PRESIDENT’S INTRODUCTION

What an exciting year this has been for Bristol Community College (BCC). It was a milestone marker for the College as we celebrated our 50th Anniversary. From relatively modest beginnings in “Year I” in 1965-66 at one location on Durfee Street, the 50th year now sees our growth as the largest higher education institution in Southeastern Massachusetts, the second-largest (in headcount) among the 15 Massachusetts community colleges, and one of the top five largest community colleges in New England.

As our BCC Family celebrated all year, we identified hallmarks of the institution’s glorious history. One noteworthy feature is the geographical evolution of the College. The complete move from Durfee Street to Elsbree Street occurred in stages, then phased expansions to New Bedford, Attleboro, Davol Street (Fall River), and Taunton marked key points in BCC history.

In fact, the move to our new location at the Silver City Galleria in Taunton on 3 June 2016, represented one of the culminating points and landmark events in our 50th celebration. The June opening in Taunton represents a unique innovation. This may be the only example in New England of a community college’s campus-level operational presence in a mall. It breaks new ground and opens up a host of possibilities for the College and our students. Our presence helps to make this location a “Destination Mall” as opposed to only retail businesses.

While the ribbon-cutting for our Taunton Center marked one of the concluding events in our year-long Anniversary, one of the beginnings of the celebration saw Governor Charlie Baker visit Fall River in August 2015 to “throw the switch” on our new Solar Canopy. This symbolic occasion underlines the College’s priorities in sustainability and green energy. Covering more than five acres, the Solar Canopy provides up to 70 percent of the electricity needs of the Elsbree Street Campus. These priorities match Governor Baker’s priorities, and he expressed his support for our efforts and pointed out that because of BCC’s model, he has ordered the MBTA to build solar canopies over its parking lots.

In like manner, Governor Baker came back to BCC on 14 July 2016 to participate in the opening of our new academic building in health and sciences. Even before being built, this building earned major state, national, and international recognition not only for its unique design but also for its extraordinary “green” features: Net Zero Energy and Platinum LEED certified. Although technically outside the parameters of our 2015-16 Anniversary, this July event with the Governor served to emphatically punctuate our 50th celebration. BCC continues its leadership throughout New England in addressing environmental concerns.

Of course, the entire 2015-16 academic year focused on the 50th Anniversary. For instance, a special “Charter Day” at each location emphasized the universal nature of this landmark occasion for the College. Also, Professor Emerita Deborah Lawton compiled a collection of memories about the College in a landmark book. In addition, the annual Foundation Gala adopted the 50th theme, and the Alumni Association led efforts to create “Paragon Awards” and “Service Awards” to recognize the outstanding contributions across the years by our alumni/ae. Lively use of social media kept the anniversary in the forefront as did our new, award-winning promotion, “Because Bristol,” which highlights our alumni/ae who have attained success (partly
or largely) because of the BCC experience. To help conclude the anniversary celebration, the College produced a spectacular “Golden Opportunity” dinner-dance that attracted more than 225 members of the community. Now, we look forward to the next fifty years in BCC’s remarkable history.

Creating an inclusive, transparent process to develop a new Strategic Plan highlighted my efforts throughout this entire academic year. Several draft versions incorporated extensive data and information from many focus groups inside and outside of the College as well as across a broad geographical spectrum. The institutional Strategic Plan serves as the College’s “ADF” [All-Directional Finding] homing beacon to keep us on course and to bring us “home,” that is, successful accomplishment of every goal and objective. Two expert consultants helped guide the process. The new plan is excellent, and it has already earned the approval of our Board of Trustees as well as “interim” approval of the Department of Higher Education (DHE). We anticipate final approval when the Board of Higher Education (BHE) meets in October.

A significant strength, among many, of our new Strategic Plan centers on the close linkages between our BCC goals and the statewide BHE priorities identified in The Vision Project. In fact, these direct connections attracted the attention of DHE/BHE officials when we met with them to present our draft document. Of course, the integration of institutional and state goals is not – and should never be – a remarkable thing! The enclosed materials address the specific goals of the BCC (draft) Strategic Plan as well as the College’s accomplishments in meeting the goals of The Vision Project. It is important to note that consanguinity not only reinforces the DHE/BHE – BCC collaborative partnership but also emphasizes the shared priorities of both partners. In other words, together, we have articulated the most important rationale of public higher education: fostering “student success.”

This year, in a key decision, I moved Advising to Academic Affairs. This shift enabled this critically-important support for students to become even more closely intertwined with our academic offerings. As a part of this move, specific academic advisors were dedicated to a specific academic division. This served to integrate Advising responsibilities with unique curriculum requirements. In another related shift, Advising assumed responsibilities for New Student Orientation. Research illuminates the importance of orientation for student success, particularly if it incorporates academic content. The College continues to explore the possibility of identifying orientation as a mandate for all new students.

This year, I announced my intention to retire on August 1, 2017. That date coincides with the conclusion of my seventeenth year as President of Bristol Community College. What a remarkable ride it has been; however, our new BCC Strategic Plan (approved and confirmed by the Board of Trustees) and my FY17 goals (to be approved and confirmed by the Board of Trustees) map out an ambitious agenda for the coming year. It has been an honor for me to work alongside an outstanding and immense corps of professionals - “Colleagues in Learning” - across these years. For example, the pages of this Annual Report are replete with details of the remarkable initiatives and accomplishments of our BCC Family. Also I am deeply grateful to be the beneficiary of the extraordinary leadership and guidance of our Board of Trustees and Chair Joseph Marshall. I continue to rely on their support and to test their patience. Go Bristol Bayhawks!