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A century of excellence has extended the influence of a small campus far beyond its hometown.

In celebration of the 100th anniversary of its founding, the institution, known today as Pennsylvania College of Technology, has published a series of books that chronicles the history of the campus beginning in 1914.

This book (number four in the series) and a companion documentary, both titled Working Class: 100 Years of Hands-On Education, capture stories that embrace the dignity of a “working class” defined not only as a group of individuals contributing to the workforce, but also as a teaching and learning experience that puts general education into practice through relevant, hands-on activities in classrooms, shops, and laboratories.

The stories are told by the men and women who—by their actions as teachers, students, and campus and community leaders—helped to weave the institution’s rich, century-old tapestry. These stories originally were told in different forms, from personal memoirs to videotaped interviews. Many were published in newspapers and magazines.

Professor Emeritus and Master Teacher Veronica M. Muzic, who served as the college’s chief academic officer, said, “Past through present, [the book shares] a consistent motif and one that demonstrates sound planning and decision making over time.”

Penn College acknowledges the contributions of many individuals whose work supported the compilation of its history, including men and women who shared their memories through oral history recordings and provided generous contributions of documents, photographs, and memorabilia to the Madigan Library Archives.

Special thanks are offered to Professor Emeritus and Master Teacher Daniel J. Doyle, Patricia A. Scott, Thomas F. Speicher, and Christopher J. Leigh, for their work with the oral history project; Nicole S. Staron, Patricia A. Scott and Helen L. Yoas, for research assistance; and Veronica M. Muzic, Thomas W. Wilson, and Tina M. Miller for editing support.

All labor that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence.

Martin Luther King Jr.
Public Relations & Marketing

For more than five years, the Public Relations & Marketing staff (formerly College Information & Community Relations) invested time and talent in the development of the Centennial book series and documentary, as well as the promotion and publicity work surrounding Centennial events and activities.

Elaine J. Lambert, special assistant to the president for creative development and public relations (formerly director of college information and community relations)

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Working Class: 100 Years of Hands-On Education offers a glimpse into classrooms that – for more than a century – have presented postsecondary education in a unique manner, combining general education with real work experience.

A century of success is rooted in the school’s respect for the “working class” – defined not only as a group contributing labor to the workforce, but also as a classroom engaging students both in traditional, general education, and relevant, hands-on, work-related activity.

Today – in a learning environment that combines classrooms, laboratories, and technology-enhanced workspaces – students directly apply knowledge gained from textbooks and lectures to real-world projects. Through this comprehensive educational experience, men and women – many representing the first generation in their families to attend college – increase their prospects for richer, fuller lives.

Fortified by its success in creating opportunities from challenges that ranged from depression and world war to global industrialization, the institution that began as a vocational education experiment in 1914 entered the 21st century as a nationally ranked, baccalaureate college.

The celebration of its Centennial presents an opportunity to explore the history of an institution distinguished by its unique mission in a crowded higher-education marketplace.

As a national leader in applied technology education, Pennsylvania College of Technology today builds upon a rich history of success, inspiring individuals, workplaces, and communities through its ongoing commitment to the “working class.”
The evolution of this institution has been marked by its renaming – three times in its 100-year history.

The story began in 1914 when a new high school opened in Williamsport, Pa. A vocational-technical program housed in the school basement opened an adult training program that gained national acclaim for efforts to fight joblessness during the Great Depression.

The program grew into the world-renowned Williamsport Technical Institute, founded in 1941, and created the foundation for Williamsport Area Community College, established in 1965 as one of the state’s first community colleges and the only one dedicated to hands-on, technical education.

Challenged by rising costs and facing the loss of local sponsorship required by the community college system, the college forged a unique affiliation with The Pennsylvania State University that led to the establishment of Pennsylvania College of Technology in 1989.

As a special mission affiliate of Penn State, Penn College became the state’s premier technical college. In recent years, the college has articulated a vision to be recognized as a national leader in applied technology education.

Guiding the institution throughout its 100-year history are consistent, core values that celebrate the dignity of work and the importance of connecting the classroom to “real world” experiences in business, industry, and society.

This publication celebrates the ideals that inspired Williamsport’s visionary leaders to embark upon a journey in 1914 that would lead to a 21st-century model of higher education.
Boom. Trees falling in Penn’s Woods once made a powerful sound.

In the second half of the 19th century, Pennsylvania was the greatest lumber-producing state in the nation. Williamsport – a centrally located city that held timber for miles in the cradle of the Susquehanna Log Boom Company – became known as “The Lumber Capital of the World.”

The boom created wealth in Williamsport, which claimed more millionaires per capita than any other city. While lumber barons built magnificent homes within walking distance of the Susquehanna, thousands of working-class citizens provided manual and skilled labor that brought prosperity to the river valley.
For generations, local citizens lived off the land, working on farms, in forests, and along the river. By the early 1900s, many jobs began to disappear as the timber boom that introduced great wealth into the region also depleted once-plentiful natural resources.

The Pennsylvania Lumber Museum reported, “By 1920, the seemingly endless forests had become history, and in hundreds of lumber towns as the last, solitary log was moved up the jack ladder, the sawmill whistle was given a long, lonely, final blast, which signaled the closing of the mill and the end of an era.”

It was impossible to recreate lost natural resources, but new opportunities for prosperity emerged as a result of innovations that took place during the lumbering period. Williamsport’s strategic location and the introduction of steam-powered engines, railroad transportation and other technologies led to the development of large-scale, commercial enterprises in the city. To be successful, those businesses needed educated and skilled workers.
Williamsport High School

A new Williamsport High School, built on land between the Susquehanna River and the mansions of “Millionaires’ Row,” symbolized the rising importance of education in this 20th-century city.

In November 1914, a public celebration marked the dedication of a majestic, neo-classical high school building, where an enlightened faculty would introduce new ideas about teaching and learning to meet the needs of a city on the brink of change.

“At the turn of the century, the high school offered four courses of study – the classical, the Latin-scientific, the English-scientific, and the commercial,” declared Williamsport Schools Through the Years, published in 1958. “As the century progressed, the high school kept up with the times.

The school’s instructional shops were equipped with tools and machines high school students could use to develop the skills needed for jobs in local wood products and machining industries.

“Williamsport had one of the best schools for industrial arts in the state ... for what we would now call vocational education,” said George H. Parkes, who joined the high school faculty as a mechanical drawing teacher in 1920. He was named director of the high school vocational program in 1924, and became the first director of Williamsport Technical Institute in 1941.

The earliest industrial shops – situated, as Parkes described, among the basement coal bins – were wood shops, a pattern-making shop and a cabinet-making shop.

“It is rather remarkable, the sophistication of that program,” Parkes declared. “The high school was new. It was a very well-built building, and was quite elaborately equipped for its size and for the size of the program at that particular time.”

The first machine shop

Wood products
“At the turn of the century, the high school offered four courses of study – the classical, the Latin-scientific, the English-scientific, and the commercial. As the century progressed, the high school kept up with the times.”

*Williamsport Schools Through the Years*
Locker Room Auto Shop

As automobiles gained popularity across America, vocational education leaders in Williamsport saw an early opportunity to begin training automotive mechanics, introducing one of the nation’s first instructional automotive programs. But, traditional classrooms and industrial shops were not fitting for this type of program.

“We wanted to get into the automotive field and there was no facility,” George H. Parkes recalled in a 1970 interview. “So, we got them to give us the old locker room … on the ground floor of the southwest corner of the high school … . We got an old automobile and put it in there. At the start, we had only one student and he worked pretty much alone in there. This student’s name was Morrissey, Charlie Morrissey.”

The program soon outgrew the locker room and instruction moved from the locker room to an open area under the high school football stadium bleachers.

“In order to get a respectable place to have an auto shop, we persuaded the school board to let us have the dismal, deep freeze area under the bleachers … . When weather would permit it, we did a great deal of work out there. Charlie Smith was the instructor and later Harry Myers. This auto shop under the bleachers was quite a popular thing, and it gave us the background, and confronted us with the problems.

“We finally (1931 or ’32) came up with a very elaborate auto shop, a very large auto shop, and an extremely well-equipped auto shop,” Parkes concluded. “This was perhaps one of the very first auto shop buildings built for this purpose in the state of Pennsylvania or in the country … as far as serious auto mechanics is concerned.”
Adult Education

In addition to its vocational program for high school students, Williamsport offered adult education prior to World War I, including citizenship and literacy programs for immigrants and classes for adults interested in finding jobs in commercial fields.

After the war, a veterans’ training program operated in the city from 1920-24, offering classes in automotive mechanics, pattern-making, cabinet-making, drafting, and electricity; over the summer months, when regular school was not in session, veterans trained in the high school shops. When that program closed, the high school expanded its programming for adults.

“It was started simply as a night school, as many other school districts had at that particular time,” Parkes explained. “It didn’t look anything like our subsequent vocational adult school, but we began to see the possibilities, partly by our contacts with industry and our research. The most significant early step we took was when we carried the adult education program into the foremanship training program.”

In 1926-29, approximately 20 industries signed on for the foremanship training program, opening their
doors to allow the high school vocational teachers to provide on-the-job training to employees who were in line for advancement. Education had spread beyond the classroom and into the workplace.

Parkes saw the foremanship training program as an opportunity to give something back to industries that earlier offered a “cooperative education” experience to Williamsport High School vocational students. Teenage “co-op” students alternated traditional learning – in academic and shop classes – with real work experience in the cooperating local businesses.

“Most of our industries, while very cooperative, were doing it chiefly as a gesture of good will for working boys who couldn’t go to college,” Parkes said.

The vocational faculty who led foremanship training became “almost partners with industry,” Parkes said. “They were in and out of the industrial plants at a great rate.”

The close relationship between Williamsport’s vocational teachers and business leaders was the spark igniting an industry-education partnership that created enthusiasm among students and employers for the next century.

“When we started this foremanship training program, the industries suddenly discovered that here was a service that would earn money for them,” Parkes stated. “This was the beginning of our success in our work with the industries.”

Great Depression

When the Great Depression threatened the stability of every American city, Williamsport’s business and vocational education leaders – already united by partnerships such as cooperative education and foremanship training – pulled together. They came up with a plan that would gain national attention for its success in creating jobs and stimulating industry.

Based on a 1930 survey of local industry needs, the Williamsport Plan recommended that the vocational education program retrain unemployed workers to fill vacant, skilled positions that would support the growth of local industries.

“This retraining program was not a hit-or-miss affair,” according to *The Williamsport Schools Through the Years*. “Eight coordinators blueprinted the city’s employment situation and students were trained to fit specific jobs in the community.”

National media recognized the unique approach. *The Saturday Evening Post* reported: “On the local level, down where the jobs and the jobless are, a movement is developing which, if it does not solve the unemployment problem, is due to make a sizeable dent in it. What they aim to do is train the jobless into jobs.”

*The Post* credited the retraining program for unprecedented success: “What the Depression did to Williamsport was about what it did to most similarly placed industrial communities … but what Williamsport did to the Depression is a story in the best, though of late unofficial, American tradition.”
Williamsport Defeats Unemployment Through Occupational Adjustment

FRANCES MAULE

Conquest of unemployment through an organized community effort at occupational adjustment—this is the task to which Williamsport, Pennsylvania, has addressed itself with zeal and enthusiasm.

By means of a five-point vocational program administered by the public school system, sponsored by the Williamsport Community Trade Association, and furthered by practically every up-building force in the community, Williamsport has managed to hold unemployment at a gratifyingly low point through depression and recession, has placed as many as eight hundred persons a year on private payrolls during the more prosperous of the seven years since 1931, and is now focusing the combined resources of these agencies upon an effort to obtain for its workers the full measure of job security and job satisfaction that can be had from job-training and job-adjustment.

Said a leading local newspaper editor to me on the occasion of a recent visit to Williamsport to study its vocational program: "Sooner or later everybody here in Williamsport find themselves pressed into the service of vocational education and adjustment and working enthusiastically to promote its objectives—newspapers; social welfare organizations; religious and racial groups; city, county, state, federal agencies; private employers. And the cooperation is one hundred percent. Why? Because we have become convinced that this is the one and only way to lick unemployment in our town."

According to the Williamsport philosophy, the best investment a community can make in behalf of its children, from the standpoint of its own self-interest, is a chance for those children to learn how to do the particular kinds of work needed in that community; and an opportunity to equip themselves to bear their part as completely independent self-sustaining individuals in its economic and social life. An instance of the seriousness of this point of view is afforded by the fact that the greatly coveted annual prize offered by the Grit Publishing Company, in recognition of distinguished community service, was awarded in 1936 to Williamsport's vocational program.
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The declared objective of this program is to open up to the people of Williamsport—young and old alike—facilities for training and re-training for jobs that are available locally, and to help them to secure those jobs. Courses of training for types of work that are not to be had in Williamsport are ruled out as a waste of the taxpayer's money and the student's time. Every effort is directed toward maintenance of a constant balance between the jobs open at any one time—or likely to be open in the near future—and the number of persons in training for those jobs.

In Williamsport they do not keep on endlessly training for tool and die making simply because a sufficiently large number elect this subject to make up a good class, or because tool and die making seems a good reliable sort of trade. The leaders of the vocational program ascertain approximately how many openings there are likely to be for tool and die makers in Williamsport, and through careful steering, counseling, and constructive alternative suggestions, keep these classes down to estimated needs.

WORK TOGETHER

To secure the information required to maintain this balance between labor demand and supply, the closest possible relations are kept up with the Williamsport industries, not by means of an occasional formal white-collar-and-tie academic visitation under the guidance of an official of the company, but by a continuous, shirt-sleeve, first-name intimacy with the foremen and workmen of all Williamsport's industrial plants. Any one of the teachers or coordinators of the industrial school can walk in at the back door of any Williamsport factory at any time, hail the foreman as "Bill" or "Pete," and not only put to him any questions they may want answered in regard to specific job-possibilities in the plant, present or future, but gossip with him socially and informally about possible future changes or developments that are likely to change the job set-up.

An equally intimate relationship is maintained by the teachers and coordinators in the business and home economics departments with the business organizations of the city, and with local organizations and individuals seeking persons equipped with commercial or home economics training.

And what the teachers and coordinators find out from their industrial and business visits, they act upon. If, for example, a coordinator discovers that a plant is about to install a new machine, he reports his discovery to the industrial school, and the school proceeds to turn itself inside out to beg, borrow, or acquire by purchase a duplicate of that machine in order that it may begin at once to train workers for the jobs the machine is likely to create. For example, when it was learned that a hosiery mill employing women operatives was moving to Williamsport, facilities were straightway set up for training, or re-training, girls and women for the jobs that would soon be forthcoming. Today some of those who received the training or re-training are earning as high as $35 a week at steady work under particularly favorable conditions. It is not uncommon for the re-training school to have among its students an unemployed man or woman preparing for a job that is expected to come into existence several months hence.

HOW IT STARTED

The Williamsport program in its present supremely practical, highly concentrated form was developed under pressure of necessity to meet a community crisis.
An industrial city set in a long valley between rows of low-lying hills along the Susquehanna River northwest of Harrisburg, Williamsport spreads out like a panorama before the eyes of those of its more prosperous citizens who, some years ago, started moving out of the valley up into the pleasantly wooded heights. They saw a prosperous city, humming with activity, laid out in tidy, tree-shaded streets lined with comfortable, and in certain districts, handsome and spacious houses. Dominating the central part of the city stood the great plant of the rubber company that for years had given employment to a large part of Williamsport’s industrial population in the making of rubber footwear. Plants of other industries dotted the valley—the automobile motor works, the airplane motor works, the Diesel engine works, the wire rope factory, the textile mills, the hosiery mill, the wood-working factories, the machine shops. Smoke rose from their chimneys. A smiling, up-standing procession of workers, mostly of old American stock, filed in and out of their gates with well-filled dinner pails.

Along in the early nineteen-thirties, however, leading citizens realized that all was not well with Williamsport’s working people. In 1932 the great catastrophe occurred. The rubber footwear factory, so long the main support of so large a part of the city’s industrial population, moved away in order to seek more economical transportation facilities for its raw materials and finished products.

Williamsport was confronted with a crisis. It was not merely that so many persons had been thrown out of work—although that was bad enough. The most serious aspect of the tragedy was that many of them had literally grown up in the rubber footwear plant. They understood the making of rubber footwear. They possessed no other skills. Before they could hope to secure other employment, therefore, it was necessary for them to acquire other skills.

How? Where? It was the rare good fortune of the working people of Williamsport that the answer was ready and waiting. It came from the city’s public schools.

Two years before, as a result of an unemployment survey made by the Williamsport Community Trade Association, a re-training program had been set up by the vocational department of the public school system. This department, for years, had been performing yeoman service to Williamsport’s workers and employers alike by giving courses in the particular skills needed by local business and industry. Now it was proposed that facilities for re-training be added specifically for the benefit of those who had lost their jobs because of the depression. Thus came into existence the first of the re-training schools to be established in the United States. In 1932 when the dislocated rubber footwear workers came into the picture, the vocational education department of the public school system was ready for them with a re-training program. Most of the unemployed rubber workers were successfully re-trained for specific types of work normally in demand by the local industries; and, despite the depression, many were placed.

Meanwhile the depression pursued its relentless course. Job-finding for the jobless became the first order of business of the social welfare agencies of the community. Their common experiences growing out of this effort made them quite ready to assent to the proposition, put to them by the leaders of the vocational adjustment program, that unemployment is not due simply and solely to bad business conditions but to what the
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vocational adjusters designate as "failure characteristics" within the individual. Among these they listed lack of proper training or experience, unsatisfactory records on previous jobs, physical disabilities or handicaps, poor attitudes toward work, inadequate or incompetent counseling and guidance in school.

ENTIRE COMMUNITY INVOLVED

With the leaders of the vocational adjustment program, the welfare organizations began to see their task as fundamentally one of education—and re-education. Readily they agreed to the advantages lying in a coordination of their separate and diverse efforts into one consistent, organized program. Among the organizations or agencies participating are the Williamsport Community Trade Association, the Pennsylvania State Department of Public Instruction, the Williamsport School District, the State Department of Labor and Industry, the Federal Civil Service Commission, the State Civil Service Commission, the State Employment Service, the teacher training department of the Pennsylvania State College, the Social Service Bureau, the YWCA, the YMCA, various WPA agencies, the NYA, the CCC re-training program, the Catholic School System of Parochial Schools, the Lycoming County Crippled Children Society, the Lycoming County Children’s Aid Society, the Rehabilitation Bureau, the Williamsport Ministerial Association, and the Williamsport Public Library.

As a community, Williamsport is ideally qualified for the task it set itself. First, it is situated in a state favorable to the furtherance of vocational education and adjustment. When, in its 1935 session, Pennsylvania's Legislature passed Act 426 appropriating $50,000 to be spent over a period of two years in the re-training of unemployed persons, Pennsylvania became the first state in the Union to provide support for a program of this character. The Act provided that this sum be administered directly by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and that teachers be appointed by him on the nomination of District Superintendents, and their salaries paid by the Department of Public Instruction. The 1937 session of the Legislature re-enacted this legislation with added measures providing for cooperation with vocational guidance and employment services.

Secondly, the population of Williamsport is not too large (47,000) for thoroughly integrated community effort, and yet large enough to provide adequate facilities and a sufficiently large body of trained and suitable persons to take care of the work involved in a thoroughly professional manner.

Thirdly, the population of Williamsport is exceptionally homogeneous in character. It has the lowest foreign-born population of any city of its size and industrial character in the state. Chiefly its people are native-born of native-born parents or else second-generation stock sprung from foreign-born parents who have become completely Americanized. The entire population, practically, is English-speaking. There are no unassimilable elements whatever. The city contains about one thousand Negroes of an exceptionally high character, owning their own homes and holding a high standing in the community as workers and citizens. The school population is practically stationary—varying only slightly around nine thousand from year to year. The roster of the adult school averages about three thousand, twelve hundred of whom are in the re-training school. Four out of five of the school population are school placement problems.
Fourthly, most of Williamsport’s well-to-do citizens have a strong hereditary interest in the well-being of the city. Descendants of the original English, Irish, Scotch, and German settlers who came into the Susquehanna Valley in the early days and proceeded to make fortunes for themselves in the lumber industry, they can be counted upon almost one hundred percent to support with money and influence any constructive effort in the interests of the city or its people. Among them are Williamsport’s bankers, city officials, captains of industry, business and professional leaders. Of the employers of the city, some 350 actively cooperate with the vocational program. These men, with their wives and daughters, sit on the boards of Williamsport’s welfare organizations, and act as volunteer workers in every good cause. Generally their children study and play throughout their elementary and high school years with the children of the industrial workers in the valley. Every educational effort made in behalf of the children of the workers is, therefore, of deep personal interest to the children of more prosperous citizens.

The Men Behind the Program

Finally Williamsport is particularly fortunate in the administrators of its vocational program. Constantly in talking with representatives of groups cooperating in the program and with members of the staff, the writer was reminded of Emerson’s saying that every great achievement is but the lengthened shadow of a man. One and all put the achievement in Williamsport chiefly up to its administrator of vocational and adult education, George H. Parkes. They told of his vision, his single-mindedness, his realistic perception of actual needs, his unflagging zeal, his kindliness and good humor, his extraordinary efficiency, and, above all, his truly amazing gift for enlisting support from all kinds and conditions of people and for infusing into them the same whole-hearted devotion and enthusiasm that inspires his own efforts. Behind him, to be sure, Mr. Parkes has a man of unusual breadth of vision, sympathy, understanding, and practical idealism in the person of the superintendent of schools, A. M. Weaver, who not only supports but actively promotes Mr. Parkes’ dream of coordinating all the vocational work done in the community under the leadership of the schools.

Inspired by such a superintendent and such a director, the members of the staff, down to the youngest clerk and typist, give enthusiastically and freely of their time and energies, not according to hours or pay, but according to the need of the moment. And as the need is always pressing, they are usually working at high pressure and totally without regard to time schedules. Officially the hours in the adult school are from 6 P. M. to 10 P. M. Actually its teachers and administrators are hard at it most of the day as well as the entire evening. In the equipment of the teachers, the practical nature of the program is again evident. No teacher is ever engaged merely for a purely academic proficiency in the subject to be taught. Each one must actually have worked at it on a regular job. The staff numbers normally about fifty-eight persons.

The Five-Point Program

The formal set-up of Williamsport’s five-fold program consists of: (1) occupational training, guidance, and placement for the full-time students of the senior high school; (2) an evening vocational school for adults offering training in some six or seven basic trades, in commercial subjects, and in home economics;
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(3) an evening high school for adults designed to provide those who have had to leave school to go to work with facilities for finishing their high school educations; (4) a re-training school for adults designed to study the handicaps and "failure characteristics" of those who are unemployed and unable to find employment, to provide a re-training and rehabilitation service to remove those handicaps and "failure characteristics," a placement service to secure private employment for the re-trained and rehabilitated, and a follow-up service to promote the greatest possible measure of success and permanency on the new job; (5) a program of cultural and recreational activities for adults designed to widen mental horizons, build up morale, and provide constructive interests and influences. *

As might be inferred from so practical a program, great emphasis is laid on placement. The declared aim is to place two placements a day. The actual record reaches eight hundred placements a year for the more prosperous of the past seven years. Only permanent jobs paying a minimum of $10 a week are counted as placements. When called for, arrangements are made with employers to take students as apprentices, in which case the apprentice is followed up and supervised from the school. Many placements are made through the Public Employment Service, which cooperates actively with the vocational program.

The "offices" of a number of the administrators of the program and the representatives of the cooperating agencies consist of desks ranged at intervals along the walls of an abandoned gymnasium in the senior high school building. Here you will find Kenneth L. Cornwell, coordinator for men in the adult education school, who serves likewise as vocational counselor and placement director and as a dollar-a-year administrator of the NYA in Williamsport. Mr. Cornwell's leading function is to act as liaison officer between local employers and the vocational services of the school. He explains to employers the advantages of sending their employees to the adult and re-training schools in order that they may acquire new skills and upgrade the skills they already possess; employers explain to him what they require in the way of special skills. Certain of the training courses have been set up by direct request of employers.

Directly across the hall stands the desk of Helen Trafford who performs for girls and women the same service that Mr. Cornwell performs for men. Here also in the converted gymnasium is the desk of Arthur Lee Davies, who in addition to performing all his regular tasks as supervisor of the Lycoming County WPA education-recreation program, has instituted and conducts a class in public speaking, a clinic for the discussion of psychological problems, an art class, a music class, and a discussion group called the Sociology Club. Next is the desk of W. Lewis Shettler, a statistician detailed by the federal government to make the statistical studies necessary for an accurate check on the work of the various departments, and for the formulation of future plans.

Survey for A.V.A.

In an adjoining room the writer found O. R. LeBeau, special research agent for the American Vocational Association, who is making an important study of what becomes of Williamsport high school graduates after they have been vocationally

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*These activities of Williamsport's Adult School were described in more detail by Miss Maule in her article, "Adjustment for Back-to-School Youth" in Occupations, xvi, June, 1938, pp. 843-845, and reprinted in condensed form in The Education Digest for September, 1938, pp. 44-45.
trained, counseled, and placed on their first jobs by the vocational department. His study will form the first of a series of similar investigations that the AVA, under a grant of $6,000 from the Carnegie Corporation, supplemented by an allotment from the AVA budget, is sponsoring in various communities throughout the United States. When finished, the studies will be published with the tentative title of "A Preliminary Examination of the Services in Vocational Education, as Shown by Twenty Years of Experiences in American Public Schools."

The purpose of the AVA study is to present objective data, based largely on case histories, that will serve to indicate to what extent the services of vocational education are effective in selecting, training, placing, and re-training the individual for useful employment. No such data are as yet available, and the information is much needed for the planning of programs for occupational adjustment. Williamsport was selected for the first of these studies because it is a typical industrial community, and because it has a particularly well-developed and effective vocational program with a history reaching back over a period of some twenty years.

The regular classrooms of the senior high school are used for the adult and re-training classes from six o'clock in the afternoon until ten in the evening, five days a week. Here, in addition to regulation academic and commercial subjects, are taught such subjects as commercial and applied art, music, dressmaking, cooking, home nursing, knitting, banking, public speaking, and radio technique.

Industrial subjects are taught in a special building some two blocks away from the senior high school. This is presided over by E. H. Shore, who was introduced to me by Mr. Parkes as "a man who would get up in the middle of the night any time, if, by so doing, he saw a chance to land a man a job." Among the courses taught here are blueprint reading, mechanical and architectural drafting, electric and oxy-acetylene welding. Diesel engineering, electric work of various kinds, engineering subjects, automobile mechanics, aviation mechanics, building construction, production tooling and routing, sheet metal layout, tool and die making, and machine shop practice. In a separate room, presided over by K. E. Carl, persons having physical handicaps receive a special type of instruction designed to develop skills which will enable them to earn their living on regular jobs. On Saturday morning some one hundred and fifty CCC enrollees spend the day at this school receiving instruction in industrial subjects of their own choosing. In the evening, before they are taken back to their camp, they are given an opportunity to engage in the various recreational and cultural activities of the vocational program.

Cost Not Excessive

And what of the cost of Williamsport's determined onslaught upon unemployment through vocational adjustment? According to a study made by federal statisticians Scheler and Armstrong for the school year of 1936-1937, the outlay per year for counseling, training, and placing each student of the regular day high school is $125.77 or, if the federal and state subsidies are deducted, the local cost is $81.20, as against $116.41 for the educating of each student in regular academic subjects alone. The cost for each pupil per year in the adult evening school is only $10.22. This discrepancy is due partly, of course, to the fact that the adult school makes use of the regular high school equipment. It is estimated that the cost per year of re-training and placing on
OCCUPATIONAL ADJUSTMENT IN WILLIAMSPORT

a regular payroll job each student in the re-training school amounts to about $100. The facilities still needed by the vocational program to enable it to do with the maximum efficiency the work lying ready to its hand are: added means of attracting to the service the individuals most needing it; provisions for adequate medical examinations and treatment for physical disabilities prejudicial to employment; the services of psychologists and experts in mental hygiene; enlarged quarters and more complete and efficient equipment; more teachers with the necessary occupational skill and experience who can be employed under existing certification regulations.

It is estimated by Mr. Parkes that anyone who takes advantage of the existing facilities to the fullest extent has an 80-20 chance to secure a good and permanent job. With enlarged and improved facilities, he is confident that this percentage of chances for satisfactory employment could be considerably stepped up. Mr. Parkes is a hearty believer in the American way of going ahead with the means at hand instead of waiting for the ideal means to be provided. Nevertheless he would welcome with the utmost cordiality the addition of any or all of the facilities now lacking.

"No one can participate effectively in the life of the community unless secure on a job." Once, long ago, Mr. Parkes read this in a book on vocational education by David Snedden. He never forgot it. It has conditioned all his thinking and inspired all his doing. Upon the enlightened social philosophy expressed thereby he has built his program. He has made of it a battle cry and a slogan.

This is the philosophy that has rallied all Williamsport to his program. This is the slogan—this the battle-cry—that has caused all the up-building forces of Williamsport to get squarely behind an effort to lick unemployment in Williamsport through a coordinated community program of occupational adjustment.

Frances Maule has written many successful radio skits for vocational guidance programs, and frequently contributes to educational as well as other periodicals. She is the author of She Strives to Conquer.

Calendar of Coming Events

American Association of School Administrators, Cleveland, February 25-March 2, 1939
American Council of Guidance and Personnel Associations, Cleveland, February 22-25, 1939
American Education Week, November 6-12, 1938
American Vocational Association Convention, St. Louis, November 30-December 3, 1938 (Special Vocational Guidance Program)
Educational Records Bureau Conference, Hotel Roosevelt, New York City, October 27-28, 1938
National Vocational Guidance Association Convention, Cleveland, February 22-25, 1939
**American Tradition**

In Williamsport, the American tradition was symbolized by a motivated working class of individuals willing to roll up their sleeves and go to work learning new techniques to secure better futures for themselves, their families, and the companies that employed them.

The heart of that tradition was found in a new machine shop, built across the street from the high school, in the midst of the Great Depression. The shop’s foundation was built by unemployed local citizens who received food baskets as payment for their efforts.

Parkes, the vocational program director, was determined to see the shop built, in spite of the economic challenges faced by the school district during the Depression. He credited his core of volunteer unemployed workers – “businessmen, salesmen, men who … didn’t seem to have too much skill but (were) willing to work” – for making it possible.

The director felt certain that a machine shop held incredible promise for the future, both for students and for industry. One of his protégés, George E. Logue, recalled Parkes describing a machine shop as a foundation for all other industries.

> “The only thing that can reproduce itself in the world – that isn’t biological – is a machine shop,” Parkes told Logue while convincing him to study machining in the 1940s. “You can go in a machine shop and build another one.”

Logue took Parkes’ advice and became a successful entrepreneur. Late in his life, he gave credit for his early success to faculty in the machine shop and in his English classes, where he said the teachers persisted in the difficult task of teaching English to “shop kids.”

Despite popular thinking of the day, Williamsport’s vocational program offered an equal blend of shop experience and academics.
George H. Parkes, who was a student at Purdue University when President Woodrow Wilson signed the first federal act funding vocational education, was one of the nation’s first fully certified vocational education teachers. But, throughout his career, he rejected the notion that college preparation and vocational education should be separate.

“In most vocational programs carried on by the public schools under the Smith Hughes Act, it was almost a standard practice, encouraged by the old federal board and later encouraged by the vocational cadre of the U.S. Office of Education, to ignore any college preparatory education under Smith Hughes funds,” Parkes wrote in a summary of activities titled “The Educational Job Concept” in 1974. “The powerful American Vocational Association is to this day generally in support of no ‘college prep’ programs for vocational students. The Williamsport faculty never liked this, since there could be no better training for engineers and scientists than a properly oriented vocational education.”

He described the unique approach of faculty, who were committed to using real work experience as a foundation for college preparation, as offering students a “two pants suit.”

“We organized a semi-volunteer program, which we referred to as a ‘two pants suit.’ A selected student could follow his usual day-time vocational curriculum and, by special scheduling, he could take courses in mathematics, science, English, and so on, under properly qualified teachers, and upon high school graduation, receive the accreditation for admission to college, chiefly in the engineering field …… The program was developed and supervised for nearly 30 years by Arthur K. Patterson, an electrical engineering graduate who had developed into one of our best trained leaders.”

Contrary to ideas that vocational education allowed students to exhibit lower standards than traditional college preparatory classes, this approach demanded a serious commitment.

“This higher education objective required a great deal of student determination and academic zeal,” Parkes insisted. “For example, students had to attend classes in the evening, and could not always participate in some of the activities dear to high school students.”

Students who committed to the program became leaders among their high school classmates, Parkes reported.

“This pre-technical, open-door, ‘two pants suit’ approach brought to our vocational program many students who wished a vocational training program, but also wished to be eligible for college at some later date. The program added respectability to our group and Mr. Patterson saw to it that these special students participated quite fully in student affairs in the high school. At one time, I recall a high school teacher tried to have some administrative control on student activity offices, which were being excessively awarded to vocational students. Undoubtedly, this program was a strong factor in progressively reducing the inter-faculty superiority contests.”
Equal Blend – Shop and Academics

Despite popular thinking of the day, Williamsport’s vocational program offered an equal blend of shop experience and academics. While the Smith-Hughes National Vocational Education Act of 1917 emphasized practical work experience over academic course work, Williamsport’s vocational program director did not give in to the notion that vocational students should be denied the advantages of a general education.

Parkes’ experience, as a railroad mechanic with an engineering degree and vocational education teacher certification, led him to believe that, while his vocational students may have wanted more shop time, they needed the right balance of education and experience.

He convinced the school’s “classically trained” English department faculty to allow alternative methods for teaching the fundamentals of language and communication to the vocational students. This included using trade publications instead of textbooks to encourage even the most reluctant students to read.

A textbook written by one of the department’s English instructors, John T. Shuman, featured the principles that were used to combine general and vocational education in Williamsport’s classrooms. In his introduction to *Spelling for Trade and Technical Students*, published in 1934, Shuman wrote:

“Teachers will find that the book properly used has in it much that tends to motivate study on the part of the vocational pupil. The different types of lessons prevent study of the material from becoming a monotonous routine … The mixing of trade, industrial, and general words tends also among this group of pupils to arouse greater interest and to promote more purposeful and sincere study than almost any other combination.”

The book’s content focused on improving vocabulary by incorporating general and industrial words with technical words used in the most common trades. It also presented words frequently misspelled “by all high school students and people in general” and offered lessons on “specific spelling difficulties that persist in the spelling of older pupils.”

Shuman stressed the importance of customizing general education to convince vocational students that reading, writing and mathematics are among the tools needed in their trades.

He wrote: “'I know but I can't say it' or 'I know but I don't know how to write it' is heard frequently by the teacher of vocational classes. A reasonable degree of accuracy and proficiency in the fundamentals such as spelling and using words is absolutely necessary to a continued improvement in the pupil’s English. Yet in spite of the existing situation we have thus far done very little to provide this group with English material which for them is practical, interesting, and essential.”

He acknowledged an abundance of “many excellent books available in the field of English,” but insisted that helping students find meaning in academics by honoring their particular field of interest was the ultimate key to success.

“It is true that vocational pupils should broaden their range of interests by studying much that their fellow pupils in other courses study, by reading good books, and by participating in extra-curricular activities. But since the great majority of them enter industry from the vocational or trade school, they must also be taught in their classes something about the romance, the content, and the vocabulary of industry.”

Shuman’s textbooks integrated the fundamentals of communication with vocational interests and encouraged students and their teachers to honor the connection between academics and real work experience.

“My own experience in teaching English to such students has convinced me of the overriding importance of correct motivation,” he said.
SPELLING HELPS

I

Words, like people, are related to each other. Look for such a relationship when you are asked to spell a word with which you have trouble. Suppose that you are asked to write the word preparation, but that you cannot determine whether it is spelled prep(e)ration or prep(a)ration. To determine what letter to use after p, try to think of a shorter word from which the longer word has come. In this case the word prepare is the shorter word. Once you now determine that a follows the second p you can easily spell the word preparation. Similarly, if you are having difficulty with the word measurement, think of the shorter word measure.

Suggest shorter words that might help you to spell the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>recommendation</th>
<th>accidental</th>
<th>omitted</th>
<th>alternating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>connection</td>
<td>mechanical</td>
<td>opposite</td>
<td>electrician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>construction</td>
<td>universal</td>
<td>specifications</td>
<td>stationary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>structural</td>
<td>alignment</td>
<td>transportation</td>
<td>reciprocating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organization</td>
<td>management</td>
<td>cylindrical</td>
<td>alphabetic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II

Always spell out a word by syllables. To spell a word in this way, simply divide it into syllables by pronouncing it carefully. A syllable is that part of a word which can be said in one expulsion of breath. For example, you must say the word axis with two expulsions of breath, as ax-is. Remember also that a syllable always contains a vowel. Notice the word industrial, when it is broken up into its syllables; in-dus-tri-al. It is easier to spell the word industrial by syllables or units than by any other method.

Divide these words into syllables according to pronunciation; then compare your division with the division given in a standard dictionary. Be sure to try to divide the word first by pronouncing it and not by copying it from the dictionary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>busy</th>
<th>carpenter</th>
<th>specification</th>
<th>employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>expense</td>
<td>factory</td>
<td>expenditure</td>
<td>receptacle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>motor</td>
<td>application</td>
<td>manufacturer</td>
<td>micrometer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>business</td>
<td>judgment</td>
<td>superintendent</td>
<td>hypotenuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specific</td>
<td>machinist</td>
<td>agricultural</td>
<td>organization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frequently the vocational and trade pupil must study independently; therefore, he must often teach himself. It is easy to learn the spelling of a word if a good method is carefully followed.
In *English for Vocational and Technical Schools*, published in 1936 and 1954, John T. Shuman specifically addressed the question, “Have you ever wondered why you should learn to speak and write well?”

**HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHY YOU SHOULD LEARN TO SPEAK AND WRITE WELL?**

You are about to begin the study of English for another school year. During this time you will try to improve yourself so that you can talk, read, and write much more effectively and easily.

Before you start to do even the first work, stop for a few moments and ask yourself: Why should I learn to speak correctly? Is the study of English actually profitable to me?

Then after looking at individuals you know, answer questions such as these for yourself: What successful men do I know? Can they express themselves forcefully and correctly? Would they hold the jobs they do if they could not present their ideas clearly to other men? Is their use of English a help or a hindrance?

Has it ever occurred to you that these successful persons had to learn to express themselves well, and that you can learn to do it also? No one is born with the ability to speak correctly and effectively, just as no one is born with the ability to swim or to operate a machine. Both are skills that must be learned through much practice.

The chapters in this book have been planned to help you learn to use better English. If you follow directions carefully, your English should improve and you should develop skills that will be very helpful. But it is not easy—success in the use of words and sentences and paragraphs comes only through real effort. Success is any undertaking never comes from just wishing; it comes only from regular and systematic work.

**TO THE STUDENT**

**English—Your Basic Skill**

Do you expect to live the rest of your life as a hermit in some forest or desert area? Certainly, you don’t. You will probably work with different groups of people and live in a community with many other persons. Since you will be working with and through people, your success will depend on your ability to communicate with them.

Your basic skill then is the ability to organize and express your thoughts and ideas in writing and in speaking so others will understand what you are driving at and can be persuaded. You must talk and write to all those persons with whom you work and live. The ability to speak and write well is important to you whether you work in industry, conduct your own business, or practice a profession.

**What Good English Means to You**

Recently a graduate of a technical school said to me: “You know, a man feels rather cheap when he suddenly realizes that he can’t write a good letter and speak correctly.”

Another graduate wrote this letter to his former English instructor:

One thing that I have learned since leaving the school is that as I advance on my job no subject is of more value to me than English.

First, I had to use it in writing a number of application letters. Second, I have to use it daily here in the plant in my contacts with my superiors. Third, I have to use it in making short reports on equipment of which I have charge and in writing short messages to the various foremen.

Actually the last thing that I expected to see in a factory was a dictionary. But believe it or not, my superintendent keeps one on his desk. And he uses it, too.
Shuman’s work influenced vocational teaching throughout North America. His *English for Vocational and Technical Schools* is credited as the basis for a Canadian text written by teaching masters at Seneca College.

Authors Elizabeth A. Holmes and A.C.L. Holmes said their *Communication Skills for the World of Work*, published in 1981, was designed “primarily as a textbook for a senior secondary school course in applied English or a college course in communications skills for students who are about to go out to work in industry.”

The original textbook by Shuman featured chapters on “Writing with Imagination about Your Work,” “Making Suggestions about Your Job,” “English in Advertising and Selling,” and “Report Writing,” with a range of themes from accident reports to inspection reports. A section on “Sending Telegrams,” as part of “Conducting Business by Correspondence,” reflected the era’s communication technology.

Shuman believed lessons that encouraged students to express themselves “clearly and correctly in letters, reports, discussions, and conferences” were more successful than traditional methods of teaching language arts because they allowed “correct English” to be “absorbed in terms of use rather than learned as theory through rules.”

In addition to his English and spelling textbooks, Shuman authored several books related to instruction in the machine shop, including *Machine Shop Work*, published in 1943 by the American Technical Society. In the same year, the same publisher released another book by Shuman: *Fundamental Shop Training for Those Preparing for War Service.*

“Shuman believes that his books should be more than a series of exercises in grammar and spelling. He wants his students to use English correctly and to express their ideas clearly and concisely.”

—John T. Shuman

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Defense Contracts

In preparation for World War II, government defense contracts created a demand for skilled machinists across the nation. In Williamsport, the manufacturer of Lycoming Engines increased its workforce to supply the French and British, even before America entered the war.

By 1940, Williamsport’s vocational education program was enlisted as a defense training operation to serve the needs of companies like Avco (Lycoming Engines). More than 5,000 students/citizens were enrolled in training and retraining programs.

“We went day and night,” Parkes said, describing the era in which classes met 24 hours a day to train first, second and third shift factory workers.

By 1940, Williamsport’s vocational education program was enlisted as a defense training operation. More than 5,000 students/citizens were enrolled in training and retraining programs.
‘Winning Their Share’

When the United States entered World War II in 1941,
there was probably little reason to believe that it
would have much of an impact on the small town
of Williamsport. Unbeknownst to many, however,
Williamsport had already made a name for itself
nationally because of one man and his plan for the
community.

George H. Parkes, director of Williamsport High
School’s vocational program and later Williamsport
Technical Institute – both predecessors to Pennsylvania
College of Technology – can be considered a visionary in
his day because of the Depression-era Williamsport Plan,
which customized training for the positions available at
Williamsport-area plants. But his impact went far further
than helping the unemployed during the interwar period;
It later helped fuel the war efforts of the 1940s.

“On May 10, 1940, the world rocked with the
realization that a nation of skilled technicians was about
to smother an ancient and cultured civilization under
an avalanche of scientific thought and mechanism.”

“A nation of skilled technicians was
about to smother an ancient
and cultured civilization under
an avalanche of
scientific thought and mechanism.”

An aviation mechanic student
works on an airplane engine. The
student was later placed as an
Army Air Corps aviation mechanic.
Williamsport School District in 1940 to make those within and around Williamsport aware of the immediate and important changes that would be happening at Williamsport High School to help the nation in its war efforts.

That year, school staff had to make immediate changes, including forfeiting their summer vacations, in order to alter a curriculum previously focused on retraining unemployed men and women, changing the focus to defense industries, especially the ever-important metalworking trades. In addition to the change in curriculum, the workload itself became more intense, as students now spent a minimum of 40 hours per week in their classes.

The school’s weekly publication, The Newsletter, noted that instructors were reprimanded for letting their classes out even 15 minutes early. Additionally, students who were absent without reason were not permitted to return to class until the absence was investigated. In the meantime, wait-listed students attended classes in their place. Training was so important for the war effort that Parkes said he was mentioned in The Newsletter of students and instructors both ensuring that they were spending every minute of their time on the most efficient and productive tasks, opposing any kind of busy work and unnecessary, menial tasks.

The school continued to work with important government agencies: the National Youth Administration, the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Department of Public Assistance, the State Employment Service and others.

By 1941, when the vocational program was established officially as Williamsport Technical Institute, the school’s successes had become much more apparent, both locally and nationwide. According to a Williamsport Sun article in October of that year, the institute was deemed one of the city’s largest assets due to its ability to train 3,000 individuals for defense industries within a six-month period. In a separate article, the Sun reported that within seven short years, Civilian Conservation Corps enrollment in the national defense courses nearly doubled what it was when the classes were first offered in 1934. In fact, the use of WTI facilities for war training was so important that by November 1941, 10 new machines had arrived on campus in support of a course that was requested by the U.S. Office of Education in the interest of national defense.

In February of the following year, the Grit newspaper reported that the U.S. Office of Education sent the institute one of the largest pieces of equipment it had ever received—a boring mill—valued at around $5,000.

The achievements of WTI were not only recognized by the federal
government, but were also praised in national journals, which in turn helped further those successes by bringing in new students. Upon initial defense-course offerings, young men began traveling to Williamsport from the anthracite coal regions in Pennsylvania and even New York City. By 1941, however, talk of the programs at WTI had traveled so far that one youth, upon reading about the progress of vocational training in Williamsport in a national journal, decided to leave his home in Alaska to study at the institute.

In addition to the influx of male students from far and wide in the 1940s, WTI saw an increasing number of women enrolling in its courses. A 1941 Williamsport Sun article, titled “Young women swap knitting bags for tool kits as the nation prepares for defense,” outlined how WTI allowed women to break from traditional roles and move into more male-dominated areas, such as aviation, instrument repair, drafting and architectural drawing. Two such women, the article notes, were disabled due to infantile paralysis. WTI was able to provide them with a vocation and, more importantly, livelihood, despite their disabilities.

An article later that year emphasized the importance of women in the Red Cross Motor Corps taking weekly classes in the institute’s auto mechanics shop. The goal of the course was for women to be able to repair a car without outside help, a job that they undertook with pleasure and pride.

The biggest step forward for women, however, occurred in January 1942, when all defense training work at WTI was opened to women on the same basis as for men. Although preference was still given to unemployed men, according to a Dec. 23, 1941, Williamsport Sun article, Parkes recognized that women should be trained in order to avert a possible labor shortage, should the men be wholly absorbed in the war.

The war program at Williamsport Technical Institute was terminated in June 1945, according to a Gazette and Bulletin article that year. Despite having existed for only a few years, the WTI defense-industry program excelled, in part because of the full support of the faculty and staff, but also because of the strong and selfless youth who wanted to do all they could to assist during the war. The administration at WTI had set very high standards for its students — a quality that was praised by civic and government officials — but continued to accept strong applicants regardless of where they came from, their gender or their physical disabilities.

Those students then worked hard to excel in their programs at a time their country really needed them, giving so much of themselves that some even volunteered their spare time to help rush the completion of one of the school’s new buildings, Unit 4, in 1942.

This building, the school’s new machine shop, was especially important to the war effort, because this is where emergency orders were sent for jobs that were needed for local war plants. The March 30, 1942, issue of The Newsletter announced, “Word has been received from the government that Unit 4 must be prepared for a large new war assignment in two weeks. This is a big and entirely new development, the nature of which is confidential.”

The article’s ending statement — “The boys are winning their share of this war!” — refers to those who volunteered their time to rush completion of the project and couldn’t have been more true.

From students in the commercial art and technical illustration classes who designed posters to aid in the country’s defense, to radio communications students who found important work aboard naval ships, to students working on intricate aviation instruments, the Williamsport Technical Institute was able to help its young students, men and women alike, to defend their country with honor and pride.
Like other cities in 1930, Williamsport found itself in the midst of the Depression and facing rising unemployment. To add to its difficulties, the U. S. Rubber Company closed its plant in Williamsport in 1932, putting an additional 2,500 people out of work, swelling the already overburdened relief rolls and leaving most of the workers without marketable skills.

Faced with rising relief bills, businessmen worked through the Chamber of Commerce to collect data to determine what type of worker was unemployed. The results showed that 75 percent of the unemployed were unskilled, 85 percent of whom had adequate backgrounds to become skilled or semi-skilled workers. A shop-to-shop survey made the surprising disclosure that while unemployment was rising, many shops reported an increasing shortage of workers with particular skills. Dr. George H. Parkes, director of the vocational department of the Williamsport High School, was appointed to design a program that would equip the unemployed with needed skills.

A plan, which became known as the Williamsport Plan, was designed to screen, train, and place the unemployed through the coordinated efforts of the Williamsport Retraining School—also directed by Dr. Parkes—the state employment office, the YWCA, the YMCA, and numerous other agencies.

The Williamsport Retraining School was to serve also as a training center for the WPA, PWA, NYA and CCC. In the Williamsport High School at the corner of Third and Susquehanna Streets, the staff of the Williamsport Retraining School set up an electrical shop in a coal bin, reclaimed a locker room for the automotive department, and set up a machine shop under the new school bleachers. With only a $1000 grant from the Williamsport School District, the Williamsport Retraining School could afford little in the way of manpower. About $10,000 in equipment was salvaged from area junk yards and reconditioned. Another

Dr. George H. Parkes, director of the vocational department of the Williamsport High School, was appointed to design a program that would equip the unemployed with needed skills.
$10,000 worth of equipment was borrowed from area industries.

By 1933, Parkes decided a separate building for the Williamsport Retraining School was needed. The Williamsport School District could offer no funds and did not agree that a separate building was necessary. So the staff of the Williamsport Retraining School chose a site on school property, designed a blueprint of the building, and tapped the County Relief Board for a work force. Every day a different crew of 20 workers was sent to the school with materials bought on credit and borrowed tools; the crew dug out a foundation and constructed a one-story, saw-tooth building with walls of glass to admit a maximum of natural light. By 1934 the three-unit building at the corner of West Third and Park Streets was ready for use.

When surveys projected a need for truck drivers, the staff of the school borrowed trucks, dug a regulation-sized mechanics pit in the yard of the school and started one of the first trucking schools in the country. When there was a shortage of men skilled in the use of the acetylene torch, the staff rounded up several second-hand and discarded torches and borrowed a skilled worker as an instructor.

The single objective of the Williamsport Plan was to place the unemployed in jobs for which they were trained. Toward that end, eight industry-experienced coordinators were employed by the Williamsport Retraining School to determine what skills local industries would be needing in the near future and what student was best suited for training in that area. Follow-up training was offered until the employee was settled in his job.

Most employers were unable to predict their future needs, but interviews with shop foremen and supervisors uncovered specifically needed skills. Applicants to the program were interviewed to determine their aptitude as well as their interest.
Unless an applicant showed no aptitude for a skill needed by industry, he received this skill with the near certainty of placement. The strength of the program rested in the ability of Parkes and his staff to determine the applicant’s ability and to equip him with a marketable skill. Coordinators kept close contact with area employers to be certain applicants would be trained in skills that would be needed.

Between 1930 and 1940, about 4,000 unemployed workers were placed, each at a cost of only $100. More than half of them had been on Williamsport relief rolls. The program was so successful that in 1940, 3,100 people were enrolled, 600 of whom were placed in that year. Lycoming County had been the first county in the state to initiate a program to pay relief recipients as they trained for employment.

The staff of the Williamsport Retraining School was far superior to any in the country in its job placement record and its ability to predict the job market. Educators, state and federal groups, and businessmen visited the Williamsport Retraining School, a predecessor to the Williamsport Technical Institute and the Williamsport Area Community College, to study its organization. The Williamsport Plan was applauded by the federal government, by numerous newspapers, and in 1940 by Nation’s Business, Woman’s Day, and The Saturday Evening Post.

The purpose of the Williamsport Plan was to retrain workers left jobless by the economic crisis. At the time, Lycoming County experienced an unemployment rate...
of 25 percent. The Williamsport Plan was so successful at retraining workers for the skilled positions opening up in area plants, that it won national recognition. It was praised as a creative and responsible way for a community to deal with the problems of unemployment on its own initiative. The high school adult training program provided the necessary instruction from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. so that trainees could pursue whatever employment they could find during the day.

The Williamsport Plan eventually made training available to other persons at the technical school through federal government programs, such as the Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Youth Administration. The NYA brought high school age boys to Williamsport from throughout Pennsylvania for technical training at the high school shops on Susquehanna Street. Each boy stayed in the program for a year, which consisted of 80 hours of training alternating with 80 hours of work. While at work the boys repaired and reconditioned machines for the government and military. The Center was able to train 100 boys at a time and helped many get a start in life when they needed it most.

In 1940, with America’s involvement in World War II just around the corner, the Williamsport School Board established a special Emergency Training Commission to undertake the training of men and women for defense work. The Williamsport vocational operation at the high school became one of the first in the country to begin a defense training program. The school operated on a twenty-four hour a day schedule.

**Between 1930 and 1940, about 4,000 unemployed workers were placed, each at a cost of only $100.**

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Lycoming County had been the first county in the state to initiate a program to pay relief recipients as they trained for employment.

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The staff of the Williamsport Retraining School was far superior to any in the country in its job placement record and its ability to predict the job market.
Tech was the word used to describe Williamsport’s vocational education program, which gained national recognition for a battle plan against unemployment during The Great Depression. Established in the World War I era, the program tested the adaptability of its “working class” curriculum when called to action to support the buildup of the defense industry in preparation for World War II.

Eleven days after the Nazis invaded Holland and Belgium – before the U.S. entered the war – Williamsport Area School District established an Emergency Training Commission to adapt its vocational program to meet defense training needs.

Williamsport’s program – focused on developing highly skilled metal workers in its instructional shops – became one of the first vocational education programs in the nation adapted for the war effort.

As the war expanded, so did the demand for manufactured goods. Most factories in Lycoming County converted operations to respond to wartime needs. Williamsport’s training program operated working classrooms around the clock to provide workers with the skills needed to increase production and expand the local economy.

By 1941, the vocational program was “so large and diverse,” according to A Picture of Lycoming County, “that the School District voted to turn it into a technical institute separate from the high school ....

The emphasis on defense industry training significantly increased adult enrollment at the technical institute. According to The WTI Story, a multimedia promotion presented by the institute in 1952, enrollment during the war years reached 6,500.

Many companies partnered with the institute, including the area’s largest private employer, the Lycoming Division of Aviation Corporation (Avco). Parkes, the institute’s founding director, said “Lycoming Motors was a big factor” in WTI’s early growth.

The company’s 4,000 workers manufactured 600 engines per month, including those for a Navy bomber, B-29 bombers, the Packard Rolls-Royce P-51, the Stinson Flying Jeep, the Spartan, Curtis, Cessna, and Beechcraft, according to A Picture of Lycoming County.

The Williamsport Technical Institute, or ‘Tech,’ remained under the control of the city school board but had its own director and educational program. The Tech continued to provide vocational training to both adults and secondary students. The first director of WTI was Dr. George Parkes.

The emphasis on defense industry training significantly increased adult enrollment at the technical institute.
Defense Diversifies Manufacturing

Increased demands for industrial production created employment opportunities in communities like Williamsport that were ready to respond to a new call to duty, even before the nation officially entered the war.

According to *A Picture of Lycoming County*, a research project of The Greater Williamsport Community Arts Council in conjunction with The Williamsport Area School District, “One of the primary reasons for the increase in production was the awarding of defense contracts to local industries. England, France, and the Soviet Union were fully engaged in war with Germany by the late 1930’s, and many vital defense products were manufactured in Lycoming County and shipped to them.”

The publication described a wide variety of products produced in the Williamsport area including “shoes, army cots, glue and plane engines … anti-tank mines, torpedo nets, ammunition shells, radio and radar tubes, paper products, cloth – silk, rayon, nylon and glass fiber – step ladders, field hospital tables, life boats, cabinets and office files, and lumber.”

Once the U.S. entered the war, production demands increased significantly.

“Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Lycoming Manufacturers’ Association … pulled its forces together in what they called the "West Branch Front," the publication reported.

“Manufacturers were asked to produce at maximum levels for the war effort … Metal industries led production during the war period. Some of the major manufacturers were Bethlehem Steel Company, Avco Manufacturing Corporation, Sylvania Electric Products, E. Keeler Company, Darling Valve and Manufacturing Company, Sprout Waldron and Company and Sweet’s Steel Company.”

Two Pants Suit

A different kind of product – a homegrown teacher – emerged from the early partnership between the vocational program and the company that produced Lycoming engines when a former student, who worked at Lycoming Motors as part of his vocational experience, joined the WTI faculty in 1937.

As a high school student, Kenneth E. Carl participated in what Parkes described as a “two pants suit” program, completing both college preparatory and vocational classes.

“You spent two weeks in lessons here and two weeks in your trade or occupation and then alternate like that throughout the year and there’s supposed to be another boy alternating with you so that when you’re in classes, he’s in the drafting department, and vice versa,” Carl recalled.

After high school, Carl attended college and continued working at Lycoming Motors. After earning his bachelor’s degree, he was hired by WTI as a drafting instructor. He later became the department head and expanded courses to include architectural drafting, tool and die design, and technical illustration.

Technical illustration, as Carl described it, was “part of drafting, but it was turning it more or less into illustrating – cutaway views and so forth, which was used in the publication of various booklets about the products that (companies) made.”

In addition to adding more courses, Carl looked for opportunities to bring the latest equipment and techniques into the classroom.

“Young Dr. Carl’s leadership in our drafting department, our school began to look carefully at the practices used in our cooperating plants, and to develop skill in teaching these new techniques,” Parkes recalled.

Based on his industry experience, Carl felt that the companies would benefit directly from any in-kind support they provided to create working classrooms for the institute.
Factory Standards

“They realized that if they were going to get people trained on the machines like they used that we ought to have one up at our shop and sometimes they’d give us one and help us influence the school board that we ought to have this for the training,” Carl said. “Avco gave us some machinery for the machine shop. Darling Valve gave us a couple woodworking machines for the pattern making …. Metal shops gave us a few pieces of sheet metal equipment. We’d get whatever we could, wherever.”

The ability to match equipment used in classes to modern factory standards made an immediate impact on training. Carl described what occurred in the drafting department:

“Of course (in class) you worked with a T-square, but in industry you had a drafting machine. I finally got some in the school, so I could give the students practice on using a drafting machine, which is handier and perhaps a little time saving …. It consisted of arms that would fasten up at the top of your drawing board and come down two pieces, and then there was a circle and then two pieces down to the actual machine. And there you could change the head – the rulers – you could have one or two at perfect 90 degree angles. And you just moved that up and draw and move it up and draw the other way … you do it much easier than reaching over and grabing a T-square or a parallel bar …. So the drafting machine was a preferred situation. Of course, not all companies had them because they did cost some money.”

Over the years, the vocational program faculty had learned to improvise – even overhauling items found in area junkyards – in order to equip working classrooms with very limited school district funding. Partnering with industry during the war years provided support needed to gain new tools and machines for instruction.
Following the war, industry continued to work closely with the Williamsport Technical Institute to train returning veterans and sharpen the skills of workers as industry shifted its emphasis to peace-time products.

In order to create new jobs in the county, the Chamber of Commerce organized the Industrial Properties Corporation whose sole responsibility was to create new jobs. The strategy was to make Lycoming County attractive to new industry and to help existing industry expand.

At the turn of the century, the economy of the county had come dangerously close to collapse after the lumber industry exhausted its resources. In order to protect the economy from collapse by avoiding dependence on any one industry, the Industrial Properties Corporation proposed to diversify industries.

According to the 1955 report, “The industrial development campaign, headed by the Williamsport Chamber of Commerce, has been successful in further diversifying the county’s industries. Nineteen major industrial classifications are now represented in the county. The largest classifications are in primary metals, fabricated metal products, non-electrical machinery, transportation equipment, lumber and wood products, furniture, food products, apparel and related products, paper products, and electrical and electronic machinery, equipment, and supplies.”

The area’s largest employers in 1955, according to the report, were:

- Avco, Lycoming Division, Williamsport ........................................ 1,700
- GTE Sylvania, Montoursville ..................................................... 1,500
- Koppers Company, Inc., Muncy .................................................. 1,000
- Bethlehem Steel Corporation, Williamsport ................................... 800
- GTE Sylvania, Inc., Muncy ......................................................... 777
- Stroehmann Bros. Company, Williamsport ................................... 425
- Weldon Manufacturing Company, Williamsport ......................... 400
- Schnadig Corporation, Montoursville ......................................... 375
- West Company-Plastic Division, Montgomery ............................. 350
- Grumman Allied Industries, Inc., Montgomery ............................. 200
Math, Physics Challenge

When production of Lycoming engines declined after the war, the company discharged large numbers of employees. Among them was Ramon H. Palmer – an engineer with a Cornell University degree who moved to Williamsport to work for Lycoming Motors in 1939.

Because Palmer’s work was considered essential to the war effort, he earned a deferment when called to active duty. While still working at Lycoming Motors, he began teaching an evening class in engine design. Later, through his connection with WTI faculty member John Shuman, Palmer was invited to interview for a full-time teaching position. He was hired as WTI’s first physics instructor in 1947.

“I was really a part of the drafting department that time,” he said. “They wanted to teach math and physics to their drafting students, so they emptied the room right in front of the drafting department to set me up so that’s where we got started.”

The instructor’s challenge was to make math and physics seem relevant to students under less than perfect conditions. The department was located in a former trolley car barn that had been converted into classrooms and administrative offices by the institute. There were few instructional resources available.

“The head of the drafting department was Fred Jones, and he would often come to me with problems that the students were having, trying to calculate the dimensions to fit the drawing,” he said. “It was a math problem, so I’d give it to my students … They couldn’t do it. I’d show them how. So we were teaching math to match up to the drafting department.”

In turn, the drafting department helped Palmer build equipment to use in his classes.

“I would make a sketch of what I wanted, take it to the drafting department and they would make the fine-working drawings, send those drawings to the shop. Then, they would build it for me,” he said.

Interaction with the trade areas improved Palmer’s ability to teach students to apply physics to their particular disciplines in his working classrooms.

“I used to visit the shops … go to the machine shop and go to the sheet metal shop, go to the electric shop, go to all the workshops and talk with their instructors,” he recalled.

Drafting students also participated in hands-on learning activities in other disciplines to enhance their program of study.

Chalmer C. Van Horn, who attended WTI after serving in the military and later became part of the drafting faculty, said as a student he elected to study in the pattern shop and sheet metal shop.

“We stopped the drafting. We went to those (other) shops and stayed there all day for a month. Then, we came back to the drafting … I think it gave us a good idea of what we were doing … how we need to call out things on a drawing, (so we) don’t look stupid by calling for something that the shop cannot do … it gave us an idea of the things we had to watch out for in making drawings.”

Van Horn acknowledged that providing this diverse experience for students was a challenge for instructors, who individualized instruction for each student’s needs. He said they had “in effect … 25 students, 25 different places, working on 25 different projects – and a teacher, trying to stay up with them.”
Live, Via Remote

Ramon H. Palmer was not only the first physics instructor at Williamsport Technical Institute, he also was the first member of the faculty to develop a televised course to complement his teaching in 1962.

“This was Dr. Carl’s idea,” Palmer said. “He thought that using television to teach more than one class at the time would be a big advantage. So, they set up this experiment. I would have a live class in front of me and … a remote class … taught only by television … I was pleased to be chosen to do it … physics is a course which should be nice on demonstration. It’ll have a lot to show.”

Palmer provided a precise description of the set-up for this pioneering program:

“In my classroom I had three television cameras … all mounted up from the ceiling, and I had control of each one to a certain extent … I had a big cabinet with three monitors in it. One would show myself and the other two monitors would be from the remote class. The remote class had two cameras … so I could see all the class. I had the public address, so we could talk back and forth … One camera mounted in the middle of the room would set on the lab table … in order for it to follow me, I designed some mechanism so that I could move it … The blackboard was behind me and I had a pulley at one end and a cord going all over around it.

One pulley was attached to what we call the Selsyn motor … as I worked on the blackboard, I just pulled this cord and as I moved along with it, the camera was following right along because of the motion of the Selsyn motor. I had a second Selsyn motor … on a fixed position … so I could adjust it vertically up or down. I had good control over that camera. Then I had another camera near the lab table, which had a zoom lens, so I could zoom in closely … I had a button on my belt that I could zoom it in or back. Then I had a third camera … which was fixed and would show the whole lab table at once … it had two focuses, a close up and a remote, and I had control over that too. So I had control of all three of them.”

Palmer was his own cast and crew for broadcasting the physics “episodes.”

“If you see a program on television, at the end they list the people involved in it. They have a long, long list of people. I was the only one. In fact, I had to start off in the morning by turning on the equipment … the main background equipment was up in my office. I turned that on in the morning and then I’d come down and I held a control box that I wore on my belt that had the three buttons on it to control which camera I was going to use. I had a push button for the “PA” [public address] system so that the fellows in the remote room could page me and I could answer them.”

His teaching style remained the same, Palmer said, except that he was “a little bit hampered by all the equipment I had to operate.”

Palmer conducted the televised teaching experiment for two years. He said that while the assessment report indicated learning via television was not significantly different from the live classroom, the emotional response of students was less positive for the students in the remote room.

The experiment also attracted attention from a neighboring university, Palmer recalled.

“Penn State University was interested to see it and then they sent some professors down to observe … A lot of people came in to see that demonstration,” he said.

Palmer also noted that his class was frequently observed by others at WTI.

“The electronics department had a monitor back there and they could observe anytime they wanted to. There was also one in Dr. Carl’s office and he could observe anytime he wanted … He’d say, ‘Ray that was a good lesson today.’”
Manual describing WTI's televised instruction
Returning Veterans

While the faculty found new ways to engage students, WTI’s administration faced the challenge of adapting the curriculum to help returning WW II veterans find employment in a workforce that was no longer “booming” from war time production.

“Anticipating being called upon to train war veterans for civilian jobs, with special emphasis upon service to the disabled, the Williamsport Technical Institute geared itself to accept thousands of students entitled to training through the GI Educational Bill,” according to The WTI Story. “Even before the GI Bill of Rights was passed in 1944, the school made plans for training returning servicemen by setting up a scholarship program in cooperation with several progressive manufacturers.

This scholarship program was described in the institute’s 1953 catalog: “Since the establishment of the school, shortly after World War I, it has maintained close cooperation with the employers of its graduates – that is with industry, commerce and business. Examples of this cooperation are the scholarship programs now in progress at the school. These programs are requested by forward-looking industrialists who wish to protect their businesses against the increasing and critical shortages of skilled men. These industrialists, by setting up scholarships, have made it possible for a number of unskilled men to obtain technical training in one or other of the many departments at Tech. Following this training, these men are able to enter the industry or business for which they have been prepared as skilled and highly paid employees.”

The catalog reported that Williamsport’s industry-education connection attracted the attention of employers beyond the local area.

“Another example of this cooperation is the fact that many employers in Pennsylvania and other states east of the Rockies make a practice of calling Tech’s employment office before seeking elsewhere for trained personnel. Tech, for its part, consults closely with business and industry regarding its courses. If, for example, the demand for men trained in a certain field begins to diminish, courses training men for that field are drastically curtailed or entirely eliminated. On the other hand, requests by employers may cause new courses to be inaugurated.”

Training veterans effectively required a more flexible curriculum. Veterans retraining differed from defense industry training and from traditional high school vocational education. The goal was to prepare the veterans so they could quickly compete for jobs in a variety of industries.

“Veterans were an entirely different thing,” said James P. Bressler, WTI faculty member and administrator. “We had to think carefully … What are the needs that these people will present to us and how can we fulfill those needs? They were talking about new programs, new approaches.”

He explained, “They (the veterans) became proficient in a number of trades, including machine shop, auto and diesel, electric, and welding. When they had entry-level skills in a number of areas, a lot of them branched out from there into industries on the basis of their training they received here.”

While the trades dominated the curriculum, veterans also had the opportunity to enroll in other, business-related courses of study offered by the technical institute.

William H. Homisak, who began leading business-related classes in 1949, said, “My first position when I came here, out of the service, was to teach adult distributive education classes.”

“We had the men, mainly, come in to school in the mornings, learning salesmanship, merchandise
Like students in the trades, business students were expected to combine their classroom instruction with real work experience. Homisak said, “We were very fortunate. There were four of us as instructors. We were very well received by the different merchants in town. They were very cooperative in … having our students work for them. They also paid them what would be … the standard wage. So that was a real incentive for these fellows to go to work.”
Howard C. Aderhold, who enrolled in WTI’s radio communications course in 1945, said experience at the institute “would set the course for the rest of my life.”

After serving as a Marine Corp radio operator in the Korean War, Aderhold continued his studies, then joined the Research Division of Curtiss-Wright Corp., where his first assignment involved setting up a laboratory to support nuclear research and testing. Later, he was responsible for the design and fabrication, as well as start-up and testing, of control and safety systems for new nuclear reactors in Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, and Bangkok, Thailand.

In 1963, he became operations manager of the Ward Center for Nuclear Sciences at Cornell University; he was later named the center’s director. Following his retirement, he returned to oversee the safe decommissioning of the facility in 2006.

He acknowledged “outstanding” WTI instructors – Clinton Dawes, Art Giles, Gordon Phipps, and Reginald Harrington – who “taught us how to use the latest electronic equipment in research projects awarded by the National Bureau of Standards.”

“WTI was the best technical institute in the country at that time,” Aderhold recalled. “Chiang Kai-shek sent military advisors to WTI for study.”

Worldwide Interest

The institute’s detailed attention to connecting instruction with localized workforce needs attracted worldwide interest in its programs.

An article published January 14, 1945, in *The New York Times* reported, “Williamsport Technical Institute is training 20 officers of the Chinese Army in aviation mechanics. This is the third project in international education within six months for the 25-year-old Williamsport, PA., public technical school. Two men from Colombia are studying machine shop practice and radio communications as the conclusion to a nationwide educational tour, prior to becoming vocational teachers in their homeland. Dr. George H. Parkes, the institute’s director, is on leave in Panama to advise the Panamanian Government in the construction of a $3,000,000 vocational school.”

According to *The WTI Story*, “Educators and students from many foreign countries have enrolled to study our methods of vocational education, in order to gain ideas which may help them in programs in their own countries.”

“The fame of the Williamsport Technical Institute as an outstanding vocational center has spread beyond the borders of the United States,” reported *Williamsport Schools through the Years*, published in 1958. “In 1953, the school was officially approved for the training of foreign students, although several nations were represented on the rolls prior to this. Educators from many foreign countries have enrolled at WTI to study our methods of vocational education in an effort to set up similar centers in their own countries.”

By 1962, WTI was rated the fifth largest program in the United States providing a technical cooperation program for international development through the education of foreign students.
1941 – 1965

• Advertising supplement about Williamsport and Little League Baseball was published in *The New York Times* (June 14, 1964). An article by Pete Martin quoted Dr. Carl: “We not only teach veterans, we teach international students as well. One of our graduates is now Prime Minister of Iraq.”

“WTI was the best technical institute in the country at that time.”

Dr. Carl and Iraqi students, *Williamsport Sun*, Feb. 1954
SUMMER STUDENTS — Dr. Kenneth E. Carl, right, director of the Williamsport Technical Institute, is teaching a summer seminar on vocational and technical education for 16 students from Jordan, Spain, Korea, Afghanistan, Sudan and Viet Nam. The men, including the national director of vocational education in Spain, attend seminar classes in the mornings and visit area industries in the afternoons. The seminar is for two weeks.

WTI Rated One of Top Schools in Training Foreign Students

The Williamsport Technical Institute, which formally becomes a part of the Williamsport Area Community College in September, holds the distinction of being one of the top schools of its type in the education of foreign students.

The United States Office of Education has released a report on a technical cooperation program for international development and it indicates that in 1961 WTI had the sixth largest program of this type in the United States when comparing the total number of students served by all colleges and universities in the country.

The local institute served 23 international students that year. The Pennsylvania State University and the University of Pennsylvania each served 13 students during the same period by comparison.

In 1962, the institute ranked fifth with 29 students and in 1963 it was eighth in the U.S. with 20 students.

To date, WTI has had students enrolled from 47 different countries. At the present, eight foreign students are studying at the institute.
By 1962, WTI was rated the fifth largest program in the United States providing a technical cooperation program for international development through the education of foreign students.

Dr. Carl and international students,
*Williamsport Sun-Gazette, 1954*
“WTI hosted people from Afghanistan … Taiwan … I’ll never forget that,” Bressler said. “One came in dressed in coat and tie to come down to do farm production work. They didn’t know anything about tractors. I put him on a big Farmall tractor and told him, ‘We’ll give you a chance to do that furrow.’ It looked so funny seeing this full dress suit sitting on this farm tractor in all this dirt. Off he went with it. He was proud to have operated a tractor in America. They didn’t have anything like that in their country.”

Working Farm

After World War II, farms around the world and surrounding Williamsport were changing.

Bressler, a graduate of Penn State’s agriculture program, was hired in 1945 to start a program at WTI that would respond to local interests.

“What we were going to emphasize … was largely determined by looking at Lycoming County,” Bressler recalled. “In those times, you see, the family farm was still key … Our basis for decision making was: What do these boys need? What do they need if they are going to have a farm in operation? What skills do they need that we can furnish?”

To develop a hands-on environment for teaching agriculture, WTI gained access to the 750-acre Brock Farm near Muncy. Bressler implemented “a plan for integrating education with practical farming” on the site. Farm managers were hired to “keep the place going while we were doing our thing in education,” he said.

Providing a working classroom at a working farm was no easy task, according to Bressler.

“A farm cannot be laid idle; it needs attention” he declared. “If you’re an educator, you understand that education by itself is enough challenge, but when you add a farm to this, you’re at a new dimension,” he said. “Farming is … a dangerous occupation. It is one that requires seven days a week attention. The family farm is used to that … but when you put the two (education and farming) together, it’s an unknown as to how it will work. There were many that said … ‘You can either farm or you can teach, but you can’t do both.’ Well, the challenge was that we were going to do both.”

Challenges became opportunities for WTI faculty under Parkes’ leadership.

“George Parkes was a pretty stern taskmaster. But he was one of a kind, with great vision and great persistency,” Bressler said. “He was only interested in results.”
The kind of results Parkes wanted often required partnerships with industry, Bressler recalled.

“One good example of cooperation between industry and the school was Dr. John Shuman … John Shuman brokered a deal with New Holland that if our drafting department would draw up all the parts of this two-row mechanical corn picker, then if we put it back together, we could keep it. So the agriculture department got a corn picker, which is a massive thing, and we had the power to run it. The [drafting] department got their experience of doing the drawings for a manual, which is the idea in the first place. And the people at the factory, the New Holland people, they got their material for the manual. So everyone came out on top.”

**Rural Electric Training**

In addition to its agricultural program, WTI provided job training for the state’s rural electric cooperatives, formed in 1941 to bring electrical service to rural communities.

“In the 1930s, because private power companies did not find it profitable to serve rural areas, only six out of every 100 rural Pennsylvanians had electricity in their homes,” according to the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association.

The institute, according to *The WTI Story*, provided a full-time, itinerant instructor named Richard Long, who visited each “cooperative” and conducted classes in first aid, accident prevention, and job training.

WTI also partnered with the state’s top agricultural university, Bressler said. “We did a lot of experimental work with Penn State – crop experiments. They would come down and use our fields [at Brock Farm] for that purpose.”

Partnerships that enhanced the lives of farmers and others living in the rural communities of Central Pennsylvania proved crucial in advancing the institution in future years.

At Brock Farm, the primary areas of study were dairy farming, hog farming, crop rotation, soil conservation, tree growing and nursery work. Instructors worked with adult students, mostly
returning veterans, and with high school students involved in vocational education.

Joseph G. Sick, who came to WTI after graduating from Penn State in 1948, also worked in the agriculture department.

“I looked at several schools available to teach vocational agriculture. This seemed to be the place. It was about 70 miles from where I was raised and a lot of little ‘ag’ departments were isolated and there didn’t seem to be much that you could do there. Here I saw possibilities … I thought it would be a place that I could learn as well as teach what I knew.”

Sick recalled, “I went to the farm one day a week with the kids (students) and did whatever was to be done down there, but the majority of the teaching I did was at the main campus.”

Innovative Program

The high school schedule that required students to split time between the farm and the high school – more than 10 miles apart – proved to be a real challenge. The challenge became an opportunity to develop another innovative program.

“An ordinary school day, as you know, is divided into so many hours. But that doesn’t work when you have to bus [students] to the place where they work. You can’t run back and forth to Williamsport, to the school district, every couple of hours,” he explained.

Bressler said under a new plan, implemented by Parkes, “Students came there (to the farm) for two weeks uninterrupted and then spent two weeks in their home school in the academic phase of their work.”

By creating a schedule that provided uninterrupted work time away from the home school, WTI was able to extend its secondary vocational program – which provided technical education only to Williamsport High School students before that time – to other school districts.

“We could bus them from … different school districts … to Brock Farm. Then we had the whole day where we could do some work, because it’s just impractical to have them there for an hour at a time.”

School districts with no vocational education programs were invited to join Williamsport’s program in 1945. The program became known as “the Watsontown plan,” named for the first district outside of Williamsport to join.

According to A Picture of Lycoming County, “The Watsontown Plan served, in effect, as the forerunner to other technical schools which have spread throughout Pennsylvania.”

While the secondary vocational program continued for decades, instruction at the Brock Farm lasted only
about 10 years. The program’s closing was tied to the changing of the region’s economy and opportunities for future employment, Bressler said.

“Williamsport – what was once farmland – is now houses. Your city grows like a tree. It grows outward and the land that our constituent students came from is rapidly becoming more valuable as real estate than it is as farming property. So the opportunities to get into farming have just evaporated,” he explained.

But the work of growing trees and nursery crops at the Brock Farm led the way to future programming related to the earth sciences and management of natural resources, according to Bressler.

“The landscape ornamental horticulture (a big field and a good one – lucrative one)... that is an offshoot of it,” he said. “Forestry, our course is an integral part of the farming business. We taught forestry. So that is what remained of it .... It metamorphosed into (something) different, according to what jobs are available. There’s no point in training somebody if there’s no job available.”

### War Surplus

Training students for jobs that had the greatest potential for growth tested the institute’s ability to acquire modern equipment and supplies. In the institute’s formative years, the cost of adding facilities and equipment was a constant challenge. The end of the war brought a surplus of materials and equipment – no longer needed for military purposes – to Williamsport.

Bressler said, “(Parkes) was able to improvise, to make do, and that philosophy pervaded everything he did. We were able to improvise. When war surplus came along that of course helped the situation. We didn't have to improvise so much ... Dr. Parkes was able to get in a position to get surplus war material of every description. We hauled into the technical institute millions of dollars’ worth of equipment, for almost every department.”

The availability of war surplus equipment led to the creation of programs, including one focused on the service and operation of heavy equipment.

“We got started with a couple bulldozers – government surplus,” Bressler said. “That was a big issue in helping to get some of these courses started. The government had excess heavy equipment due to the war being over and they didn't need it anymore, so they put it up first to schools to help them – if they could use it – and we could use most anything. So we had trucks going to Harrisburg quite often to bring them home – surplus plus equipment, everything you could think of ....”
Little League Baseball

The program that began as a result of the war surplus program made it possible for WTI to support the growth of valuable community assets, including Little League Baseball.

“Most of the equipment we were able to get was through war surplus; that’s what made it possible, because it’s a very, very expensive form of education,” Bressler said. “Just imagine what would have happened in this community without the heavy equipment department. Where would the Little League complex be? That whole thing … the earth moving part of the Little League complex was done by our heavy equipment people.”

According to the Spotlight student newspaper, WTI’s first heavy equipment instructor, Clyde Brass – who enjoyed a 32-year career at the institution – never had any formal education beyond his experience in the Williamsport High School vocational program, which he completed in 1934.

Brass worked in gold mines and oil fields in the Philippines and built refueling stations for World War II combat ships in Japan and France.

“I got four years of education in the college of hard knocks,” Brass declared.

It was not unusual to find instructors who did not hold academic degrees on the technical institute’s faculty.

“The philosophy of Dr. Parkes was to select somebody who is very proficient in their profession,
It was not unusual to find instructors who did not hold academic degrees on the technical institute’s faculty.

and then ... make teachers out of them,” said Bressler, who remained on the WTI faculty as an English instructor after the agriculture program closed; he later became the dean of applied studies.

He explained Parkes’ philosophy as: “We have to train [students] under people who know what they’re doing. He was able to go out and pick those people that were experts in their fields. It didn’t make much difference how many degrees they had, but how skillful they were in training others to perform that skill.”

Get an Expert

“He had the vision of ... ‘Let’s get an expert electrician in here. We’ll train electricians under an expert. When we get him, now we make a teacher out of him, now we’ll give him the training on how to communicate with students.’ That’s the basic philosophy under which all the trades came into being,” Bressler concluded.

The creation of “working classes” – equipped with war surplus materials and led by faculty with industry expertise – was a hallmark of WTI’s approach to hands-on education.
As new equipment was introduced, often instructors learned to use the new devices right along with their students. Homisak recalled, “When I first started teaching business, the equipment we had, in addition to being WW II surplus, was basically manual. Everything was mechanical – like the comptometer, and the calculator, and so on. But after that, we began to get electric. In other words, I grew up with the industry.”

Because new equipment was such a valuable asset to the institute, he said, students were taught to respect it. “We began to get electric typewriters, and electric calculators, adding machines – not calculators, adding machines. And, my God, when you did, you got the students … and you told them, ‘Now look, you’re going to sign in for that piece of equipment. You’re going to be responsible to take care of it.’ You know, it was that important.”

First Public School at Airport

Some of the most valuable war surplus equipment that came to WTI supported the growth of an aviation mechanics program and a new, regional airport. WTI’s instructional hangar at the public airport in Montoursville was the first program operated by a public school at an airport facility in the United States.

“Aviation, of course, was down at the airport. It had a very close relationship with Lycoming Motors, who produced aircraft engines,” Bressler stated.

The focus of WTI’s aviation instruction was maintenance and repair, but faculty were licensed to pilot the aircraft.

“Frank Pannebaker was certified in most everything,” said Bressler, who recalled using aviation department planes for purposes other than instruction, such as locating livestock that had wandered away from the Brock Farm.

“You know how we found them? We took the planes and flew out over the area; we found them … and brought them back.”

The creation of “working classes” – equipped with war surplus materials and led by faculty with industry expertise – was a hallmark of WTI’s approach to hands-on education.

WTI’s instructional hangar at the public airport in Montoursville was the first program operated by a public school at an airport facility in the United States.
The origins of the Williamsport/Lycoming County Airport reach back to a time when air travel had only just established itself as a viable means of high speed commercial travel. It was in July of the same year that Charles Lindbergh made his celebrated solo flight across the Atlantic that the Williamsport Chamber of Commerce … announced the appointment of a committee to study the feasibility of an airport for Williamsport. The year was 1927. In November of that year the airport committee recommended that an airport be built on the site where it now stands.

In 1928, the Lycoming Aviation Corporation (now Avco) built the first airplane hangar at the airport. Avco used the site for testing aircraft engines. The airport was formally dedicated July 20, 1929, in a ceremony which involved 79 aircraft. Among the 35,000 people who attended the event was the famous woman pilot Amelia Earhart.

A new chapter began for the airport in the 1930’s when it was sold to the city of Williamsport and Lycoming County by the Airport Company for only 40 percent of the original investment. The sale was negotiated because the state and federal governments were making available construction aid through the Works Projects Administration. In order for it to benefit from WPA funds, however, the airport had to be publicly owned. The WPA built the original Municipal Hangar in 1937. The hangar, located at the west end of the field, housed offices, the Weather Bureau and the Federal Aviation Agency.

Then in 1938, another hangar was erected on the north edge of the airfield by the Williamsport School District, which pioneered public school training in aviation technology. This hangar was the first public school airport building anywhere in the country.
Eager Beaver

WTI’s aviation facility attracted one of the institute’s most legendary examples of war surplus materials: the Eager Beaver, a World War II B-17 bomber that made history as the first 8th Air Force plane to bomb Germany in January 1943. It was reported to have flown more combat missions than any other B-17 in Europe.

After the war, the government sold the plane to WTI for $350 in 1946; it was used as an instructional resource for students – including war veterans – who were training for work as aircraft technicians. The plane eventually was scrapped; but its nosepiece became a permanent connection to history, making its final home at the Mighty 8th Air Force Heritage Museum.
WTI had a well-earned reputation for turning challenges into opportunities that put its classes to work. This was true even for incidents arising from natural disasters, such as a devastating flood that covered Williamsport in 1946.

James Bressler recalls how the flood nearly put an end to the institute, which had been formally established only five years earlier.

“Finally, when we had things in a pretty fair shape and functional so that it could be used for instructional purposes, in 1946 along came the high water,” he said. “That’s before the flood protection was completed. The dikes were not in place. High water completely inundated the Technical Institute shops; everything in Williamsport in fact …. Well, that just put the end to everything we had accomplished. But everyone dug in with their own departments. Just imagine what the machine shop looked like covered with a layer of greasy mud. But no one complained. We did what we had to do and we cleaned up and, in time, moved on.”

In order to move on, the institute needed new furniture. Rather than purchase standard school desks and chairs, the faculty and administration embarked upon an innovative project to build furniture that would hold up to flood waters and comfortably fit larger, adult students.

Furniture Building

“We decided to rebuild our own furniture,” Bressler said. “We had long ago learned that it was far more feasible to purchase materials than equipment on a tight budget. And, furniture provided many of the instructional projects we needed, especially if we built to commercial standards and on a production line basis. The furniture had to be of steel, and it had to be rugged.”

Parkes challenged the faculty to design and build the furniture in WTI’s instructional shops: “Dr. Kenneth Carl and the several drafting departments were responsible for the design, and a great deal of research and the production of many prototypes were needed before the machine shop, welding department, and the sheet metal workers could do the actual production work.”

In writing about the school furniture project in 1971, Parkes said the experience led to a similar project to assist the city’s elementary schools in the 1950s by replacing rundown wooden furniture with WTI-manufactured desks and chairs. In 1953, the Grit newspaper published an article featuring the WTI project that incorporated a new tube bending technology to create the classroom furniture.
“In 45 seconds a piece of seven-eighths-inch tubing can be placed in a machine and come out in six bands as designed to form the frame of a chair. All pieces come out exactly alike, and it is all operated hydraulically by push buttons. One man could not bend tubing by hand. It would soon tire two men,” the newspaper reported.

“Students made more than 500 desks and chairs for elementary schools in the city. Furniture was made under the supervision of Lewis H. Bardo, machine tool making; Rolland Fague, woodworking; and Robert G. Thomas, welding.”

Dr. Carl later recalled, “Nearly half of the students at the institute had some part in the job as it pertained to their courses. Some of them are totally blind, some amputees, some veterans, some girls.”

With a history of retraining war veterans, many of whom were disabled, WTI explored new opportunities to provide vocational education to individuals facing physical challenges. In 1951, the institute launched a Vocational Diagnostic Program that was the only one of its kind in the country.

According to Williamsport Schools through the Years, WTI’s program was based on “a need for a new, more practical method of vocational counseling of rehabilitation clients and clients with limited educational or cultural backgrounds.”

The publication described the program as follows: “A client is enrolled at the school for a four-week period. During this time, he is guided and counseled in his effort to make an occupational choice. The most important phase of the program, and the reason it is now gaining nationwide interest, is the job-trial method used.”

Job Trial Method

The WTI Story described the unique “job trial method” used in counseling clients of the Vocational Diagnostic Program: “In addition to examinations to determine the physical limitations of the students, psychological testing, which includes IQ, mechanical aptitudes, and dexterity tests, the client spends up to three weeks in various shops, and thus his ability and interests are tested under real rather than artificial conditions.”

Clients of the Vocational Diagnostic Program were provided with “an integrated medical, vocational diagnostic, and training service. They were sponsored by their home states’ Bureaus of Rehabilitation, The Pennsylvania State Council for the Blind, and the United Mine Workers, which offered its services, through the UMWA Welfare and Retirement Fund, to handicapped miners or their dependents.

A correspondent for the United Mine Workers Journal, George Korson, writing in a 1958 article titled “Now I Have Hope,” described the institute’s commitment to comprehensive education for all students – including those facing physical and other challenges: “The Institute believes that manual
skill is not enough to assure continued employment and advancement. The student is helped to develop an understanding of why things are done.”

While traditional vocational education – as it was set forth in the Smith-Hughes National Vocational Education Act of 1917 – supported its separation from general education and college preparatory studies, Williamsport’s program maintained that general education was crucial for success in the trades as well as other professions.

The institute encouraged faculty, as well as students, to continue to pursue their studies in order to seek future advancement opportunities.

When the agriculture program closed, Bressler – who continued his education at Lycoming College and became certified to teach English to high school and postsecondary students – joined WTI’s English faculty. He said his vocational experience prepared him well to teach English and technical writing to his students.

“I wrote reports constantly … I knew something about composition,” he said. “Not only that, but (I also knew) how to organize facts in a pleasing way so that whoever gets (the reports) will read them. In other words, not only must they be factual, but they must be readable.”

Leadership Training

Based on his experience, Bressler added parliamentary procedure and speech to the curriculum, “because it seemed to me that, in spite of everything, what you need to instill in people – if they’re going to advance in their fields – is leadership training … confidence to do things, to stand up before a group of people and lead them … It’s amazing how few people know how to run a meeting efficiently.”

He said his focus in teaching English remained the same as it was in agriculture – preparing students to be successful in their chosen field.

“Everything you do … has to do with the welfare of the students … trying to assess where they’re going and what the demands will be for that student in the workplace,” he said. “Much of the importance of teaching students is to create attitude, as nearly as you can, so that they want to learn what you’re presenting to them … by making it clear to them how important this will be in the job that they’re going to try to get into.”

Blending the trades and general education was second nature to the faculty, whose quiet classrooms and noisy shops were often located within steps of one another. Bressler recalled that he taught English in very close proximity to welding and machine shops.

“My base of operation was largely in the basement of the machine shop, which was never meant to be a classroom because you have a constant interference from noise level on the outside,” he said. “The welding shop was right across the alley from where we were teaching our courses in English. In order to keep the welding shop in business, they had to bring in scrap iron. Now when you have a dump truck load of scrap iron unloaded outside of the window where you’re teaching, the decibel level is liable to increase. We had to stop every once in a while and wait until the noise abated before we could proceed.”

Despite the challenging conditions, Bressler said, students more interested in writing than the trades also found success in the world of work. He shared a memory of visiting the Remington Arms Company plant museum during a summer vacation and being impressed by the quality of written promotional materials provided at the site.
As a teacher of technical writing, he was curious about the background and training of the person who had created the materials. He learned the writer “went to school down in Pennsylvania … a little town called Williamsport … Williamsport Technical Institute” … and was impressed that someone writing for the Remington Arms Company got started at WTI.

“When you see that what you tried to do bears some fruit, that’s what makes teaching special,” he declared.

**Individual Needs**

WTI’s combination of “working classes,” which provided hands-on, individualized instruction, and “on the job” experience provided through cooperating industries, was designed to encourage interest among students at all levels of interest and skill.

The institute even opened its doors for a time to students who had not advanced beyond the eighth grade by the age of 15. *Williamsport Schools through the Years*, published in 1958, reported: “Upholding its principle that vocational education should fit itself to the needs of the individual, the work-experience program was initiated in 1952. Under this program any seventh or eighth grade student, who is age 15 or older, can enter the Williamsport Technical Institute.
to learn a trade through shop training; academic subjects meet the minimum requirements. Upon successful completion of his course, the student receives a high school diploma.”

The impact of WTI’s “working classes” on the local community was acknowledged publicly between 1955 and 1961, when industrial expansion made the headlines in Williamsport and in The Wall Street Journal.

In an open letter published as a full-page advertisement in The Wall Street Journal on August 18, 1961, the general manager of the M. W. Kellogg Company, said the company chose to locate its headquarters and manufacturing facilities in Williamsport, in part, because of the institute’s success in training the workforce.

John McAneny wrote, “We have found in Williamsport a reservoir of skilled workmen who have met the extremely high standards required for this type of work. Many of these men have improved their natural skills by taking courses at the Williamsport Technical Institute, which has a history of turning out graduates skilled in all the arts and crafts required by all types of Central Pennsylvania industry.”

The influence of the technical institute had grown throughout the community – especially in areas of business and industry.

“Our greatest supporters were men of industry and business, because they knew that we had ready trainees – or trainers – to put them to work,” said William Homisak. “Our biggest supporter was Avco Lycoming (Textron now). We worked with them for years ….”

“In addition … we had at least 20 industries where we taught foremanship … because a lot of these industries did not have training for these people to be foremen. We also had rural electrification … taught the rural electrical people the electrical systems and so on. We had … a lot of outreach programs.”
The impact of WTI’s “working classes” on the local community was acknowledged publicly between 1955 and 1961, when industrial expansion made the headlines in Williamsport and in The Wall Street Journal.
**Computer Training**

When computers began making an impact on business and industry in the 1960s, WTI applied for National Science Foundation funding to establish a program for training computer programmers.

The field was so new that the man picked to lead the initiative, George P. Wolfe, had taken only one graduate school computer course before creating WTI’s computer curriculum. But Carl, then WTI’s director, assured him, “That’s more than anybody else [at this institute] has … You’re our man.”

Wolfe, a Williamsport High School graduate, joined the WTI vocational math faculty in 1960, after serving as a part-time teacher in the evening school’s drafting department. At the time WTI began to develop a computer programming curriculum, he was enrolled in an NSF-funded master’s degree program at Clarkson College of Technology in Potsdam, NY. Clarkson’s program, directed at secondary teachers, required four years of summers-only study for completion.

He recalled the guidelines for NSF funding required that “we design a course of study … bring in a class of 25 students … train them for two years to be computer programmers and follow them after they graduate” in order to submit a final report to the funding agency.

The report, Wolfe said, “was intended to be disseminated throughout the country to high schools, technical schools and even some colleges” beginning their own programs.

Successful completion would mean WTI could keep computers that would be purchased through NSF-funding to start the course. There was a lot on the line and Wolfe still had a year to go to earn his master’s degree. Thus far, he had taken only one computer course – an elective on the FORTRAN programming language, a mathematical or technical language for science and engineering applications.

“Of course that’s what computers were originally designed for … engineering applications,” he explained.

When he left for his next summer study at Clarkson, Wolfe reached out in addition to advisers at Clarkson, Wolfe reached out to Penn State and others just beginning computer programs. He also established a “committee consisting of local people in business, bankers, and some other educators.”

“We’re putting together something new; there is no history out there,” he said.

WTI’s first computer program – designed by Wolfe to include eight computer science courses, seven math courses and five technical courses such as physics and drafting – was called engineering data processing technology. It required two years – a total of 26,150 hours – for completion.

Wolfe explained, “The technical institute programs were qualified by hours not credits. You didn’t get three credits, you got so many hours.”

Those hours were spent inside a converted trolley car barn, where students were first introduced to concepts like punch cards, paper tape, and computer codes.

WTI applied for National Science Foundation funding to establish a program for training computer programmers.
\[ \text{“This was ‘Unit Six,’ which happened to be an old trolley barn. They converted [it] to classrooms and labs – adequate for that time,” Wolfe explained. “They picked a classroom in the southwest corner … and broke it into two parts. One part was a classroom (that was larger) and the smaller part was the computer lab. In that computer lab, they put a raised hardwood floor; the reason for that was it served as a shock absorber for the vibration of the computer. They put a 10,000 BTU window air conditioner that was to keep it cool for the students … We could only get 10 students in there at one time.”} \]

**20K Computer Lab**

While the computer lab featured all the traditional trappings of a WTI classroom – including school-made furniture – it also introduced some entirely new equipment, including a mainframe computer that was approximately five feet long, four feet high, and four feet wide and "had 20,000 positions capable of holding 20,000 digits – we didn’t call it 20K at that time,” Wolfe explained.

"In the classroom, where they [students] could do their coding, they had a regular WTI-made desk, a student desk and chair,” he said. "The computer lab … contained what we called record equipment, the key punch, the accounting machine. The computer we got first was an IBM 1620. This computer had a typewriter device, which was part of the unit and connected to it – a typewriter for typing in and out, input, output. It contained the switches and the buttons that controlled certain aspects of the computer. Attached to the system [were] a card reader and a card punch – one unit – and a paper tape punch – again, one unit … Once you had your program, you put it in the card reader. It was fed into the memory of the computer and either rejected or executed. The printing came out on the typewriter … If it was a good program, you had data that was required by the computer … the instructions would be executed."
“How do you explain a key punch?”

George Wolfe repeated the interviewer’s question with a grin.

“Well, the programs and information data put into the computers all had to be punched on IBM punch cards. Standard cards … I would say about six, seven, eight inches long and about three inches high … They were called 80 column cards, so you could key punch 80 characters on that card. Your program had to be punched on cards – statement by statement, one statement per card.”

A simple program could have a pile of cards “maybe half an inch thick … but eventually we got programs that were a couple of inches thick,” he said, before patiently recalling the early days of programming.

“Let me go through the process. I give [an] assignment and this paralleled industry. You got an assignment. You got a problem. That means you have a program. So, the student would sit down and work out the logic for the solution of this program, hard copy, with a flowchart … draw a flowchart, which would depict the sequence of steps that had to be done and get that all figured out. Once they did that, they had to take what they developed [and] put it on coding sheets.”

Wolfe described FORTRAN language coding sheets as an example.

“In this case … they had to write the FORTRAN statements on a coding sheet. They would then take that sheet to the key punch and punch a big card for each of those lines. Once they had their deck (that was called their source deck) … that’s the deck that they will put in the computer to be executed. It’s a common knowledge in computers that no program works correctly the first time. So, errors were printed … they got to redo it and so forth. But that was the process of the program at that time. They had to feed the cards into the card reader, which went into the machine.”

What happened if the programmer made one mistake on one card in the program?

“Well, the program won’t run,” Wolfe explained. “The computer would print out a listing of the statement and identify the error.”

The teacher enjoyed learning this new technology along with his students.

“You know the secret, you’re a teacher,” he declared with tongue in cheek. “I taught all the computer courses and I taught all the math courses. Math courses were no problem. Computer courses – I had to study and review before class. I liked to tell people that I was mostly one day ahead of the class. It was a real challenge, but I enjoyed that challenge.”

Members of the second graduating class of data-processing in 1967.
Students in the first computer programming class were prepared for careers as technical programmers. “They all got jobs,” Wolfe remarked. “We brought in 25 graduates …. They all got employment, which is typical for WTI …. Half of them were in technical (fields); the other half were helping out businesses, like banks, getting started.

At the end of the first two-year program, Wolfe set out – with help from the Vocational Diagnostic Program staff – to write the report to the NSF. “Grant Berry Sr., the registrar at the time, did the pre-screening. Those that were selected went to our diagnostic department … They did all the psychology and the follow up … made all the research and surveys. I gave them the verbal standpoint … showed them what results are ahead … and the final report came together …. NSF accepted it … and we kept the computer.”

As Wolfe learned more programming languages, he incorporated them into the curriculum for WTI students. After the first class of students entered the workforce, faculty acknowledged a demand for business-related data processing. So, in addition to a science and engineering related curriculum, WTI began to offer a program geared more toward business needs.

During this era, which launched the computerization of the workforce, administrators began to consider the future direction of WTI’s postsecondary offerings. Choosing a new path – as a community college – could advance the program’s mission beyond its vocational technical roots.

Trained Minds

“As the material of industry has changed, as processes have become automated, the greatest resource of any individual, organization, state or nation is the trained mind … It is now generally accepted that our recovery of industrial and business leadership will be by way of a productive educational system,” wrote Carl, then WTI director, in “An Overview of Considerations Related to the Establishment of a Community College.”

Carl prepared the overview for administrators and school board directors in districts throughout North central Pennsylvania that were invited to act as sponsors of the proposed Williamsport Area Community College. Established as a community college in 1965, WACC built upon WTI’s foundation and expanded opportunities for students by granting college-level credits for coursework.

This made it possible for students to earn an associate degree from the community college and/or to transfer to other colleges and to continue education toward a baccalaureate degree.

“A career program must not become a dead-end road. It should be planned as a career ladder allowing all to aspire to his highest ambition according to his aptitude and motivation,” said Carl, who became the first president of Williamsport Area Community College.
Power and the Pen
Kenneth E. Carl, who grew into a career as director of Williamsport Technical Institute – beginning as a high school vocational student, joining the faculty after college and industry work experience, and advancing through the administrative ranks – had a vision that would take the institute to the next level of higher education.

In 1959, while serving as president of the Pennsylvania Council on Local Administrators of Occupational Education, Carl told the Governor’s Committee on Education that “Pennsylvania must take immediate steps to provide comprehensive public junior colleges for its economic and social welfare.”

The idea became Carl’s doctoral thesis and a proposal that led him into the inner circle of Governor William Scranton and other public leaders who would create the state’s system of community colleges.

“It is sufficient to say that he [Carl] wrote the final version of Act 484, the present Community College Act, in the outer rooms of the office of Gov. Scranton,” wrote Carl’s predecessor, George H. Parkes.

Confirming the WTI leader’s role in the historic event, Gov. Scranton gave Carl the pen he used to sign the act into law in 1963 to Carl.

Williamsport Area Community College was the fourth community college established in Pennsylvania, following Harrisburg Area Community College (1963), Community College of Philadelphia (1964) and Bucks County Community College (1964). Only HACC actually began offering classes before WACC. Classes began in 1965 in Williamsport, Philadelphia, and Bucks County.

Dr. Wertz Says No, Dr. Carl Yes to State Plan

Opposite views by two local educators concerning the feasibility of community colleges were expressed yesterday during a meeting with members of the Joint State Government Commission’s task force on such colleges.

Dr. D. Frederick Wertz, president of Lycoming College, told the legislators, who are on a fact-finding state tour, that the academic needs of the area are being met by Lycoming College and the Williamsport Institute.

But Dr. Kenneth E. Carl, director of Williamsport Technical Institute, said he believed a community junior college would be an asset because “not everyone wants or needs a four-year college education.”

The concept is that community colleges would offer college credits to persons who cannot afford to attend a regular college or university. The plan envisions using existing public buildings and schools and financing the program through local taxation with possible help from the state.

Dr. Wertz said a junior college is not needed locally because to throw in another post-high school facility would not strengthen the education program, but would tend to jeopardize the financing of education here.

He said the situation locally might not apply generally throughout the state, but that duplication of facilities would be a financial burden on the local community.

The task force will study the need for community colleges and make a report of its findings and recommendations to the 1962 Legislature next January.

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**Trailblazing Nurses**

In 1963, Mary Ellen Bowen thought her prayers had been answered when she learned Williamsport Technical Institute was offering a practical nursing program.

“I heard it was a wonderful school and they had opened this nursing program because of the shortage of nurses,” she recalled.

Bowen was 39 years old and the mother of two daughters when she enrolled in WTI’s first practical nursing class.

“It was a varied group,” she said, explaining that the oldest participant was 55 and others were “girls right out of school.”

Instruction took place in a building on Campbell Street, a few blocks east of the WTI campus. Bowen recalled it was “in front of the old Packard garage” and adjacent to WTI’s automotive shop.

The students received instruction and support from Marguerite Wright and Thelma Morris and then practiced their skills at Divine Providence Hospital, where Bowen recalled the nuns kept close watch on their activities.

“You made sure you were always kept busy,” she said. “If they saw you idle, they’d say, ‘Are you unemployed?’”

Because practical nursing was a new field in the area, WTI’s first class became trailblazers.

“Because we were something new to the community, the RN’s (registered nurses) and the aides were very apprehensive about what we were going to do,” Bowen explained. “As we went on the floor, we assured them that we were only there to learn and to help them with their duties.”

The hospital experience proved to be invaluable. “You can read so many textbooks,” Bowen said, “But when you get into a situation, you can learn from experience, from someone else who has done that.”

Bowen’s experience paid off immediately after she completed the one-year WTI program. She was hired by Divine Providence Hospital and assigned to duty in the nursery.

Years later, when she donated her original nursing uniform to the institution’s archives, she described her WTI experience as “the happiest time” of her life.

“I loved it … just loved it,” she said. “The teaching we got was superb.”

She was proud that the first class of practical nurses established a reputation that benefited future students, who trained later at both Divine Providence Hospital and Williamsport Hospital, which had not initially accepted WTI students because it operated its own nursing program.

Bowen said that near the end of her year of instruction at WTI, she and another student (Ginny Bower) were invited to an interview and tour at Williamsport Hospital. She recalled that “a month or so later” officials at Williamsport announced they would accept WTI students.

“It makes me feel good to know that we helped open the door,” Bowen said. ☐
WTI Programs

The following program offerings were listed in the final Williamsport Technical Institute course catalog.

**AUTOMOTIVE**
- Automotive Mechanic
- Automotive Technician
- Diesel Mechanic
- Diesel Technician
- Heavy Construction Equipment Operator and Serviceman

**AVIATION**
- Airframe Mechanic
- Powerplant Mechanic

**BUSINESS PRACTICE**
- Accountant
- Business Management
- Business Administration
- Business Machines Operator
- Clerk-Typist and Receptionist
- Secretary

**CARPENTRY**
- Carpentry and Building Construction

**DRAFTING**
- Draftsman, Architectural
- Draftsman, Mechanical
- Layout Fabricator Technician (Pipe and Metal)
- Technical Illustrator I
- Technical Illustrator II
- Tool Design Technician

**ELECTRICAL**
- Electrical Construction Technician
- Electrical Instrumentation Technician
- Electric Motor Winding and Repairs

**MACHINE SHOP**
- Toolmaker
- Toolmaking Technician

**OFFICE MACHINE SERVICE**
- Office Machine Serviceman
- Office Machine Technician

**PATTERNMAKER — WOOD**

**PLUMBING**
- Plumber
- Plumber— Lead Work

**OFFSET AND LETTERPRESS PRINTER**

**ELECTRONICS TECHNOLOGY**

**SHEET METAL WORKER**

**NEON TUBE BENDER**

**SIGN PAINTER**

**WELDING**
- Acetylene
- Electric
- Technician

**AUTO BODY REPAIRING AND REFINISHING**

While most programs of study ran for two years by 1962, there were exceptions, such as **Clerk-Typist & Receptionist** and **Welder**, which could be completed in 650 hours (six months), and **Architectural Draftsman** and **Tool Design Technician**, which required 3,300 hours (2 ½ years) to complete.
Practical and Theoretical Training
Text and images from WTI course catalogs 1950, 1954-55, 1962-63

The school is open to young men and women over 16 years of age who can meet the requirements. Since each applicant is dealt with as an individual there may be conditions under which he might not be admitted. The Institute reserves the right to admit and to drop from classes students who cannot or do not make satisfactory progress in the course.

Technical Institute students have always been recognized as an excellent group of young men and women. Only those students willing to apply themselves, and willing to conduct themselves in a gentlemanly, business-like, and honest manner are permitted to remain in training.

Practical and theoretical training supplement each other in all courses. Practical training, we believe deserves a prominent place in a technical program because the resultant skills are fundamental to the success of the graduate. They give him his initial employment opportunity and in very many cases provide the continued source of his employment.

However, merely manual skill is not enough to assure continued employment and advancement. In addition, the student must develop an understanding as to why things are done, and must have a good background of theoretical and related knowledge.

Hence, related theory and technical study requires about one-third of the student’s time. He learns not only how to do things, but why they are done in a specific way. He becomes acquainted with the fundamental technical principles of the mechanical and physical sciences. Finally, he develops the ability to apply these principles in the solution of practical problems in his chosen field.
“Improvements in modern automobiles and equipment require that automotive mechanics have a thorough all round technical training which can be secured best in a well-equipped school.”

“The Diesel Department of the Technical Institute is one of the best equipped diesel schools in the Eastern United States. Instruction is available on marine, stationary, and portable equipment.”

“The graduate of this course will receive a broad background of mechanical, technical, and scientific training … He will receive sufficient flight experience to permit him to understand just how his work affects the efficiency and safety of the aircraft.”
“Competent office workers are in demand. Employers are no longer willing to waste time in training incompetent or unprepared employees.”

“Men with a pleasant personality and with mechanical skills beyond those of the ordinary mechanic will find employment opportunities with the large manufacturers of office equipment, with appliance sales agencies, or in their own small businesses.”

“Printing is both a great manufacturing industry and one of the arts … It is so closely interwoven with our professional, business, and personal life that it is one of the most stable occupations in which to earn a livelihood.”
“The toolmaker and diemaker are the most highly skilled men in the machine shop. The toolmaker specializes in the construction, repair, and calibration of machine shop tools, jigs, fixtures, and instruments. The diemaker specializes in the construction and repair of dies for forging, punching, stamping or other metal-forming work.”

Students were prepared to “enter airline, marine or landline stations as communications operators” or become broadcast station engineers. Job opportunities were expected to increase as: “Hundreds of new radio stations are being erected and applications for new station licenses will increase as frequency modulation and television apparatus becomes available.”

“The traditional concept of a glass blower is unknowingly confused with laboratory glass working. Actually the laboratory glass worker does not use a blow pipe nor make up his ware from a gather of molten glass, but works only with glass tubing … to make up the glass apparatus as used in laboratories, hospitals, and industry … Laboratory glass workers are in demand by scientific supply companies, research laboratories, radio and television plants, hospitals and colleges.”
“The art of bending and pumping tubing for the advertising trade is now an important and profitable business … When this course is taken in conjunction with sign painting, the student then possesses a rounded experience which will permit him to do any type of sign work.”

“Patternmaking is the technique of preparing, shaping, or building wood and other adaptable materials into models. These models are used in the foundry to make molds into which the molten metal is poured to produce castings … Graduates of the Patternmaking Course are often accepted by employers as having had the equivalent of an apprenticeship. There is a large demand for well-trained craftsmen in this field.”

“Jobs in electric welding are found in industrial establishments such as the following: boiler shops, heavy equipment manufacturers, structural steel fabrication, railroads, steel mills, and welding shops.”
**Shop Dress**

As described in the WTI Course Catalog 1962-63

*All new students will be required to wear standardized shop clothing. This clothing may be rented through the Student Council or purchased, if the student desires, from a store of his choice.*

- **Aviation**: White Coveralls
- **Machine Shop**: White Shop Apron
- **Plumbing**: Dark Green Coveralls
- **Masonry**: White Coveralls
- **Welding**: Dark Green Coveralls
- **Sheet Metal**: White Shop Coat
- **Motor Rewinding**: White Shop Coat
- **Electric Shop**: White Shop Coat
- **Carpenter**: White Shop Apron
- **Pattern Shop**: White Shop Apron
- **Automotive**: Dark Green Coveralls
- **Diesel**: Dark Green Coveralls
- **Heavy Equipment Construction**: Dark Green Coveralls
- **Office Machine Serviceman**: White Shop Coat
- **Printing**: Apron to be supplied by department
- **Electronics**: Dress Shirts required including necktie for the winter months
- **Drafting**: Dress Shirts required including necktie for the winter months
- **Business**: Dress Shirts required including necktie for the winter months
The passage in the state legislature of the 1963 Community College Act spelled bigger and better things for the Tech. After a feasibility study concluded that a community college in Williamsport was both desirable and possible, five area school districts cooperated to create WACC out of the Technical Institute. On February 11, 1965, the Pennsylvania Board of Education approved formation of the college; its doors opened for classes Sept. 7, 1965, under the same roof as the former Tech. WACC now (1977) has a total of 20 sponsoring school districts from nine counties. Students in college courses from these 20 districts receive a two-thirds tuition subsidy—one-third from their own school district and one-third from the state.

Besides offering full-time college-level courses in both vocational technical fields and the liberal arts, WACC offers continuing-education courses for adults in areas from carpentry to cake decorating. The adult evening courses are a very popular aspect of WACC’s offerings as attested by the current enrollment of 4,000 persons. In its full-time college section, WACC has a total of 3,250 students. While 95 percent of WACC’s college students are enrolled in vocational technical fields, it is not uncommon for a WACC graduate to continue on to a four-year college to finish a bachelor’s degree. Eighty-six percent of WACC’s students who do not go on for higher degrees are placed in jobs upon graduation.

WACC’s service to the community extends beyond its doors. Recently, programs have been introduced in such areas as dental technology, food services management, computer programming, and general studies for inmates at the Lewisburg Federal Penitentiary. The college also has engaged in retraining members of the government’s
Manpower Training and Comprehensive Employment Training Act programs; has provided apprenticeship training for a number of local labor unions; and has made available in-plant training in such industries as Hammermill, Piper Aircraft, Tetley Tea, Sprout-Waldron/Koppers, and GTE Sylvania. Industries often reciprocate by providing WACC with grants and equipment.

The control of WACC passed at its founding from the Williamsport Area School Board to a 15-member board of trustees. The board is responsible for electing the college president, the first of whom was Dr. Kenneth Carl, who was also the last director of WTI. The board of trustees is elected by an executive council, which consists of one member chosen by each of the school boards of the sponsoring districts. The sponsoring districts must, in turn, support the college financially, the amount of which is determined by a formula based upon the total value of real estate in each school district.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania also provides one-half of the capital costs for running WACC. Besides providing low-cost education, WACC enhances the industrial and economic capacity of Lycoming County by making available a skilled body of trained workers for industries located here. Thus, what Lycoming College is to the liberal arts, the Williamsport Area Community College is to the vocational arts. Lycoming County covets both colleges as major contributors to its cultural and economic well-being.

Thus, what Lycoming College is to the liberal arts, the Williamsport Area Community College is to the vocational arts.
1965 – 1989

The year 1965 marked a pivotal time in history. U.S. combat forces arrived in Vietnam and President Lyndon B. Johnson – who introduced the concept of a “Great Society” in his State of the Union address – signed such monumental laws as the Social Security Act, the Voting Rights Act, and the Higher Education Act.

The Higher Education Act was intended to strengthen colleges and universities and provide financial support to students who were interested in pursuing postsecondary education.

Johnson declared, “We have entered an age in which education is not just a luxury permitting some men an advantage over others. It has become a necessity without which a person is defenseless in this complex, industrialized society. We have truly entered the century of the educated man.”

Higher education history also was made in Williamsport in 1965. Williamsport Technical Institute officially ceased to be at the close of business on Friday, Sept. 3, 1965. Five days later, the new Williamsport Area Community College registered its first students. Classes began on Sept. 13.

WACC emerged from the exact footprint of Williamsport Technical Institute. The first college catalog said the campus “occupies the plant and facilities of the former Williamsport Technical Institute and uses part of the Williamsport Senior High School Building and gymnasium. All of the above plant and the equipment therein used by the college are presently rented from the Williamsport Area School District … The college is using all or part of 11 buildings including two buildings which are rented, one of which is used for a student activities center.”

Many former faculty and administrators continued service, including WTI’s director, Kenneth E. Carl, who became WACC’s first president. Postsecondary students who entered WTI and had not yet completed their programs returned to finish their studies at the community college. A secondary vocational-technical program that educated thousands of high school students from Williamsport and the surrounding area – including Carl and other members of the faculty and administration – also continued.

While many things stayed the same, there was one very important change. The community college offered something the technical institute did not: the opportunity to earn a degree.

WTI students who completed the required hours in their programs earned certificates, not degrees. The community college introduced associate degrees to the campus.

WACC’s president – one of the primary authors of Pennsylvania’s Community College Act, which was approved in 1963 – committed to using the technical institute as the foundation for a college that would be unique in the state.
He determined that the college would expand upon opportunities by granting college-level credits for course work to elevate the status of graduates in the job market and ensure their WACC credits would transfer into baccalaureate-degree programs.

Carl believed that keeping the career-ladder concept alive – through a combination of vocational-technical and academic education – was important for the college and for the economic future of its community.

Carl later said that “bringing together the vocational and academic departments and melding them into one school” was his “greatest and most enduring contribution to higher education.”

In the spring of 1966, the first graduates to earn WACC degrees assembled on the front steps of Williamsport High School for a class photograph.

Secondary Vocational Program

When Williamsport Area Community College was established in 1965, it continued a secondary vocational program that had existed on campus since the early years of the 20th century.

Approximately 620 high school students – most from the Williamsport, Jersey Shore, Montoursville, and Warrior Run school districts – attended classes at WACC in the fall of 1965.

The first WACC catalog explained, “This school has provided the vocational-education for the Williamsport High School on a part-time basis since 1920. In 1945 an area vocational education plan was pioneered with the Watsontown School. This proved so successful that several other area high schools have joined in the plan. The college plans to continue to offer this service to high schools of the sponsoring districts.”

The community college offered something the technical institute did not: the opportunity to earn a degree.
**Student Illustrates**

Among the graduates was Fred T. Gilmour, whose work in the technical illustration program helped to create WACC’s visual identity.

When artwork was needed for the new community college, Gilmour’s faculty mentor, Walter K. Hartman, called the student into action. The images Gilmour created spread beyond the classroom, into institutional history. He designed WACC’s official seal and mace, the first catalog cover, and a masthead for the first student newspaper.

His contribution symbolized the manner in which “working classes,” which presented hands-on experience for many students, continued as WTI transitioned into a community college.

**Job Placement**

Months before WACC’s first graduation ceremony, administrators released the final WTI graduate placement report. It confirmed students’ success in gaining employment.

“WACC has recently released figures to show that approximately 5,000 technically trained students of the former Williamsport Technical Institute have moved directly from school into industry in the past 10 years,” reported the *Spotlight* student newspaper in April 1966.

Lewis H. Bardo, a former WTI machine shop instructor who advanced into the position of dean of applied arts and sciences at the community college, noted that 636 individual students were placed in jobs in 1965, the year of transition from WTI to WACC.

The majority who were placed in positions in 1965 came from four departments: drafting, machine shop, electronics, and nursing; 100 were from drafting, 80 from machine shop, and 40 each from electronics and nursing.

Bardo said the placements reflected the specific needs of local industries “where critical shortages have existed.”

WTI offered individualized paths of study. Students could enter at any time of the year. Their progress was measured by hours of attendance. They could leave the program as soon as they had the amount of instruction they felt was necessary for them to secure employment.

Bardo said, “Demand for technically trained students is so strong that nearly 100 of those accepting positions last year (1965) were persuaded to leave school and enter industry even before they had fully completed training at the local institution.”

The dean expressed hope that the new community college would “provide better regulation of the courses of study and reduce the probability of students being tempted to leave before completing their courses of study.”

**Broadening Mission**

A broadening of the institution’s mission was described in the first Williamsport Area Community College catalog (1966-68):

“The public community college will offer a wide range of curricula and courses for both transfer and non-transfer students that will offer a challenge to students with a wide range of academic ability for both the liberal arts oriented and occupationally oriented students, for both full-time and part-time students, and for youth and adults …. Our strongest commitment shall be to provide quality instruction in all courses and curricula with rigor and level suited to the purposes of each course.”
degrees designed for entry-level employment. Liberal Arts and Sciences offered associate degrees that prepared graduates to transfer to four-year programs.

In its first year of operation, WACC enrolled approximately 1,200 students in technical programs and 100 in liberal arts, according to the *Grit* newspaper published Aug. 22, 1965.

“Our strongest commitment shall be to provide quality instruction in all courses and curricula with rigor and level suited to the purposes of each course.”

### WACC Programs 1966-68

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THE WILLIAMSPORT AREA
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES

This program is a two-year college transfer program. It is designed for those students who wish to work toward a degree at a four-year college after they have completed their work at the Community College. The responsibility to determine whether the college to which the student intends to transfer will accept these credits and as to whether the student can meet the admission requirements rests with the student. We suggest that each applicant determine before he enrolls in the program to what college or colleges he desires to transfer credits.

Graduates from this program will receive an Associate in Arts or an Associate in Science Degree.
THE WILLIAMSPORT AREA
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

SCHOOL OF APPLIED ARTS AND SCIENCES

THE ASSOCIATE DEGREE DIVISION

These are two-year courses designed for entrance into employment at the end of two years. The program will carry at least 24 general education credits in English, mathematics, science, humanities, and social studies. These credits are not specifically designed to be transferable to a four-year college program although some credits may be eligible for such transfer. Graduates from this program will receive an Associate Degree.

Note: It is not anticipated that the physical education courses listed in the Applied Arts and Sciences curriculum will be scheduled before June 1968 due to lack of facilities.
Credit Hours

Scheduling semesters of study (instead of allowing students to enter at any time) and assigning credits to track students’ progress in WACC degree programs (rather than counting hours of attendance) marked a turning point for academic study at the institution.

“We went to the traditional semesters (typically) 15 credits. That changed the way this school had operated for years … (WTI) did individual instruction, so that as soon as somebody graduated, the next person on the waiting list came in. Almost any time of the year, an employer could find somebody ready to graduate,” said David M. Heiney, who was a WTI vocational counselor from 1963-67.

Heiney, who later served as dean of students and interim president at WACC, explained that “when it went to the semester hours, (some) instructors said, ‘This is not good because now we’re only going to have people available in May and January instead of 12 months a year,’ and there were some employers, I think, at that time who were a little upset about that because when they needed a diesel mechanic, they needed them now. They didn’t want to wait until the end of May to get one … It was a significant change for a lot of people on the campus.”

“We had to do all the curriculum fixes … because everything at that point was in hours,” said Veronica M. Muzic, a member of the English faculty who later became the institution’s chief academic officer. “(This) annoyed the heck out of a lot of faculty, who saw it as nonessential, taking their time …. But (it was) necessary, if we were going to be what we said we were: a community college, with the opportunity for students to transfer. The shift to credits was absolutely necessary.”

In addition to “fixing” established course work to fit associate-degree requirements, the administration hired new faculty to develop fresh curriculum.

President Carl selected a vice president of academic affairs, C. Herschel Jones, who could oversee the development of general education requirements to ensure WACC’s associate-degree graduates were transfer ready.

“Since he (Jones) was connected to Bucknell (University), I had him check and make sure that we were teaching on a college level …. Hersh was a good man on that job,” Carl said.

William H. Ealer was hired in the summer of 1965 and assigned to what Carl called “second trick” (teaching from 4 to 10 p.m.). Charged with developing curriculum for a new associate degree in architectural technology, Ealer said he did not worry about how veteran WTI faculty might view his work.

“I had no qualms,” Ealer declared. “I guess I’m liberal to the point where I sort of see beyond those things. I never had hang-ups. I didn’t have any issues because, literally, I was the first one there (in the associate-degree program). I wrote the curriculum.”

Previously, WTI’s drafting department included an architectural draftsman program that required 3,300 hours of instruction over two and a half years. WTI drafting courses also included mechanical drafting, pipe and metal layout fabrication, tool design, and technical illustration; none were eligible for college credits.

“Everybody before then had put a kid in the chair, given him a project to draw, and when he needed help, they’d help him,” Ealer explained. “The object was to build a set of drawings and put in so many hours a week and … then Dorothy Shultz would issue a certificate.”

Schultz – the institution’s registrar (official keeper of records) – was affectionately known, according to some administrators, as “Sergeant Schultz,” a name that reflected her previous military service and her no-nonsense approach to college administration.
Sample pages from Williamsport Technical Institute and Williamsport Area Community College catalogs display the shift from course unit hours to semester credits.
What is a slide rule?

According to the International Slide Rule Museum, it is “an analog computer consisting of three interlocking calibrated strips. The central strip can be moved lengthways relative to the other two. A sliding cursor with an alignment line can record an intermediate result on any of the scales.”

Slide rules, “came into wide use in the 1950s, as engineering became a recognized professional activity,” according to museum information. “Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the slide rule was the symbol of the engineer’s profession in the same way that the stethoscope symbolized the medical profession. Some engineering students and engineers actually carried 5-inch pocket slide rules in their belts in addition to using a 10- or 20-inch rule for precision work at home or at the office. All this came to an end in the 1970s, when the advent of miniaturized scientific calculators made slide rules obsolete.”

While most of slide rules were less than 20 inches long, “a huge 10-footer” was used to teach classes in WACC’s Unit 6.

“There’s nothing like the fun of a grand show when you’re using a slide rule up there … moving things back and forth,” said William H. Ealer, associate professor of architectural technology, who used the Unit 6 model in his class. “And, of course, when you’ve got a big one, you can be really accurate, you know.”

In addition to the tool’s accuracy, Ealer said, it brought an element of entertainment into lecture classes.

“That was sort of fun. It was a toy to play with in the classroom and you need toys to play with in a classroom or you don’t get anywhere,” he remarked. “Today, they have the screen to look at and you bring up the calculator. Well, that’s not half as much fun as it was to use the big slide rule.”

Ealer continued to enjoy fun in the classroom for decades, until his death in 2009. At that time, a scholarship was created in his honor.
Higher Aspirations

A Spotlight student newspaper article published on June 7, 1966, described the impact a community college with a “liberal arts” department was having on the region.

“With the inauguration of the college and the liberal arts program, students in the Central Pennsylvania area are being given a much better opportunity to attend college and eventually work toward a degree at a four-year school after completion of work at this institution.

Currently there are 85 students in the Liberal Arts Department who can complete the first two years of work toward a Bachelor’s degree in the Mathematics-Science, Business Administration, Education, or Engineering fields …

Students interviewed had a most favorable opinion of the community college and found it much to their liking. Some students who had previously attended larger colleges or universities consider it much better because it is smaller and more personal. The college is also more convenient to students living in the Williamsport vicinity. One student called it, "the best answer to providing an education to students of limited means."

In addition to “students of limited means,” the community college attracted local residents who were interested in building a strong academic foundation at an institution close to home before going on to higher levels of education.

The 1960-70 college catalog described the college transfer programs as “meeting the needs of many capable students who desire a liberal education but cannot afford the tuition and other living expenses of state-supported or private universities and colleges for more than two years,” but also benefiting other student needs.

“Other area residents are taking advantage of these programs to obtain two years of liberal education for personal enrichment. Many bright people whose true potential didn’t show itself in pre-college years will find numerous services to unlock this potential. For some, limited academic loads may be undertaken for a semester to allow themselves to prove themselves. For others, enrollment in the College Skills Development Program, which is offered within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, opens the doors to further academic or technical training at the collegiate level.”

The catalog also reported that achievement reports from its first class of associate-degree graduates indicated that those who transferred “competed effectively with those students who had spent the freshman and sophomore years in the four-year college. In fact, their performance was superior to the national average of community college transfer students.”

Kirby O. Smith, a 1971 graduate who became a leading healthcare executive in the region, was one of many area residents who used a WACC associate degree as a steppingstone toward high career aspirations.

“The liberal arts degree was perfectly suited to help me accomplish my initial college goal,” he said. “I quickly grew a great respect for my faculty, who had a wealth of ‘working experience’ and academic professionalism.”

Named a distinguished alumnus in 2002, Smith was, at that time, serving as the highest ranking administrator of the largest health care system in Williamsport. He was executive vice president and chief operating officer at Susquehanna Health System from 2000 until 2004.

“Many bright people whose true potential didn’t show itself in pre-college years will find numerous services to unlock this potential.”
Democratic Ideal

WACC’s official philosophy statement proclaimed the college was “committed to the concept that all individuals in a democracy should have full opportunities to develop themselves to the limits of their capacities through education.” The democratic ideal appealed to many young faculty members.

Ned S. Coates joined the English faculty in 1967 and taught for nearly 40 years. He said, “The community college was, it seemed to me, a democratic institution. The idea of teaching students who would otherwise not, perhaps, go to college – students from families from which they were the first student to go to college – that appealed to my idealism at the time.”

The democratic ideal appealed to many young faculty members.

Phillip D. Landers, who was hired in 1968 and also stayed with the institution for more than four decades, said he was attracted by the institution’s ideals and its practical focus on career disciplines.

“Most community colleges are open admission and I really philosophically like that because it gives people, in almost any stage in their life, an opportunity,” Landers said. “I wanted to teach in a community college environment because I wanted to teach a discipline, in this case, accounting … I was bringing in a discipline through an MBA … I had this combination of business education, student teaching, (and) training within the discipline.”

Business Leader

Among WACC’s earliest business graduates was a man who went on to lead one of the state’s largest retirement systems.

James A. Perry, who graduated in 1967 with an associate degree in business management, was executive director of the Pennsylvania Public School Employees Retirement System (PSERS) until his retirement in 1999.

Perry joined PSERS in an entry-level accounting position after graduating from WACC, serving in the U.S. Army, and working in retail sales and management.

“I attended (WACC) with the idea that I would be able to come out and begin a career in business, which I was able to do upon completion of my studies. Our instructors … taught us that, if you acted professionally and worked hard, you could succeed at anything you put your mind to,” he said.

One teacher who gained Perry’s admiration was Margaret Baldwin, assistant professor of business administration.

“Mrs. Baldwin was a major influence on my business career. She taught business writing and really helped me develop my communication skills. She was a stickler on business etiquette and impressed upon us the importance of acting and conducting yourself in a professional manner.”

Perry also completed degrees at Elizabethtown College (bachelor’s degree in business management) and University of Pennsylvania (master’s degree in government management).

He credited a part-time, on-campus job he held as a WACC student with helping him prepare for future leadership positions.

“I had a part-time job supervising the recreation center in the afternoon and evenings. In that capacity, I learned that people are willing to follow a good example and are happy to play by the rules as long as they are fair and equally enforced,” Perry stated.
Finding Faculty

Building a more diverse faculty, by adding liberal arts professors to a core of technical instructors originally hired by WTI based on their work experience, rather than teaching credentials, proved to be a challenge.

William H. Homisak, among the first WTI administrators to move into executive roles at WACC, recalled the urgent search for faculty with degrees. “Really, to recruit, you almost said, ‘Do you have a degree?’ … ‘We need you.’ It sounds terrible, compared to what we do now in the academic field. But basically it was very difficult at that time to find qualified teachers.”

Daniel J. Doyle said the interview conducted before he was hired to teach history in 1967 was an example of the administration’s urgency to fill positions with capable, young faculty.

“The interview went well. It was very easy and I did not have to do a teaching sample. It was over in about an hour. I didn’t have to answer any questions.”

Landers recalled a similar experience, “There wasn’t a lot of protocol back then; there weren’t a lot of steps. By the end of the day, they had offered me the position.”

The urgent need to hire faculty was not unique to Williamsport. The community college system, introduced in Pennsylvania in 1963, brought many young teachers into classrooms around the state.

Patrick Murphy, who joined WACC’s advertising art faculty in 1979, shared his experience as a community college student in 1967, after his discharge from military service.

“I wanted to get an education when I got out of the Army … Three days later I’m attending a community college … Luzerne County Community College,” Murphy said.

“It was an interesting phenomenon because it was a new school, just opened the first year. They hired professors … from all over; several that I had were from New York City. They were pretty broad-minded people …. It was early, they were young – the college – and so were the professors. I learned a lot from them. They were basically fairly liberal-minded people.”

Classrooms led by young liberal arts faculty at WACC began to reflect an expanded philosophy, described in this formal statement in the college catalog:

“The vast majority of our citizens will need some form of education beyond the formal education they received in their youth. The community college should provide the opportunities for man to learn more about himself and his fellow man, his community, state, nation, world, and the universe in which he lives as well as the history, languages, cultures, and issues of the world about him and such other avocational interests as he may have or develop.”

Doyle said expanding students’ knowledge often called for unconventional methods. He once surprised Western Civilization students with a unique approach to history.
“I probably shocked a lot of students. I said, ‘I’m not going to ask you any date questions. It’s not about memorization.’ Even in the early years … it was about … critical thinking, about analysis by synthesis, tying things together and then gaining various perspectives on it … so a person could do well in life … including in work,” he said.

Shock Facilities

While new teaching methods shocked some students, new faculty often were shocked by the state of the campus. There was no hiding the fact that WACC facilities did not match its vision for the future.

Coates said he accepted a faculty position despite what he saw following his job interview with Hugh M. MacMullan, chairman of the English department. (MacMullan was a Williamsport native who came to WACC after a Hollywood film career that included work on Casablanca.)

“First thing he (MacMullan) did was put me in his car and take me down to the landfill (on the southern perimeter of campus). He showed me a campus, which was very ‘un-campus-like’ – after an interview at a college that tried to point out how ‘college-like’ it was …. The contrast seemed genuine and Hugh did too.”

Coates and his colleagues taught in a patchwork of facilities. Many evening classes were conducted in the Williamsport High School after regular high school activities had ended.

Robert G. Bowers, a Williamsport High School graduate who joined WACC’s math faculty in 1966, recalled entering a familiar environment when he taught “after hours” in the high school building.

“I taught initially only after 4 o’clock … on the second floor …. That was sort of déjà vu because I taught algebra in exactly the same room (227/229) where I learned algebra.”

Sharing facilities with the high school (until 1972) led to some unusual challenges.

David K. Heiney, who began his career as a vocational counselor at WTI and went on to become WACC’s dean of students and interim president, recalled a time when fall registration in the high school gym was interrupted by a coach’s evacuation order.

“We were in the middle of registration and the (high school) football coach came in and said, ‘It’s raining out. We need to have football practice in here. You’ve got to get out.’ … We quickly moved tables and chairs out into the stairwells and all around downstairs into the lobby because the football team had priority.”

Physical education credits were required to complete an associate-degree program at WACC. Students planning to transfer completed four credits of physical education or health education. Others completed two physical education credits. Waivers were offered to individuals over 27 years of age and those who had served one year of active military duty. Thomas E. Vargo supervised Bardo Gym for many years as WACC’s director of athletics.
Primitive Classrooms

Muzic recalled, “Teaching anywhere on this campus in that era was pretty primitive … One place was as bad or good as another.”

As enrollment grew, Landers said, administrators often assigned faculty to teach in “any space they could find.” In one of those spaces, he reported, “You could sit in your office or the classroom and hear the sewing machines go, ‘thump, thump, thump.’”

This was the Rishel building, located two blocks west of the high school, along West Third Street. A former furniture factory, the building housed WACC’s library, classrooms, and faculty offices and – on its upper floors – a shirt-making factory.

Muzic recalled a time when factory work brought down lights in a classroom below.

“Above our heads: Arrow Shirt Co. – where you could also go and get shirts at a good price, if you were so inclined, because they would have their sales. It was an interesting place also, because the reverberations of all the sewing machines going. Ultimately you didn’t hear them anymore, but the ceiling would bounce a bit. I guess it was Ray Tyler (business faculty) … his classroom … got hit when some lights fell from all the vibrations.”

Doyle also recalled “the cutters or sewing machines or whatever rumbling upstairs” in the Rishel building. In addition to the factory, Doyle taught in the high school, the basement of the local historical society, and a former trolley car barn known as “Unit 6.”

“One of the classrooms that I remember teaching in in the early ’70s was part of the electronics area in Unit 6. These were tiny little classrooms …. I probably had about 30 students … jammed in there. The front row was so close to the blackboard that there was just about space for me. And yet, one of the things I learned was the location really didn’t matter…. Trying times created … an intimacy that worked.”

When a new Williamsport High School opened in 1972, the former high school and gymnasium became official property of Williamsport Area Community College. WACC dedicated the facilities in memory of two recently deceased leaders. The George S. Klump Academic Center honored the memory of a local physician and member of the WACC board of trustees; the Lewis H. Bardo Gymnasium honored WACC’s first dean of applied arts and sciences.
Welcome Hospitality

A family home and a high school home economics room were among the first locations assigned to WACC’s food and hospitality program.

According to a history of the program written in 1973 for the first meeting of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Council of Hotel Restaurant and Institution Education, WACC’s food service department opened in Fall 1968, offering a food service associate degree “to meet the community need for hospital food service supervisors and assistant managers for restaurants.” An advisory board of local dietitians, including employees of Williamsport Hospital and the Williamsport Area School District, helped to develop the curriculum.

Classes initially were held in Williamsport High School’s home economics room after regular hours. In 1970, the program moved into a family home at 1143 W. Third St., for lecture and lab classes. In 1972, the program returned to the former high school building (then Klump Academic Center) and enjoyed expanded facilities – including two labs and a lecture room.

The program’s first full-time instructor was Patricia Reis, followed by Vivian P. Moon, who replaced Reis in 1970. In 1972, a certificate program for head cooks and chefs was added. In 1974, the program was renamed Food and Hospitality to attract students interested in both institutional and commercial food service.

Students gained local work experience at Divine Providence and Williamsport hospitals; Williamsport Area School District; and hotels; bakeries, and other enterprises, ranging from Meals on Wheels to the Williamsport Country Club.
Student Veterans

WACC faculty mentored a diverse student body, ranging from high school juniors and seniors – who arrived in bright yellow school buses each morning to take part in vocational classes – to adults returning to the classroom after military service or significant life changes.

Veterans returning from war had been drawn to the institution since its inception. WACC’s outreach to veterans included special messages in early promotional brochures:

“Many returning Vietnam veterans are exploring educational opportunities and finding them attractive at The Williamsport Area Community College. A highly active veterans’ fraternity, Chi Gamma iota, is located on the campus and serves as the area headquarters for the Program to Advance Veterans Education (PAVE). We invite all veterans to come and talk with us about the possibility of joining a growing number of veterans who are being prepared for a profession or a career. All programs are approved by the Veterans Administration for benefits under the various veterans’ education laws.”

“The vets were fascinating,” Muzic declared. “They took over an empty classroom and made it their office …. That’s essentially where they worked as a group. They were a mutual support organization.”

She recalled that veterans “literally carried” one wheelchair-bound vet to classes in a building with no elevator.

“They took care of their own,” she declared. “They were absolutely amazing and loved the learning …. They ate it up. My most vivid memory is one of my 7 a.m. classes where I had a group of the guys, the Vietnam vets, in the class. Some of the other students in the class were commenting on the war and it was close to throwing punches …. It was bad until both sides settled down.”

Doyle also remembered the impact of veterans in the classroom: “Students who had been in the military and now were coming back, using their veterans’ benefits and pursuing an education, were several years older. They had experienced life that none of us, including myself, had experienced. Their lives were clearly transformed. For the most part – unless they were dealing with some issues, probably caused by the war – they were more mature and they bonded as a community.”

Transforming Experience

Doyle said students’ interest in the Vietnam War led him to develop a more thorough understanding of the use of propaganda to frame public opinion at the start of war.

“A transforming experience for me … showing how students can influence faculty … was in 1969,” he said. “One student [Bill Nixon], who had not been in the military, decided he wanted a panel discussion … an open discussion, pros and cons, question and answer. He put together a number of panelists and I was supposed to give the history of Vietnam and the Vietnam War.”

Researching the events that led up to the war caused Doyle to consider how news reports impacted popular opinion.

“I had not taken any position on the Vietnam War. I was passive …. I had to do research,” he noted. “I remember writing on yellow, cheap paper. I would write in dark color the information that I had gathered and then in red ink … my interpretation. What I began to realize was that everything that I superficially had heard – particularly about the Gulf of Tonkin incident [a transformative moment in U.S. foreign policy] … there was no conclusive evidence of this.”

He said that “in hindsight, much later” he came to realize that using incidents as a “pretext to justify” buildup for a war was “not necessarily all that unusual.”
Doyle said the research “influenced me very significantly.” Over the years, he continued his research of propaganda and the media and eventually developed a course exploring that topic.

In 1972, a rally for peace on campus attracted hundreds of students and faculty and remained “completely nonviolent,” according to the student newspaper.

Distinguished Service to Veterans

A veteran student remembered by Daniel J. Doyle as “instrumental in forming the vets’ organization on campus” was recognized by Congress for a distinguished career as a veterans’ advocate.

Darryl W. Kehrer, an Air Force veteran who earned an Associate of Arts degree in liberal studies in 1972, spent nearly four decades in government service. When he retired in 2005, he was staff director for the U.S. House of Representatives’ Committee on Veterans’ Affairs’ Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, specializing in education and workforce-development policy.

He declared that his service to veterans “began at WACC when I was coordinator of the student-veteran-run Program to Advance Veterans’ Education Center and it continued to the highest councils of government in Washington, D.C.”

Kehrer earned the Secretary of Veterans Affairs’ Exceptional Service Medal and guided the Congressional Veterans’ Claims Adjudication Commission (as executive director) and the Congressional Commission on Service Members and Veterans Transition Assistance (as panel staff director).

In 2005, U.S. Rep. Michael K. Simpson paid tribute to the WACC alumnus in the Congress: “As the chairman of the Veterans Benefit Subcommittee during the 107th Congress, Darryl’s strong work ethic and commitment to the issues was unwavering. He worked tirelessly with me to enact the Jobs for Veterans Act (PL 107-288), and since then, he has continued his work with the Department of Labor to ensure the legislation is reaching veterans and helping them make the transition from military service to civilian employment.”

Kehrer – who also earned degrees from the University of Pittsburgh (B.A., 1981) and American University (M.A., 1985) – made his first efforts on behalf of veterans at WACC, where he and fellow veteran students established a student-run veterans’ outreach center.

A leader of WACC’s Chi Gamma Iota veterans’ fraternity, Kehrer earned distinction as the college’s Alumnus of the Year in 1981. He said “the massive reading assignments” and learning “to write with coherence” were among his greatest challenges as a WACC student.

In 2011, he co-authored Across the Aisle: The Seven-Year Legislative Journey of the Historic Montgomery GI Bill. His expertise regarding legislative enactment of the bill (PL 100-48) led to opportunities to serve as a guest presenter at the U.S. Military Academy, the Air Force Academy and other noted universities. □
Divided Community

Technical programs attracted the largest enrollments at WACC, but rising interest in liberal arts and sciences created the sense of a divided community.

Robert G. Kissell, WACC’s first history and government teacher, said liberal arts faculty were “in the minority” and the majority were “technical people – many from the WTI era.”

Kissell was familiar with WACC’s history; as a Navy veteran, he was sent by the Veterans Administration to WTI for vocational diagnostic testing to determine his aptitude for various careers. As a result, he enrolled at state college and became a high school teacher before accepting a position at the community college.

Often heard in lectures referring to “blue collar” workers as “Joe Dinner Bucket,” Kissell said he identified with these individuals because his father had been a machinist at Avco-Lycoming.

Kissell was among the liberal arts faculty enlisted to support WACC’s early curriculum development. He researched catalogs from nearby colleges “to see what was being taught and determine what was needed for transfer” to establish core degree requirements that would give graduates the option to continue their education.

Doyle believed the movement, toward encouraging higher levels of education, increased tension between new liberal arts faculty and veteran faculty, who did not have advanced education and had been employed to prepare technical students for job placement, not college transfer.

“There were obviously some aspects of teaching English, writing … career-focused mathematics,” Doyle said. “But, when I came in 1967 … only two years after the transfer to a community college had occurred …. There was still tension.”

The tension may have reflected society’s view of vocational education as a “working class” opportunity and academic education as an option only for more affluent citizens.

Changing Viewpoint

By offering a comprehensive, hands-on education – that combined work-based experience and academic rigor – WACC presented an alternative to traditional views of higher education. Students could choose degrees that offered immediate entry into the workforce as well as those that offered transferrable college credits.

The two paths offered by WACC were marked by separate mathematics courses for applied and liberal arts students.

According to Bowers, “Liberal arts mathematics was asking the question ‘Why?’ and applied arts mathematics was asking the more simplified question of ‘How?’”

Too often, he said, even the liberal arts students were eager to ask for “the shortcut” without really understanding how to solve the problem at hand.

“Just show me the table. Where do I look this up? Tell me how to do this,” he mimicked.

Declaring that “I can’t do math,” Bowers said, created a “self-fulfilling prophecy” for many students.
Learning how math class related to technical classes could help students make connections between theory and application, Bowers believed, so he tried to find ways to relate lessons to real work.

“I talked to other instructors in the technical programs. They have told me students ‘don’t even recognize that the trigonometry that you did in your classroom is the same trigonometry we’re using in electronics,’” he said.

Graphic communications instructor Dale A. Metzker said a love for math led him to see the connections between numbers, calculations, and his field.

“But when I was teaching and I started talking about proportions and ratios, (I) could see the glaze going over the students’ eyes,” he admitted.

Metzker, who joined the WACC faculty in 1966 after completing his studies at WTI in 1961 and working as a production printer for the school, enjoyed a 40-year career at the college and earned recognition as a Master Teacher in 2002.

Students who were successful in Metzker’s classes experienced Bowers’ edict: “If you’re going to be successful in mathematics, you have to get your hands dirty.”

Because a teacher’s influence helped him develop an appreciation for math, Metzker encouraged his students to embrace mathematics as part of their technical studies.

“In the printing program or in any vocation, it requires a lot of math,” he insisted. “If you are mixing chemicals and you have to do it in a certain proportion, you’ve got to know mathematics. If you are determining how many pieces of paper you get out of a sheet and then if you have to figure out how many sheets you need to print the magazine, there is a lot of mathematics in that, as well. If you are enlarging or reducing a photograph, you know there are percentages there … You’ve got to keep it in proportion. That’s mathematics.”

Field Work

When Williamsport Area Community College gained official accreditation from the Middle States Commission on Institutions of Higher Education in December 1970, the commission’s evaluation team was enthusiastic about WACC’s progress and planning for the future.

“The atmosphere at WACC encourages initiative and experimentation,” the team reported. “The faculty is being encouraged to get out of the ruts and try new ways of teaching. Such an atmosphere is vital in keeping both faculty and students intellectually alive. The college is beginning to reap the rewards of this atmosphere of freedom.”

Still, encouraging students to master general education, rather than settle for the shortest path to entry into the workforce, was a challenge.

Coates and Muzic recalled that some students and faculty simply did not agree with new academic course requirements for all students, including those without an interest in continuing their education beyond a certificate or associate degree.

“They lived with it,” Muzic said, “Didn’t like it. Thought it was a waste of their time. But ultimately were tolerant.”

Coates, who introduced filmmaking as a way of teaching English composition students how scenes in a story relate to one another, recalled “One student who got an ‘A’ from me said, ‘I want to be the best damned airplane mechanic I can be. I don’t want to learn how to make films.”

Coates acknowledged there were “some teachers and some students who objected to the course because it was ‘taking away’ from time in their applied arts curriculum.”

“The atmosphere at WACC encourages initiative and experimentation.”
Cameras and Composition

A chance to earn extra credit in Ned Coates’ English “comp” class led a few students to fake a bank robbery.

“I got the college to buy about six Super 8 cameras, which were fairly cheap at that time,” Coates said. “I offered (students) … the opportunity to make some films … for extra credit. A lot of them took to that and they made films. One “robbed” the First National Bank downtown … a bank-robbing film. Another that I recall … had a really junky car and the student wished … that the car could be changed. A fairy godmother appears … This was an all-male class. They got a female student to dress up as a fairy with a magic wand. They had the camera on a tripod and lined up the car just exactly and ‘poof’ the junker turns into a Corvette!”

Coates’ students made films, studied plays by Samuel Beckett, and learned storyboarding concepts by reading comic books. This caused some of his critics to challenge the academic rigor of a class that used comics instead of textbooks. Although “Comp 12” was an “applied arts” course that did not earn transferable credits, Coates declared his classes “had content worthy and challenge worthy of transferability.”

As one of two original advisers of the college’s yearbook staff in 1968 – Florence M. Markley was the other – Coates was inspired by an interest in films to suggest the yearbook’s name, “Montage”.

“Montage … in film … means the unity of the visual impression as one shot relates to the next … creating a unified impression,” he said. “With the yearbook being mostly a picture book, I thought that was an appropriate name.”

Pictures, he recalled, became a source of disagreement as the first yearbook went to print.

“We didn’t have time to gather a lot of material and a lot of pictures,” he said, explaining that WACC’s audio visual department staff (A. Neale Winner and Richard Long) took photographs of students in their program areas.

“We put them into the yearbook, or were about to, when Dr. Carl looked at the proofs and said he wanted these students with coats and ties. We had to take all the groups over. I was surprised; nearly all the students cooperated with that.”

“The administration, naturally, wanted the yearbook to be something to draw positive attention toward the college and be a promotional thing,” he said. “As advisers, we wanted it to be sort of a memorabilia for students.” □
Time was a valued commodity among applied arts students and faculty who were focused on transferring education to the workplace as soon as possible. Classes often were offered around the clock.

For a time, Muzic taught English to technical students at 7 a.m., when they were “coming off” overnight instruction in programs like welding, which ran 24 hours a day to meet workplace demand. Students in those early-morning classes took great pride in their blue-collar pursuits.

“They were great. I had no complaints about the students, ever,” she declared. “They were very manageable and interesting always, regardless of whether they were ‘Tech’ or not ‘Tech’ … At that point, there was the ‘Tech Rat’ syndrome, including wearing it (‘Tech Rat’) on their jackets (with) a certain pride in the fact that they considered themselves … ‘non-academic’ …. Many of them were as academic as any other …. It was just a reverse snobbery.”

Academic snobbery was alive on most college campuses, but at WACC, where the lines were clearly divided between “applied” and “liberal” arts and sciences – it was a potent expression of differences between professional teachers and technical experts who were teaching college classes despite their own lack of formal education.

Muzic recalled that many applied arts faculty “who had no degrees … ended up in (general education) classes” – as they pursued college degrees to supplement their industry training and classroom experience.

**Teacher Training**

Technical faculty members were encouraged to build academic credentials following the transition from the technical institute to the community college.

Homisak, WACC’s first dean of continuing education – who earned his doctorate while rising through the ranks at WTI – mentored technical faculty enrolled in a teacher training program offered by The Pennsylvania State University.

“Penn State asked me in the early ’60s to be an instructor in their teacher training for vocational teachers,” Homisak said. “I probably did that for about two years, part time. I taught them at night and weekends. I’d get these instructors – plumbers, carpenters, steamfitters – and I would teach them introduction to education, curriculum development, testing …. I traveled pretty much throughout Central Pennsylvania.”

They “were qualified tradesmen, but they did not have the (educational) background” to help them teach classes with the greatest confidence, he said. They were often “shellshocked about expressing themselves.”

Involvement in the teacher training, Homisak said, helped him develop greater knowledge of the technical programs – to aid in public relations and marketing – and it helped to recruit faculty to the institution.

Doyle recalled, “Initially … many of the faculty in vocational-technical areas did not have college degrees. But they knew their stuff and … were learning how to teach.”

He said his own respect for “applied” arts faculty increased after he took a continuing education course on automobile maintenance led by Marlin M. Roush, of the automotive faculty.

“The first night … there was some testing (of) the battery and I didn’t know the difference between positive and negative on the battery. I knew I was out of my element,” Doyle declared.

At that point, Doyle said he came to appreciate Roush’s competence. “With vocational education … you had to have experience in your craft, in your trade. He had that.”

The Parkes Automotive Techology Center, dedicated in honor of the institution’s founding leader, George H. Parkes, opened in 1971.
Know Your Subject

Carl M. Hillyard, who was hired to teach carpentry to secondary vocational students at WTI in 1962, was among the faculty who enrolled in Penn State’s vocational teacher training.

When WACC continued the secondary vocational education program along with postsecondary offerings, instructors like Hillyard often taught both high school and college students.

“When I came in, I had no college education at all,” he said. “I had some concerns because I never taught before in my life. I just graduated from high school.”

An experienced faculty mentor, Lloyd C. Cotner, advised him to “Know your subject.”

“They were just small words, but they meant a lot to me,” Hillyard said. “I took them to heart. I studied night after night until I knew my subject well. See, I knew how to use the tools, but I never really knew the particulars about the tools.”

“Initially … many of the faculty in vocational-technical areas did not have college degrees.”

Tools and Pingpong Tables

Carl M. Hillyard taught “the particulars” about carpentry tools for more than 40 years.

“When students first came in … we taught mostly hand tools and portable power tools. They really didn’t use the tables or anything until their senior year,” he explained.

“The first project was a bench hook. (They) took rough wood. They had to take their jack plane and plane the surface up and down … . They made three pieces of wood about 3 inches wide and 12 inches long and then they glued them together and put cleats on one end, turned it over and put the cleat on the other end and then that hooked on to the tables.”

“Their next projects were making joints … . We had them do that with a backsaw and wood chisel. They used a lot of sandpaper … . After the bench hook and the joints, they made handy boxes they could keep their tools in and we had them make a pair of sawhorses, which they would use a lot, and then a stepladder, a bench, projects such as that. They did it all with hand tools and portable power tools.”

More advanced classes offered opportunities to frame and build projects, such as outdoor sheds, which students built on campus and sold in the community. One project brought students a bit of lunchtime recreation.

“We actually made pingpong tables,” Hillyard said. “Then – only at lunchtime – we played ping-pong. I had tournaments and I gave trophies out.”

“Building construction, 1970”
When Hillyard joined the faculty, carpentry was taught in “Unit 2,” an old industrial shop along Susquehanna St. Later, classes moved into the vacated Cromar hardwood-floor factory, which also housed the campus bookstore.

“When we taught house framing, we could actually build full-size rooms there (in Cromar), he said. “In Unit 2, we had to use scaled-down models. This gave us the opportunity to make full-size projects.”

Throughout his career – Hillyard retired from the college in 2002 – he insisted that a teacher’s work experience in the field benefited students in the classroom: “I think that, when you teach a trade, you had to have the trade experience …. If you have trade experience, you can relate it to your students.”

“Today’s building industries are becoming more technical and more competitive. New materials and changing designs and techniques create a need for well-trained adaptable people. In order to become a specialist in these fields, you need special training – training that includes both theory and practice. At WACC, we realize that not all learning comes from books – each program provides opportunities for you to practice the skills you will need on the job”.

Quote reprinted from a WACC promotional brochure; image from Colors, a campus magazine.
**Strike Relations**

Hillyard related well to students and his faculty colleagues. When faculty began to consider striking for better pay and working conditions in 1973, Hillyard was approached to serve as co-leader of the strike. He represented the applied arts faculty; Doyle represented the liberal arts faculty.

“The college had gone through a very difficult time financially,” Doyle recalled. “There was an economic downturn. There was a drop in anticipated enrollment. There was a shortfall in the budget of significant proportions at that time.”

Landers, who was then president of the faculty association, remembered, “The college was growing like crazy …. There (were) a lot of inequities … workload … compensation and benefits.”

Among the concerns were lack of due process – a grievance procedure and protocol for managing disagreements – and inequitable teaching schedules that required applied arts faculty to teach five courses a semester while liberal arts faculty taught four. Class size also was an issue.

“One of the things we were very concerned about – particularly the applied arts folks … the trades and the shops … is you have only so many stations,” Landers recalled. “Dave Karschner talked about this. (He) taught welding at that time …. If you place too many (students) at a station) … there (are) health and safety issues …. Are you giving the students a good education?”

A three-week strike in Fall 1973 turned into a unifying experience. Faculty, as well as counselors and librarians who were also represented by the union, bonded together for common interests.

“I think it really brought the faculty together as a group,” Landers said. “We were dealing with a common problem … our contract, our salary, our rights, our benefits … and the future of the college.”

Grant M. Berry Jr., a WACC counselor, said the strike “created a bond among people at the institution that I don’t think could have been created in any other way.”

He described a warming of relations among the picketers as they marched outside the Klump Academic Center in early winter.

“It was cold. They didn’t have anything else to do. They got to talking to one another. They began to develop a real respect for one another. There was one fellow … who was in carpentry, who was also a beekeeper. That kind of amazed the academic that he was with … and they got to talking because the academic had an interest in that area also. And, there was one fellow … in plumbing or air conditioning who had an interest in literature. As it happened, he got paired up with an English Lit major in the picket line …. It broke down the barriers … or lack of understanding that existed before that and created a genuine team spirit, a genuine respect for each other as individuals.”

A three-week strike in Fall 1973 turned into a unifying experience.
Further evidence of the teachers’ unity was noted in the years following the strike when Hillyard was elected president of the faculty union.

“I never thought that I would ever be president of the association,” Hillyard declared. “I came out of the industry. I didn’t have a college background at all. I was a high school instructor and yet I was president of WACCEA (Williamsport Area Community College Education Association), which had many academic faculty.”

Hillyard said he was intimidated by the prospect of leadership until he decided to follow the same advice he gave to his beginning carpentry students.

“It’s just one step at a time,” he said, describing a methodical process he shared with students. “You put the saw plates down, then you put the saw router on that. You lay out and you nail those floor joists to that. Then you put the bridging in. It’s just one step at a time …. I took my own advice…. Just take one little step at a time.”

**Teachers on Strike**

WACC classes were suspended on Nov. 1, 1973, when the faculty voted to strike and set up picket lines that marched in front of the Klump Academic Center (formerly Williamsport High School).

“Because the college has many shops where students may be exposed to accident or severe injury, and having the safety and security of the students in mind, the closing because of insufficient instructors now becomes necessary,” said C. Herschel Jones, who was chief executive officer of the institution following Carl’s resignation earlier that year.

According to the Grit newspaper, “The strike affected more than 2,400 WACC students enrolled in regular classes, 1,200 students from 15 area high schools in the area vocational-technical school operated by the college, and about 800 persons in evening continuing-education classes.”

The faculty bargaining unit, representing approximately 178 teaching faculty, counselors, and librarians, said issues related to workload (including class preparation and student consultation), equitable salaries (taking into account the teacher’s experience, workload, and seniority), and fringe benefits led to the strike.

“We estimate our average annual salary to be about $2,000 below the average at other community colleges,” said Phillip D. Landers, union president. “So money is an important factor – but there is more than just money involved.”

The Spotlight student newspaper reported that WACC had the lowest average salary among community colleges. While most community college salaries were in the range of $12,000 to $13,000 per year, according to the newspaper, the average salary among WACC faculty was $9,980.

Classes resumed on Nov. 19 after a two-year contract, providing for the establishment of a point system to determine faculty compensation, was approved by the faculty and administration.
Responsive to Needs

In 1973, a Pennsylvania Department of Education study to determine colleges’ effectiveness in producing skilled workers revealed that WACC was a statewide leader in producing job-ready graduates.

Based on a study of 1971 graduates of Pennsylvania community colleges, Penn State branch campuses, and other proprietary schools, the study reported that WACC produced nearly one-fourth (804) of the state’s total number of graduates (3,367).

The survey also revealed that 94 percent of the WACC graduates were employed. The Grit newspaper called this “an unusually high number considering the total picture of employment at that time.”

James P. Bressler, dean of applied arts and sciences, said WACC had achieved “an amazing success ratio in training skilled craftsmen for the job market.”

“The strike affected more than 2,400 WACC students enrolled in regular classes, 1,200 students from 15 area high schools in the area vocational-technical school operated by the college, and about 800 persons in evening continuing-education classes.”

WACC was a statewide leader in producing job-ready graduates.
Commitment to Community

A deeply rooted connection between the college and its community was praised by an evaluation team from the Middle States Commission on Institutes of Higher Education in 1970. The team reported, “The Williamsport Area Community College exemplifies a philosophy of community colleges, which is often verbalized but seldom realized. The college’s commitment to its community is total, is real, and is significant. It is involved in the economic, social, and cultural life of north-central Pennsylvania in ways which few of any institutions of higher education ever even hope to achieve.”

Cooperation with the business community was a particular focus of the team’s report.

“The president and the faculty in cooperation with the Lycoming Foundation initiated a fund drive, which resulted in the establishment of a new industrial park. Over a score of new industries have located there, but that is only part of the story. One of the prime inducements for industry to settle there is the college and its graduates who are available for employment … The participation in the recruitment of new industry by the college in cooperation with the Industrial Properties Corporation of the Chamber of Commerce to help create jobs for its graduates is a unique and highly significant aspect of this college.”

Eye for the Future

Despite WACC’s success in placing graduates, enrollment declined from 1971 through 1974. Operating at a budget deficit, the administration considered cost-cutting options, including a proposal to eliminate academic courses from certificate programs.

Dr. Otto L. Sonder Jr., academic dean, and James E. Logue, chairman of the English department, spoke out against the proposal in an article published in the Grit newspaper on March 24, 1974.

“I personally think that it would be best if students in certificate programs took related academic work,” Sonder said. “But over the years, I have received complaints from students, parents, and sponsoring districts who have felt that the academic courses are unnecessary.”

Logue expressed concern over the students’ futures: “We’ll grind them out and they will be prepared to enter the job market. But what happens in 10 or 12 years, when these people want to advance in their work? They won’t be able to because they won’t have the communication or mathematic skills required. I would prefer a vocational-training program here that has an eye to the future.”

With the appointment of Dr. William H. Feddersen as president later that year, the WACC administration sought to adapt to economic realities while protecting the integrity of its mission, stating “The aim is to maintain WACC’s historical mission of meeting constantly changing educational needs in the widespread community we serve … responsive to the needs of individuals.”

Ten years after WACC’s founding and one year after resolution of the 1973 teachers’ strike, the 1974-75 college catalog, claimed that the institution had undergone “a major re-organization of the academic and administrative structure … to streamline the basic programs and institute modern management methods.”

Responding to individual student needs was a priority for WACC’s new chief administrator.

“Students have the right to succeed,” Feddersen said while making a case to expand WACC’s remedial class offerings into a centralized “developmental studies” operation designed to assess and address students’ learning needs.

The president said he was “a really strong proponent that this was something that we had to strengthen if we were to remain a leader in vocational-technical education.”

“If you don’t place students … into the courses for which they’re prepared to succeed, many will fail,” he said. “You don’t want an institution where many students drop out and fail.”
Saving History

The success of one WACC alumnus exemplified the importance of postsecondary education that responds to individual needs – even if the result is not a college degree.

“I’ve learned things here that have helped change my life,” said Jeff Erdly, who earned a certificate in engineering drafting in 1972 and later achieved national recognition for restoring building facades.

As owner of Masonry Preservation Services, Erdly used his technical expertise to repair and restore historic buildings including Frank Lloyd Wright’s masterpiece Fallingwater, Pennsylvania’s Capitol, and an iconic tower at the U.S. Penitentiary at Lewisburg, which was named the 2010 Historic Restoration Project of the year by Masonry Construction magazine.

“My total education is a two-year certificate – not even an associate degree – from WACC,” Erdly declared.

He shared a simple, yet holistic, view of success: “Be the best technically and ethically …. First, do excellent work. Second, bring the best technical knowledge of the day to the table.”

Early in his career, Erdly made suggestions to improve work practices that his employer ignored. Rather than give in to frustration, he found inspiration in a book that cost him “about two weeks’ worth of walking-around money.” He used How to Start, Build and Finance Your Own Business as a resource to launch Masonry Preservation Services in 1985.

Erdly was pleased with his return on investment from a $19 book and a WACC education, which he said was “the deal of the century, when you consider what I paid.”

Open Door

WACC offered an “open door” admission policy common among community colleges, but required placement testing to determine students’ levels of readiness for college-level course work in mathematics, English, and reading.

Individuals who lacked the academic skills to be successful in a chosen course of study had the opportunity to participate in a developmental studies program that used individualized and self-paced instruction, as well as small group sessions, tutoring and media support to improve their skills. Federal funding made it possible for WACC to offer such services free of charge to students who were academically and financially disadvantaged.

Feddersen tapped Veronica M. Muzic to coordinate developmental studies. She called the early program “no-frills, inexpensive, but successful” and recalled faculty debates on whether or not developmental course grades should count toward a student’s grade-point average. Ultimately, the decision was to count the grades in order to provide “more of an incentive for students to succeed.”

Designed for you if:
• you lack academic background in courses required for curriculum of your choice
• you’ve been away from a classroom and need to re-acquire academic skills
• you did not complete high school or high school background is weak

Reprinted from a WACC promotional brochure
Muzic said a 1976 grant eventually led to the creation of a Tutoring Center and inspired one of WACC’s first professional tutors, Diana Kuhns, to switch from English to mathematics.

“Diana, by the way, was an English major,” Muzic said. “Because of the students’ need for math, she became a math tutor also – ultimately took all the math classes here, so as to be able to help the students. How’s that for commitment?”

**Better Teachers**

A faculty-scholar model, offering developmental coursework within WACC’s individual discipline areas, was determined to be the best way to accommodate students, Muzic said.

“Coincidentally, our self-directed, professional development in support of the developmental courses made us better teachers,” she asserted.

Robert G. Bowers, who became one of the first WACC faculty to earn a Ph.D. in 1971, helped develop a self-paced, self-directed course in beginning algebra. He agreed with Muzic’s assessment.

“These were not my favorite courses to teach in the beginning,” Bowers admitted. “The students didn’t want to be there …. But an amazing fact changed my attitude. I always had some of the highest student evaluations from those developmental classes, more than anything I taught. I realized even though it didn’t show and they weren’t very happy campers, they appreciated what happened. Those who succeeded said, ‘This is the first time I’ve ever had success in doing this.’”

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**Faculty Support Influences Veteran**

When Kenneth C. Kuhns enrolled at WACC in 1976, after four years in the Air Force, his expectations – in terms of academic success – were pretty low.

Support from faculty mentors inspired him to pursue a career in electrical engineering and eventually become a teacher.

“At that time, I lacked confidence in my academic abilities and truly believed that I wasn’t college material. I reinforced my suspicions by testing poorly in all areas of the college’s placement test. Luckily for me, after reviewing my dismal test scores, Veronica Muzic encouraged me that day not to worry.”

Kuhns earned an associate degree in electronics from WACC in 1979, then transferred to Penn State and graduated with a degree in electrical engineering in 1983.

“The faculty and staff that I worked with as a student at WACC certainly were dedicated to bringing out the best in each individual. I especially remember the positive influence of Veronica Muzic, Peter Dumanis, Ned Coates, Richard Sweeney, Robert Bowers, Vic Michaels, Bob Mix, and Norman Briggs. From them, I learned the importance of being able to communicate effectively through both the written and the spoken word, having a strong foundation in mathematics, and developing a strong foundational understanding of electrical and electronic theory.”

After college, Kuhns worked as a microwave engineer for eight years before returning to campus to join the faculty in the fall of 1990.

“As a faculty member, I aspire each day to influence the students with whom I work the same way that those faculty I mentioned influenced me,” he said.
Muzic’s influence stretched far beyond English classes and developmental studies. She earned a reputation for working closely with fellow teachers in the liberal arts department, as well as many applied arts and sciences faculty who appreciated her support as they polished their teaching skills.

“Some of the faculty in the trades also were not especially fond of all this ‘academic stuff,’ but I was able to make a pact with a couple. We would share papers: I would read them as an English person, they would read them as a technical person, and we’d give two grades and then average them out, and that worked nicely.”

Richard J. Weilminster, hired to teach horticulture in 1972, remembered interactions with Muzic as instructive not only to students, but also to her faculty peers.

“I remember Veronica saying … ‘There are things that are very important to teach and there are things that are nice to teach …. Once you’re done with the important-to-teach things, then you can get into the nice-to-teach things.’ And, it’s very, very true.”

He continued, “That was really good information for me as a young instructor, because what you have to do is synthesize all the things that are really, really essential for a particular topic.”

“Articulate Agitator”

A popular character on the WACC campus was Dr. Peter B. Dumanis, a member of the English faculty who gained status as a Master Teacher in 1983 – just one year after his colleague Veronica Muzic became the first member of the faculty to be so honored.

Dumanis was an articulate agitator who enjoyed provoking reactions from students and colleagues as much as he loved sharing his passions for Shakespeare, horror stories, cinema, and bluegrass with the campus community.

Muzic, who teamed with Dumanis to teach English Composition II, said, “He was – although he did his best not to let anybody know – a real scholar.”

Together, Dumanis and Muzic – in the fashion of WTI faculty and administrators George H. Parkes and John T. Shuman – sought unique ways to develop students’ appreciation for communication and language.

“I left the novel behind … went into short stories …. Peter used cartoons, used films,” Muzic said. She also recalled that her teaching partner would occasionally give students credit for errors.

“Peter would also give them credit for the world’s worst answer … silly and stupid …. They loved it. There would be this kind of ‘Can we do it?’ and they’d come up with the really stupid answer so they got his attention,” she remembered.

Antics that challenged students and faculty peers were part of the Dumanis legacy.

Ned S. Coates, who was one of Dumanis’ office mates, said, “Pete did not like any barriers between people. Where we used conventional communication, small talk, Pete would blast right through that …. When someone sneezed, in class or in the office, Pete would yell ‘Quiet!’ Everybody else was saying ‘God Bless You’ or something like that. And most people sneezed twice, so the second time he’d raise the roof yelling ‘Quiet!’

Muzic also recalled that students learned from disagreements she and Dumanis occasionally brought into the classroom: “[Students] saw that you could disagree … there are elements of being right on both ends and that was important for them to see …. I could be right and Pete could be right at the same time, which was another lesson they needed to learn.” □
Weilminster expressed his view that teaching styles used by WACC faculty were key to their graduates’ successes in the workplace.

“Our two-year students get the same jobs, are paid the same money, as four-year graduates. That’s a credit to the instructors here.”

Another member of the horticulture faculty, Dennis E. Fink, agreed, “Students really are very much aware of the fact that you’ve got that practical background. If you do it properly in the classroom, it shows that you’ve got that knowledge …. That’s one of the reasons why our students do so well when they leave here and go out into industry – college-wide, not just in the horticulture program.”

Fink believed trust was an important factor that connected “hands-on” faculty with their students. “When you can actually do a hands-on application and show them – this is exactly how you build a retaining wall, this is exactly how you install a patio, this is exactly how you test the soil for pH or soluble solid content and here are some of the reasons why you need to know this information, why it’s important – students can very quickly see that you’ve got a lot of practical knowledge, a lot of intimate knowledge, of the subject that you’re talking about and they very quickly learn to trust you,” he explained.

Fink and Weilminster were among the faculty hired when WACC created a separate campus for teaching in the “earth sciences” in 1972. Each went on to earn highest faculty honors during careers that spanned four decades at the institution. Weilminster received the Master Teacher award in 1996, the same year he earned national recognition for his outstanding work with students from the American Nursery and Landscape Association; Fink received the Master Teacher honor a year later, in 1997.

Earth Science Center Opens

About the time Americans began celebrating “Earth Day,” WACC established the Herman T. Schneebeli Earth Science Center. It served as a living laboratory for students interested in pursuing careers in the natural sciences.

Joseph G. Sick, who was named director of the new center, began his career as an agriculture instructor in the basement of WTI’s machine shop. In those days, his dream of one day expanding studies in related fields, such as horticulture and forestry, seemed impossible.

“Where are you going to teach it? You can’t teach it down there in the basement of a machine shop …. We had no labs, no greenhouse,” Sick recalled.

James P. Bressler, a former agriculture teacher who advanced to the position of dean of applied arts and sciences at WACC, decided to approach a local congressman with an idea to use a piece of land owned by the federal government to expand WACC’s “earth science” programs.

“He (Bressler) and I talked about it,” Sick said. “He seemed to have some good rapport with Herm Schneebeli, our representative to Washington, and he knew that the penitentiary had excess land.”

The land was located 10 miles south of the Williamsport campus, adjacent to a low-security Federal Correctional Institution near Allenwood. When the government agreed to provide the land to WACC for instructional use, the
1965 – 1989

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college built a $1.3 million center, which opened in the 1971-72 academic year. At that time, more than 400 students were enrolled in WACC’s forestry, horticulture, agricultural, and heavy equipment majors.

Setting the Environment

The heavy construction equipment program was already well-established at the time it was relocated to the Earth Science Center.

Benjamin H. Eldred, who used the GI Bill to earn a WACC degree and then joined its faculty to teach service and operation of heavy equipment, said, “This is, as far as I know, the oldest program that exists in the United States in a two-year, degree type (comprehensive) program.”

As a new member of the faculty in 1973, Eldred had the advantage of being mentored by Clyde Brass, who started WTI’s heavy equipment program in 1946. Like Brass, Eldred had the opportunity to turn trash into treasure when securing instructional equipment for his students.

Eldred recalled “We got this bulldozer from the military surplus (that was) painted green. It just looked old; but it was actually brand new …. Nobody wanted to run it; nobody really wanted to take care of this ‘piece of junk.’ That summer, I had it painted, (added) new decals. The fall class comes … and every kid wanted to run that bulldozer. They thought it was a new machine. That coat of paint was all it took to make the difference.”

The teacher took a lesson from his experience. “The same thing makes the difference in the front of the classroom,” he said. “You set the attitude. You set what the environment is going to be as a teacher.”

He recalled that Brass encouraged him to be patient – not to expect too much too early – as his students transferred what they learned in class to their field experience.

“We have a way to take it from theory and put it into action … put it to the ground,” Eldred declared. “In our business, you have to be able to talk in the classroom, relate to the industry, then … be able to go out and do it.”

He stressed the importance of students learning how to do things correctly in class, before actually doing it in practice – especially

Much of the forest technology student’s time is spent in field laboratory sessions. For this over 200,000 acres of public and private forest lands have been made available. The forests are all within a 25-mile radius of campus …. The new building shown above will be your classroom ‘home’ for the study of forestry. It is surrounded by 168 acres of college-owned land, easily accessible for the practice and development of forestry techniques and methodology. The building contains a spacious study center adjacent to the earth-science library and a conservation-recreation laboratory – all of which will greatly enrich the forestry student’s career preparation.

Reprinted from a WACC promotional brochure
when the project involved working with large, and very expensive, pieces of heavy equipment.

“The operation portion is the carrot at the end of the stick,” he declared, while describing the program’s emphasis on maintenance, as well as the operation of big machines. “Students spend a whole year … doing all the right background, maintenance and learning about power trainings and engines and everything …. That has been what I feel has made our program so successful …. The ones (students) that were here just to pull the levers, they don’t make it through the first year …. We’re not turning out ‘lever pullers’ …. We’re turning out a comprehensive-type individual … (someone who is) well-rounded.”

Learning Experience
When George H. Parkes decided to open a heavy equipment operation program at Williamsport Technical Institute, he turned to a man named Clyde Brass, who taught himself to operate the equipment on the other side of the world.

“Clyde Brass always fascinated me,” said Grant Berry Jr., a WTI counselor who went on to serve as a senior executive in the college administration. “He was a straight shooter, no-nonsense sort of individual.”

Berry shared the story of Brass’s introduction to heavy equipment and the technical institute.

“When he was 16 years old, his family owned some property in Australia and whoever had been managing the property either passed on or gave up the management or whatever, and so his father put him on a boat to Australia, and said ‘You’re manager of that property, make it work,’” Berry recalled.

Brass told Berry he was “really dumbfounded,” but he “managed to survive and got things running smoothly.”

Among the things he learned to run there were a bulldozer and a backhoe. That experience came in handy when he returned to the United States and met Parkes, who was convinced he should develop a WTI training program.

Berry said, “Clyde Brass told me was he was just flabbergasted. He said, ‘I knew how to operate a bulldozer and a little bit of operating some other machines. I didn’t know anything about how you taught … and he’s asking me to take over and establish this program.’”

When Brass voiced his concerns to Parkes, he was reminded of his father’s challenge when he embarked upon his Australian adventure.

“You learned that,” Parkes insisted. “This is just a new learning experience for you. I am confident that you can learn how to do this.”

“And so, that’s how the heavy equipment program started at the college,” Berry concluded. ☐
Covering Ground

Preparing WACC students for success in industry took high standards and personal attention, according to Eldred.

“A lot of people (in industry) have said to me, ‘We don’t know how you do this. We can handle one or two green people on the job. How do you handle 18 working at once?’”

Eldred admitted that teaching on an expansive outdoor training site was a challenge. He covered a lot of ground – compared to a college professor in a typical classroom – in order to prepare his students for jobs in the real world.

“I was basically rotating around on this 150-acre site … observing, talking with them, working much like a foreman would or a superintendent – except that I have to give them more time … because the expectation level here can’t be the same as for someone who is a journeyman-type person. You have to stop and say, ‘Now, here’s what you need to correct. You’ve done this and this, but now you need to handle this differently.’ So, days go fast,” he said.

The focus on industry standards, he explained, began each day at the start of class.

“There was a set of standards for each project …. Take, for instance, excavating a basement. It may take a student four days. It’s a progressive thing. They’ll be able to get so much done today and the last hour of class, fuel and grease the machine. Tomorrow, they come in. We have a safety conference every morning – first 15 minutes – just like they do out there on the job …. They call it ‘toolbox safety meetings.’ Then, they’ll go to work.”

Indian Park Project

More than 100 WACC students assisted in the construction of the 22-acre Indian Park in Montoursville. The project, which began in 1984, took several years to complete.

WACC heavy construction students developed and graded the playground, created parking areas, built internal roads, and enlarged an existing pond at the park, according to the Spotlight student newspaper.

Montoursville’s mayor estimated that the students’ work would save the borough approximately $200,000. “We would not have been able to generate the necessary funds for a project of this size,” said Mayor John Dorin. “We looked at the community college to do the work because we have high respect for what the college has to offer and felt that the project would benefit both parties – the borough and the college.”

The focus on industry standards … began each day at the start of class.

The Indian Park Project was started around May 11, 1984 and is expected to take two years to complete. The project will benefit more than 125 students of the College. The students will be involved in the extensive equipment to develop and grade the playground area, create parking areas, build internal roads, and enlarge the existing pond to three times its area. The pond will then be used for fishing and boating.

Edward J. Stolar, of Kulpmont, was the construction manager in charge. He said, “We were able to get the necessary funds for a project of this size because the college has so many students interested in the project.”

Montoursville's mayor estimated that the students' work would save the borough approximately $200,000. “We would not have been able to generate the necessary funds for a project of this size,” said Mayor John Dorin. “We looked at the community college to do the work because we have high respect for what the college has to offer and felt that the project would benefit both parties – the borough and the college.”
Hands-on experience made WACC students workforce-ready, Eldred said. “The construction business is a very fast-paced business,” he said. “It isn’t a ‘touchy feely’ kind of ‘feel good’ thing. You either can do it or you can’t … We’ve got all the rough edges off them by the time they graduate. Now, the construction company can take them to the next level, mold them into their company culture.”

WACC’s emphasis on providing individualized attention to students was beneficial to teachers as well as students, Eldred believed. “Normally, people that come here to teach stay. That’s because they can work within their field … and not have to be in any way intimidated by, ‘I need to produce a paper or a book or whatever,’” he insisted. “All you have to do here is produce … the student who is employable.”

Eldred’s colleague at the Earth Science Center, Dennis Fink, agreed. “This isn’t a research-based college. The faculty … dedicate their time to the students in the classroom and in laboratory situations.”

“I constantly talk about presenting your work in a professional manner …. I want you to be more professional. I want your work to be better organized. I want your work to be neater. I want your work researched – in-depth research. I want it well presented in a professional manner,” he stressed.

Fink required written reports “with title pages and short paragraphs on what the lab experience was about,” he said. “I want it presented in folders [that] look professional and are neat and well-presented. I do expect a certain level of professionalism from my students.”
A certain level of professionalism, he believed, would pay benefits for students later in life.

“(While) money isn’t necessarily a measurement of success … I’ve had students that will potentially be millionaires – or even in some cases multimillionaires … doing the things that they enjoy. There are a lot of students who establish themselves in business … We literally have students around the world … who are successful in what they do.”

Learn and Earn

WACC established a formal “cooperative education” program in 1976-77, giving students the opportunity to earn a paycheck while working for approved employers as part of their education. Federal Title XII grants provided funds to pay students’ co-op salaries.

William C. Bradshaw, who began his WACC career in 1969 as a teacher in the tile-setting department, developed the college’s first co-op program. He said Kenneth E. Carl, WACC’s president, urged him to attend a conference in North Carolina to learn how cooperative education had moved beyond high school vocational programs into college-level majors.

Carl offered the invitation, Bradshaw remembered, with a hint of sarcasm. As a high school student, WACC’s president had participated in an early Williamsport High School cooperative work experience at Lycoming Engines.

He warned Bradshaw, “I just want to tell you that, if you’re here to tell me about cooperative education, I was involved in that when you were in diapers.”

Under Bradshaw’s leadership, WACC offered the third-largest co-op program in the state, behind Drexel and Temple universities.

“We had definite objectives,” Bradshaw said. “The employer was not going to let them be there and just hang around and watch. They had to work.”

Co-op integrated academic study with related work experience and could, according to the college catalog, “be used to replace or supplement required courses within most programs.”

“We had a pretty big program and we had a number of people (from other colleges) that would come to get information on our program,” Bradshaw said.

Credit for Experience

By the mid-1980s, co-op experience could replace or supplement required courses in most WACC programs. While on co-op assignments – for 8 to 16 weeks – students worked as regular employees while receiving vocational counseling and earning academic credit.

Students chose alternating or parallel plans of study – rotating periods of full-time work and full-time study (alternating) or working part time and attending regular classes during the same semester (parallel). A summer plan allowed full-time work between semesters.

WACC also added the Advanced Placement Co-op Option that allowed students with high school co-op experience to receive advanced placement into related programs of study at the college.
“I got to thinking seriously about the number of students who would come in to our program who had spent two years at the vo-tech schools … (had) already done everything that was in the curriculum,” Bradshaw recalled. “I came up from this idea … (to) put these two programs together.”

Bradshaw wrote an application for a federal grant to fund APCO, which would allow students who came to WACC after doing co-op experiences in high school to continue work-based learning with the same employer while in college.

“It was so novel,” Bradshaw said. “It went over really well. We scored well and got the grant without any question.”

APCO benefits were offered to students from Pennsylvania area vocational-technical schools and New York schools that operated under the Board of Cooperative Educational Services.

“Finally, it got up to the point that we had agreements with vocational schools in 61 counties (including Philadelphia),” Bradshaw said.

Goals and Growth

WACC entered its second decade of operation armed with institutional goals designed to put its unique philosophy and mission into action.

- Provide equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the service area within the context of a humanistic educational environment.
- Prepare or retrain individuals for employment and advancement through a comprehensive program of career education.
- Provide services that assist secondary and postsecondary students to explore their career interests; to recognize their aptitudes; develop an educational program that best suits their needs, interests, and potential for personal growth; and to obtain employment in their chosen fields.
- Contribute to the lifelong learning opportunities of our service area through on- and off-campus educational programs in cooperation with other organizations.

Published in Williamsport Area Community College Catalog, 1978-79
Uniting academic rigor and hands-on experience provided a comprehensive educational experience that set WACC apart from other Pennsylvania community colleges.

Built on the foundation of a successful technical institute, WACC enrolled more than 90 percent of students in technical programs. According to its president, "Most community colleges would have maybe 50 percent vocational-technical, 50 percent in transfer; some 60 percent in transfer – majority in transfer. Williamsport had that turned around."

Feddersen was committed to maintaining a mission that would emphasize general education as well as applied technology.

“I don’t care what you want to become, what you want to do, if you can’t read, if you can’t write, if you don’t know how to do mathematics, you don’t have the basic skills to succeed,” he said.

Aid and Opportunity

Federal grants that provided financial aid to help families afford the cost of college expanded WACC’s recruitment efforts and led to years of enrollment growth.


The grants were renamed Pell Grants in the senator’s honor in 1980.

WACC’s director of financial aid, Grant M. Berry Jr. was determined to use the grants to recruit students to the institution, even though other area institutions had decided not to do so.

Berry said the new Basic Educational Opportunity program was discussed during a meeting with regional colleges – Bucknell, Lock Haven, Mansfield, and Lycoming. One-by-one, the college representatives said they were not interested in promoting financial aid as part of recruitment.

“Everybody pretty much took the same position on it,” Berry recalled. “When it came to me, I said, ‘Well, I’m glad to hear that … because we are going to include (it) as a central part of our recruiting approach,” he said. “We’re going to have a whole lot of students that you’re not doing anything with that we’re going to be able to recruit.”

Berry said the others “laughed up their sleeves” and, he thought they perceived him as a “know-nothing, young upstart” who was jumping aboard the wrong bandwagon. But he was convinced in its potential to attract new students to WACC.

“The intention … was to create for students and their parents an understanding that, yes, they can afford to go to college,” he said.

Berry learned that many students in the region were eligible for the grants, but the complex formula used to determine eligibility often intimidated those who could benefit most.

“We couldn’t … plug a couple of figures in and say, ‘You’re probably eligible,’” Berry lamented. So, he partnered with Chester D. Schuman, WACC’s director of admissions, to help make families more aware of the benefits.

“This encouraged a lot of people who might otherwise not have applied …. We could draw them in and at least begin to have a conversation with them,” he recalled.

WACC also developed brochures – that displayed basic financial aid benefits and explained the differences between grants (which did not have to be paid back)
and loans (which did) – and newsletters that explained financial aid processes to high school guidance counselors.

Berry said grants did not pay the entire cost of college for most students, but they “sure put a big dent in it.” WACC often supplemented grants with “work study” benefits and students secured loans with terms that were “very favorable” to cover the remaining costs.

The cost to WACC students who lived in a sponsoring school district (prior to grants and loans) was equal to one-third of the total tuition cost. The state paid one-third and the sponsoring school district (WACC had 20 sponsoring districts in 10 counties) paid one-third. Students who were eligible for federal grants and work study were left with a very manageable tuition bill.

**Blueprint for Future**

When called to give testimony before a U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education in 1975, Feddersen explained that WACC’s unique combination of general education and hands-on, technical training attracted students from far beyond its large service area.

As WACC’s enrollment and influence grew, the Feddersen administration developed a 10-year plan to build facilities that would support future growth. The first phase called for building instructional facilities for metal trades and building construction programs as well as a center to house the library, bookstore, and developmental studies.

Groundbreaking for the Learning Resources Center, Avco-Lycoming Metal Trades Center, and Carl Building Trades Center took place in Fall 1979. When the buildings were dedicated in Spring 1981, a new president was in his first days of leadership in Williamsport.

Dr. Robert L. Breuder saw the potential to build upon a strong foundation to create an institution that would become Pennsylvania’s premier technical college.

“I don’t know that (WACC) had any competition equal to it in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania,” Breuder declared. “We had programs of study … nobody else had, costly programs that required anybody else to inject a lot of capital dollars to start them up. We already had them. We had excellent faculty …. We could build off of that.”
Honoring Tradition

When WACC broke ground for a Building Trades Center in 1979, a member of the construction faculty was president of the faculty union. Carl M. Hillyard joined the college president, William H. Feddersen, in celebrating the new facility as a “blueprint” for WACC’s expansion.

With an eye to the future, WACC also honored the legacy of its founding leaders in the naming of new instructional facilities developed in “phase one” of its building program. The Carl Building Trades Center honored WACC’s first president, Kenneth E. Carl, and the Avco-Lycoming Metal Trades Center recognized the contributions of a Williamsport-based business that had partnered with the institution to train the local workforce for more than half a century.

Carl was a product of the school’s affiliation with Avco-Lycoming. He worked at the engine-building plant when he was a high school vocational student and again after he graduated from college – before he moved into higher education as a teacher, administrator, and one of the authors of the commonwealth’s Community College Act.

WACC honored its traditions not only in the naming of its facilities, but also in carrying its most respected tools from the past forward into new modern shop environments.

Hillyard expressed excitement with the modern equipment that came along with the opening of the new Carl Building Trades Center – “a couple of planers … table saw, radial arm saw … molding maker … high speed router table” – while fondly recalling one piece of quality equipment that followed the carpentry program as it moved around the campus.

“It was a Tanowitz planer – huge– and it was in the pattern-making shop when I first started teaching in ’69,” Hillyard said. “When we moved to Cromar, we brought it over …. When we moved to the BTC, we brought it over …. It was a real piece of quality … able to plane a wider board than some of the modern planers we have. You know, they bought newer planers, but they never lasted as long as Tanowitz lasted.”
State of Decay

New instructional facilities put the college on a path for expansion. But other parts of the campus also needed attention. Breuder said WACC was “in a pretty serious state of decay” when he arrived in 1981.

Victor A. Michael, a member of the electronics technology faculty, agreed. Michael began teaching in 1978 in “the old trolley barn,” which featured old steel tracks and equipment he described as “very old … wasn’t up to current standards.”

“They were still using the first, earliest transistors in the laboratory,” he recalled. “There was a lot of upgrading to do … It was an opportunity to introduce new things.”

Michael operated commercial radio businesses before becoming a teacher. He said if he had interviewed for a regular industry job and found such poor working conditions, he would have turned the job down, but he accepted the teaching position at WACC.

“I wanted to be teaching so bad that all that other stuff didn’t matter to me. What mattered to me was the chance … to walk into a classroom and … impart information that I had. I still remember the first thing I did the very first day that I walked into the very first class. I wrote on the board, ‘Today is the first day of the rest of your life.’ While I meant it for students, I also meant it for myself because that was the first day of the rest of my life … the college was just the place that I wanted to be.”

Magic Little Box

Revising the electronics technology curriculum – “just to get it up to something approaching the newer, modern technology” – was one of Victor A. Michael’s first tasks.

One innovation – that Michael called “the magic little box” – changed the course of history, as well as the curriculum.

The microprocessor – a miniature electronic device that could perform as the central processing unit in digital devices – led to the development of calculators, microcomputers, and “intelligent” devices, ranging from automated industrial and hospital equipment to banks’ automated teller machines.

“Here was a whole new thing,” Michael recalled. “How am I going to learn about it? What is a microprocessor? I don’t even have any idea what they do.”

The rookie teacher – who went on to earn the college’s top Master Teacher honor – drew upon his experience and learned the new technology in stages.

“You have to reduce it down to its smallest component,” Michael said. “Break it up into small enough pieces … start off with some very basic simple things first and then you add to it … keep adding, keep adding. That’s what I did … I just worked and figured out what a microprocessor really does.”

Michael’s mastery of the device benefited students and area manufacturing companies, which sent their engineers to WACC to learn the new technology.

“I also did course work as night classes for all the engineers at Sylvania,” he recalled. “They were in the same boat. They had been working on other things. Now, all of a sudden, they have to learn what microprocessors are about. So I offered courses, night classes, in the continuing-education area and developed a lot of programming in that area.”
Technology Advances

WACC’s commitment to provide hands-on instruction on industry-standard equipment – to give graduates an edge in the job market and support workforce development – demanded the introduction of new equipment on a regular basis as technologies emerged. This was true not only in industrial courses, but also in programs related to office technologies.

“The great advantage was when IBM came out with their electric typewriter,” said William H. Homisak, who taught WTI classes related to business and merchandising before becoming WACC’s first dean of continuing education.

“The whole technology changed … the typewriters, the calculators. I remember buying the first hand calculator and I paid about $285 for it. I think right now you could buy it for $2. That is the way this technology has grown.”

Learning to use new technology, in order to be able to share it with students in the classroom, was important for WACC faculty. Often, teachers learned to use new tools – and shared what they learned with their faculty colleagues – just before presenting the tools to their classes.

In 1978, her first semester at WACC, faculty member Patricia Shoff Rambo found herself offering instruction on word-processing equipment that she had never used.

“I received my schedule, which included a section of Typing II,” she said. “No problem – until I discovered the course also included the teaching of at least four different types of word processors that I have never seen before!”

Rambo described word processors as “relatively new in the classroom” at that time. She had limited experience on a different model processor, so she turned to a fellow faculty member who was teaching another section of the Typing II course.

“Alex Bailey (was) the master of every piece of equipment he ever laid eyes on,” Rambo insisted. “In addition, Lex had a photographic memory, and I most assuredly did not. Always considerate and helpful, he suggested we wait a few weeks before introducing the word processing equipment into the course. He then proceeded to patiently demonstrate each machine and answer my plethora of questions.”

The array of equipment in WACC classrooms often depicted the evolution of the industry, with older equipment standing side-by-side with the latest models.

“Communications, broadcasting, solid state …. Industrial research, design, space applications, telemetry, ultrasonics, 2-way radio, color TV were a part of the electronics curriculum.”
"When I arrived, the classrooms were serviceable, but rather stark," Rambo said. "There were basic electric typewriters and a variety of stand-alone word processors, such as the Memory Typewriters, the Mag Cards I and II, the Displaywriters, and the dreaded Office Systems 6. A huge mainframe took up most of the space in the lone computer room."

Exposure to equipment that represented generations of innovations in industry provided students with a foundation from which to build true mastery of their craft and an appreciation of the advances made over time.

"Today’s students have probably never heard of the business machines that were used: 10-key adding machines, rotary calculators, and comptometers," Rambo said. "Yet we were fortunate to have such equipment because it was the latest available, with the exception perhaps of the comptometer. If you have never attempted to execute a complicated multiplication problem on that machine – using all fingers of both hands on the keys, only to have the machine jam near the end – you have missed an opportunity to develop patience, or not!"

Calculations and Explorations

Technology influenced general education as well as business and applied technology classes. The introduction of the calculator brought a revolution to the mathematics department.

Bowers remembered, "We started out with the Texas Instrument TI 81 .... The guru at the time of graphing calculators was Jack Murphy (a member of the WACC math department faculty) .... He shared information with people and developed handouts and modules of instruction for both the students and the faculty. So I learned from Jack."

The calculator, Bowers said, made it possible to use real-world data without the need to "mess around with horrendous calculations."

"With the advent of the graphing calculator, it’s very easy to take many different problems in many different settings and explore them numerically, explore them graphically," he explained. "One of the downfalls of the graphing calculators .... You can say, ‘Oh, I don’t need to know anything here. I need a graph. There it is.’ .... What the grapher is doing is trying to give you a shape of a predicted function, but it’s very limited."

The limitations had particular implications in applied technology. Bowers stressed that many fields of study – including those related to engineering technologies – required greater accuracy than a calculator’s approximation can supply.

"The grapher, in most cases, gives you a numerical approximation to the answer," the professor cautioned. "Students think, ‘There’s the answer’ ... the exact answer. It is if it happens to be a rational number or an
integer; but if it is an irrational number, the grapher gives you an approximation .... It's an aid. It certainly allows you to check your calculations; but if you want an exact answer, you need to know the algebraic process."

"This is why we can't just throw away all the things we make (students) learn - the theoretical and the applied procedures," Bowers insisted, "Those are the only sure ways that you get an exact answer."

He provided a specific example: "If you're building a bridge for me and you're doing stress analysis and you're doing a hundred calculations, I'm not going to go over your bridge if you've 'approximated' the answer a hundred times."

The calculator, according to Bowers, is a tool to enhance the application of a theory - not an excuse not to learn the theory.

"This is not the magic solution that allows you not to understand mathematics .... This is a piece of technology that will enhance your understanding and give you the ability to check on things that you either believe are true or what you've done on paper suggests are true."

Technology tools, like the calculator, the professor said, provide teachers and students more freedom to explore and learn by doing.

"I very much believe if people participate and experience mathematics, it enhances the retention of that skill and it enhances their understanding," he concluded.

**Huge Hammer**

Job opportunities changed as technology eliminated many tasks that once required paper, pencil, and calculations of the human brain.

"In my opinion, the huge hammer that came through is when the PC was born in the '80s," Landers said, noting that computers replaced human functions in many career fields, including accounting.

"In effect, the personal computer and the software that was developed - such as QuickBooks and Peachtree - means you don't have to have big, huge, or many mainframe computers doing your work .... It reduced the number of people ... required to do that job in a business."

The emergence of computers in the workplace also created opportunities for many individuals who took WACC courses focused on the new technologies.

"From a student's point of view, if you have those skills ... you become a much more employable person," Landers said. "You become more valuable to your employer .... You may be able to do the work of two or three people that didn't have those skills."

Landers said he stressed the importance of computer skills in classes and even required students to use the computer in final exams.

"I had become famous (or infamous) for the three-hour final exam where the students would ... prepare (a) tax return for a client. I used to do that with paper and pencil but, as we introduced the tax software, they had to do it using tax software," he explained. "I commandeered a couple of computer classrooms.

They had three hours .... When they left, they had these dazed looks .... We always hoped that the system wouldn't crash ... You never knew what was going to happen."
Big Breakthrough

The “big breakthrough,” in terms of using technology in the general education classroom, according to Daniel J. Doyle, happened in the late 1980s when instructional media began to enhance traditional lectures with visual images.

“I think for the students at this college, many of whom select the college for hands-on experiential learning, my guess is … the vast numbers of them are visual learners,” Doyle said.

Doyle and faculty colleagues – Regis C. Kohler, in radiography, and Philip H. Henning, in heating, ventilation, and air conditioning – were the first WACC faculty who earned release time – funded through a Title III grant – to introduce instructional technology to their classrooms.

“I can remember when I first started using projection (instead of writing on the blackboard or using an overhead),” Doyle said. “Having the text there and talking of that idea, walking up to the screen … For me, it changed the dynamic …. The word that symbolized the idea was here, and you could almost put your hand on it.”

Grant M. Berry Jr., who was the chief development officer responsible for securing the Title III grant that provided $500,000 per year for five years, said, “We decided that we would have a three-semester release for the faculty involved. First semester would be for them to become familiar with the equipment and with the principles of computer-assisted instruction and begin the development of their own application. Second, they would complete … development of their own application and begin some pre-testing with students. And the third was that they would go into full implementation.”

A benefit for participating faculty was that each received a desktop computer – at a time when virtually no faculty had one.

Mastering Skills

Preparing students for a changing workplace was the primary goal of WACC faculty.

Michael, who taught electronics, said advice he received early in his teaching career from the English faculty’s Veronica Muzic helped him organize his lectures in a way that challenged students to master individual skills and increase their understanding of a subject.

He described methodically distributing learning objectives and using quizzes to assess students’ progress to make sure they had mastered the material before progressing through the lessons.

“I divided the course up into units. I would pass out the first unit … with approximately 10 or 12 learning objectives …. In the next class period, they got … short quizzes on the first one or two objectives that were on that objective sheet …. Then I gave what we called the ‘unit test,’ where all of those objectives were being tested,” he said. “At the end of the semester, I gave a final exam that went back over every one of those units …. I made the exam count 50 percent of their grade …. I made the point that you need to know this if you wanted to work in electronics.”

“What we’re studying … is not something you need to learn just for this week and then, once you pass the test, you don’t need to know it anymore,” he told students. “The things we’re doing, you’ll need to know for the rest of your life.”

“The things we’re doing, you’ll need to know for the rest of your life.”
Illustration Roots

WACC faculty stressed lifelong learning and many took their own advice – learning emerging technologies and exploring related fields of study.

When Patrick D. Murphy joined the WACC faculty in 1979, he had a liberal and fine arts education and experience working as a commercial artist.

He was hired to teach a new program in advertising art and a more popular, well-established technical illustration program. Both programs were offered through WACC’s industrial division, which also included welding, machining, and printing programs.

“I knew nothing at the time about technical illustration, which is basically industrial-based illustration – pipe fittings, motors … different pieces and parts that would often times end up in parts manuals,” Murphy admitted.

He studied textbooks on technical illustration left behind by his predecessor, the late Walter K. Hartman. He also received advice and support from students who had begun their studies under Hartman.

“They were extremely bright people,” he said. “They had to take two semesters of algebra … semester of ‘trig’ … a lot of drafting … board drafting because the computer didn’t come into its own yet …. They’d show me what they were doing and how they were doing it.”

Illustrators and Elevator Operators

Eventually, Murphy gained enough confidence and knowledge to edit technical illustration textbooks and do freelance work in the field – “usually industry or industrial-type printing manuals” – before computers made the field obsolete.

“Technical illustrators went the way of the elevator operators, so to speak, because of the computer,” he said. “Axonometric views, angles, different angles of objects and so forth rotated in space …. The computer could now do that through CAD systems – computer-aided drafting. Those projections that used to be done by hand … went by the wayside fairly quickly.”

Focus in Murphy’s classes went from industrial illustrations to the type of artwork created by professionals working for advertising agencies or organizations that created in-house materials. Access to WACC’s in-house printing department proved to be a real asset for his students.

“Part of the strength of the program at the time … was that the students had to take the graphic arts courses, in things like the process camera, typesetting … color separations and so forth …. This really gave them a nice technical background along with the artistic design background.”

Murphy studied along with his students to support his overall knowledge of the industry.

“I audited the courses in typography and process camera with Dale Metzker and Harold Newton respectively. It was interesting,” he said.
Eye, Hand, Brain, Computer

As computers became more prevalent, Murphy noted, art faculty were challenged to incorporate the technology into the creative design process to enhance students’ learning.

“It's still design … this marriage between the pieces and the parts, the hand, the eye, the brain, the computer,” he said. “The eyes, the hands, and the brain were a constant …. Intellectually, we (faculty) had to figure out: What is that? What is that coupling? What is that narration between those and how does that work?”

“We found that those students who were adept with the hands … which is the eye and the mind coming out, manifestation with the hand … those people were talented, not only this way, but when they moved to a computer, their design skills followed through. Those people who struggled with the hand, the eye, the mind, the brain struggled on the computer, too.”

As technology grew, Murphy was even more convinced that students needed both general education and hands-on, applied technology to be successful.

“When you teach a student, you need to realize that the technology’s going to change rapidly,” he declared, “The important thing is that you teach these people critical thinking, teach these people the skills to be able to make these changes.”

An important change for WACC’s art and design programs occurred in the mid-1980s, when the program moved from the Engineering and Design Technology division into Integrated Studies, which merged communications and English, math, history, social science, science, and related programs into a new entity.

“Long range, it (the move to Integrated Studies) became a good thing …. The area of advertising art, graphic design was more aligned with the liberal arts than it was with industrial design,” Murphy said.

Nude Sense

Patrick D. Murphy – whose championing of the hands-on experience was equaled by his commitment to the liberal arts – made a controversial move early in his WACC career. He requested permission to bring nude models into his drawing classes.

“I wanted to introduce life drawing and working from the nude, which is what I did all the way through school …. That was part of my education,” Murphy said.

He met some resistance from the administration, but ultimately gained approval for the request.

“I had to prepare a written statement – rationale – and deliver it to Ed Watters, who was still the academic dean, with copies to Paul McQuay, who supervised the art department. Paul did not stand in my way on this; Ed was reluctant about it.”

Murphy said his written rationale for the course was kept on file for some time. In it, he said, he “went back historically in (explaining) how important the nude was artistically …. I quoted things like Sir Kenneth Clark The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form … the Greeks and so forth.”

Years later, he reflected upon his once-controversial request.

“In retrospect, I realize that it may have – or may not have been – that important in a commercial art program to do that. But I felt that it was – in the liberal sense, in an artistic sense – an important aspect and should be part of the education of these students.”

“It’s still design… this marriage between the pieces and the parts, the hand, the eye, the brain, the computer.”
Changing Lives

Many students entering WACC in the 1970s and '80s were “nontraditional” in age and gender. In addition to Vietnam veterans, the college attracted men and women who were facing life changes that included divorce, single parenting, and jobs lost as a result of factory closings.

Patricia Shoff Rambo explained, “Recessions meant higher unemployment. There were more nontraditional students attending college to train for new careers, and they were able to bring the voice of experience to the classroom.”

“They were able to bring the voice of experience to the classroom.”
Wanted: women for the machine shop

ANNA D. WEITZ and
BARBARA A. GILMOUR

"I feel like I'm a stronger person since this program. I feel that I'm able to create and do things and I look at the world differently. Now I look at things and wonder how they're made. Like, when my sewing machine breaks down, I think, 'oh boy' and dig in there and work on it."

"My friends think it's great. They even want me to make things for them. And you know, I'm really proud of a hammer I made."

"My sister said, 'Most people want yarn to make an afghan or something, my sister wants a toolbox.'"

These people have had a common experience. They've all completed the 20-weeks machine operator training program, originally targeted for women and minorities. The training sessions were held at the Williamsport Area Community College (WACC) in Williamsport, Pa. The program's goal was to train students to be operators in a machine shop, running such equipment as drill presses, lathes, and milling machines.

The program was initially funded by a grant from the Pennsylvania Bureau of Vocational Education with money available through CETA, the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act. Public Law 93-203. It has been

coordinated by the Clinton-Lycoming Counties CETA Consortium. Working in conjunction with the local Bureau of Employment Security (BES), CETA conducted an industrial needs assessment in 1976. Industries including the Lycoming Division of the AVCO Corporation, the area's largest employer of machine operators, had a need for skilled female and minority employees to help them meet their federal affirmative action goals. Although AVCO did not automatically hire all the graduates, the majority of those employed have started there, usually beginning work at about $6.75 per hour.

The Williamsport Area Community College, an occupationally oriented institution, provided the key ingredients in establishing the program: a well-equipped training facility and staff. Since the college regularly offers programs in machinist general, toolmaking technology, and tool design, it had the machinery and the teaching expertise. WACC designed the specific curriculum, provided an instructor, and offered general guidance to the program. The college also allowed students access to the school's library and child-care center. After the first class, WACC added developmental and tutorial support for those who needed it.

The first class began in November, 1976, with three men and 17 women. Since then, three other classes have been completed and a fifth will end in September, 1978. Originally, all screening was done by BES personnel who administered four sections of the Standard Aptitude Test Battery to check for math
I like to work around machinery and I wanted a trade so I could get a good job. I haven't worked that much, but I need to get a job to help my husband. We have six children and it's really hard.

Another said, "I get a kick out of running the machines," and a third stated that the work "just felt natural."

The first class had a high drop-out rate. Of the 20 who began the course, 12 dropped out. The eight remaining women proved to themselves and others that females could succeed in this type of program. None actually completed their training; they were hired by a local industry a few weeks before the program was scheduled to end.

ability, manual dexterity, and discernment of spatial relationships. Beginning with the second class, all applicants were also interviewed by CETA before being accepted into the program.

Initially it was difficult to get people interested in the class. It was new and there was no guarantee of a job after the 20-weeks investment of time and energy. Additionally, many of the women were unsure of what a machine operator does and whether or not they could handle the work.

Although women are traditionally characterized as being nonmechanical, a number of the participants in the program indicated they had previous mechanical interests.

My husband and I are forever changing motors and things like that. I really love it — I don't care whether I get dirty or not.

"I like to work around machinery and I wanted a trade so I could get a good job."
The positive experiences of the first class—especially their success in obtaining jobs—made subsequent recruitment for the program much easier. Each successive class attracted more women who heard about the program from a friend or relative. By the fourth class, 60 people applied for 20 openings.

Because of the high drop-out rate in the first class, interviews with applicants became a more important aspect of the screening process. Linda Clipper, CETA training coordinator, indicated that while SATB test scores were important, her staff also tried to determine in the interview the applicant's familiarity with and interest in the work involved. Motivation to actually complete the program was also important. As those directing the program gained experience, the selection of applicants improved and the attrition rate declined. By the completion of the fourth class, only two of the six men and none of the 14 women had dropped out.

For women who are the sole support of their families, the high wages are the greatest incentive to complete the program and begin work.

I have to work; I have two children to support. So I really need a man's job.

If you have to work—and I do—you might as well get paid well for it. Why work for two or three dollars an hour when you can get six or seven?

The group’s previous work experiences are varied. Tending bar, factory work, clerical work, insurance sales, dealing in antiques, actuarial work, and construction are some of the jobs at which the participants had worked. When asked to compare machine work to their past jobs, the women were enthusiastic about their new career. One, comparing the work to a previous job in a sewing factory, said:

I had one of those jobs once, you drive yourself crazy. These machines are good—they don't rattle apart.

"...I'm able to create and do things and I look at the world differently."
"I get a kick out of running the machines."

Another said:

I haven’t worked since 1966, except for going out into the fields and picking tomatoes. I worked once in a factory — I was a shoe lacer. But I’ve been a housewife for 14 years. I quit school after the eighth grade, but I always dreamed of getting more education.

While a few of the participants have taken courses beyond high school, the majority had only a 12th-grade education. Some never completed high school, but quit after the eighth grade.

Machine operation requires a solid ability in basic mathematics, including facility with decimals and fractions. For some of the participants the necessary mathematics was the most difficult part of the program, but a tutor was provided to work with these students. The additional help made the difference between success and failure for those who had weak math backgrounds and those who had been away from school for a number of years.

Math was the hardest part, because I never knew how to change a fraction into a decimal or vice versa, but now it just seems so simple... I wouldn’t have made it through without the math tutoring.

A strength of the program was the emphasis on learning through hands-on experience. Theory classes were emphasized in the first few weeks, but soon the eight hours a day were primarily spent operating machines. Students learned by completing individual tasks and assigned projects.

It takes me a long, long time to read a paragraph and get it and remember it and be able to use it. The books don’t make a lot of sense until you actually use it. You can sit there and read about the reaming machine, but until you have experience drilling holes, it doesn’t make any sense at all.

During the school year the machine-operator students were in the same shop area as the regular WACC students. An obvious difference was that most of the machine-operator students were female and many were older than 30 — certainly not typical for a college machine shop.

BES, CETA, and WACC officials all consider the program a success. It provided unemployed people with a highly marketable skill while assisting area industries with their needs. According to Paul McQuay, director of WACC’s engineering and design technologies division, the program has directly benefited the college, as well as provided a valuable community service. McQuay cites increased contact and cooperation with local industry, improved utilization of facilities, and progress in breaking down stereotypes about women’s ability in this field as major benefits.

The ultimate success of the program, however, can only be judged by the reaction of the participants. One member of the fourth class summed up the over-all reaction when she said: “It’s the opportunity of a lifetime — for underprivileged people, or those with no skills — for anybody.”
Nontraditional Diversity

Davie Jane Gilmour, who joined the faculty in 1977 and rose through the administration ranks to become president 20 years later, remembered that one of her first dental hygiene classes “had 18-year-olds in it and it had 40-year-olds … a real diversity of backgrounds.”

Muzic said a wide range of adults — including “the recovering HIV community, divorced women, prisoners, and Vietnamese students sponsored by church organizations” — introduced “a whole different level of experience” on campus.

“They were almost more like colleagues in many ways than students,” she said. “That whole experience … was fascinating. The ‘nontraditionals’ ultimately were teaching as much as we were …. They were intolerant of bad behavior. They were wonderful.”

Rambo agreed, “My favorite classes always consisted of a mix of traditional and nontraditional students.”

Doyle suggested that younger students benefited from their connections with “adult students who could share from their experiences …. The students could hear from their ‘peers’ and not hear from me. Those were some very dynamic forces.”

A class of young and older students provided Doyle with one of his best classroom memories.

“I was teaching Introduction to Philosophy … in the trolley barn in a small classroom. It was an evening class and I had a mixed group of students — a small group of adult and traditional-aged students …. We sat in sort of a circle or semi-circle …. A student asked a question. Another student answered it and another student commented and another …. They went on for at least half an hour before I said anything. For me, that is one of the most magical moments in my teaching experience, where we truly were a community of learners.”

The spirit of community often extended beyond the classroom for nontraditional students, especially many women who lost jobs as factory workers when their plants closed.

“They were hungry,” Muzic emphasized. “Many of them also lacked any support system, so they became one another’s … a cohesive grouping occurred.”

She described the women as “super bright, many of them” and “not afraid to tell you if you were off the money.”

“I’ll never forget, I was teaching women … at night 7-10 …. I overprepared, as usual, because it was three hours …. I started out with a lecture that went for a solid 40 minutes during which I used all the jargon like ‘objective correlative,’ all the stuff. I finally stopped at 40 minutes and I said, ‘Are there any questions?’ One of them looked at me and she said, ‘Is this going to be the way it goes from now on?’”

Muzic, who became WACC’s first Master Teacher in 1982, said she adjusted her approach to respect the students’ ages and years of experience.

“It became group work,” she said. “At 10:30, there would be the knock on the door – one of the custodians reminding us that he was locking the building and we needed to get out of there …. I should have paid to teach that class instead of being paid to teach … the quality of the work, the respect for one another, the ease with which they worked together without any self-consciousness, their willingness to take direction and advice.”
Women’s Series

Prominent authors visited the campus in the 1980s as part of the Women’s Series. The series was an academic and extracurricular activity that grew out of the Women’s Forum, a group of students, faculty, and staff that joined together to support women’s initiatives.

The authors’ series was coordinated by Veronica M. Muzic, professor of English, and JoAnn R. Fremiotti, director of student activities.

Among the artists featured were Maya Angelou, Alice Walker, Marge Piercy, Lynne Sharon Schwartz, Carolyn Kizer, Nikki Giovanni, June Jordan, Marsha Norman, Judith Viorst, Yolanda King (daughter of Martin Luther King Jr.) and U.S. Rep. Pat Schroeder.

Students, faculty and staff, and residents of the local community were invited to participate. In addition to on-campus readings by the authors, the series included classes, led by Muzic, to introduce the authors and their works prior to their visits.

The popular classes were notorious for going well past scheduled meeting times. Participants were so eager to discuss the authors and their works that Muzic had to limit discussion to stay on schedule.

In a memo issued to “Women Writers Seminar(ians)” in preparation for the final class of Spring 1988, she told them to choose a primary point of discussion in advance of class to make the best use of time.

“No shilly-shallying,” she urged, “I promise this session will not be another marathon.”

Muzic wrote in 1988, “The Series – the authors-as-people, the literature, the class, the opportunity to ‘talk’ books – is wonderful!”

In addition to reading works by the visiting authors, participants kept journals describing their impressions before and after the on-campus readings and workshops. One journal entry described a student’s impressions after meeting author and activist June Jordan.

“When I met her at the hotel, she was reading the Sunday Grit [a national publication then published in Williamsport], ‘Grit, I really like that name,’ she told me. On the drive to campus she asked where I lived, what my job involved, what people ‘do’ on Sundays in the Williamsport area. She wasn’t making small talk; she was asking questions and listening to the answers. … When I said that I dream of someday being a full-time writer, she got very excited – and very encouraging. I’ll carry her words – Never listen to anyone who says ‘no’. Only listen to those who say ‘yes’ – with me always.”

Individuals throughout the campus and community were inspired by the rare opportunity to meet internationally renowned writers in Central Pennsylvania. The Women’s Series strengthened the institution’s longtime commitment to support the cultural activities in the Williamsport area.
Vocational Education Grants

At WACC, the most important sources of funding for new instructional equipment were the state’s vocational education grants.

Grant M. Berry Jr. – who took the college’s success in acquiring grants to a new level as chief development officer – admitted grants “aren’t fun to write” and faculty were hesitant to put in the time required to develop a successful grant application. But, one department’s success served as an impetus for encouraging more faculty participation.

The electrical faculty, led by Robert G. Snauffer, wanted to add programmable logic controller equipment to prepare students for emerging job opportunities when automation was coming into play in industry. They worked with Berry – who admitted he had no understanding of the technology at the start of the project – to write a successful grant application.

As a result of their success, Berry said, Snauffer “talked about it all the time,” encouraging faculty in other departments to develop grant applications for vocational equipment.

“These were times when money was tight …. There was no money for equipment. We were barely keeping a roof over our heads in some respects,” Berry recalled. “So, I finally got to tell them, ‘Look, if you want to improve your program … I got a budget that’s guaranteed in terms of grant money that I can get. If you want to come, work with me, I’ll do everything I can to help you get it.”

Berry said he found the equipment grants very gratifying, because he understood their impact on WACC’s working classrooms and on students’ success in find jobs after graduation.

“As we became more and more successful and people realized more and more that it was a good route to go …. It gave me a sense of satisfaction because I was kind of a catalyst in this process,” he said.

Community Education

A major function of the community college was providing “low-cost lifetime learning opportunities, cultural and personal enrichment, recreation and career training or upgrading for adults” as well as “special training, employee upgrading, or other educational programs on or off campus designed to meet the needs of community organizations, professional associations, business, industry, institutions, prisons, and government agencies.”

The WACC college catalog described its noncredit, community education offerings as “short, hourly mini-courses and career courses … workshops, lectures, seminars, contract programs, consultations and conferences to meet the immediate needs of the communities served.”

These included career training programs for industries, police and fire departments, and prisons. Courses included business and computer sciences, technical and trade areas, personal development, and homemaking.

WACC’s first dean of continuing education, William H. Homisak, had a long history with the community programs. He served as evening school coordinator for the Williamsport Area School District before the technical institute was established in 1941.

“When we were with the school district, a lot of it was hobby courses,” he explained.
“When we became a community college … my contacts in industry would say, ‘Bill, we need a course ….’ I would say, ‘Who do you recommend to teach it?’” Homisak would hire “real technicians or craftsmen from industry (who) were pleased to come on board and teach.” He said it was a real advantage for students to learn from the experts.

“I would probably be a typical classroom book instructor,” he said. “But these fellows could tell them exactly how it was.”

**Industrial Training**

Most classes met on campus one night a week for three hours. Others were offered in the workplace. Industrial training programs were arranged by a variety of companies, from Pennsylvania Power and Light Co. to the United Iron Workers.

“One of the greatest opportunities I had was to visit any plant, pretty much, in this 10-county area (and) other plants throughout the state,” Homisak said. “I got a chance to see what the plants were doing. When they asked for training, I had an idea of what they needed …. The rapport was good.”

To meet immediate workforce needs, industrial courses often “left out the math and the physics (required in credit classes) unless it was directly related with that career,” he said.

Homisak recalled a time when he assured officials from an area company that WACC could train industrial welders in a very short period of time.

“You hire 20 people and give them to us, and I’ll have our welding shop train them within one month,” he promised. WACC delivered and the company was able to open a new welding shop.

“I know from an academic point of view, we were not operating the way you normally would,” Homisak revealed. “If somebody said they needed something, we stepped right in … in a week or two weeks, we were right there, getting started. They knew that we could serve them.”

In addition to short-term classes to address immediate workplace needs, WACC also offered an associate degree in Industrial Management, designed to prepare graduates for supervisory roles in industry.
Back to the Farm

Years after the closing of the agriculture program, WACC returned to farming for a brief period in the 1980s.

Williamsport Technical Institute era operated a successful agriculture program that included hands-on activity at the Brock Farm near Muncy for many years. But, agricultural programming was phased out due to a lack of student interest in the early years of the community college.

When the commonwealth decided to close the Danville State Farm, WACC was invited to take over the farm property, which included 120 dairy cows and 60 head of young stock, in order to offer instructional programming.

The dairy herd management program began on Aug. 26, 1983. The 32-week program was offered as the College’s Earth Science division, which operated from the Schneebeli Earth Science Center, near Allenwood.


Prison Program

One of WACC’s most unusual community education requests came from the Lewisburg Federal Penitentiary.

“They wanted some of their minimum-security people to come up and take welding (on) Saturdays,” Homisak recalled. “I said, ‘No problem. You provide a guard. We’ll keep them locked up in the welding shop’ … We didn’t have anybody run away.”

There were times when Homisak would spot a prisoner downtown when he should have been in class. The dean would call the prison and request a guard to pick up the prisoner.

“They had to … abide by what the rules were,” he insisted.

Barbara A. Danko, who joined the staff as coordinator of continuing education in 1980 and became director in 1983-84, remembered the prison program started to phase out after Congress began to deny federal prisoners the right to apply for Pell grants.

“The primary program we were doing at Lewisburg (at that time) was a dental tech program,” she said. “But that was pretty much gone pretty early in my career here, although I do remember seeing the Allenwood (Federal Penitentiary) inmates on campus – because they made them dress in a certain way.”

Homisak remembered some Allenwood prisoners complained about having to wear their khaki uniforms. He told them that they were not alone, because so many students who were military veterans also were wearing uniforms on campus.
North Campus

In 1983, WACC acquired an empty Wellsboro Area School District building and opened its North Campus to offer credit and noncredit classes that would support workforce development in the Northern Tier. One of the first – and longest-running – programs offered was in practical nursing.

Credit programming eventually ended, but the college continued to offer noncredit personal enrichment and workforce development courses from the site – along Route 6 near Wellsboro – until 2012, when the property was sold and practical nursing and other noncredit classes moved into the Wellsboro Area School District building.

Grant M. Berry Jr., who helped to secure initial funding to open the North Campus, reflected on its history: “A lot of people who might not otherwise have gotten an education – place-bound people … who were so tied to that community that … they wouldn’t leave – got a good occupational opportunity …. Local organizations and institutions benefited as a result … . We did one heck of a lot of good in a community that would have never had that resource otherwise.”

20,000 People

Continuing education grew to have a substantial, positive impact on WACC’s revenue. Noncredit classes were under the auspices of the Center for Lifelong Education, which operated under the concept that “learning takes place from the very beginning to the very end – all across your life,” Danko explained.

She said the concept was developed at WACC by her predecessor, Russell C. Mauch.

“He wanted to come up with something that showed that we were doing things for all ages (so people) would say, ‘Oh, I’m not too old’ or ‘I’m not too young,’ …. That was what he was trying to promote.”

“We probably had about 20,000 people through our programs in any given year,” she said.

“We had about 5,000 people … through the personal enrichment side and … about 5,000 … through business and industry. A lot of that was in cooperation with local industry … (and) a little farther out of our local area, depending where the companies were and what kind of training they wanted. Sometimes we sent instructors to them. Sometimes they brought people to campus.”

An activity known as Fire College brought significant revenue to the college and doubled continuing education’s enrollment figures.

“We had about 10,000 that went through fire science,” Danko recalled. “That covered the State of Pennsylvania …. We had a relationship with the fire academy, the Pennsylvania State Fire Academy in Lewistown. We worked very closely with them. They had very strict courses. They had objectives that had to be met. Their training was a significant amount of hours. You don’t learn how to use self-contained breathing apparatus in an eight-hour day. You have to do it over a period of time and there were tests and practices …. So that generated a large amount of revenue for the college.”
Workplace Computers

Twenty employees of Avco-Lycoming were the first students from the local business sector to take computer training courses at WACC, according to the Spotlight student newspaper. The first classes were held in Fall 1984 in the new Hager Lifelong Education Center; the company had contributed funds to help build the center.

Introduction to Microcomputers, which offered an introduction to the keyboard and basic computer functions, was taught by William T. Ward, a software/device specialist at WACC. Employees of Avco’s personnel, purchasing, accounting, production control, sales, engineering, service, and manufacturing engineering departments were enrolled.

Avco-Lycoming, then the Williamsport division of Avco Corp., had a long history of involvement with the institution. Students from Williamsport’s vocational-technical program participated in work-study programs with the company, formerly known as Lycoming Engines, early in the 20th century; WACC’s first president, Kenneth E. Carl, was among the students who worked for the company in that capacity.

WACC also developed microcomputer instruction courses for other businesses and industries in the area including Frito-Lay, Brodart, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, GTE Sylvania, and James V. Brown Library.

Try Something New

In addition to fire science and business/industry courses, WACC offered a wide variety of classes to address public interests – from finding employment to flower arranging.

“We did a ‘dress for success’ to help people who were going back into the job market,” Danko said. “We did some symposiums … (on) interview skills, writing a resume … getting people back in the job force.”

The noncredit classes offered people a chance to “try something” new and discover “Am I going to like this? Would I be able to extend it further to something that would be a job – possibly part time, full time – or just a hobby,” Danko explained.

“Sometimes you don’t know until you try. Something looks like it might be really great … and when you get into it … you don’t have the talent for it. Those noncredit courses gave people that option … without (needing to) get into something credit,” she said.

Many WACC faculty who taught credit courses by day also taught noncredit classes in the evenings. Danko named a number of regular faculty experts who led community education classes including: Ann Miglio (food), Max Ameigh (ceramics), Pat Murphy (art), Jim Fox (welding), Al Hauser (machining), and Chris Fink (flower arranging).
Reservations Required

One Master Teacher’s passion led to the successful launch of a fine-dining restaurant on campus in 1984. President Robert L. Breuder described Ann E. Miglio’s efforts that captured his attention and led to the planning for Le Jeune Chef restaurant.

“When I first came to Williamsport, the culinary program was in the Klump and Ann Miglio … was cooking in one classroom and serving in another classroom. She was so great, so passionate … . She was just everything that the college was at that time in terms of great teaching and learning.

Miglio announced the idea for serving dinners as part of the instructional food and hospitality program in 1978. A Spotlight student newspaper article offered the following details on the first student-prepared meals.

Quantity food classes will prepare dinner every Monday and Wednesday night in front of Room 107, Klump Academic Center. Dietetic and food and hospitality students will prepare and serve dinner from 5:30-6:30. The dinner will consist of a main dish, soup, vegetable, salad, and beverage, all for $2. Dessert is not included. Reservations should be made three days in advance … . Anyone interested in making reservations or requests can contact Mrs. Miglio in Room 107 … or sign the sheet posted there.

“Dinners are prepared by these students as experience and no profit is made,” Miglio said. She issued a special invitation for campus clubs to attend and offered an adjacent room (ACC, 105) for groups to meet and dine.

Miglio, who was named Master Teacher in 1987, recalled, “Originally my greatest challenge was an outdated and inadequate kitchen and no dining facility … . After construction of our new building, we worked in great laboratories and served in an elegant dining room.”

She said James E. Logue, a member of the English faculty known for sharing his love for and knowledge of fine food and wine, helped her make a crucial decision. “He helped me name the restaurant.”

Miglio also fondly remembered the day WACC’s president promised to build a first-rate facility to showcase the culinary program.

“Dr. Breuder came in to compliment us and, after seeing the crowded facility (in the ACC), told me to start planning a new facility and promised to make it come to fruition. I learned to think BIG,” she said.

The grand opening of Le Jeune Chef restaurant was held on Oct. 1, 1984; a sneak preview was offered to the campus community on Sept. 27.

Doreen W. Shope, a member of the business administration faculty, was the restaurant’s first customer. She said, “The restaurant is a wonderful idea. It has excellent food, the atmosphere is nice, and the price is absolutely unbeatable. I intend to be a regular patron of the restaurant. I would compare this restaurant to the finest restaurants in Williamsport.”

At its opening, the restaurant was operated by 8 postsecondary students and 10 students enrolled in WACC’s secondary vocational program. The students worked under the direction of Judith M. Patschke, secondary instructor, and Howard R. Mihan, postsecondary instructor.

Lunch was served on weekdays between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Dinners, initially served only on Monday, were so well received that reservations were required and plans were announced to add Wednesday and Thursday dinners the next semester. A catering class also began to offer services through Le Jeune Chef, serving on- and off-campus events including receptions and weddings.
Pioneer Program

A training center to support home energy conservation, operated through WACC’s continuing education unit, became a national model and a leader in the weatherization training industry for more than a quarter century.

The Weatherization Training Center, first funded in 1985 by the U.S. Department of Energy working through Pennsylvania’s Department of Community Affairs, Bureau of Human Resources, was the only facility of its kind in a six-state region.

“Energy conservation and the reduction of the burning of fossil fuels is no longer just a pocketbook issue, but now an environmental issue as well,” said the center’s first director, William R. Van der Meer. He said the center was a “highly specialized and unique facility” that served as “an important link between energy conservation professionals.”

The center offered training for individuals employed by nonprofit, community action agencies to provide home energy conservation assistance to low-income clients; this included home energy audits, furnace testing, air-leakage testing, and basic weatherization carpentry.

Grant M. Berry Jr., who helped secure funding for the project, called it “a pioneer program.” He said the federal grant came with a very tight deadline and – despite its relevance to WACC programs – he had to convince colleagues, who were reluctant to issue a proposal without the more advanced planning, that there would not be a “next-year opportunity.”

“Whoever gets funded is going to be the Weatherization Training Center for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for as long as they continue to operate with any credibility,” he declared. “So we’ve got a one-shot deal here.”

Berry reported that colleagues throughout the campus – from the Construction and Design Technologies division to the Admissions Office – “signed on” to support the project and assist in putting together a grant application.

“This became an interesting competition because it came down, in the final analysis, to two competing institutions: [WACC and] Luzerne County Community College,” Berry said. “Their bid for the project was $336,000 for the first year; our bid for the project was $66,000 for the first year. They called us down to Harrisburg – the Department of Education – saying, ‘We don’t understand this. Two of you are looking at the same program and yet we’ve got this huge difference in cost in operating the program. Why?’”

Berry went to Harrisburg and explained the strategy behind the proposal – to involve existing WACC departments in delivering the services. WACC was successful in securing funding to establish the center. But Department of Education officials were growing more nervous about making large grant awards to an institution where the future seemed uncertain.

At the same time WACC was seeking funding to establish the Weatherization Center, the college’s 20-year contract with sponsoring school districts was coming to an end.

The rising cost of higher education was viewed by the districts as a financial burden they could no longer bear. Without local sponsorship, WACC would lose significant revenue – as well as its place within Pennsylvania’s system of community colleges.

“Harrisburg was seeing headlines,” Berry said.

State to Move Into WACC Battle

Williamsport Sun Gazette, April 1985

City Wants Out Of WACC Deal

Williamsport Sun Gazette, April 1988
Legacy of Leadership

“We’re public servants. One of our basic responsibilities is good stewardship of taxpayer money. I want to spend in a way that if tomorrow somebody came in and examined the books, they would walk away saying, ‘Yeah, that was well handled. There wasn’t any waste in there.’”

Grant M. Berry Jr., who was responsible for attracting millions of dollars to the college during his years as chief development officer, spoke not only of the institution’s legacy as good public stewards, but also of his family’s legacy. Three generations of Berry’s family served in the college’s administration, including his father and his son, Philip G., who began work in Admissions and later moved into the Registrar’s office.

Grant M. Sr. was a long-time administrator, originally hired by George H. Parkes, founding director of WTI. He served in various roles at WTI and WACC, including director of admissions and counseling, registrar, and dean of students.

“I got to know Dr. Parkes briefly as a result of Dad knowing him,” said Berry. “He wasn’t hung up on buildings as being the cornerstone of a decent education. He thought as long as you had a knowledgeable and motivated instructor and the basic tools of the trade, education could take place. As a matter of fact, he had a very simple contract with people that he hired. That was: Your graduates get jobs, you keep your job. That was the beginning and the end … That seemed very realistic and practical to me.”

Part of History

The sponsorship crisis of the 1980s was not the first time the institution faced the very real possibility of closing.

“That’s happened a couple times in the college’s history,” said Berry. “People aren’t generally aware of it, of how close we came at times to actually closing the doors and not continuing.”

Berry recalled one incident involving his father, Grant M. Berry Sr., who was a WTI administrator under the institute’s founding director, George H. Parkes. He remembered Parkes calling on his father for help.

“I don’t remember what year this was, but it was when the technical institute was still part of the Williamsport School District, and there was a growing debate about whether the school district legitimately should be involved in technical education,” Berry said. “It got to the point where literally there was a question of whether they would continue sponsorship and involvement with the technical institute.”

Parkes called Berry Sr., and asked him to try to persuade a member of the school board to vote in favor of WTI when the issue came to a vote. Berry was happy to oblige, and his son recalled that the board – with a one-vote margin – voted to continue the technical institute.
The Williamsport Area Community College is the only community college in Pennsylvania to offer a Secondary Vocational-Technical Program for high school students. The Secondary Vocational-Technical Program is a unique offering that benefits students, school districts, and the community in general.

Many students will seek employment immediately after graduation; others will continue their education in a degree or certificate program at WACC (with the opportunity of receiving advanced placement credits) or another college.

Students spent half the school year at their home schools and half of the year at WACC. They followed a nine-week alternating schedule. Seniors came to WACC for the first and third nine-week periods; juniors came to campus during the second and fourth nine-week periods. There was no charge to students. Fees were paid by the home school districts, which served as sponsors of the community college.

Reprinted from a WACC promotional brochure

SECONDARY VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS
Auto Body Repair
Automotive Mechanics
Aviation Maintenance Technician
Carpentry
Cooperative Education (CAPSTONE)
Cosmetology
Drafting - Architectural/Mechanical
Electrical Construction
Forestry
Health Assistant
Machine Shop
Quantity Food Production and Service
Small Engine Repair
Welding

Nurtured by his father’s long history with the institution, Berry said he was “fascinated” with the idea that was at the foundation of Williamsport’s secondary vocational education program: that “any student from any sponsored district could go tuition-free.”

“That, to me, is a remarkably enlightened way to approach things, because you really take the barriers down (that keep) people from getting a good education. Literally thousands – thousands and thousands – of people got an education that they simply would not have gotten. That’s a significant part of the history of the college …. It absolutely amazes me.”

When the community college was established in 1965, WACC continued to offer “tuition-free” secondary vocational programs, as well as postsecondary degrees and continuing education. That benefit would be lost when the school districts’ sponsorship ended.

Berry said, “When we started realizing that the sponsor district arrangement was getting tenuous, the thing that bothered me most was ultimately we’re going to do away with that (free tuition to secondary students) and the people in our community don’t realize what a wonderful opportunity they’re losing.”
Put It in Writing

“We were called down by the Secretary of Education,” Berry recalled. “I talked first to the head of vocational education and he said, ‘I'm getting static from the secretary over making awards to you this year because our headlines in the Harrisburg paper are about sponsorship to end, college faces crisis and all that sort of thing …. The secretary has come to me with a question of, why should we make awards to them this year? They may not exist very shortly … based on what I'm seeing in the headlines.’ He wanted assurance.”

Berry and WACC’s president traveled to Harrisburg to offer that assurance.

“Bob Breuder and I went down,” Berry continued. “Bob said, ‘There is no question the college will continue. Yes, there are going to be some changes. The sponsorship arrangement does not work. It doesn’t work for us. We’re in the midst of finding a transition and solution. But I guarantee you that, come July 1, the college will continue to open its doors.’ And the secretary said, ‘Will you put that in writing?’ Breuder started laughing and he said, ‘Yes, I’ll put it in writing.’ So they had that simple statement written out on a piece of paper. The secretary typed it up and Bob signed it and it was notarized and that made the difference on whether we got awards that year or had awards withheld or reduced.”

Sponsorship Crisis

According to the Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges, “The Community College Act of 1963 (Act 484, Statutes of 1963) authorized local communities to petition the Pennsylvania State Board of Education to sponsor and establish a community college in the Commonwealth. Each college must have a local sponsor, which may be a city, county, individual school district, or consortium of these entities.”

Articles of agreement that established Williamsport Area Community College, sponsored by school districts in a 10-county region surrounding the college, expired on July 1, 1985. The districts claimed their primarily responsibilities were to grades K-12 and announced they would not continue to serve as WACC’s sponsors.

The potential decline in enrollment and revenue – when students in sponsoring districts lost the benefit of one-third of tuition costs paid by the school districts – threatened the college’s bottom line and, without a local sponsor, the institution would lose authority to operate as part of the state’s system of community colleges.

The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, which accredited regional colleges including WACC, was concerned about the future.

Dr. Robert Kirkwood, executive director of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, told the media that all of Pennsylvania’s 14 community colleges were in some kind of difficult financial situation; WACC was at the top of the list.

“Williamsport and Beaver (County Community College) are in very serious circumstances, but all community colleges will have problems within five years. They have never received the support they were intended to have,” Kirkwood declared.

WACC’s chief administrators went in search of solutions at the local, county, and state level. State officials offered no bailout plan. After the Lycoming County Commissioners voted down a proposal to become WACC’s local sponsor, the City of Williamsport agreed to take on the role until a permanent solution could be found.

While the college sought a resolution to its sponsorship crisis, the county commissioners did
provide financial support for the construction of a campus facility that the president believed would become a “flagship” for the future.

“I went to Lycoming County and asked them for $5 million. I thought they would choke,” Breuder recalled. “At the same time, we were in the throes of the sponsorship crisis and we were talking, literally, about the possibility of Williamsport Area Community College going out of business. So I’m sure there were people in the community, who looked at me and said, ‘Who is this guy? He’s crazy!’”

Incredible Statement

Breuder was a visionary who recognized an opportunity to turn public conversation about WACC into a discussion about the future of the commonwealth’s workforce.

Breuder was a visionary who recognized an opportunity to turn public conversation about WACC into a discussion about the future of the commonwealth’s workforce.

“We took the $5 million (from Lycoming County), plus money we had, and some money from the state, and we built the Advanced Technology and Health Sciences Center and that, in and of itself, made an incredible statement in Lycoming County,” Breuder said.

Breuder’s vision – that the center would improve the economic vitality of the region by offering education in emerging career fields that could attract new businesses and industries to the area – gained national publicity even before the facility opened in 1987.

In an article titled, “Where the Past is Prologue,” Viewpoint magazine, published by industry giant IBM, described the economic condition of the region and the community college’s effort to reclaim a once-proud past:

The last few decades haven’t been any kinder to Williamsport than they have to many other Midwestern and Northeastern cities. Industry and manufacturing slowly dwindled as facilities and technology became outdated.

Northcentral Pennsylvania’s allure for major new employers was feeble, at best. Only the International Little League Championship regularly kept Williamsport in the public eye.

The faculty and administration of the Williamsport Area Community College are changing the scenario. And they’re doing it in an innovative way that marries a rich appreciation of tradition to a visionary commitment to a high-tech future.

What is rapidly emerging is nothing short of spectacular.

The $21 million facility included state-of-the-art laboratories for business and computer sciences, health sciences, graphic arts, electronics, robotics, and automated manufacturing.

The manufacturing laboratory was known as a “factory of the future” and featured wire-guided vehicles programmed to deliver materials from one manufacturing cell to another.
**Formula Change**

WACC’s commitment to hands-on education – that provided each student with access to modern equipment – nearly sidelined state funding supporting equipment acquisition for the new Advanced Technology and Health Sciences Center.

Grant M. Berry Jr., who developed grant applications for WACC, said the Department of Education used a particular formula to determine the amount of space that was needed to support instruction, when it was considering grant applications related to construction. According to that formula, WACC already had more space than it needed to support its enrollment.

“That was a bit stunning,” Berry said, “because we were tripping over each other in too many instances.”

He realized the state’s formula was influenced by more traditional methods of instruction than the unique, hands-on approach employed at WACC.

“I thought about auto mechanics and auto body repair … I know what happens … at many two-year institutions. You assign a team of four students to work on an automobile. And, I know what happens at our institution. You generally have one student working on an automobile … Look at the space an automobile takes up and look at the number of students – with one to an automobile versus four to an automobile – and you can begin seeing that maybe the state’s formula wasn’t as sound as they thought it was.”

Berry invited state officials to campus to tour the laboratories – to “demystify” their thinking – and reconsider their appraisal of WACC as already having “excess space” for instruction.

“We showed them auto body. We showed them aviation … You get a plane in there, you’re taking up a heck of a lot of space, but only a limited number of students can work on it … They eventually revised their formula and we were able to get money for the Advanced Technology and Health Sciences Center.”

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**High Skill Difference**

The bold move into the new advanced technology facility gave WACC’s faculty the opportunity to offer students access to hands-on equipment that was a step ahead of what was happening at the time in industry.

Electronics faculty member Victor A. Michael said, “When we moved there (ATHS), we had more space and we had individual laboratories for lasers, for instrumentation, for communications and computer maintenance stuff, networking …. We had plenty of room. We were producing a large number of students at that time …. It really made a huge difference in the program. We had modern, air-conditioned facilities. Up until then, we would depend on the weather to make the room comfortable enough to be able to even sit through a class.”

Faculty input was crucial to the success of facility planning during the construction process.

Michael said, “We helped develop the facility. From the very planning of the building, the electronics faculty were involved … really idealizing the setup that we would have there. That made a big difference in our programs.”

He recalled that, when he arrived at WACC in 1978, the electronics program was focused on “entertainment electronics” – television and radio. But the development of integrated circuits for those devices made it impractical to make repairs and consumers began replacing broken or outdated models with new ones. So the focus for electronics technicians switched to manufacturing.

That’s where a high skill … makes all the difference in the world.”
“If you have a factory and you’re running it with robots that are controlled by electronic control systems, you’re depending on production,” he said. “That robot costs hundreds of thousands of dollars. You want to have that machine running continuously if you’re running a business. If it goes down, the faster it gets back up, the more money you make. That’s where a high skill – to repair the electronics components of that robot and get it working again – makes all the difference in the world.”

In addition to high skills, Michael said, employers were looking for graduates who understood more than the technical aspects of their career field.

“When we went out to employers and we’d say, ‘What can we do better in our program?’ They didn’t talk about better math courses or better electronics courses. What do you think they told us that we absolutely had to have? Better communication skills. Stop and think about this. A big robot goes down. They probably aren’t going to fix it with one (shift of workers); the first shift that tries to work on it may not get it accomplished …. How well that first shift communicates with that oncoming shift is the difference of night and day. Also, when you call the factory to get some support for a piece of equipment, how well you can communicate to the people at that factory about what’s not working, the better the chances are that you’re going to get some help to get that piece of equipment up and running. Communication skills today are probably one of the areas that people still should think about when doing anything in the world.”
Promotional materials for the symposium declared, “The Advanced Technology and Health Sciences Center at the Williamsport Area Community College offers one of the most sophisticated two-year advanced technical facilities in the country. Highlighting the facility is a “factory of the future” that features four robotically-controlled manufacturing cells. Computer networking allows products designed in computer-aided drafting classrooms to actually be manufactured within the futuristic factory/classroom.”

The symposium’s marketing message also highlighted WACC’s efforts to influence economic development in the region, declaring, “The need for regional economic revitalization and the growth of the community college is not a coincidence, but rather a plan to challenge the economic decline and stagnation of the ‘smokestack’ era.”

“As an institution with a national reputation for the quality of its technical and career program,” the declaration continued, “the community college has focused its resources toward developing programming in those technical areas which will be utilized in the 1990s: fiber optics, computer networking, automated manufacturing, and the health sciences.”
Advanced Technology in the 90s: Visions and Perspectives

WACC Faculty Presenters

WACC faculty were among the professionals who presented information on emerging technologies during a 1987 symposium hosted by the community college in the new Advanced Technology and Health Sciences Center. Faculty presenters were:

**Specialty Electronics:** Victor A. Michael, associate professor, electronics (fiber optic communication); Bruce M. Smith, instructor, electronics (computer automation maintenance); Perry R. Gotschal, assistant professor, electronics (biomedical instrumentation), and Karl E. Markowicz, instructor, electronics (laser electro-optics).

**Information Age:** Dr. Donald B. Bergerstock, business and computer technologies division director; Andrew J. Brovy, assistant director; Brent K. Langley, instructor, computer science, and George P. Wolfe, director, academic computing.

**Automated Manufacturing:** Alfred L. Houser, associate professor, machine tool technology; William A. Holmes, associate professor, machine tool technology; Lynn Turney, instructor, machine shop.

**Plastics Technology:** Timothy E. Weston, curriculum developer, plastics technology, and J. Thomas Livingstone, assistant professor, machine tool technology.

**Health Careers:** Robert Slothus, coordinator, radiography; Barbara J. Sims, coordinator, occupational therapy assistant; Linda F. Falchek-Clark, coordinator, practical nursing, and Davie Jane Gilmour, division director.

**Mass Communications:** Janie K. Swartz and G. Joseph Loehr, assistant professors, mass communications/English.

**Graphic Arts:** Harold L. Newton, instructor, Dale A. Metzker, associate professor, and Fred C. Schaefer Jr., assistant professor, graphic arts.

Affiliation Plan

Within a year of the opening of WACC’s Advanced Technology and Health Sciences Center, Gov. Robert P. Casey traveled to Williamsport to publicly announce a stunning, historic plan to resolve the college’s sponsorship crisis.

The governor proposed that WACC leave the community college system to become an affiliate of the commonwealth’s only land-grant university: The Pennsylvania State University. The historic affiliation was enacted by formal legislation, signed by Gov. Casey, effective July 1, 1989.

Gov. Casey and Dr. Breuder
WACC Divisions and Programs

**Business & Computer Technologies**
- Accounting
- Business Administration
- Business Management
- Clerical Studies
- Computer Information Systems
- Computer Operations
- Retail Management
- Secretarial Office Administration
- Word Processing

**Construction Technology**
- Architectural Technology
- Building Construction Technology
- Construction Carpentry
- Electrical Occupations
- Electrical Technology
- Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning Technology
- Plumbing
- Refrigeration

**Health Sciences**
- Culinary Arts
- Dental Assisting
- Dental Hygiene
- Food & Hospitality Management
- Occupational Therapy Assistant
- Practical Nursing
- Radiography
- Surgical Technology

**Industrial Technology**
- Automated Manufacturing Technology
- Civil Engineering Technology
- Electronics Technology
- Engineering Drafting Technology
- Industrial Drafting
- Machinist General
- Plastics and Polymer Technology
- Tool Design Technology
- Toolmaking Technology
- Welding

**Integrated Studies**
- Advertising Art
- General Studies
- Graphic Arts
- Human Service
- Individual Studies
- Mass Communications
- Printing
- Technical Illustration
- Technology Studies

**Natural Resources Management**
- Floriculture
- Forest Technology
- Landscape/Nursery Technology
- Outdoor Power Equipment
- Service & Operation of Heavy Construction Equipment

**Transportation Technology**
- Auto Body Repair
- Automotive Mechanics
- Automotive Technology
- Aviation Maintenance Technician
- Aviation Technology
- Diesel Mechanics
- Diesel Technology
On July 1, 1989, Gov. Robert P. Casey signed into law House Bill 1086, which transformed Williamsport Area Community College into Pennsylvania College of Technology. Penn College was established as a special mission affiliate of Penn State, committed to applied technology education.

“Through this legislation, we’re creating an exciting new center of resources and opportunities that will serve serious students, researchers, business and government throughout the commonwealth,” Casey said.

Shepherding the bill through the state Legislature were Rep. Alvin C. Bush and Sen. Roger A. Madigan. Among the benefits lawmakers anticipated were improved access to technology training for more Pennsylvania students, improved efficiency in high-speed transfer of innovations in technology to the state’s businesses and industries, and a reduction in the duplication of specialized programs and services that could result in savings to state taxpayers.

Penn College was governed by an 11-member Board of Directors; nine members were appointed by Penn State, one by the Speaker of the House, and one by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate.

Bush was the board’s first chairman. Other local representatives were Kathryn W. Lumley, noted author and co-founder of the Reading Is Fundamental program, and William D. Davis, chief executive officer of Commonwealth Bancshares Corp. Centre County lawmakers Sen. J. Doyle Corman and Rep. Russell P. Letterman served as legislative representatives.

Penn State executives filled the remaining seats: William C. Richardson, executive vice president and provost; Richard E. Grubb, senior vice president and dean of the commonwealth educational system; Steven A. Grubb, senior vice president for finance and operations; Carol Herrmann, vice president for administration; John A. Brighton, dean of engineering; and C. Gregory Knight, vice provost and dean for undergraduate education.

New Vigor

A 12-point memorandum of understanding defined the details of the merger. Penn College retained its own mission and goals and received state funding through Penn State.

Penn State President Bryce Jordan predicted the affiliation would “strengthen both institutions.”

“The real beneficiary in this affiliation is the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania,” he said. “In strengthening the two institutions, the affiliation promises new vigor for Pennsylvania in terms of technology transfer, a technologically superior workforce, and overall economic development.”

Robert L. Breuder, who continued to serve in the chief executive role at Williamsport, agreed.

“We believe this linkage of our prowess in the applied technologies with Penn State’s world-class expertise in
research and development is going to result in quantum leaps in our ability to serve Pennsylvania’s need for education in the advanced technologies. The impact will be profound and far-reaching, and it will influence us and our region in ways we can’t readily envision at the moment,” he said.

Historical Mission
Locally, questions were raised regarding the institution’s historical mission. The daily newspaper reported, “One concern that arises with the merger is that the college may lose its ‘blue collar’ orientation … the basis for its growth into a high-technology training center.”

Breuder insisted, “The people at Penn State are bright enough that they are not going to let that happen.”

He proclaimed in the college’s 1988-89 annual report, “Times are changing. But, what have not changed are the fundamental principles, which have guided this institution since its inception. Whether you consider the industrial arts training for adults in the early 1900s … the veterans’ retraining of the 1940s at the Williamsport Technical Institute … the community leadership of the college in the 1960s and 70s … or the emerging role of advanced technology training in the 1980s … you will be constantly reminded that the underlying goal of all our efforts has been to provide excellent, lifelong education that promotes ‘the dignity and worth of all individuals.’ And that goal, I can assure you, will never change.”

At the time of the merger, WACC was a comprehensive community college with a national reputation for the diversity and quality of its occupational programs. It was a two-year, co-educational, publicly supported institution and a fully accredited member of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. Offerings included more than 60 associate-degree and certificate programs – related to both vocational and technical fields and the liberal arts and sciences – as well as vocational training for secondary students, courses tailored to meet the needs of business and industry, and a broad range of avocational, noncredit courses.

Broader Base
Increasing awareness of Penn College’s unique offerings beyond the local community was a primary objective in the years immediately following the affiliation. In its effort to become “Pennsylvania’s premier technical college,” Penn College opened new programs to attract a broader base of students as well as new business and industry clients.

Most notably, the college introduced four-year, baccalaureate degrees that expanded upon some of its most popular two-year degrees. The new Bachelor of
Science degrees offered graduates opportunities to increase their advancement opportunities in the workplace.

Significant changes in the way the institution offered programs and services to the local public resulted from the affiliation. In February 1990, Breuder announced, “Transition from the Pennsylvania community college system to our new status … has had several impacts on our noncredit programming. As a community college, the college received state reimbursement in dollar amounts directly related to enrollment … this supporting funding stream ceased under our new status … and we now receive our state funding on a simple allocation basis.”

The college decided to continue noncredit programs on a cost-recovery basis. Courses that could not operate on this basis were discontinued. Among the first casualties was fire science training, which was transferred to other community colleges, and outreach programs that were conducted in several regional communities.

Eventually, expanded operations with statewide influence – especially in areas of business/industry training and career development – emerged in place of earlier “lifelong education” classes that primarily served local residents. But early public reaction inspired an editorial that reminded local taxpayers they had waived opportunities in order to spare themselves the financial responsibility that came with community college sponsorship.
Technology Transfer Center

Penn College reprioritized its continuing education goals to reflect the affiliation’s promise to support efforts to advance the state’s workforce by increasing access to high-tech training.

Officials secured funding from the National Science Foundation in 1988 to establish a new center focused on business and industry needs. After one year of planning, developing and pilot testing, the Technology Transfer Center officially opened on July 1, 1989, with a mission to provide business and industry – especially small- and medium-sized companies – with access to technology training that could improve productivity and competitiveness.

Alliances with industries, universities, and vendors provided a network for sharing resources. Regional companies pledged cash and offered expertise to support the establishment of TTC. Universities including Penn State, Purdue, Carnegie Mellon, Ohio State, and Maryland agreed to explore opportunities for cooperation. Companies including IBM, AutoDesk, Point Control and InterCIM corporations pledged equipment and training support.

Two pilot projects – a plastics research project with Lonza Inc. and an IBM seminar on computer integrated manufacturing (CIM) – proved TTC’s capability to deliver customized training as well as research and development support.

Factory Floor

The first public demonstration of the CIM process involving IBM and higher education took place in Penn College’s Advanced Technology and Health Sciences Center in 1990. A simulated “factory floor” in the facility was equipped with three machining cells and one assembly cell serviced by an intelligent warehouse, automated guided vehicle system, and off-line programming room. Students and industry clients used the area to calibrate and test robots, machining centers, control systems and materials handling equipment.

Alliances with industries, universities, and vendors provided a network for sharing resources.

The first public demonstration of the CIM process involving IBM and higher education took place in Penn College’s Advanced Technology and Health Sciences Center in 1990.

Business and industry leaders, as well as teachers from vocational-technical centers around the state, came to campus to experience the new technology, which incorporated state-of-the-art cell manufacturing, robotic technology, local area networks, sensory technology and advanced materials handling using automated systems.
“By committing our resources in this area, we are acknowledging the need for higher education to become a player in the team effort to improve the competitiveness of U.S. manufacturing in the international arena,” the college’s president stated. “To achieve that goal, we must not only train tomorrow’s professionals, but assist today’s companies in attaining a technological edge now. By expanding our missions and reaching out beyond the typical college walls, higher education can impact in unprecedented ways on the quality of life.”

As part of the CIM initiative, Penn College faculty – including IBM Fellow Bruce Pratt – developed an interdisciplinary credit course that explored connections among automated manufacturing, business management, and computer sciences through classroom work, guest speakers, plant tours, and CIM tool demonstrations.

“Students are learning to appreciate the challenges faced by other students in different disciplines,” Pratt said. “Perhaps when they graduate and work in manufacturing firms, the walls between departments will be lower.”

Classroom Revolution

The technology revolution that influenced relationships in manufacturing also revolutionized classrooms across the campus.

In 1990, Penn College was one of 95 programs chosen from nearly 540 competing colleges to receive funding from the U.S. Department of Education to develop technology-based instruction. Thirty faculty members participated in the five-year, $2.5 million grant program. Among the first to incorporate instructional technology in their classrooms were Dr. Daniel J. Doyle, history and philosophy, and Regis C. Kohler, radiography.


Penn College’s chief academic officer said the college’s self-paced, technology-based learning initiatives would improve teaching and learning at all levels.

“One of the timeless educational challenges is adjusting to the range of student needs,” James E. Middleton, vice president of academic affairs, explained. “Educators have often had to teach to the middle of the class. Technology-based instruction gives us a chance to take our commitment to the individual student to an even higher level of success.”

Grant M. Berry Jr., vice president for development, who helped secure the federal grant, agreed: “This will not replace laboratory instruction, but strengthen that instruction through simulation and different problem-solving techniques … More than ever students will become active participants in the educational process. Mastering content is important, but what’s more important is creating active, energized learning. If we can capture that zeal for learning, we will revolutionize education.”
Baccalaureate Degrees

Unique Bachelor of Science degrees expanded the college’s commitment to hands-on, applied technology education in 1991.

The addition of baccalaureate degrees marked the realization of a vision set forth by the institution’s founding leaders. Rather than follow a tradition, set in the early days of the 20th century, which called for separate tracks for vocational and academic study, Williamsport educators emphasized the importance of blending general education and hands-on experience.

George H. Parkes, director of the vocational program in the 1920s and founding director of Williamsport Technical Institute, referred to this combination of shop experience and academics as a “two pants suit” advantage, which offered students a full range of opportunities to help them succeed. More than half a century later, Penn College’s president agreed.

“Since our early days as a local technical school, our institution has had a tradition of breaking with tradition,” Breuder declared when he announced plans to introduce a unique selection of baccalaureate degrees focused on applied technologies.

In the months leading up to the affiliation, neighboring colleges and universities expressed concerns that a Penn State affiliate campus offering baccalaureate degrees in the region would duplicate programs and compete for students. Legislation that created Penn College addressed those concerns by prohibiting the institution from offering competing four-year degrees.

Penn College leaders were undaunted by the limitations and found opportunities to create specialized degrees built upon an applied technology focus, which no other institution in the state could provide.

“The four-year programs will be developed in technical areas with strong two-year foundations already in place,” Breuder declared.

“First Bachelor’s Degree

The first person to earn a Bachelor of Science degree from Pennsylvania College of Technology was John G. Upcraft, of State College, who transferred from Penn State to Penn College to complete his studies in manufacturing engineering technology.

Years later, Upcraft returned to Penn College to serve as an automated manufacturing instructor.

He also became adviser to the student chapter of the Society of Manufacturing Engineers, which began competing in 2005 in an international showcase that simulated real-world engineering challenges by requiring students to design and build off-road vehicles and then compete in a rugged, four-hour endurance race. The Penn College team captured its highest finish, third place, at Baja SAE in 2014.

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Charting New Course

Designing baccalaureate programs was a complex process that captured the full attention of faculty and administrators in the years following the affiliation.

Davie Jane Gilmour, who was dean of instruction in 1990 and became president of the college in 1998, was among the academic affairs administrators who developed the initial baccalaureate degrees. She said, “Jim Middleton, Veronica Muzic and I were keenly aware we were charting a new course in our history. The standards we established from day one would set our mission as a college of technology.”

The structure and requirements for Bachelor of Science degrees were endorsed by the internal governance system, a formalized structure comprising College Council and five committees (Curriculum, Academic Standards and Issues, Student Affairs, Human Resources, and Long Range Planning) made up of faculty, staff and students.

After researching the requirements of other baccalaureate institutions, Penn College officials “ultimately came up with our own,” Muzic said.

The “core” of the baccalaureate degree required nine credits related to English and communications; six mathematics credits; seven credits in science (including one lab science course); three credits each in humanities, social science, and art; six additional credits related to humanities/social science/arts/foreign language/applied art or an international field experience – defined with each major; three liberal arts credits defined with the major; two health and fitness credits; an introductory computer information course (or an equivalent course required by the major); and courses that were specifically designated to satisfy cultural diversity, science/technology/society, and writing-enriched requirements.

Among the most significant requirements were the writing-enriched, cultural diversity, and science/technology/society courses.

Profound Change

Doyle, who ultimately developed two writing-enriched courses, cultural diversity courses, and a science/technology/society course to meet baccalaureate-degree requirements, said the addition of four-year, technology-based programs on campus “profoundly changed” his classes.

“I went from teaching first- and second-year students who were in college transfer mode to teaching students who were mostly in their junior and senior years in career and vocational/technical areas … aviation, HVAC, automotive.”

The professor found he “could count on” these students to take his course seriously – especially when he related the content to their career field.

“If you could show them a connection, then they would buy into it … That was exciting for me,” Doyle enthused.

In Doyle’s Visual Propaganda class, students researched and analyzed print and electronic media – using research to test the validity of information presented in the media.

“It had to be credible, scholarly research,” he said. “I would take great delight when many students could rise to that occasion – understanding that this, maybe, was the first humanities course they’ve ever had.”

Doyle also developed a baccalaureate-level history course, Technology and Society. William J. Astore, who began teaching the course in 2005 after Doyle’s retirement, said the course “sought to introduce students to the potentially unsettling idea that technology has been, and continues to be, a powerful force that we as humans do not always fully understand, let alone fully control.”

In an article published in One College Avenue magazine in 2009, Astore wrote:

“Immediately after becoming a four-year college in 1989, Penn College recognized the need for courses that tackled the complex dynamic that exists between technology and the many human societies that technology helps to create, sustain, and sometimes to disrupt and even to destroy … Such courses recognize that the ultimate ‘success’ or ‘failure’ of technologies
is often not determined solely by technical factors; other concerns, such as aesthetics or cultural values or perceptions of risk and safety, intervene to vex the most skilled scientists and engineers. Such nontechnical circumstances serve to remind us that technology is a thoroughly human endeavor – and thus often a thoroughly unpredictable one.”

The opportunity to develop a full understanding of the technologies connected with the industries in which they planned to work – as well as the society in which they would live after graduation – was one important aspect of Penn College bachelor’s degrees.

Senior Capstone

Another hallmark of the Penn College baccalaureate degree was the requirement to complete a three-credit Senior Project prior to graduation. Within the capstone, students were to integrate the competencies they had gained and demonstrate synthesis, application and analytical skills. They were expected to produce a project, portfolio or major written project to demonstrate their abilities. In many cases, students made formal presentations to their peers, faculty, and the campus community.

“The capstone had to be all-inclusive,” said Patrick Murphy, graphic arts professor and Master Teacher. “It wasn’t only the discipline for concentration; it was really a collective kind of thing.”

Murphy served on the faculty committee that established baccalaureate requirements. One of the requirements was a three-credit art elective that he said introduced “a significant movement” in the art department, which previously offered only associate-level courses that prepared students for jobs in advertising agencies or in-house art departments.

In addition to the baccalaureate-level art electives, Murphy and his art department colleagues developed a bachelor’s degree in graphic design to expand advancement opportunities for Penn College graduates.

“A four-year degree would lead to, potentially, a position as creative director, art director … a person was able to move up,” he said. “The initial goals [for associate and bachelor’s degrees] were very similar; it’s just that the four-year program became more expansive.”

To encourage enrollment in graphic design, he said, faculty identified students in the associate degree program that they felt had the potential for more advanced study.

“If someone had a propensity for hand work, and liked illustration, and they could prepare a good document proposal, and the instructors knew that the person had that propensity for that – and had demonstrated it in earlier classes … We would allow that person to move forward,” he said.
Greater Opportunities
A four-year degree also was developed in accounting, a field that provided entry-level positions, but offered limited advancement, to associate-degree graduates.

Graduates of the two-year program, according to Phillip D. Landers, business administration and management professor, were limited to securing positions “dealing with payroll … accounts receivable, accounts payable, general accounting” – while those with bachelor’s degrees “may be hired by a public accounting firm … or government agencies, educational institutions, private industry, not-for-profits.”

“There were just a lot more opportunities with the four-year degree,” he said.

The professor was pleased when an internship requirement was added to the baccalaureate degree.

“In my opinion, [it was] the best thing we ever did … and many students received job offers because of that,” he declared.

Meeting Standards
Earning industry accreditation, Landers said, also was an important milestone for the baccalaureate program. In fact, he said, the institution’s leadership encouraged all academic programs to seek accreditation in order to gain an advantage when recruiting new students.

“I think it sets up a benchmark that you can compare … natural marketing … because you can say to a prospective student, ‘We are accredited. We meet these standards.’”

In addition to meeting accreditation standards, Penn College adhered to legislative restrictions that prohibited direct competition with regional colleges and universities. But it did so with some frustration, as expressed by Muzic, who later became the college’s chief academic officer.

“What is unfortunate is the ‘no-compete’ is for us only,” she explained. “They can compete all they want. And since we became Penn College, they began associate-degree programs … So the ‘no-compete’ is for us only.”

Minors Instead of Majors
While the “no-compete” law prevented Penn College from offering a mathematics-related baccalaureate degree, the math faculty was determined to establish a math minor, with “upper level” criteria.

“We thought this was an obvious thing to look at because students who are in the engineering programs – computer engineering, electronic engineering, civil technology engineering – they take a lot of math courses,” math professor and Master Teacher Robert G. Bowers said. “So with just a little bit more math, they can get a math minor on their transcript, which is just one more credential, which is nice to have.”

The minor required that students complete 19 credits in mathematics. Bowers said on a regular basis about seven students meet those standards in time for graduation.

“They must take Calculus 1, Calculus 2, Calculus 3 … and they have to have seven additional credits from some of our upper-level course work, like Differential Equations or Discrete Mathematics … and Statistics is included … They could actually have the calculus sequence and two statistics courses. They must have a grade of ‘C’ or better in every course and they must have an overall average of 2.5.”

Over the years, minors were added in a number of areas where no full baccalaureate degree was offered, including biology, chemistry, criminal justice, financial planning, photography, psychology and sociology.
Secondary Programs

Building baccalaureate degrees upon unique centers of excellence met the commonwealth’s efforts to avoid duplication of taxpayer-supported programs, as defined in the affiliation legislation.

Another benefit lawmakers sought to achieve was improved access to technology training for more Pennsylvania students. Penn College delivered by developing new partnerships with school districts throughout the state.

After the affiliation, the college’s Secondary Vocational Program was renamed the Parkes Vocational-Technical Program in honor of the institution’s founding director. But the future of secondary programming was in question, as state funding ended when the community college ceased to exist.

A December 1989 communique from the president announced that the college would continue to offer instruction to area high school students for the next 24 months, while school districts considered how to continue programming for the future.
Penn College's statewide Tech Prep consortium placed the institution at the forefront of a movement to revolutionize vocational-technical education in America's high schools.

“One of our challenges is how to equip a workforce for the 20th century in a local community. New jobs will require more, not less education,” said James E. Middleton, vice president for academic affairs. “Many students are not equipped to deal with the rigors of a first-year (college) program. More than one-half of the students who come to us are deficient in reading, writing or mathematics.”

Tech Prep provided an alternative approach to traditional secondary vocational education. The “two-plus-two” concept offered a planned, sequential technical preparation program that combined the final years of high school with two years of postsecondary education. The program incorporated math, science, and English course work into vocational education programs. It also helped students understand how various disciplines related to one another in the world of work.

Penn College's 55-member consortium included 19 school districts, 32 area vocational technical schools, industry associations and the College's Technology Transfer Center. Eight members were selected as pilot sites for implementing curriculum changes in 1992-93: Loyalsock Township School District, Lycoming County Youth Apprenticeship Program, Centre County Area Vocational-Technical School, Columbia-Montour AVTS, Northern Tioga School District, Schuylkill County AVTS, Shikellamy School District, and Tyrone Area School District.

Grant M. Berry Jr., who was the institution's chief development officer at the time, said the program was originally funded by grants from the state's Youth Employment Training Program.

“The state didn't spell out any territorial limitations and, if you look at the distribution of community colleges, there are huge geographical gaps in Pennsylvania that just aren't served. So we tried to pull in as many school districts as possible ... Ours was, by far, the largest grant made out of the program that first year.”

Berry said the Penn College program went on to serve not only consortium members but also many other school districts that were interested, but did not have the resources to develop their own programs.

“It’s one of those programs that I feel particularly good about,” Berry said. “It was innovative. There were a lot of challenges involved in it. Jeannette Fraser Carter did an absolutely fantastic job working with the school districts in pulling that together and making it happen.”

The institution's 1993-94 annual report declared Penn College’s Tech Prep consortium was the largest in the United States. In its first five years, Tech Prep received $1.7 million in state and federal funds to help bridge the gap between high school and college or technical training by uniting classroom theory with workplace practices.

Industry Partnerships

Penn College quickly realized its vision to be recognized as “Pennsylvania's premier technical college.” A mission-driven marketing theme of “degrees that work” described the opportunity for students to build respectable resumes with real work experience prior to graduation.

Industry leaders, interested in developing strong candidates for their workforce, established relationships with Penn College that benefited individual students and provided important instructional resources.

A 1991 partnership with Toyota Motor Sales USA, Inc. marked the start of industry-sponsored programming at Penn College. The Toyota T-Ten program launch in November featured a visit from the top American executive with Toyota Motor Sales, Bob McCurry.
State Sen. Roger A. Madigan said, “This alliance of forces of Penn College and Toyota is good for Pennsylvania. I would like to see more of this type of imaginative, cooperative relationship established across the commonwealth. I’m very excited about the potential of this program.”

Penn College became one of the top A-rated schools in the T-TEN network, training technicians for dealerships in the Central Atlantic region. In 1999, Penn College launched a Toyota T-Ten Collision Repair program; it was the fifth in the nation and the only one offered on the east coast.

The T-Ten program and similar programs developed with Ford Motor Co., Caterpillar and Mack Trucks offered scholarships and dealership internships for students, corporate training for faculty, and equipment donations to support instruction on campus.

Colin W. Williamson, division director for natural resources management/transportation technologies, said, “In this day of fiscal restraint, colleges can’t afford to be continually buying all of the advanced components needed to train students … We need partnerships like this one to enhance our instruction while keeping students’ financial costs at an acceptable level.”

Penn College awarded its first honorary doctoral degree to Toyota Motor Corp. executive Tokuo Ogawa in 1996. Ogawa said: “Penn College is one of our most outstanding schools.”

Beginning in 1994, the Caterpillar Excellence Fund, a consortium of the Caterpillar Foundation and regional dealerships, provided nearly $2 million to support instruction and provide student scholarships.
Celebrity Chefs

An industry partnership of a different sort began in 1992 with the introduction of a Visiting Chef Series, which brought distinguished professionals into Penn College kitchens. Students worked alongside some of the nation’s most prominent chefs preparing fundraising meals that supported scholarships for culinary/hospitality students.

Among the first guest chefs was Louisiana Chef John Folse, who made international headlines when he opened the first American restaurant on Soviet soil in 1998. Folse, who authored popular cookbooks and starred in a PBS television show and a syndicated radio show, returned to campus several times. On his third visit, he asked students, “Why would I come to Williamsport, Pennsylvania? Because this school inspires me.”

In addition to working with professional chefs on campus, beginning in 1993, selected culinary students had the opportunity to serve as part of the hospitality team at the Kentucky Derby.

The William C. Butler Visiting Lecture Series was established in 2003, in memory of the dean of the School of Hospitality from 1994 until his death in 2002. Under Butler’s leadership, the school earned prestigious honors from Wine Spectator, the American Culinary Federation and the Dietary Managers Association. His support helped establish projects including students’ annual participation in the Kentucky Derby and Finger Lakes Wine Festival, as well as the award-winning public television cooking series, “You’re the Chef.”

Visiting Chefs at Penn College

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>City</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Darrin Aoyama</td>
<td>Houston, Texas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donald Barickman</td>
<td>Charleston, South Carolina</td>
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<td>Phillip Brown</td>
<td>Jacksonville, Florida</td>
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<td>Russell Bry</td>
<td>Chicago, Illinois</td>
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<td>Charles Carroll</td>
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<td>Callie Chalmers</td>
<td>Danville, Pennsylvania</td>
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<td>Leah Chase</td>
<td>New Orleans, Louisiana</td>
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<td>Steven Chiappetti</td>
<td>Chicago, Illinois</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kusuma Cooray</td>
<td>Honolulu, Hawaii</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bert Cutino</td>
<td>Monterey, California</td>
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<td>Travis Dale</td>
<td>Chesterton, Indiana</td>
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<td>Todd Downs</td>
<td>Chicago, Illinois</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dennis Eckrote</td>
<td>Lewisburg, Pennsylvania</td>
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<td>Timothy H. Eldridge</td>
<td>Jacksonville, Florida</td>
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<td>Scott Endy</td>
<td>Las Vegas, Nevada</td>
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<td>Dominique Filoni</td>
<td>Gulph Mills, Pennsylvania</td>
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<td>Gregg Flisiak</td>
<td>Chesterton, Indiana</td>
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<td>John Folse</td>
<td>Donaldsonville, Louisiana</td>
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<td>Greg Gable</td>
<td>Ephrata, Pennsylvania</td>
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<td>Christopher Gross</td>
<td>Phoenix, Arizona</td>
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<td>Traci Des Jardins</td>
<td>San Francisco, California</td>
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<td>Richard Kimble</td>
<td>New York City, New York</td>
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<td>Robert Kinkead</td>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
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<td>Sabrina LaRosa</td>
<td>Calabria, Italy</td>
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<td>Andrew Masciangelo</td>
<td>Gulph Mills, Pennsylvania</td>
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<td>Honolulu, Hawaii</td>
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<td>Robert Mobilian</td>
<td>Aspen, Colorado</td>
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<td>Brian &amp; Shanna O’Hea</td>
<td>Kennebunk, Maine</td>
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<td>Gale E. O’Malley</td>
<td>White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia</td>
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<td>Jean-Louis Palladin</td>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
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<td>Georges Perrier</td>
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<td>Steven Schimoler</td>
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<td>Walter Schug</td>
<td>Sonoma County, California</td>
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<td>Rudy Smith</td>
<td>Snowmass Village, Colorado</td>
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<tr>
<td>Walter Staib</td>
<td>Philadelphia, Pennsylvania</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dave Sturgis</td>
<td>Atlanta, Georgia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jeff Vigilla</td>
<td>Amelia Island, Florida</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jeff Vosburgh</td>
<td>Atlanta, Georgia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Errol Walters</td>
<td>Hummels Wharf, Pennsylvania</td>
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You’re the Chef

Before there were entire television networks devoted to cooking shows, Penn College produced “You’re the Chef.” The series premiered on local cable in 1996 and later moved to WVIA public television, where its audience grew beyond the region to include other parts of Pennsylvania and areas as far away as Guam and Quebec.

The series featured Chef Paul Mach, assistant professor of hospitality management and culinary arts, and cooking novice Tom Speicher, a member of the public relations staff, along with selected culinary students. A campus kitchen studio built by Penn College construction students was the backdrop for the show.

Mach, who earned the college’s Master Teacher Award in 2001, said that “learning becomes a reality” when students put classroom theory into practice. Part of the reality, he said, is adapting when things don’t go as planned.

“How quickly can you think while you’re working?” he asked. “Can you still apply proper cooking methods while you’re making an adaptation or a change … Those are the opportunities where students really have a chance to grow … It causes them to think and create something a bit different.”

He explained that putting lecture into practice allowed students to engage in a new way.

“It gives them ownership … of the learning experience … of the activity. As students progress and mature, you have to give them that freedom.”

Mistakes, he asserted, are an important part of the learning process.

“I’m not afraid to tell students … I have done everything in this business of hospitality wrong once. The trick is not to do it wrong twice.”

Mach also encouraged students to learn from professionals and people they admired – including the distinguished Visiting Chefs that traveled to the campus each year.

“The first thing I’m looking for when I meet people is what can I learn from them?” Mach said. “What are they doing? What’s an activity that they have? What’s something that they read? What is an approach they have to a certain situation? What do they do that makes them successful?”

Mach made an important contribution to the campus palate when he introduced international cuisine to Le Jeune Chef Restaurant.

“The explosion of global cuisine had started … It just hadn’t hit Williamsport yet,” Mach recalled.

“When I first served … a Thai dish, an Indian dish, a Vietnamese dish … nobody knew what to make of it … People were like, ‘What is this?’ It tasted great, but they didn’t know if they should let me put it on the menu.”

The chef persisted and international cuisine became a popular selection on the menu.

“Dining has become a global idea. People expect to go into any restaurant and get food from around the world. That’s just made it even more interesting, because there’s more to learn,” he said.
Retraining Opportunity

When international competition changed the face of the American workforce, Penn College continued a tradition of retraining the workforce that began at WTI and WACC.

The introduction of the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994 led the federal government to offer educational support for retraining workers impacted by the trade agreement.

CBS News national correspondent Wyatt Andrews visited Penn College in 1993 to interview adult students who enrolled after losing their jobs at local factories impacted by NAFTA. The televised “Eye on America” segment featured interviews with accounting student Linda Barner and Christy Jeirles, a computer information systems student.

Jeirles and her husband John, also in the computer information systems program, enrolled in a free career exploration for adults program at Penn College after losing their jobs at the local C.A. Reed plant, which closed in 1993.

“At first the thought of losing our jobs was terrifying,” Christy Jeirles said. “But then, we both thought it was going to be the opportunity of a lifetime. If the factory hadn’t shut down, we’d still be there.” Her husband agreed, “We were bitter when the factory closed. But now, we think that’s our past and this is our future.”

Penn College offered free, career exploration programs for adults and traditional age student prospects who were interested in learning more about educational opportunities before enrolling in college classes. One of the programs – Career Explorations in Nontraditional Occupations – earned status as an “exemplary” gender-equity program in 1989-90.

Sharon K. Waters, who managed the CENO program, worked with the instructional media center to produce an award-winning video, “Consider All Your Options,” which was distributed statewide through the Department of Education.

Company Assets

Adults seeking retraining and those interested in upgrading their skills while continuing to work enrolled in both credit and noncredit educational programs. By 1995-96, enrollment in noncredit Technology Transfer Center classes was nearly equal to the total enrollment in credit classes. That year, 4,690 employees of regional companies participated in noncredit workforce training. TTC project manager Susan K. Clark-Teisher said the courses met important needs in a variety of industries.

“The workplace over the last 10 to 15 years has greatly changed in terms of what skills employers are looking for in their employees,” Clark-Teisher said. “Most plants have moved into a cell manufacturing environment; instead of standing and working at one machine, employees now need to operate two or three machines … You do not see too many pieces of equipment without computerized control. Not only do employees need to learn how to operate the equipment, but they need to troubleshoot and repair.”

Calls for technical training came in from across Pennsylvania. In 1997, the commonwealth awarded the first statewide Customized Job Training project to Penn College and six Osram Sylvania facilities, located in St. Mary’s, Towanda, Warren, Wellsboro, York, and Bethlehem. Penn College also earned a CJT contract to assist with the startup of a new automotive casting products division at Ward Manufacturing in Tioga County and created training programs for computer

Lynell Whitnack, a 1992 electronics technology graduate, was named Nontraditional Student of the Year (Central Region) by the state Department of Education. The mother of three enrolled at Penn College after completing the CENO career assessment course. She specialized in biomedical electronics and did an internship at Divine Providence Hospital.
support technicians in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and, Allentown.

Employees with computer training were valuable assets to their companies. TTC project manager Candace S. Baran noted, “Although the training essentially benefits the employer, the employee benefits by being more capable on the job and possibly maintaining employment. And since the employee is the one to receive the training, if she or he leaves, the training goes with them … If you’ve got the right skills set, those skills are portable and you are marketable.”

Many employees also needed to update their communication skills in order to adapt to workplace changes, so TTC offered courses in basic math, communication and problem solving. Clark-Teisher said, “Employees must keep logs on machines and communicate from shift to shift. They need to be able to read technical manuals. For many employees, all of these changes are totally redefining their jobs.”

Baran added: “You can’t separate the technology skills from the basic skills because they work hand-in-hand. The basic skills are the foundation.”

You can’t separate the technology skills from the basic skills because they work hand-in-hand. The basic skills are the foundation.

“Penn College’s Technology Transfer Center offers businesses in our area a clear advantage.”

Historic Connection

The institution’s historic connection with the Williamsport-based manufacturer of Lycoming Engines expanded in 1996 when Penn College was named the worldwide Textron Lycoming Authorized Training Center.

Penn College provided noncredit training for Textron Lycoming’s domestic and international customers and employees at the Kathryn Wentzel Lumley Aviation Center, which opened at the regional airport in Montoursville in 1993. The Lumley Aviation Center replaced a 51-year-old airport hangar originally used for instruction by Williamsport Technical Institute.

Robert W. Engel, director of economic development for the Williamsport-Lycoming Chamber of Commerce, said, “This training alliance displays the quality technical training readily available to businesses located in our area. Trained quality labor is very important to business success. Penn College’s Technology Transfer Center offers businesses in our area a clear advantage.”

Lead instructor for the Textron program was James E. Doebler, a member of the aviation faculty who earned the College’s Master Teacher Award in 1995. Doebler participated in the institution’s aviation program as a high school student and later returned to serve as a member of the faculty at the request of a former teacher.

“I returned to Penn College because of a request by Mr. Frank Pannebaker, a retired aviation instructor,” he explained.

Doebler said when he joined the faculty the classrooms and labs were equipped with tools and machines that hearkened back to the program’s beginnings.

“Everything was wearing out and in need of repair or updating,” he recalled.

He assisted in the planning and development of the $6 million Lumley Aviation Center, which he said became “an envy of aviation schools around the world” when it opened in 1993.
Doeblter enjoyed the challenge of rebuilding facilities and rebuilding lives as a member of the faculty. He declared his proudest accomplishments involved inspiring students who had suffered failures in high school and/or the workplace and helping them become “successful, productive” members of society.

He recalled working with one student “who was considered the ‘black sheep’ of his family, had been in trouble with the law in his hometown and was on probation, and had a very negative attitude of life in general … By paying attention to this student and not passing him off as a failure, I saw his attitude and work ethic change dramatically. He is now a supervisor of 40 men that build rockets for the United States Air Force and has become very successful in this position.”

Lumley Aviation Center offered specialized labs for instruction in airframe, power-plant and avionics repair. In addition to noncredit classes for Textron Lycoming, the center was home to Penn College’s federally certified degree and certificate programs.

Penn College’s aviation curriculum expanded to include a baccalaureate degree in aviation maintenance technology. In 2008, it became the first baccalaureate program accredited by the National Center for Aircraft Technician Training. NCATT also accredited the college’s two-year aviation technology associate degree and aviation maintenance technician certificate programs.

The Kathryn Wentzel Lumley Aviation Center was dedicated in honor of a member of the Board of Directors who was a noted children’s author and founder of the national Reading Is Fundamental program. The center offered instructional facilities for airframe, power-plant and avionics repair.

A disarmed and deactivated A-6E Intruder aircraft, formerly used by the U.S. Navy and valued at nearly $20.9 million, was awarded to the college by the federal government for use in aviation and avionics instruction. It was the single largest gift in the college’s history at that time. Penn College President Robert L. Breuder stated, “Few colleges in the nation can deliver the quality of education we are now able to provide with this rare and special opportunity.”
Teacher Training

The Penn State affiliation opened the door for a new type of teacher-training program on campus. Introduction of a Vocational Teacher Education program in 1995 expanded upon earlier efforts focused mainly on enhancing WTI and WACC instructors’ resumes – which reflected mostly technical experience – with college degrees.

An article by Dr. George L. Baker, the academic division director who oversaw programs related to industrial and engineering technologies, published in the Winter 1995-96 issue of One College Avenue magazine explained the details of the program.

Penn College and Penn State University have pooled their unique resources to better serve vocational education by providing a way for individuals to become vocational teachers. For many years, teachers for vocational subjects were recruited from the world of business and industry. Most started their teaching careers needing to complete a series of educational and certification tasks. This ‘emergency’ certification required the beginning teacher to divide energy between the tasks of (1) learning to teach on the job, (2) pursuing personal educational development, and (3) remaining current in the field. Many talented and dedicated teachers were recruited and many matured to be master teachers and leaders in the field, but with great difficulty.

The task of finding and recruiting high quality vocational teachers has always been difficult. The task has become even more difficult as technology has become more volatile. Competition for persons of talent and commitment is always severe in the areas of greatest need. The shortage of teachers has remained one of the greatest barriers to the delivery of quality vocational programs. In severe cases, programs have been terminated due to the lack of qualified personnel.

According to the Pennsylvania state records, approximately 900 teachers must be replaced annually in the state. In an effort to improve the supply of vocational teachers, Penn College joined with Penn State’s Department of Vocational Education to offer a unique program in vocational education – one in which a student could learn both the pedagogical (teaching) skills and the technical skills required of vocational instructors. After much discussion and planning, a program in Vocational Teacher Education was developed which uses the strengths of the two institutions to better meet the need for public school teachers of vocational and career subjects.

Penn College offers over 70 degree and certificate programs which parallel most of the vocational programs offered at the secondary level throughout the state. The college’s programs are well staffed, operated at ‘state-of-the-art’ levels of efficiency and have among the best equipped laboratories and facilities in the nation. The technical programs are supported by high quality general education options which provide an excellent foundation for transfer to the upper division program in Penn State’s School of Education. So, students receive technical expertise in two years of education at Penn College and complete the four-year degree with classes at Penn State.

The first courses in the Vocational Teacher Education program were offered during the fall 1995 term at Penn College. In order to give the program the best possible start, Dr. Frederick Welch volunteered to teach the first Introduction to Vocational Education course on the Penn College campus. Dr. Welch has been the professor-in-charge of vocational education for many years at Penn State.

He administered the Pennsylvania-sponsored Center for Professional Development of Vocational Education Personnel. Many teaching faculty at Penn College and other institutions in the central region of Pennsylvania have attended classes conducted...
by Dr. Welch or have received certification from the Center. Dr. Welch plans to retire at the end of the year and has stated that he is pleased to be able to return something to the teaching profession and to vocational education in this manner …

Graduates of the program should find excellent career opportunities teaching in secondary schools. Additional opportunities are available teaching in community colleges and proprietary schools. Another growing area of opportunity is with business and industry, as many private firms have developed in-house training programs for their own workers or for customers who buy their products and use their services.

Campus Center
Opening of the Alvin C. Bush Campus Center in 1993 marked the beginning of an era in which greater attention and more resources were given to enhancing students’ lives outside of the classroom.

The facility was named for the first chairman of the Penn College Board of Directors. As a state representative, Bush helped to secure the legislation that created the institution in 1989.

The contemporary student center provided facilities for study, recreation, and dining. Meeting rooms for student organizations, a fitness center, bookstore, and convenience stores were popular gathering spots. Health care services, counseling, and career advice were offered within the Bush Campus Center.

Art studios used for drawing, painting, ceramics, and photography instruction were located in the Bush Campus Center.

The Children’s Learning Center, which offered students in the Early Childhood Education program an opportunity to interact with young children on campus – and provided a child care option for students, faculty, staff, and the general public – was a feature of the Bush Campus Center.
Most Wired

Penn College entered the information superhighway in the spring of 1995 as part of the Pennsylvania Research and Economic Partnership Network, which provided worldwide access to electronic mail and to information resources of the Internet.

Later that year, the college announced it would require that all students complete a three-credit Introduction to Information Technology course in order to be eligible to graduate from an associate- or baccalaureate-degree major.

“These days, there isn’t an administrative, professional or technical position that doesn’t require you to use a computer in the process,” said James E. Cunningham, associate dean for information technology, who announced the new course requirement. “Not only have computers and networking led to significant improvement in employee productivity, but they have improved our lives in terms of access to information . . . Literally, whole new worlds have been opened up for us.”

Five years later, Penn College ranked fourth among “American’s Most Wired Colleges” in 2000, according Yahoo! Internet Life. The college offered one computer for every six students, which was three times the reported national average.

Access to Care

A statewide concern about providing adequate health care in rural areas was the impetus for the addition of a physician assistant major at Penn College in 1996. At that time, the nearest accredited physician assistant programs were offered in Wilkes-Barre, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Altoona, and Erie.

When Williamsport’s program earned provisional accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs in 1996, it became the only approved program at a state-related public college or university in the state.

Provisional accreditation status allowed the institution to enroll students in the professional phase of the baccalaureate program. Only students who graduated from accredited programs were eligible to take national exams allowing them to practice as certified professionals.

In the first year, 19 students enrolled in the professional phase of the major. They entered as juniors, with education and experience equal to the first two years of undergraduate studies. Eleven had previously earned bachelor’s degrees, one had a master’s degree and three had associate degrees. All met the requirement of 800 hours of prior health-care exposure.

More than 100 students enrolled in pre-professional courses to prepare them for application into the professional phase at a later time. Penn College

Physician assistant student Bethany K. Lavallee checks the blood pressure of state secretary of health, Dr. Calvin B. Johnson, at a community outreach event in 2007.
announced it would not enroll more than 25 new students per year into the professional phase.

Russell M. Trapp Jr., the first program director, said, “This gives us small class sizes, a reasonable student-to-faculty ratio, and the best experience for the students.”

A remodeled section of the Technical Trades Center provided labs for clinical assessment and work with cadaver anatomy as well as “virtual patients.”

“Interacting with virtual patients here on campus will better prepare the students for what they will encounter out in the field,” Trapp said. “Students will be given patient cases to go through. They can ask questions, make physical evaluations, order lab tests and come up with clinical diagnoses. It makes learning fun for the students and the faculty, and it stimulates the whole process. Previously, we’d only be able to read about cases in a textbook. Now we can recreate situations right in the classroom.”

Dr. William B. Urosevich, associate professor of biology, anatomy and physiology – who earned the college’s Master Teacher Award in 2008 – said development of a course for the physician assistant program was among his most rewarding experiences.

“The greatest challenge was to meet the academic needs of the future physician assistant, nursing, dental hygiene, radiographic, occupational therapy assistant, surgical technology and general studies students in my Anatomy and Physiology classes at Penn College,” he said. “Further challenge included the development of the Cadaver Anatomy course for the physician assistant program. The Cadaver Anatomy course was a great success as demonstrated by the subsequent student evaluations.”

Another Master Teacher who emerged from the ranks of the founding faculty of the physician assistant program said the hands-on environment at Penn College supported her students’ desires to work in a modern health care environment.

Dr. Christine M. Kessler, who earned the highest faculty honor in 2009, said, “Students tend to have occupational goals in mind and come to campus to make those goals a reality. Classrooms and labs are typically created with this in mind. It is a joy to come to work at an institution that supports its faculty with modern and up-to-date supplies and equipment so that students can learn effectively.”

Physician assistant students volunteer at the Little League World Series
Homes and History

Past, present, and future merged on campus in 1997 with grand openings of the Victorian House and the Village at Penn College.

The Village, an apartment-style housing complex east of Klump Academic Center, was the first college-owned student residential facility. It accommodated 320 students. The college acquired a privately-owned facility south of campus later that year; it housed another 330 students.

On-campus housing and the promotion of student activities and services through Bush Campus Center created a more traditional college environment.

The Village at Penn College was designed with a façade to honor its neighborhood. The facility was located adjacent to Williamsport’s Historic District, which included a section of West Fourth Street known since the late 19th century as “Millionaires’ Row,” because many of the city’s wealthiest families built homes there.

The Victorian Era had been the most prosperous in the city’s history, as lumber barons made their fortunes transporting timber on the Susquehanna River, which ran south of the campus.

Penn College celebrated Victoriana with the construction of a guest house at the center of campus that featured grand design elements from that time period, but also operated with the most modern conveniences.

The Victorian House was a student project from concept through construction. A design submitted by architectural technology student Mark Kessler was selected; students and faculty in construction-related majors built the guest house, providing a testimonial to the quality of instruction at Penn College.
Secret of the Tower

The chance for students to build “something that would last” inspired the carpentry faculty to include campus and community projects in “practical classes,” according to instructor Carl M. Hillyard.

“It was live experience with a full-sized project and they learned what it was like to really build something that was going to be permanent … It really was a good experience for them.”

Experience with live projects went to an entirely different level, he said, when students began designing and building on-campus facilities, at the request of WACC’s third president Robert L. Breuder. The first was the Professional Development Center; later came a Victorian House.

“My two practical classes built the whole second story of the ‘Vic House’ and we built the big front porch around side, the side fortress,” Hillyard recalled.

Hillyard revealed a secret about the Victorian House’s octagonal tower.

“That was quite a challenge … a bigger challenge because when it was made, the first floor wasn’t perfect. It wasn’t a perfect octagon. So for the next two stories that we had to put on, we always had to account for that. If you really take a good look … at the windows in the attic … you can see where there isn’t the same amount of space around every window … You can see that there is a difference.”

Hillyard said the project “was a great experience because it simulated the work outside they were going to go into.”

He said the students responded to the challenge with enthusiasm.

“They loved working out there. They loved it … even when it was snowing and cold … We worked all winter in that house and Dr. Breuder came over and was surprised that we were working and happy.”

The instructor said students in his carpentry classes learned perseverance.

“I think … what I gave them is ‘never give up.’ Even though something looks really hard to do, you can still do it if you take it one little step at a time … You can always get a little bit better … There’s always something to learn.”

Students were responsible for the construction of the campus Field House, which opened in 1999 to provide additional space for athletics, recreation, and large campus events, such as career fairs held each semester to help connect students with employment opportunities.
International Competition

Penn College construction programs established a national reputation for quality as associate degree students, as well as those enrolled in a baccalaureate degree in construction management, began to compete at the highest levels at builders’ conventions.

When a team of two-year construction majors earned the top prize in competition at the National Association of Home Builders International Builders’ Show in 2008, it was Penn College’s third first-place finish in five years. The College also received a Silver Award for 10 years of event competition that included two second-place and three third-place finishes.

Members of the 2008 team sent a message reflecting the “thrill of victory” to the campus: “It is a great feeling to bring a victorious end to five months of hard work! Nothing made us happier than to bring the trophy back to Penn College. Participating in this competition has required an extreme amount of perseverance, dedication and motivation. We are all thankful to have had the opportunity to apply our education beyond our required course work. This experience has been very rewarding.”

Student involvement with professional builders’ associations was highly encouraged by faculty, including Richard L. Druckenmiller, assistant professor of building construction technology who earned the Master Teacher award in 2003. He said he was approached at the international home builders’ show by professionals who said, “We need your people. Send them down. We need as many as we can get.” That’s a great statement about our college and our students.

Centex Homes’ director of construction services for the mid-Atlantic region, Bill Faulk agreed, “This school’s really raising the bar. I think they’re really challenging all the rest of the two-year schools to step up to the plate.”

“The ‘hands-on’ … it’s still the best thing about Penn College,” Druckenmiller declared. “They can walk out of the classroom … go right into our lab and work on just about exactly what you just explained to them.”

Faculty often mentored students based on their own professional experiences. Druckenmiller originally went to college and earned a teaching degree, but instead of getting a job as a teacher, he went to work in the construction industry. After jobs as an ironworker and carpenter, he became a private developer, building and remodeling homes while working nights as a production supervisor at a local manufacturing plant. Then, he received an opportunity to teach at Penn College.

“I didn’t feel like I was leaving my trade. I was just doing my trade in a different way,” he recalled. “I still feel that way because I’m so involved with the people I know in the business and industry.”

His industry connections led Druckenmiller to encourage Penn College to establish a relationship with the Pennsylvania State Builders Association.

“I became a faculty representative to the West Branch Susquehanna Builders Association, which is our local builders’ association. I’ve always been a believer that a unified association is a good way of promoting business, good business.”

He started investigating the idea of forming a student chapter on campus and in 1994, with just three students, founded the student chapter of the National Association of Home Builders.

“I tried to bring in a lot of people from industry, guest speakers, people that are out there doing this type of work, people that are in management, people that are in real estate, people that do the hiring.”
He enjoyed the opportunity to help students connect with the rich traditions of the construction field.

“They’re finding out that it is a noble craft – being a mason, being a concrete or tile expert, being a carpenter, being a furniture maker,” he said. “It’s a noble craft. We have rich traditions.”

Druckenmiller celebrated tradition, but also believed it was important that he interact personally and informally with students when appropriate.

“You can’t rely on one form of teaching in the classroom … I don’t believe it matters if you’re teaching building construction or you’re teaching economics or you’re teaching welding … You have to change your style of delivery. If you’re extremely formal all the time, you’ll draw some barriers with the students … I think it’s good to break down those formal barriers and have some personal interaction.”

He made it clear that informal teaching did not mean he allowed students to act unprofessionally; in fact, he offered a “subjective” grade, in addition to formal tests scores, to measure their professional behavior.

“I actually grade them on what I call professionalism … all the qualities an employer would like to see: use of working time, care and cleaning of working space, proper tools in a job, attendance and punctuality, ability to follow instructions, ability to work with your supervisors and co-workers,” he explained.

The idea, he said, was to instill an appropriate work ethic in his students.

“We want to promote quality work and good, sound work ethics on the job.”

National Honor Society

Phi Theta Kappa, a two-year degree student national honor society was chartered on campus in 1997. The Beta Epsilon Upsilon Chapter inducted 91 students in the first chartering ceremony. Members were required to earn a minimum 3.5 GPA and commit to college and community service. Also chartered on campus were chapters of Alpha Chi, a national baccalaureate honor society, and Delta Mu Delta, an international honor society for business students.

Creating Convenience

Seeking to provide more opportunities for adults to complete college degrees while maintaining work and family responsibilities, Penn College arranged programming so that a number of degrees could be completed through evening and weekend classes or distance learning.

Students could customize an evening and weekend program of study in bachelor-degree majors (accounting, applied human services, business administration, computer science, dental hygiene, legal studies, nursing, and technology management) and associate-degree majors (accounting, business management, computer studies, human services, legal assistant, and office technology).

For those who were interested in learning from home, Penn College introduced distance learning options in 1996-97. The first Internet-based course in Human Resources Management was offered in 1996. Video-based courses in Principles of Business, Principles of Management, Personal and Community Health, Nutritional Pathways, and Introduction to Cinema were added in 1997.

Distance learning expanded to allow for the completion of a number of two-plus-two baccalaureate degrees; students who had previously completed two-year degrees were able to complete the final two years of their degrees completely online.

The first students to graduate as a group from a Distance Learning degree-completion program at Penn College received their bachelor’s degrees in
dental hygiene during ceremonies at Harcum College in Bryn Mawr in 2000.

“This is the first of what we think will become a continuing trend at Penn College – the ability for more professionals to complete a degree in a format that is convenient and flexible to accommodate a busy personal and professional schedule,” said Fred T. Gilmour, director of instructional technology/distance learning.

The first student to complete a Penn College baccalaureate degree in the automotive technology management via distance learning was Robert W. Stepanovich, who continued working full time while earning his degree.

He enrolled in classes in 1999 after discovering Penn College’s programming online. He graduated cum laude in 2002.

As a father of four young children, Stepanovich said, “The distance learning was essential … By taking courses online, I was free to live wherever I wanted and still attend the same school … I could never have done that while attending conventional classes.”

Before enrolling in the Penn College program, Stepanovich attended classes at another college and a technical institute.

“I actually had more interaction with the instructors online than I did when attending classes [at the other institutions] in person,” he said, adding “For all those who are skeptical of online courses, I have taken both conventional and online courses and found that it all depends on what you are willing to put into it, as to what you’ll get out of it.”

In 1998, the college established the Advanced Automotive Technology Center in a building in the George E. Logue Industrial Park, several miles west of campus. The facility originally was built by the state as an emission testing facility; it was used to offer upper-level course work including instruction related to alternative powered vehicles and motorsports. The industrial park was named for Logue, a distinguished alumnus of Williamsport Technical Institute.

The opportunity for licensed dental hygienists to earn a Penn College bachelor’s degree via distance learning became available in 1998-99. The program was first offered in the Philadelphia area through a “link to learn” grant from the state that allowed Penn College faculty to interact with students on the campus of Montgomery County Community College. The director of the dental hygiene program, Kathleen E. Morr, earned national recognition in that year as the recipient of the Warner Lambert/American Dental Hygienists Association Award for achievement and service.
Cutting-Edge Contribution

Development of the first distance learning classes offered by Penn College was under the direction of a member of the first graduating class of Williamsport Area Community College.

As a technical illustration student at WACC and Williamsport Technical Institute, Fred T. Gilmour designed important and enduring institutional symbols, including the college seal and mace. As director of instructional technology at Penn College, he led a team of professionals who assisted faculty in developing the first distance learning courses as well as the first multimedia marketing pieces that connected users with the Internet.

The Instructional Technology Office, like many others on campus, provided internship opportunities to students, giving them opportunities to work on college projects – as Gilmour had when he was a student.

“We’re able to give students a real, ‘hands-on’ learning experience, using our own cutting-edge technology. They’re having so much fun helping, they rarely complain about anything. When they do, it’s usually because they have to leave at the end of the day!” he said.

Gilmour entered the presidential suite with a commitment to reconnect the institution to its historical roots and its position of prominence in the local community. Among her first acts were the establishment of an Alumni Office on campus in 1998 and the dedication of a new Main Campus entrance – that included a commemorative brick walkway honoring many individuals who had contributed to the institution’s history – in 1999.

Kenneth Harding, who was president of the Student Government Association during the Diamond 10 anniversary year, was a native of Williamsport. His parents both graduated from Williamsport High School in the 1960s, when the high school occupied what later became the College’s Klump Academic Center. His father also attended Williamsport Technical Institute’s vocational-technical program for high school students.

Harding said one of his fondest memories of the celebration year was “purchasing my own brick, which will stay along the walkway for generations to come. It makes me feel as if I have a small piece of myself that stays behind.”

Harding earned an associate’s degree in aviation technology and a bachelor’s degree in aviation maintenance technology from Penn College. He later earned a master’s degree and held a number of positions – including working internationally – in aviation and business fields.

Inauguration and Celebration

Seventy-five years after the first vocational-technical classes were offered in the Klump Academic Center, Penn College celebrated its 10th anniversary as a Penn State affiliate. Adding to the excitement of the “Diamond 10” anniversary was the appointment of a former faculty member to lead the institution.

President Davie Jane Gilmour, who joined the WACC faculty in 1977 and rose to the position of provost before accepting the presidency, said “I saw a community college become the nation’s leading, premier college of technology.”

“I saw a community college become the nation’s leading, premier college of technology.”
Health Care Collaboration

One of the president’s first community initiatives involved collaborating with the Susquehanna Health System to maintain a world-renowned paramedic training program in the city.

The Williamsport Hospital & Medical Center’s Paramedic Training Institute – an accredited, nationally recognized program – was transferred from the health system to Penn College in 1999.

“Paramedic graduates are now looking for opportunities beyond our region,” said the system’s president and chief executive officer Donald R. Creamer. “We believe these students can be better served by the vast placement resources available through Penn College.”

Few paramedic training programs were available in the state. Others were located in Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, and Luzerne County.

Penn College expanded the hospital program in order to offer students the opportunity to earn an associate’s degree. The first class enrolled at Penn College in Fall 1999.

Rededication

The Herman T. Schneebeli Earth Science Center was rededicated in 1999 following a massive renovation and expansion project that brought new life to the facility.

The size of the center was expanded by 60 percent, including the addition of a work area for repairing track and tire vehicles, as well as environmental science labs, library, computer room, and food-service area. A new sawmill was also built on the site.

Todd Mason, who earned an associate degree in horticulture/landscaping nursery technology in 1991, called Penn College “a great experience.”

He said, “I had the unique experience of being an orientation leader, president of SGA, and president of the Horticulture Club at the same time.”

Mason, who later served as a member of the landscaping program’s advisory council, said he attributed his success in the field – first in golf course landscaping and later in sales and training – to “interaction with the faculty at the Earth Science Center.”

“Rich Weilminster would ask how things were going and tell me whatever was going on I could handle it and make the right decision,” he recalled.

Weilminster, who earned the college’s Master Teacher Award in 1986, said, “I always say to the students I wish that I could download what I know and somehow give it … so that the learning process was a little bit easier for them. Of course, they have to work at it. I guess that’s the way it is in life. You have to work for what you achieve. Most students are there. They really want to learn and they’re enthusiastic about what they learn.”

Another former student, Carl J. Bower Jr. – who went on to become a member of the Penn College faculty – said Weilminster was “the kind of teacher that every student wishes they had.”

When the college unveiled the Richard J. Weilminster Arboretum in 2008, the master teacher, who retired in 2006 after more than 30 years on the faculty said, “This is not just a collection of plants. What we really have here is an outdoor classroom.”
SMART Girls

Female leadership at Penn College – with Davie Jane Gilmour as president and Veronica M. Muzic as provost – led to an increasing awareness of the particular needs of young girls who were losing interest in math and science at an early age.

“They hit this wall with science and math and they don’t overcome it,” Muzic said. “That’s usually around junior high, middle school … usually around the seventh grade.”

Research provided by the National Science and Technology Council at the time indicated that although women comprised nearly half of the nation’s workforce, less than 20 percent were employed in lucrative science/technology jobs.

To make an impact by encouraging more girls to consider technology fields, Penn College faculty and administrators developed a career exploration program called SMART Girls – an acronym for Science, Math Applications in Real-World Technologies for Girls.

The inaugural SMART Girls event in 2001 provided seventh and eighth graders opportunities to apply math and science concepts to problem-solving activities in technological career fields. Penn College math and science faculty, in addition to faculty from plastics, forestry, electronics, civil engineering, and computer science technologies, offered the first session’s activities.

“Whatever the activity was, it had to be science/math-focused,” Muzic said.

SMART Girls quickly grew to include more sessions and an overnight, residential component that resulted in increased attention and participation.

“Initially, we used only women as presenters, teachers,” Muzic recalled. “Ultimately, we couldn’t stay with that because we had … too much interest. We needed additional sessions. So, we brought in the men – all our faculty. They did a great job.”

Nancy C. Bowers, associate professor of mathematics, said, “Working with Veronica Muzic and many others in the SMART Girls program brings back fond memories as the program developed from a Saturday event to include an overnight summer program. Seeing the excitement and ability of those young ladies was refreshing.”

Muzic also recalled the girls’ excitement when exposed to a variety of hands-on activities.

“I’ll never forget, they got into that slimy pond at Earth Science … without any consideration for what they were going to look like,” she said. “They were so absolutely open to anything. They didn’t gripe. They didn’t complain, and we ran them ragged.”

One of the early SMART Girls, who went on to earn a Penn College degree in dental hygiene in 2009, said the program introduced her to the field of study she decided to pursue in college.

Kelly A. Braun said, “I began attending the SMART Girls workshops in seventh grade. Through the program, I got to explore many careers, from heavy equipment operator to dental hygienist. I attended both the day programs and the summer workshops. After my experiences, I decided that I wanted to become a dental hygienist … Without the influence of the SMART Girls program, I may not have discovered an interest in the dental field.”

As an adult, Braun returned as a volunteer mentor to SMART Girls’ participants.

“I believe these girls have a true advantage when it comes to finding a career that best suits their interests,” she declared.

“The dental hygiene program launched Sealant Saturday as a community service in the campus clinic in 2002-03. Student, faculty, and professional volunteers provided free services, including screenings and education, to children without access to dental care.
Caring, Loyal Faculty

When the Middle States Commission on Higher Education reaffirmed accreditation of Penn College in 2002-03, it praised the faculty for its commitment to the student body.

“The college has a core group of full-time faculty that is not only caring, but also friendly (and) loyal to Penn College and the students they serve. The students in return have high praise for the faculty, the quality of their teaching, and the support they provide on an ongoing basis. There is a true ‘love affair’ in terms of the students’ feelings about Penn College,” the commission reported.

Displaying that commitment were Robert and Nancy Bowers, math faculty members with the distinction of being the only husband and wife to earn Master Teacher Awards – Nancy in 1990 and Bob in 2007. Bob actually developed the criteria for the teaching award in 1982, while working in an administrative role as executive assistant to the president for internal affairs. He shared the “top 12” requirements that qualify a member of the faculty to earn the college’s highest honor:

- Well-prepared
- Enthusiasm for the subject
- Stimulate student interest
- Good listener
- Build self-esteem and success
- Accessible for help
- High standards and expectations
- Conveys concepts and application effectively
- Actively involves students [Bob says this is #1!]
- Assist toward students becoming independent learners
- Uses appropriate strategies and technology
- Is student-focused

Factory Conversion

When a furniture-making factory on the western perimeter of campus closed in 2001, its owner HON Industries Inc. initiated a gift-purchase arrangement that allowed Penn College to turn the manufacturing plant into an instructional facility.

“It was an unprecedented opportunity for us to take an exceptional industrial and warehouse facility, located immediately adjacent to our campus, and convert it into an instructional facility that will prepare a new generation of workers for jobs here in Northcentral Pennsylvania and around the world,” the college president said.

After an extensive renovation, the college dedicated College Avenue Labs in 2003. Classrooms with the latest technology accommodated growing enrollment in general education classes, such as mathematics, which were previously offered only in Klump Academic Center.

“This building offers what might be considered the prototype for an intelligent large-group classroom,” Gilmour explained. “Computer technology, projectors, screens, voice, data, and video capabilities, and the ability to divide these large spaces into smaller rooms, will give faculty a wide range of options in offering instruction. Students really will experience the best possible learning environment.”

Three programs – collision repair, automated manufacturing and civil engineering technology – were relocated to College Avenue Labs. Each area doubled or tripled the amount of space available for instruction.
Supporting the cost of equipment for the new facility were a $100,000 Community Revitalization Program state grant and contributions from PPG Automotive Refinish and DuPont Performance Castings, which benefited the Collision Repair area.

The president said the project struck an emotional chord with the college and its industry benefactor.

“Whenever a business leaves town and local people lose their jobs, it’s difficult for the community,” she said. “When HON announced it was closing, our first thought was to get our people over there to help those workers figure out what they wanted to do with their futures. We always provide career services when an area business announces a layoff or a closing. Of course, this time it came very close to home; it affected our neighbor. We were very surprised when that neighbor turned around and offered us an opportunity to turn the loss into a gain to turn an empty factory into a lively, instructional facility. We appreciate that HON wanted to continue to make a difference in our community.”

Automation Showcase
Automated manufacturing technology students had the opportunity to experience the latest, industry-standard equipment in the Haas Technical Education Center established inside College Avenue Labs.

Haas Automation Inc. – the largest machine-tool builder in the United States – provided equipment for instructional use within the center. Established in 1983, the company manufactured CNC vertical and horizontal machining centers, CNC lathes, rotary tables, and related equipment.

Edward Kilgallon, president of Philadelphia-based Lance Co., a distributor of Haas equipment, said a partnership with Penn College was important to increase America’s competitiveness in manufacturing. “Through the efforts of technical programs like Penn College, we can meet the challenges of a global economy,” Kilgallon said.

Tremendous Improvement
Moving the civil engineering technology program into College Avenue Labs came as a welcome relief to faculty, who had experienced multiple relocations over the years.

Frederick Rankinen, professor of civil engineering and surveying technologies who earned the Master Teacher honor in 1992, said “In (my) 38 years of full- and part-time teaching, the Civil Engineering and Surveying department moved to seven different locations, including Unit 6, Claster Building, restaurant, Cromar Building, Building Trades Center, Klump Academic Center and College Avenue Labs. Some of these locations and buildings had conditions that were less than desirable and not conducive to a classroom environment. The Cromar and Claster buildings were dirty and noisy and the Building Trades Center had only one classroom, which did not provide adequate space.”

The professor said inadequate instructional space and equipment almost led to the program’s demise in the early 1980s. But, an effort to gain national accreditation breathed new life into a course of study that offered excellent placement opportunities for its graduates.
“The decision was made to try and save the program by applying for accreditation through the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology,” Rankinen said.

After an on-campus visit by an ABET accrediting team, the department received new equipment and computers and moved into the Klump Academic Center, re-energizing the program.

“Throughout my teaching career at WACC and Penn College, from 1968 to 2005, I witnessed a tremendous improvement in the campus environment,” Rankinen said. “Old outdated industrial buildings and grounds were transformed into state-of-the-art buildings with updated equipment and beautiful landscaping.”

Among the most important equipment upgrades impacting the program was the 1994-95 addition of Global Position System tools. A National Science Foundation grant provided equipment that allowed students to master the basics of the GPS satellite navigation system originally developed by the Department of Defense for military purposes. It used Earth-orbiting satellites to derive very precise position measurements.

High school students from six states competed in a robot-to-robot contest, which tested the students’ engineering know-how as part of the FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Tech Challenge, North Central Pennsylvania Regional Qualifier, in College Avenue Labs in 2011. The robots faced a variety of obstacles, including retrieving and depositing batons and balancing on teeter-totters. Penn College students, faculty, and alumni volunteered as judges for the event.

Collision repair laboratory, which moved from the Parkes Automotive Technology Center into the new College Avenue Labs, doubled its space and enrollment capacity. The move also provided room for growth in automotive programs that remained in the Parkes building.
Restoration of the historic Klump Academic Center in 2004 brought fond memories for many people at the college and in the community. It also was a labor of love for its general contractor, who graduated from Williamsport Area Community College decades earlier.

President Gilmour, who began her career at the college on the fourth floor of the building, in the campus’s original dental hygiene lab, said, “This building represents our past, our present, and our future. It also represents what is fundamentally most important to Penn College: student learning and teaching. This Academic Center serves as the literal and figurative foundation for our students, programs and services.”

Dr. William J. Martin, senior vice president who supervised the project, noted that the building had a strong connection with the community, since every person who attended Williamsport High School before 1975 spent time there. He was one of those high school students.

Martin said the circa-1914 building was in good shape, but needed updating to meet building codes and modern technological classroom needs. He said most of the $9 million renovation budget went toward adding restrooms, fire alarms and sprinkler systems, and making the building compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.

Some people suggested it might have been more efficient to tear down the building and construct a new one in its place; but Martin said there was no debate about the importance of maintaining the integrity of the facility that served as the birthplace of the institution.

“It wasn’t a hard decision; it wasn’t even a courageous decision. It was just the right thing to do,” he said.

General contractor for the renovation project was Robert Feaster, who graduated from WACC in 1973. The 2005 Distinguished Alumni Award recipient said he persevered to earn his WACC degree.

“I was married at the time and worked in the morning, scheduled classes for afternoon … also commuted from Sunbury and had to hitch a ride most days because I could not afford the gas to drive.”

Feaster was a liberal arts student at WACC. He wrote a short story titled “The Coldest Night of My Life,” which was published in the Colours literary magazine. The campus magazine was founded by Hugh MacMullan, an English professor who came to WACC after a career in Hollywood.

“He taught me that life can be as big or as small as you choose, but rest assured it is your choice, not some outside force,” Feaster said of MacMullan. “He instilled a sense of confidence in me.”

Feaster said he enjoyed WACC’s small classes and one-on-one relationships with professors – some of whom were only “slightly older than we were … It was easy to relate to them.”
Articles from the Spring 2005 issue of *One College Avenue* magazine captured the excitement of the historic renovation of the Klump Academic Center, formerly Williamsport High School.
When renovating the oldest structure on campus, in need of tender care as it nears the end of its first century, it pays to have a pair of credible "go-to" guys in your corner. And when that building is steeped in institutional history, an edifice that majestically stands as the very genesis of your educational mission, it helps that they have an appreciation and respect for its past.

Klump Academic Center was rededicated late last year after an extensive project reclaimed the building's grandeur and returned the "ACC" to its full intended use as the teaching/learning heart of Pennsylvania College of Technology.

It was an undertaking fraught with challenge: relocating offices, juggling five contractors' schedules, and maintaining instruction amid the dust and din. But in speaking with Walter D. Nyman, director of general services; and Andrew M. Richardson, construction manager - both of whom attended classes when the four-story building was Williamsport High School - it's obvious these were the right men for the job.

"It's just a big, beautiful building with a lot of character that's stood the test of time since 1914, when it was originally constructed," Richardson said.

He, Nyman and Dr. William J. Martin, the College's senior vice president who also attended high school in the building, form a triumvirate that has successfully tackled projects including the beautifully functional Student and Administrative Services Center and the just-begun Roger and Peggy Madigan Library.

In the Klump renovation, however, they rolled up their sleeves for a true labor of love: part archaeological dig, part diplomatic mission and wholly delivered months ahead of schedule.

The Academic Center had seen piecemeal makeovers over its history, but new carpeting and fresh paint were nothing compared to this top-to-bottom operation that cut more than skin-deep.

"The primary goal was to take this grand, old building and refurbish (it) to a look of an earlier time, especially on the outside," Richardson explained. "Then, on the inside, take it to a more modern level. Each classroom is set up with very modern instructional capabilities with video projection and screens, TVs, podium stations. To make it one of the top-notch instructional facilities . . . within the shell of this beautiful, old structure that's close to 90 years old."

Both men retain many memories of their former high school - Nyman learned of President Kennedy's assassination while a student there, and his colleague remarked of basement bomb-shelter supplies among other reminders of days gone by.

Both also have a reverence for the craftsmanship that preceded their efforts: the intricate detail of the carved Indiana limestone, for instance, and the stateliness of the auditorium. Their familiarity with the building - not only as former students, but as workers scouring every crawl space and cranny - makes the changes all the more noticeable.

"You come inside the front doors and you see the (Penn College) logo on the floor, the new handrails, the new carpeting," Nyman said. "Then, you work your way around and see the elevator lobbies, the skylights, the view into the lower level. Those are dramatic, dramatic changes, aesthetically and architecturally, to the building."
A crane lifts the back end of an ambulance, which was cut in half and later reassembled by master mechanic Robert C. Karschner Jr., over the Academic Center, then lowers it into the former courtyard, to be slid through a window into the basement Paramedic Laboratory.

Many touches are behind the scenes, such as the smoothing of cluttered corridors, improvements to elevators and handicapped access, the cleanup of dirty basement recesses and the elimination of space-consuming air shafts.

"Unseen to most people are the dramatic changes we made in the air-conditioning system, upgrading two boilers," Nyman said. "The kinds of things that most people take for granted. Unless they are too hot or too cold, they don’t realize that there is a whole new system."

So new, in fact, that General Services now can change the temperature of an office or classroom simply by calling up that specific location on a laptop computer and remotely making an adjustment. From a maintenance point of view, he said, "we’re going to have a whole lot better facility to deal with."

Treasures were uncovered during reconstruction, such as colorful murals and a running track around the former downstairs gymnasium. And new treasures were created — the "retired" ambulance, for one, acquired for use by paramedic students in their basement laboratory.

In what already has become a much-recounted adventure tale, the vehicle was painstakingly dismantled by General Services master mechanic Robert C. Karschner Jr. . . . maneuvered into tight quarters (along with a companion "crash car" simulator)... rewired and repainted... and eventually placed into service as a working classroom tool.

"To take all that apart, split the thing in half, and then put it all back together and make it an instructional piece of equipment was no minor feat," Nyman explained. "Not even to mention the fact that we had to hire a rigger to pick it up by crane and drop it down in ‘the hole’ before that was all closed up and get it into the building at a very early part of the construction phase. That was a really once-in-a-lifetime piece of construction that we did there."

The ambulance is one huge indicator of the reinvigorated attention to instructional space. The building is filled with countless smaller touches that have turned the somewhat cavernous old building into an intimate learning environment. Even those subtle changes haven’t been lost on faculty and students.

"The feedback we’re getting is very good in that the structure is much better," Richardson said. "There’s a warmer feeling to the classrooms. The drywall that we’ve added and some of the finishes have all helped make the building feel a little more comfortable and (become) a better teaching environment."

The good reviews from some of the same people who were most inconvenienced by the renovation are an indication of the teamwork that characterized the entire project.

"If you polled many of the faculty, I think the percentage would be very high of people who were very pleased (that) what they had to put up with (was) not that great a sacrifice for what we have now ended up with," Nyman said.

Nor has the building’s amazing transformation escaped the notice of others.

"The term that was used many times was we want to see a ‘Wow!’ factor when we’re done.

"To make it one of the top-notch instructional facilities . . . within the shell of this beautiful, old structure that’s close to 90 years old."

We want this to be a significant change," Nyman recalled. "Having toured with the Board of Directors and just listening to their responses through the several different areas, I think we achieved our goal."

What of the eponymous Dr. Klump, a former local physician and onetime member of the Williamsport Area Community College Board of Trustees, whose portrait hangs in the newly appointed lobby of the Academic Center?

"I was looking at it the other day and, somehow, the sunlight was coming in through the front glass windows and shining right on Dr. Klump at that point, and I thought, boy, that’s a perfect spot for him to be seated at this time of day," said Richardson, perhaps providing the optimum word for the entire enterprise. "It was perfect."
The recent rededication of the Klump Academic Center gives us the opportunity to reflect upon the evolution of Pennsylvania College of Technology. New construction and renovations are common occurrences on our campus, so perhaps it is difficult for us to appreciate what the newly constructed Williamsport High School building represented to the residents of Williamsport in 1914. Placing the event in its context may help.

It was the year the Panama Canal opened, Edgar Rice Burroughs published “Tarzan of the Apes,” and Irving Berlin’s first musical, “Watch Your Step,” starring Vernon and Irene Castle, opened on Broadway. Movie theaters were showing the serial “The Perils of Pauline,” and the Model T touring car cost $550. World War I began, and the first telephone line between New York and San Francisco was completed. Stories covered by the local edition of the Grit that November revealed that L.L. Stearns sold women’s tailored suits for $22.50, that the iron fence with brick pillars surrounding Way’s Garden was completed, that the city experienced a boom in housing construction, and that the Lycoming County Society for the Prevention of Tuberculosis reported headway in its battle against the disease.

Why was a new school building such an important event in the life of the community? A brief overview of the school’s history helps to answer that question. When students and faculty moved into the newly completed building in 1914, Williamsport High School had occupied five previous locations. The city’s first high school was organized in 1869 by selecting 13 pupils from existing grammar schools. Students were tested, and those who scored highest became the first high-school class. Grammar-school teachers objected to losing their best pupils, and the public balked at the cost of an additional school. The three-year course of study included advanced versions of basic grammar-school subjects, plus algebra, chemistry, physiology and philosophy.

From 1869 until 1872, the school was located on the north side of Fourth Street, between Elmira and Hepburn streets, and later in a building identified as DuBois Hall. In 1872, the school moved to the second floor of the Independence Fire House, just north of Christ Episcopal Church on Mulberry Street. The year 1878 found the school relocated to the third floor

This photo of Williamsport High School was featured in the program for the building’s 1914 dedication ceremony.

For Klump Academic Center rededication video, go to: www.pct.edu/campmap/acc-video.htm

by Patricia A. Scott, collection development librarian
Sons of America and the Daughters of Liberty. The ceremony, held in the school auditorium, was attended by 2,000 people, though the auditorium seated only 1,500.

Education and good citizenship were inextricably linked in the minds of those who witnessed the festivities, a belief reflected in an eloquent excerpt from the dedication program.

"The Williamsport High School Building, beautiful and majestic as it is, was not erected for the purpose of making real the dream of the man who has the honor of being its architect nor as a monument to the men who have given so much time and thought to its construction. Its purpose is rather to be found in the unrestricted opportunity which it offers for the development of future citizens of the community.

Its purpose is rather to be found in the unrestricted opportunity which it offers for the development of future citizens of the community.

It marks a step in the onward march of progress in education and should contribute to the eternal well-being of all who enter its doors."

If those who attended the building's original dedication had been present at its rededication in December 2004, they would have felt very much at home.
Provides Picture of Penn College Life

by Nancy C. Bowers, associate professor of mathematics and Mark D. Noe, professor of English-composition

Just before Thanksgiving, several representatives of Pennsylvania College of Technology gathered as a time capsule was secured in the atrium lobby of the Klump Academic Center. Veronica M. Muzic, vice president for academic affairs/provost, originated the idea for the time capsule as one means to commemorate the rededication of the 90-year-old former Williamsport High School. As Dr. Davie Jane Gilmour, Penn College president, stated in her accompanying message (included in the time capsule in both audio and print formats), the committee worked “to give you (the people of 2054) a comprehensive review of the state of the College, the state of our community, and a reflection of what is happening in the world around us at the same time.”

Interest in the time capsule was College-wide, as the committee received a multitude of ideas for what to place in it. The committee has its favorites. There are three articles from the Williamsport Sun-Gazette that explain the history of and renovations to the building. There is a laptop computer that committee member Jim Folmar loaded with videos of the College and community, spectacular aerial photos of the main campus, and the audio message from Dr. Gilmour. There is a scrapbook, the inspiration of student member Joshua Appleman, which includes creative pages from 20 student organizations. There are news articles collected by committee members Jim Green and Mindy Carr that reflect important world events in 2004, election 2004 memorabilia, and local and campus news articles. Particularly important to the committee, there are two pages in the scrapbook that list the 50 Penn College students who were called out of their classes for military duty between the Spring 2003 semester and mid-October 2004.

Committee members were surprised to learn how often time capsules are lost or forgotten. Numerous precautions were taken to protect the contents of this time capsule from damage and to ensure it is not forgotten. A rededication DVD has recorded the history of the filling and sealing of the capsule. A very visible plaque marks the capsule’s location on the first floor in the northeast corner of the building.

Patricia A. Scott, Penn College collection development librarian, advised the committee on specific steps to ensure the contents survive. She made sure we used acid-free folders, boxes and packing materials and polypropylene sleeves and foam to pack materials. We took out batteries (which could explode or leak) and added a desiccant (to keep things dry). A complete list of the contents is in the Penn College library archives. In addition, Pat Scott registered the time capsule with the International Time Capsule Society, headquartered at Oglethorpe University in Atlanta. (See www.oglethorpe.edu for a fascinating education on time capsules.)

When the time capsule is opened in 2054, a fitting date would be Dec. 7, the 50th anniversary of the rededication ceremony. Members of the faculty, staff, administration and student body should be present, as they were at the sealing of the time capsule. Current student and committee member Appleman should be invited, but our bet is that he’ll call the College in 2054, asking for his invitation. We hope the slice of 2004 history we preserved will enlighten our successors in 2054 about their past. As Dr. Gilmour encourages them in her audio message, “perhaps you will replace our time capsule with something that reflects you, and we can preserve the legacy of this fine institution in memoriam.”

A list of contents of the time capsule can be found on the back cover.
Completing a renovation project seven months ahead of schedule is no easy feat, especially when the building being refurbished must remain occupied.

“In a renovation project, working ahead of schedule is really unlikely. Typically, a renovation project will run behind schedule,” said Robert Feaster, general contractor for the Klump Academic Center renovation and a crucial player in helping the project move ahead smoothly.

His Northumberland-based company, Robert Feaster Corp., has renovated many buildings, but this one was particularly satisfying.

“I took 10 classes in that building,” Feaster said. “From a personal standpoint, I was proud we got that project and proud to be part of the renovation.”

Feaster earned an associate’s degree in liberal studies from Williamsport Area Community College, a predecessor of Pennsylvania College of Technology, in 1973.

One of the project elements he is most pleased with is the restoration of the building’s brick-and-stone façade.

“When the scaffolding came down and you could see the difference between the old and the new, it looked like we had relaid the brick. That was a lot of labor to clean it, repoint it and seal it instead of putting a new brick face on it,” he said.

He said the goal of a restoration project – especially to a building with the historic value that the Academic Center has for Williamsport – is to beautify the structure but keep its character.

“When you go inside, the integrity of the building is there, but it’s been given a new face, with drop ceilings and new flooring to spruce things up. But the restoration of the existing masonry on the outside is where you can tell whether a contractor did his job or didn’t do his job,” Feaster said.

And while the finished product was a success, some issues in any renovation project threaten to wreak havoc on a contractor’s schedule.

“The challenge in working within an existing structure as opposed to starting a new structure is that there are things you find as you are working that no one knew were there,” Feaster said.

For instance, a contractor may attempt to cut a hole for a new window and find a steel beam in the way.

“Now you have to change your approach, and it’s unforeseen,” Feaster said. “The decisions have to be made by an architect or an engineer, or sometimes the College, and these decisions have to be made very promptly.”

He said such surprises arise on renovation projects on a weekly and sometimes a daily basis, and, in this case, they were addressed swiftly, helping to move the project ahead of schedule.

Contractors also overcame the need to keep the building functioning. Because the Academic Center is a key instructional facility for the campus’s growing student population, the College couldn’t afford to lose the entire space for teaching classes.

“Keeping a building occupied does somewhat slow a project down,” Feaster said. “But the staff was so cooperative. Sometimes they had to move three times to stay ahead of us. Students, too – sometimes they would walk in a door one day, the next day it wasn’t there, and the next day there was a new door. There was a lot of patience on the part of the staff and the students.”

That tolerance and the pride that each person involved in the renovation project took in their work was key, Feaster said.

“Overall, from the students through the faculty to the administration, the architect and the contractors, it was just a grand effort of cooperation by all parties, and that is what made it a successful project, in both finishing ahead of schedule and the quality of the outcome,” he said. “It is something we’re going to be proud of, and it’s going to stand a long time. It’s a good old building.”
I don’t know who George S. Klump was … or what he did … or why his name is associated with the George S. Klump Academic Center on the campus of Pennsylvania College of Technology. To those of us who occupied the structure between 1914 and 1972, it was simply known as “the high school.” Since the winter of 1972, the occupants have known it as “the ACC.”

I do know, however, its history goes far beyond a name. The building has survived two world wars and the Great Depression, numerous renovations, and a baby-boomer population that pushed its capacity to the limits. Yet, it still stands as a symbol of a proud community and flourishing campus. Over the past 90 years, it has played a key role in the development of CEOs and politicians, doctors and lawyers, artists and educators. In its classrooms sat leaders of industry and technology, laborers and soldiers, parents and mentors, and even a college-football Heisman Trophy Award winner.

The building has undergone six major renovations since its opening in 1914. This past year, the building underwent its most recent renovation. A Williamsport High School alumnus and current Penn College senior vice president, Dr. William J. Martin, directed the project.

In an era that is defined by disposable products, the building once again dodged the wrecking ball. Razing the structure and rebuilding gave way to a renovation project that preserved a part of history. The external structure, aside from a few alterations, stands as it has for nearly a century. The internal structure the same, its character maintained.

The decision of the college to renovate, and not rebuild, is a gift to all those who occupied the building over the past 90 years. Both the city of Williamsport and Penn College continue to have a monumental building that reflects the past and forges into the future.

The following are three short stories I hold of my years as a student at the Williamsport High School and a professor at Penn College.

A Tunnel to the Gym

In 1939, the high-school gymnasium was moved from its original location in the basement of the building to its present location across Third Street. I presume the prank began around this time. The upperclassmen at the high school would start a rumor that a tunnel was built from the main high-school building, under Third Street, into the (new) gymnasium. Sophomores, entering the high school for the first time, would be told that, in order to use the tunnel, they would have to purchase a pass from the upperclassmen. As a member of the 1962 sophomore class, I was approached by upperclassmen to purchase such a pass. Fortunately, I knew of the prank and avoided becoming a victim. But a tunnel was such a good idea, that it was tempting. Today, as I watch Penn College students, tired of waiting in inclement weather for the Third Street traffic light to change, I believe they, like me, would still think a tunnel is a good idea.

The Auditorium

The American Indians built a large council house in the center of their villages. It was where the villagers could meet and address significant matters and make vital decisions. It was located in the center of the village to signify unity among the members of the tribe. I don’t understand
architectural design, or why the builders of the Williamsport High School chose to place their auditorium in the center of the building, but I can see a connection between the "council house" and the auditorium.

The faculty and student body of the Williamsport High School attended regular assemblies in the auditorium. Williamsport, throughout most of the 20th century, was a secular community: The German neighborhood was located in the eastern part of the city and the Polish in the western sector. The Irish neighborhood was in the northcentral and the Italians in the southcentral. The African-American neighborhood was in the central and pockets of other ethnic groups scattered throughout the city. But in the high-school auditorium, they all sat as one unified group. It was the school’s "council house." Today, at the beginning and end of each semester, the faculty and staff of Penn College gather in the same auditorium – diverse disciplines of education, together as one unified group. It is still the "council house."

The President Is Dead

I attended the former Williamsport High School from 1962-65. We were the baby-boomer generation. My class graduated 750 students; the school enrollment was more than 2,000 students. The building was bursting at the seams. Its days as the Williamsport area’s high school were numbered. The old building was showing its age.

On Nov. 22, 1963, I was seated in my junior English class, on the second floor, southwest corner of the now-ACC building. A knock at the door disrupted class. Our teacher was called out of the room. My classmates and I sensed something was wrong, but didn't foresee the dramatic event about to unfold. A distressed teacher returned, gathered her composure and announced to us, "The president is dead!" John F. Kennedy, the 35th president of the United States, had been assassinated. We sat in silence, then burst into an assortment of emotion.

Forty years later, I can still remember that day. On Sept. 11, 2001, I had a similar experience. While instructing class, I was called out of the room and told of a strange event happening in New York City. My students and I began watching the news coverage. We watched as a second airplane crashed into the World Trade Center. America was under attack! We sat in silence, then burst into an assortment of emotion. It will be remembered by all for a long time.

A Significant Preservation

Thousands of students, faculty and staff have occupied the Williamsport High School/ACC building over the past 90 years. There are millions of similar stories. I wish I could hear them all. It’s one good reason why preserving this building is so significant.

I don’t know who George S. Klump was … or what he did to have his name associated with such a magnificent building as the George S. Klump Academic Center. I do consider him to be a fortunate man to have his name immortalized in such a way.

Editor’s Note: Dr. Klump was a local physician and member of the Williamsport Area Community College Board of Trustees.

High-school students cross Third Street to get to gym class during the 1964-65 school year.
Grow old along with me,  
The best is yet to be.
To anthropomorphize the Klump Academic Center by borrowing from the Browning love sonnet may appear to be a stretch; however, in many ways, those words fit this 90-year-old building and its 35-year association with the College.

As the Williamsport High School, it played a part in the Williamsport Plan, focused on job training, during the era of our predecessor institution, The Williamsport Technical Institute. Today, we tout “degrees that work,” continuing that commitment as we educate the workforce of the 21st century.

When W.T.I. became a comprehensive community college and was reborn as Williamsport Area Community College, the building housed still-existent majors and services. TotWatch, the child-care facility on the first floor, provided an important service for the students in essentially one large room. That commitment to student service continues in today’s Children’s Learning Center, an accredited, Keystone 4-Star facility, with 6,000 square feet of space. It goes beyond child care to the early education implied by its name, an appropriate extension of its predecessor.

In the early years of the 35-year association with the College, the building housed Radiography, Dental Hygiene and Hospitality, including the student-operated restaurant. And there, those programs established themselves, ultimately moving to other, larger spaces, allowing both growth and technological currency. The classroom that was a dining room on the first floor grew into Le Jeune Chef; the one-room labs with limited equipment grew into the accredited, competitive-admissions majors they now are. Advertising Art lived in the basement; its space – and the addition of a baccalaureate – multiplied, as has its addition of electronic resources.

Civil Technology was also a basement program, working around pillars and pipes; its move to the College Avenue Labs and its accreditation by the Technology Accreditation Commission of the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology have helped it prosper.

Also in the initial years, the campus eatery lived on the ground floor in then-adequate space; from there, it moved to the Lifelong Education Center and its Susquehanna Room branding. That one eatery then multiplied as enrollment had grown. Also in the basement was a machines-only eatery, a precursor, first, to the International Café and now to Wrapture on the first floor of the Academic Center. There were game machines in the building – wind-down options for between classes; PacMan was the big draw. Today, in the Campus Center, that need is met not just with game machines but also with pool tables, TV lounge and – in the Field House – intramurals and – in the Fitness Center – workout equipment.

Cast me not off in the time of old age…” And the College acted on that directive from Psalms; before this major renovation came other upgrades. The auditorium, one space that saw extensive earlier upgrading and was, therefore, not in need of the extensive facelift just completed, has attracted both the College community and the larger community as an audience, including college students from Bucknell, Susquehanna and University Park. There was the memorable Maya Angelou, onstage with a packed house, the “Phenomenal Woman” sharing her poetry. Afternoon and evening, packed houses heard Alice Walker read from her works. We heard Shirley Chisolm and Marsha Norman and Marge Piercy; we watched “For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf” and listened to its author. And even before those events, there was the Film Series, a faculty-student endeavor that provided not just the opportunity to watch together but also to engage in discussion. Now, lecturers draw students and the community, as does the Williamsport Symphony Orchestra for its “off-series” performances. The commitment to cocurricular enrichment activity remains alive in other forms, including, for example, the Art on Campus initiative.

As the Academic Center, the building has always been home to assorted academic disciplines and classes. In those early years, faculty pushed their overhead projector carts (from slides to overheads) and distributed their mimeographed
A Love Story

sylabii in rooms with nailed-to-the-floor student seating; agony seating for our nontraditional students. Same classrooms, different ambience, top-of-the-line technology, and no more blue-ink syllabii/blue-ink stained fingers. Even better – the ability to move desks and chairs to allow students to collaborate. Just as the student newspaper, Spotlight, that once worked out of the building, has given way to the electronic daily, PCToday, the purposes remain unchanged while the technology moves forward.

...PURPOSES remain unchanged while the TECHNOLOGY moves forward.

...In age we understand
Marie von Ebner Eschenbach’s aphorism aptly speaks to the maturation of the College; through its ages, the commitments to education, to students, to the community have been refined, not replaced or altered. Teaching remains the focus and the strong point it has always been. The names associated with the one building on campus through which every student moves have changed also. The old guard is pretty much gone; their replacements, however, come with the same passion and regard for the educational process.

That passion and regard led to the establishment of the writing center, precursor to today’s accredited Tutoring Center, home again in the Academic Center. Originally on the fourth floor, in what had been the Nursing lab, then the Radiography lab, originally a writing center, today’s Tutoring Center has added to its stock of English and math tutoring just about any subject, delivered by 11 professional and 50 student tutors, on duty at various times. Its commitment remains unchanged – no cost to students, fill the need, function as an extension of the classroom experience.

The computer folks are still in the building – some of them, anyway. The huge servers are gone, as are the punch cards. Computer labs have been added, along with wireless capability for laptop users. The Academic Center’s manual typewriters gave way to electric typewriters, then to word-processing machines and, ultimately, to computers, now flat-screened, networked, one-to-a-person. The tools have changed; their purpose, however, has not; they continue to make teaching and learning more efficient and student-serving.

Age cannot wither her... said Shakespeare, and age has been kind to the Academic Center. The structure is sound; its extreme makeover was a sound decision, serving the institutional mission and commitment to both students and employees. Classrooms are now comfortable; students need no longer sit on the corridor floors; there are student study areas; faculty offices provide privacy and space; “necessary rooms” allow space to move, as well as handicap access. There was no need to “gut” the building and start over; the soundness of the original design allowed re-allocation of existing space to today’s and tomorrow’s purposes.

And The best is yet to be... What exactly will be “the best” that will mark this institution when the time capsule is opened 50 years hence? The expectation, based on the past 35 years’ history, suggests that faculty will be teaching and students learning – perhaps the same material. (Does algebra change? What about speech? Will students ever not need tutorial services?) The two computer labs will likely be gone, declared fossils. The tech-futurists believe that we’ll be paperless; syllabii, assignments, library resources will continue as part of the students’ life, but in electronic form (actually, that progression has begun). Will textbooks load down backpacks? Will those students be carting backpacks?

There is one safe prediction – any changes will advance the institution to its next level; a commitment to teaching and learning will continue, as will the commitment to excellence. And playing its part in that important work will stand the Academic Center, as it has for almost a century. Sentinel to the “best that’s yet to be,”

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Make a Difference

Penn College students and alumni often referred to the influence of faculty and staff mentors when describing their personal and professional progress in life.

Two former SGA presidents – Sabrena O’Keefe (2005-06) and Brian Walton (2008-09) – went on to become college administrators after graduation.

O’Keefe said, “I am now a student affairs professional … If it was not for my experience as a student leader, I would have never even known my field existed!”

She earned an associate degree in computer information systems in 2004 and a bachelor’s degree in business administration with a concentration in human resource management in 2007 before continuing her studies in the field of higher education.

“I just wanted to make a difference as a student leader. I tried to do everything I could to impact Penn College in a positive manner during my time there.”

Walton, who earned an associate degree in heating, ventilation and air conditioning technology in 2007 and a bachelor’s degree in technology management in 2009, returned to the campus to work as an admissions representative and coordinator of academic operations in the School of Business & Hospitality.

“From the moment I stepped onto campus I felt that Penn College was a home away from home,” he said. “I look at my entire time spent as a student leader as a learning experience. My experience as a student leader had given me my first exposure to staff meetings, committee meetings, working with groups, leading groups, creating/conducting surveys, and much more.”

O’Keefe said she also learned the importance of community service as a Penn College student.

“Hurricane Katrina hit while I was a student. I remember raising money and going on an alternative break trip to Mississippi that truly changed my life.

Hearing the stories of the survivors and seeing the wreckage was so heartbreaking and motivated me to do whatever I could to help!”

Hurricane Katrina hit close to home for two strong supporters of the college’s culinary program. Louisiana restaurateurs John Folse and Leah Chase each worked more than once in the kitchens of Penn College’s Le Jeune Chef Restaurant. Folse traveled to Penn College five times and Chase twice.

In honor of the visiting chefs, student and faculty volunteers hosted “Gumbo for a Cause” and raised $1,500 selling containers of Louisiana-style chicken, sausage, shrimp, and oyster gumbo.

Mary G. Trometter, assistant professor of food and hospitality management/culinary arts, said, “Both Chef Folse and Miss Chase, when they were here as visiting chefs, had prepared their version of gumbo for our guests.”

College Town

Williamsport’s mayor proclaimed the first week of September 2005 “College Town Week” to honor the city’s institutions of higher learning and celebrate the launch of a “Making our town your town” website developed by Penn College students.

The site – developed by Penn College students Daniel Little, Robin Carey, Shaun Scheimreif, and Julie Reppert – featured a calendar of events, interactive map of the city, and links to information on local services.

Little, who chaired the College Town website project, said, “Working on College Town has been one of the best experiences of my life. In the two years that I have been a part of College Town, not only have I learned about our town and surroundings, but I have also connected with a lot of people.”
In 2002, Scheimreif and another Penn College student Amanda Stine developed a searchable database of available industrial and commercial real estate in Lycoming County while working as interns for the Williamsport-Lycoming Chamber of Commerce. The site earned an American Chamber of Commerce Executive’s Award for Communications Excellence.

Statewide Network

Penn College became a key partner in a business growth and retention initiative funded by a $3.75 million U.S. Department of Labor grant in 2005.

The Pennsylvania Plastics Initiative supported development of the plastics industry by partnering resources of the Pennsylvania Workforce Investment Board, Penn State, Penn College, a consortium of local Workforce Investment Boards, and the statewide system of Industrial Resource Centers and Ben Franklin Technology Partners.

Penn College offered one of only four plastics technology programs in the country accredited by the Technology Accreditation Commission of the Accreditation Board of Engineering and Technology. The campus also was home to the Plastics Manufacturing Center. Founded in 1994, the center was one of the nation’s top plastic technology centers offering industry support for all types of plastics processing, including injection molding, extrusion, blow molding, and rotomolding.

“By providing scholarships for students and helping incumbent workers maintain competitive skills, the funding will be an important step in keeping Pennsylvania manufacturers in step with advances in polymer materials and processing technologies,” Gilmour declared.

Assistant Professor Timothy E. Weston, who developed the plastics and polymer technology program at the college and became its first instructor in 1987, received the 2006 International Education Award from the Society of Plastics Engineers. Under his leadership, the program added a baccalaureate degree in 1992 and became the fourth plastics program in the country accredited by the Technology Accreditation Commission/The Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology in 1995. He also was instrumental in developing the Plastics Manufacturing Center (which later became the Plastics Innovation and Resource Center) and was a principal in the development of the Plastics Resources for Educators Program, a joint effort between Penn College and Penn State that was supported by grants from the National Science Foundation.
Public Statement

A new library built inside the college’s main entrance in 2006 made a public statement about the comprehensive nature of the learning experience at Penn College, according to its president.

“The library is integral to the educational mission of Penn College and it is central to the learning process for all students,” she said.

The new 1,000-seat facility offered large collections of resources – books and other media – as well as computer labs, a coffeehouse, and relaxing spaces where students could meet, conduct research, and study together. It also hosted activities that were open to the community.

“Roger and Peggy Madigan – for whom our library is named – committed their lives to public service. We want to ensure that the Madigan Library is committed to service, as well,” the president said.

A popular feature of Madigan Library was the Gallery at Penn College, which offered exhibits of contemporary, original works of art. Exhibits – selected by a committee of faculty, staff and community artists – as well as meet-the-artist receptions and gallery talks encouraged personal growth, social awareness, and cultural diversity.

The library’s James Everett Logue Popular Reading Atrium was named in memory of a veteran faculty member and 1988 recipient of the Master Teacher Award. Friends of the late English professor – who enjoyed a 39-year teaching career at Penn College and its predecessor – made gifts to support the establishment of the reading atrium. After his death in 2004, Logue’s widow, Darla, a former associate professor of dental hygiene, arranged for the donation of his papers – including literature and music, as well as documents from his days as a student and teacher – to Madigan Library’s archives.

Keith Vanderlin, who earned the Master Teacher Award in 1999, introduces his grandchild to The Gallery at Penn College.

“Three generations of Vanderlins have lived in Williamsport before me. My roots run deep in this city … I knew in my heart that I wanted to teach art and photography at the college level and I wanted to contribute to the art culture of Williamsport,” said Vanderlin, who joined the college faculty in 1986.
Business Practice

Is there value in earning a business degree from a college committed to combining classroom theory with practical experience?

“Business is experience-related,” said Dr. Irwin H. Siegel, professor of business law and business administration and the college’s 2005 Master Teacher Award recipient, who often shared his own workplace experience with students in his popular business classes.

The college’s ‘degrees that work’ marketing slogan, he said, is “broader than just a vocational type of thing.” He said “practice-oriented” education is important not only for those who immediately enter the workforce, but also for those who “want to go straight to grad school – and we do have a number of those as well.”

He confirmed that hands-on, applied technology experience is important in the conference room, the boardroom and the courtroom.

“We have the applied part – students know how to build spreadsheets and that type of thing – in addition to business theory.”

Before joining the Penn College faculty in 1998, Siegel earned an undergraduate degree in English and taught for a few years before entering law school and establishing a career as a corporate attorney in financial institutions and insurance companies.

“I think students recognize I’ve been there – as far as boardrooms and managing and that type of thing,” he said. “I teach a lot of theory, but to the same extent, I’ve sort of ‘been there and done that.’”

As a professor, he was determined to use his life experience – including extensive research in organizational behavior and theory – as a foundation for teaching.

Accreditation from both the International Assembly for Collegiate Business Education and the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs gave evidence of the strength of Penn College’s business and accounting majors.
“I wanted to teach at an educational institution that would allow me to apply that business experience and not look down upon it as a negative or something that kept you out of research for 20 years,” Siegel said. “Penn College was the perfect fit.”

Penn College encouraged faculty to maintain one primary focus, the professor said.

“Our faculty is largely dedicated to teaching. It’s not … focused on research, as you would have in the big universities.”

Tax Time

In 2006, Penn College partnered with the Salvation Army to expand a free tax assistance program that had its foundation years earlier at Williamsport Area Community College.

Accounting, business, and legal assistant students, under the mentorship of business administration and management professor Phillip D. Landers, helped thousands of low- and moderate-income taxpayers in the region prepare and file their tax returns over the years.

Through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance campaign, students not only provided a valuable community service; they also achieved certification on software programs developed by the Internal Revenue Service and gained valuable experience interacting with tax clients.

“I know of students who have gotten jobs eventually because on their resumes they would say ‘volunteer, VITA program,’ because the employer knew that they had experience with software, interviewing clients – the psychology of interviewing clients,” Landers said.

Kylie N. Waslosky, an accounting student who did an internship as administrative coordinator with VITA, said her experience in preparing and filing the individuals’ returns as well as helping to recruit and train other volunteers convinced her she was on the right career path.

“I quickly learned that taxes are what I’m really interested in,” she said. “By the end of the tax season, I felt that I learned a great deal of information just by volunteering.”

Penn College’s Student Managed Investment Fund trading group, advised by faculty member Roy A. Fletcher, received trading approval and online access to a stock trading account in 2006. In its first six months of trading, the group’s investment portfolio outperformed Standard & Poor’s 500, a key industry benchmark.
Last Words

What would you talk about if you knew you had only one more chance in your lifetime to speak to a group of students?

This question was posed to selected faculty at the introduction of the My Last Words Lecture Series, introduced in 2006.

In 2008, the series was dedicated in honor of David A. London, associate professor of speech communication/composition and a former chair of College Council, who died earlier that year.

Adnan Syed, a native of Pakistan who earned an associate degree in computer information systems in 1992 and a bachelor’s degree in data communications and networking in 1995, said London became his “American dad” while he was attending Penn College.

“First and foremost, David London was an unbelievable teacher – a natural! His teaching style was very dynamic; he kept his students engaged through student-teacher and student-student discussions,” he said. “His classes were filled with invigorating debates and provided stimulus for critical thinking. Students were exposed to real-life experiences as they compiled reports for organizational behavior classes by engaging with local business individuals or went through an interview process to strengthen techniques taught in public-speaking classes.”

London’s colleague and friend, Sandra Lakey, associate professor of speech communication and composition, was the first speaker after the series was renamed. Her inspirational tribute included a montage of photos of London.

Other faculty speakers, nominated by students, over the years were: Edward A. Vavra, rhetoric; David L. Evans, biology; Michael J. Ditchfield, hospitality management/culinary arts; LaRue R. Reese, human service/social sciences; Eugene M. McAvoy, English composition; Daniel L. Brooks, architectural technology; Bruce A. Wehler, English, speech communication; Gerri F. Luke, business administration/marketing; David S. Sims, English composition; William J. Astore, history; Charles R. Niedermyer II, baking and pastry arts/culinary arts; Ryan P. Good, welding, and Jacob R. Miller, computer information technology.

High Achievers

A program aimed at fully energizing academically gifted students through a blend of academic, cultural, and social enrichment was introduced to the campus in 2006.

The Honors Program evolved following a recommendation of Master Teachers serving on the President’s Quality Commission. Students were invited into the program during the second semester of their first year of study, based on their academic success in high school and their first semester at Penn College.

The program was developed to accommodate both associate- and bachelor-degree students. Honors Program students shared a class, conducted independent research, performed service work, participated in a symposium, and studied abroad. The first faculty coordinator for the program was Thomas E. Ask, associate professor of HVAC technology/mechanical refrigeration and design.

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The first-year theme, “Maritime World,” introduced students to topics ranging from maritime law to art history. The group learned about ship technology, produced drawings of boats, wrote poetry and read classics including “The Old Man and the Sea,” by Ernest

Each student investigated a topic related to the theme and his/her field of study. Selected students’ research presented during the first-year symposium were: “Biodiesel: A Technician’s Perspective” by Micah A. Metzel, diesel technology with Instructor David C. Johnson, faculty adviser; “A Look at Modern Feminist Pedagogy in Business Classroom,” by Monika K. Weader, business administration with professor Irwin H. Siegel, faculty adviser, and “Composites: Evolution Through the Years and Beyond,” by Benjamin W. Thompson, aviation maintenance technology with assistant professor Walter V. Gower, faculty adviser.

Study Abroad

Opportunities to explore the world expanded for Penn College students in the 21st century. From exchange programs with institutions in Mexico and Germany to a service program in Nicaragua and graduate-level studies in Ireland, Penn College students traveled the world to realize their dreams.

One of the most unusual study-abroad experiences was a component of a math survey course, Introduction to Non-European Mathematics, developed by Rob Cooley, assistant professor of anthropology and environmental science, and Curt E. Vander Vere, assistant professor of mathematics.

After studying mathematical concepts of Egyptian, Babylonian, African, Chinese, Central and South American civilizations by exploring architecture, astronomy, art, and other cultural components, students traveled to Guatemala to experience the Mayan culture.

Cooley said the course was not “just mathematics” but rather “an attempt to show that the modern world is a complex mixture of unique cultures.” Students, he said, kept ethnographic travel journals to help them “process their experience and take their travels beyond tourism.”

One of the rewards of international travel, he said, would be an opportunity for students to consider the wide range of future employment opportunities available to them.

“The job market is increasingly global, and an international experience such as this expands students’ cultural perspectives and truly gives them a deeper appreciation of cultural diversity,” Cooley affirmed.
Arabian Dreams

“I never dreamt of something like this 25 years ago when we began developing the plastics curriculum for the college,” said Timothy E. Weston, associate professor and department head for plastics and polymer technology.

Weston was speaking about the growing enrollment of students from Saudi Arabia after the college established a formal agreement with Jubail Industrial College, which created a pipeline for students interested in Penn College’s plastics and polymer engineering technology bachelor-degree major.

“This is my dream college,” said Sami A. Al Anazi, one of the first students from Jubail to enroll. “I want to get the best education in the world.”

Saudi pioneers who enrolled in 2009-10 were Mohmmed H. AlNasser, 28; Fadhil A. Aljishi, 26; and Al Anazi, 27. They completed Penn College’s English as a Second Language program, transferred credits from JIC and entered Penn College with junior status.

AlNassar described the Saudi students’ efforts to perform well on behalf of their nation.

“One had to develop the appropriate behavior and passion to compete with native English speakers and go beyond their educational achievements to be among the honor students of Penn College,” he said. “That is the utmost challenge, as we Saudi students are perceived as representatives of our educated community.”

Weston recalled, “I asked the first few Saudi students if they all wanted to be in the same lab together so it would be easier for them to communicate. Without hesitation, they said, ‘No. We want to get out with Americans and have the American experience.’ That really impressed me.”

Under an articulation agreement finalized in 2012, students earned scholarships to study at Penn College through the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission, initiated by Saudi ruler King Abdullah. Students make a commitment to return to Saudi Arabia to use their expertise.

Baccalaureate degree dental hygiene students and faculty Mary Jo Saxe and Rhonda J. Seebold traveled to Nicaragua in 2009 to share information on dental care, diet and health.
Four students came under the King Abdullah Scholarship Program for Technical Training in 2011. More than 25 students followed by the spring of 2013 – in programs ranging from HVAC, electronics and computer engineering technology, manufacturing engineering technology, computer-aided product design, welding and fabrication engineering technology and building automation technology.

In addition to enhancing their technical knowledge, the program prepared the Saudi students to pass on their expertise to the next generation.

"Before they graduate, the students take a teacher-training course that covers the basics of how to teach," said Tom F. Gregory, associate vice president for instruction. “When they return to Saudi Arabia, they may teach in a consortium of universities that offer technical training.”

Weston said the Saudi students brought a real sense of cultural diversity to the classroom.

"It's important for our students to have a global perspective," he said. “Having our students be with the Saudis – and friends with them – is a big plus.”

Communication Evolution

The closing of graphic communications technology and mass media communications programs at the end of 2011-12 marked a transition of the institution’s delivery of instruction related to printing and communications. After years of on-campus print production and radio broadcasts, the academic focus switched to new forms of electronic media.

A new baccalaureate degree in web design and multimedia integrated animation, e-commerce, website development, audio and video production – all with an artistic eye toward interactive platforms, from tablet PCs to cell phones and multimedia kiosks to “enhanced TV” programming.

Interdisciplinary faculty from web design, graphic design, mass communications, and graphic communications collaborated to offer classes ranging from design to computer programming.

The launch of the Penn College website in 1995 (shown above) led to a “Most Wired College” national ranking and recognition in 2007 as the highest-rated school in the North and second among the top 10 rated schools in the nation in the National Research Center for College & University Admissions annual rankings of admissions websites. Sharing of news and information online became common with the introduction of the PCToday online news in 2001, social networking via Facebook in 2009, and the first Penn College Twitter message in 2010.
Gaming and More

With video games capturing the attention of a new generation, Penn College became the first public institution in the state to offer an undergraduate degree in the fast-growing field of gaming and simulation in 2011. The degree prepared graduates to pursue jobs in the gaming and simulation industry and in related computer fields.

While students enjoyed hands-on experience with various gaming and simulation applications, Anita R. Wood, assistant professor of information technology, said they should not expect to spend their time just playing games.

“This is not for students who despise math or who just like to play the games. It’s heavy in math, it’s heavy in physics, it’s heavy in programming … but if you can program a game, you can program a fairly complex business machine and have a career for life.”

Career opportunities included positions in manufacturing, education, government, military, automotive, health care, flight simulators, disaster training, according to Bahram Golshan, associate professor of information technology.

Hackers Beware

As news of cybercrimes grew, Penn College launched an information technology baccalaureate degree with a concentration in information technology security specialist in 2008.

With a curriculum certified through the National Security Agency (NSA) Information Assurance Courseware Evaluation program, graduates of the program received the background training needed for employment with government agencies.

Associate professor Jacob R. Miller described the “fireproof” setting – apart from the real campus computer network – where students work, putting themselves into the minds of computer hackers.

“It’s an anonymous lab,” Miller said, “so hackers don’t know it’s affiliated with a college.”

In order to attract hackers to a makeshift site for instructional purposes, “firewall” protections that would normally be in place on secure websites were removed. This provided access to information about the hackers’ activities, Miller said, because, to those who want to exploit computer networks “a machine without a firewall is like a lightning rod, a honey pot.”

Students used the same tools in class that law enforcement would use to conduct investigations of cybercrimes – including devices that allow connection between a suspect’s hard drive and an investigation system for collecting criminal evidence.
Stage X

A $45 million construction project completed in 2010 marked the 10th phase of a plan to improve the campus site and facilities that was introduced decades earlier. The Stage X building program included the construction of new student housing, renovation and expansion of the Avco-Lycoming Metal Trades Center and the Parkes Automotive Technology Center, and addition of new science labs and relocation of the Children’s Learning Center to the Hager Lifelong Education.

When Dauphin Hall opened in Fall 2010, Penn College was able to house approximately 1,700 students on campus.

A Star is Born

The Children’s Learning Center gained “star” status prior to its relocation to the Hager Lifelong Education Center.

The Pennsylvania-licensed child care center earned a four-star rating under the Keystone Starts initiative in 2002-03 and accreditation by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools’ Commission on Elementary Schools in 2007. It also was accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

The center provided high-quality, on-campus care and education for children whose parents attended classes or worked on campus. Children aged 18 months to five years were accepted during the school year, children up to age 7 in summer.

In 2011, the center’s founding director, Karen Woland Payne earned the Director of the Year Award from the National Coalition for Campus Children’s Center. Woland Payne was with the center from its beginning in 1994.

The Children’s Learning Center was named for retiring Board of Directors Chairman Robert E. Dunham and his wife Maureen in 2010. Dunham, retired senior vice president and dean of the Commonwealth Education System at Penn State, served as chairman of the board from 1997-2010.
When the Avco-Lycoming Metal Trades Center received a complete overhaul in 2010, the academic dean overseeing the renovation had a long history of connection with the institution’s welding department.

Donald O. Praster, dean of industrial and engineering technologies during the Stage X building program, first connected with the institution as a high school student enrolled in WACC’s secondary vocational program and later as a member of the welding faculty.

When he was featured in an interview in the WACC student newspaper in 1979, Praster said “I have a deep-seated desire to help people. Maybe it’s a little egotistical, but when I’m gone I want to leave something of me behind, even if it is in someone’s memory.”

Praster’s path from student to teacher was paved by his secondary program welding instructor, David L. Karschner, who convinced him to enroll in college instead of enlisting in the military.

After attending Penn State, Praster went to work at a local manufacturing company. He also earned a state teaching certificate. When he left his industry job to accept a teaching position at WACC, he experienced a $3,000 drop in his annual salary.

“I went to school to become a teacher,” he said. “I couldn’t see myself spending the money for an education without ever giving it a try…. It was great to be able to come back home and get a job teaching – especially in the same school I had gone to.”

When he joined the faculty, Praster reunited not only with Karschner, but also Karschner’s former teacher and mentor, Bernard C. Williams, who was also a WACC welding instructor.
Freshman Hub

Creating a social hub for freshmen students – to help ease the transition from home to college – was a goal that was realized on campus with the opening of Dauphin Hall in 2010.

First-year students were assigned to Dauphin Hall and other facilities (Clinton, Delaware, Juniata, Lancaster, and York halls) that made up Rose Street Commons. Upperclassmen were housed in Campus View Apartments and The Village at Penn College.

“When you’re just targeting freshmen, you can provide more programs on basic college preparation” said Elliott Strickland Jr., chief student affairs officer.

In addition, Residence Life sought to provide “learning communities” within residence halls.

“It’s a very simple concept,” Strickland explained. “You have students living together that have the same major or same interests.”

Resident students who elected to live in a learning community were assigned faculty mentors and a Resident Assistant enrolled in the same or a similar major. The faculty and RAs planned regular events centered on students’ common academic interests. In the first year of the program, Penn College offered learning communities for students in health sciences, hospitality and automotive majors, as well as students selected for the Presidential Leadership Program.

Invest in Success

In 2009-10, Penn College elected to participate in Foundations of Excellence, a self-study process facilitated by the Policy Center on the First Year of College. Mentor for the college’s self-study was the policy’s center John Gardner, who had established a national reputation for landmark research regarding students’ first-year college experience.

Carolyn R. Strickland, assistant vice president for academic services, led the college’s self-study initiative, which resulted in an action plan to enhance academic support, the campus environment and communication to support student success.

In verbalizing her support for the initiative, the president said, “Students and parents make an investment in education and it is important that we too invest in their success.”

A key component of the plan was the full integration of a First Year Experience course (FYE 101) into all curricula by Fall 2010. Gilmour said she believed “so strongly that FYE is important” that she made a decision to teach a section of the course.

“I did survive my first semester in the classroom in over 32 years,” she declared. “I loved it and I was challenged each session to engage students and connect with them to make a difference.”
She said her regular contact with her class through the semester reminded her that college is “a huge transition for young people.”

“To a person, they shared this was not what they expected in college. Some did not know what to expect. Others thought this was going to be ‘easy like high school.’ Homework was foreign to many, as was ‘taking care of themselves.’”

What started as Developmental Studies at WACC and expanded into Penn College’s Academic Support Services evolved into the Academic Success Center as part of the FOE process.

The Academic Success Center introduced individual, appointment tutoring in addition to the “drop-in” tutoring previously provided on campus and established a Writing Center to assist students enrolled in Basic English through senior-level capstone courses.

An academic mentoring program and an internal, online resource that helped faculty and staff identify students who were experiencing academic or personal challenges, so that proper, proactive steps could be taken to help facilitate the students’ success, were introduced, as well.

Gilmour encouraged participation by reminding all employees, “Knowing who your students are, making the effort to reach out early and often, investing the time in an intervention to connect them with available campus resources is not just a good idea, it is critical to the success of these students, and therefore to our success.”

Tutors Return

Penn College’s coordinator of tutoring first practiced her skills as a student at Williamsport Area Community College in 1985-86.

“I tutored English and thought it was the best job,” said Jennifer L. Hammond, who returned to Penn College to work as a professional English tutor in 1989 and was named coordinator in 2001.

Hammond was thrilled to receive the opportunity to realize her dream of coordinating the Writing Center in 2010.

“With more bachelor-degree programs requiring senior capstone projects and more programs including writing-enriched courses, the time was absolutely right,” she said.

Another alumnus who returned to the campus to work as a professional tutor said the center’s relaxed atmosphere was welcoming to students.

“Relieving stress is a very effective way to keep students on track,” according to Donald Noviello.

“The center is a place for students to get both academic and emotional support from those who have been trained to assist students in need.”

In addition to support provided by professional tutors and student peers, English faculty also volunteered to spend some of their office hours in the Writing Center.

One of the volunteers, Mark D. Noe, professor of English composition, said, “The independent Writing Center creates a space devoted to the single, fundamental element of the broader education process, the element that is – theoretically, at least – integrated into every discipline and course: writing.”
Best of Both Worlds

While communications-related careers typically were associated with individuals who earned liberal arts degrees, lucrative opportunities existed for those who blended strong communication skills with technical education and experience.

Ryan Black, a graduate of Penn College’s automotive technology management baccalaureate degree program, developed training materials for service technicians at the University of Toyota (the continuing education and training arm of Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A. Inc).

Responsible for formulating curriculum to train thousands of technicians at Toyota dealerships across the U.S., Black started his career as a line technician and later advanced to a position as an assistant service manager at a Toyota dealership after he graduated in 2005.

He began tinkering on cars at 12 years of age and chose the Penn College bachelor’s degree – which provided a shift to a management focus after two years of technical work – to broaden his knowledge and career opportunities.

“It was the best of both worlds. You receive state-of-the-art technical experience, and they also mix in the business side of things. The degree opens a wide array of jobs you can target.”

Ronald A. Garner, professor of automotive technology management, said the unique degree encapsulated business, education and engineering.

“It is our students’ strong occupational background – coupled with their hard work to complete the rigorous academic requirements focused on industry-specific content – that makes them successful,” Garner declared. The professor said that, as a student, Black exemplified the qualities necessary for success.

“Ryan read, thought, wrote, analyzed data, went to the library, and worked hard to master the content provided. He understood how the assignments prepared him for a career path that an academic degree can provide.”

Black agreed, “The major, and the way it’s set up at Penn College, is exactly what they [Toyota University officials] were looking for. I would not be able to do my job today without my Penn College education. You have to have an extremely solid knowledge base in the automotive field. I draw from that knowledge base every day with developing these materials.”

Antique Autos

A regional automobile club’s “crazy idea” to invite Penn College students to restore a classic Mustang resulted in the introduction of a new program in Automotive Restoration in 2012.

“It really began as a crazy idea, a way to put the collision-repair business into a historical perspective. The college has this massively gorgeous collision lab; why not coordinate something between the students and the museum?” said Earl L. Mowrey Jr., part-time architectural technology instructor and member of the Susquehannock Region chapter of the Antique Automobile Club of America.

Penn College accepted the challenge of restoring the 1965 Mustang in 2008. Work took place in College Avenue Labs, under the direction of faculty member Roy H. Klinger, department head for collision repair.

Alumnus Ryan Black represented the University of Toyota at on-campus career fairs, where he scouted potential employees among Penn College students.
by Tom Wilson, writer/editor, PCToday, described the meticulous process of restoring the classic vehicle:

“With gloved hands and near-surgical perfection, the students tagged and bagged and stored for safekeeping every piece removed from the automobile – from entire fenders to the smallest hardware – until reinstallation … The finishing touch to the restoration project was a new paint job – delivered via a waterborne basecoat system donated … by PPG Industries – one of the latest innovations in auto-body technology applied to a vehicle that came off the Ford assembly line a quarter-century before the youngest of Klinger’s students was even born.”

Jeffrey Bliemeister, then curator of the AAAC museum in Hershey, said, “I am thrilled with the results. The car looks stunning and has received numerous comments from our guests. I knew the results would be good, but the students have certainly exceeded our expectations.”

Students enrolled in the restoration program learned the techniques and workmanship sought after by the most discriminating collectors and museums while working on vehicles built between 1900 and 1975. One of the most prestigious and recognizable names in automobile history was represented among the vehicles available for instruction. The Rolls-Royce Foundation agreed to provide vehicles for student restoration. The first vehicle received was a 1970 Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow.

Commuter Car

One vintage automobile donated to the Automotive Restoration program was first parked on the campus half a century ago.

Galen Mellott, who attended Williamsport Technical Institute from 1962-64, used the 1940 Ford to commute to campus from State College while he attended toolmaking technology classes.

“Penn College continues to have an excellent reputation,” Mellott said. “Because of my education at the school and my career in manufacturing, Penn College was the logical place for me to donate a vehicle for its automotive restoration major.”

Colin W. Williamson, dean of the School of Transportation & Natural Resources Technologies, said, “We hope to give the project the same respect and care as its previous owner has shown it through the decades.”

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Penn College students restored a 1965 Ford Mustang and returned it to the Antique Automobile Club of America’s Museum in time for the 2010 annual car show, where the car earned first place in its category. It marked the first time the club awarded a top prize to an East Coast college.
INFINITE POSSIBILITIES
Collaborative Piece Shows College’s Artistic Side

Over the course of a week, 54 Pennsylvania College of Technology students collaborated with artist-in-residence Antonio Puri to create “Infinite Possibilities,” a piece of artwork installed permanently in the Student and Administrative Services Center lobby. The piece includes 100 canvases painted by students, as well as 39 shadow boxes that students transformed with easy-to-find objects to represent each academic department.

1. Graphic design student Angela R. Barletta applies paint to one of 100 canvases – the visual “glue” among the individualized shadow boxes.  
2. Student Sarina C. Bloodgood is among about a dozen students who painted canvases.  
3. Barletta, foreground, works alongside Puri, right, and other students. Each canvas is covered with eight to 10 layers of paint and glaze.  
4. Baking and pastry arts student Amanda L. Altemose adds a fabric background to a recycled wooden cigar box that will depict her studies.  
5. Radiography student Joseph M. Haber creates a lightbox.  
6. Civil engineering technology student Brandon T. Sliko applies paint to his shadow box.  
7. Building construction technology student Samantha L. Werner works with William T. Goddard, associate professor of construction technology, to assemble and hang the canvases.  
8. “Infinite Possibilities” hangs in the lobby of the Student and Administrative Services Center.
**Design Connections**

Drafting and design-related programs were popular on campus from the institution’s earliest days. The drafting program began as a high school vocational offering that had among its alumni Kenneth E. Carl, who later became a member of the WTI drafting faculty, then director of WTI and finally the first president of Williamsport Area Community College.

Over the years, other design-related programs were established to include a wide range of career interests – including technical illustration, architectural technology, and advertising art – and drafting became “computer-aided.”

“I’m a CAD student, I know a lot about skateboarding, I’ll be willing to help where I can.”

This Facebook message – from a student to community organizers attempting to build a skatepark in Williamsport – sparked a project that fueled the student’s passion and added a new attraction to the city.

When skateboarder Benjamin M. Schappell, a computer-aided product design student, discovered a group was trying to gain approval to build a skatepark, Schappell offered to help. In one week, he created a digital 3-D model of the proposed park, which was approved and built in 2012.

“I worked on it every night, after classes, with help from my professors to give me pointers about different methods of modeling some complex curves, the way the ramps flow,” he recalled.

Organizers estimated Schappell’s work saved up to $10,000 that might have been spent on a professional design consultant.

Coincidently, the generosity of a design consultant who graduated from Williamsport Technical Institute helped to support Schappell’s Penn College education. He was the first recipient of a scholarship established by Glenwood Cheslock, a 1957 mechanical drafting graduate who owned a Hollywood design firm.

“WTI changed my whole life,” Cheslock said. “The instructors were great. They were knowledgeable and helpful. They came from the industry.”

He described the hands-on experience he gained in a variety of shops on campus.

“The whole idea was if you’re designing and drawing things, you had to know how equipment works, what tools will be needed. We spent time in the sheet-metal shop and did some spot welding and riveting. In the machine shop, we got to learn the lathe, mills, and drill press. We had math classes, too, that were related to the field. They were also beneficial.”

Cheslock, who worked on the design of America’s first operational intercontinental ballistic missile, was impressed by Penn College’s continuing emphasis on applied technology.

“I’ve worked with people with master’s degrees but they don’t know how to do anything. They learn by the book. And if it doesn’t go by the book, they are stumped … It’s a good feeling to know that Penn College is providing useful educations for young people so they can really be competent and productive in the field of their choice,” he said.
New Design Era

The 21st century introduced a new era of design education on campus. In addition to its “traditional” offerings related to art, architecture and engineering drafting, Penn College introduced baccalaureate programs in building science and sustainable design (2009) and industrial and human factors (2010).

Industrial and Human Factors Design was the first bachelor’s degree of its kind in Pennsylvania.

In addition to visual design courses, students learned kinesiology, ergonomics, cultural anthropology and marketing – in addition to engineering and sustainability principles, computer aided drafting, materials and manufacturing – to design products that appeal to consumers.

“Industrial and human factors designers make beautiful things that work well,” said Thomas E. Ask, associate professor of industrial and human factors design.

The building science and sustainable design baccalaureate major was designed as a two-plus-two program for associate degree architectural and construction-related technology graduates interested in continuing their education in a “green” career field.

Enthusiasm of these students helped the new major move quickly through the development process, according to Tom F. Gregory, associate vice president for instruction.

“When some found out about the curriculum-development process for this new major, they sent a petition signed by more than 20 students to Academic Affairs asking for a rapid implementation so they would not have to interrupt their studies,” he said.

The program’s focus on technology and construction was structured to address industry needs and promote a better way of building. Students learned sustainable aspects of materials, construction, site design, building design and energy production and technologies for measuring and recording those factors.

“Students are well aware of the issues facing our country, and they see this as a career area where they can make a positive difference,” Gregory said. “Recent economic developments make the implementation of this degree even more important to our region. Energy production, conservation and efficient management of resources are key areas for careers that can have a direct impact, and our graduates will be in high demand as jobs in these areas rapidly develop.”

“Students Maxwell A. Davert, Michael J. Engel, and Michelle M. Holzmann joined their faculty advisers in a Centennial Colloquia Series presentation on Technology and Society in 2014. “Sustainable and Affordable Home Building” offered interactive polling, a slide show of home styles and living conditions around the world, and a discussion on measuring power consumption (Holzmann, above).
Superefficient Challenge

Penn College was one of five institutions selected to compete in a 2013 home design challenge to meet national energy-efficiency standards. Designs from all five competing institutions were to be constructed later at the Denver Sustainability Park.

Denver Superefficient Housing Challenge, developed by the Rocky Mountain Institute in partnership with the Denver Housing Authority, paralleled the U.S. Department of Energy’s biennial Challenge Home Student Design Competition by challenging teams to meet or exceed minimum energy-efficiency standards of DOE’s Challenge Home and building codes, while remaining affordable and neighborhood-appropriate.

Dorothy J. Gerring and Robert A. Wozniak, associate professors of architectural technology, were faculty advisers for the project, which Gerring said could “lead efforts to transform the housing marketplace.”

More than 100 students participated. They completed online training that resulted in an Advanced Green Builder’s certificate from The Energy & Environmental Building Alliance. They were also schooled in building codes by representatives of the Pennsylvania Housing Research Center.

Renewable Energy

The “go green” movement took a practical step forward on campus in 2010 with the introduction of a two-year renewable energy program that developed skills needed to install, troubleshoot, and maintain photovoltaic, wind-turbine, and solar-thermal systems.

“Renewable energy will be a hot topic for years to come due to depletion of our natural resources and reliance on fossil fuels,” said Marc E. Bridgens, dean of construction and design technologies. “With all the national and local emphasis on our carbon footprint, it’s only natural that we get involved in teaching these up-to-date technologies.”

The associate degree provided an “excellent pathway” to baccalaureate degrees in HVAC design technology, building automation technology or building science and sustainable design.

A 10-kilowatt wind turbine and control center near the Schneebeli Earth Science Center provided power to illuminate roadside signage and generated cost-cutting electricity, while supporting instruction in renewable energy technologies. Installation was funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy, through a subcontract from an awarded to Penn State’s Department of Aerospace Engineering. Students in heavy construction equipment technology, electrical occupations and building construction technology aided in excavation and installation at the site.

Photovoltaic panels, purchased with a Solar Scholars Grant from the Sustainable Energy Fund, were installed in 2010 near the Victorian House, the campus guest house designed and built by students and equipped with modern energy-saving features such as “smart” controllers, variable air-volume systems and ground-source heat pumps.

Dedicated in 2011, the Construction Masonry Building offers enhanced spaces for hands-on instruction in stone, brick, and block masonry and freed up space in the Carl Building Technologies Center to expand labs for the renewable energy technologies program.
Power Core

At the core of renewable energy were principles of electricity that applied for generations, according to James E. Temple, who served 28 years as a member of the WACC and Penn College faculty.

“I’m pretty proud of the fact that in electrical – electrical technology, electrical occupations and now building automation technology [and] renewable energy – we’ve never lost track of the core. I think that’s what allowed us to keep moving on … in the different areas.”

The core concepts, he said, related to a variety of electrical and electronics technologies that have been taught over the years on campus.

“Once you have the foundation – when you’re looking at new concepts in electricity and electronics – the base doesn’t change. You have volts, amps, ohms, and power … You work with those four components. The core is the same.”

Still, Temple admitted, there was constant change in the related industries and educational programs.

“We’ve evolved. As the technology has changed, we’ve evolved with the technology,” he assured.

Teachers who were open to change, he said, adjusted the curriculum over the years to fit emerging technologies and meet industry needs.

“When you teach, you have to want to learn yourself … As long as you’re willing to keep on learning, it isn’t a problem,” he insisted.

Temple said the biggest challenge during his teaching experience was adapting to computers.

“When I started out … it was all relay logic in mechanics … Then we brought PLCs along, programmable logic controllers. The first ones were very expensive – as were the first computers. We used those to process what we wanted done, but they still had to interface with the heavy-duty parts out there because you couldn’t get a computer to actually turn on a hundred horsepower motor. The computer was the control. It turned on the interface that turned on the hundred horsepower motor. It’s how you got that interface to operate. Somebody pushed the button – or a mechanical switch did it. Now, the computer … turn(s) on the interface. Those are things you had to adapt and change with … but the logic, the mechanics, never changed.”

The evolution of the electrical department included addition of degrees in electric power generation, renewable energy, and building automation technology – a baccalaureate degree that drew interest from graduates of the college’s two-year majors in electrical technology, electronics, and heating, ventilation and air conditioning.

“We filled up the building automation program the first year. It’s always been filled,” he said.

Graduates of Penn College electrical programs found employment not only with local companies, but also with big-name firms including Siemens, General Electric, and Johnson Controls, Temple said. He recalled a time when one large company was disappointed when representatives came late to campus to recruit new employees.

“They expected to pick up building automation people … Well, it was too late; they (graduating students) all had jobs. They didn’t get one person.”
**Contract Equity**

James E. Temple received the College Service Award in 2012 in recognition of his contributions, which included 20 years as president of the faculty union – the longest tenure at that position in the institution’s history.

The first faculty contract that Temple helped to negotiate as president of the Pennsylvania College of Technology Education Association, in 1991, was a five-year agreement that ultimately brought the average faculty salary up to $52,000.

“We worked hardest to bring some equity across campus,” Temple said. “Today, everybody has the same load of 15 credits, 20 hours, and five office hours.”

Prior to the 1991 contract, Temple said some members of the faculty were teaching 15 hours and others were teaching 38 hours – under the same contract, earning the same amount of money.

“We considered it critical that we get some kind of parity,” he said, explaining that the union agreed to phase in the change over the five-year life of the contract.

“The college knew they were going to have trouble finding people (at the) salaries (they) were paying and so they were equally committed to raising the salaries … We both [faculty and administration] saw the need.”

He also explained how the college maintained its ability to use experienced professionals, who might not have earned advanced college degrees, in the classroom, while ensuring its competitiveness as a baccalaureate institution.

“There’s nothing in the contract that says this area has a terminal degree of a Ph.D. and this one has a master’s. We’ve tried to be flexible,” he said.

He explained that a “lecturer” position allowed departments to hire individuals with associate degrees and relevant work experience, who lack the degrees typically desired for faculty positions. The lecturer was not eligible to accrue seniority until he/she gained the qualifications required for a faculty position.

A lasting legacy of Temple’s leadership with the faculty union was the establishment of a student scholarship using funds the association invested 20 years earlier as a “strike fund.”

“I always thought that we should give back in some way,” Temple said. “We bargain for wages, hours, terms and conditions … but we are all in this together through the good times and the bad.”

“It’s been great to be able to prove to the skeptics – and to myself – that I can do it,” said Sara Rust, the first female graduate of the electric power generation major. Rust (shown here working with electrical technology/occupations instructor Edward J. McCabe in 2006) was hired by PPL as a plant equipment operator. McCabe, who graduated from WACC’s electronics technology program in 1967, earned the institution’s Distinguished Alumni Award in 2011. He was a founding partner of Mek-Tronix Laboratories Corp., which generated patents for several prominent technologies including caller ID, the fax “handshake” protocol and the telephone memory dialer.
National Legacy

In 2012, the Weatherization Training Center – established in 1985 and recognized as a U.S. Department of Energy Legacy Weatherization Training Center – became the National Sustainable Structures Center.

“With hands-on instruction that remains true to Penn College’s pre-eminence in applied technology education, the Weatherization Training Center has been a widely renowned model of workforce development,” Gilmour stated. “I have all confidence that the expanded NSSC designation will only enhance our position as a national provider of training and certification.”

From 1985 to 2012, WTC taught residential building-science and energy-conservation standards and techniques to more than 10,000 individuals. NSSC began working with industry and energy utilities in the commercial building sector in 2013, offering Building Operator Certification and Commercial Building Re-tuning training in Pennsylvania and other states.

In addition to its location in Williamsport, NSSC offered training in Philadelphia at the Energy Efficient Buildings Hub at the Naval Shipyard, a Department of Energy Innovation Hub led by Penn State, with a mission to improve energy efficiency and promote economic growth and job creation.

The facility was home to the noncredit Workforce Development & Continuing Education operation, and to laboratories for the College’s electronics and computer engineering technologies majors.

BWD also became the point of contact for natural gas workforce-development initiatives as major companies moved into the region to extract natural gas through hydraulic fracturing.

Penn College partnered with Penn State Extension in 2008 to form the Marcellus Shale Education & Training Center. In 2012, the name changed to the Shale Education and Training Center, but ShaleTEC continued a mission of staying connected to industry needs, monitoring trends and adapting workforce training to fit regional needs.

“Through our applied-technology curriculum and workforce-development initiatives, we are uniquely positioned to be a prime educational and training conduit for the natural gas industry,” Gilmour stated.

Penn College’s assistant vice president for workforce and economic development Tracy L. Brundage said ShaleTEC’s efforts to identify and respond to needs of the emerging natural gas industry established a new standard for communities that respond to workforce development needs.

“Core curriculum and research developed through the ShaleTEC partnership has helped set the standard for understanding and responding to the needs of industry, government, and local business and individuals,” Brundage said.

Co-director of the Marcellus Center for Outreach and Research at Penn State, Thomas B. Murphy, said local response is critical to achieving industry growth.

“As the workforce developing the Marcellus shale in Pennsylvania becomes more local, it is even more imperative that the skills necessary to work safely in this industry are obtained from local educational providers with an in-depth understanding of the training needs necessary to be successful,” Murphy concluded.

Emerging Energy Interests

“From its very beginnings as Williamsport Technical Institute, the college has walked hand-in-hand with business and industry,” Gilmour said at the 2007 dedication of the Center for Business & Workforce Development. “This building honors that tradition, helping employers stay ahead of the competition and helping our students attain the latest skills that those employers demand.”
Safety First

Just as WTI offered safety training to the state’s Rural Electric Cooperatives in the mid-20th century, Penn College developed safety training for the natural gas industry. In partnership with Lycoming County and private industry, Penn College developed a training site that incorporated a drilling rig and live fire props to simulate potential emergencies on job sites. The Energy Technology Education Center was approved by the Pennsylvania Fire Academy to provide firefighting training to all 67 Pennsylvania counties.

Labor Initiative

Penn College partnered with a community college in western Pennsylvania to secure federal funds to increase awareness of training and education opportunities related to the industry. ShaleNET, funded by a three-year $4.9 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, served more than 8,600 people in Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, and New York.

Larry L. Michael, assistant vice president for workforce development and special projects, said “Penn College and Westmoreland County Community College have succeeded in building a four-state network of training providers and Workforce Investment Boards that have been responsible for meeting the program’s goals throughout the Appalachian Basin”

At the end of ShaleNET’s initial funding period in 2012, Penn College was tapped to lead a much larger – $14.96 million – ShaleNET U.S. federal grant project to develop and implement standardized curricula for industry with partners at Westmoreland County Community College, Stark State College in Ohio, and Navarro College in Texas.

The goal of the ShaleNET U.S. was to develop and implement standardized, “stackable” credits for certificates and associate degrees in high-demand occupations in the oil and gas industry and to target special populations including unemployed and dislocated workers and veterans.

Industry partners involved with ShaleNET U.S. included Chevron, Shell, Anadarko Petroleum Corp., Chesapeake Energy, XTO, Encana, the Allegheny Conference on Economic Development, the Pennsylvania Independent Oil & Gas Association, the Ohio Shale Coalition, and other employer partners and associated stakeholder organizations, including Workforce Investment Boards, One-Stop Career Centers, and economic-development organizations.

A National Science Foundation/Advanced Technological Education grant supported efforts to make faculty more aware of oil and gas related careers, so they could incorporate training into courses that matched industry needs such as electronics, welding, civil engineering technology, forestry, and computer-aided drafting.

“The idea isn’t to create new majors, but rather to look at the needs of industry and then look at our current curriculum across the college and enhance it so students understand the career path and technological needs of the natural gas industry,” said Dr. Eric K. Albert, professor of machine tool technology and automated manufacturing.

The grant also supported the Penn College NOW dual-enrollment program, which offered secondary students the opportunity to take Penn College classes at their home high schools.
Dr. Jeannette F. Carter, director of the Outreach for K-12 Office, which coordinated the dual-enrollment program, said “Increasing the pipeline of students interested in natural gas careers is critical if the industry is going to find the Pennsylvania technicians it needs.”

Mary B. Wolf, a former Williamsport mayor who became government relations adviser for Anadarko Petroleum Corp. (one of the world’s largest independent oil and natural gas exploration and production companies), said the college’s contribution to building a local workforce for the emerging energy industry was significant.

“The various programs and training opportunities Penn College offers have developed a strong local workforce to support our Pennsylvania operations. Penn College has helped our contractors understand and meet our expectations and high standards, especially in the areas of environment, health, and safety.”

Industry: We Need More Qualified Employees

When distributors for the largest machine tool builder in the United States gathered at Penn College for a Haas Technical Education Center CNC Technology Training Conference in 2011, the issue on their minds was the challenge of finding qualified employees to help revitalize U.S. manufacturing.

Lauren Bryson, director of Pennsylvania’s Industrial Resources Center Network, shared research that showed Pennsylvania manufacturing jobs were going unfilled because employers cannot find workers with the necessary skills to support industry needs.

Penn College responded in a manner that reflected the actions of the institution’s founding leaders when they were challenged to help steer a local economic development course during the Great Depression, when a local employment survey revealed there were vacant positions in Williamsport because companies could not identify workers with the skills needed to perform on the job.

Dr. George H. Parkes published “What We Do for a Living in Williamsport” a study that proved – even during the Depression – local jobs were available for individuals with the right set of skills.

More than six decades later, Penn College produced a YouTube video that described how it prepared graduates for high-paying jobs in the manufacturing sector, which had hundreds of thousands of vacancies amid national unemployment.

“Despite whatever you might think about the economy, our students typically had multiple offers and opportunities with major companies, all across the United States,” said Eric K. Albert, associate professor of machine tool technology/automated manufacturing, during an interview for the video.

The state’s largest guaranteed free training program, the Workforce and Economic Development Network of Pennsylvania, managed by Penn College and served by more than two dozen partners, improved the skill levels and productivity of more than 1 million Pennsylvania workers since its inception in 1999.

Road to Success

Encouraging students to meet the challenges of a modern workforce was a top priority when the institution began its Countdown to the Centennial – a celebration of 100 years of education on the Williamsport campus in 2014.

A visit from a member of the class of 1974 – who had recently stepped down as a vice president at BMW of North America – reminded the campus community of the importance of personal commitment on the road to achieving the life of one’s dreams.

Thomas C. Baloga began his influential career with an associate degree in automotive technology from Williamsport Area Community College. He honed his skills working for luxury car giants Mercedes-Benz USA and BMW of North America. After years of success in a field he loved, Baloga used the opportunity of his retirement to return to Williamsport and share his experiences.

“I’ve lived it, I’ve been there,” Baloga told his audience as he opened a “10 Tips for Career Success” presentation that he hoped would serve as “inside information, some insight into what an employer looks for, what a manager looks for, how an employee can realize success.”

Baloga’s tips were widely distributed beyond his audience in the Klump Academic Center. An article in One College Avenue magazine and a YouTube video – both developed by writer/video editor, Thomas P. Speicher – shared Baloga’s story and these tips:

10 Tips for Career Success

1.  “YOU are as good as any and better than most”
   Be confident, not arrogant

2.  Understand a hobby vs. a career
   Hobby = You pay $$$
   Career = You are PAID $$$

3.  First two weeks on job define your reputation
   Be on your best behavior from the start

4.  Deliver 110 percent ... or 100 percent and move on?
   Exceed what people expect

5.  You are paid ONLY to solve company problems
   Remember your employer’s needs

6.  Always be fair, but expect unfairness
   Be fair even if it “hurts” you

7.  “Trust but verify”
   Be discreet when you verify

8.  Ask for the hardest jobs
   It builds confidence and character

9.  What’s not in your head must be in your legs
   Research, ask and listen

10. You WILL change the world ... for better or worse
    Your job performance helps or hurts people
New Century

As the institution prepared to enter a second century of education and service to the community, it was clear that its fundamental mission – to prepare young people, as well as men and women of all ages, for success in the workplace and in life through education and hands-on experience – would continue.

Penn College continued to share the “two pants suit” philosophy espoused by the early founders of vocational-technical education programs in Williamsport, encouraging students to seek excellence in general education and to apply classroom theory in practical applications that take learning to its highest potential.

With a high school basement as its foundation, the institution continued its commitment to promote career awareness and inspire passion for education and vocation at an early age.

What had become a national push to connect young students with the opportunities of math, science, and technology was already a century-old tradition in Williamsport when industry, education, and government leaders gathered for the USA Science & Engineering Festival Expo in Washington, D.C. in 2014.

Penn College was among the participants in the expo, which focused on opportunities for careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). At its exhibition booth, Penn College featured high-tech applications including a virtual welder, electric Camaro and cars controlled by tablet computers.

A video produced by Penn College at the exhibit featured an interview with Mike Rowe, a skilled-trades advocate who starred in Discovery Channel’s “Dirty Jobs” television series.

 Asked to discuss the national push to improve America’s workforce and economy through STEM education initiatives, Rowe said, “The single biggest challenge is finding people who are willing to learn a new and useful trade. That’s the trick. The (skills) gap doesn’t close until that happens … and that doesn’t happen until perception around work starts to change.”

Celebrity Support

A television host known for tackling tough jobs – and putting his money where his heart is – featured a Penn College graduate on his foundation’s website in 2011.

Mike Rowe, celebrity spokesman for companies including Ford Motor Co. and Lee Jeans and creator and host of the Discovery Channel’s “Dirty Jobs” television series, established the mikeroweWORKS Foundation, which awarded a $500 tool scholarship to Andrew C. Reisinger, who earned a degree in heavy construction equipment technology in 2011.

Rowe and Reisinger met at an industry convention in Las Vegas. The philanthropist offered his impression of the Penn College graduate: “Andrew is gracious, enthusiastic, smart, and very motivated. In short, he’s exactly the kind of guy we want to encourage, and I couldn’t be happier to help fund a few of the tools he’ll need moving forward.”

Reisinger, who started a robotics team in high school, originally planned to become an engineer but learned through experience that he’d rather troubleshoot and repair equipment.

“I realized that I can’t sit behind a computer all day; so I hopped over to the other side to be a mechanic like my Dad,” he said. □
National Leader

Entering its second century, as a national leader in applied technology education, Penn College was uniquely positioned to represent a fresh – yet proven – voice in American higher education.

The college achieved a top-tier ranking among America’s Best Colleges, named by U.S. News Media Group as one of the top 10 public baccalaureate colleges in the north region. It also was one of the nation’s top associate degree producers and a nationally recognized military-friendly campus.

In 2012, Penn College President Davie Jane Gilmour was invited to serve on the Governor’s Advisory Commission on Postsecondary Education. The commission was charged with making recommendations in relation to “the establishment and maintenance of a robust and responsive postsecondary education system” for the 21st century.

The commission identified four key goals to support its recommendations: affirm opportunities for lifelong learning; ensure greater public access, affordability, and usability of postsecondary education; recognize and support the diversity and richness of the postsecondary education system; and embrace Pennsylvania’s economic vitality and the ability for the commonwealth to compete globally.

These were goals that Penn College had embraced for a century and continued to embrace as it encouraged open minds and open doors in pursuit of excellence in higher education that responds to real workforce and community needs.

For 100 years, a commitment to offer working classes – that combined practical, hands-on experience with rigorous academic study relevant to students’ career aspirations – set the institution apart from typical vocational education programs and from traditional colleges and universities.

Over a century, Williamsport’s visionary leaders displayed the courage and tenacity to follow a road less traveled in higher education. It is in the spirit of those visionaries that the leaders of today and tomorrow will pursue new partnerships and innovative programming that will impact future generations.

FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Tech Challenge State Robotics Championship was held at Penn College 2012. More than 350 high school students competed on teams seeking the opportunity to advance to national competition.

WVIA Public Media partnered with Penn College to produce “degrees that work.tv” – a television broadcast supplemented with free online lesson plans to support education and career awareness through public television.

Emily DeRocco, president of The Manufacturing Institute and senior vice president of The National Association of Manufacturers, is interviewed for degrees that work.TV.
New Kind of Hope Chest

Think filling a hope chest sounds old-fashioned?

Not so for SMART Girls. Participants in Penn College’s Science and Math Applications in Real World Technologies program in 2012 explored the concept of “A Hope Chest of Careers Never Imagined.”

During an on-campus camp experience, girls filled the hope chests with enchanting, hands-on experiences exploring biometrics, plastics, clean energy, aviation technology, automotive restoration, automated manufacturing, and computer-aided product design.

They also spent a morning with women working in the natural gas industry and received inspirational letters from Penn College alumnae employed in fields considered nontraditional for women.

All the activities were designed to encourage the girls to consider the challenges of continuing their education and considering work in fields that have traditionally been dominated by men.
Penn College students climbed 100 feet into the narrow clock tower of the Trinity Episcopal Church in Williamsport to restore the clock's familiar chimes in 2010. Under the direction of Keith H. English, instructor of machine tool technology and automated manufacturing, students enrolled in manufacturing-related majors remade gear shafts and helped to install a new motor in the 135-year-old clock.

The historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence.

T.S. Eliot
As Pennsylvania College of Technology nears 100 years as a leader in applied technology education, who better to herald the 2014 milestone than a unique group of committed participants: faculty who are also among the institution’s proudest graduates?

They have returned to inspire students, bringing private-sector wisdom and an abiding appreciation for the education they now impart to a new generation.

The transition can be as surreal as it is humbling, said Carl J. Bower Jr., especially when one’s predecessor casts a long shadow.

The 1993 landscape/nursery technology alumnus succeeded Richard J. Weilminster, a 34-year veteran of the horticulture faculty and the college’s 1986 Master Teacher. As if it wasn’t intimidating enough to be interviewed by his one-time professors, Bower, once hired, found himself behind Weilminster’s former desk.

“I just sat there. I can’t even remember how long,” he said. “It took a while for it to sink in.”

While Bower credits everyone in the department, “Rich – he lets you call him that once you graduate – inspired me the most and is the reason I am here today,” he said. “He was a father figure to so many of his students – and I was no exception. Rich was hard on you and, at the time, you might have thought he was too hard. But after you graduated, or even before, you said to yourself, ‘He only did that because he cared.’”

Bower believes his alumni status enhances his teaching ability, allowing him to bridge the past and future.

“Students ask why certain trees look the way they do or why beds are planted how they are, and having that history makes it easy to tell them,” he said. “I still remember the trees I planted while I was a student, and it’s nice to remind current students that, when they return in 10 or 15 years and see projects they were a part of, they will feel that same pride. Knowing you are a part of making a change in any landscape, at school or in the workforce, is a very satisfying feeling.”

Bower said a former student now doing postgraduate work elsewhere recently told Facebook friends he has a difficult time “learning” from a professor without field experience.

“That, to me, is what it’s like moving from student to teacher,” Bower said. “You realize what you need to do for the student because you have been there … and to so many places in-between.”

Perhaps few understand those “places” as well as Thomas A. Zimmerman, associate professor of psychology, a general studies student at Williamsport Area Community College in the mid-’60s. Fate took him everywhere thereafter – degrees from Lycoming College and Bucknell University, naval service and employment in the mental-health field – until he joined the full-time faculty in 1984.

His student experience was no less varied. He flirted with literature and math and allied himself with instructors all along his wandering journey. Some made academic sense, such as friendships with Hugh MacMullan and Richard Sweeney in the English department; Robert Kissell, who taught history and government; and Paul Feng in psychology. Others were more nebulous, as when Bill Morris offered him a ride to his part-time job.

“He asked me questions about me and made me realize the shared participation in this endeavor.” Zimmerman said Morris counseled him to find balance between work and play, to pace himself for the long haul. “Here was a math instructor giving me advice; he gave me a lift, but he made a meaningful impact.”
He finds today’s students more inquisitive than those of his generation and cherishes the surprises that wait at the off-ramp of classroom detours.

“You have an outline of where you want to go in a particular class; then you’re suddenly onto this dialogue that you didn’t expect,” Zimmerman said. “It reminds me of my parents, who introduced us to new things, then stepped back and asked, ‘Well, what did you think?’”

Socratic exchanges were routine for his faculty heroes, during his student days and after he became their colleague. To Zimmerman, the college will forever be “a place where the emphasis is on good teaching.”

His gold standard is an erudite group of WACC professors who quickly proved that hands-on education and academic rigor could walk hand-in-hand. Their names are among the most revered in campus history, recipients of what is now the Veronica M. Muzic Master Teacher Award: Daniel J. Doyle, Ned S. Coates, Peter B. Dumanis and James E. Logue. Doyle taught history and sociology; the other three, English.

(Muzic, the pole star who has accurately guided so many students, is a former English professor, academic vice president and provost.)

“Jim, particularly, elevated the school to something akin to academic sophistication and professionalism. It was an auspicious end to the notion we were anything but a ‘real’ college, the idea that all academics are elitists,” Zimmerman recalled. “It was an affirmation of a college education being available to everyone, of telling students, ‘It’s not about your background.’”

The possibilities and accessibility of community college were embraced by Daniel L. Brooks, instructor of architectural technology, who holds two diplomas from the institution: an associate degree in architectural technology (1980, WACC) and a bachelor’s in residential construction technology and management (2008, Penn College).

“The whole technology piece is different now, revolutionizing everything we do, and the facilities are definitely different,” he said. “But students today have the same types of goals. Many, then and now, come from humble circumstances – it’s a struggle for their families. This college represents real opportunity for them, as it did for me.”

The faculty triumvirate of Joseph G. Mark, Lloyd C. Cotner and William H. Ealer “certainly gave us a core education that was well-respected. I applied to 12 architecture schools and was accepted at every one,” said Brooks, who ultimately chose the University of Maryland. “All of them had a clear realization of what we were learning here.”

“Joe Mark was an incredible influence, showing that extra encouragement, that interest in my personal life,” he said. “I see that with my colleagues, reaching out to students. It’s not just ‘I gave a satisfying lecture, now I’ll give a test.’ There’s something about the human contact.”

Brooks said that “Penn College approach” pervades campus, from the classroom to the dining hall.

“The women on the pizza line at Penn Central seem to know every student by name. No, not just their names, but what they like to do and what’s going on in their lives. They’ll ask, ‘Did you get your car fixed?’ or ‘How is the skateboarding?’ It’s amazing how many people here go out of their way to make these connections matter.”

“From the time I was a student, I wanted to teach here,” Brooks said. “I can remember walking behind the ACC, thinking, ‘I really like it here.’ Some places just sort of click. I enjoyed my time at Maryland, but it didn’t have that ‘home’ feel to it.”

Like Zimmerman, he recognizes the rigor of a Penn College education, and knows that the institution – even with its working-class roots and open-door admission policy – isn’t a consolation prize for students who can’t cut it somewhere else.

“I’m so impressed with this year’s crop of freshmen,” he said. “I’m teaching students that could go anywhere else for their education, but they chose Penn College.”
In the School of Business & Hospitality, alumnus Chef Charles R. Niedermyer II teaches alongside many of the faculty who nurtured his craft. After receiving a baking and pastry arts degree in 2000, he worked in three Ritz hotels, two fine-dining restaurants and a bakery before returning as a baking and pastry arts/culinary arts instructor in 2005. (He also earned a bachelor’s degree in technology management in 2012.)

“The process of moving from student to faculty, however, with former instructors who were now my colleagues, offered some unique challenges,” Niedermyer said.

Challenges with a side of respect.

“They taught me a tremendous amount and I owe them a lot,” he said. “Chef Monica Lanczak is a big inspiration. She has had a very successful, colorful career and is really dedicated to her students. I won’t ever stop looking up to her.”

Unlike Brooks, who dreamed a dream and made it happen, Niedermyer never planned on coming back.

“I wanted to be the best pastry chef I could be,” a notion sidetracked by a call from his alma mater.

“I’ve been handed one of the most rewarding and challenging positions I’ve ever been in, trying to transfer my industry knowledge to student learning,” he said. “To take the expectations, refining this and improving that. It’s a big responsibility.” He’s struck by how young his students are, noting that they were in grade school on Sept. 11, 2001, while he was “in Jacksonville, Fla., in the middle of 50 baguettes.”

“It’s a reminder that I’m not 18 anymore, that they’re from a different generation and that I have an obligation to them,” he said. “I’m their instructor, but I’m also a life and career adviser, wanting them to develop as community-minded citizens, with a concern for themselves and a concern for their neighbors. It’s a lot to absorb … but it’s very hard to come to work every day and not smile.”

The school also boasts alumna Suzann L. Mayer among its award-winning faculty — but her career was headed in a different direction when the hospitality bug bit. Among her influences? No less than Davie Jane Gilmour, now Penn College president, and Ann R. Miglio, whose faculty leadership helped bring the school into prominence.

“When I came to WACC, I was going to enroll in the word-processing program because it was the big thing in the early 1980s,” said Mayer, an assistant professor of baking and pastry arts/culinary arts.

“I took part in a program through Career Explorations, met Ann Miglio in the food and hospitality program, and was hooked.”

Among the earliest transfer students was Thomas A. Zimmerman, Class of 1967, who transferred Williamsport Area Community College credits to earn additional degrees and later joined the college faculty. His comments were shown in the 1969-70 WACC catalog.
Miglio, who taught at the college from August 1978 to May 1993, was selected as a Master Teacher in 1987. “Her expertise and teaching style inspired me to become a lifelong learner and explore all aspects of the industry,” Mayer added. “When I became coordinator of the Food and Hospitality Program, Davie Jane became my mentor and guide. She taught me how to problem-solve and motivate others.”

“Penn College changed my life – and the lives of my children and, now, grandchildren.”

Change of a technological sort is reflected in the college’s drafting area, where painstakingly hand-rendered pencil drawings have been replaced by the latest in desktop tools.

David A. Probst, assistant professor of drafting and computer-aided design, fondly remembers those who taught him at WACC: Chris Radke, Dale R. Straub, Jackie E. Welliver and Chalmer Van Horn. Van Horn, a tireless visitor to alumni events and reunions, is one of the few instructors whose career touched all three institutions embodied by the centennial.

“We had classes in the old trolley building with cubicles along the outer perimeter that had related courses,” Probst said. “If someone opened the windows at the top of the building, the wind would blow dirt, feathers and whatever else ... onto the drafting tables and your drawings. And we were graded for how clean our drawings were!”

“Good times and great teachers,” he added. “Oh, and we had a ‘stockroom’ where we went to get our drafting paper, pencils, tape, etc., and to have blueprints made. Times have changed!”

Todd S. Woodling, who teaches in a major that didn’t even exist when he was a student – building automation technology – is no stranger to those days of compromised space. But the 1982 electronics alumnus said students didn’t feel shortchanged.

“We had scopes; we had a tool room,” he said. “The labs were equipped, and the equipment worked.” That has carried over, as industry leaders such as Honeywell and Automated Logic donated enough controllers that Woodling’s students don’t have to share.

What is shared is the same connection between teaching and learning that Woodling experienced. In his case, it was with Victor A. Michael, a 1991 Master Teacher in electronics technology, who convinced him to leave industry and pursue a bachelor’s degree at The College of New Jersey, and David C. Johnson.

“Dave changed the way I think. He taught me discipline; knowing how to do things right the first time, getting my priorities straight and setting me up for the real world,” Woodling said. “He was tough, but I came to appreciate it.”

Such memories will continue throughout the centennial year, and as Zimmerman noted, with good reason: “Whether we admit it or not, everybody’s got a story. The best way to get someone’s attention isn’t to scare the hell out of them, it’s to bring in their human side. Their story is what makes them interesting; it makes them who they are.”
## Emeritus Honors

The following individuals have been granted “emeritus” status upon retirement from the institution. With this privilege, they accepted a continuing professional role with the College. They, and thousands of others, represent the spirit that motivated a century of excellence in education in Williamsport.

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Department/Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jacqueline Baughman</td>
<td>Medical/Surgical Nursing</td>
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<td>Grant Berry Jr.</td>
<td>Dean of Development</td>
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<td>Dean/Postsecondary Student Services</td>
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<td>William Best</td>
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<td>Robert G. Bowers</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
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<td>Jacquelynne Ellis</td>
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<td>Al Hauser</td>
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<td>Carl Hillyard</td>
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<td>William Holmes</td>
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<td>John Hough</td>
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<td>G. Robert Kissell</td>
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<td>Phillip D. Landers</td>
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<td>Coordinator/Audio Visual</td>
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<td>Andrew D. Mehall</td>
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<td>Joseph Murphy</td>
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<td>Veronica M. Muzic</td>
<td>Professor and Vice President for Academic Affairs/Provost</td>
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<td>Donald O. Praster</td>
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<td>Joseph Sick</td>
<td>Director of Earth Science</td>
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<td>Robert H. Smith</td>
<td>Director of Earth Science</td>
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<td>Dale Straub</td>
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<td>Chalmer VanHorn</td>
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<td>Richard J. Weilminster</td>
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<td>Charles Wilkinson</td>
<td>Automotive Technology</td>
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<td>Barbara Williams</td>
<td>Drafting</td>
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Approved as of Fall 2014
Academic Schools & Majors 2014
Pennsylvania College of Technology delivered degrees that work through six academic schools, offering programs of study leading to bachelor’s degrees, associate’s degrees, certificates and competency credentials relating to more than 100 different career fields.

**Business & Hospitality**
- Accounting & Finance
- Applied Management
- Business Administration
- Hospitality

**Construction & Design Technologies**
- Architectural Technology
- Building Construction
- Civil Engineering & Surveying
- Construction Management
- Heating, Ventilation & Air Conditioning

**Health Sciences**
- Applied Health Studies
- Dental Hygiene
- Emergency Medical Services/Paramedic
- Health Information Technology
- Medical Imaging
- Nursing
- Occupational Therapy Assistant
- Physical Fitness Specialist
- Physician Assistant
- Surgical Technology

**Industrial, Computing & Engineering Technologies**
- Applied Technology Studies
- Automated Manufacturing & Machining
- Electrical
- Electronics & Computer Engineering Technology
- Engineering Design Technology
- Information Technology
- Plastics & Polymer
- Welding

**Sciences, Humanities & Visual Communications**
- Early Childhood Education
- Emergency Management
- Graphic Design, Web Development, & Art
- Human Services
- Individualized Programs of Study
- Industrial & Human Factors Design
- Legal Assistant/Paralegal

**Transportation & Natural Resources Technologies**
- Automotive
- Aviation
- Collision Repair & Restoration
- Diesel & Power Generation
- Forestry
- Heavy Equipment
- Landscape/Horticulture
Then & Now:

Remembering “Unit 6”, the former trolley car barn, used by Williamsport Technical Institute and Williamsport Area Community College.
Pennsylvania College of Technology
Core Values 2014

**Hands-on Education:** We believe the best preparation for a successful career is a learning environment emphasizing applied, real-world instruction. We provide experiential learning in small classes and labs with state-of-the-art equipment, mentored by skilled faculty with business and industry experience.

**Student-Centered Environment:** Our students’ best interest is the priority influencing our decision making. As an open enrollment college, believing in the dignity and worth of every individual, we strive to provide a holistic experience that fosters educational, physical, personal, and social development.

**Business and Industry Partnerships:** As an entrepreneurial institution, we develop cooperative relationships with business and industry to ensure our curriculum remains current, encourages lifelong learning, and prepares our graduates to compete successfully in the global marketplace. This provides opportunities for faculty to enhance their skills, students to acquire work-based experiences, the College to receive technology and scholarship support, and the community to benefit from a highly qualified workforce.

**Community of Respect:** We are committed to diversity, inclusiveness, tolerance and civility. We recognize that respect of individual differences is the foundation of civil behavior across the College community.
www.pct.edu/centennial

Net proceeds from the sale of Working Class will become permanently restricted funds that will be invested to create income used for annual scholarship awards from the Penn College Endowed Alumni Scholarship.

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