



President's Message

Welcome to Blue Ridge Community and Technical College. Inside you will find the Self Study, the result of four years of hard work and writing on the part of many individuals at our college. When we first moved to Martinsburg eight years ago, I think very few of us had a true picture of the great success Blue Ridge CTC would become. As I look back on the years of work that led to our becoming an independent, comprehensive community college, I see great achievements on the part of many industrious and inspired faculty and staff. In visiting our college you will find dedicated and enthusiastic people and stories that reflect the importance of the community college mission. There is much to be proud of and much yet to be experienced. We have quite literally created a college from the ground up. It is a very successful story, and it will continue to be a positive influence in shaping the lives of thousands of people.

As a result of our independent accreditation in 2005, we created our Board of Governors. Through the guidance of the Board, we have enjoyed the tremendous support of community leaders who have the vision and wisdom to know that Blue Ridge CTC is a tremendous asset to our community. The academic and support services which we once contracted are now fully run by our own employees. Our general studies coursework is taught by Blue Ridge CTC faculty. We are one of three independent community colleges in West Virginia, and we can now more readily fulfill the mission of a community college in our region. We are also serving more employers and employees than ever before. We have added a number of technical programs that lead to high paying careers for our students, and our student body has grown by 65 percent in the past five years. Blue Ridge CTC is indeed a picture of success.

Our college has progressed from a once very well kept secret to a college that is embraced and promoted by the community. We have a comprehensive series of binders containing articles that chronicle the development of our college and reflect strong support from our service area. In May of this year, we were honored to host the very first in a series of "Conversations about Education" with United States Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. With this important exposure for our college, major national and international news outlets including the *New York Times*, the US Department of Education website and YouTube featured Blue Ridge CTC and our leading role in the Secretary's national tour. In recent weeks, the Obama administration has made very clear that community colleges are a key element in the educational advancement of our country. I can say without reservation that the employees of Blue Ridge CTC truly believe in the power of education and the transformational role of our college.

Blue Ridge CTC is featured in another article in the *New York Times* concerning the importance of developmental education. The nation's community colleges are called upon to provide students with strong academic skills so that they may benefit from the college experience. In our interdependent global community the need for education beyond high school has never been more apparent. The services provided by our developmental educators are invaluable tools which greatly increase the likelihood of success of our students. Blue Ridge CTC is flattered and honored to be featured in a *New York Times* article that informs the public of our developmental program.

Occasionally when there are so many things going on from day to day, one loses sight of the larger scale issues that are approaching on the horizon. At Blue Ridge CTC we have kept our eyes on both the day to day and the longer term. Below are a few of the big picture items on which we are currently working. As is often the case they involve people, finances, or facilities.

New Buildings. We are continuing the process of locating property and securing bonding for a building that will house many academic programs and administrative offices. At present we have narrowed the search for property to a couple of very promising sites, and the bond issue should be approved soon.

New Programs. Blue Ridge CTC is undergoing a transformation and expansion of the certificate and degree programs that it offers. A decade ago, we had very few technical programs in our inventory. Over time we have been successful in starting new programs in technical areas such as power distribution, medical assisting, Cisco technologies, and a number of others. These new programs hold great promise for a growing region such as ours, and with a certificate or degree in many of these new areas, our graduates can earn a very competitive salary and engage in a fulfilling career. We are proud to be able to bring new technical programs to our area.

All of these ongoing projects ensure access for students, produce quality graduates, maintain solid working relationships with our local employers, and develop well coordinated programs of study with our local public school systems. Our graduates are increasingly in high demand, either for placement directly into the workforce, or for transfer to another institution for further study. It is the students and outstanding faculty and staff that have made Blue Ridge CTC one of the most successful community and technical colleges in our state.

I am deeply privileged to be a founder and the first president of Blue Ridge Community and Technical College. I am also deeply indebted to the many individuals who have helped us along the way. It is my hope that we have repaid our community and our students many times over with the life changing advantages of a college education. I am honored to be associated with such a fine institution.

Welcome again to Blue Ridge CTC and our success story as portrayed in the pages that follow.



Peter Checkovich, President