



# CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

**President Leo I. Higdon, Jr.**

**Speech to Rotary Club of New London April 7, 2011**

**Speech to Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut April 15, 2011**

It's a pleasure to be here today. My sincere thanks to the Rotary and to the Chamber for inviting me to speak. As many of you know, Connecticut College is celebrating its Centennial this year. We are very proud of our 100 years in New London – and appreciate the support we have received from New Londoners and the region since our very beginning.

I'd like to share with you a short, fun video we produced about our founding. We sent this to all of our alumni to help build excitement for our year-long Centennial celebration. Let's watch... [video shown here.]

It is no accident that Connecticut College is located here, in New London.

One hundred years ago, many colleges and universities were refusing to let women in. A group of Hartford women, led by Wesleyan University alumna Elizabeth Wright, decided to establish a new college just for women.

The competition among Connecticut cities and towns to attract the new college was fierce. But in New London, Elizabeth Wright found a city with greater than average drive and determination. New Londoner Colin Buell had raised the issue of a women's college in the city before, and so citizens very clearly understood the value of having a brand new, progressive college right here.

Business leaders offered a beautiful hilltop site, and everyone from civic leaders to schoolchildren joined in a fundraising drive. When the fundraising drive ended, New Londoners had exceeded the target by thousands of dollars. There was a citywide celebration and an impromptu parade.

I am proud to be the president of the Connecticut College as we celebrate our 100<sup>th</sup> birthday and particularly proud to be talking with you about the vision and generosity of the city of New London.

On March 1, the College hosted a celebration in downtown New London to thank the city, its residents and our community partners for your 100 years of support. I am pleased that many of you were able to be there.

Today, even as Connecticut College celebrates its Centennial, the College and New London continue to enjoy a strong and mutually beneficial relationship that contributes to the economy, improves the quality of life and deepens the College's educational excellence.

We've come a long way from our auspicious beginning, and yet we've managed to always adhere to our founding principles: quality education, access, community partnership...

Today, Connecticut College has evolved to bring men and women from all over the world to New London.

Now that we've talked a little about the College's founding, I'd like to share more about what the College is today.

Today, Connecticut College is a thriving, highly selective private liberal arts college with 1,850 students. The campus is a center for students and faculty who create a vibrant social, cultural and intellectual community enriched by diverse perspectives.

- We are known for our unique combination of interdisciplinary studies, international programs, funded internships, student-faculty research and service learning. And, of course, for our top quality faculty.
- We attract the very best students – from here in the region and throughout the world. Our applications for admission are at the highest levels ever – with 10-11 applicants for every opening. And our students continue to bring honor to the institution with their outstanding achievements.
- The statistics show that Connecticut College students succeed. A Connecticut College liberal arts and sciences education is associated with the best known educational practices, and independent studies show our students have the capabilities and skills for success.
- A number of our graduates settle in the area and begin building long-term relationships in their home communities. Currently, there are 1,500 alumni living and working in southeastern Connecticut.
- Others head out for more distant cities, but they always retain a part of New London and Connecticut College with them. And every year, more than 1,000 alumni and their families return to the area to celebrate their reunion and re-connect with their New London memories.

Connecticut College has made a positive economic impact on New London and the region.

- We are proud to be the third largest employer in New London, with 830 employees and a payroll of \$41 million.
- The College spends nearly \$40 million a year on goods and services, with a direct and indirect economic impact of \$198 million.
- The College's 1,850 students and thousands of campus visitors spend an estimated \$2.8 million per year in the local economy.

- Events on campus, such as the Connecticut Early Music Festival, the Cerebral Palsy International Sports and Recreation Championships and the Connecticut Storytelling Festival, draw 70,000 visitors annually.
- For the year ending June 30, 2011, New London is scheduled to receive \$5.6 million in payments from the state of Connecticut to compensate for tax-exempt properties in the city. Approximately one quarter of those funds, or \$1.4 million, is in lieu of taxes paid by Connecticut College.
- And, separately, we crafted our own agreement with the city of New London that includes a 10-year, \$100,000 payment and other measures that foster our “good neighbor” relationship.

On campus, the high level of intellectual engagement results in national recognition for our students. For example, senior Chris Krupeneye, named a Goldwater Scholar last year, was just notified that he has won a very prestigious National Science Foundation fellowship for postgraduate study.

Our student athletes are also excelling. Last spring’s men’s lacrosse team made it into the NCAA championship tournament – a first for Connecticut College. And, recently, our swim team competed in the NCAA championship. We have all-American athletes and nearly 100 of our student-athletes were named to the NESCAC all-academic team...

In addition to specific student achievements already mentioned, the College as an institution is continually recognized for excellence. For example: We consistently are named one of the top Fulbright producers among LA colleges. And:

- We’ve had more than 200 volunteers go on to serve in the Peace Corps.
- We received the Senator Paul Simon Award which substantiates our efforts to internationalize the campus and curriculum.
- The state of Connecticut honored us for our commitment to sustainability.
- Our innovative career program ensures students graduate with the skills and experience that make them appealing to potential employers.
- And approximately one-third of our students volunteer in some fashion, many right here in New London.

And we’re getting outside recognition for our efforts, including recent national stories in newspapers and magazines such as USA Today, The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal. I routinely write outside pieces for publication, our professors frequently are called upon as experts and they often write commentary as well. And, of course, we’ve had great coverage through the years from The Day.

In the last two years, Connecticut College has been among the top 15 liberal arts colleges in the country for media hits – stories or mentions of Connecticut College. And these stories invariably include mention of New London – our host city.

Even as we've garnered national attention for Connecticut College, we've also worked very hard to do justice to this beautiful campus.

Over the last five years, we've undergone significant transformation as we have invested more than \$40 million in facilities improvements. Most of these are funded through our Campaign.

Major projects have included:

- a number of new modern classrooms,
- renovated common rooms in all the residence halls,
- complete renovation of two residence halls,
- new center for special collections and archives in the library,
- new tennis courts,
- and, of course, our new fitness center.

That's in addition to the work we do every summer to re-invigorate the buildings and improve the walkways, roadways and greenways.

Many of you are frequent visitors to our campus – and have made note to me or Ulysses Hammond about the improvements. We appreciate your comments.

The College is in a strong position as we embark on our second century. I'd like to think our original founders would be extremely pleased if they could see where Connecticut College is today – this beautiful campus, the outstanding faculty, and our extraordinary students.

We are experiencing a tremendous amount of momentum as we begin our second century. Let me finish by telling you what's coming up next at the College.

Later this spring, we will begin reconstruction of our first academic building. New London Hall, named in honor of the people of New London, will undergo a complete transformation with an addition and renovation, and will become a state-of-the-art center for the life sciences. This is a major investment for the College. With this transformation, we continue to honor the people of New London and the region, our founders and the entire Connecticut College community.

Thank you.