

03/24/2007

After 15 months, college welcomes new president

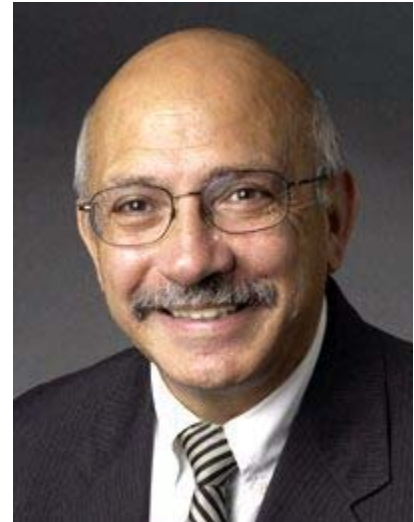
Matt Bower , Daily Times

WARWICK - The field house at the Community College of Rhode Island's Knight Campus in Warwick was filled yesterday as the school community celebrated the inauguration of its fourth president.

More than 400 family members, friends and former colleagues of Ray M. DiPasquale were on hand as he was officially welcomed to the position with a full share of pomp and circumstance. Yesterday's installation events began with a procession of students, faculty and staff of the college, as well as community members, from the school's main building to the field house where the ceremony was held.

Serving as master of ceremonies was the Honorable Frank Caprio, who performed the ceremonial installation of DiPasquale as president with the help of Dr. Jack Warner, commissioner of Higher Education. Both presented DiPasquale with the ceremonial chain of office.

Caprio said he knew DiPasquale, who had been serving as the interim president for roughly one and half years after leaving his position as vice president for enrollment management and student affairs at the State University of New York's SUNY College at Brockport, was the right man for the job after inviting him to his house for dinner.



Ray M. DiPasquale

"I invited him over my house for dinner so we could meet and get to know one another," he said. "There was a snowstorm that night, so, as a true test of his character, I asked him to spend the night in our guest house, but he declined because he said he had a meeting the next morning at SUNY that he felt was important."

Caprio said DiPasquale that night drove seven hours through the snowstorm back to New York.

"By then I knew we had the right guy," he said.

Gov. Donald Carcieri delivered the "Call to Service."

"The selection of Ray DiPasquale to head CCRI is a great one," he said. "It's abundantly clear to me the amount of respect he's garnered from the team here in the short period of time he's been here."

Describing DiPasquale as approachable, Carcieri said he "reaches out and touches the members of his team here."

"The leadership I know Ray will bring will be important to our state," he said.

Following the governor's speech was a videotaped presentation of greetings to the president from students, faculty and staff of the college. Greetings ranged from sincere welcome messages to joyful singing to one faculty member with a goofy-looking "bonnet," which she explained DiPasquale could use to channel her for advice when needed.

"That was quite a video," Caprio said after it was over. "It speaks to the creativity and the energy with which the CCRI community welcomes Ray DiPasquale."

Representatives of the CCRI community delivered greetings from their respective groups in person.

"Ray coming to the college over a year ago was definitely a breath of fresh air," said faculty representative Dr. John A. Every, associate professor of social sciences. "Sincerity, optimism and great communication skills - the same values embodied by President Franklin D. Roosevelt - are what Ray has brought to CCRI."

Kristen Smith, president of student government at the Warwick campus, said, on behalf of the student government, she was

pleased to convey its confidence in President DiPasquale.

"We look forward to working with him and creating opportunities," she said. "I've had the pleasure of working with him before. He's a great man to work with who truly listens and truly cares."

Marjorie M. Norquist, president of the faculty association union, said, since DiPasquale arrived on campus more than a year ago, he's worked hard to get to know everyone.

"You've shown an untiring effort to get to know us and you've come to know us well; better than we know ourselves in some areas," she said. "You have our whole-hearted support. We're with you as you lead this great institution to new heights."

During his inaugural address, DiPasquale spoke highly of CCRI and its "43-year history of academic excellence."

"It always gives me great pause to say those words and to reflect on the enormity of the college's distinction as the only community college in Rhode Island. To think that, while there are more than 1,100 community colleges nationwide, we have the distinction of being the sole community college for Rhode Island. Not only that, but we are one of the largest in the nation as well," he said. "I might be somewhat biased, but it's important for the citizens of this state to know that they have an outstanding learning institution of which they can be proud."

DiPasquale spoke about the power of dreams and asked his audience to imagine a childhood without an imagination.

"Sometimes it's too easy, however, to imagine an adulthood without imagination," he said. "That is why I love working where I do ... here ... at a community college, because every person who walks through our doors has a dream he or she strives to achieve."

DiPasquale explained that he went to college to become a coach, not a teacher, but 33 years in education later he still achieved his dream of becoming a coach.

"Today, I am the head coach of team CCRI," he said. "Being your coach means that I am here to help you ... I am here to help each of you achieve your educational dreams."

DiPasquale said it is his dream that CCRI will set the example for the state and for other community colleges throughout the region.

"We are going to be a player - and all of you will help get us there," he said. "I want us to dream together as we move forward in changing the lives of our students and helping make their dreams come alive. Thank you for joining me on this exciting journey."

On May 22, 2006, the Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education selected DiPasquale to be the fourth president of CCRI, effective July 1, 2006. He had been interim president since January 2006.

DiPasquale holds a master's degree from Northeastern University in Boston and a bachelor's degree from Arkansas Tech University. He's taught management, marketing and government courses at Springfield Technical Community College in Springfield, Mass. and management and marketing courses at the University of New Hampshire.

Since coming to Rhode Island, DiPasquale has assumed leadership positions on the board of directors of the Newport Chamber of Commerce, the Rhode Island Campus Compact Executive Committee and the Met School Board. He's also a member of the Rhode Island Commodores.

Yesterday's installation ceremony was the culmination of a full week of events involving students, faculty, staff, alumni and community members celebrating the inauguration.

©Kent County Daily Times 2007