On July 1, Dr. Lars Hafner’s first day as the fifth president of Manatee Community College (MCC), he traveled to all three MCC campuses to greet employees and students. It was an effective demonstration of his collaborative leadership style that involves listening and sharing ideas with stakeholders.

“My heart lies with the community college mission of providing everyone, regardless of age or financial status, an opportunity to succeed. I have embraced that mission as a student, athlete, faculty member, administrator and now a president,” said Hafner.

Hafner acknowledged Dr. Sarah H. Pappas, who retired after 11 years as MCC’s president, and her predecessors for leaving a solid foundation. A lifelong advocate of a “can-do, never-quit” attitude, he knows challenges lie ahead but believes they can be turned into opportunities.

“With budget cuts and caps on enrollment at the universities, it could mean another 60,000 students at the doorsteps of the state’s community colleges. It will be more important than ever to show that investing in MCC ensures a cost-effective, quality return,” said Hafner.

In his former job as provost of St. Petersburg College (SPC), Hafner was responsible for the main campus and three centers serving 9,000 students and 400 employees. During his 22 years in higher education, Hafner also served as a Florida state representative for 12 years.

At SPC, Hafner developed a University Partnership Center, the first of its kind in Florida. Partnerships with institutions including the University of Florida, University of South Florida, Indiana University and Case Western Reserve University offer convenient access to higher degrees in business, pharmacy, dentistry, computer science and nursing. Another partnership with the Pinellas County Economic Development Division created an EpiCenter for continuing education.

Raised in the Tampa Bay area, Hafner received an associate in arts degree from what was then called St. Petersburg Junior College. He played and captained basketball there and at State University of New York at Buffalo, where he earned a bachelor’s degree. He has a master’s degree in organizational and political communication from the University of Maryland and a Ph.D. in leadership and education/higher education administration from Barry University, Miami Shores.

Hafner’s many honors include Florida Community College Legislative Lifetime Achievement, Raymond Gavel Leadership in Education, Florida Board of Regents Outstanding Legislator and University of South Florida Medical School Education awards, and a Phi Theta Kappa Distinguished Service Award for Campus Presidents.

In addition to serving on Bayfront Medical Center, St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce, Suncoast Center for Community Mental Health Foundation and Florida State University Nursing Foundation boards, Hafner was honorary chairman of this summer’s Pinellas County Arthritis Walk. Hafner’s 3-year-old daughter, Lilly, has juvenile rheumatoid arthritis and he does all he can to raise awareness.

Hafner’s wife, Jacquie, recently graduated from Case Western Reserve University with a doctorate in nursing. The Hafners also have a 9-year-old daughter, Lexi.

“As a family, we are excited about living and working in this area. It’s a culturally diverse community and a great place to bring up children. We plan to become an integral part of it,” said Hafner.

In enrollment is under way for Fall term 2008. New student applications will be accepted through Aug. 13. First-time college students must make appointments for orientation prior to registration. Web registration is available to all students who have completed the admission process. Admission information is available at www.mccfl.edu/Admissions. Class offerings may be viewed at www.mccfl.edu/ClassSchedules.