

Thank you

Good morning Chairman Rice, Chairman Green and members of the Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee and the Assembly Housing and Local Government Committee.

My name is Raymond Yannuzzi and I am pleased to come before you today as the Acting President of Camden County College in order that I may express my appreciation and that of our Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, and students for your support of our urban mission in the City of Camden through the passage of the Municipal Rehabilitation and Economic Recovery Act.

Camden County College is New Jersey's largest and most comprehensive community college as well as one of the largest institutions of higher education in the state and region. CCC serves over 30,000 students annually through more than 150 degree and certificate programs, hundreds of non-credit courses and an array of cultural programming at its three locations in Blackwood, Cherry Hill, and the City of Camden.

Although we are extremely proud of our rural and suburban campuses, it is our urban campus where we feel we can and should have the most profound educational impact.

The Camden City campus serves as both a physical and an educational gateway to the University District, which includes the Camden campuses of both Rowan and Rutgers University.

The College began providing educational opportunities to Camden residents in their community in 1969. In 1991, a five-story campus building opened at Broadway and Cooper Street. That structure, now known as College Hall, features conventional classrooms, a community meeting room, a student lounge, a child care center and laboratories for computer and science instruction.

On Sept. 29, 2004, through cooperation, collegiality and working together for a common end, the \$19.6 million, 278,000-square-foot Camden Technology Center of Camden County College, one of the first new construction projects to be completed under the Municipal Rehabilitation and Economic Recovery Act, was dedicated.

The college received \$3.5 million from the legislation, which played a significant part in enabling the College to complete the facility and is also helping to create an ever more vibrant university district.

The Tech Center was constructed across the street from College Hall and is bordered by Broadway and Cooper, Sixth and Penn streets. It is a major training facility for technology-driven careers in health, business and computer fields and greets all who enter the City from across the Ben Franklin bridge.

Yet, our Camden Technology Center, which your support graciously ensured is not just about a building. It is about the educational programs leading to employment or transfer that it houses. It is about its ability to create career pathways that will strengthen and expand Camden's middle class and help make stronger neighborhoods. It is about the people we serve there. As the number of technology jobs continues to increase, our technology center gives Camden residents a competitive edge and positions the city for future growth.

In addition to its significant educational role, the center houses amenities that enhance both college and community include technologically "smart" learning spaces, fully wired conference rooms, a 621-space parking garage, the University District Bookstore, and an "electronic village" computer lab where Camden City residents without being a registered student, can surf the Internet, and create documents in Word or Excel at no cost, and then print them out.

The 13,500-square-foot University District bookstore, which opened for the Fall 2003 semester, was the first new commercial venture completed in the city under the Recovery Act. The store offers a range of general titles and textbooks, comfortable chairs, and an Internet cafe stocked with sandwiches, sweets, coffee and other beverages. The store is managed and operated by Follett Higher Education Group and provides a convenient place for students from the Camden campuses of Camden County College, Rutgers University and Rowan University to find the materials to satisfy their scholastic and between-classes needs. The facility also provides a place for the public to shop, read and relax.

Expanding on what you have helped create, in April 2007, we will open the Camden Conference Center at the northeast corner of the Camden Technology Center. It will feature state-of-the-art audio and video technology and a 181-seat auditorium, seminar banquet room for up to 100 people based on seating arrangements, and a lobby for registration and coffee breaks. The Center includes a catering-capable kitchen to prepare food on-site for conference activities as well as provide snack-grill service on campus.

More than 2,200 students take classes at Camden County College's Camden City Campus each semester. The additional space and new academic programs offered by the Technology Center should more than double that figure over the coming years.

In closing, let me add that although the technology center is a significant component of our presence in the City, the College is actively involved in communities throughout the City. Among our many initiatives allow me to cite two. Our Community Gateway Program, a collaboration with local churches and community centers, provides residents with classes to increase their writing, reading, math, and language skills at convenient locations throughout the City to prepare for the GED test or to enhance employment opportunities. Classes have been offered at over 10 different locations serving hundreds of students since the program began in 2002.

In addition, as an official New Jersey Department of Education GED testing site, the College operates two express literacy centers at the North Camden Community Center and the Cramer Hill Community Center.

These and so many other actions are reflective of our commitment to the City and our willingness to work to do all that we can to make a positive difference there. The Municipal Economic and Rehabilitation Act helped us do that and for that we are most grateful to you.

Thank you.