

Update

Alumni Newsletter *from*
President Merodie A. Hancock



Spring 2017
www.esc.edu/Alumni

In today's world of hyperconnectivity, the term "community" has evolved to encompass more than just the communities in which we physically live and work. The digital age has indeed created a "global village," with communities spanning social networking platforms, as well as across distributed work and educational environments. Today, we interact remotely with colleagues, clients, instructors, fellow students, family and friends alike. With all of this ubiquitous communication, however, we are learning continuously how to develop and maintain the various virtual and geographically dispersed communities that we are connected to.

SUNY Empire has tackled this conundrum since it opened in 1971, and we continually improve in creating vibrant communities. With our complementary geographic footprint and our virtual presence, we are in and of the communities we serve, bringing our statewide resources to solve local and focused community challenges.

Our students are connected through a robust network of classes, residencies, services, clubs and activities. The annual Student Academic Conference, where students and recent graduates can showcase their academic work, and the annual Student Wellness Retreat collectively bring more than 1,000 students together annually. In 2010, the college recognized our first student club. We now boast 18 student clubs and organizations, with more recognized each year. These student-run clubs and organizations help create additional ways for students to come together, to enrich one another's lives and strengthen their sense of community.

And, continuing with our history of inclusive and growing communities, I am excited to share that we are building on SUNY Empire's recently formed partnership with The

University of the West Indies, to celebrate our inaugural Year of Cultural Initiative with the Year of the Caribbean as the first theme. This new SUNY Empire initiative is designed to explore a topic more intensively through linked courses, cultural events and celebrations, art exhibits, webinars, seminars, service-learning projects, student and alumni gatherings, speakers, articles in the college magazine and other experiences.



President Merodie A. Hancock

To kick off this new initiative, we were proud to host Sir Hilary Beckles, vice chancellor of The University of the West Indies, as the 2017 Boyer Family Lecturer during our annual All College Conference. Sir Hilary's address, exploring "Reparatory Justice and Economic Development: Critical Support for the Social Growth Paradigm in the Caribbean," was the perfect mark to the beginning of our Year of the Caribbean initiative. During the 2017-2018 academic year, you should see many more opportunities to celebrate and connect with our Caribbean communities.

And finally, please know just how much we value the *alumni* community and all you do for the college. As always, I look forward to your input, and I encourage you to share your thoughts and ideas as we work together to continue to use community building to expand the power of the SUNY Empire promise. I also welcome your feedback and urge you to contact me at president@esc.edu with any questions or suggestions you may have.

Scholars Across the College Present at Alumni Student Event

A particularly noteworthy donor-sponsored program at the college, Scholars Across the College offers faculty the opportunity to share their ideas, research, reading, writing and professional activities with members of the college community. That now includes our alumni and students.

Recently, Sky Armory in Syracuse was the setting for “Teach and Taste: All About Chocolate.” Two of this year’s Scholars Across the College, Kim Stote, Ph.D., and Dana Gliserman-Kopans, Ph.D., discussed chocolate as a commodity in cultural and historical contexts and its nutritional efficacy. With alumni, students, faculty and staff gathered at the sold-out event, they also explored the participants’ relationships with and memories of chocolate.



Alumni and students learn about the wonders of chocolate at our Syracuse “Teach and Taste.”

The scholars were welcomed and introduced by alumna Jacki Hannon ’15, who also is a current MBA student and the High End Spirits manager at the Eagle Beverage Co. in Oswego, N.Y.

After their presentation, the audience was treated to chocolate samples by alumnus, Michael Woloszyn ’03, owner of Lune Chocolat in Manlius and a member of the Alumni Student Federation Board of Governors.

My special thanks go to all the faculty and alumni who helped make this event such a success and also strengthened the already strong relationships among our students, alumni and faculty.

With Gratitude to Our Alumni Volunteers

I want to extend a very special thank you to all of our alumni who have volunteered to assist the college so willingly. You have come out in record numbers, offering testimonials at our open houses, student recruitment events, panel discussions and commencement exercises.

I can’t think of any better group to meet with our students to offer advice, support and congratulations when they finally walk across that stage.

If you are interested in learning more about volunteering, please go to our alumni website at: www.esc.edu/alumni. Even if you can’t give your time, there is a place for you to offer testimonials that we can use in college publications and marketing materials.

Thank you.

Summer Event Plans in Saratoga Springs

Start planning now for our signature summer events in Saratoga. Our 23rd annual college day at Saratoga Race Course is slated for Friday, July 28. The day begins with more than 200 of us gathering for a continental breakfast and handicapping seminar. Then we head to the track for the races, one of which is named for the college.

Just two weeks later, our 13th annual Evening at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center will be Thursday, Aug. 10, featuring American classics. This year, Maestro Marin Alsop conducts The Philadelphia Orchestra in an evening dedicated to the music of American composer George Gershwin. The Marcus Roberts Jazz Trio also will perform that evening.

If you had not planned on attending either event, I strongly encourage you to think about it. Come to Saratoga Springs and enjoy one of the premier tourist spots in all of New York state. Check our website for ticket information and when they’ll become available at www.esc.edu/Alumni.

International Alumni Activities

For the first time in the college’s history, we now have an international alumnus on the Alumni Student Federation Board of Governors. Hady Aouad ’10, from our Lebanon program, joined the board this past fall.

In the short period of time since then, he has organized the first Middle East Alumni Association. Thank you to the new association members, Houssam El Zein ’04, Paul Najm ’16, Hani El Abid ’05 and Ramy Bou Khalil ’03 for their active participation.

They’ve been working on engaging alumni living outside of the United States, and we are hoping to extend our volunteer networks into Europe. They are planning social media outreach, a number of networking events and periodic e-newsletters.

The college’s International Programs has locations in Prague, Czech Republic; Athens and Thessaloniki, Greece; Tirana, Albania; Beirut, Lebanon; Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic; and Eskişehir, Turkey.

Alumni Profile – Robert Roach '96

The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies

Robert Roach '96, accomplished many “firsts,” including being the first African American to serve on the Executive Council of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM). In 1999, he also became the first black general secretary-treasurer of the union, a “barrier that seemed unbreakable for over 110 years,” writes labor activist and labor student Cindy Williams.

Beginning as a billing clerk in New York’s garment district, Roach went on to work as a ramp serviceman for TWA at John F. Kennedy Airport in Queens, N.Y. He joined IAM at 25. He’s been a shop steward and served for 17 years on IAM’s Grievance Committee, as well as being a Local Lodge president. Roach says that the only job he ever really campaigned for was general chairman in 1992, which is pivotal in arbitration talks. He retired from IAM in 2015. We asked him to answer a few questions from his new position as president of the Alliance for Retired Americans.

Q. How did you become interested in labor issues?

A. My real interest came at TWA when my supervisor kept telling me how the union contract worked against me. I began to read the contract and soon found that the agreement worked more in favor of the workers. Once my fellow co-workers saw I had a command of the contract, they elected me shop steward.

Q. Tell me a little bit about your career path, your opportunities, highlights, etc.?

A. Highlights of my career have been many; being the first African American to be elected to the executive council of one of the largest industrial unions in North America; being charged with responsibility for the largest department – transportation – with jurisdiction over 125,000 members, and then being elected secretary-treasurer with responsibilities for two pension funds of over \$10 billion, and a union budget of \$130 million. Achieving those positions wasn’t a highlight, it was that the members and my peers trusted me to handle those responsibilities.

Q. Biggest challenges?

A. The most challenging part of my career was after 9/11. The Transportation Department of the Machinist Union was the largest airline and rail union in North America. We had to defend our members in the airline bankruptcies. Wages were being decreased, there were layoffs, and pension plans were being terminated. Those in the towers and their families were the first victims. I believe the airline workers were the second victims of that devastating attack. I lost a good friend, Keith Maynard, and two shop stewards in the attack. Every day was a different and difficult challenge. We went from testifying on Capitol Hill to coordinating the bankruptcy team, to the negotiating table. I am proud of the team that protected our members through that process. The Machinist Union was able to protect and provide and defend benefit pensions for all 50,000 members through the bankruptcy proceedings.

Q. You’ve partnered with the college to start a residency program that serves labor students in the greater Washington, D.C. area. Why was it important for you to do that?



Robert Roach '96

A. It was that experience after 9/11 that makes me passionate about teaching the next generation of labor leaders how to navigate through the bankruptcy process and what to do when confronted with pension terminations. That is why I am partnering with SUNY Empire, Pension Board Guarantee Corporation and the Pension Rights Center to develop courses that provide training for those on the labor side of that process. Having been blessed with great mentors, I try to mentor younger people who crossed my path. It is a great feeling to watch those whom I have had the privilege of teaching and guiding – some wonderful people – become leaders in their own right.

Q. Why did you decide to serve on the foundation board?

A. I decided to serve in order to help people get the education that I was able to get at SUNY Empire. I know that the college provides an opportunity that may not otherwise be available to many talented people. More importantly, it provides opportunities for a great experience, and networking with those with similar goals. We are a better society because of Empire State College.

Q. What may surprise people who know you?

A. That I am very happy and comfortable at a slower pace, walking my puppy, Smokey (a black lab), and just doing things at a slower pace. Many thought after my retirement from the Machinist Union I would have a difficult time adjusting.



Thanks to our generous donors, each year the Empire State College Foundation awards more than \$700,000 directly to our students in the form of scholarships. This includes a growing number of named, donor-funded scholarships, which now exceeds 100 unique funds. In order to better serve our students and ensure the broad availability of these scholarships, we are pleased to share that the Empire State College Foundation is launching a new, application-based

program called ESCFAST (Empire State College Foundation Application for Scholarships Tool). Launching in spring 2017, ESCFAST will be our students' online portal for all scholarships, allowing them to easily view all of the available opportunities, submit their applications, track the status of any awards and even convey their thanks to the scholarship benefactor. Visit www.esc.edu/ESCFAST to view all of our scholarship opportunities and learn more.



The Fund for Empire State College is driven by thousands of loyal donors who believe in making a difference. So many of you have kindly supported the fund by designating your gifts to student scholarships and the "area of greatest need."

Your actions and comments told us how important it is to you to provide scholarship assistance to as many students as possible. To maximize

the impact of your support, we have established The Fund for Empire State College Scholarship, for which students across the college may apply. This scholarship complements the work already being done by The Fund for Empire State College by creating more accessible funds for more students so they can one day write their own Empire story.

Each student has a story to tell, the story of how they first came to SUNY Empire State College or the story of their journey as a student, but many of these stories can't be completed without assistance from the fund. We look forward to showing you the impact of your contributions by sharing the stories of recipients of The Fund for ESC Scholarship. Please join your fellow alumni and make a gift today to The Fund for Empire State College.



The difference one donor can make in the life of one student is significant. Working together, the difference we can make for many students could be enormous. Make a difference and make your gift today using the enclosed envelope or by going to www.esc.edu/SupportESC