SUNY Orange: Partnering for the Future of Education
I’d like to welcome you to the second edition of Learning Alive.

I am convinced that the leader of any organization, whether it is the CEO of a Fortune 500 company or the president of a community college, must be an efficient shepherd of that organization’s resources. I truly believe that, through collaboration, “We can do things better together than we can separately,” and I am extremely proud of how the faculty and staff here at the College have embraced that philosophy, and how that thought has resonated throughout the community as well.

For us at SUNY Orange, collaboration is vital to maintaining our status as one of the leading community colleges in the SUNY system.

In this issue of Learning Alive, you will read about how faculty and staff have united to broaden the learning experience and academic rigor for our students. You will discover how we have forged relationships with local high schools, businesses, civic leaders, artists and healthcare providers that have enhanced our educational offerings and made us more attractive to prospective students.

Our faculty and staff have worked tirelessly to hammer out details and make these initiatives a reality. I want to thank each one of them, as well as each of our partners, for leaving no stone unturned in their quest to build a diverse academic program that is relevant and current, and a source of pride for everyone associated with the College.

Sincerely,

Dr. William Richards
President, SUNY Orange

A leader in learning – that’s SUNY Orange! Inside the pages of this second issue of Learning Alive are examples of valuable partnerships being forged that enable the College to continue providing a “second-to-none” learning experience for the residents of Orange County and beyond.

Learn about our vision for expanding students’ understanding of diverse cultures and exposing them to a world beyond their comfort zone, as the Global Initiative is described. Read about our sharpened focus on educational partnerships and a clearer picture emerges of our efforts to join hands with K-12 school districts and university partners to address academic challenges and to create pathways for students. Look further and you will get a glimpse of our new, state-of-the-art telecommunications lab that resulted from a partnership with Frontier Communications.

Think partnerships and one most often thinks external, but many internal partnerships are being formed as well, like the new faculty mentor program, where seasoned and experienced faculty are paired with newcomers to discuss pedagogy. And on and on … there are many special happenings within Academic Affairs.

None of these initiatives or achievements could be realized without the right talent. As stated in the best-selling book, “From Good to Great” “…you have to have the right people on the bus” … and that we have. We have an exceptional faculty intent on teaching the art of learning. I am extremely proud of all the individuals you will read about in the pages of Learning Alive. Please join us: SUNY Orange is a great place to be!

Sincerely,

Dr. Catherine Chew
Vice President for Academic Affairs
At SUNY Orange, the term “student” is broader now than perhaps it has ever been, encompassing not just “traditional” college students or high school students, but also middle school children as well as adults who are taking courses for either credit or personal enrichment. To help assure a strong educational future for all residents of Orange County, the College has created the Office of Educational Partnerships to enhance its current community relationships and actively seek new partnerships.

The College is embarking upon a yearlong celebration and investigation of the culture, history, art, music and politics of Central America, South America and the Caribbean.

SUNY Orange is one of four community colleges who have united to improve access to training and education for emergency responders in the Hudson Valley.

When local healthcare leaders told College officials there was a pressing need for trained nuclear medical technologists in the Hudson Valley, SUNY Orange acted swiftly.

Veteran professors are using their expertise and experience to mentor new faculty on campus.

The members of Encore are proving that learning is a lifelong pursuit.

Meet four SUNY Orange professors who are building relationships outside the College.

To demonstrate the power of “hands-on” teaching and learning, SUNY Orange students and faculty from across campus created a winter display in Orange Hall Gallery.

The expanded visibility, and newfound success, of the College’s arts and communication programs spotlights the talent of SUNY Orange students.
Latin America
Seeking to expand students’ horizons, bring academic departments together in collaboration and infuse a global perspective on its curriculum, SUNY Orange has planned a year-long focus on Latin American culture, heritage, geography, art, music, language and much more as part of its first Global Initiative.

Rooted in the College’s international studies program, this debut Global Initiative project is drawing participation from all corners of the campus community, but it is hoped that as the initiative gains attention, it will appeal to local businesses, civic leaders and community members as well.

“This Global Initiative will recognize the contributions Hispanics have made to areas such as American art, culture and economics. It will also bring Hispanic Americans to the College, thus expanding the community base of the College and helping to strengthen our ‘American culture’ by informing Hispanics and non Hispanics about these contributions,” explains Max Schaefer, SUNY Orange professor who coordinates the College’s theater productions.

A number of the College’s academic departments have incorporated Latin American-based courses into their programs. Additionally, a pair of international trips to Peru and Mexico is planned; Latino lecturers have been invited to speak to both students and county residents; an immigration and migrant work symposium is scheduled; and concerts, art exhibits and plays by Latino artists will be performed by the College’s Arts and Communication Department. Many other events are being planned and will be announced as they are scheduled.

Among the many faculty members who have embraced this Global Initiative are Schaefer, Kathleen Wright, Dr. Jean Carlos Cowan, Dr. Barry Kass and Dr. Demos Kontos. Wright, Kass and Kontos will spearhead the College-sponsored trips to Peru and Mexico while Cowan has organized the immigration and migrant work symposium. Schaefer, who will oversee production of a play by Latino playwright Carlos Morton in November, has joined with many of his Arts and Communication colleagues to feature Latin American artists in their performances, plays and concerts.

“We really had two goals when we first began discussing this Global Initiative,” says Paul Basinski, coordinator of the College’s international studies program and chair of the Global Initiative team. “We are hoping we can create something meaningful here. It is a project that is collaborative, it is educational and it is intended to be inspirational, too. We want to talk about Latin American history, politics, heritage and culture, in all dimensions, the light side, the dark side, because we feel that is part of our ultimate educational mission here.

“The other part of it is to reach out into the Latino community, and we’ve begun to do that as well. We really want to get a sense of who our Hispanic constituency is, and ways in which we can involve those people who aren’t part of our academic community, both in terms of attending the events, or helping us to set up,
participate or sponsor them,” Basinski adds. “That is part of the collaborative piece as well. We think this is a way to present the best side of SUNY Orange to a very large and growing segment of our potential college population.”

Basinski has already seen the on-campus collaboration hit its full stride as a diverse grouping of departments have banded together to create a year-long educational focus that ultimately benefits the students.

**Dr. Catherine Chew**, SUNY Orange’s vice president for academic affairs, says it is imperative that today’s educational programs stress cultural understanding. “You can’t underestimate the importance of helping students gain a deeper knowledge of the global society we live in today. We want to make sure our graduates leave us having been exposed to diverse cultural experiences and recognize their impact.”

There is a sense among faculty members that this Global Initiative is not just about Latin America and the focus on learning, academics and culture, but that it will help internationalize the curriculum on campus.

“As an anthropologist, I believe that the Latin American Global Initiative is one of the most exciting educational events to be held at the College in the last several years. In our increasingly diverse and complex society, it is vital to a liberal arts education to become knowledgeable about worldwide, national and regional trends which affect all of our lives,” Kass says. “Through the migration to the United States of millions of Hispanics, this country has important historical and current connections throughout the vast region known as Latin America.

“The Hispanic population of the United States is as important to the formation of this country as any of the other immigrant groups who have entered our borders. The Global Initiative is SUNY Orange’s recognition of the vitality of the Hispanic people and their central place in the development of our nation,” Kass adds.

When the Global Initiative’s focus moves on to another region in the future, whether it is Africa or China or some other locale, Basinski expects the Latin American theme to remain.

“I see no reason why once those courses and events have been established, that they couldn’t continue to be taught and remain a part of our curriculum in the future. That would be one of the real legacies and impacts the Global Initiative could have on the curriculum in international education.”

An even greater legacy of the Global Initiative will be its lasting influence on SUNY Orange students, as well as faculty, staff and Hudson Valley residents.
A faculty member’s vision, an automobile ride to Rochester and a fortuitous meeting helped initiate and cement collaborative relationships for SUNY Orange with Citizens Communications Company/Frontier and Rochester Institute of Technology that will bolster the College’s curriculum, enhance students’ transfer options and put graduates in position for employment consideration by Frontier.

Thanks to its partnership with Citizens/Frontier, the College will cut the ribbon on a state-of-the-art telecommunications laboratory in the Bio-Tech Building (Room 357) this spring with an eye toward offering the first courses of its new telecommunications degree program (Associate in Applied Science degree in electrical engineering technology) this fall.

Frontier and several of its vendors donated all of the equipment for a 1,400-square-foot lab that will supplement the new degree program, which is expected to receive full New York State Department of Education approval this spring as well.

After completing a telecommunications graduate course during the summer of 2005, Fern Steane, chair of the College’s Applied Technology Department, began considering ways to modernize the department, specifically the electrical engineering technology degree program. That fall, College officials started discussing a local paid student internship program with Frontier and ways that SUNY Orange could upgrade its applied technologies curriculum.

The subsequent involvement of SUNY Orange President Dr. William Richards and Maggie Wilderotter, chairman and chief executive officer of Citizens Company (parent company to Frontier), vaulted the project toward fruition. But it wasn’t until College officials visited Rochester last summer that the full impact of the project crystallized. That’s when the SUNY Orange contingent met a Frontier employee who had at one time been a community college student.

“We talked with him a lot about how a telecommunications program at his community college would have benefited him,” says Dr. Melody Festa, associate vice president. “He said the learning curve on the equipment would have been faster had he been exposed to it earlier. The Frontier lab we saw him working in was cutting-edge. He had never been exposed to that type of lab, but he said having it at the community college level would have given him a phenomenal advantage.”

“Frontier believes we are going to produce the telecommunications employees of the future by working with SUNY Orange,” Tom FitzGerald, Frontier’s vice president of operations for New York state, says. “Telecommunications is a great industry. It is always evolving and this lab can create and attract great students for SUNY Orange.”

FitzGerald says the unique collaborative philosophies of Richards and Wilderotter were vital to the project’s success, and demonstrate the endless possibilities available when educational and business leaders unite.

“These two CEOs think differently about their worlds of education and business, and how to effectively utilize resources outside the borders of both,” he explains. “For them, there are no boundaries, and they are proving that it is important that business, education and communities make an impact together for everyone in that community to be successful.”

Input from Frontier employees Sue McDermott, network engineer, and Janet O’Connor, senior technical analyst, along with SUNY Orange professor Arlin Bartlett, has created a lab that will allow students to replicate every aspect of Frontier’s daily operation, and will serve as a fertile training ground not only for SUNY Orange students, but current and future Frontier employees in the region.

“An added benefit is that the College has been able to collaborate with RIT on transfer agreements that benefit our students,” Festa says.

“Without Frontier’s collaboration, this whole thing would have been impossible. SUNY Orange could not have offered an adequate telecommunications program without the proper equipment. It would have been a disservice to our students,” Steane asserts. “Frontier facilitated acquisition of the equipment for us and also helped us develop a relationship with RIT. Quite frankly, SUNY Orange could not have afforded to do this on its own.”

Frontier has also agreed to continue its partnership with SUNY Orange, assuring not only that the College will have access to the latest equipment as it is developed, but a bright future for students and citizens who aspire to a career in telecommunications.

New Frontiers in Telecommunications

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A unique and groundbreaking collaboration between SUNY Orange, SUNY Ulster, SUNY Rockland and SUNY Sullivan has created the OURS Consortium, merging the four colleges’ emergency services and first responder degree programs in a true regional approach to education.

Technology and ingenuity are the two biggest advantages the United States has in preserving its homeland security and fighting the many faces of terrorism during the coming months and years, according to Michael Chertoff, director of the nation’s Department of Homeland Security.

It is those two traits that are at the foundation of the OURS Consortium, a cutting-edge, four-college collaboration involving SUNY community colleges in Orange, Ulster, Rockland and Sullivan counties. Through the consortium, students throughout the Hudson Valley will be able to take classes and receive degrees in emergency management, fire protection science, paramedic services, human services and cyber security. Graduates will be able to seek jobs with professional
fire departments, police departments, emergency service organizations, and in private industry as emergency management specialists in the Hudson Valley and in the metropolitan area.

The consortium, announced in September 2006, is the product of the creative collaborative visions of each of the participating colleges’ presidents, the strong support of the region’s state legislators (John Bonacic, Bill Larkin and Thomas Morahan) and the yeoman, behind-the-scenes legwork of numerous faculty members and administrators.

For SUNY Orange, taking the lead in developing the consortium’s cyber security program allows for a unique partnership that carries numerous advantages.

“Our graduates will be ready to take leadership roles in major fire, police, emergency service and security departments throughout the region,” asserts Dr. William Richards, SUNY Orange president. “They will have a background in management, understand the principles behind providing emergency services and be able to apply their knowledge in the ‘real world’ in the most dangerous situations.”

“What is special about this consortium is that, from day one, everyone was aware that we needed to collaborate and not compete. It’s about working together, and I think that the leadership involved in the consortium is doing a wonderful job,” comments Dr. Sue Deer, associate vice president for the health professions. Deer represents the College on the Consortium Executive Committee, joining vice presidents Dr. Catherine Chew (academic affairs) and Dan Bloomer (administration).

“Independently, each of the four colleges offers very good programs, but together we can jointly offer tremendously viable programs,” Deer adds.

Marianne Collins, consortium coordinator, hails the partnership as "groundbreaking" and admits many within the SUNY system are watching, which means the consortium’s organizational structure, management and fiscal efficiency could become a pilot for future groups to follow.

She adds, “The consortium grew out of a recognition that every community in the Hudson Valley has a need for well-educated and well-trained first responders. The community college system has been a key part of that training for many years.”
By utilizing video teleconferencing and online study, along with traditional classroom work, students in Orange County will be able to complete first responder-specific degree programs at the other three colleges without having to commute to those campuses. An initial $4 million dollar start-up grant acquired by Bonacic, Larkin and Morahan has supported the creation of the consortium and the initial technological upgrades necessary to facilitate video teleconferencing on the four campuses.

Joining together in September to announce the consortium were, from left, Dr. William Richards, president, SUNY Orange; Dr. Donald C. Katt, president, SUNY Ulster; Senator John J. Bonacic; Marianne Collins, consortium coordinator; Senator William Larkin; and Dr. Cliff L. Wood, president, SUNY Rockland.

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Deer and Jim Dutcher, associate vice president for information technology, have overseen the upgrade to the College’s technological infrastructure. Meanwhile, Dr. Melody Festa, associate vice president for math, science and technology, has guided the cyber security curriculum development as well as design of a new cyber security lab planned for the Bio-Tech Building along with Richard Heppner, vice president for liberal arts, and department chairs Fern Steane (applied technology) and Dennis O‘Loughlin (criminal justice). Countless others on campus have contributed as well.

John Otero, New York City Police Department’s chief investigator of computer forensics, has consulted with SUNY Orange staff throughout the process and has been an invaluable resource.

The College is prepared to offer the initial courses in its cyber security program this fall with anticipated program approval expected from the SUNY administration and the State Education Department prior to the Fall 2008 semester. The College’s new cyber security program, which Festa assures will be “a very comprehensive and detail-oriented computer and network forensics degree program” should appeal to traditional students as well as current emergency services personnel seeking further training or a career change.

“I think the cyber security program will excite a lot of students,” explains O‘Loughlin, whose research into the Hudson Valley’s homeland security structure on behalf of SUNY Orange earlier this decade helped establish the bedrock principals upon with the consortium stands today. “Today’s students have very good computer skills. They may want a career in law enforcement but may not be sure where they fit in. This gives them a chance at fulfilling their dreams through the avenues of halting cyber crime and improving cyber security.”

By merging their ingenuity with advanced computer skills, students throughout the Hudson Valley can build a rewarding career in cyber security thanks to SUNY Orange’s emerging program, or they can utilize the OURS Consortium to become a valued member of one of the varied emergency management and first responder professions that will be critical to securing our homeland in the future.
When leaders from local healthcare providers outlined the most pressing “needs” in their industry last spring, officials from SUNY Orange listened, and then responded by quickly formulating a nuclear medicine technology program that was unveiled in January.

This exciting new program is a 12-month, non-credit certification course directed by the College’s Diagnostic Imaging Department. It features evening classes and accompanying clinicals designed to prepare students for their certification exam (offered by the Nuclear Medicine Technologist Certification Board and the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists) and application for a state-issued license.

“The creation of this program is a direct result of the Healthcare Industry Forum that Continuing and Professional Education hosted in the Spring of 2006,” says David Kohn, the College’s continuing education director. CAPE’s Business Solutions and Professional Development Department invited the leaders of 16 local healthcare organizations to discuss issues facing the region’s healthcare industry.

“They told us that nuclear medicine is one of the ‘hardest-to-fill’ areas because of a lack of a qualified workforce,” Kohn continues.

By uniting its credit and non-credit resources, the College was able to move quickly. And once Orange Regional Medical Center, of Middletown, generously stepped forward with a donation to cover start-up costs, SUNY Orange finalized its program, thus becoming the only college or university in the Hudson Valley to offer a certificate program that fully trains registered nurses and radiologic technologists to become nuclear medicine technologists.

“Through the Diagnostic Imaging Department’s expertise and network of contacts, they were able to put together a didactic and clinical program,” Kohn adds. “There is a need in this program for 1,000 clinical hours, and that’s where the Diagnostic Imaging Department’s network came in handy, because CAPE would not have been capable of establishing such a program.”

It is estimated that over the next 10-15 years, as a large portion of the baby-boom generation enters retirement, the need for technologists and technicians across many health fields will increase. Projections by the U.S. Department of Labor Statistics predict the field of nuclear medicine technologists will grow faster than the national average over the next 10 years, rising by as much as 18 to 26 percent.

“Our program is designed for radiologic technologists and registered nurses who wish to expand their skills, focus on additional specialization or change career fields,” says Diedre Costic, chair of the College’s Diagnostic Imaging Department, adding that a one-year program allows health professionals who already possess a degree (associate, bachelor’s or beyond) in radiologic sciences or nursing to specialize in nuclear medicine.

When word that SUNY Orange was considering establishing a nuclear medicine technology program began circulating through the local healthcare industry, Costic says her phone and e-mail heated up with inquiries.

“We had a lot of interest, which tells you just how much a program like this is needed in the Hudson Valley,” Costic says.

“The development of this program shows that SUNY Orange is responsive to the community’s needs, adaptable to changing workforce demands and eager to maintain its place as a regional educational leader in both the credit and continuing education arenas,” Kohn adds.

By fostering a collaborative atmosphere among staff and faculty, both internally and with partners throughout the community, SUNY Orange is poised to quickly respond to future “calls for help” as well.
Through its newly created Office of Educational Partnerships, SUNY Orange has sharpened the focus of its outreach efforts in Orange County and beyond. Under the guidance of Rosana Reyes-Rosello, director of educational partnerships, the College offers college-level classes in the area’s high schools, saving students time and money. Also, SUNY Orange operates programs that address the academic needs of young at-risk students.

In addition, the College this spring created a collaborative partnership between high school teachers and SUNY Orange faculty members. The College will unveil Camp College, an academic-centered summer enrichment program this summer. Reyes-Rosello has also concentrated the College’s efforts toward improving its existing transfer articulation agreements, while also initiating talks aimed at formulating new articulations and maintaining the diverse offerings available at the College’s three satellite locations.

In short, if the College has an existing relationship or partnership, Reyes-Rosello, in concert with her program coordinators (Ramona Burton, Center for Youth Development; John Hoffman, Tech Prep Program; and Cindy Simpson, Community College in the High School), is eyeing ways to improve it, while at the same time exploring a myriad of untapped avenues through which SUNY Orange can pursue innovative new collaborations.

It’s easy to see why Dr. Catherine Chew, vice president for academic affairs, hails Reyes-Rosello’s hiring and the formation of the Office of Educational Partnerships as among the most important moves the College has undertaken recently. Although many of the programs now under the purview of the Office of Educational Partnerships had been in existence, with some dating back a decade or more, their oversight was not integrated across campus.

By uniting programs such as the Tech Prep Program, the Center for Youth Development (Liberty Partnership Program), Community College in the High School (CCHS) and College Experience Program (CEP) beneath one umbrella, the College can assure greater efficiency and avoid duplication of effort by staff members.

“I can’t think of a position on campus that is more important to our mission and outreach efforts than this one. We had so many initiatives going on, but very little coordination. Rosana has been able to pull all of the pieces together and the talent and vision she is bringing to the office is impressive,” Chew says. “She reaches out to all parts of Orange County and all levels of education. She has been such a wonderful ambassador on our behalf, particularly with BOCES and the school districts in the county.”

Local educators have already seen the impact of Reyes-Rosello’s efforts, which have invigorated the College’s relationships, elevated the College’s profile in the community and excited high school administrators who see that SUNY Orange is establishing new trends in education through partnerships and collaboration.

“Instead of SUNY Orange being simply a college in our community, the College is now being seen as the educational leader of our county,” says John Bell, assistant superintendent of the Port Jervis School District. “The College is trying so hard to build bridges around the county. It’s really exciting and it makes perfect sense for us all to work together.”

“At the high school level, we can no longer set our sights on graduation at grade 12,” says Sean Michel, assistant superintendent for instruction and curriculum at Minisink Valley School District.
Director Rosana Reyes-Rosello is the face of SUNY Orange’s new Office of Educational Partnerships. She and her staff are eyeing ways to improve the College’s community relationships through innovation and collaboration.
District. “We have to work with the College to make sure our students graduate (from college) with an advanced degree. Working hand-in-hand with SUNY Orange is a great opportunity for us to break down those barriers (that once existed between high schools and post-secondary institutions) and begin unifying our approach to education across all levels.”

One outcome of that new unified approach is the Collaborative Faculty Partnership, a project involving SUNY Orange’s Center for Teaching and Learning, the Orange/Ulster BOCES curriculum committee and the Office of Educational Partnerships. The program matches College faculty with colleagues from the county’s high schools. The goal is to increase students’ academic performance at both levels while also aligning the curriculum and academic expectations at the high school and collegiate levels. For example, a thorough grasp of college entrance exams such as the Placement Assessment would benefit high school teachers while college faculty might be helped by a stronger comprehension of how high schools must prepare students for the state’s Regents exams.

“We want to improve teaching and assessment strategies at all levels. We recognize that there is expertise at the high school level that college faculty can benefit from, and vice versa,” Reyes-Rosello says.

“Through this partnership, we can tighten the communication so that everyone has a better understanding of the expectations of high school and college faculty. It needs to be a two-way street so that our kids are not caught in the middle,” says Dr. Mary Ann Wilson, assistant superintendent of instruction and curriculum for Orange/Ulster BOCES. She provides the analogy that students are allowed to use calculators during high school math tests, but are prohibited from using them on college exams.

“Often times, students are prepared one way in high school but they find that the expectations are not the same in college,” Wilson explains. “We are working to see what we can do, as a group, to be clearer about everyone’s expectations and what projects we can undertake to promote student success.”

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For SUNY Orange, the term “student” is broader now than perhaps it has ever been, encompassing not just “traditional” college students or high school students, but also middle school children as well as adults who are taking courses for either credit or personal enrichment.

“Our focus now starts at the sixth grade, through the Center for Youth Development, and extends to our graduates who leave us and move on to a partner institution,” Reyes-Rosello explains. For many educators, it has become increasingly apparent that it is never too early to start exposing students to the wide variety of academic and employment opportunities at their disposal.

By collaborating with local school districts, community-based organizations, businesses and government agencies, the College’s Center for Youth Development (including the Liberty Partnership Program) creates and implements a comprehensive array of pre-collegiate programs that prepare youths in grades 6-12 for successful transition into post-secondary education and entry-level careers. The Liberty Partnership Program has been such a success in Newburgh that it has recently branched out to Middletown and plans are under way for the program to be offered in Port Jervis this fall.

“We jumped at the chance to bring the Liberty Partnership Program to Port Jervis,” Bell says. “We have a lot of at-risk kids in our district. We battle issues with graduation and dropout rates. This will allow us to find those kids that might be at risk, train them and give them a chance to succeed. Hopefully we can pull it off and acquire the grant.”

By contrast, for those high school students who do not intend to enroll in college, SUNY Orange’s Tech Prep Program is a way for them to gain an advantage in an increasingly competitive and technological society by stressing those criteria that will enhance their employability. It is a collaborative effort by college, high school and industry personnel that includes field trips to high-tech business and industry, features aligned curriculum and academic expectations, and provides industry mentors for the secondary school.

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It was the end of an especially trying day, the type that is all-too-familiar to new teachers on college campuses across the country, and Melissa Browne was dejected, searching for an infusion of confidence and assurance, when she bumped into colleague Alex Jakubowski on the steps inside Morrison Hall.

Five minutes later, Browne, in her initial year as a full-time instructor in the English and Foreign Languages Department, walked away rejuvenated. Similar encounters between established veterans and newcomers to the College are happening much more often across the SUNY Orange campus thanks to the new Faculty Mentoring Program established last fall by the Center for Teaching and Learning.

“I was feeling like a failure and doubting myself,” recalls Browne, who spent 2005-06 as an adjunct instructor in the fall and a full-time temporary instructor in the spring before acquiring her present full-time tenure track slot prior to this year. “But Alex said, ‘That just means you are asking all the right questions.’ His insight reaffirmed for me that I was on the right track, and that as long as I am learning as a teacher, I’m doing OK.

“Instead of floundering, I walked away from that conversation knowing I was in the right spot,” Browne adds.

According to Dr. Jennifer Merriam, CTL director, regular exchanges of that nature are exactly what the College envisioned when it constructed this program, spawned from ideas put forth by three recently retired faculty emeriti and former department chairs (Chris Godwin, Peg Scribner and John Cummins). Fifteen mentors and 16 mentees are presently participating in the program, which is just one component of the College’s faculty orientation structure.

“In general the mentees have greatly valued being able to go to their mentor with questions and have another friendly face to ask questions, seek advice and bounce ideas off of,” Merriam explains. Those experienced faculty and staff members who volunteered to be mentors completed an orientation workshop last summer and many were then paired with new faculty or staff this past fall.

Browne credits Jakubowski with providing creative ways of reaching out to her students, engaging them in classroom participation and introducing them to challenging topics, while Jakubowski, soon to complete his 15th year at the College, has benefited from his involvement in the program as well.

“As I talk about things with Melissa, it gives me a chance to re-examine what I am doing in the classroom, which is always beneficial,” Jakubowski says. “It’s a nice forum to share ideas and get feedback from her. Many times I’ve come away feeling validated and having re-affirmed in my mind that I’m on the right track as well.

“I remember how overwhelming it was during my first year,” Jakubowski says. “I felt a lot of pressure to fit in and make a good impression. It’s hard to learn the attitude of the campus, things like grading expectations, assignments and workload expectations. New employees need to know they are on the same page as everyone else, and to be reassured.”

“When you are new, you are reluctant to ask questions because you don’t want it to appear as if you don’t know what you are doing,” Browne says. “But this program gives me ‘permission’ to ask questions, and Alex has been tremendous about letting me call, e-mail or stop by his office anytime. It’s been extremely valuable to me.”

There is little doubt the Faculty Mentoring Program has eased the transition process for Browne and others, generating self-confidence among the instructors and enhancing the learning experience for students. Sometimes all it takes is five minutes.
Have you always wanted to water color, script or quilt, but have always been too busy working or raising a family? Perhaps you’ve wanted to teach a short course on a favorite pastime like, say, baseball history or radio’s heyday? Or share your expertise about local history or opera? And do it all as a senior citizen-learner in a community college setting?

Those tantalizing questions are at the foundation of one of SUNY Orange’s most successful educational partnerships: Encore, the College’s 10-year-old program for “lifelong” learners. Modeled after the international Elderhostel program, Encore allows community and college lifelong learners and instructors to explore together wonderfully diverse opportunities in short courses, one-day special programs and travel-learn experiences.

The results of this vibrant program and partnership are invigorating for the learners and instructors while meshing perfectly with the mission of the College. For instance, during the Spring 2007 semester, Encore members are flocking to courses about “Modern India” and “Understanding Islam.”

“I wanted to take both courses very badly. We need to learn about other cultures if we are to understand our world,” says Encore student Gail Harlach, who found professor emeritus Bob Foglia’s lectures on India mind-expanding; the sessions on Islam invaluable in separating stereotypes from the realities of a nonviolent religious system.

For Renuka Khanna, another student-retiree in the Modern India course, it was a superb opportunity to see her native land and culture from a different perspective, while Foglia saw the chance to instruct the course as “an opportunity to share one of my personal favorite subjects—and to learn from the responses and additions of the ‘students’, who bring their own seasoned worldly experiences to the forum.”

SUNY Orange is completely invested in the Encore program, beyond simply sponsoring it with funding. President William Richards joined the Encore faculty, teaching “Conceptual Physics” this spring. How did the experience affect him? “I had a marvelous time discussing Aristotle, Ptolemy, Copernicus, Newton and many others with a wonderful group of friends of the College. The ideas and insights we shared with each other were memorable.”

One obvious benefit of this special community-college partnership is the way it spans generations and age groups, and Encore member-students applaud the lifelong learning SUNY Orange encourages. Dr. Fred Levinson, who has studied jazz, big bands, global issues and cinema via Encore, says, “It’s an inspiring program in continuing education, a worthwhile endeavor.”

Delighting in exchanging the role of teacher for that of student, Evelyn Noelle says Encore’s sculpting class allowed her to explore “things I had never tried before. I loved all of the creativity that, once tapped, came pouring out! I’ve always wanted to sculpt and now Encore has given me the chance to put my hands to the clay.”
At age 96 one of Encore’s “senior” senior learners, Nadia Tally, says Encore offers her what she values most. Since retiring, she has avidly sought to study and discuss “everything that I don’t know about. I like to find out about different things and I like the variety of subjects offered.” She’s taken Encore trips to the Culinary Institute of America, visited numerous historical sites, and studied opera and movies in Encore courses.

But this unique educational partnership has other paybacks.

“It reaches out and brings together lovers of learning from all areas of our community. And it infuses us all with new life, new possibilities,” says Encore president and founder, Gertrude Mokotoff. In addition, Encore strives to encourage ongoing learning. Last May, it created and awarded its first “Adult Returning Student” scholarship to a SUNY Orange student. This academic year it has also contributed $5,000 to the College.

A former SUNY Orange Trustee and professor emeritus, as well as a past Middletown mayor, Mokotoff embodies the kind of ongoing educational commitment this partnership creates. “I will never stop learning myself,” she observes, “and I believe that’s what keeps us, our college and our community vigorous and alive.”

Dr. Catherine Chew, vice president for academic affairs, agrees. “This is a wonderful win-win partnership for the College and the community. This group not only learns from talented colleagues on campus, but supports our academic programs in numerous ways such as a significant contribution for audio equipment for our theatre program.”

Encore formally resides within SUNY Orange’s Continuing and Professional Education division and the College provides office and classroom space for the primarily daytime courses. But the life blood of the program is the healthy mix of the college and community partnership and the shared dedication to “lifelong learning” and keeping “learning alive” at SUNY Orange.

Christine Godwin is a SUNY Orange faculty emeritus and former chair of the English and Foreign Languages Department. She served as editor of “Learning Alive” in 2006.
Anouk Verheyden-Gillikin

Trained scientists can observe the growth rings of a tree and provide a detailed biography of that tree. But when there is an absence of rings—such as in tropical mangrove trees—that’s when Anouk Verheyden-Gillikin stands out from the crowd.

Because of her experience in cutting-edge research into the “cycles” of growth in mangrove trees—detailed in a paper entitled “Annual Cyclicity in High-Resolution Stable Carbon and Oxygen Isotope Ratios in the Wood of the Mangrove Tree *Rhizophora Mucronata*” published in the December 2004 edition of Plant, Cell and Environment magazine—Verheyden-Gillikin was invited this past February to be the keynote lecturer at a prestigious workshop in Potsdam, Germany.

Her appearance at the workshop placed Verheyden-Gillikin among 50 of the world’s elite dendrochronologists—including Graham Farquhar who is credited with developing the isotope model for plants—and it gave her just one more “world experience” she can impart upon her students here at SUNY Orange.

“By measuring isotopes in the wood, you see a cyclicity. From the cyclicity, you essentially see the rings,” she says of her research on tropical trees, which generate little or no visible ring boundaries because tropical climates don’t have the significant seasonal changes necessary to create visible tree rings. “They are invisible rings that you can extract through a chemical analysis. It is very new. In 2004, three publications came out on the subject, and I was one of them.”

Concluding her first year on the College’s faculty, Verheyden-Gillikin has been a welcome addition to the Biology Department. She brings a unique perspective to the classroom, thanks to extensive tours through Europe as a child growing up in Brussels; a student exchange trip to Thailand at age 18; a one year stay at England’s University of Manchester; and visits to Sri Lanka and Kenya for research projects related to her master’s and doctorate degrees.

“Every science has its limitations and I want students to understand that science is not something that you have to accept. As long as you know the limitations, then science works fine, but if you don’t take those limitations into consideration, then science doesn’t work,” she says. “By integrating dendrochronology into my classes, I hope students will have a better understanding of the global carbon cycle, the increase in carbon dioxide levels and global climate change.”

Currently, she is working with Vassar College professor Brian McAdoo on a National Science Foundation grant proposal that would provide money for community college instructors to be involved in research. The current proposal is for a trip to Indonesia to study the effects of the recent tsunami on the mangrove ecosystem.

In her short time on campus, Verheyden-Gillikin has represented SUNY Orange on an international stage and she’s injected an international and global flavor to her lectures, with a focus on challenging her students to think beyond their own limitations.

Faculty Collaborators
A live Learning Jean Halpern

With the advent of simulation technology and an array of “life-like” mannekins that offer training scenarios covering virtually every potential medical situation, nursing programs are now able to provide students with “real life” experiences before they acquire their first full-time job.

During her Fall 2006 sabbatical, Jean Halpern, an associate nursing professor at SUNY Orange, spearheaded the College’s drive toward integrating simulation technology into its curriculum by investigating the entire spectrum of the technology and its implementation. She traveled 8,669 miles and visited 11 labs and universities, spanning from Seattle, Wash. to Springfield, Mass.

“Simulation technology allows students to feel more comfortable and gives them the sense that they can handle any situation, because they have encountered it before,” Halpern says.

A veteran of more than 35 years in nursing and education, a semester spent examining the latest technology energized Halpern as she unfolded a road map she thinks the College can follow to enhance its ability to produce students with “real life” experiences before they acquire their first full-time job.

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Since taking over the SUNY Orange Symphonic Band in January 2006, Kevin Scott has sculpted a remarkable turnaround for the group by reaching out to the community, plucking talented artists, and infusing his dedicated, professional and workmanlike attitude into his performers’ practices and concerts.

So when Scott pronounces his vision of the symphonic band serving as a beacon not only for the College, but the entire Hudson Valley and beyond, it’s easy to believe he will accomplish his goal.

“I’d like to take this band into New York City and perform a program, to let people know that the SUNY Orange Symphonic Band is not just geared to a small community college,” Scott says. “I don’t see our band members as strictly performers, but as ambassadors for the College. We want to reflect a positive image, in our music, in our attitude and in the way we carry ourselves.”

Scott would like to create an outlet for performers desiring to showcase their talents, while giving music aficionados a place to enjoy quality concerts. And now that the College has partnered with the City of Middletown to practice and perform at the historic Paramount Theater, he sees no reason why the band won’t continue to prosper.

“Many of the high school bands in this area are excellent, so there is a talent base there,” he adds. “And moving to the Paramount has been a huge ego boost for the performers, and it makes them feel more at home in a community setting rather than a campus setting.”

With assistance from Mark Strunsky, chair of the Arts and Communication Department, Scott plans on broadening his outreach into the community. He is intent on fostering strong collaborative relationships with high school bands, as well as local performers and composers, in order to add more diversity and talent to the band.

“My hope is we can create an outlet where those kids who play in high school bands now can come to keep their music at a high level, or 10 years down the road they can come back and play for pleasure. Regardless of their situation, this band is a place they can call home,” Scott adds.

Scott maintains there is much more work to be done, but he’s already accomplished so much in a short time that the band’s future, as well as its present, is clearly in good hands.
Educators are fond of reciting a quote from Confucius, who said, “I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.” Earlier this academic year, SUNY Orange professors and students put that quote to the test by creating a “Hands-On Learning” exhibit in Orange Hall Gallery.

For the exhibit, students created interactive displays designed to draw the viewer into a participatory exercise, thereby heightening the learning principles and boosting retention of the subject matter for the audience.

It was clearly a “hands-on” learning experience for all, as the College’s students were forced to think about how best to create a display that would most effectively teach their selected topic, and the folks who viewed the display were afforded an opportunity to “learn through doing.”

“At the top of the learning pyramid, it is shown that students retain about 10 percent of lectures,” says Maria Blon, associate professor of mathematics and computer science, who helped organize the exhibit. “But the base of the learning pyramid shows that students who teach someone else retain 90 percent of the subject matter, which means that the students who created these exhibits were retaining nearly everything about the topic they were demonstrating.”

The exhibit, which ran from mid-January through mid-February, was a full-scale demonstration of the collaborative abilities of the faculty and students at SUNY Orange, as nearly every academic area was represented. More than 90 students participated in creating displays.

The exhibit was coordinated through the Center for Teaching and Learning, with Blon receiving organizational assistance from Dr. Jennifer Merriam, Elizabeth Tarvin and Nancy Carlson. But the real energizing force behind the event was a full slate of professors who eagerly brought their students into the fold as well, pulling the exhibit together in less than a semester’s time.

“It was impressive that the teachers were able to work this into their classes so quickly,” Blon adds. “Although faculty members have been doing these types of things with their students for some time, there was never a place for them to show their work.”

Professor John Wolbeck’s engineering students attended the exhibit’s opening and its final day, reprising their popular fall semester bridge building and demolition project (shown above). Another popular display was a theater lighting demonstration created by Max Schaefer’s arts and communication students.

“The Hands-On Learning exhibit embodied two major principals of developmentally appropriate education, ‘constructivism’ and the ‘multiple intelligences theory,’” Carlson says. “Constructivism can be summed up by the quote, ‘it must be in the hands before it is in the head.’ It’s been proven that children learn most easily when they can have learning materials in their hands first, experience them, and then make the connection to an abstract.

“Howard Gardner, who developed the multiple intelligences theory, said, ‘It doesn’t matter how smart you are, it matters how you are smart.’ I challenged our students to not only think about how they were constructing their display, but to think about how they might adjust it for someone who was a logical-mathematical learner, or a linguistic learner or a spatial learner,” Carlson adds. “It was certainly a positive learning experience for our students.”

The next “Hands-On Learning” exhibit is planned for October 2008. It will be yet another opportunity for the College’s faculty and students to showcase the true power of interactive learning, as well as the energy that can be created through true collaboration from all corners of campus.
Whether it is a simple stroll down South Street, a short drive to nearby Sugar Loaf, a trip to the Empire State capital in Albany or an intense overseas excursion to France and beyond, SUNY Orange is aggressively spreading its artistic wings.

The College, thanks to the inspired work of many staff and faculty members, is forging exciting new relationships that are fortifying its Arts and Communication Department programs and creating a dynamic and appealing on-campus arts culture that will benefit SUNY Orange and its students for years to come.

A recent agreement with the City of Middletown has allowed the SUNY Orange orchestra and symphonic band to move from intimate Orange Hall Theater on the Middletown campus to the historic Paramount Theater several blocks away on South Street.

The College is hoping to soon finalize details of an initiative to create a summer internship program that will immerse students in the “business” side of the arts by pairing the students with local artisans in Sugar Loaf. In addition, the College is looking at ways that it can offer courses in Sugar Loaf.

This past fall, four SUNY Orange students—alumni Nathalina Nesteroke, Mary Catherine Halfpenny and Mike Marquez, along with current student Angela Hermida—had their work displayed in the 2006 Fall SUNY Student Art Exhibition in Albany, marking a first for the College. Nesteroke’s piece “Dresses” was chosen as “Best of Show,” which means it will now be featured in the “Best of SUNY” show at the New York State Museum this summer.

The College continues to provide the region with a strong theater arts program and this February formally launched its own internet radio station, Colt Rock Radio, bringing SUNY Orange to a global audience.

And earlier this spring, SUNY Orange students MaryLee Shorr and Jeff Fina were among a dozen students chosen from across the country for the prestigious National Endowment for the Arts’ “2007 Visual Arts/Liberal Arts Workshop,” a month-long international summer program that will immerse the participants in the works of Rembrandt and William Shakespeare.

Organized by renowned sculptor Greg Wyatt, this inaugural four-week workshop, made possible through a recent grant from the NEA, will take the students to New York City, Giverny, France; Amsterdam, Netherlands; and Stratford-upon-Avon, England.

“It is an incredible honor for the College to be included in this program, and it is an incredible opportunity we can give to our students,” Richard Heppner, associate vice president for liberal arts, says of Shorr and Fina’s inclusion in the NEA program. “The opportunity is so unique, for SUNY Orange to have two students selected in beyond description.”

For many on campus, the expanded visibility, and newfound success, of the College’s arts programs spotlights the sizable talent of SUNY Orange students, and provides a very public stamp of approval for future students who may be considering the College as a means to reach their goals.
“The support of the administration, as we’ve pursued these agreements and opportunities, has been wonderful, and it shows their commitment to the arts on this campus,” Heppner adds. “And that has been a great boost for the confidence and morale of our students and faculty.”

Kevin Scott, director of the symphonic band, echoes that sentiment. “Moving to the Paramount has been a huge ego boost and tonic for our band. And because we are a community band, our members feel more at home in a community setting (at the historic theater) rather than a campus setting.”

The relationship has been beneficial to the Paramount as well, according to Maria Bruni, the theater’s manager. “As soon as I heard about the opportunity for us to work with the College, I jumped at it. I see all sorts of networking and collaboration opportunities with the students and the faculty at the College because we are within walking distance,” Bruni says. “It opens new doors for everybody, from the students to the clientele who attend the theater, but mainly for the students because it allows us to showcase local talent.”

For the students who are diligently working to craft and hone their skills, the chance to bring their art to the public is both rewarding and inspiring. Professor Susan Slater-Tanner, who manages the College’s student art gallery in Harriman Hall, doggedly pursued the quest for inclusion in the SUNY show in Albany this fall because she knows how educational those opportunities can be.

“It is integral for students to not only work in the studio, but to participate in organizing and hanging shows, and to learn about marketing and promoting their work,” she explains. “That’s critical to their development, because that is often the side of art that is most overlooked. In the end, we want our students to leave us with the most well-rounded experience possible.”

By continuing its search for appropriate venues for its entire arts and communication program, SUNY Orange can assure future students of every opportunity to spread their own wings as well.
There are other new ventures on the horizon as well, including Camp College, a three-week program that will bring sixth, seventh- and eighth-grade students to the Middletown and Newburgh campuses for academic enrichment workshops that will include classes in the morning and afternoon. Planned sessions include Eco-Avenger; Kung Fu Kids; Crime Scene Investigation (CSI); Digital Photography/Recording Studio; Food, Fun and Fitness; and So You Think You Can Dance?

Input from Burton; Hoffman; David Kohn and Dorene Iacovino, of the Continuing and Professional Education division; and Sharon Ahearne, from the movement sciences department, was critical to the formation of Camp College.

Reyes-Rosello is also collaborating with BOCES and the Newburgh school district on grant proposals that will create a Model Transition Program for disabled high school students pursuing a post-secondary education.

“It is commonly known that disabled students are expected to get their high school diploma. But they become stalled in a situation where they don’t move on, they don’t become employed or continue their education,” she explains. “Many times they find themselves here two or three years after high school graduation, looking for an opportunity to pursue a college degree. We want to help the school districts assist their students so they may transition more quickly and easily.”

With more than 80 percent of its student body comprised of Orange County residents, SUNY Orange serves a special role in the county, and the College is committed to expanding its accessibility to all who desire to pursue or resume an academic challenge.

“Our mission is to improve our students’ success, not only in terms of SUNY Orange but also in the community. We want to create partnerships that will ultimately help the economic and academic success of the students in the county,” Reyes-Rosello explains. “So many people in the community have been receptive to exchanging ideas and working with us to find ways to serve our wide range of constituencies. There are so many possibilities out there and we are only just scratching the surface.”