

August 17, 2007

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope you enjoyed your summer. Here in New London, the season seemed to fly by with all the progress on our campus renewal projects. We invested nearly \$10 million this summer alone, and completed (or have nearly completed) 100 different improvement projects, including renovating the interiors of Marshall and Hamilton residence halls, upgrading classrooms, and installing new sidewalks and lighting, among other things. We will continue investing in this beautiful campus with more than \$50 million planned for a variety of projects over the next several years. I encourage you to visit the College's Web site for information on additional accomplishments related to fundraising, admissions, academic recognition and more.

One important, but less visible improvement was the upgrading of our emergency communications system. The College is implementing a new communications system called Connect-ED. This system will enhance emergency preparedness by enabling College administrators to communicate directly via e-mail, voice message or text message with students, parents, staff and others in an emergency. Within the next few weeks, you will receive a letter from our Vice President for College Relations, Patricia Carey, with details about this system and its implementation.

We are all looking forward to the return of our students. We have a terrific new class of freshmen joining us who boast a diverse array of talents and experiences. Our sophomores, juniors and seniors will return fresh from internships, travel or study abroad, volunteer and employment opportunities, and all the experiences they integrate into their rich academic and co-curricular lives. As the many members of our diverse community continue to develop intellectually, we learn from each other and share a palpable excitement in our achievements.

Five new tenure-track faculty members have joined the College: Carol Akai, instructor in child development; Sylvanna Falcón, the Lenore Tingle Howard '42 Assistant Professor of Sociology; Simon Feldman, assistant professor of philosophy; Chad Jones, assistant professor of botany and environmental studies; and Nina Martin, assistant professor of film studies. This additional talent and expertise will help us continue to enhance our students' rigorous academic program.

We made strides with respect to diversity last year, and are looking to build on that success this year. Elizabeth Garcia, director of Unity House, has been named dean of multicultural affairs. She will continue as director of Unity House, the campus multicultural center, and will initiate and coordinate College programs that support a pluralistic student experience. Our goals this year include developing new programming for our LGBTQ community and developing a new facility and programming for our Women's Center.

We also named a new director of residential life, Trish Godino, a proven leader in bridging connections among diverse groups of students and fostering their development as community builders and leaders. Her efforts will complement the strategic initiatives Dean of Student Life Jocelyn Briddell, Dean of the College Community Armando Bengochea and Dean of the Faculty Roger Brooks are collaborating on to enhance the intellectual environment of our residential campus.

I hope you and your family plan to join us in New London for Fall Weekend, Sept. 28-30. We have an interesting array of terrific speakers lined up, including LaShawn Jefferson '88, outgoing executive director of the Women's Rights Division of Human Rights Watch, who will give a keynote lecture entitled Human Rights: Are They Really Universal? Other highlights include faculty lectures and mini-classes, athletic games, alumni gatherings, Harvestfest, panel discussions, campus tours and much more.

You should have received your new parent handbook during the summer. This excellent resource can help you better understand the benefits of a Connecticut College education, how to find information about the College and how to help your student leverage his or her time here. I hope you will consider joining our Parents Committee. This engaged group is essential to the life of the College and always welcomes new members. For more information, e-mail [parents@conncoll.edu](mailto:parents@conncoll.edu).

And finally, I want you to know we currently are conducting a national search for a director of student wellness who will serve as a campus educator on a critical issue: the use of alcohol and other drugs. This person will help us improve our prevention and education programs, strengthen awareness of this issue on campus, and reach out to students proactively. The director will coordinate campus-wide efforts to encourage students to make healthy choices—a matter of grave concern at every college and university. Please take some time to speak with your student about making responsible choices. Your open dialogue will complement our efforts to educate students and reduce high-risk behaviors.

I look forward to a terrific 2007-08 academic year, and to seeing you and your student on campus.

Sincerely,  
Lee Higdon