

connections

CHARTER OAK STATE COLLEGE NEWSLETTER

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2020 Shea Lecture Pivots to Three-part Series; Economic Disparity and Solutions



Sponsored by the Dr. Bernard D. Shea Endowment Fund and the Charter Oak State College Foundation, the College's bi-annual educational lecture was transformed into a virtual three-part lecture series this Fall. It featured a collection of knowledgeable speakers to address the various issues associated with economic disparity. The resulting series was a rich and insightful discourse into racial injustice and its adverse impact as expressed through lenses of the key economic pillars in our society, e.g., Education, Housing, Business and Community Development, Healthcare, Financial, and overall well-being.

What is the Shea Lecture?

The Shea Lecture Endowment was established in 1987 upon the retirement of Bernard D. Shea, Charter Oak's first President. This Endowed Fund enables the Foundation and College to sponsor public lectures to further the College's mission to engage students and the community in lifelong learning.

As stated by panelist, Glenn Davis, First VP, Community Development, Liberty Bank and COSC Foundation Board member, "The overall objective of the Shea Lecture initiative is to provoke critical thinking and dialogue among students and the broader community concerning crucial social issues. Beyond simply being a forum for discussion, this year's forum is intended to be a 'Call to Action!' In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the racial divide, the widening wealth gap, and the injustice within our criminal justice system as it relates to the

treatment of black and brown Americans, this series sought to challenge our audiences to be actively engaged in solutions."

The interrelatedness of these various drivers for economic disparity became a theme in the conversation. According to Jason Jakubowski, President and CEO of Foodshare, Hartford, CT and COSC Foundation Board member, "Food insecurity is a branch on a tree with economic disparity as its trunk, and deeply rooted historic, systemic issues digging into the ground. To provide just one solution would be to underestimate the number of rings in the tree or the weight of the soil holding it steady."

Pivoting to a virtual series proved successful not only for its ability to gather subject matter experts, but for extending its reach outside of a physical lecture hall. The Board hopes to keep and expand on this new format for future Shea Lectures. View the lecture series on the College website anytime at www.CharterOak.edu/news/2020-Shea-Lecture.php.

Each speaker was challenged to address their topic to explain why it is a significant cause of economic disparity and suggest concrete steps we can take to alleviate or end it. All three sessions were recorded, and participants submitted some of their thoughts in writing. Charter Oak President, Ed Klonoski will create a White Paper from the collaboration of the expert panel submissions and presentations.

The narrative found throughout the lecture series highlighted a few common themes no matter the subject, including:

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Call for Employer Appreciation Nominations!

**Nominate your boss or employer
for the 2020 Golden Acorn
Employer of the Year Award**

Would you agree that your employer along with Charter Oak State College has helped you improve your career, achieve your goals, and better your life? If yes, show your appreciation and nominate your boss for the prestigious 2020 Golden Acorn Employer of the Year Award. Nominations are open to all Charter Oak alumni and students.

Write a short essay (250 words or less) expressing your appreciation for any support, guidance, or advancement opportunities you received while earning your degree at Charter Oak. Simply email your essay along with your contact information to Foundation@CharterOak.edu or use the nomination form at www.CharterOak.edu/Foundation.

The Employer Appreciation breakfast began two years ago with the Charter Oak State College Foundation Board wanting to recognize the economic and personal importance of employment opportunities that arise for Charter Oak graduates. As a Board committed to higher education degree completion, acknowledging and thanking employers who utilize the skills and talents of our graduates and support employee growth is a natural alliance.

Please contact **Carol Hall, Associate Director of Development**, at 860.515.3889 or chall@charteroak.edu with questions. 🌱

THE PRESIDENT'S TAKE



The Pandemic

It's time for my winter essay on the College, but I find myself unable to proceed without commenting on conditions. Over Christmas, my house was decorated, the tree was up, my family was baking, and yet everything felt off. The same is true for the College. Our enrollment is strong, our students are progressing, the staff is working, and yet everything seems off. Instead of a holiday

party with food and games, we met online and played virtual trivia. We have had several retirements of valuable employees, but no in-person retirement festivities. In the news, we are reading about the two new vaccines that will eventually conquer this virus, but at the same time, the number of sick and dying Americans keeps increasing. The infection rates are growing, and staying quarantined, masked, and safe feels like prison. So, to quote Dickens in *A Tale of Two Cities*, "it was the best of times; it was the worst of times..."

I mentioned that Charter Oak has been able to keep its enrollment strong, but that is not the trend across higher education. Only 25% of colleges and universities have positive enrollment. Community colleges are down 15% across the nation, and the traditional trend of college enrollment rising when unemployment increases no longer holds. Higher education is struggling to re-invent itself to meet the current challenges.

In our case, I believe the marketplace is moving toward us, and not away. I have been arguing for some time that the distance learning classroom closely mirrors the 21st century workplace. Both our students and American knowledge workers use technology to perform their work, to communicate both internally and externally, and to participate as part of teams with whom there is often no direct contact. In other words, the modern workplace was always more like a distance learning classroom than a traditional classroom, and that similarity has increased dramatically during this epidemic.

I do not think work will return to "normal" when the pandemic eases. I suspect that companies will understand that they can function with a workforce that is not housed within a single structure. In addition, workers now understand that they can live separate from their employer, choose a home base that meets their personal needs, and still play a key role in that business culture. For example, Connecticut's housing market is incredibly hot right now because city dwellers are moving away from New York City into rural and suburban homes that offer more internal space, a yard, and a walkable neighborhood. They can perform their jobs from here, and that change is probably going to be permanent.

So what must we all do to adapt to these changes? First, universal broadband is required to support a knowledge workforce that is living in one place and working in another. Second, all colleges will need to make distance learning a permanent part of their offerings. College students who did not move into a dorm, but chose to stay home for the same reason that city dwellers moved to non-urban settings, may not flood back to campus. Instead, they will insist on continuing to learn remotely. And third, from the DMV to voting, technology is going to become a routine part of our most important public duties.

Charter Oak is well prepared for this new world. Our courses, instructors, and student services are all offered online. We are hiring experts from across the country, which means our talent pool is larger and deeper. We are making progress establishing ourselves and our programs as necessary partners for business at the same time as we are improving our ability to market ourselves across social media. That's the upside. On the challenge front, it will be necessary to find ways to maintain the deep relationships that the staff has built over the years. Our program offerings must continue to grow and stay relevant to the market. So those are two of the key challenges that I will be addressing over the coming months and years. As always, I welcome feedback from you (eklonoski@charteroak.edu).

Ed Klonoski, President

"2020 Shea Lecture" continued from pg. 1

- Education is imperative, across the spectrum on a variety of topics at all ages
- Data collection and analysis is critical
- Community members are essential and should be included in discussions
- Listen, learn, and expand our personal circle beyond our own race and culture
- Acknowledge inequity and systemic racism – no one problem is a stand-alone issue
- Parity is a priority – pledge equality in housing, education, food, healthcare, and opportunity
- Collaborate and share resources to eliminate issues and policies that perpetuate inequity

The Foundation works tirelessly towards breaking the cycle of poverty and

disadvantage for black and brown community members by increasing financial support to higher education degree completion. Degree completion positively impacts individuals and increases opportunities for career, business, and economic improvements. Thusly, positively impacting our communities. It is the hope of the Foundation that the panel-suggested solutions will move the needle forward, surrounding economic and racial disparity, in Connecticut and across the U.S.

Join the Foundation's efforts by making a gift today at www.CharterOak.edu/Foundation. 🌱

STAYCONNECTED!

We always like to hear from our alumni about successes in your life. Email updates to share to chall@charteroak.edu.

connections

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STATE COLLEGE

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Provost and Sr. VP, Academic and Student Affairs

Charter Oak State College
Ed Klonoski, President

Sometimes we never know when our work, important as it is, will suddenly rise to the level of national importance. Assisting with shipments of the COVID-19 vaccine is just a small part of what Charter Oak Alum, **Paul Chase, President and CEO of Ameriflight** is doing these days.

Ameriflight is the largest regional cargo airline in the nation, meaning it moves commercial cargo on-demand as well as running private charter flights. Their fleet of 150+ small planes, in all shapes and sizes, meets specific requirements and maximizes efficiencies, relative to larger jets, making them ideal for landing in small airports when delivering goods throughout the country. The airline is a critical link in the UPS, FedEx, and DHL supply chains. From live animals to hazardous materials, they fly it all – and right now that also includes cargo consisting of COVID-19 vaccines.

"Being such an important part of the pandemic vaccination distribution is certainly exciting and humbling at the same time" says Chase. "We already transport medical supplies so we are extremely well positioned for this new challenge."

Chase's interest in operations began while in the U.S. Navy, during which time he completed a variety of classes along with his military training. He went on to work at a company called Southern Air Inc. where he worked as an Aircraft Dispatcher. While there, his boss and mentor at the time gently let him know that a college degree would be important for advancing in the business world.

As a father of two small children, working full-time, and wanting to complete his degree, Paul began researching state schools and discovered Charter Oak State College. He felt accreditation was key to ensure a proper educational experience. As he describes it "Charter Oak accepted the widest range of education credits and experience, offered a compelling and quality education, and was affordable and flexible."

All of which suited his family, life, and work commitments as the risk of leaving the workforce to attend on-ground classes was too great.

Together, Paul and his academic counselor, created a path to degree completion that included his previous college credits, his military training and experience, as well as CLEP tests. He proudly graduated from Charter Oak in 2014 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration and went on to complete a Master's degree at the University of Tennessee. Seeking education to better himself and his opportunities is an intrinsic part of who he is.

These credentials allowed Paul to eventually rise to Chief Operating Officer at Southern Air before joining Amazon where he worked on the launch team for Amazon Air and helped create Amazon's first-ever aviation operations department. Having Charter Oak recognize and validate the value of his life-long learning was exactly what he needed. "My Charter Oak degree was integral in expanding my career opportunities and getting me to where I am today."

While busy running an important business, Paul still finds time to fit in some recreational flying as a hobby for himself and sightseeing with his family. He shares a passion for both education and aviation with his oldest daughter and in his free time they can often be found spending time together in the air.

Bon Voyage Paul! 🌿



Charter Oak STATE COLLEGE Foundation

An Update from Foundation Board President Rebecka Scalia, Class of '96



Twenty-twenty brought many challenges our way; however, it also provided us with an opportunity to pivot, adjusting the way we do business to the new virtual norm while

maintaining our focus on supporting degree completion.

In a typical year, we host fundraisers and send appeals to raise funds to give back to students in the form of scholarships, grants, WIT funding, Prior Learning Assessment Scholarships, and Student Crisis Awards. This financial assistance helps ensure our vulnerable population of students "stay the course" and complete their degrees. We are changing lives; our efforts matter to over 100 students each year. The "we" that is changing lives includes so many of YOU. Thank you to

all who gave, participated, and stayed the course in 2020.

Please take a moment to read some good news and be inspired by our community.

• **Kate (Gubbiotti) Rockefeller**, a 2010 graduate of the Women In Transition program became a donor with a monthly gift, as she describes it "The WIT program gave me the resources and encouragement I needed to complete my BS, and I've been so fortunate to have built a successful career with the Healthcare Administration degree I earned. I was moved by the memorial fund for the program originator and am proud to now be a monthly donor. Please pass my appreciation on to all those involved in lobbying and fundraising to keep this program active. It's a game changer."

• **Albert W. A. Schmid**, '97 Charter Oak Alum shared his time and talent by providing the

intermission lesson at our virtual story telling *Tell Me Another: Live and Learn* virtual event in August with the origins, recipe, and on-screen mixing of the popular (and oh so easy to make) Old Fashioned Cocktail. He also pledged to pay-it-forward with an annual gift of \$250 to the annual appeal.

• **Dr. George Moker**, '89 is paying-it-forward, big-time! Dr. Moker established an endowed scholarship fund. His gift will last in perpetuity and give financial assistance to Charter Oak students striving to complete their degree. George leveraged his Charter Oak degree to rise to the highest ranks of his profession. He values life-long learning and offers this fund as a 'thank you' so that other business students may realize their dreams.

The Estate of Astrid T. Hanzalek, provided a sizable bequest to the Foundation used in part to provide an *Extenuating Circumstances Grant Fund*. Hanzalek served for many years as a Trustee to the College and as Board Chair. She and her husband, Fred, were generous in life and in death and were committed supporters of degree completion at Charter Oak.

More good news. **The Women in Transition (WIT) Program** received program sustaining

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"Foundation Update" continued from pg. 3

support in the form of grants and gifts in 2020, all of which ensure we can provide our single-mother students the holistic support needed to complete their degrees with little or no debt.

- \$15,000 Aurora Women and Girls Foundation, Inc. Grant
- \$35,000 Hartford Foundation for Public Giving Grant
- \$100,000 Widows' Society Grant
- Lynn (and Jack) Plummer provided a generous gift, bridging the gap of need during the holiday months
- The Monday Reading Club collectively provided financial support for textbooks

The Community Foundation of Greater New Britain provided a generous **\$10,000 Capacity Building Grant**, to help the Foundation meet its strategic planning goals and increase fundraising efforts.

There are many more stories of generosity from so many more of you. **Thank you!** 

SAVE-THE-DATE and join us on Thursday, March 4, 2021 for the Foundation's Spring Fundraiser, Curiosity Courses for a Cause!

Watch your email/mail or find details at: www.charteroak.edu/foundation/events.php

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