STATE OF THE COLLEGE ADDRESS
February 28, 2007

Introduction

As you know, this address was slated originally to be delivered on February 14th. Had it proceeded, it would have been the briefest on record. “THE STATE OF THE COLLEGE IS: CLOSED”. I can only thank you for attending today and hope that you are not wistfully longing for similar brevity at the conclusion of my remarks.

My address will be divided into 5 parts.

1. Our institutional picture at Ramapo
2. The public higher education picture in NJ
3. The Planning Horizon
4. Sore Spots and Misconceptions
5. A Personal Note

1. The Institutional Picture at Ramapo

Budget Update

I don’t need to remind you that last year saw the largest cut ever in state funding to New Jersey’s public colleges. This year, state appropriations make up only 30% of the college operating budget, down from 54% only eleven years ago. The challenge of meeting these cuts was met due to the hard work and planning of faculty, staff and students working together with the administration and the Board under the guidance of Chair Thomas Zelante, Esq. and his fellow trustees. More about next year’s budget later.

CEP Update/Banner Update

Our Curriculum Enhancement Plan (CEP) was fully implemented and is working well albeit with some wrinkles. The Banner computing system was installed with a minimum of disruption thanks to the hard work and dedication of a large number of staff.
Strategic Planning Task Force

With membership drawn from a broad range of college constituencies, the task force is hard at work to develop a refreshed plan that will serve the college for the next five years. More about that later.

Spring 2007 Enrollment Highlights

- 320 new students (262 Transfers, 50 Re-admits, and 8 First-time freshmen) enrolled for Spring 2007 compared to 274 new students in Spring 2006 (an increase of 17%)
- Full-time enrollment for Spring 2007 is 86.3% compared to 79.9% for Spring 2006, which represents an increase of 318 full-time students compared to Spring 2006
- First-Year retention is very strong: of the freshman cohort that began their college career in Fall 2006, 96.6% returned for the spring

Fall 2006 Enrollment Highlights

Enrollment records were exceeded again this year. Overall, the College enrolled more first-time freshmen (814); more freshmen of color (201); and the highest number of Hispanic students in the College’s history (413).

Housing Update

Ramapo College has 90 percent of freshmen and more than 60 percent of the total student populations choosing to live on campus. Laurel Hall, a 432-bed suite style residence facility fully opened this fall bringing the number of students residing on campus to 2,619, an increase of 5.7% over spring 2006.

Recognition/Updates

- Ramapo College of New Jersey was listed in the February 2007 issue of Kiplinger’s Personal Finance Magazine as among the “100 Best Values in Public Colleges.” The ranking process places an emphasis on strong academics, as well as great value, with academic quality carrying more weight than cost. Kiplinger’s looked at more than 500 public four-year colleges and universities in the country, using measures including the percentage of freshmen scoring 600 or higher on the verbal and math components of the SAT, student/faculty ratio and graduation rates. This is the second year in a row that Ramapo College received the designation. The College’s ranking climbed to 66, improved from 78 in 2006.

- The Anisfield School of Business application for AACSB (Association for the Advancement of Collegiate Schools of Business) accreditation candidacy, the first step in the process, was accepted in October 2006. Carl Gooding, a professor at Jacksonville State University in Alabama, has been assigned as Ramapo’s mentor for the pre-accreditation phase of the project. Gooding has served as dean of business at other
institutions. In addition, he has served on the AACSB board and has held a number of committee responsibilities with the association.

- We are also actively pursuing accreditation in our Teacher Education and Social Work programs.

- The Admissions pages on Ramapo College’s Web site were recognized as among the most highly rated in the country by the National Research Center for College & University Admissions (NRCCUA) 8th Annual Enrollment Power Index® (EPI), an analysis of the admissions Web sites that provide information to potential students and move them from prospect to applicant. The study graded the sites for each institution on a 100-point scale. Ramapo College was one of only 157 that received an A.

- Ramapo’s New/Media Web site also recently received a 2007 CASE District II Accolades Silver Award and the Web Marketing Association presented its 2006 Web award for outstanding achievement in Website development to Ramapo College.

Cost Control Measures

The following cost control efforts and results were submitted to NJASCU (New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities):

1. Increased student enrollment brought additional tuition dollars.
2. Reducing every unit’s non-salary expenses resulted in more than $1.2 million in savings.
3. Reduced overtime and reduced part-time, temporary agency and student aide hires brought $211,000 in savings.
4. Ramapo College suspended faculty range adjustments, froze 23 vacant positions and encouraged employee furloughs amounting to savings of $1,373,000.
5. A Ramapo College Energy Savings Plan through which employees are encouraged to cooperate in cutting power use brought more than $63,000 in savings.
6. Reduced college advertising dollars by $170,000.
7. In November 2006, the New Jersey Educational Facilities Authority refinanced $106 million in outstanding college bonds, substitution lower for higher interest debt. The transaction resulted in over $3.5 million in present value savings.
8. An insurance policy was substituted for outstanding debt service reserve funds. This transaction, which did not entail the issuance of new debt, freed up more than $5 million in funds that will be used to renovate student housing.

Construction Update

- At a ceremony celebrating the “Topping Off” of the Anisfield School of Business, the College announced receipt of additional significant gifts. Ina Anisfield Meyers, a distant relative of Richard Anisfield, donated $2 million in support of the ASB. Meyers established an endowment of $1 million toward the Steven Meyers Chair in Finance and an additional $1 million to fund the Anisfield-Meyers Family Scholarships. In addition, the College has received anonymous gifts in trust toward
the ASB. The estimation of the total value of gifts received toward the School is in excess of $6.5 million. Completion of the building is slated for fall of 2007.

- The College participated in a groundbreaking ceremony for the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission’s Center for Environmental and Scientific Education. A distinctive feature of the facility is an observatory with a state-of-the-art telescope and a 6-meter retractable dome. The Center includes three classrooms, a wet laboratory, a classroom/laboratory, administrative offices and storage space. The building, constructed to “green” standards, enhances the educational relationship with Ramapo College.

Faculty

- Professors Art Felix and Shalom Gorewitz were honored as Thomases Award recipients.
- James Hoch, an assistant professor of literature was awarded a $20,000 National Endowment for the Humanities Literature Fellowship.

Save-the-Date

African Ancestry Month – February events found on Web site

Galleries: An Apparently Unimportant Event: Self-Taught from the Centre d’Art in the 1940s and 50s. This exhibit in the Kresge and Pascal Galleries will continue through March 7. Drawn from the private collection of film director Jonathan Demme, this historic exhibition features renowned Haitian artists brought to the fore by American critic and Ramapo College donor Selden Rodman while he was co-director of the Centre d’Art in Haiti. Included are such masters as Hector Hyppolite, Philome Obin, Wilson Bigaud and Castera Bazile.

Saturday, March 3: Distinguished Citizens Award Dinner, Rockleigh Country Club, 6 p.m. Four distinguished citizens will be honored for their leadership and commitment to higher education: John D. McMahon, president and CEO of Orange and Rockland Utilities, Inc.; A.J. Sabath ’93, chief of staff to the president of the New Jersey Senate and alumnus of Ramapo College; and Lawrence and Theresa Salameno, key supporters of Ramapo College who have been instrumental in the establishment of an on-campus Spiritual Center.

Sixth Annual State of the Africana Professoriate Conference: March 29 and 30. The theme of this year’s conference will be “The Black Familial Structure.” Movie director, author and activist Melvin Van Peebles will deliver the keynote address.

Saturday, April 21: Athletic Hall of Fame Dinner, Bradley Center, 5:30 p.m. The following 2007 inductees will be honored: Glenn Burdk ’80, Football; Rich Hill ’96, Basketball’ Nansha Kalonji ’03, Soccer; Mary Mott ’84, Swimming; David Allan “Skip” Storch 80, Service; 1991 Men’s Basketball Team.
Commencement: Friday, May 11

2. The Public Higher Education Picture in New Jersey

During the two decades since 1986, New Jersey’s nine State Colleges and Universities have flourished under a structure which has minimized centralized regulation in favor of governance by a Board of Trustees. Indeed, a scientific poll conducted in 2005 found that New Jersey citizens would prefer trustees over State government by a margin of 4 to 1 as overseers of the investment in public colleges.

As I have mentioned before, the Economist magazine, not known for dispensing praise lightly, concluded that America has the finest system of higher education in the world due to wide access combined with overall high quality nurtured by a foundation of mission differentiation and minimal government regulation.”

Since 1986, New Jersey’s nine public colleges and universities have increased undergraduate full-time enrollment by 15,000. African American and Hispanic students combined are 26% of the undergraduate student body, up from 16%. Over the past 10 years alone, baccalaureate degrees are up 39%; residential students are up 37% and graduate students are up 26%.

NJ Statistics Compared with Other States

College Participation

- College participation of students from low-income families 1st
- Percent of ninth-graders graduating from high school within four years 1st
- Percent of ninth-graders immediately entering college after graduation 1st
- Percent of those who started college returning after their freshman year 1st
- Percent who finished college within “150%” time (B.A. in 6 years; A.A. in 3 years) 8th

Demand and Capacity to Serve College-Bound Students

- Net out-migration (loss) of high school graduates attending college 1st
- Public four-year college/university enrollment (capacity) per capita (1,000 residents) 45th
- Public four-year college/university capacity per 100 high school completers 50th
- Number of institutions of higher education (58) 29th
- Total population of the State 11th
- Projected change 2002-2017 in number of all high school graduates NJ 13.7%
- Projected change 2002-2017 in number of all high school graduates US 8%

State and Local Spending on Education

- K-12 spending per capita 5th
- K-12 spending per pupil 3rd
- Higher education spending per capita 30th
• Higher education spending as percent of general spending
  42\textsuperscript{nd}
• Higher education spending per $1,000 personal income
  43\textsuperscript{rd}

**Tuition, Fees and Student Aid**

• Tuition and fees charged to state residents attending public colleges and universities
  As full-time undergraduates ($8,180 on average)
  2\textsuperscript{nd}

• Productivity among public baccalaureate and master’s institutions
  3\textsuperscript{rd}

3. **The Planning Horizon**

**State Budget**

Governor Corzine’s budget proposal provides for an increase in state appropriations for public colleges. Unfortunately, Ramapo’s increase of 3.1% is smaller than most because we have been assessed a kind of tax to compensate for what the state believes is a subsidy to the full cost of educating out-of-state students (of which we have a proportionately larger share than the other colleges).

There are many comments I might make about this “tax”, but there is immediately a calculation problem that has come to light. Here is how the state approached the issue.

• A cost-of-education is calculated for each institution by adding the FY ’07 adjusted appropriation to the FY ’07 projected tuition and fees as submitted on the FY ’08 budget request. The cost-to-educate is then divided by fall ’06 FTE enrollment to derive an average cost per student. The undergraduate non-resident tuition rate is then subtracted from the average cost per student. The resulting number is then multiplied by the GTE number of out-of-state undergraduate students. The Treasurer’s office plans to repeat this exercise for fiscal years ’09 and ’10 as well, by which time they believe they will have eliminated the state’s subsidy for out-of-state students.

• While the whole formula is subject to question in many ways; the Presidents have identified a particular anomaly which is causing the very high amount of taxation experienced by many of us. That particular anomaly is that, while fees are included in the calculation of cost-to-educate, they are not included with the non-resident tuition rate in calculating what out-of-state students pay. If fees were included on both sides of the equation, or left out of both sides of the equation, everybody’s “tax” would decline very significantly. We are currently working this analysis through with a formula which would result in a more positive outcome for Ramapo.

A welcome feature of the Governor’s announcement is that the State has committed to paying increased fringe benefit costs arising as a result of the collective agreements with unionized employees. At present, CWA members are considering a four year contract offer that could pay salary increases of 3%, 3%, 3.5% and 3.5% respectively. If we assume a comparable AFT
contract settlement, we have some idea of the deficit we will have to make up by a combination of reducing expenditures and increasing tuition and fees.

Our planning work in the budget began early this year and a team made up of Beth Barnett, Dorothy Echols Tobe, Maria Krupin, Babs Varano and Nancy Mackin are meeting weekly to develop our budget strategy.

**Strategic Plan**

The Strategic Plan Task Force has met many times as a whole and in sub-groups, since the fall. Members are:

- Robert Amon: Vice-President, Student Government Association
- Beth Barnett: Provost and Vice-President for Academic Affairs
- Henry Vance Davis: Dean, School of Social Science & Human Services
- Mark Grannon: Member, Ramapo College Foundation Board of Governors
- Elizabeth Jocham: Unit Secretary, Specialized Services
- Stephen Klein: Professor, Anisfield School of Business
- Mary-Ann Long: Independent Living Counselor, Specialized Services
- Peter P. Mercer (Chair): President
- Emma Rainforth: Assistant Professor, School of Theoretical & Applied Science
- Dorothy Echols Tobe: Chief Planning Officer
- Babette Varano: Director, Institutional Research and Planning
- Vernon C. Walton: Vice-Chair, Ramapo College Board of Trustees

The Task Force expects to release the initial draft report late this week and hold open sessions to receive comments on March 19th and 20th. Written comments are also invited and, after receiving them, the Task Force will review them to produce a second draft to be released for further commentary in April.

4. **Some Sore Spots and Misconceptions**

(a) The Study Abroad Program and International Education

A review of the Study Abroad Program was formally carried out by Dr. David Larsen, Vice President of Arcadia University. His report raised a number of issues and these were considered by an international committee struck in early 2006. Its members were selected because of their international experience. Most had lived abroad, were fluent in more than one language and had experience as an international student.

Among the questions they were asked to examine were the following:

1. What exposure do we want our students to have to international affairs and issues?
2. How can we improve integration of Study Abroad into the curriculum?
3. How do we address the foreign language issue?
4. Does the general education program provide adequate coverage of international and intercultural issues?
5. Do we sufficiently integrate discussions of nationalism, fundamentalism and global economic imperatives for example?

The committee was also asked to develop a policies and procedures manual, to recommend criteria for developing and monitoring exchange relationships and to suggest a process for providing and reviewing short and long term programs.

The Committee began its work by surveying faculty to get a measure of the extent to which their curriculum and scholarly work included an international component. It also looked at exchange programs in other Colleges and Universities. Because of the moratorium that I as President imposed on Ramapo’s short term programs, the Committee at my request spent a great deal of time developing the policies and procedures manual and analyzing “best practices”. The manual was completed last semester and sent to ARC, the faculty assembly executive council and each academic unit. I understand that the faculty assembly will discuss it at its meeting on March 7th.

I have previously stated my position publicly that the manual should be agreed to and adopted before we sponsor our own programs anew. That has not happened yet but I hope it can happen soon. Once it occurs, there is no reason why faculty should not be able to make proposals and submit them to convening group and ARC review. The international committee would then ensure that the proposals conform to the criteria.

Within the next few weeks, I also hope we can have a support person for the office and review the duties and responsibilities of the director and assistant director. I would like to see a start to our program this summer - one or two - and expand to five or six next summer. Based on this year’s experience, I am also hopeful that forty students will enroll in semester programs in the next academic year.

**The Roukema Center**

The history of the Marge Roukema Center for International Education began in January 2001 when the College received an $800,000 appropriation for the Center for International Education and Entrepreneurship (we had asked for 1.5 million!). As the appropriation request specifically enumerates, the Center concept was developed by faculty from both American and International Studies and the School of Administration and Business. The building to have the Center was to be a modest four-storey addition to an existing academic building. It was estimated to be a 12,500 square foot building and a $3 million project.

Under the original plan, the $3 million was to come half from the College and half from federal funding. The request also specified that all overhead costs were to be the responsibility of the College. Our own internal discussions reflected the expectation that the Center would be self-sustaining from fee-based programming, workshops and conferences.
The request included money for salaries and fringe benefits, and for equipment, fixtures and furnishings for classrooms and labs. One of the purposes behind the request was to provide for the salary of the Director of International Education and her support person. Thus, their salaries were paid out of the grant and an amount equal to their salaries was then put into a reserve budget to support the debt service on the building.

The budget period for the grant expires at the end of June and the balance is being spent now through Dick Robert’s office on the Center’s common space and the rooms it will use for its programs.

(b) Classification of Executive/Administrative/Managerial Staff

Ever since my arrival, I have been perplexed by reports that show Ramapo College as having a disproportionately high number of administrators. The IPEDS (Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System). The HR sector group has deliberated on the definition and categorization of employees and, in the result, Ramapo’s numbers of “Executive/Administrative/Managerial” employees fell by over 50% from 84 to 40. It transpires that those dropped from this category should have been, and now are, categorized as professional support and technical staff.

5. A Personal Note

My initial contract, when I started in July 2005, was for two years. They have been challenging years but I believe that the greatest strides forward are likely to be made under such circumstances. According to a recent Conference Board report on how employers rate the skills of new four year college graduates, the highest perceived deficits are in written and oral communication and in leadership skills. In other words, in the very areas where a liberal education lays greatest emphasis.

There is much to be done here and I believe we can work together to bring Ramapo College to the next level. Accordingly, I will formally be requesting an extension of my contract by the Board of Trustees.

Peter Mercer
February 28, 2007