

*On behalf of the community and business partners comes Mr. M. Rick Hager as our sitting Trustee who also is an alumnus of our College. He graduated in 1969 from Manatee Junior College and holds a Mechanical Engineering degree from the University of Florida. Mr. Hager is president of Goodwood and Stone Builders.*

Rick Hager:

Good afternoon and greetings to all.

Dr. Probstfeld, it is an honor for me to welcome you as President on behalf of our area's business partners, our neighbors who call our community "home," and my fellow Trustees.

Most especially, it is an honor to bring greetings as the representative of more than 41,000 proud alumni of MJC, MCC and SCF.

Today as we mark a new chapter at State College of Florida, the alumni and entire College community join to express our love of this College and our shared hopes for its future, as well as our expectations and support for you, Dr. Probstfeld.

Celebrating your inauguration provides the opportunity to reflect on the profound contribution that this College has made to our lives and to the greater community.

Today I am speaking for innumerable former students in declaring that this College was directly responsible for my college education and therefore made possible my career, the life I have provided for my family and my contributions to my community.

Manatee Junior College was the perfect choice for me.

It afforded me a transition from military service to civilian life.

It was economically viable.

Classes were smaller than at the university.

Faculty help was available when needed.

Most important, the quality of education here was of such excellent caliber that when I went to the University of Florida for my engineering degree, my grade point average went *up*.

That was a common story with MJC graduates.

As an MJC student in 1968 and '69, I had the great privilege of being Student Government president, chair of Circle K, and chair of a faculty-appointed student leadership group called the Committee of 20.

Dr. Neel was president, and my participation in college activities gave me many chances to interact with him. I was in awe of this dedicated leader who built this college from the ground up.

After graduating from Florida, I worked my way home to Manatee County and commuted to Tampa, building my business skills and caring for my family, but I also wanted to give back to the College that had contributed so much to me.

In the 1980s I volunteered to serve on a newly established alumni association board and I got to know Dr. Korcheck, another strong president of our College.

Later, I met Dr. Pappas through service organizations and I appreciated the strong connections she developed between the college and community.

Last year, when the opportunity came to serve as a Trustee on the Board, I gave it careful consideration. In the process, I realized again how much I really care about this College. I truly appreciate the faculty, both past and present, who taught and teach our students, and the administrators who over the years have developed quality programs and kept the school strong.

The desire to give back to my College is stronger than ever.

At the time, the Board had announced a nationwide search for president and had scheduled community input sessions. I went to the sessions as a private citizen —because I wasn't yet on the Board — and at every session I saw Dr. Carol Probstfeld. I couldn't help but notice that she was a careful listener to what everyone said—compliment or complaint--she listened to it all. That made a big impression.

When the Board halted the search and asked her to take the presidency, I was in complete agreement.

Time has only proven the wisdom of the Board's choice.

Dr. Probstfeld brings to the Office of President these essential attributes:

She cares about students.

Hers is a deep, genuine, heartfelt concern for our students to not just make it but to thrive.

“How will it help or affect our students?” is the question central to every decision she makes.

Since becoming President, she hasn't let any grass grow. In her first 30 days as president, Dr. Probstfeld made 26 individual outreach contacts. She hasn't slowed her pace. She is out in the community and at college events, reaching out to partners, reestablishing old friendships and making new ones encouraging all who she makes contact with to come see for themselves the many things our College has to offer! A real life super hero for our college.

Most important, she is still listening. She still makes it a point to hear from people who care about this College as much as I do.

It gives me great pleasure to report that with Dr. Probstfeld, our College is continuing the tradition of a strong leader as president.

Dr. Probstfeld, we the community and we the alumni are excited by the prospect of working together with you to bolster involvement and support for our College.

We are inspired by your commitment and we thank you for embracing the unique spirit that sustains our College.

May your leadership thrive in coming years.

It is my honor to pledge the support of MJC, MCC and SCF alumni -- all 41,000-plus of us.