

THE FIRST 25 YEARS

*Rappahannock Community College*  
THE FIRST 25 YEARS

*Rappahannock Community College*  
THE FIRST 25 YEARS

*Written by*  
Ron Carter

*Based on research by*  
John Wilson

*Illustrations by*  
Kathryn Jones Humphreys

*Book design by*  
McFadden Design

*Printed by*  
Richmond Engraving Company, Inc.



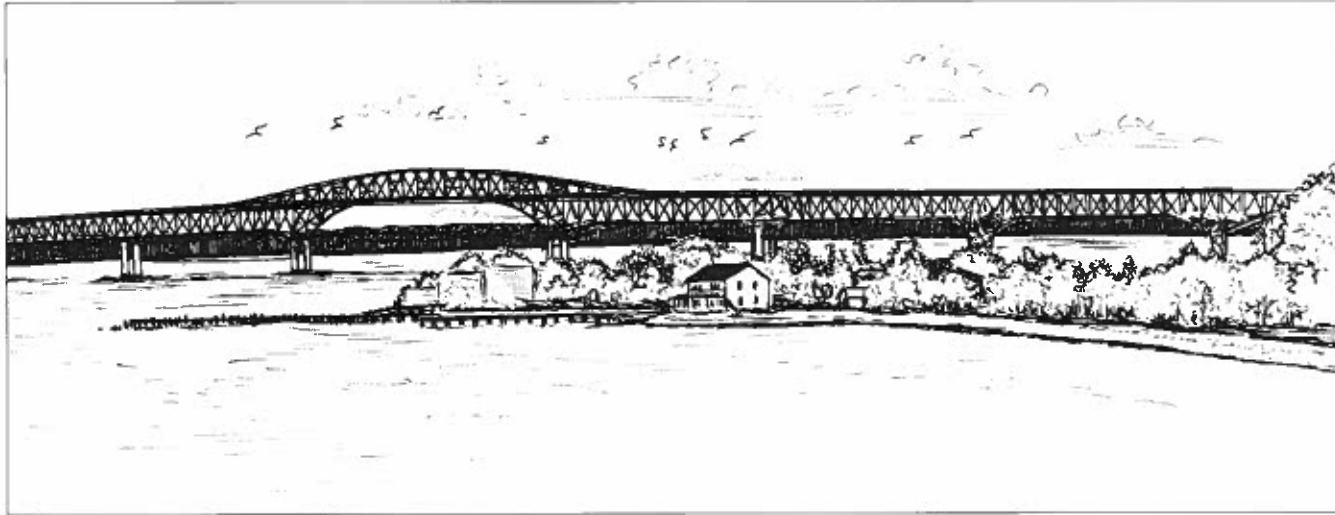
## DEDICATION

Many are they who worked to bring a college to the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula and many more whose untiring efforts brought it through the difficult years of early development.

This history is dedicated to all of them and to a very special Virginian, Governor Mills E. Godwin, Jr. Gentleman, orator, author, legislator, statesman, he had the vision and gave to it the leadership to make our dream, Rappahannock Community College, a reality.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Chapter I</i>	
Building Bridges	Page 1
<i>Chapter II</i>	
The 200-Year Journey	Page 5
<i>Chapter III</i>	
From Mortar to Mortarboard	Page 9
<i>Chapter IV</i>	
Weathering Storms	Page 13
<i>Chapter V</i>	
Building Better Bridges	Page 17
<i>Chapter VI</i>	
The Tide Turns	Page 21
<i>Chapter VII</i>	
Looking Ahead	Page 25



*The Robert O. Norris, Jr. Bridge connects the lower Northern Neck to the Middle Peninsula and the Rappahannock Community College Glenns Campus.*

# I.

## BUILDING BRIDGES

For nearly three centuries the Rappahannock River was the only highway between the Northern Neck and the Middle Peninsula. Although residents of both regions looked to the river and its tributaries for sustenance and although family and political ties often reached across the water, regular commerce between the two regions was limited. Ferries made the crossing at various points along both shores, but travel by ferry was tedious, time-consuming, and at the whim of wind and weather. Steamboats zigzagged from wharf to wharf, stopping for livestock, produce, and passengers and carrying them to Baltimore, the area's main commercial center. On the Middle Peninsula, however, residents of the southernmost counties — Mathews and Gloucester, primarily — did their buying and selling in Hampton Roads.

Then, in the early 1900s, the first bridges were built, linking the two peninsulas geographically. But these early wooden structures — as, indeed, the later steel and concrete spans that replaced them — did little to bridge the social, political, and economic fissures that had

developed, separating the interests of the two regions. Bringing the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula together took something more than highways across the water. It took a shared vision, a vision first articulated by Thomas Jefferson in his proposal for the creation of 24 “district colleges” which would place the opportunity for higher education “within a day’s ride of every man’s door.”

In September of 1969, representatives of the boards of supervisors for each of the 13 Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula counties met in Urbanna to create a local board for a community college that would at last, for these rural Tidewater Virginia communities, bring to fruition Jefferson’s dream. The “Northern Neck Area Community College,” as it was then known, was to be part of the newly-created Virginia Community College System, whose first chancellor, Dr. Dana B. Hamel, was present at that September meeting. Bringing the 13 counties together had been an arduous task, and creating a college to meet the diverse needs of the population would prove to be just as arduous.





Planning for the institution that was to become Rappahannock Community College actually began in 1964, two years before Virginia decided to climb onto the national community college bandwagon and create a statewide system. In 1964, the Virginia General Assembly established a state Board of Technical Education and announced that it would accept applications from communities seeking a technical college. The Northern Neck Regional Planning and Economic Development Commission (today, known as the Northern Neck Planning District Commission), representing the counties of Lancaster, Northumberland, Richmond, and Westmoreland, had for some time been considering the possibility of establishing a technical college in the Northern Neck. At its quarterly meeting on January 5, 1965, the commission's vice chairman, Walther B. Fidler, conveyed the state board's plan and urged the members present to apply for a technical college. Chairman Carl Flemer, Jr., turned the project over to the commission's Committee on Health, Education and Public Welfare, chaired by Richard W. Gouldin, and the campaign for a college was off and running.

Soon, other counties joined the effort, beginning with King George and Essex. An application signed by representatives of the six counties was submitted to Dr. Hamel, then director of the Department of Technical Education, on the day of the deadline. Shortly thereafter, Middlesex County came on board.

Applying for a college was just the beginning of the process. The state wanted assurances of an enrollment of 400 within four years of the school's establishment. Surveys were conducted to determine student interest, local employment needs, and the willingness of local industry to provide support. Gouldin credited the enthusiasm and interest of local governing bodies and the communities with making the college a reality. ". . . if it hadn't been for them," he stated, "we wouldn't have a campus here [in Warsaw] today." He cited Walther Fidler for his "tremendous help throughout" the process and

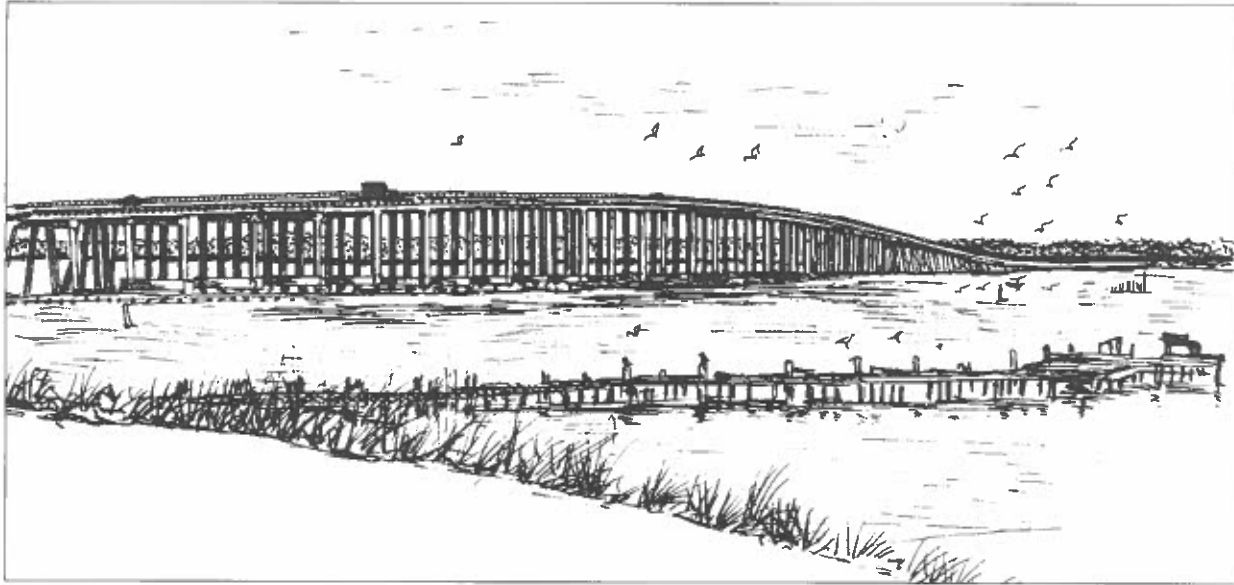
recalled the critical contributions of Jack Mullin, Richard Farmar, Jr., Marshall Coggin, H. Marston Smith, Dr. James R. Knight, Jr., Charles Ryland, and the supervisors from each of the seven counties that initiated the project.

While awaiting word on their application, the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula representatives were surprised by a state decision to abandon the technical college concept and create, in its place, a statewide system of 23 community colleges. Suddenly, the ground rules changed. In order to qualify for a community college, the region needed a minimum population of 100,000, a minimum of 1,000 secondary school graduates annually, and a campus within 45 miles of every resident. The seven counties that had spearheaded the drive for a technical college had a total population of 61,600, far short of the state's new guidelines. To meet the new requirements meant taking on six more counties and providing land and site improvements for *two* campuses instead of one. Caroline, Gloucester, King and Queen, King William, Mathews, and New Kent counties — all on the Middle Peninsula — soon joined the original seven, creating a service area for the new college of 3,000 square miles, one of the two largest in the state system.

While the dream of a community college serving citizens on both sides of the river had succeeded in uniting the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula, the struggle to identify sites for the two campuses nearly shattered the fragile coalition. Along with population requirements, minimum site requirements had also changed. The state now mandated 100 acres in lieu of the 50-acre requirement for a technical college. The state also required localities to pay for site development costs, including roads, exterior lighting, parking lots, landscaping, and utility hook-ups. Furthermore, campuses had to be accessible from major highways and situated near population centers.

Although the town of Montross, with two tracts of land possibly available, was briefly considered as a site for the northernmost cam-





*The Downing Bridge, originally built in 1927, connects the Middle Peninsula to the Northern Neck and the Warsaw Campus of the Rappahannock Community College.*

pus, Warsaw emerged as an early front runner. Three sites were offered by Warsaw landowners (a 100-acre parcel from the historic Sabine Hall estate, offered by the Reverend T. Dabney Wellford; a second site offered by Mrs. Evelyn Mitchell and Allen Delano; and the third site — ultimately to become the planners' choice — a 117-acre parcel offered by Austin B. and Joseph W. Chinn).

Surprisingly, there was considerable opposition to the idea of a college campus in the heart of Warsaw. Helen Murphy, a member of the founding board, remembered hearing residents express concerns about traffic congestion, trash, loitering, and even racial problems, although she noted that such concerns were more prominent on the street than among board members. Mrs. Murphy proudly pointed out that the “downtown” site proved to be the best choice and cited as evidence the widespread use of the campus for community-wide events, including fairs, exhibits, and social and cultural functions. Richard Gouldin went a step further, claiming that locating the college in Warsaw “was the one thing that united the area.”

On the south side of the river, site selection quickly became

mired in controversy. Gloucester and Middlesex counties both lobbied hard for the campus. As the area's population center, the town of Gloucester came closest to meeting the state's criteria; nevertheless, the state board decided to locate the campus at Glenss, closer to the area's geographic center. The decision pleased no one. Middlesex County officials felt that, since Gloucester County had the campus, Gloucester County should pay for it. Gloucester officials, on the other hand, felt that the county was being saddled with the cost of a campus located where it would be of least benefit.

Given the discontent over the campus location, hammering out a cost-sharing agreement for construction of the Glenss Campus proved to be a contentious process. Representatives of the six Middle Peninsula counties agreed that Gloucester County would pay acquisition costs for the property and that all six counties would share site development costs in proportion to the population of each. Acquisition costs came to \$53,625, excluding costs for deed recordings, surveys, attorney fees, and other charges. The latter amounted to an additional \$5,363.45, which Gloucester County balked at paying,



insisting that these constituted site development costs. With the community college system, represented by Vice-Chancellor Fred L. Wellman (who was also serving as acting president of the yet-to-be-named RCC), unable to provide definitive guidelines, Gloucester County ultimately bore the total of \$58,988.45 alone.

Agreement as to cost-sharing for the Warsaw campus was reached far more quickly. In fact, six chairmen of county boards of supervisors worked out a formula at an impromptu meeting held in late November of 1968. Instead of tying the counties' contributions to population, the formula called for each county to contribute on the bases of school enrollment, distance from the campus, and true tax value. Since parts of King George and Caroline counties had easier access to Germanna Community College, both were allowed to contribute to each region, Germanna and Rappahannock, on a half-share basis.

With funding agreements at last hammered out and campus sites selected, the stage was set for the first meeting of the college board. On January 9, 1970, the newly-appointed board members gathered in Urbanna to learn from officials of the community college system about state guidelines and expectations. Representing Westmoreland County at that first board meeting was Helen Murphy, who was sure she would be the only female member. The county "thought it was being very progressive in appointing a female," she pointed out. In fact, "there were two others."

The founding board consisted of the following members: Mitchell J. Alga (Lancaster), Eldon W. Christopher (Essex), Robert L. Covington (Northumberland), Richard W. Gouldin (Richmond), William A. Keith (Mathews), Bobby C. Layman (King George), William P. Lemmond (New Kent), Guy C. Lewis

(Caroline), Thomas F. Marshall, Jr. (Middlesex), Helen Murphy (Westmoreland), J. Edgar Pointer, Jr. (Gloucester), Alease Roane (King and Queen), and Patty Fowler West (King William). The board members came "from all walks of life, but they all added something," Mrs. West remembered.

Although several shared a background in education, both public and private, others brought experience from business and industry: Covington and Alga were bankers; Layman and Lemmond came with engineering backgrounds; Gouldin and Lewis managed local electric cooperatives. Marshall was a pharmacist; Pointer, an attorney; and Mrs. West had served Governors Harrison and Godwin as confidential secretary and staff assistant.

At the board's second meeting, Keith was elected chairman and Gouldin, vice chairman. And, more importantly, the new college acquired its name. Although other possibilities were discussed — Walter Reed, Robert E. Lee, and Eastern Virginia, among them, each with its determined advocates — the board soon agreed that the name of the institution would be Rappahannock

Community College. Traditionally a barrier, the Rappahannock River was now seen as a link, Gouldin explained. And the new college, it was hoped — although split into two campuses — would serve as a cultural and educational link between the 13 diverse counties of the Northern Neck and the Middle Peninsula.

*“Bringing the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula together took something more than highways across the water. It took a shared vision . . .”*



## II.

# THE 200-YEAR JOURNEY

Seldom had the nation undergone such an intense time of change as in the 1960s, and while future historians writing about Virginia will no doubt focus on the demise of segregation and the end of the solidly Democratic South, the creation of a community college system marks a shift of priorities just as significant. Virginia's system of higher education, anchored by two elite universities and a technical institute, had been one of the most conservative in the nation. Students unable to gain admittance to one of the three prestige schools — the University of Virginia, the College of William and Mary, and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University — could apply to a private college or one of the state's four-year teacher education schools. Beyond that, however, with the exception of Richmond Professional Institute and a couple of other specialized colleges, there were few options. As a result, the percentage of high school graduates going on to college was low.

The community college system, with its open door policy and its commitment to the nontraditional student, seemed somewhat

alien to Virginia's concept of higher education. And indeed, even after the system was up and running, the community colleges had to struggle for acceptance, at times encountering skepticism in their own board members.

As noted earlier, community college leaders like to locate the origin of the community college concept in Thomas Jefferson's vision of a network of "district colleges." (He proposed 24 for the state, just one more than the 23 colleges — several with multiple campuses — that would eventually constitute the VCCS.) However, it was actually business and industry that provided the impetus for the creation of the system. Lacking adequate technical and occupational training, Virginia was encountering difficulty persuading industry to consider the state as a possible site for new plants and offices. And those businesses and industries already established here were having trouble finding continuing education and training opportunities for their employees. In fact, it was projected that to meet industry needs, some 6,500 students would need to receive technical training each year



between 1966 and 1970. At the time, postsecondary educational institutions were serving only ten percent of those potential students. If the Commonwealth was to maintain a competitive edge in the 60s and in the decades beyond, something had to be done.

In 1962, something *was* done. Governor Albert S. Harris, Jr., noting the rapid growth of Virginia's college-age population and the limited number of institutions providing technical training, took action to avoid what he called an "impending crisis." He ordered an immediate reevaluation of vocational and technical education in the state and goaded the General Assembly into creating a Commission on Vocational and Technical Education headed by Delegate D. French Slaughter. This initial step was followed in 1964 by the creation of a State Board of Technical Education and a Department of Technical Education headed by Dana B. Hamel, who would later figure prominently in the establishment and development of the community college system.

Meanwhile, the state's premier universities had created 11 two-year colleges — five operated by the University of Virginia, four by VPI & SU, and two by William and Mary. Although the Slaughter Commission endorsed the creation of an independent community college system as a long-range solution to the state's educational crisis, the universities were reluctant to give up control of the two-year institutions that had been established to prepare students specifically for transfer into their undergraduate programs. However, as planning progressed at the state level, educators and legislators both began to see the pitfalls of three systems of higher education — two-year "branch" colleges serving the traditional universities, technical schools, and area vocational schools — each separate from one another. Consequently, in 1964, the Virginia Higher Education Study Commission chaired by Senator Lloyd C. Bird and by VPI President T. Marshall Hahn recommended that "highest priority" be given to a comprehensive community college system and that the two-year

"branch" colleges, the technical schools, and area vocational school programs be subsumed under one board.

Central to the success of the community college concept was Hahn's decision to back the commission's recommendation. Although his own institution, VPI, did not relish yielding control of its branch colleges, Hahn recognized that a statewide system was in the best interest of the Commonwealth and acted accordingly.

By taking action on the multitude of issues having to do with higher education in Virginia, Governor Harrison, whose term ended in 1966, laid the foundation for the Commonwealth's future. But the hard work was yet to be done. In his final address to the General Assembly, Governor Harrison staked out a radical position for a Virginia chief executive and called for a statewide sales tax, a proposal certain to provoke harsh debate in the upcoming election campaign.

Mills E. Godwin, Jr., a Democrat who, just six years earlier, had been instrumental in defeating a sales tax proposal suggested by then Governor J. Lindsay Almond, remained uncommitted on the issue this time around but called for progress (i.e., growth) in public and higher education. His chief opponent, Republican A. Linwood Holton, Jr., flatly opposed the proposed sales tax. But Godwin, correctly sensing the public's mood, won the three-way election (an ultra-conservative candidate also ran) by 57,000 votes and immediately took steps to deliver on his campaign promises. In his inaugural address, he called upon the citizens of Virginia to "marshal all our resources against [ignorance]," which he dubbed "a universal enemy."

"We can take no rest," the new governor said, ". . . until all our colleges and universities — not just some — can hold up their heads in any company; until all our sons and daughters — not just some — have the same chance to train their minds and their skills to the utmost." Reflecting later on his decision to push for an expansion of higher education opportunities in the state, Godwin was emphatic: "In my three decades of public service, I cannot recall endorsing so



wholeheartedly any program that was so untried and untested in Virginia as our system of community colleges . . .”

There were good reasons to support a state sales tax at this point in Virginia’s history. For one, 15 Virginia cities had already established their own local sales tax to generate revenue, and it became apparent that, unless the state acted, cities would grow too strong financially — at the state’s expense. Nevertheless, it took some tough lobbying and a lot of elbow-bending to see the measure through the General Assembly. Godwin managed the process adroitly and, against some heavy opposition, succeeded in implanting an “escalation clause” that provided for an automatic tax increase two years down the road, thereby ensuring a steady stream of funds for education without the necessity of additional debate in the immediate future.

There remained significant barriers to overcome, however, not the least of which was the reluctance of the three “prestige” universities to give up their branch colleges. Using the branch colleges as a springboard for the community college system seemed a reasonable way to begin, but not until Virginia Tech President T. Marshall Hahn threw his support to Godwin and lobbied for the creation of the system was further progress made.

In 1966, with the allocation of \$34 million to begin some construction and \$1.6 million to merge two schools in the Roanoke area into one — Virginia Western Community College, the first of the projected 23 — the system was becoming a reality. When he appointed Dana B. Hamel director of the system (which was governed by a 15-member board chaired by former Senator Eugene B. Sydnor), Godwin all but guaranteed the success of the new concept.

Dana Hamel is credited by many as “the one who got out on the road and sold the concept.” Original RCC board members, with whom he worked closely, recognized and appreciated his persistence. Patty West credited his “very dynamic” presence with convincing Virginians to take a chance on an idea that, for most of them, was

totally new. Helen Murphy, another founding board member, recalled Hamel’s trademark greeting, which seemed to underscore his inherent enthusiasm: “It’s a great day to be alive in the Commonwealth!”

The sales tax provided one source of funds for the new system, but sales tax revenue was to be used for other purposes as well, including library and hospital improvements. To get the community college system up and keep it going, additional funding was needed, and this need led to another first for Virginia — the issuance of general obligation bonds.

Proud of its reputation as a “pay-as-you-go” state, Virginia had broken one fiscal tradition by voting for the proposed sales tax. Would it break another? The answer came in 1968 when, after forceful lobbying by Godwin and many of the state’s business and education leaders, the electorate voted overwhelmingly for the issuance of \$81 million in bonds. Of that amount, only about \$5.5 million went to the community college system. Added to it, however, was federal money for economically depressed areas (some of which went toward the Warsaw campus) and funding for colleges for Appalachia. Throw in the VPI branches, already up and running, that would become community colleges, and the system was off to a start.

This was, for Virginia, “a sort of magic time,” according to Pat Perkinson of Middlesex County, a Godwin speechwriter, press assistant, and in Godwin’s second term, Secretary of the Commonwealth (she would later become an RCC board member), a time when Virginia decided to take the steps needed to make good on Thomas Jefferson’s 200-year-old vision. To do so took courage and commitment, not only from Virginia’s leadership but from the rank and file as well. As former Governor Godwin remarked, “Untold thousands of Virginians . . . have participated [in the system’s contributions], and the impact upon Virginia has been amazing and altogether worthwhile.”





*The Chinn House in Warsaw served as the new college's administrative center and later, for one year, as the Warsaw campus academic building.*

### III.

## FROM MORTAR TO MORTARBOARD

On September 11, 1970, VCCS officials, RCC board members, and citizens of the surrounding counties gathered in a wooded area off State Route 33 to break ground for the Glenns campus. The ceremony included yet another gesture symbolizing the regional cooperation that had made the day possible — the mixing on the site of soil taken from the courthouse greens of the 13 participating counties. Those present were told that the new college would open its doors to students in September of 1971, one year later, as indeed it did . . . but just moments before they were ready to enter.

Four hundred and thirty-three students marched through those doors that first day of classes at the new college. And what they found was a facility still partially under construction. Teachers taught from behind boxes stacked up to form makeshift lecterns. Chalk was a scarce and highly-prized commodity. Wires dangled from the ceiling, and desks were dragged from room to room to accommodate students.

Nevertheless, instruction proceeded apace, often centering on “teachable moments,” according to Jerry Horner, one of the members

of what he called the original “sweet 16” faculty. Horner, a health and physical education instructor still with the college, remembered “doing a lot of things you didn’t think you should have to do,” but doing them without complaining (“or at least not much”). And according to Harold Jackson, one of the first students to enroll, the faculty made the new college work.

Jackson, who became the first president of RCC’s Student Government Association, had been accepted by Virginia Commonwealth University but decided to give the new college a try. “It was close, it was inexpensive, and it turned out to be one of the best decisions I ever made,” he said later. Jackson completed a two-year degree program at Rappahannock, transferred to Florida A&M in Tallahassee, did his graduate work at Ohio State and embarked on a career that led to a position as Director of Program Operations and Compliance for the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Invited to give the keynote speech at RCC’s 25th anniversary commencement ceremony, Jackson brought with him a





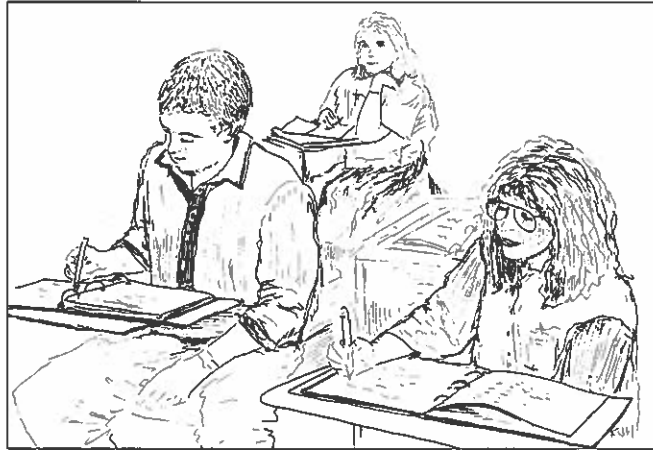
copy of a letter RCC's president, Dr. John Upton, had written recommending him for admission to graduate school. That letter, he said, reflected RCC's concern for its students and demonstrated the close relationship that existed between faculty, administrators, staff and students. "The things he [Dr Upton] said about me," Jackson pointed out, "sustained me through hard times and encouraged me believe in myself and in my abilities."

When Harold Jackson and his classmates graduated, the Warsaw campus had yet to open its doors to students. In an unforeseen snag, construction in Warsaw had been put on hold by the state legislature, much to the chagrin of those who had lobbied long and hard for the creation of a college in the area. Refusing to sit back and wait, a delegation led by Dick Gouldin, who had spent years doing legwork in an effort to sell the concept, appeared before the House Appropriations Committee of the General Assembly and made a pitch for restoration of funding for a Warsaw campus. It was Gouldin's first experience of the kind, but he pulled it off. As Bobby Layman, another founding board member said, Gouldin "saved the day in keeping the North Campus."

Gouldin was not without assistance, however. Thomas F. Marshall, Jr., a fellow board member (now deceased) recalled taking a bushel of Rappahannock River oysters to the appropriations committee, and Layman noted that it took "a real concentrated effort by the board" as a whole to get the job done. But get it done, they did.

Still, it was not until March of 1972 that ground was broken in Warsaw. Fortunately, students in the northern part of the region didn't have to wait for the facility to be constructed in order to begin classes. Donated along with the site for the Warsaw campus was a three-story,

turn-of-the-century, Victorian mini-mansion known as the Chinn House (now the Justice Joseph W. Chinn Community Center). Before *either* campus was completed, the Chinn House served as the new college's administrative center. When the central administration moved into the newly-constructed Glens campus, the Chinn House became, for one year, the Warsaw campus academic building.



"How many people get to teach in a mansion?" asked English professor Joseph Swonk, one of three faculty who taught 18 students in the Chinn House during the 1972-1973 academic year. Swonk and his colleagues — Wade Johnson, who taught health and physical education, and Wallace Lemons, who taught math and now serves as the Warsaw Campus Director — remembered leaking roofs, frequent trips by

flashlight to the fuse box, and students sneaking off into obscure passageways or even out onto the roof.

Remarkably, perhaps, given the 25 years that had elapsed, they also remembered each of the 18 original students. Few were "college material" in the traditional sense. For most, the community college offered the promise of a "second chance," an opportunity to make up for lost time or to obtain a clearer sense of direction. As Swonk said, "We'll take anybody and give him or her a chance, and if they have it in them, it will come out." Of the 18 original Chinn House students, one became an airline pilot; at least two others transferred to four-year colleges and then returned to the area to teach in the public schools. Others acquired skills that led to clerical and management jobs.

It is perhaps worth noting, too, that all three of the faculty assigned to the Chinn House in 1972 remained at Rappahannock Community College.



The faculty hired to open the new college were a diverse lot. They came from all parts of the country — California, Michigan, Florida, nearby North Carolina — with a few Virginia natives among them. Many, especially those from states in which community colleges had long been a part of the educational landscape, were taken aback by community attitudes toward the new college. According to Jerry Horner, many residents felt that the college was “a state idea that would fold up.” Worse yet, Swonk added, the going joke in the community was that a high school student could choose to attend college or go to RCC. To counter these attitudes, the faculty worked the shopping centers and country stores, passing out catalogs, buttons, and brochures, driving from one site to the next in an old Winnebago. “Just like evangelists,” Swonk said. “But we were evangelizing knowledge.”

With state funding based heavily on numbers, recruitment in those early years — and in many years to come — was the name of the game. However, another source of funding lay with the local community. Colleges in the state system had begun creating local funds budgets, securing from the localities they served nominal amounts to help meet needs for which state funding either did not provide or was limited. Spearheading the drive for local funds was the college president, Dr. John H. Upton.

A Michigan native and a graduate of that state’s university system, Dr. Upton was 38 years old when the Rappahannock Community College Board chose him from six other finalists to serve as the institution’s first (and, to date, only) president. At the time, Upton was employed by William Rainey Harper College in Illinois, a community college he helped found, as Director of Governmental Relations and Project Development, as well as assistant to the president. The fact that he had been “present at the creation,” so to speak, of one community college and appeared eager to oversee the opening of another was one factor that made him stand out over other candidates for the position.

The board was also impressed with Upton’s background, an

unusual combination of liberal arts and business. An English major as an undergraduate, he had gone on to earn a Master’s in Business Administration and a Ph.D. in higher education. He was a Navy veteran whose administrative philosophy was built on a foundation of classroom experience; he had been a professor of business at Arizona Western Community College before leaving to become part of the founding administration at William Rainey Harper College.

Upton’s experience and educational background made him a leading candidate for the position, but it was perhaps his personality and leadership style that convinced the board to give him the helm. As board member Pat Perkinson put it, Dr. Upton was “unusual . . . very low-key [and] probably ideally suited” for the area. In his approach to decision making, one faculty member noted, Upton “was not a four-star general;” his usual practice was to seek input from the entire college community before making any major changes.

Tangible evidence of the esteem in which he was held by college and community alike came in January 1995, as the college celebrated its 25th anniversary. Surprisingly, for an institution where secrets are seldom kept more than half a day, a John H. Upton Scholarship Endowment was established without the president’s knowledge. In just six weeks, contributions to the endowment soared to more than \$22,000 and were still coming in when Dr. Upton was made aware of the fund at a surprise reception in his honor held on January 28. In her remarks that evening Elnora F. Tompkins, chair of the Rappahannock Community College Board, paid tribute to Dr. Upton’s skill at guiding the institution through its birth pangs, early crises, and into its maturity.

A hallmark of Upton’s leadership style was his emphasis on teamwork. Long before the Total Quality Management (TQM) concept began to make inroads in business and education in America, Upton was convinced of the importance of managing the institution



through consensus. Accomplishing that requires a team of topnotch professionals clearly committed to the community college concept.



His ability to put together exactly that sort of team is evidenced by the fact that four individuals who served in key administrative posts during the college's first 25 years — Dr. William Briley, who served as Warsaw campus Provost; Dr. Oscar Prater, a math instructor who became Director of Research and Planning; Dr. James Linksz, RCC's first Dean of Instruction; and Dr. Jerome Friga, its most recent Dean of Instruction and Student Services — moved on to presidencies elsewhere.

The initial years of Dr. Upton's tenure were filled with master plans, campus designs, construction, curriculum development, hiring faculty and administrative staff, campus dedications, accreditation, and — in many ways, the toughest task of all — building

bridges between the college and the community. Upton himself vividly remembered the campaign to obtain local funds from the community, one of the first major efforts he had to take on as the institution's new president. "I earned my keep that year," he said, getting "blistered, one county after another." The counties had understood that after the initial investment for site and improvements, they would be off the hook, financially. Thanks to Upton's low-keyed approach — he purposely kept the requests minimal, believing that the local school system should have priority for any extra funds a county might have — all

13 counties pitched in (although, in some cases, not immediately). The local funds budget has become as much a symbolic as a substantive measure, representing a base of community support for the college.

Perhaps the first real "payoff" for the community occurred in June 1973 when the college awarded 41 degrees and 11 certificates to graduates in ceremonies held on the Glenns campus. (Three students had been awarded certificates, indicating completion of one-year programs, in 1972.) Dr. Ronald E. Carrier, president of Madison College (now James Madison University), was RCC's first commencement speaker.

A few months later, in October, the North Campus was dedicated, and in June of 1974, thanks to getting an early start in the Chinn House, students from that campus joined their peers from Glenns in the commencement exercises held, this time, in Warsaw. Fifty-seven degrees and twenty certificates were awarded.

During the 1973-1974 academic year, a significant — and essential — milestone was realized with the granting of full accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. At that point, the college was up and running, and growth in those first few



years was steady. Although for various reasons, economic and other, enrollment climbs and dips, if charted, would probably make the first 25 years look like a roller coaster ride, the overall trend was one of increasing acceptance by the community and of solid growth in programs and in numbers of students. To attest to that — and to how far the college had come from those first years when graduation ceremonies

could be squeezed into the visitors' parking area — simply look at RCC's 1994 commencement: 129 degrees and 138 certificates awarded with guests and spectators numbering more than 1,000.



## IV.

# WEATHERING STORMS

Nostalgia is known to cast a glow over the past, but in light of the storms encountered by RCC as it emerged from its first decade, the period between 1970 and 1979 looked, in retrospect, like a golden age. Excitement and enthusiasm ran high as each new academic year saw longer lines of students eager to register for classes. By 1975, with a headcount reaching 2,500, enrollment exceeded projections, and funding, although never plentiful, was adequate to support a growing number of programs. The college was strengthening its ties with the community by creating programs designed to serve local employers, including the Naval Surface Weapons Center at Dahlgren, the Chesapeake Corporation in West Point, and the Zapata-Haynie menhaden fishery in Northumberland County. In addition, graduates of the newly-established nursing program, a cooperative venture with J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, were staffing almost every hospital, nursing home, and medical office in the region.

Then, in 1979, with planning well underway for the tenth anniversary celebration, enrollment took a nosedive and the college

was thrown on the defensive. The reasons were many: a smaller crop of high school graduates, a shaky economy coupled with increasing tuition (from \$5 per credit hour when the college opened to \$8.50 for the 1979-1980 academic year), an energy crisis raising fuel costs and making things difficult for commuter colleges, and enrollment projections that were perhaps overly optimistic. Making a bad situation worse, however, was the fact that the state was beginning to keep a tighter rein on the budget, refusing to acknowledge the impossibility of running two campuses on a budget allocated for a one-campus operation, looking at numbers of graduates as the primary measure of success instead of considering other factors such as students taking classes to upgrade skills rather than to earn degrees, and ignoring such regional differences as population density and geographical area covered.

The euphoria that had accompanied the opening of the college was beginning to evaporate; many now felt that the survival of the college was at stake. Indeed, Dr. Gordon F. Davies, director of the State Council of Higher Education, went on record predicting that some of



Virginia's smaller colleges and campuses would be forced to shut down in the coming decade. It was time for RCC to take a hard look at staffing, curriculum, teaching methods, and expenditures. The college had to focus more closely on its mission and do its job more efficiently.

One of the first steps taken to counter the crisis was to cut staff, especially in the administrative area. Insofar as possible, the college relied on attrition to accomplish the needed reductions. Instead of filling a vacant administrative position, for example, the college might assign the responsibilities of the position to another administrative office or divide them up and parcel them out to the remaining administrators. To cover classes as efficiently as possible, full-time faculty were given teaching assignments on both campuses and, at times, on off-campus sites. Increasingly, RCC relied on its adjunct faculty to carry much of the course load.

As something of a retirement haven, RCC's service area has been able to provide the college with an abundant supply of highly-qualified adjunct instructors. Several — including Phil Semsch, a well-traveled former Army officer, and George Heffernan, a retired Navy pilot and physicist — later became full-time teachers for the college. Others — such as Sloan Wilson, author of *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* — taught a course or two before moving on to other endeavors. For many adjunct instructors — especially, perhaps, those employed full time by the Naval Surface Warfare Center at Dahlgren — teaching part time for RCC became a sort of “supplemental career.”

Foreseeing an end to the enrollment surge that had powered the entire community college system in its early years and anticipating a future in which state funding would be tighter and tighter, Dr. Upton and the local board commissioned an external review of the college structure, organization, operation, and administration. In January of 1979, consultants Richard J. Ernst and Max F. Wingett published a 35-page report that, for the most part, reinforced the actions already being taken to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

Ernst and Wingett suggested streamlining the college committee structure (which had mushroomed to 20 separate committees) by creating five principal committees: a President's Advisory Committee, a Learning Resources Committee, and one committee each to deal with instructional affairs, student affairs, and financial and administrative affairs. As for the administrative structure, the report recommended that the college continue to employ a provost for each campus but that each provost have an immediate staff of two division chairs, one for instruction and one for student services, and two coordinators, one for the Learning Resource Center and one for continuing education and community services. Beyond that, the president's staff should include a dean of instruction and student services, a dean of financial and administrative services, and a college information officer.

The college adhered closely to the report's guidelines, and the administrative structure prescribed therein carried RCC into the mid-eighties when another major reorganization took place.

Not only staffing but also programs were targeted by the college in its struggle for survival. Surprisingly, a marine science degree program offered on the Warsaw campus never got away from the pier. Despite a massive investment in resources — including a 34-foot trawler built on Long Island and “sailed” south to Warsaw by three faculty members: Darryl Davis, Lynn Suydam, and Ron Carter — and a decidedly local orientation, the program failed to attract students and had to be eliminated.

The problem? According to Wallace Lemons, the college was “preparing them at a level way above what jobs they could get with an A.S. degree.” In fact, none of the graduates of the program were ever hired by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, targeted as the principal employer. Lemons also noted that the marine trade in the area was made up of people whose families had been in the business for years (and thus provide their own training) and independent watermen.

A more successful program that nevertheless had to be severely



curtailed was the job training program offered under the Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA). Although the program, during its eight years of operation, trained more than 600 individuals in carpentry, residential wiring, heating and air conditioning, plumbing, and as nurses' aides, it consisted entirely of non-credit courses and was therefore not factored into the state formula for measuring success, a formula that used as its principal criteria the number of students receiving degrees and certificates from *credit* programs.

Although the 70s ended in foul weather for the college, a number of programs and initiatives stood out like bright lights on the horizon. Among them was the nursing program. Established in 1974 as a cooperative program with J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College in Richmond, the nursing program consistently produced graduates ranked among the top in the state. Of the eight initial graduates of the program, seven passed the RN exams, and in 1979, graduates taking the RN exams scored second highest compared to all other nursing schools in Virginia, including those at four-year colleges.

Headed since its inception by Catherine M. Courtney, the program (along with its spinoff at the Glenns Campus, a practical nursing certificate program) was the only one at the college with a waiting list for admission. Mrs. Courtney pointed with well-deserved pride to the fact that 82 percent of the 200-plus graduates of the program were employed in the 13-county service region.

Community service, an essential element of the community college concept, has always been a strongpoint at RCC. As early as 1973, the Glenns campus hosted the first annual Regional Forensics Meet for high school students. A year later, the Warsaw campus

became the site of the annual Regional Math Contest sponsored by Virginia Commonwealth University. And in 1975, in Warsaw, the college began hosting the Regional Science Fair. Also during this period two creative writing festivals were established — one on the Glenns campus geared toward adults and another on the Warsaw campus geared primarily toward high school students. A community orchestra, a summer enrichment program for eighth through twelfth grade students, and a regional tennis tournament rounded out the community service offerings.



In November of 1975, the Warsaw campus was designated a “Bicentennial Campus” by the American Revolutionary Bicentennial Commission. As such, it hosted a Bicentennial Colonial Crafts and Skills Festival and, in September of 1976, a Bicentennial Ball sponsored by the Garden Club of the Northern Neck and held beneath a gigantic tent erected on the lawn.

Always a strong proponent of community involvement, even in times of fiscal constraints, Dr. Upton insisted that participation in and support of such efforts was essential. “The leadership and support of the College was felt and recognized,” he wrote in a note of appreciation to his staff members. “Its stature in the community has grown significantly as a result.”

Community support would become even more essential in the next decade, for despite successes such as the nursing program and the community service outreach that, by one estimate, brought 26,000 people onto the two campuses during the school’s first ten years, the storm clouds that had appeared in the late 70s continued to darken.





*Rappahannock Community College draws its strength from the diverse communities that it serves.*

## V.

# BUILDING BETTER BRIDGES

Reviewing his tenure at Rappahannock Community College, Dr. Upton identified four phases: first, a period of building and growth; second, a defensive phase as enrollment and funding plummeted hand-in-hand; third, a refocusing phase during which the college reached out to its students and the community, including area business and industry; and finally, a time of renewal. The third phase came hard upon the heels of the storms that beset the college at the end of its first decade. Although the college had been intent, from the day of its inception, on building bridges to the communities it served, it now found those bridges rusting from lack of use.

In 1982 the Commonwealth inaugurated a new governor, Charles S. Robb, who came to office determined to enhance the state's understaffed prison system and yet to leave office in 1986 with fewer people on the state payroll than when he was elected. Early on, Governor Robb targeted the community college system for cuts. The enrollment decline that had taken RCC by surprise in 1979 turned out to be a system-wide phenomenon that continued through the

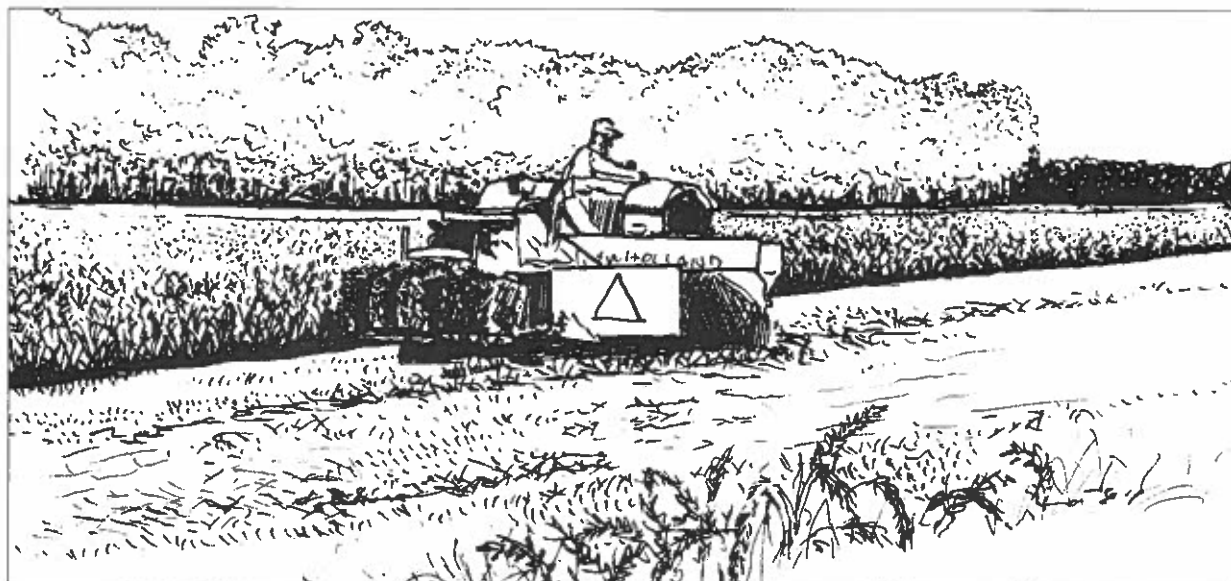
1985-86 academic year, depressing morale, creating a ready market for unfounded rumors, and goading community college faculty and staff into a siege mentality made worse at RCC by the perhaps inevitable rivalry (and suspicion) between campuses.

Perhaps nothing symbolized the change in Virginia's educational climate so much as the back-to-back ceremonies commemorating RCC's tenth anniversary. The first, held in 1981 to celebrate the anniversary of the institution's founding, featured Governor Mills Godwin, the governor who served as midwife to the community college system and saw it as meeting a vital need. Then, in 1983, a ceremony was held to mark the tenth anniversary of the Warsaw campus; the featured speaker was Governor Charles Robb, who had inherited a system that he felt needed streamlining lest it become a drag on the Commonwealth and hinder progress in other areas.

Just months before his appearance on the Warsaw campus, Robb had appointed a special commission to investigate the financial future of higher education in Virginia and map long-range solutions.







*RCC performs a vital educational function in the rural Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula.*

Although neither Robb nor the commission advocated closing any existing colleges, the threat was in the air. And, indeed, even before Robb's commission began its work, the State Council of Higher Education, having predicted "survival problems" for some of the smaller state colleges and universities, received a report from L. Cleaves Manning, chairman of the higher education subcommittee of the House of Delegates' Appropriations Committee, in which it was suggested that some of the state's smaller community colleges — RCC and Germanna among them — might have to be closed "somewhere down the road" unless the state's economy improved.

The community responded to such hints with indignation. Delegate Harvey Morgan of Gloucester proclaimed that any attempt to close rural community colleges would be "over the dead bodies of a lot of legislators. . . The community college has performed a vital function, especially the ones in rural areas and the ones that are not over-enrolled." As RCC founding board member Patty West pointed out, rural colleges fill a void by providing educational opportunity for those who have few other options. Making the point even more

dramatically, Dr. Upton wrote in a 1984 article that "should William and Mary, the University of Virginia or Washington and Lee close suddenly, the students at those schools would be able to go elsewhere." Should RCC close, however, most of its students would be left with nowhere to turn.

Dr. Upton's concern was echoed by Alan Ball, a member of the Rappahannock Community College Educational Foundation Board (discussed later in this chapter) and a former administrative assistant to the superintendent of the Lancaster County Schools. Reflecting on the impact of the college, Ball insisted that "it was one of the best things that ever happened to this area. He cited student after student whose life had been changed for the better by Rappahannock Community College. "It has been a godsend," he said. "That's why I keep working with it."

Several immediate steps were taken in the early 1980s to impress upon citizens and legislators alike the importance of the community college and to counter the threat of closing. Among these was the formation of a marketing task force to recommend



redirection of the college around its central mission (a key to survival under the Robb administration with its admonition to colleges to build on their strengths and on the needs of their service regions rather than attempt to be “all things to all people”). Chaired by Richard A. Ughetto, the Glenns campus director of continuing education, the task force produced a host of recommendations that, in effect, changed the focus of the college for the next decade.

One major thrust of the recommendations was to bring the two campuses together and foster a one-college image. To accomplish this, the task force said, the college should employ a dean of instruction and student services in place of a provost for each campus. Campus division chairs should report to the dean and assume responsibility for day-to-day operations on the respective campuses. In addition, public information functions should be consolidated under one individual, daily activities on the two campuses should be communicated through some sort of inter-campus “bulletin board” or computer video system, and policies should be applicable college-wide (with some leeway to allow for differences in regional needs).

The importance of symbolism was not neglected. To solidify the one-college image and deemphasize rivalry, the task force recommended changing the traditional campus designations “North” and “South” to “Warsaw” and “Glenns.” Furthermore, it recommended creating a unified style guide with an emphasis on clear, crisp, dynamic graphics and — prompted by William Craig, senior vice president and director of public relations and community affairs for Sovran Bank — a new logo. In September 1987, in a ceremony marked by the release of hundreds of helium-filled balloons, the new logo was unveiled. Designed by Irv Beatley, a Northern Neck native, the new logo consisted of a white seagull in motion against a blue and green background (suggesting the agricultural and aquatic heritage of the service region, according to Dr. Upton).

Service to the community had always been a keystone in the

effort to build bridges between the school and the residents of the service area. In the 1980s however, given the tightening grip on funding from the state, this part of the college mission — like many other elements — had to be restructured. The college had to restrict the use of its facilities by the public and eliminate such popular events as the Dragon Run Festival, an annual celebration of the region’s folk heritage. Initiated in 1979, the festival drew up to 12,000 visitors to the Glenns campus but, unfortunately, ran in the red until its last year when a \$1.00 per car admission fee was charged. An audit of the college concluded that running a community event of that magnitude was not within the institution’s purview. This finding, coupled with the changing climate in Richmond, sounded the festival’s death knell.

Although many community service activities — among them, the Chesapeake Writers Conference — survived the fiscal crunch, the college decided to focus its community service effort on the area’s businesses and industries. Changes in the workplace and the advent of the personal computer had businesses looking to the college for employee training. Numerous computer-related courses were added to the schedule along with classes in management and accounting, and programs were developed specifically for clients such as Chesapeake Corporation, Levi-Strauss, GTE, and a newcomer to the area, SouthTech (a division of Canon, Inc.).

Since the mid-1970s, the college had been offering classes in King George County to meet the needs of military and civilian employees of the Naval Surface Warfare Center and the various subcontractors surrounding it. Now, the college mounted a major effort to expand the program in King George County, adding to the specialized computer and technical writing classes a full range of courses required for both transfer and non-transfer degrees and supplementing a highly qualified adjunct staff with full-time faculty members. In addition, a full-time administrator, Walter (“Petie”) Norris, Jr., was hired to main-



tain an office at King George High School and oversee the program offered there. It was not long before RCC's commencement ceremonies began to include graduates who had never set foot on either campus, having completed all their required course work in the evening in King George County.

Targeting business and industry called for a change in the way courses were packaged, as well. Noting that students who come to the college in order to upgrade their skills to meet changing job needs often lack the time and/or interest needed to meet degree requirements, the college adopted the concept of a Career Studies Certificate, a "bundle" of job-specific courses requiring anywhere from 9 to 29 credit hours and leading to an award of completion (i.e., the Career Studies Certificate). Not only did this provide a saleable package to present to business and industry, but it effectively countered the state's refusal to consider anything but program completion as a measure of an institution's success.

For decades, Virginia's four-year colleges had been forming similar partnerships with the business community but had carried those partnerships one step further, relying on the business community for supplemental funding. The community college system, at its inception, had decided not to get involved with independent fund-raising. However, the times were changing, and in 1980, the system lifted its unofficial ban on fund-raising initiatives.

Rappahannock Community College had, as early as 1971, sought scholarship donations from the community to aid students and, by 1980, had deposited \$11,000 in the VCCS Education Foundation. This became the "seed money" for the Rappahannock Community College Educational Foundation, Inc. (RCC/EFI) when it was established in 1980 under the direction of Margaret (Marty) Taylor, RCC's

first development officer and the foundation's first executive director. Serving as the first president of the foundation was W. Henry Edwards of Irvington.

From its inception, a primary aim of the foundation has been to provide scholarships for students. Beyond scholarships, the foundation has supported faculty and staff development (including support for two

faculty members to travel to China), alumni gatherings, and the purchase of needed equipment such as a CD-ROM system for the library.

With few significant businesses in its service area, RCC relied on clubs, small businesses, and individuals for donations to fuel the foundation's efforts. The largest individual gift came in 1991 from Edwin T. Holland, founder of First Virginia Bank and a resident of the college service area. His donation is discussed in a later chapter. Another significant benefactor, Creston George Tate, a car dealer whose family has roots in the area, established the Arwood Barrett Tate, Sr., and Della Marie Tate Memorial Scholarship, as well as, in honor of his aunt, the Mary Tate Rilee Loving Fund for faculty and staff development.

The early 80s had seen a flurry of activity that literally transformed Rappahannock Community College into a lean, efficient, and aggressive institution with even better bridges to its constituents, especially business and industry. Although state funding would continue to be a scarce commodity well into the 90s, enrollment would begin to build again, and the college would shift its focus from its own organizational structure and aims to the students in its classrooms. A new generation, nurtured by Nintendo and MTV, demanded new teaching techniques, and a world becoming more complex and interconnected required fresh thinking about subject matter, curriculum requirements, and course content.

*“From its inception, a primary aim of the Rappahannock Community College Educational Foundation has been to provide scholarships for students.”*



## VI.

# THE TIDE TURNS

Rappahannock Community College emerged from “the dark years” with a new sense of confidence and direction. Symbolized by small but significant image-enhancing steps such as the adoption of a new logo, the commissioning of a college mace to be used on ceremonial occasions, and the creation of a Style Guide to ensure that the college image was represented consistently in its correspondence and publications, a renewed spirit seemed to pervade both campuses. Dr. Upton credited the Marketing Task Force for its effort to forge a stronger identity for the college, an effort that, in his words, represented “a turning point for us, a new emphasis. The spirit reflected there, we’re still trying to carry forward in many ways.”

The task force managed to raise morale and sparked individual faculty initiatives that helped the college turn itself around in the latter part of the decade. Glenda Lowery, for instance, an English professor, was inspired to spearhead a successful effort to obtain grant funding for a gender equity program designed to help displaced homemakers and single parents obtain marketable job skills. Begun in 1986, the

program brought 50 students to each campus and evolved into the Equal Opportunities for Employability Program (EOEP), a prime example of how community colleges can transform lives and contribute to the economic health of their service areas.

Headed by Reba Bolden on the Glens campus and Robert Worthy on the Warsaw campus, the EOEP became a showcase program for the college. Not only was it offering financial assistance, including help with transportation and child care, but it involved students in support groups to enhance their self-esteem and provide help with the personal problems that so often prevent single parents and displaced homemakers from completing an educational program. Beyond that, the program offered career counseling and workshops on issues related to consumer and parenting skills. A major focus of the EOEP was gender equity, an issue that took the program into the community and the public schools in order to educate the public on sexual stereotypes and convince youngsters that their choices regarding career and lifestyle need not be limited by gender. Dr. Upton pointed out that



the EOEP demonstrated “that putting special funding and focus on students pays off. They are able to succeed, and they do.”

As a result of external factors, as well as of initiatives such as the EOEP and a more focused marketing of the off-campus program in King George County, RCC’s enrollment increased in 1986-87 for the first time in five years. And in the following year, the “unduplicated” headcount for credit courses rocketed upward to 1,913, exceeding the previous high by 33 percent.

During this period, while it conducted a thorough search for a new dean, the college was run by a transitional team of faculty and administrators serving in an “acting” capacity. And when Dr. Jerome J. Friga was hired to fill the vacant dean’s slot, he found that three of his five dean’s staff members were temporary (or “acting”). Both Wallace Lemons, Warsaw campus division chair, and Rick Ughetto, Glens campus director of continuing education, were on leave for advanced graduate study, Lemons at the University of Virginia and Ughetto at Virginia Tech. The resulting shuffle left only Robert Griffin, Glens campus division chair, and Dean Rogers, college librarian, serving in their usual capacities. Nevertheless, enrollment continued to climb, and when Lemons and Ughetto returned to the college, the general feeling was that those involved in the transition had benefitted from the opportunity to look at the college from different perspectives.

The payoffs came hard and fast in the second half of the 80s as enrollment continued to climb and partnerships with business and industry bore fruit. Chesapeake Corporation, one of the area’s few large employers, turned to RCC to provide training in mechanical maintenance. A fledgling program with an adjunct professor providing on-site instruction eventually grew wings and became a Career Studies Certificate program in industrial maintenance open to the public at large, not just Chesapeake Corporation employees.

Dual enrollment programs, in which high school students earn

college and high school credit simultaneously by taking college level courses in place of traditional high school requirements, became an important element in RCC’s growth. A history course was offered at



Caroline High School for dual credit while calculus and English composition were offered at King William High School. At Gloucester High School, the entire child care curriculum was offered, making it possible for Gloucester students to receive a

high school diploma and a college certificate in child care at the same time. The program’s success was recognized with a statewide vocational education Check Excellence Award. Similarly, in Mathews County, a partnership that won the Check Excellence Award the following year made the geriatric nurses’ aide program available to students at Mathews High School.

While the college appeared to be on a roll, the situation in Richmond continued to be perilous. In RCC’s 1989-90 annual report, Dr. Upton noted that the college had enjoyed “its vintage year,” but he also referred ominously to “developing cracks in Virginia’s economy.”

The cracks widened, so much so that Dr. Upton later termed 1990-91 “a year to test the mettle of any institution.” Further reductions in funding forced the college to put salary increases on hold and forego filling vacated positions in order to meet the growing demand for its services. With both campuses beginning to show signs of age, maintenance projects were badly needed. Nevertheless,



all such projects, unless absolutely critical, were deferred. Likewise, the need for new equipment, driven by quantum leaps in technology, went unmet.

Despite the fragile budget situation, enrollment in 1990-91 increased for the fifth consecutive year. No degree or certificate programs were discontinued, and in fact, several were added. These included, in yet another extension of the highly fruitful partnership with Chesapeake Corporation, a Career Studies Certificate in pulp and paper operations. Programs in industrial electricity and small business management also joined the list of college offerings.

With enrollment up, Rappahannock Community College began to move from a quantitative to a qualitative frame of reference, putting less emphasis on numbers of students enrolled and more emphasis on the effectiveness of instruction. Pressure to move in this direction was hitting the college from higher levels, as well. During this period, the Virginia legislature enacted a requirement for all institutions of higher learning to assess the effectiveness of their programs on a regular basis. For once putting money behind its mandate, the state provided funds to fill a position dedicated to the assessment effort.

Assessment results were to be used to help the college do a better job, and indeed, the initial assessment results led immediately to a restructuring of the developmental math curriculum, as well as to a fine tuning of other programs. A massive and demanding challenge, the assessment effort was expected to continue into the foreseeable future as long as colleges are asked to prove to the taxpayer that they are indeed doing what they say they are doing.

As the 90s dawned, the college found itself energized and eager to pursue several new initiatives but, as usual, short on money. In

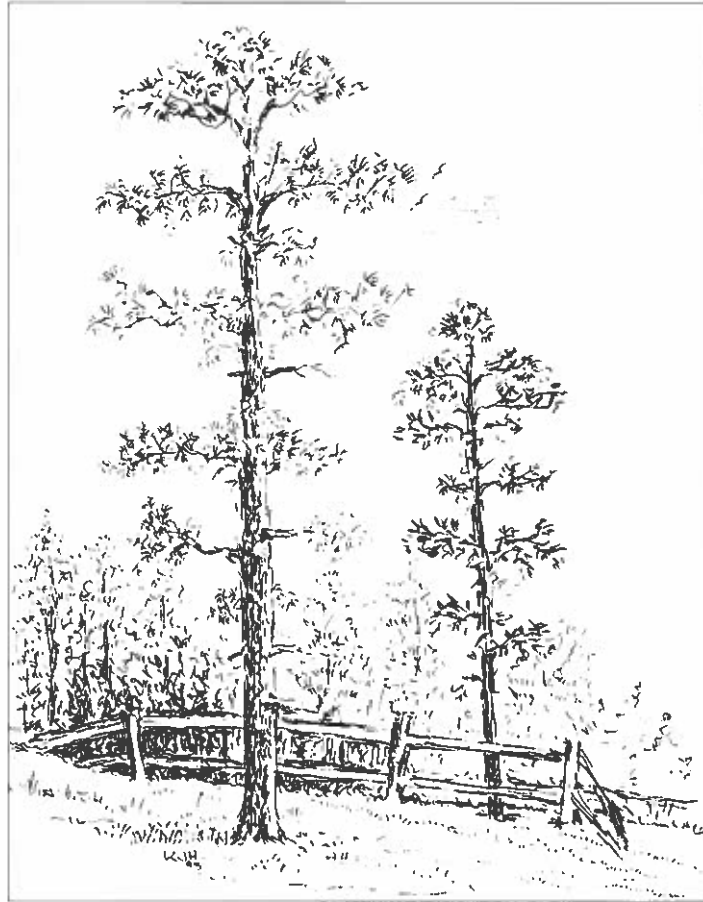
one area, however, funds were flowing in. In 1987, the RCC Educational Foundation honored its largest benefactors to date, Atwood Barrett Tate, Sr., whose contributions established two funds, one to provide two-year scholarships and another to fund faculty and staff development. A year later, the Northern Neck Realtors Association and friends of the late RCC advocate, H.

Marston Smith, added scholarships to the growing pool. And in 1989-90, three endowments were established, two of them — the Alice P. Self Memorial and the William Swayse Elliott Memorial — for scholarships, and a third — in memory of Joseph William Chinn — for maintenance of the Chinn Center.

Smaller gifts from community groups such as the Herb Society, the Garden Club of the Northern Neck, the Northern Neck Historical Society, the Jesse Ball duPont Religious, Charitable, and Educational Fund, and hundreds of individual donors continued to sustain the foundation, enhancing the ability of the college to serve students even in lean economic times. The hard work and generosity of the foundation's many supporters paid off dramatically in 1991 when Edwin T. Holland's gift made it possible for the college to take a tangible step forward along the course it had set for itself as it entered into the next decade.

*“With enrollment up, Rappahannock Community College began to move from a quantitative to a qualitative frame of reference . . .”*





*Rappahannock Community College is dedicated to helping students achieve their academic and career goals.*

## VII.

# LOOKING AHEAD

As RCC neared its 25th anniversary, a backward glance revealed a remarkable ability to turn obstacles into opportunities. Enrollment losses in the late 70s and early 80s led to partnerships with public schools and programs for local industry. Budget cuts, following hard on the heels of these surprising (although not unforeseen) declines, led to a more sharply-defined curriculum and closer ties with the community. As the 90s dawned, enrollment was climbing once again, and the demand for services was growing. However, the future offered little hope for a return to the high levels of funding that helped launch the community college system. Facing adversity once more, RCC responded by embarking on a quest for a winning combination of quality and efficiency that would enable it to continue to fulfill its mission.

If the credit for RCC's hard-won success lies in any single factor, it must surely be the institution's commitment to its students. Faced with adverse circumstances, the college has always looked first at how it might meet its challenges without compromising its service to students. At times, this has imposed hardships on faculty and staff — requiring

them to make do with less equipment and less assistance than they might desire, for instance — but in the long run, all have taken pride in a job well done despite difficulties.

It was this focus on students that motivated Edwin T. Holland to provide the college with its largest single donation from a private individual. RCC had, for some time, recognized that, by and large, its students do not come to it by way of the traditional path that begins with a college preparatory track in high school and leads to graduation followed by enrollment in a baccalaureate degree program. In fact, many of its students had not completed high school, and of those who had, most were older, having married and/or entered the work force upon graduating. Many were the first in their families to attend a college. (Indeed, some were the first to have completed high school!) To these students, merely applying for admission could be a formidable obstacle, and reaching a long-range educational goal often seemed a dream rather than a real possibility.

To reassure these students, to convince them that their dreams





were within their reach, the college began to cast about for role models who might become mentors, men and women who had overcome obstacles in order to achieve success. One of the first it found was Edwin T. Holland, the founder of First Virginia Bank. Invited to speak to students about his remarkable career and the values that had gone into its making, Holland accepted eagerly. “[My mother] never would have believed I’d be a role model for anything,” he said, explaining why he felt a special kinship with students whose prospects for success, judging by such traditional measures as family income and high school grades, look dim.

Students reacted warmly to Holland’s talk, recognizing in him someone who had managed, despite trying economic times and the lack of a “privileged” upbringing, to make a significant contribution to society. He was invited back and, again, spoke about the importance of hard work and positive values in the effort to overcome adversity.

In the meantime, Holland’s biography, *Against the Wind*, authored by his wife, Enid, was published. Holland made copies available to RCC’s faculty and staff, hoping that it might reenforce in them the conviction that these key values can be instilled in community college students who, without them, might give up in despair. He began a dialogue with college representatives and students about the importance of providing an ongoing source of encouragement for promising students entering college without the benefit of a “privileged” background.

In 1991, Holland’s generous gift of \$250,000 enabled RCC to establish a Center for Student Success targeting the “at-risk” student. Building on the success of the Equal Opportunities for Employability Program, which demonstrated that students benefit from focused attention to their needs, the Center, according to Dr. Patricia Nicholas, its first director, set out to change the educational culture of the college and create an atmosphere wherein every college employee and every

college policy would be oriented toward student success.

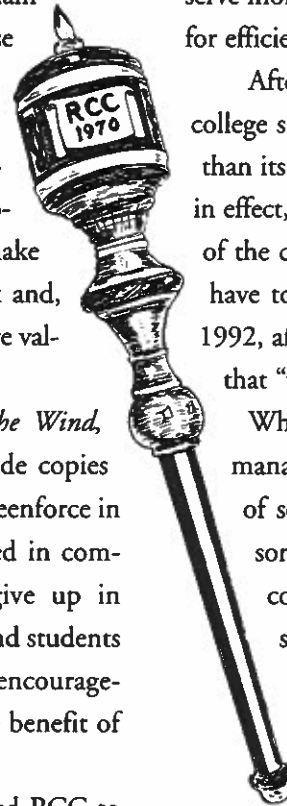
As the founding of the Edwin T. Holland Center for Student Success clearly indicates, the quest for quality was well underway as the college entered the 90s. At the same time, however, another element entered the picture, ushered in by the steepest decline in state revenue since the Great Depression. This element — the need to find ways to serve more students for less money — launched the college on a quest for efficiency that soon became just as vital as the quest for quality.

After years of intensive recruitment and outreach efforts, the college suddenly found itself facing the prospect of more enrollment than its resources were intended to serve. Funds from the state were, in effect, capped, and it appeared that, for the first time in the history of the community college movement, enrollment limitations might have to be established, ending the “open door” policy. In fact, in 1992, after six straight years of enrollment growth, Dr. Upton stated that “unofficially, we’re capped.”

What Upton meant was that the college had undertaken to manage enrollment through scheduling (i.e., limiting the number of sections of a course offered), thereby putting the college on something of a first-come, first-served basis. In addition, many courses unrelated to degree or certificate programs, hitherto a staple of the college’s continuing education program, were cut from the schedule. And programs such as auto mechanics that failed to draw students in sufficient numbers to meet minimum class size guidelines were eliminated.

The quest for efficiency was a mixed blessing for the college.

On the one hand, increasing class sizes had some negative impact on the ability of the college to give students the individual attention that had been one of its hallmarks. And eliminating extra sections of classes was, in some cases, tantamount to closing the doors on some potential students. However, one of the tactics devised to deal with the problem — curtailing, whenever possible, duplication of



classes and programs — pulled the two campuses closer together. Engineering technology and licensed practical nursing, for instance, were offered only in Glens while the Warsaw campus housed a registered nursing program (in cooperation with J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College) and had begun to lay the groundwork for an office technology program that was to be part of a Tech-Prep initiative, a national program aimed at keeping America technically and economically competitive well into the next century.

RCC's record of cooperation with the high schools in its service area positioned the college to assume an early role in the development of Tech-Prep programs. In 1992 the Warsaw campus received the go-ahead to revise its office systems technology degree program, in cooperation with local public school systems, to meet Tech-Prep guidelines, thereby making it the first Tech-Prep program in the area. A year later, the Glens campus received a planning grant to develop a new curriculum, engineering technology, in response to the Tech-Prep initiative. By fall 1994, public school students were already enrolled in the applied academic courses that form the bedrock of Tech-Prep, and the first high school Tech-Prep graduates were soon to enter Rappahannock Community College.

Another by-product of the search for efficiency was the transformation of the Warsaw campus library into a combined academic-public library, using funds that would otherwise have gone into the creation of a separate Richmond County library. Although both campus libraries have always been open to all residents of the college service area, the cooperative arrangement on the Warsaw campus — a first for the state of Virginia — made it possible to employ a public librarian, who works alongside the campus librarian, as well as to expand the collection and extend the library's operating hours to include weekends.

As if to underscore its ongoing commitment to quality, the college launched a second major initiative. This one — a “Quality

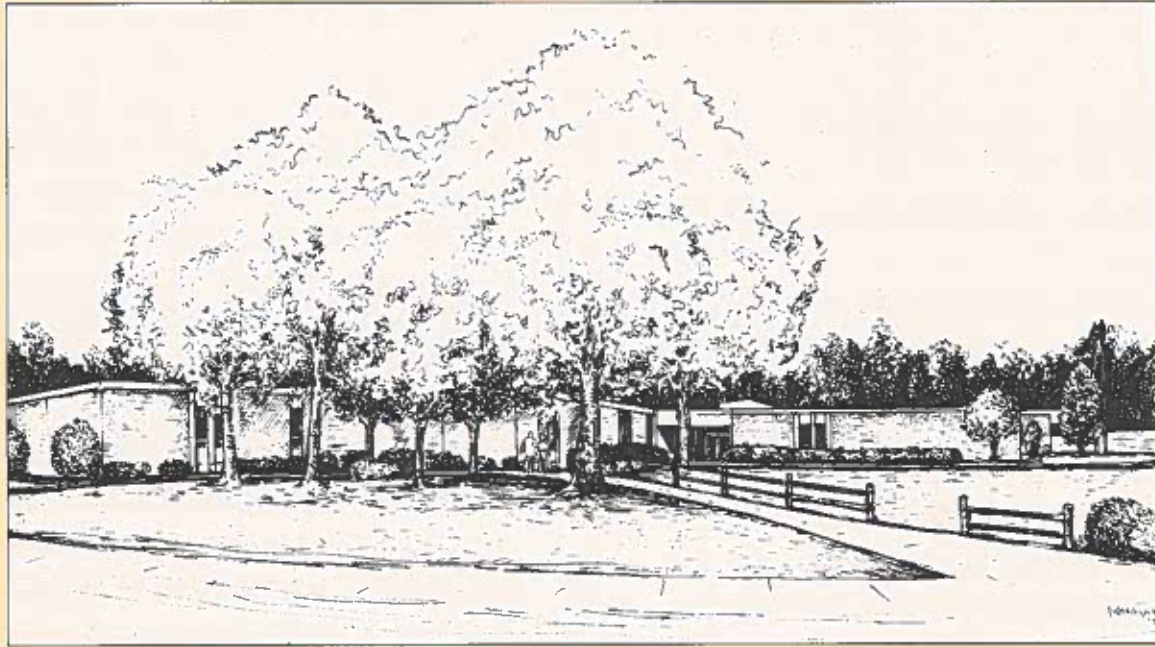
Initiative” — involved the adoption of a Total Quality Systems approach to the operations of the college. In 1993, as one of the first elements of that initiative, the college adopted a revised Mission Statement, along with a Values Statement and a list of institutional goals.

As the 90s reached their midpoint — and as RCC came to the end of its first 25 years — enrollment continued to set records, reaching 1,066 full time equivalent students in 1993-94, even as tuition for in-state students (which had begun at \$5.00 per credit and had, by 1990, reached \$26.60) soared to \$40 a credit. When the community college system was founded, students were expected to contribute, through tuition, less than 20 percent of the cost of their education; they were now being asked to shoulder 35 percent of the financial burden, an increase that threatened to cut out the very students for whom community colleges were created.

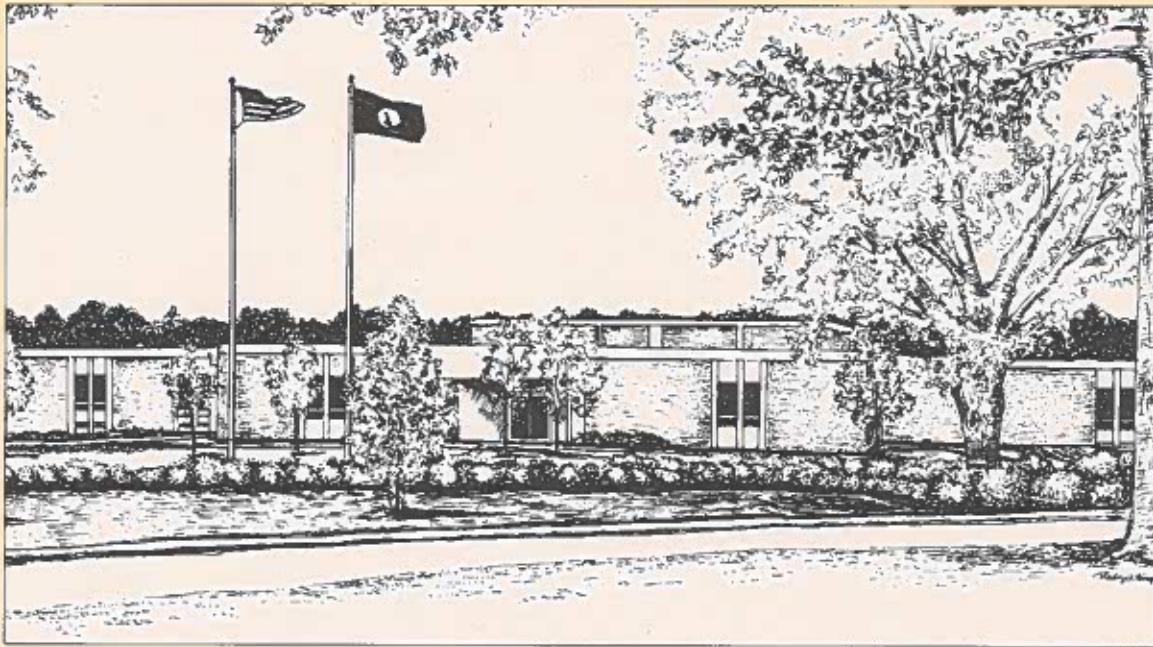
Meanwhile, a new governor, George Allen, was elected on promises to cut spending and push prison construction. Governor Allen's early moves again threatened funds for higher education (which were, in fact, cut for several four-year colleges in the governor's first budget). The adverse financial situation reaffirmed RCC's dedication to the course it had set for itself with quality, efficiency, and service as its foremost goals.

Committed, as always, to students and the community, Rappahannock Community College was working with renewed vigor to maintain and improve the bridges that were built in its first 25 years. At the same time, new technology, including computer networks and interactive video, was emerging to enable the college to build new bridges not possible heretofore — bridges to people and bridges to learning. In fact, thanks to distance learning and other initiatives, Jefferson's dream of a college “within a day's ride of every man's door” may be surpassed in the 21st century by the ability to bring the opportunity for higher education right into everyone's living room.





THE GLENN'S CAMPUS



THE WARSAW CAMPUS