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TWO PAGES

Inclusion Through Diversity

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Highlights of the **March 18, 2014** meeting of the Tompkins County Legislature

TC3 President Addresses Continuing Challenges in “State of the College” Message

Commenting on major trends over the past five years in his annual “State of the College” message to the County Legislature, Tompkins Cortland Community College President Dr. Carl Haynes characterized the past five years as “one of the most challenging five year periods in the College’s history,” but expressed hope that Legislators see the College’s responses to these circumstances as “thoughtful, strategic, and consistent” with what sponsors expect. In addressing these challenges, he noted that TC3 has sustained program excellence and improved services in several areas.

Among the primary challenges, he said, relate to budget—with budget revenues declining through the period, with “unprecedented cuts in State aid for community colleges in the early years (a 21% State aid reduction in the first two years and aid from sponsoring counties flat)—followed by “an unusual trending both nationally and statewide in enrollment,” a trend he cautioned that seems to be continuing. While during the prior 15 years, College enrollment had doubled, with 10-14% growth in some years, the President noted that a 5.9% decline in total enrollment is projected for the current academic year, with a 13.4% decline if only Fall/Spring enrollment is considered.

President Haynes said the College has responded to these challenges, in part, with strategic budget expenditure adjustments—including a 14% reduction in employees, with an 18% decline in full-time faculty and similar reductions in administrators and support staff. Equipment purchases have declined by more than half since 2009; department budgets drastically reduced, and operations restructured and staff responsibilities realigned, with some needed changes hampered by additional and increasing unfunded mandates and compliance reporting requirements. He added, however, that, unlike many community colleges, TC3 has not resorted to an across-the-board approach to budget cuts and measures such as hiring freezes and significant increases in class sizes. The College, for example, has sustained its maximum class size at 30 students, as a key aspect of its educational mission, has increased staff in such areas as the Student Success Office to address student retention, and has developed new curricula, such as the Farm to Bistro program, to attract new students in innovative programs that meet local workforce needs and contribute to the local economy.

The President said that there continues to be much to be excited about at TC3 during the past year—including the new degree programs in Culinary Arts and Sustainable Farming and Food Systems, an expanded peer mentoring program that has strengthen student retention efforts, customized training for 28 businesses, outside recognition of student and faculty achievements, and organizational achievements including a successful Annual Campaign,

When considering the challenges of the past five years, President Haynes cautioned that significant relief does not appear in sight. “While we have strategically managed these challenges to this point with noteworthy improvements, prospectively, this will be extremely difficult to do,” he said. As a community college that will serve students with excellence in academic and support services, area employers with a well prepared workforce, and transfer colleges and universities with exceptionally well prepared students for more advanced study, TC3 “will continue to be a vital resource for the overall well being of our community,” Dr. Haynes pledged.

Contact: Dr. Carl Haynes, President, Tompkins Cortland Community College, 844-8211.

New Real Property Tax Exemption Approved

The Legislature, following a public hearing, approved a new Local Law, under Section 470 of New York State Real Property Tax Law, that provides an exemption from County property taxes, under certain conditions, for up to ten years for construction of buildings that achieve LEED certification. Approval was unanimous, but there was some discussion before the vote regarding whether wording changes, based on suggestions in positive comments at the public hearing necessitated a return to committee.

The maximum taxable value to be abated under the proposed law would be \$100,000, and exemptions over the ten-year period would be in accordance with a sliding scale over the ten-year period, based on the appropriate LEED standard in effect at the time a property’s construction or renovation is completed.

Contact: Legislature Office, 274-5434; Nathan Shinagawa, Chair, Government Operations Committee, 280-7557; Director of Assessment Jay Franklin, 274-5517.

Among other items:

- Deputy County Administrator and County Compliance Officer Paula Younger delivered the year-end report on the Tompkins County Compliance Program—a program with a vision to “sustain a strong and consistent culture of statutory, regulatory and ethical compliance throughout County government.” Its mission is “to administer a proactive County-wide agenda, integrating best practice and legal and compliance requirements, that supports all areas of County operations to improve monitoring systems and internal controls, identify and mitigate risk, and demonstrate transparency.” The year-end report will be available for review on the Compliance Program section of the County website at <http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/tccp>.
- There was some discussion regarding whether a policy should be instituted regarding replacement and design of county bridges, this following passage of a committee-only resolution Monday by the Facilities and Infrastructure Committee regarding three county bridges—including designation of a preferred two-lane design alternative for replacement of Ulysses’ Waterburg Road bridge. Legislator Carol Chock brought up the issue, questioning whether certain such issues should be brought to the Legislature for consideration.

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