Dear Alumni and Friends of the College:

New River celebrated its sixth commencement on May 15, and what a wonderful night it was! Judging from the size of the crowd, we made the right decision in moving the ceremonies to the Beckley/Raleigh County Convention Center. The inspiring words of Delegate Linda Sumner and the joyous reactions of family members and friends as each graduate crossed the stage made for a perfect ending to the year.

On July 14, President Obama proposed legislation that would authorize the investment of $12 billion to expand the capacity of the nation’s community college system. The funds from President Obama’s proposed legislation will be expended as loan guarantees or seed money for capital campaigns. New River is in an excellent position to qualify for funding should this legislation pass. In response to a request from the Governor’s Office and in response to potential stimulus funds, we have submitted a list of capital improvement projects to the West Virginia Council for Community and Technical College Education that could be “shovel ready” within three months. These projects had already been outlined in our approved Facilities Master Plan.

Across all of our campuses, there is tremendous energy and optimism as we approach the 2009-2010 academic year. New River has now established its own Business Office, Registrar’s Office, Financial Aid Office and Office of Enrollment Services to administer functions that had previously been performed on a contract basis by Bluefield State College. We are very grateful to our colleagues at Bluefield State for their generous assistance and support during the transition process.

As you will read in this issue, we are upgrading our distance learning capabilities and expanding our allied health programs with support from major grants awarded to the college last year. Through a partnership with the Mercer County Technical Education Center, we are preparing to offer a full range of courses in Princeton this fall, including the launch of the Mechatronics program.

Although New River continues to evolve and grow, our goal remains the same—to provide exceptional educational programs and workforce training that are both affordable and close to home for our students.

Best Wishes,
Ted D. Spring, Ph.D.
From the New River Foundation

Scholarship Program Meets the Challenge of Tough Times

Like public and private foundations across the country, the New River Community and Technical College Foundation faced challenges this year as the value of our investments dropped to a level that earnings were not available for scholarship awards. But thanks to the extraordinary generosity of New River’s donors, enough contributions were received that all of our scholarships will be awarded this year.

In addition to those gifts, several new scholarships have been created in recent months. The Marlinton Rotary Club has established two scholarships to support students entering Practical Nursing or other allied health programs. The students must be residents of Pocahontas County. The college and/or the foundation will provide a match to the Rotary dollars to fund the scholarship for $1000 per year.

One of the “founding fathers” of the Greenbrier Valley Campus is being honored with a scholarship fund created by his surviving children. John Bowling, Jr. of White Sulphur Springs was among a group of community leaders who helped found what is now the Greenbrier Valley Campus of New River Community and Technical College in Lewisburg.

The John H. Bowling, Jr. Scholarship was established by Connie, Martha, Bruce and Rear Admiral Jay Bowling. The scholarship will be awarded annually to a high school student with at least a 2.5 grade point average who will be attending the Greenbrier Valley Campus.

The siblings wanted to honor not only their father, but also their late brother, Chris Bowling.

The Foundation is committed to providing scholarships to as many deserving students as possible. We are blessed that there are generous alumni and friends who share that commitment and are willing to keep our scholarship program moving forward, even in these difficult financial days.

A New River Success Story

When Carl Eugene Sparks rose from his wheelchair, climbed the stairs and walked across the stage during New River Community and Technical College’s commencement, it was an electrifying moment. Sparks not only received his college degree, but also a standing ovation from the large crowd in attendance.

“Finishing my degree became very important to me,” he says. “It says I have accomplished something that is important to a lot of people. It was very difficult for me. I had been out of school for 25 years.”

Sparks graduated from the former McComas High School in Mercer County. After graduation, he fulfilled his two childhood ambitions: to be a soldier and a mail carrier. He served in the military for 21 years, including two years in Vietnam. After retiring from the military he joined the U.S. Postal Service as a mail carrier, a job he enjoyed because it allowed him to work outdoors.

In 1985, Sparks decided to pursue a college degree and began his studies on what is now New River’s Bluefield Campus. Work, health problems and family intervened, but he finally completed his Board of Governors Associate of Applied Science degree in Computer Science.

Sparks has been wheelchair-bound for more than a year. He suffers from a number of health problems that resulted from exposure to Agent Orange during his Vietnam stint. Still, he persevered to get his degree. “Being handicapped is not an excuse,” he says. “It’s just a matter of determination.”

Through hard work and careful planning, Sparks and his wife have been able to achieve another life-long dream: retirement in Myrtle Beach, SC. They still have a home in Bluefield where they retreat when the heat becomes unbearable. Otherwise, he enjoys sitting on his deck, hearing the waves in the distance and feeling the ocean breezes.
Delegate Sumner Addresses Graduates at Sixth Annual Commencement

Do all you can do to make the world a better place,” challenged Del. Linda Sumner (R-Raleigh County) of Beckley as she addressed nearly 1,500 graduates, faculty, staff, family members and friends at the sixth annual commencement ceremonies of New River Community and Technical College. The graduation took place Friday, May 15, at the Beckley/Raleigh County Convention Center.

New River awarded 240 associate degrees and certificates to 215 students, representing 74 communities in southern and central West Virginia and four other states.

Sumner, who has been elected to four terms in the West Virginia House of Delegates, told the graduates: “Do something special! You are all gifted so that you can make a difference!” Sumner is committed to the philosophy of the community college as an instrument of economic development and as an institution providing access and opportunity to higher education.

Degrees and certificate candidates were presented by Dr. Harry R. Faulk, executive vice president and chief academic officer. Ted D. Spring, Ph.D., president of New River, presented the diplomas, assisted by Robert Farley, chairman of the New River Board of Governors, and Donna Lewis, interim registrar.

Chairman Farley brought greetings to the graduates on the board’s behalf.

Board of Governors Inducts Members, Elects Officers

Three new members were sworn in at the June 4 meeting of the New River Board of Governors. Donna Feijo, student recruiter based on the Beckley Campus, was elected to a two-year term as the Classified Staff Representative. Dr. John Mark Walkup, professor of music on the Nicholas County Campus, was elected to a two-year term as the faculty representative. Rondah Lowe, a student on the Beckley Campus, was elected to a one-year term as the student representative.

Robert Farley of Princeton, chairman of the board for the past two years, stepped down as chair. Leslie Baker of Beckley, who has served as vice chair during Farley’s tenure, was elected to succeed him in the post. Edward Knight of Lewisburg was elected vice chairman and David Nalker of Lewisburg was re-elected secretary. All will serve one-year terms. Mr. Farley was commended for his outstanding service as chairman. He will remain on the board.

Chairman Farley presented Resolutions of Appreciation to the three outgoing representative members of the board: Gerald Hough (faculty); Mary Igo (classified staff) and Christopher Pennington (student).

President Ted D. Spring announced that Dr. Lucie Refsland, professor of math on the Greenbrier Valley Campus, has been elected to the West Virginia Advisory Council of Faculty for FY 2010-12. Mary Igo, program specialist on the Nicholas County Campus, has been re-elected to serve as the representative to the West Virginia Advisory Council of Classified Staff.
Familiar Faces, New Roles

Donna Lewis, student services coordinator on the Greenbrier Valley Campus, has been named interim registrar. Beginning with the fall semester, all student registrations will be processed through the Registrar’s Office.

Tracy Evans, director of high school relations, has been named interim director of enrollment management. She oversees admissions, recruitment and student services.

New Faces at New River

The Human Resources Office has had a very busy spring filling a number of new positions. The following summary reflects those who had joined the staff through the end of May.

Business Office Staff

The Business Office staff has assumed responsibility for the financial functions previously handled by Bluefield State College. The Business Office is located on the first floor of the Wilburn Building on the Beckley Campus. The staff includes (seated, L-R) Melinda Ford, supervisor of student accounts on the Greenbrier Valley Campus; Brigette Neil, program assistant on the Nicholas County campus; Barbara Stewart, finance and grants accountant; (standing L-R) Melissa Blankenship, accounts payable/benefits representative; Susie Atkins, executive secretary to the vice president for finance and administration; Larry Barnhill, vice president for finance and administration; Heike Soeffker-Culicerto, controller; and Jill Kinder, supervisor of student accounts on the Beckley Campus.

Lisa M. Hatcher has been appointed Allied Health Specialist based on the Beckley Campus. She is providing coordination and leadership for New River’s non-credit and credit allied health programs.

Steven Garlow and Raevin N. (Nikki) Gregory have joined the Information Technology Department. Garlow is information systems manager based on the Beckley campus. Gregory is a systems programmer headquartered on the Nicholas County Campus.

Grace Griffin is the administrative assistant for the Title III Grant project. See the article page 5 for more details.

Ralph Payne has been named director of the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE), a faculty resource focused on instructional development and support. The CTE has been made possible by the Title III grant. See page 5 for details.

Melanie Slone has been hired as a student recruiter with responsibility for recruitment efforts in Greenbrier, Pocahontas, Webster and Nicholas Counties.

Margaret Vines has joined the faculty as an instructor of Medical Assisting at the Mercer County Campus located at the Mercer Technical Education Center in Princeton.

Chancellor’s Leadership Academy

Joycie Wawiye, assistant professor of biology on the Beckley Campus, and Dr. John Mark Walkup, professor of music on the Nicholas County Campus, were selected to participate in the 2008-09 Chancellor’s Leadership Academy sponsored by the West Virginia Community College System. This program prepares faculty and staff to assume future leadership positions within their institution and to support the initiatives and ongoing development of West Virginia’s community and technical college program.
Title III Grant Renewed for Second Year

New River has been notified by the U.S. Department of Education that a grant of $400,000 has been approved for the second year of the Title III project, “Developing a Distance Learning System for Rural Appalachia.”

The goal of the project is to improve New River’s ability to provide comprehensive services to time- and place-bound students by increasing access to the learning opportunities provided by the college. Grant funds are being used to install an Interactive Video Learning Network (IVN) with access points on New River’s multiple campuses. The grant also supports extensive faculty development to prepare instructors to teach distance learning and online classes, and to provide online student services such as applying for admissions, registering for classes, advising and paying bills.

Carolyn Sizemore, dean of the Beckley and Raleigh County Campuses, is the project coordinator. She reports that over the past six months, New River has opened a Center for Teaching Excellence to assist faculty members in developing online and distance learning classes. The center is under the direction of Ralph Payne. He has created a studio to assist faculty in course design and in the production of media-rich course materials using a variety of new hardware and software tools. Expert advice, training and assistance in course design and multimedia production are also provided for all faculty members.

“We have identified a cohort of faculty who are enthusiastic about upgrading their skills to deliver instruction using these new technologies. They are in the process of developing 10 freshman General Studies courses for distance delivery this fall,” Sizemore said.

The cohort includes Shirley Davis, Karen Carter-Harvey, Anita Stapleton, Keith Lilly, Scott McClanahan and Joyce Wawiye from the Beckley Campus; Dr. John Mullens from the Nicholas County Campus in Summersville; and Lizabeth Rogers and Monica Fleming from the Greenbrier Valley Campus in Lewisburg.

The first of the new IVN classrooms are being installed this summer under the direction of Dr. David J. Ayersman, chief information officer. During the upcoming year, the grant will support training of faculty in the Allied Health fields and the redesign of 12 Allied Health courses for distance delivery.

“This project is making a huge difference in our ability to offer innovative classes to students throughout our nine counties,” commented President Ted D. Spring. “Dean Sizemore and her team did an outstanding job of accomplishing the goals that were established for the first year. It is a testament to their hard work that the grant was renewed.”

Training and Assistance Offered for Displaced Workers

With the recession contributing to higher unemployment in West Virginia during the first half of the year, New River’s Office of Workforce Education has introduced a number of training programs and initiatives to assist workers in obtaining new job skills.

Working in cooperation with the Bureau of Prisons and Region 1 WorkForce West Virginia, New River has hosted workshops for people interested in jobs at the new McDowell County Federal Correctional Institution navigate the maze of the federal job application process. At the completion of the workshops, attendees had successfully submitted their application to the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

A commercial motor vehicle license (CDL) training program was started on the Nicholas County Campus in March. A CDL is required to operate any type of vehicle with a weight over 26,000 pounds (including but not limited to) tow trucks, trailers and buses. This 200-hour course will provide students with the substantial knowledge and practical skills necessary to become an entry-level truck driver. Students will also have the opportunity to get the training necessary to add Hazmat and Heavy Equipment Endorsements.

In partnership with the INNOVA Commercialization Group and the Beckley Women’s Business and Training Center, New River is offering the Kauffman Fast Trac LaunchPad program in Beckley this summer. The program is designed to help displaced workers and entrepreneurs “retool” their businesses.

New River is also expanding its training in allied health fields (see story, page 6) and will soon introduce weatherization and green technology training programs.

“Southeastern West Virginia has been hit pretty hard by this tough economy,” said Bill Loope, vice president of Institutional Advancement and Workforce Education. “We are committed to doing everything possible to assist displaced workers.”
Two New River faculty members have received the 2009 Excellence Award from the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD), an organization that promotes teaching and leadership excellence in the nation’s community colleges. The two were nominated for the honor by the faculty.

Joycie Wawiye, assistant professor of Biology on the Beckley Campus, and Lizabeth Rogers, associate professor of Business on the Greenbrier Valley Campus, received the honor at the annual NISOD Conference on Teaching and Leadership excellence in Austin, TX.

“[The students] are who inspire and motivate me, and the main strategy that drives my success is setting high expectations. I set high expectations for my own performance as facilitator and for my students in their performance as learners. Then I seek to help us all reach those high expectations,” Rogers says.

Wawiye also attributes her success to the inspiration she receives from students. “I am energized by my students’ potential for greatness and being a part of their journey to the realization of what or who they can become,” she explains.

Allied Health Programs Expand to Meet West Virginia’s Need for Healthcare Workers

Did you know that healthcare is the largest employment sector in the country? The current recession and the resulting layoffs in multiple sectors have people looking for fast career training that will lead them to good-paying jobs, and New River is responding by expanding its offerings in allied health fields.

“We found that certified nursing assistants (CNAs) and pharmacy technicians are in great demand, and we have been able to initiate programs in both of these areas this year,” stated Lisa M. Hatcher, allied health specialist in the Workforce Education Department.

A Pharmacy Technician Training program is being launched on the Nicholas County Campus this summer in partnership with Boston Reed College. A CNA program was started on the Greenbrier Valley Campus in February. A second class began on the Greenbrier Valley Campus in June, and the college plans to expand the program to other campuses by the end of the summer.

Last year, New River was awarded a $1.6 million dollar state grant to expand its allied health programs, particularly the certificate program in practical nursing. The classes are well underway, according to Joyce Egnor, RN, MSN and chair of the Allied Health Division. Until last year, the nursing program was only available on the Nicholas County Campus in Summersville. In 2008, a Pocahontas County cohort was established, and the first class received their nursing pins in a ceremony on April 25. A second nursing cohort is scheduled to begin studies in Clay County in August.

New River recently signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the McDowell County Career and Technology Center for a collaborative effort to provide affordable practical nursing training for students at the Career and Technology Center located in Welch. This collaboration makes it possible for students to obtain financial aid and earn college credits in an allied health program without leaving McDowell County. Discussions are underway to form a similar partnership with Summers County Schools.
Around Our Campuses

Three New River Students Named to All West Virginia Academic Team

Three students from New River were named to the 2009 All-West Virginia Academic Team in a competition sponsored by the Phi Theta Kappa honors society and the West Virginia Council for Community and Technical College Education.

The honorees are Madora Smith, a resident of Minnehaha Springs and student at New River’s Greenbrier Valley Campus in Lewisburg; Dianna Calfee of Princeton, who attended the Bluefield Campus; and Briana Friend of Canvas from the Nicholas County Campus. All three graduated with honors in May.

Academic Team members from throughout the state were honored at a ceremony in the Governor’s Reception Room at the State Capitol on Friday, April 24. They were presented plaques and medallions by Secretary of State Natalie E. Tennant and James L. Skidmore, chancellor of the WV Council for Community and Technical College Education. Dr. Ted D. Spring, president of New River, and Dr. Harry R. Faulk, executive vice president and chief academic officer, were also on hand for the ceremony.

Allied Student Artists Group Formed on Greenbrier Valley Campus

Students in the Fine Arts program on the Greenbrier Valley Campus have started a new organization, Allied Student Artists. The group has made several trips to visit art museums and arts programs at other colleges around the region. The students also mounted a digital photography exhibit at Carnegie Hall in Lewisburg last February. Nathan England, instructor in the Fine Arts program, is the faculty advisor for the group. Wanda Johnson, student program advisor, has been instrumental in coordinating field trips for the new organization.

Nicholas County Students Transform Class Project into Community Service

On Saturday, May 23, the Youth Activity Center at Old Main in Summersville was alive once again with music and young people. And it all started with a class assignment.

Jett Bailes, Josh Mullens, Bill Phares, and Robin Singleton, had been working on a collaborative project in Dr. Lisa Brewer’s Technical Writing class. The assignment was to write about a community problem, need, or opportunity.

The student team got so excited about the project that they decided to take it beyond the classroom and put it into action. As a result, young and old alike will have a safe place to go this summer to listen to music, to play pool or just to hang out with friends. The more people who attend these music events, the more activities the Youth Center will be able to provide.

“I am so proud of my students,” said Dr. Brewer. “When I assign technical writing projects, I want my students to learn how to do research and how to write professional reports, but most of all, I want them to get real world experience and to get involved in their communities.”

Mercer County Campus Begins Operations in Princeton

New River began offering programs at the Mercer County Technical Education Center in Princeton this summer. Campus Dean James “Bo” Hylton has been busy at the Technical Center preparing for a full schedule of fall courses, including the addition of Mechatronics and Medical Assisting programs to the curriculum. Many of the classes formerly offered on the Bluefield State College campus will now be taught at the Technical Center. An electronic sign in front of the building sports the New River logo, delivering the message that the college is now ready to serve students in the heart of Princeton.

Congressman Rahall Addresses Beckley Campus Class

U.S. Rep. Nick Joe Rahall spoke to students in Dr. Willis J. Nordlund’s American Government class on the Beckley Campus on Monday, April 6. His topic was current issues and the role of Congress in the legislative process. Following his presentation, the students asked a number of questions on issues ranging from the war in Iraq to the economy. Rahall gave informed and thoughtful responses and enjoyed the give and take with the students. At the conclusion of the class, Nordlund presented the Congressman with some New River items to commemorate his visit.