

# History of St. Petersburg College

Access and excellence are the hallmarks of St. Petersburg College, founded in 1927 as St. Petersburg Junior College, Florida's first two-year institution of higher education. Initially a private facility for the white populace (owing to the customs of the times), its first classes were held in a borrowed, unused section of the then-new St. Petersburg High School. Today the College stands as a fully integrated, multicampus public institution with a dozen locations situated throughout the county and its services administered throughout the nation and beyond. Students from more than 100 countries are in residence. Learning sites are located in St. Petersburg, Clearwater, Tarpon Springs, Pinellas Park, Largo and Seminole. The latter campus, which opened in August 1998, now includes SPC's University Partnership Center, which opened a year later with the collaboration of half a dozen Florida four-year institutions. The UPC enables students — through the technology of distance education — to earn various baccalaureate and graduate degrees without leaving Pinellas County. The UPC's original partnerships now total 12 and include The George Washington University in Washington, D.C. The SPC Center at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg also opened in August 1998, and the College's new Corporate Training facility at the ICOT Center business park in mid-county opened the following session. In October 1999, the College opened a high-tech facility at Pinellas County's STAR Center in Largo that serves scientific, technological and research enterprises located at the center plus several outside its borders. SPC's courses also are offered in various community facilities throughout the county via the Open Campus program, while others — including entire programs — are transmitted to students by way of computer, television and the Internet. At one point earlier this year, the College offered more online programs than any other community college in the state — and more than all the state universities except one. The College dropped the "Junior" from its name in June 2001 when legislation was signed by Gov. Jeb Bush that in part provided for SPJC to become the first among Florida's 28 public community colleges to become a four-year institution. Some 60,000 students a year are served by SPC.

## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The mission of St. Petersburg College (formerly St. Petersburg Junior College) is to provide accessible, learner-centered education for students pursuing selected baccalaureate degrees, associate degrees, technical diplomas, technical certificates and continuing education within our service area as well as globally in program areas in which the College has special expertise. As a comprehensive, multi-campus state postsecondary institution, St. Petersburg College seeks to be a creative leader and partner with students, communities, service agencies, businesses and other educational institutions to deliver enriched learning experiences and to promote economic and workforce development.

St. Petersburg College fulfills its mission led by an outstanding, diverse faculty and staff, enhanced by advanced technologies, distance learning, international education opportunities, innovative teaching techniques, comprehensive library and other information resources, continuous institutional self-evaluation, a climate for student success, and an enduring commitment to excellence.

St. Petersburg College is dedicated to the concept of equal opportunity. The College will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin or marital status, or against any qualified individual with disabilities, in its employment practices or in the admission and treatment of students. Recognizing that sexual harassment constitutes discrimination on the basis of sex and violates this rule, the College will not tolerate such conduct.

## IN THE BEGINNING

### THE CHARTER

Capt. George M. Lynch, Pinellas County's city superintendent of schools for St. Petersburg, founded St. Petersburg College in 1927. It was set up as a private, nonprofit corporation to help meet the needs of a growing state population and to provide local access to higher education for students with limited resources. The nation's Great Depression of the 1930s had come early to Florida. The "paper boom" (inflated land values) fueled inflation during the mid-'20s in the Sunshine State. The families of many high school graduates suddenly found "going away to college" beyond their means.

The College was founded to enable students to live at home, pay low tuition, work part-time and still pursue a postsecondary education. The 1928 charter application to the State of Florida listed the following aims:

To found, maintain and conduct a scientific institution of learning; having a department of fine arts; and such other departments as from time to time may be added in accordance with the provisions of the by-laws; to own, buy, sell and mortgage real estate and personal property and to use all income derived therefrom in its work and not for the benefit of the members of said Corporation.

Led by Lynch, who would become the College's first president, a group of local citizens signed the charter application. They were L. Chauncey Brown, publisher of the *St. Petersburg Evening Independent*; Frederick R. Francke, a Florida Power Corporation executive; Frank N. Robinson, an insurance executive; George W. Wylie, an attorney; and Robert R. Walden, a merchant. Together with Mrs. H. C. Case, a Pinellas County trustee, they made up the founding Board of Governors. They demonstrated their dedication by signing personal bank notes guaranteeing expenses until tuition could be collected. The city's Advertising and Library Board also backed SPJC, to the tune of \$10,000.

The board members managed the corporate affairs until the first election, when Brown was named board president, Francke vice president, Robinson treasurer and Wylie secretary. Lynch, who eventually rose to county superintendent, remained president of the College until his death in 1935. At that time, Robert B. Reed, whom Lynch had selected as dean of the College, was appointed by the board as the second president. G.V. Fuguitt succeeded Lynch as the county superintendent. The informal relationship between the College and the Pinellas County Schools continued.

#### COLLEGE PROGRAMS

In the beginning, advice was sought from educators at the University of Florida regarding the type of college to be created. They recommended a two-year college, noting that it would be much less expensive to operate than a four-year institution. Lynch and the board agreed, but clung to the idea that SPJC would become a four-year college as soon as it was financially feasible. In the 1927 catalog, the goal of the College read as follows:

. . . to afford opportunity to the young men and young women of St. Petersburg and Pinellas County who have completed the 12th grade course of study, to continue a two-year program of study of college grade, leading to the degrees of Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science. Non-resident students will be admitted upon certificate showing that they are living with their parents, legal guardians or relatives.

Students who attended the College planned to graduate in arts and sciences. At the time, there were no separate academic departments, but the curriculum comprised history, English, mathematics, science and education. Students would either transfer to a four-year college or university to complete their baccalaureate degrees or receive a teacher's certificate permitting them to seek employment in elementary and secondary school classrooms. As noted by State Superintendent of Public Instruction W. S. Cawthon in 1928:

This office will recognize graduates of the St. Petersburg Junior College . . . and will issue limited Graduate State Certificates to the said graduates, said certificates authorizing the holders thereof to teach in the public schools up to and including the tenth grade.

The College became fully accredited in 1931. Preparation for transfer to four-year colleges was strengthened in September 1933 by the addition of a third year to the curriculum, a year recognized under certain provisions by the University of Florida. In 1934, the third year of college was similarly recognized by the Florida State College for Women (now Florida State University). The additional year of the curriculum was dropped at the end of the 1938-39 academic year because it had become evident that expenses progress geometrically not arithmetically. The Board of Governors determined to maintain a strong, high-standard, two-year college and abandoned further efforts to seek four-year status.

## FACULTY AND STUDENTS

The opening-day enrollment in Fall 1927 was reported by both the local newspapers as 102. The first class was held Sept. 12. W.W. Little, principal of St. Petersburg High School and acting college dean, was in charge of 14 faculty members. By 1928-29, Robert B. Reed had been appointed dean, and taught history while performing his administrative duties. That fall (1928), 186 students enrolled; the following June, 50 students proceeded down the aisle as the charter graduating class. The College granted diplomas, a practice that continued until June 1946 when the first Associate in Arts degrees (44 in all) were awarded. Opening fall enrollment grew from 173 in 1930 to 389 in 1939.

At the beginning of the fall semester in 1941, enrollment stood at 317. In early December, the United States was drawn fully into World War II. SPC's enrollment dropped sharply, reaching a low of 98 students — almost all of them women — in the Fall of 1943. The College avoided closure by becoming an integral part of the war effort. A Civil Aeronautics Administration/War Training Service (CAA/WTS) installation was established. Each six weeks, 60 naval V5 cadets rotated through the College for part of their early training. Housed in an old hotel near Albert Whitted Airport on the city's bayfront, they received their first experience as pilots while attending "ground school," which included navigation, plane recognition, physical training and naval procedures relevant to their objective. Those hundreds of young men enabled the College to remain open.

Upon the death of President Reed in 1944, Dr. Roland A. Wakefield, head of the College's Department of Physical Sciences since 1933, was appointed president. Dr. Wakefield's interest in aviation had taken him during the war from SPC's labs and classrooms to Atlanta where he served as the Civil Aeronautics Administration/War Training Service regional coordinator. He was a key figure in bringing naval cadet training to SPC. He had been back at the College only a few months when he was called on to assume the presidency.

War's end brought the College's largest-ever enrollment as returning veterans took advantage of the GI Bill. Fall enrollments in 1946 and 1947 were 452 and 460, respectively. As Dr. Wakefield retired at the end of the 1949-50 academic year, 88 students graduated. He was succeeded by Dean of Men Michael M. Bennett, Class of '37, a faculty member since 1940 and the first president to have been an SPC student.

## FACILITIES

When classes began in Fall 1927, City School Supt. Lynch had persuaded the Pinellas County School Board to provide the College free space in one unused (and unwired) wing in the then-2-year-old St. Petersburg High School. At the end of that fall term, students and faculty moved from their borrowed space to a former public school at Fifth Street N and Second Avenue downtown, overlooking Mirror Lake. This mid-year move to downtown — into a two-story, white-columned brick building — gave the College much more room. SPC remained at this facility until 1942, but the quarters grew cramped in short order. It became clear much more space would be needed. In 1931, the City of St. Petersburg pledged an annual grant of \$15,000 to the College, and six years later it donated a 24-acre tract in the city's Eagle Crest section. President Reed initiated a building campaign in 1938 that raised about \$100,000 in pledges made by St. Petersburg residents and businesses.

The first permanent new building — housing classrooms, offices, the library and an auditorium named for Captain Lynch — was erected at the corner of Fifth Avenue N and 66th Street. Built with WPA labor, it cost \$91,000; equipment worth about \$100,000 was transferred from the old building, mostly during the December 1941 holiday break. The new building and its contents were valued at a quarter of a million dollars. The first classes were held there in January 1942. A small, temporary cafeteria building also was built. These two buildings (plus a limited library first occupied in 1955) constituted the College's total facilities until 1957.

The original building, still in use today, is known as the James E. Hendry Administration Building on the St. Petersburg/Gibbs Campus. Renovated and air conditioned in 1963, it houses administrative offices, conference rooms and faculty offices. More additions and renovations to the building were made in 1991 and 1992. In 1993-94, multimillion-dollar renovations of the other buildings on campus got under way and are continuing. The Lynch Auditorium underwent major renovation and redesign in 2000, to become St. Petersburg College's acoustically splendid, 300-seat Music Center. Enhancing it greatly are the two new Steinway concert grand pianos purchased during the summer. The college's theater program, meanwhile, was transferred to the Clearwater Campus.

Renovations to the campus' Fine Arts Auditorium are nearing completion, which will give the program an impressive new home.

#### FROM PRIVATE TO PUBLIC

The wave of returning veterans subsided toward the end of the 1940s. The College began losing superior faculty to better-paying positions at other colleges and universities. Demographics pointed to fewer college-age people for at least the next decade. This was the result of low birth rates during the 1930s. Tuition increases necessary to maintain the operation of the College proved counterproductive by further depressing student enrollment. Prosperity was not evident in the College's service area; hence, outside financial support for a private two-year college was extremely difficult to generate.

The Florida Legislature, in 1939, had adopted a law authorizing counties with a population of 50,000 or more to establish a public junior college, with permission of the State Board of Education. Then, in 1947, the Florida Legislature passed the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP), which provided financial support for operation and capital outlay (construction) for Florida public schools. On May 11, 1948, the Pinellas County Board of Public Instruction adopted a resolution accepting the College. SPC converted from private to public status, the second junior college (after Palm Beach Junior College) in the state to make the change. At that time, the Board of Governors of the College dissolved the corporation and released all existing facilities to the school board. L. Chauncey Brown remained president of the Board of Governors, which had consisted of 12 members. The Board became the College Advisory Committee, in accordance with Florida Statutes Chapter 230.0103 and State Board Regulations Chapter 130-8.04, with Brown as chairman. Others on the five-member Advisory Board: Frederick R. Francke, Allen C. Grazier, Robert R. Walden and George W. Wylie, all former members of the Board of Governors.

With the change in status from private to public, the College became part of the school system with the president reporting to the Pinellas County Superintendent of Public Instruction. Shortly after SPC became public, G. V. Fuguitt retired from that post. Floyd T. Christian was elected to succeed him. During the College's tenure under the County School Board, tuition was lowered.

Although the Florida Legislature authorized creation of the Division of Community Colleges in the State Department of Education in 1957, it was not until July 1, 1968 that it authorized the separation of the colleges from their county school systems. At that time, the College Advisory Committee of five members became the College's District Board of Trustees.

At the state level, the Florida system of 28 community colleges underwent various reorganizations to ensure its efficient and effective operation. In 1983, the Legislature replaced the State Community College Coordinating Board with the State Board of Community Colleges. This preserved local control, represented by local boards of trustees, while at the same time established system-wide policies and coordination.

In 2001, as part of a sweeping reorganization of Florida's educational administration, the Legislature replaced both the State Board of Community Colleges and the State University System's Board of Regents with the Florida Board of Education. The Board of Education is now the overall governing board for public education in Florida and is charged with maintaining a seamless K-20 system for all Floridians. Meanwhile, the Division of Community Colleges of the Department of Education remains as the statewide body to provide leadership and support to Florida's independent public community colleges.

## AND IT GREW

### EXPANSION OF THE COLLEGE MISSION

Pinellas County experienced unprecedented growth during the 1950s and the College was swept along with it. In Fall 1950, the first year of President Michael Bennett's administration, 451 students enrolled; at the start of 1977-78, the last academic year of his presidency, 14,445 students signed on. During his 28-year tenure, enrollment increased more than 3,200 percent. Additionally, during those 28 years, 25,449 degrees were awarded. This compares to 1,450 students who had graduated from 1928-29 through 1949-50 — an increase of more than 1,750 percent.

As part of the Self-Study of 1957-59, the faculty formulated a college philosophy and a set of institution-wide objectives reported in the *1958-59 College Bulletin*. Acknowledging its relationship to the county schools, the College noted that its philosophy was contingent upon the Statement of Philosophy of Education for the Schools of Pinellas County, Florida. Moreover, it recognized an expanded responsibility to the individual. The College's mission was stated in the following manner:

St. Petersburg Junior College shares a responsibility with the community, county, state and nation in contributing to the development of the individual student so that he (she) has the opportunity to become a useful citizen, to make worthwhile contributions to society and to live a rich and satisfying life.

The purpose of the College is threefold: (1) to provide community educational facilities for those who may wish to transfer and continue their college education; (2) to provide community educational facilities for those who wish to terminate college work at the junior college level; and (3) to provide the entire community with an educational program based upon its needs and demands.

The catalog listed seven enabling objectives to achieve the College's purpose and one objective describing a method to measure their attainment. These objectives affirmed the commitment to a college transfer program comparable to the lower-division program available in four-year colleges and universities, a terminal college curriculum that would lead to employment, and non-credit lifelong learning courses that would facilitate changing vocational and social needs.

The College rigorously developed its programs to meet its new educational vision for the next 20 years. It was not until the *1978-79 College Bulletin* that a major change appeared. While the objectives previously stated were reaffirmed, attention was given to students who might profit from special opportunities, including instruction to overcome deficiencies that might impede college-level work. The following six objectives were identified in the bulletin for the College:

- (1) To provide educational opportunities for those students who will transfer to other colleges to continue their education.
- (2) To provide a variety of occupationally oriented programs for students who complete their career preparation at St. Petersburg Junior College.
- (3) To provide opportunities for students who desire to increase their general education.
- (4) To provide opportunities for cultural enrichment, personal and social development for members of the community.
- (5) To provide special opportunities for students with superior qualifications as well as for students with inadequate skills and backgrounds who need additional training to participate in the general programs of the college.
- (6) To provide, through counseling, guidance, which will enable students to plan more effectively for the realistic attainment of their academic and personal goals.

These objectives became the foundation upon which a more comprehensive mission would emerge in the next stage of the College's development.

## COLLEGE PROGRAMS

As enrollment grew, the College undertook the development of an expanded curriculum. The School of Nursing was founded in 1954 and Anastasia M. "Nancy" Hartley, R.N. was named director. It offered the first associate degree in Nursing in Florida. In addition to the two-year program in Nursing, occupationally oriented programs in business were developed.

Although Article II of the Application for Charter in 1928 called for ". . . a department of fine arts; and such other departments as from time to time may be added . . ." it was 1956 before SPC became departmentalized. Table 1 shows the first organization of the College.

TABLE 1  
COLLEGE'S FIRST DEPARTMENTS, 1956

<u>Department</u>	<u>Chairperson</u>
Business	Melvin Courson
Communications	Gertrude Porter
Humanities	Harriette G. Ridley
Mathematics & Engineering	Carol S. Scott
Natural Sciences	Arthur W. Gay Jr.
Nursing <sup>1</sup>	Anastasia M. Hartley
Social Sciences	E. L. Noel Jr.

In 1957-58, the School of Nursing became the Division of Nursing and continued to be headed by Miss Hartley. By 1958-59, several changes had occurred in department chairpersons, and one new department and a second division had been created. Table 2 shows the 1958-59 college organization.

TABLE 2  
COLLEGE DEPARTMENTS AND DIVISIONS, 1958-59

<u>Department/Division</u>	<u>Chairperson</u>
Business	J. E. Nicholson
Communications	M. Carolyn Parker
Humanities	Harriette G. Ridley
Mathematics	Carol S. Scott
Natural Sciences	Arthur W. Gay Jr.
Nursing Division <sup>2</sup>	Anastasia M. Hartley <sup>3</sup>
Radio, Television & Film	Nancy E. Reiss
Social Sciences	E. L. Noel Jr.
Technical Division	William L. Bolin <sup>3</sup>

The 1960s saw continual change in the College's organization. In 1960-61, the Department of Communications was renamed the Department of English and continued to be headed by M. Carolyn Parker. All speech, dramatics and modern language courses were placed in the new Department of Speech and Modern Languages chaired by Roberta M. Buchanan. In January 1965, this department was placed in the Department of Humanities and Peter Mendoza Jr. was named assistant chairman for Speech and Modern Languages.

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<sup>1</sup> School established 1954

<sup>2</sup> Created 1957-58

<sup>3</sup> Dean of the Division

Also in 1960-61, the Department of Business became the Department of Business Administration. The following year, the Department of Radio, Television and Film became the Department of Radio and Television, chaired by Robert C. Bohan.

The '60s saw the creation of several new departments as well. In 1960-61, the Department of Physical Education was created, chaired by Eleanore M. Gehlen. Joan Catherman was employed in 1962 as director of the new Dental Hygiene Division, to plan for the implementation of classes during the 1963-64 year. The Department of Police Administration was created in 1962 with James D. Stinchcomb as chairman. In 1963, Harold V. Hoff was employed as chairman of the new Hotel-Motel-Restaurant Department. Enrollment began in 1964.

Two courses in data processing were offered in 1964-65, and in 1966 the Data Processing Department was established with Wayne Laurents as chairman. Beginning with the 1965-66 academic year, the College instituted a remedial Program of Directed Studies for students with ability whose educational background evidenced academic weaknesses. Courses were developed that focused on the use of programmed and non-programmed instructional materials to strengthen students' basic skills as well as study skills.

The College became a three-campus institution in Summer 1965 with the opening of the Clearwater Campus. A Directed Studies Department was activated on both the St. Petersburg and Clearwater campuses and was combined with Communications on the short-lived Gibbs (later Skyway) Campus in south St. Petersburg. Clearwater Campus departments activated with its opening are shown on Table 3.

TABLE 3  
OPENING CLEARWATER CAMPUS DEPARTMENTS/DIVISIONS, 1965

<u>Department/Division</u>	<u>Chairperson</u>
Business Administration	Jack L. Miller
Communications Division	Robert Kreager
Directed Studies	Merle E. Morgan
Mathematics and Sciences	Joseph Gould
Physical Education	(None)
Social Sciences	William Hunt

The departments active on the Gibbs Campus in 1965 are shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4  
GIBBS CAMPUS DEPARTMENTS, 1965

<u>Department</u>	<u>Chairperson</u>
Business Administration	Chrystelle Stewart
Communications-English-Humanities-	
Directed Studies	Helen McLean
Mathematics and Science	Frank Pierce
Physical Education	Annie Woodard
Social Sciences	Leo Ballard

The Gibbs Campus was "inherited" by SPC from Gibbs Junior College, an all-black institution that had been started in 1957 as part of a 12-member, state-funded network. It was located on the campus of Gibbs High School in south St. Petersburg and, during its brief existence, served thousands of students from around the Tampa Bay area. Among its distinguished graduates: Walter Smith, who became president of Florida A&M University, and Calvin D. Harris, a provost and vice president at SPC who would be named by Gov. Lawton Chiles in 1997 as the first black member of the Pinellas County Commission. Gibbs Junior College, which at the county's behest had become SPC's Gibbs (later Skyway) Campus, was disbanded in 1967 as the crumbling walls of segregation fell. Most of Gibbs' faculty and staff were absorbed into SPC's other two campuses.

In 1967, several organizational changes occurred on the Clearwater and St. Petersburg campuses. In January, the Humanities Department was established on the Clearwater Campus with Donald L. Bisdorf as chairman, and the Communications Division became the English Department. On the St. Petersburg Campus, two assistant deanships were created under the Dean of Instruction -- one for Technical-Related Programs and one for Health-Related Programs. The Hotel-Motel-Restaurant, Radio-Television, Police Administration and Electronic & Mechanical Technology departments were placed under Technical-Related Programs. The Dental Hygiene and Nursing departments, as well as two new programs, Inhalation Therapy and Hospital Care Administration, were placed under Health-Related Programs.

On the Clearwater Campus, Leroy M. DeVane was named Assistant Dean of Instruction for Governmental Services. The Data Processing Department and the new Aerospace Technology Program were placed under Dr. DeVane. A new program in Pre-School Education was begun on both the Clearwater and St. Petersburg campuses. Its purpose was to prepare competent instructional personnel for community, private and church-related pre-school institutions and to provide in-service opportunities for pre-school classroom teachers.

Much program expansion occurred during the Bennett administration. The programs on the St. Petersburg and Clearwater campuses at the time of Michael Bennett's retirement (January 1978) are shown in Table 5.

TABLE 5  
ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS/DIVISIONS BY CAMPUS, 1978

<u>Campus</u>	<u>Department/Division</u>	<u>Chairman/Director</u>
Clearwater	Architectural Technology	Robert Sebek
	Aviation Technology	Wayne J. Harrison
	Business	Jack Miller
	Communications	Helen V. McLean
	Computer Science	Mary C. Durkin
	Emergency Medical Technology	Barbara Finn
	Fire Administration	Eugene Z. Jackson
	Health	Anastasia M. Hartley
	Humanities	Karl Garrett
	Natural Science	Homer A. Jopling
	Nursing	Elizabeth Wajdowicz
	Physical Education	Ralph G. Kern
	Respiratory Therapy	David C. Shelledy
	Science	Joseph Gould
Social Science	William S. Hunt Sr.	
St. Petersburg	Animal Science Technology	David C. Tollon
	Business	Tod O. Dravis
	Communications	Joseph F. Madden
	Engineering Technology	William L. Bolin
	Health	Merle H. Morgan
	Hotel-Motel-Restaurant Management	Harold V. Hoff
	Human Services	Donald Davis
	Medical Laboratory Technology	JoAnn R. Ahlstrom
	Natural Science	Marvin L. Ivey
	Nursing	Almeda B. Martin
	Optometric Technology	Kenneth C. Gatson
	Physical Education	Eleanor M. Gehlen
	Physical Therapy	Francis L. Golden
	Police Administration	Robert B. Tegarden
Science	William R. Rice	
Social Science	Joy A. Mitchell	



In addition to those shown, the Program for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing had been created at the Clearwater Campus, coordinated by Calvin Harris.

#### FACILITIES

As enrollment increased, so did the need for construction of additional facilities. A direct appropriation by the Legislature in 1954 resulted in the start of new construction. The St. Petersburg Campus acquired a small new library that was occupied in 1955. Five separate parcels of one to five acres were purchased for \$360,742, extending the campus from the original 24 acres to 37.58 acres. The largest of these parcels was the off-campus site that contained the Physical Education building, running track and swimming pool. (The pool was razed in 1999.) Today, the campus has 17 buildings.

In 1953, as a result of requests from people living in the Clearwater area, nine evening classes were offered at Clearwater High School. Eighty-eight persons registered for the first session, and course offerings were increased each semester as the needs and interests of the northern Pinellas students were identified. During the 1959 Fall semester, 113 students were registered in 14 evening classes at Clearwater High School. After considering the current enrollment and projected growth of Pinellas County, the College Advisory Committee recommended a Clearwater campus be established. In July 1959, a request was made to the State Department of Education for permission to plan a campus in North County. After a study of enrollment projections for the next 10 years and a survey by the Department of Education, the plan for a campus in Clearwater was approved, located 14 miles north of the campus in St. Petersburg.

In 1962, a tract of land was selected and acquired through purchases and gifts. In 1964, construction began. The 38.3 acres north of Drew Street were purchased from the county for the token sum of \$1; the 34.5 acres south of Drew Street were purchased for \$226,008, with the City of Clearwater paying \$127,000 of this amount. During the second session of 1964-65, 532 students taking 35 evening classes were moved onto the new campus and day classes were held there for the first time. In 1968, a parcel of one-half acre was purchased for \$1,275 for parking; in 1969 the Faith United Church of Christ next door donated a similar parcel, also to be used for parking. The Clearwater Campus today encompasses 73.87 acres and contains 17 buildings. Its long-time provost — Dr. Vilma Zalupski, who retired in 1996 — was the first woman provost to be named in Florida.

In February 1965, Gibbs Junior College was placed under the supervision of SPC. By summer it had become the Gibbs Campus of St. Petersburg College. In 1966, the campus name was changed to the Skyway Campus. For economic reasons, however, this campus — located at St. Petersburg's Gibbs High School — was phased out of operation in June 1967. In February 1993, SPC's St. Petersburg Campus was rededicated as the St. Petersburg/Gibbs Campus, to honor the contributions Gibbs Junior College, its personnel and its alumni have made to St. Petersburg College and the Pinellas County community.

Although operating three campuses, St. Petersburg College remained a single institution with a central administrative organization. It was felt this one-college concept could best be maintained by having central administrative offices. In July 1966, the Pinellas County Board of Public Instruction purchased a 9.47-acre site in Pinellas Park for this purpose. Construction of two office buildings was started in 1967. These offices were housed in a mid-county location without specific physical identification with any campus. They were occupied in August 1968.

Early in 1970, the mayor of Tarpon Springs approached President Bennett about the possibility of opening a college site there. A study was made and, meanwhile, a special relationship was formed between Tarpon Springs banker-philanthropist A. L. Ellis and city officials. The result: establishment of the Tarpon Springs Center, rent-free to the College, on the second floor of the Ellis Springs State Bank in the fall of 1970, to operate for a provisional three-year period. Later, the city's Rotary Club provided additional space in the Rotary Youth Center. On Oct. 19, 1972, the College purchased a tract consisting of 54.17 acres on Klosterman Road for \$328,000. Seven buildings with more than 21,000 square feet rose on the site and the new Tarpon Springs Center opened in Fall 1975. Today it contains more than a dozen permanent structures augmented by portable facilities. A major addition that will be of significance to the entire area is scheduled for completion early in 2002. It will house the Leepa-Rattner Museum of Art, the Arts Education Center and the new, larger Michael M. Bennett Library. The campus area also has grown

through the acquisition of 18.6 adjacent acres. Its provost, Nick Billiris, has been on the job since the second year of operation.

In August 1970 and February 1971, the College purchased tracts of 81.4 and 21.72 acres, respectively, within the Seminole community. Construction of a new campus began in 1997. The initial building — a model of educational technology — opened to students in August 1998. The 24,000-square-foot Technology Learning Center contains computer and interactive-TV classrooms, a multimedia conference room and a 120-computer video station known as the Information Commons. Work on Phase II of the Seminole Campus is under way and includes the three-story University Partnership Center, which is scheduled for completion this school year.

The Bay Pines property of 55.21 acres, only 15 of which are above the mean high water mark, was acquired in December 1973 by a quitclaim deed from the federal government. The two buildings on the property serve as college storage and as a classroom for the county's Life Skills Program. This program provides life skills training for retarded adults past the age of 21. It is under the direction and co-sponsorship of SPC's Open Campus and the Pinellas County School Board. For the past six years, the program also has been offered at the St. Petersburg/Gibbs Campus.

### AND LOOKED TOWARD THE FUTURE

President Bennett's Jan. 31, 1978 retirement was followed in May by the appointment of Carl M. Kuttler Jr., J.D., who had been serving the college as Dean of Administrative Affairs. Dr. Kuttler, Class of '60, is the second graduate of the College to be named to the presidency.

#### COLLEGE MISSION

In 1987, the District Board of Trustees adopted a new mission statement that affirmed St. Petersburg College as a comprehensive, open-door institution with a policy of providing quality educational experiences to a diverse student body and community. The original goal of the College (to prepare students to transfer to four-year institutions) continued, as did the goals previously established regarding the preparation of students for entry into a job or career, the upgrading of students' occupational skills and the strengthening of their basic academic skills. Additionally, the mission statement addressed the need for flexibility and innovation in the way services were provided, the integration of educational goals into lifelong learning, and the encouragement of minority students to utilize the College's available resources and opportunities. The 1989 Florida Legislature added economic development as a component of the mission of all community colleges and in later years granted SPC capital construction and renovation funds of the following amounts:

\$6,293,832 in 1989-90	\$5,664,427 in 1990-91	\$6,676,405 in 1991-92
\$13,305,995 in 1992-93	\$6,729,719 in 1993-94	\$10,481,060 in 1994-95
\$6,335,156 in 1995-96	\$8,353,332 in 1996-97	\$12,542,977 in 1997-98
\$17,542,265 in 1998-99	\$17,021,161 in 1999-2000	\$20,509,349 in 2000-01
\$24,443,488 in 2001-02		

During the 1993-94 school year, a committee was formed to review the College's mission. A new statement of that mission stated that the goals of the College were to:

- prepare students for transfer to upper division baccalaureate programs at four-year colleges and universities through the Associate in Arts degree program;
- prepare students for careers requiring postsecondary education through Associate in Science and selected Certificate programs;
- prepare students for responsible and ethical citizenship, directed interaction in the diverse community, participation in the global society, effective involvement in life activities, and informed decision-making through general education courses;
- provide underprepared students with opportunities to achieve entry-level skills in reading, writing and mathematics through the college preparatory programs;
- provide opportunities to improve employability, enhance career skills, and attain personal enrichment, through courses, seminars, workshops and other continuing education programs offered throughout the community;

- help students choose appropriate courses, programs, services and activities as well as maximize their opportunity to succeed in college through a comprehensive student development program;
- contribute to the economic development of the county through technical courses, workshops, programs and services designed to enhance the competitiveness of individuals, businesses and industries in the local, state, national and global economies;
- contribute to the international education of students through a variety of courses, foreign study tours, faculty and student exchanges, linkages with international institutions and other special programs; and
- serve target populations beyond the borders of Pinellas County through authorized programs and activities that emanate from the institution's history of service and specialized expertise.

(With the College's changeover in 2001 to four-year status, a revised Mission Statement became necessary, but because of the College's continuing commitment to the preservation of its two-year programs, much of the wording remained intact.)

## COLLEGE PROGRAMS

Under the Kuttler administration's leadership, Open Campus — a flexible system for providing educational services — was established to meet the growing needs of the community for lifelong learning. This program provides credit and non-credit courses, workshops and seminars on the College's campuses and at business sites throughout the county to meet existing community needs. It includes the Corporate Training Center as well as the College for Kids Program, the Dual Credit Program for high school students, and other continuing education classes for job training and fun.

Today, the programs leading to the Associate in Arts degree are the traditional transfer programs with concentrations in, among others, art, arts and sciences, architectural/building construction, business administration, computer science (business option), corrections, early childhood development, education, engineering, corrections/criminal justice, English/humanities, fashion merchandising, fire administration, forestry, gerontology, human services, social work or occupational therapy, industrial arts education, international business, law enforcement, mass communications, mathematics, medical technology, music or music education, natural science, nursing, occupational therapy, pharmacy, physical therapy, speech/audio pathology, pre-dental, pre-medical and pre-veterinarian. These programs meet all the requirements of the general education component for the baccalaureate degree.

The College has dozens of Associate in Science programs that prepare students for entry-level jobs. All are listed in the current catalog. Altogether, today's students can choose from more than 260 academic areas of study in the A.A. and A.S. areas.

Additionally, the College offers a growing set of certificate programs that in 1997 expanded more than sixfold. Currently, more than 50 different programs are grouped under these seven headings: Business Development & Administrative Services; Certified Internet Webmaster Technology; Computer, Database, Engineering and Network Technology; Environmental Resource Management; Health Care; Industrial Development; and Public Service.

In 1989, SPC launched Project Flamingo, a collegewide, comprehensive approach to integrate computer technology in a totally networked, standardized environment. The plan was created to enhance the curriculum and teaching-and-learning process, strengthen the administrative systems and improve campus communications. This multi-year computer project was developed with the considerable help and cooperation of Apple Computer, Unisys and the Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC), who among them contributed more than \$3-million in equipment to the College. Through the project all of the College sites became interconnected, enabling the majority of faculty and staff to use the new tools of technology to enhance quality and improve productivity. Its major purpose: to promote excellence in teaching and learning by incorporating computers, CD-ROM and laser disk technology into the curriculum as instructional tools, through a collegewide fiber network.

In the wake of Project Flamingo, the College has launched a number of other administrative and academic computing initiatives: Project Horizon; SPIRIT (St. Petersburg Junior College Interactive Registration &

Information by Technology); Project Connect, an initiative to upgrade the College's network connections and provide high-speed computers to all college faculty; a new PeopleSoft-driven administrative finance system; and the promise of a new Human Resources and Student Registration system using PeopleSoft software to serve the College well into the next millennium. Many of the concepts that began with Project Flamingo have come to fruition in concert with the development of the Seminole Campus, which has as part of its vision all curricula and services being either delivered or enhanced significantly via technology.

#### FACILITIES

During the first year of the Kuttler administration (1978), SPJC asked the voters of Pinellas County to approve, by referendum, a temporary, additional 1/2 mill in property taxes for college improvements. Despite predictions of failure from some quarters, the referendum passed and the College was able to accomplish some much-needed renovations with the new funds.

In an effort to respond to the growing demand for health care providers and to make more effective use of resources, the College petitioned the Florida Legislature for funding to purchase and remodel three buildings at the former Webb's City retail complex in Pinellas Park. A special \$6.5-million appropriation from the Legislature was obtained and the College acquired 170,000 square feet of floor space for its Health Education Center. In addition, a capital campaign, begun in 1981 and completed in 1986, raised \$3.5-million, including a significant gift from Mr. and Mrs. W.W. Caruth Jr.

In the summer of 1981, 10 of the existing 11 health care programs were moved into the new center and classes began that August. The 11th program, Veterinary Technology, occupied its building in August 1983. The College since has acquired additional property for parking space, plus two additional properties fronting on 66th Street N. All of the buildings on the 11.63-acre tract have undergone renovation. The library area has been expanded into the newly renovated space and includes the M.M. Bennett Library/St. Petersburg Times Media Center. A \$400,000 overhaul of the center's parking lot was completed early in 1994. In 1999, major renovations were done to the Vet Tech area and construction was finished on the new \$1.4-million teaching auditorium. The latter also is made available to the public for meetings and other gatherings.

The expansion of the College's Corporate Training program led to the establishment of the Corporate Training Center in the Carillon office complex north of St. Petersburg in Winter 1988. That facility now has evolved into the new Corporate Training Center located at the ICOT Center business park located just north of Ulmerton Road and immediately accessible to clients in St. Petersburg, Clearwater, Largo and Pinellas Park — with a straight shot to Tampa. The new facility opened in mid-year of 1998-99. The 11,000 square feet of space house class and conference rooms with full computer and training labs.

In July 1988, the Allstate Insurance Company turned over to the College the keys to its former regional office facility in south St. Petersburg. The 131,344-square-foot building on 20.85 acres was valued at more than \$11-million. At the time, it was the largest property gift ever made to a Florida institution of higher education, and the largest ever to a U.S. community college. Extensive renovation concluded in 1991. The Allstate Center houses the Central Computer as well as the Open Campus program and the College's Southeastern Public Safety Institute (law enforcement programs). The Institute's state-of-the-art firing range was completed in 1995. Next door to Allstate, the former American Heart Association building was purchased in 1998 to house offices for the Florida National Guard, which is engaged in a number of programs at the center.

#### EXPANDED HORIZONS

In January 1987, St. Petersburg College played host to the first "Roundtable on Institutional Effectiveness." A dozen national experts on higher education and community college administration, led by former U.S. Secretary of Education Terrel Bell and Director John Roueche of the Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas/Austin, met to develop future directions for SPC.

Within a year, the College held the second of these conferences. The "Roundtable on Educational Partnerships" brought together leaders from national organizations representing American postsecondary education.

Together they analyzed the ways SPC had successfully addressed many of the education and training issues facing the local community.

The second roundtable led to a request from William H. Meardy, executive director of the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT), for material relating to the College's presentations at the conference. Administrators, faculty and board members responded, providing 46 pages of information about SPC, its programs and accomplishments. Published in the *ACCT Journal*, this marked the first time an issue of that publication was devoted exclusively to a single institution. Director Meardy wrote: "Those of us who were expecting a 'typical' community college found out our expectations were wrong. St. Petersburg Junior College is anything but 'typical.' Words such as 'outstanding,' 'amazing,' 'innovative,' 'creative,' 'first class,' 'exemplary,' 'trend setting' and 'community centered' describe SPJC, but 'typical' it is not. What we found was a college replete with such an abundance of human services and educational programs that we were awed."

Ten years later, in November 1998, a third roundtable was convened. Meeting at the Bilmar Beach Resort on Treasure Island, the conferees turned their attention to "Focus on Learning: Planning the Community College for the 21st Century." Implicit in the theme was the idea — the reality, really — that faculty must come to regard themselves as learning guides and abandon their old image of teaching authorities. Among the presenters were Denver Community College President Byron McClenney, Vice President Kay M. McClenney of the Education Commission of the States, North Seattle Community College's Rita Smilkstein, prominent Florida architect David Michael Harper and Visions Inc. President James Riskowski, who heads one of the nation's leading educational technology consultancies.

In 1982, Tom Gregory (a future Chairman of SPC's Board of Trustees, who earlier had chaired the Florida Ethics Commission) and President Kuttler were attending a national conference of college trustees. They heard one of the speakers -- Dr. Paul Ylvisaker, former Dean of Harvard's Graduate School of Education -- outline the rationale for an Applied Ethics program. Following Dr. Ylvisaker's visit to SPC in November 1987, the Board of Trustees approved the creation of an Applied Ethics program. Initially, the basic course was set at three hours and was required for all students seeking A.A. degrees. It since has been changed to a two-hour course and is required of A.S. degree candidates as well. Finding no satisfactory text for the course, the College authorized the writing of one. In July 1993, *Ethics Applied* was published by McGraw-Hill. Its 17 specially commissioned authors from around the U.S. included three from the College faculty. An all-but-totally revised edition was published by Simon & Schuster and marketed nationally in 1999.

The College's Central American Scholarship Program (CASP), established in August 1987, welcomed 16 students from modest backgrounds as its first class. The two-year program, which stayed in place at the College for a dozen years, gave students the academic and vocational education needed to help improve their families' standard of living on their return. While here, each student lived with an American family, which greatly helped them adapt to "life in the States." Initiated by Georgetown University, CASP was funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development.

St. Petersburg College and the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges worked together to offer the first national conference on "The Role of the Community College in Shaping the Nation." Held at the Jimmy and Rosalyn Carter Center in Atlanta, it brought 200 educational administrators and public officials together at the research/conference complex to discuss national and international issues as they relate to the education of the nation's college students. In a message to the gathering, former President Carter noted that better preparation of students holds the key to the United States regaining its competitive edge in world markets and adapting to the evolving global economy.

In 1989, former U.S. Secretary of Education Terrel Bell accepted the College's invitation to chair its FACET Commission (Focus on Access, Community and Excellence in Teaching). He agreed to work with the University of Texas' Dr. John Roueche in guiding the College's faculty, staff and students. The purpose of this project was to insure continued educational excellence into the next century. Over several months, commission members met to discuss teaching effectiveness, evaluation of teaching performance, recognition of teaching excellence, and professional development. Their published report provided invaluable direction for the College.

In October 1989, the College and the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges co-convened their second leadership seminar, at the Gerald R. Ford Museum in Grand Rapids, Mich. "Workforce 2000" looked at the future economy in terms of the people and forces that will make it function. Included in the topics discussed were the role of technology, the importance of a quality workforce in a global economy, and the blending of enterprise and education.

In the international arena, as the breakup of the Soviet Union brought about profound changes in the structure of institutions within Russia, SPC leaders envisioned a joint educational venture between the College and the Russians. In June 1990, President Kuttler and the president of Leningrad State University exchanged visits. (The project grew out of conversations the previous spring between Dr. Kuttler and a Leningrad State law professor, Valery Musin, who was visiting Dr. Kuttler's alma mater, Stetson College of Law in St. Petersburg. Musin resided for a time at Dr. and Mrs. Kuttler's home.)

Dr. Kuttler spent two weeks in Russia in Fall 1990, and served as honorary rector of Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) State University. Among the many notables he met was St. Petersburg (*nee* Leningrad) Mayor Anatoly Sobchak, a leading political figure in the post-Gorbachev era. The Russians reciprocated that fall with a delegation led by Leningrad State University President Stanislav P. Merkuriev, who was named SPC's honorary president, and Mayor Sobchak. The Russian entourage met with many educational, civic and business leaders during their U.S. visit.

In June and July of 1991, Dr. Kuttler visited Baoji Teachers College in Baoji, Shaanxi, China. Dr. Yang Yijun, the college's president, returned that visit to St. Petersburg College in March 1992, and was named honorary president. SPC Communications Instructor Jeff Hooks and his family spent a year in residence at Baoji, and other Chinese have visited here since.

At the invitation of the State Department's U.S. Information Agency, Dr. Kuttler returned to Russia in May-June 1993 to assist the Russians in setting up a national community college system to help speed economic reform and development. His efforts resulted in his being named "Father of the Community College System in Russia," by that country's national education leaders. While there, he also arranged for future visits and exchanges on the part of educators and other representatives between Russia and the College. A campus in the "other" St. Petersburg is a long-term SPC objective.

SPC and its president were greatly honored in February 1997 with the Werner O. Kubsch Award for Achievement in International Education, one of community college education's most coveted awards. The following year, Dr. Kuttler was auspiciously honored twice by the Association of Community College Trustees — first on the Southern regional level, and then nationally, as AACT's "Chief Executive Officer of the Year." This was, in effect, recognition of him as the No. 1 community college president in the United States.

District Board of Trustees Chairman Joseph Lang also brought credit to the College when, in 1993, he received the "Outstanding College Trustee" award from the Florida Association of Community Colleges. The next year, he was given the Association of Community College Trustees' "Trustee Leadership Award" for the southern United States. When former DBT Chairman Philip Benjamin retired in 1997 from the Florida Board of Community Colleges, which he had served as charter chairman 14 years before, Lang was appointed by the governor to succeed him. In November 1999, Lang assumed the board chairmanship for a one-year term.

In mid-1996, Tarpon Springs retirees Allen and Isabelle Leepa decided SPC was the institution to which they would make a remarkable donation: the Leepa-Rattner Art Collection, plus a gift of \$2.5-million, to go toward establishment of the Leepa-Rattner Museum of Art at the Tarpon Springs Center. The collection, now numbering thousands of pieces, is mostly of Abstract Expressionist art by Allen Leepa and his late stepfather, Figurative Expressionist Abraham Rattner, with other artwork by Esther Gentle Rattner, Allen Leepa's mother. But it also contains works by Picasso, Rouault, Chagall, Hans Hofmann and other greats who were friends with Rattner, and its value approaches \$20-million. The gift has earned recognition from, among others, the Florida Cabinet, the Legislature, *Fortune*, *Newsweek* and Microsoft's *Slate 60* online magazine. Groundbreaking for the 58,000-square-foot museum complex — which also will house the M.M. Bennett Library and the Fine Arts Education Center — was held Nov. 9, 1999. The grand opening of this unique complex is scheduled for early January 2002.

The gift, meanwhile, has generated a decided increase in philanthropic interest in SPC. One notable contribution, made in 1998, is a \$1.9-million collection of rare documents, historic diaries, first editions, television scripts and other items gathered over half a century by Wendell Ware, SPC Class of '39. The material is undergoing computer entry into the college library system to make it universally available to students. Ware, now retired in California, was a postwar pioneer in the field of microfilm and microfiche.

August and September 1997 marked additional milestones in the life of the College. At summer commencement, the first three graduates of the Veterinary Technology Online program received their degrees after completing their studies on the Internet from their homes in Leon, Sarasota and Palm Beach counties. (Other students in the program are scattered across Florida, the U.S. and beyond.) That September, SPC rounded out seven decades of service to the community in typical fashion — by further committing to the future. A belated 70th birthday party with a 1920s theme was held in early November on the quad of the St. Petersburg/Gibbs Campus. Hundreds of Pinellas residents attended, including two members of the charter graduating class of 1929.

Nov. 10, 1998, two notable events occurred. That afternoon at the District Office, the organizational meeting of the Pinellas County Millennium Celebration Project convened. The College was asked to serve as the project's coordinating agency at the request of the Pinellas County Commission. Commission Chairman Barbara Sheen Todd and Dr. Kuttler were co-chairs of the project, which extended until the end of the year 2000. Earlier in the day, a news conference was held at the Florida International Museum in downtown St. Petersburg to announce that at SPC's behest, Robert L. White of Baltimore had agreed to bring his private collection of John F. Kennedy artifacts — said to be the world's largest — to the museum. It went on permanent display in November 1999. The museum also agreed to exhibit part of the College's Leepa-Rattner Collection in the future. In tandem with all these developments, the College plans to develop a degree program in Museum Studies that will coordinate with numerous area museums. Much of the success of this venture, however, rides on public and private support.

In late 1998, the College was notified by the American Association of Community Colleges that William Haddad, Class of '51, had been named to receive one of AACC's "Outstanding Community College Alumni" awards for 1999. Haddad, CEO of MIR Pharmaceuticals in New York, was a co-founder and assistant director of John F. Kennedy's Peace Corps, and was assistant director of the Office of Economic Opportunity for President Lyndon Johnson.

In the final five months of 1998, an unprecedented series of events occurred. The College opened three new learning sites: the new, high-tech Seminole Campus, on wooded property SPC began acquiring more than 30 years before; a "co-campus" on the downtown site of the University of South Florida St. Petersburg; and SPC's Corporate Training facility in new quarters in the ICOT Center business park on Ulmerton Road. Less than a year later, another new facility was opened in Pinellas County's STAR (Science, Technology and Research) Center in Largo.

August 1999 brought establishment of SPC's College University Center (since renamed the University Partnership Center). It was formed in collaboration with half a dozen four-year colleges and universities statewide. Through the UPC, students were able for the first time to enroll at the College and, via distance learning, continue through with their studies to the earning of a bachelor's degree without having to leave Pinellas County. The UPC's first graduates received their degrees in May 2001. Since its founding, its enrollment has grown from a few hundred students to more than 1,500, and the partners have doubled to 12: Eckerd College, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University, Florida Gulf Coast University, Florida International University, Florida State University, Florida Technological University, the University of Central Florida, the University of Florida, the University of South Florida, Saint Leo University — and The George Washington University in Washington, D.C. A new UPC building, under construction on the Seminole Campus, is to be ready for occupancy by 2002. Postgraduate programs (including a Ph.D. in Pharmacy) have been added to the curriculum. The associate vice president of Educational and Student Services charged with running the UPC is Lars Hafner, Class of '81. As a retiring Florida House member in 2000, Hafner was a charter recipient of the Florida Association of Community Colleges' Lifetime Legislative Achievement Award.

In the fall of 1999, another SPC alumnus, Dr. Donald Altieri, president of South Piedmont Community College in North Carolina, was distinctively honored. A member of the Class of '55 and for a time an Associate Vice President of Educational and Student Services at the College, he won the Florida Association of Community Colleges' LeRoy Collins Distinguished Community College Alumni Award for FACC Region IV. SPC

accomplished the unusual in 2000, when it won the FACC award for a second consecutive year. It went to St. Petersburg attorney Ed Turville, Class of '34, a former (non-playing) U.S. Davis Cup captain, a past president of the U.S. Tennis Association, and the founder and charter president of the Florida Tennis Association. Turville served as college attorney of SPC for 32 years (1950-1982).

Other prominent SPC alumni include Astronaut Sam Durrance, Class of '67; New York advertising executive Cliff ("Where's the beef?") Freeman, '61; World War II French Underground heroine Virginia Roush D'Albert Lake, '31; Major League All-Star Tim Teufel, '78; Seminole Community College President Ann McGee, '68; former Congressman William C. Cramer, '43; former Florida Commissioner of Education Doug Jamerson, '77; classical pianist/composer Stephen Montague, '63; former Florida Secretary of State Sandra Mortham, '71; and the first woman aquanaut, Sylvia Earle, '53, who received FACC's LeRoy Collins Award in 1996. Award-winning Hollywood actresses Carroll Baker and Barbara Bosson also attended SPJC briefly.

It was announced in January 2000 that SPC was one of eight two-year colleges nationwide to receive a \$255,000 E-Commerce grant from Microsoft Corp. SPC became partners with Microsoft in creating a groundbreaking Associate in Science degree in E-Commerce, plus eight certificate programs, to meet the needs of the corporate and industrial community in the Tampa Bay area. The impact of the college on the state level was exemplified by the announcement that an SPC-produced CD-ROM, *AfterMath: Lessons in School Safety*, has made its way into Florida's middle schools, with a video in development as follow-up. SPC's Florida Regional Community Policing Institute is producer of both. On the national level, SPC won a top award from CADCA, the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America, for the assistance the college has lent in furthering CADCA's mission in support of anti-drug efforts.

September 2000 saw completion of a historic construction project on the St. Petersburg/Gibbs Campus: renovation of the Lynch Auditorium, now housed inside a new College Music Center. After 73 years, SPC gained an acoustically correct hall for its music programs plus an impressively renewed venue for campus and community meetings. Adding luster: the two new Steinway concert grand pianos onstage, paid for with a seven-year set-aside of music laboratory fees and donations from friends of the college. These acquisitions and the renovation signaled a new day for the college's music programs.

When the U.S. Department of Education released its annual community college rankings in Summer 2001, SPC as usual found itself at the top — in fact, among the Top 6. Even though the College ranks about 30th nationally in size, it placed sixth among the nation's top producers of associate's degrees for all disciplines. It was No. 3 for degrees awarded in health-related professions, No. 4 for degrees awarded in nursing and No. 5 for degrees awarded in arts and sciences. It placed 39<sup>th</sup> nationally in number of certificates awarded — highest of any two-year institution in Florida.

The signing of the legislation in June 2001 that turned this institution into a four-year college was arguably SPC's most historic development since its founding in 1927. The lawmakers most responsible were Sen. Donald Sullivan, R-Seminole, the legislation's author, and Reps. Gus Bilirakis, R-Tarpon Springs, and Heather Fiorentino, R-New Port Richey, who guided it through the House. The total legislative package signed by the governor in June signified a sea change for public education statewide as the Florida Board of Community Colleges and the State University System's Board of Regents were abolished. The elected office of state Commissioner of Education was done away with, and all public education — kindergarten through graduate school — was placed under the new Florida Board of Education. SPC and its Board of Trustees ("District" was dropped from the name) remain part of the Division of Community Colleges, because the college is charged with maintaining — and all along has had every intention of continuing — its mission as a two-year institution. But it is gearing up for the awarding of four-year degrees as well, in Education, Nursing and Technology. Tom Furlong, who was deputy executive director of the Division of Community Colleges, was hired as SPC's senior vice president in charge of Baccalaureate Programs and the University Partnership Center. The timetable calls for the College to win accreditation of its four-year programs from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in 2002.

History continues at St. Petersburg College. ↷