic that we overlook that fact that we are in many respects remarkably well off. I think for example of what it was like generations ago for our parents and their families, and I suspect that most of the people in this room are better off than their parents were. And even if we say to ourselves, yes but will our children be better off than we are, I think that question is being answered in different ways. The question of what makes us better off isn’t just a question of materiality. In other words, we may be looking at a generation who will say if the
solution to avoiding a recession is to keep spending as a consumer, perhaps we will just opt out.

So what I thought I would do today is talk about this past year, but occasionally against the backdrop of the past 5 years because I think it’s important for us occasionally to take a snap shot of where we’ve come from, and you can lose that perspective sometimes when you are looking at your history in one year bites.

**Strategic Plan**

Before I do that though, I want to remind you about the strategic plan, which I think will be proven to be the most important achievement of this academic year, having been passed at the December Board meeting. You will recall that there are two underlying principles that were seen by the strategic planning group, accepted by you and ultimately by the Board as pervasive and indeed coloring everything that we do. The first being sustainability and the second being inclusive excellence. Inclusive excellence meaning excellence across a broad range of activities, not just in academia, but also inclusive in the sense of embracing multiple perspectives and identifying what is excellent in those. And then under those two principles are three objectives. The first enhancing academic excellence, and I say the first although we purposely said in the report they are not in order of priority. Next investing in the future and thirdly enriching college life and community presence. I believe that we will be referring to the Strategic Plan and those principles and goals a lot over the next few years. It is meant to guide us over 5 years, which is a long time in the life of a college today.

**Presidents Climate Commitment**

But I will begin with my own commitment signed on Friday November 30th, at the opening of the *Green Meets Green* conference, reflecting the fact that we identified sustainability as a pervasive principle at Ramapo College. The Presidents Climate Commitment was created under the auspices of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities and is designed to actively engage campuses in reversing the trends of global warming by achieving climate neutrality and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Now there are two wonderful things about this initiative from my perspective; the first is that it was student driven. Most of you know the story but the environmental alliance – Paul Corragio and his colleagues came to me and asked what they could do to make the campus more environmentally aware. I said I thought we had to do something challenging, something that I can hold up as a challenge to the community and they came back on November 29th with a challenge of their own - in the form of several hundred signatures asking me to sign the Presidents Climate Commitment. Now this is not just a commitment made on behalf of the College, it is one that I personally have to take seriously and I am trying to do so in a number of ways in my own household. We are dramatically increasing the degree of recycling at the Havemeyer House and are doing away with all the plastic containers. More to the point, I have been trying to identity what in my own life, as president, actually impedes the achievement of the goals set out in this commitment. And I think in some ways that is a metaphor for what we will be asking all the units to do when they go through the planning process this year. That is rigorously
examining their behavior, priorities and expenditures as they look forward to identify what goals they seek to achieve.

**Middle States**
With the approval of the strategic plan, we have to turn our minds once again to Middle States Accreditation. MSA is extremely important. It has always been important, but it is particularly important now because the accreditation exercise has been ratcheted up several notches as a result of the Spellings Report. I will not say much about the Spellings Report other than that I think it was lamentably weak in areas where it should have been strong. It speaks as if applied education is the only important form of education and overlooks the fundamental importance of the liberal arts. However, it has spawned a kind of contest between professional organizations that set accreditation standards, the states that have the constitutional primacy with respect to education and the feds who provide most of the funding. That punch-up is underway as we speak. Middle States is not simply an academic evaluation but it is also an evaluation of institutional effectiveness and it will be more rigorously applied to us when we come up for review in the next months and years. The self-study and accreditation process will be led by a Steering Committee and I am particularly grateful to Jennefer Mazza, Dean of AIS and Miki Cammarata, Associate Dean of Students for agreeing to co-chair that initiative. It will be time-consuming and challenging, but we could not be better served by having Jennefer and Miki. I would also like to read the names of the committee members:

- Judith Jeney (Employee Relations)
- Karl Johnson (SSHS)
- Stephen Klein (ASB)
- Ramona Kopacz (Student Affairs)
- Linda Madernini (Pres. Office)
- Lysandra Perez-Strumolo (SSHS)
- Peter Rice (Admissions)
- Stephen Rice (AIS)
- Dick Roberts (Finance and Admin)
- Sam Rosenberg (Dean SSHS)
- Jody Williams (TAS/Nursing)
- Alex Urbiel (Teacher Ed)
- Babs Verano (IR)
- Jason Krisza Freshmen Senator on SGA

Let’s give them a round of applause and thank them.

**Enrollment Information**
Now I said I would back up and inject some perspective into this. When you look at our enrollment statistics, in Fall of 2002 our total FTE count was 4,352 and in 2007, our FTE was 5,043. We have had almost a 16% increase in FTE in the past 5 years. Now, that’s a mixed blessing because we worry about the load on our faculty and consequently our faculty/student ratio. But it also tells us that we have been mindful of trying to provide places for New Jersey’s students. And that pressure continues unabated. When you
advance your projections 10 years ahead and take a look at the demographic bulge, across the country the number of college age students is going to increase by about 8% and in New Jersey it is set to increase about 13%.

In 2007, our total applications including regular, special, EOF, transfer, and readmits was 3,587. This year, as of yesterday, we have 4,917. That is an increase of 27%. That is a good thing because it means we are being sought after. But we need to drill down to see what that pool is like. We have to be considerate of quality and diversity and there are some wrinkles in the numbers that suggest the applicant pool is not as rich as we would like it to be. And that is something we will have to work on and I will give you two examples of how we are working on that. Tomorrow evening at my home I will entertain about 40 high achieving applicants to Ramapo College who have not yet decided to register here. We will have the Deans and some faculty who will have the opportunity to talk to them about why they should come to Ramapo College. But that does not mean that my sights and the sights of the Deans are only on elitism. We want and need to have a mix of students, but we have to be concerned about quality and we have to find out if there are reasons why students are choosing to go elsewhere. We have some indication that the current economic climate might be helpful to us because parents and students who might previously have gone to private institutions have decided to go to economically more advantageous public institutions. And by the way, in this country 75% of students are educated by public institutions. We do a majority of the work and it is only natural that we should get the bulk of the students. However, the students that are best qualified to attend colleges are still looking for special features that appeal to them and so, I suspect over the next little while, we will need to look at reinforcing our Honors program and the sorts of things that are attractive to students with high achievement and high aptitude.

**Student Affairs**
The completion of the College Park Apartment renovation is something we will very much look forward to. Those students who have managed to get relocated from the hotel where they spent last semester are looking forward to it even more. If you haven’t had the opportunity to walk up and see those renovations, I encourage you to do so because they really are quite striking. This is important because you may ask where did we get the money for this- and the answer is, we refinanced some of our bond issues and received an immediate windfall of between $4 and $5 million. We’ve used that money to renovate the College Park Apartments. We spent $17,000 per bed on the renovations which will increase the life of the College Park Apartments by 20-30 years. If we wanted to build new it would cost $100,000 per bed.

We’re also very much looking forward to the completion of the Sustainability Center and the groundbreaking of the Salameno Spirituality Center and the programming that will occur there. When Jackie and I were in India, we actually opened a Sustainable Living Center in one of the backwater areas outside Bangalore. This will be a study site for our students who go there on exchange and so we’ve entered into an arrangement with them where we will have companion programs and exchange programs with them. Our sustainability initiatives are not just academic. Beginning April 1, we will no longer be offering paper or plastic bags in the Pavilion Convenience Store. Instead, we will be
selling reusable bags made from recycled materials at a cost of $1.00. We will also have a promotion where you will receive a bag for FREE if you make a purchase on the first day of our new policy. We are also piloting a "no tray" day in our two meal plan dining rooms one day in April to cut down on the cost incurred to wash food trays.

**Academic Affairs**

**SEM Team**

Many of you have already been involved in the Strategic Enrollment Management process, the SEM Team, which has representatives from numerous departments. The idea is we are working together in large groups to try and mutually reinforce each other’s ideas. It guides the work of four working committees:

- Marketing and Admissions Committee
- Graduation and Retention Committee
- Scholarship Committee
- Planning Committee

These are very important committees because if we are going to reach our optimum student goals, we need to determine what is optimum and the strategy for achieving it. Ricardo has asked each of these committees to analyze existing data and policies in each of these areas, compare Ramapo trends with national trends and make recommendations on how those areas can be improved to enhance the mission of the College. All of those recommendations will go back to the Planning Committee and we will have a SEM Plan presented to the Cabinet in due course. Ricardo will be making campus-wide presentations on Strategic Enrollment Management in Laurel Hall on February 11th and 13th at 1:00. I would encourage you to attend if you are able.

**Pre-College Programs**

You will also know under the aegis of Academic Affairs that this summer we will be offering pre-college programs. These pre-college programs for rising high school juniors and seniors in good academic standing are being offered in summer 2008 through the Center for Innovative and Professional Learning under the direction of Rosa Diaz Mulryan. Three programs have been designed which offer students choices among courses bearing college credit and non-credit experiential courses. The School of Contemporary Arts, American and International Studies and Theoretical and Applied Sciences have been instrumental in designing these programs. The three programs include: Hands-On Contemporary Arts; Fossils to Forests: Field Studies in Changing Landscapes; and Enrichment in Reading and Writing/Cultural Enrichment and Literacy/Readings in Poetry/Film and Literature. We think these will be heavily sought after.

I want to identify the two themes that we have determined should guide these new initiatives we are attempting to promote. The first is that any new activity should focus on academics to the maximum extent possible and, at the very least, not be inconsistent with our academic goals. We have to make sure they pass through that filter. Secondly, if we are starting new programs, we need to make sure we are choosing those that have a long shelf-life. We don’t want to spend our time each summer developing brand new
programs. They will not be just academic; I will give you another example. We signed a contract with the Five Star Basketball Camp which is a premier sports camp for kids that has operated across the country for over 40 years and most campuses that have it, have had the camp for at least 10 years.

**SSHS**

SSHS is looking in a focused way at a new and exciting Masters Program in Educational Leadership. This program will provide an excellent opportunity for educators to upgrade their skills and, consequently, improve the delivery of educational services in the greater Ramapo community. And again, I want to mention we are going to focus on niche graduate programs—ones where we feel we can do a particularly good job and where there is a significant demand. And even though I mentioned our 15.9% increase in undergraduate enrollment in the past five years, I have no hidden agenda about extending that to any particular level. I don’t believe our undergraduate population can increase by very much more. However, there is a very real question as to whether we can significantly increase graduate programs, as long as we give them the right resources. And the second question, and one that goes back to our roots as a college, is whether returning adult learners can find a greater place here than they have in the past few years? But that will mean we will have to address some difficult questions about timetabling and the availability of classrooms.

SSHS hopes to receive support from the Foundation for "The Human Science Research Conference" in the summer of 2008. This event will attract national and international scholars in the Social and Behavioral Sciences. Ramapo Faculty will play a strong role at the conference and will demonstrate their scholarly talent. Events like this help showcase the College.

One of the questions we are going to be addressing as a College in several focus groups, very shortly, is something I have been working on with a committee and that is to try and develop an appreciation of how we can serve one another better. I want a broad complexion of the college to be involved in these discussions because I think we need to work on increasing the level of service to one another and to the outside world.

**AIS**

The AIS Colloquium will have the Pulitzer Prize winning poet, Natasha Trethewey, on campus to read from her book *Native Guard*.

**ASB**

The ASB Accreditation Plan was recently accepted by AACSB, formally establishing ASB as a candidate for initial accreditation almost a year earlier than we thought it would be. This is a major milestone in the long and complex process of earning accreditation from the world's leading business school accrediting body. We’re hoping in another year to be in a position to file our final Self Assessment which will lead to a campus visit by an AACSB assessment review team. Here I want to mention what a wonderful job our
programs have done in accreditation this past year. Teacher Education and Social Work received absolutely stellar reviews and I expect the same from our Nursing Program which will be evaluated on February 20th.

This summer will also be the official launch of the new Business Essentials Certificate Program designed to provide a basic, yet broad foundation in business principles to non-business-major students as well as to the non-traditional students in the surrounding community. I think there will be significant interest in this as well.

**International Initiative in TAS**

We have in place an operating faculty and student exchange agreement with Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, Ghana. Dr. Kofi Owusu-Daaku has spent the last two summers here teaching Anatomy and Physiology, and has asked to, again, spend the summer in residence here (with his wife, Professor Frances Owusu-Ansah, who teaches in the medical school there) to teach our students.

I also know we have three representatives from the nursing faculty who will travel this spring to Sierra Leone to explore the potential of establishing program exchanges with the nursing faculty there and helping rebuild their Masters program. We also have a nursing team going to Sri Lanka. After the tsunami, their education infrastructure was destroyed and they will have the opportunity to work on rebuilding that.

The School of TAS now has faculty representing some ten countries. Dean Langer has formed the “TAS International Education/Science, Mathematics, Nursing Committee” consisting of those faculty to discuss ways for the College to establish inter-institutional and international affiliations.

One of the great advantages I found in traveling to universities in India and China at the beginning of the January was that it gave me the opportunity to spend time with our students and be able to speak with their parents about the efficacy of these exchanges. I know we had a half dozen students who wanted to go India this past semester, but their parents were very nervous about their children spending 105 days in a country such as India about which they knew very little. My ability to go there and experience it firsthand gives me more credibility than I would otherwise have in meeting and speaking with those parents. More of those enriching experiences, as I have said since I first arrived at Ramapo, are what we need to pursue.

**Potter Library**

Over the next couple of years, the George T Potter library will be participating in a statewide effort to shift New Jersey academic libraries from individually supported Integrated Library Systems (ILS) to a shared Open Library System (OLS) environment using “open source” software. This will mean shared catalog access and borrowing privileges between participating schools and shared personnel and management support. It should mean and will mean better access to other state college and university collections for both students and faculty. For the library and college, this will mean tremendous cost savings for personnel development and technical support. This project is
being led by the Library Deans from NJIT and TCNJ through the Virtual Academic Library Environment (VALE) Consortium of New Jersey. Liz Siecke, our own Librarian, was accepted to the 2008 Frye Leadership Institute at Emory University and will center her work on helping the Potter Library and other participating libraries make this transition.

Finance and Administration
I asked for my own interest what square footage we added to the campus since the year 2000. Any guesses? 870,883 gross square feet including:

- Parking Garage
- Laurel Hall
- Thomases Commons
- Addition to Bradley Center
- Pavilion/Fitness Center
- Observatory
- Maple Hall
- Anisfield School of Business
- The Overlook
- Greenhouse
- Havemeyer House

I had a meeting with the Governor three weeks ago yesterday in which he talked about the need for the State to do something about its debt service costs because almost 10% of the State’s revenue goes to servicing the state debt. I was able to tell him how envious I was of that ratio at only 10%. He was a little shocked, but it gave me the opportunity to talk with him about how the failure of the state to provide any capital funds has meant we really had to burden ourselves and no one more than Ramapo College.

We have the new track under construction; an eight lane state-of-the-art track with new artificial turf field. I am excited to see that and what sort of events we can have as a result of having it.

Institutional Advancement
You will have seen the reports of the endowment growth at certain colleges and universities across the country. That attracted the attention of numerous senators and two of them have written to colleges whose endowments are $500 million or more. It does raise a very serious question which I think is going to occupy a significant place in the public debate agenda in the next few years. When you have a $34 billion endowment as Harvard does, you really do have to ask what they are doing with the money and why their tuition fees are as high as they are. One of the perversions effected by that is that private institutions now are in a better place to provide access to deserving but financially disadvantaged applicants than the public colleges are, but that by no means takes care of the problem.

I expect to see much debate about that. And I hope someone asks us because the money that we have made available through Institutional Advancement and the Foundation has a tremendous effect here. I often say to donors who come from other Ivy League places don’t put your money there because it won’t have the same impact that it will have here. Think about Ramapo College because we will use it in a way that is tangible and
ascertainable immediately. Our endowment has increased since 2005 on the order of 60% and is headed up towards $10 million.

Institutional Advancement is also highly focused on securing federal appropriations for the College. We have requests in two appropriation bills. The first is to fund the renovation of our Chemistry lab, valued at about $500,000. It will be support for that initiative, but not nearly enough. Then there is a $350,000 appropriation request to try and improve our nursing program. We match it very much with all the data that is emerging about the shortage of nursing. We are grateful that Congressman Garrett is giving us support in both those initiatives and we also have sponsorship from Senators Lautenberg and Menendez.

**Liberal Arts Mission**

Now you’ll notice there has been significant reference to our professional programs throughout. And, I know that there is some concern about Ramapo as a liberal arts college perhaps going back on its mission by laying such great stock in its professional programs. I have said before that I don’t believe that and I want to explain why I don’t believe it. I want to explain by focusing on learning outcomes. A number of us attended the American Association of College and Universities Conference and one of the presenters was from Miami Dade College, which is a remarkable organization that has eight campuses and 180,000 students. Now many of those are returning adult learners, many of whom you would expect to be interested in applied knowledge. And yet what you find is a renewed intensive emphasis on liberal education. That is because when Miami Dade examined the learning outcomes they hoped to effect, they discovered that those are more naturally aligned with liberal education that with applied education. I want to read them to you and I want you to think of the four pillars of a Ramapo education and see if, in fact, they fit. I believe they are fragments of the objectives we have set for ourselves. The learning outcomes that one would hope to achieve:

1. To communicate effectively using listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.
2. To use quantitative analytical skills to evaluate and process numerical data.
3. To solve problems using critical and creative thinking and scientific reasoning.
4. To formulate strategies to locate, evaluate and apply information.
5. To demonstrate knowledge of diverse cultures including global and historical perspectives
6. To create strategies that can be used to fulfill personal civic and social responsibilities
7. To demonstrate knowledge of ethical thinking and its application to issues in society.
8. To use computers and emerging technologies effectively.
9. To demonstrate an appreciation for aesthetics and creative activities.
10. To describe how natural systems function and recognize the impact of humans on the environment.

I suggest to you that if you take the two principles which we say are pervasive to our strategic plan and the three goals that we identified, all ten of these points are captured by them. And, it reinforces our own understanding of the value of liberal education,
something that I think is important that we not shrink from. We must continue to advance it.

The Future
So briefly, I want to talk about the future. You have all been asked to go through a budget and planning exercise now that will be different from any that you have done in the past. All the units are being asked to confer themselves and present plans that relate to the strategic plan. Budgetary decisions will be made centrally and with the units based on those plans. But, the strategic plan will drive, ultimately, the process and the agenda.

It will not be an easy agenda because the Governor indicated that the most we could hope for would be flat funding, in other words, no increases of any kind such as for the salary increases we know we must pay or for the natural increases that occur in such items as utilities. If you do the arithmetic, what it comes out to, in effect is a 15% cut in appropriations. Now the appropriations make up only 30% of our operating budget and our operating budget is $117 million. That we will have to make up again in a combination of tuition increases, expenditure reductions and other revenue increases that we ourselves can manage.

We will not be able to do this all in one year. We will have to look outward and develop a plan ourselves that takes account of not just one year’s potential revenue increases but three to five years. It is going to be exacting as it has been in the past and we will come through it as we have done in the past. The important thing is that we plan for the future directly and not simply as a reaction to what it is the state lumbers us with.

I have already identified the new venture principles; that they must be consistent with our academic mission and advance it wherever possible and not be inconsistent with it, and secondly that any new venture must be renewable, something we can see over time.

And that will lead me to just a couple other examples. I had a meeting two days ago with the CEO of a hospital and to that CEO I made a proposal. The suggestion was that we could take a number of their personnel who wanted to get four year nursing degrees and we could train them in basic science, nursing science and general education. We could do that somewhere off-site and if they would commit the capital to build a clinical training facility and provide the clinical teachers we would in turn go into partnership with them in continuing education and a number of other ventures. There are three important things about that, again in no particular order of priority. The first is that it is significantly problematic that we have so few nurses given the need we will have for them societally, so we are filling a paramount social need if we can increase the number of qualified nurses. Secondly, this should generate some revenue for the College. And thirdly, it enables us to go into partnership with another major entity in the county.

We also have discussions going with Bergen Community College about how we can improve relationships with them and streamline potential joint programs. These are the sorts of things that I believe will come out of the Strategic Plan and we are very much looking forward to the types of advice you give us as part of the planning process.
I want to end by talking about the capital campaign that I hope we will be able to embark on within a very few months. In a sense, we are never out of a campaign. Formal capital campaigns are sort of signifiers for the work that we do all the time, but they have special needs themselves. In order for us to enter into a major comprehensive campaign, and we have not been in one for many years, two critical steps must be completed. One is slightly easier than the other. First, we know that we must cumulatively secure $10 million in lead gifts. Now, these will most likely be gifts for the Anisfield School of Business, the Salameno Spirituality Center, the Sustainability Education Center and the renovation of our science labs. In other words, where you have immediately ascertainable high profile foci; people do not give unrestricted funds in even small amounts to colleges. But as I have said to you, the receipt of those designated funds in those designated areas helps us relieve the stress on the overall operating budget by being able to apply the designated funds there. This early support will also have to include endowed funds for student scholarships and academic support. We also must conduct a formal feasibility study and this is where I need your help.

This study can take place as soon as the first set of three year initiatives is presented and approved under the strategic plan. And the reason for that, is that the components for a fundraising campaign must be directly linked to the approved strategic initiatives. In other words, neither I nor Cathy Davey as the Vice President of Institutional Advancement are going on a frolic of our own with our own ideas about where the money needs to be raised. We are going to go on behalf of you and the College to ask prospective donors to apply their funds where they are most needed. The Institutional Advancement Team along with the Executive Leadership of the Foundation Board will help us. They will cultivate and solicit members of their constituencies, but in order to be successful and strive for the largest possible campaign, we will need to increase our development staff, we will need to provide leadership advisory roles to our alumni in each school, and we will need to secure a significant Challenge Grant allowing us to dramatically increase the number of first time capital donors, and we will need to have that information from you.

My bottom line comment to you is that despite the volatility in the world in which we live and find ourselves, and despite the fact that we have some challenges to meet, I think we do have an awfully positive environment here at Ramapo College. We have a lot to look forward to and I am looking forward to working with you to achieve that.