What stands out to you now that you’ve been in the President’s chair for about a year-and-a-half?

“I was lucky coming into this position that I already knew the college and its people, so I had a pretty good handle on the community. I also knew where my learning curve would be in the position. I have a lot to learn about the fiscal side of the institution, and I’m continuing to learn more about the academic side and the complexities and challenges across the college.

“But one of the things that was probably the greatest learning curve for me was my introduction to legislative issues last spring. I had never had much to do with legislators. And we are lucky in Aurora that we have a really accessible group that’s interested in what we do. But the big political picture and the level of politics that comes with being a state-funded institution was an eye-opener for me. And, going to the Capitol for meetings or, on one occasion, to testify, that was really outside of the box for me. The bills and implications for us, and, at times, the need to weigh in on things based on positions the (community college) system was taking was surprising and challenging.

“But I would say that across the time I’ve been here … my focus has been on being the best internal president I can be – to get to know faculty and staff better; to have opportunities for communication across the college; to get to student events. I always did that as vice president of Student Affairs, but I prioritized that as president.

“Over the last year-and-a-half, there was an initial honeymoon period and then you come to know what you didn’t know and it gets more complicated. And there are hard issues and hard decisions. These are not easy jobs, but they are wonderful jobs.”

Is there a certain day that you can recall saying to yourself, well, the honeymoon’s over now …

“I can’t remember a specific event, but I do remember thinking to myself, ‘O-K …’ [laughs] But what’s great about doing this job at this particular place is that it’s mostly just a great job. I believe so fully in what we do.

“I have a lot of experience in higher education. This is my fourth
Q and A

From Page 2

community college. And CCA is just special. I’ve valued every place I’ve worked, but the students here are just remarkable and they're focused in a way that students aren't always necessarily. … Higher education has so many things that can sidetrack folks, and in the absence of a lot of extras here – we don’t have athletics, housing, Greek life – our students are here to get an education, and I have always valued community college students, both for the diversity they bring and that idea of grit and perseverance, desire and courage. … And I believe what we do is potentially life changing.

“Going into classes in the fall was the single-best thing I’ve done since I’ve been here. And I went, in part, because I do a lot of things that have nothing to do with our core function of teaching and learning. I hope everything I do somehow supports that, but I don’t get to see it happen very much. So when I asked the faculty if I could come visit, I got numerous invitations, and my intent was to see hands-on what was happening in our classrooms and let the faculty know I support their efforts, want to get to know them, value what they’re doing, and see them in their world.

“But what I also got to see was our students – hundreds and hundreds and hundreds. I went to 44 classes. I loved the level of engagement, effort, care, and risk-taking that I saw. It was just affirming for me, because I have a lot of pride in this college and what community colleges do in the world – the opportunities we provide and impact we have. And seeing how we

do it was just great.

“Students don’t get lost here. The faculty knows their names. They use their names and engage them. Watching diverse groups of students in our classrooms work together on a project and having discussions across all those differences, and to help, talk and mentor each other, it was just an impressive experience. And it affirmed that at this particular institution that we have a lot to be proud of. I can say that with a conviction now that I probably couldn’t have a semester ago.”

What did you learn about CCA’s faculty within that process?

“I had a great undergraduate education, but it was pretty much a professor coming in and delivering the lecture, we would supposedly absorb the knowledge, and off we would go. Our faculty works so hard. It’s not just about disciplinary knowledge, which they clearly have. But they also work to challenge students and get them thinking. The flipped classrooms were fascinating. All the different tools our faculty uses and all the ways they change up their instruction, from game-based learning to different uses of technology; nobody is just walking into class and winging it.

“But what was clear to me was that they keep the classes fresh, stay current on pedagogy, teaching techniques and their knowledge. They’re courageous in turning over these classes, at times, to their students, to let them take the lead. At the same time, they have to manage the class. So the juggling of the disciplinary knowledge, technology, and managing of classroom behavior and constructing learning experiences that are valuable was impressive. …

“And what they model for their students, which I really value, was a sense of, ‘I care about you, but I’m going to set the bar high and help you while giving you ample opportunities to help yourself.’ ”

In an overarching sense, what is CCA doing well and what represent necessary areas of concentration moving forward?

“Clearly, based on what I just said I think we do instruction well. And I know from my years working with them that we have a great support staff. So once students are here, I think we do a great job. Our challenge is getting them here. That’s still much Exchanging gifts with the mayor of Adama, Ethiopia, Abreham Adula, on July 31, 2014.
of my focus, and something we’ll talk a lot about in the spring. I just don’t believe our enrollment is where it should be or could be. With Aurora growing and our high schools bursting at the seams, it baffles me. We may need to make some bold moves and do some things real differently and/or continue talking about the need for another location. Our Marketing folks are doing a great job working with Outreach and Recruitment. Some of the collaborations around this are much better. We have an Enrollment Task Force. We have an Advising Task Force. But I think we’ve got to get them in the door.

“That said, no matter how wonderful a student’s experience is once in the door, we’ve got to keep them here and get them to completion. And the things that we may need to do in order to do that may need to be bigger than what we’ve tried so far.”

You’ve spoken to the college in general terms about the bold initiatives espoused in a November conference, Complete College America, that you attended. Are the ideas that you heard there potential bold solutions and innovations that can differentiate CCA?

“Some of what I’d like to talk to the college about in the spring is, ‘What kind of institutional initiatives, innovations or changes in policies and procedures can we make to drive change?’ What the folks at this conference were talking about was putting things in place that make a difference at scale. We know that our Student Success Center does great work and shows results with cohorts of students. But its serving about 400 and we have thousands of students that need the same kind of attention. What do we do as an institution to help impact every student that comes in to give them a great shot at completion?

“One of the things we’ve done in higher education is focus too much on course selection. So, if we say to a student, ‘You’ve assessed into this English and Math course’ – and I did this working in advising for years – that’s how we got them started. But if that student doesn’t have an end goal or a clear idea of why they’re here, they’re probably not going to be successful. And we have been fairly complacent about saying to students, ‘You need to have a goal,’ because we have to start with the big picture. Our first question should be, ‘Why are you here? What are you hoping to accomplish?’

“What they were saying at this conference is that you can’t have undecided students. You have to help structure this for them so they know where they’re headed and how to get there. So you start with the big decisions and work your way back. Courses aren’t discreet courses, they’re attached to something, and there’s a path.

“They talked a lot about moving students through more quickly and how time is the enemy. We do have students that attend full-time. They were saying, ‘Can you get them done in two years? Can you help them make it happen through financial support or messaging?’ And if they’re part-time, can we put them on a path that says, ‘If you take six hours each semester, this is what it’s going to look like.’ It’s intervening with students and getting away from AGS (Associate of General Studies), which is a default degree that doesn’t apply to career and technical education or the workforce and doesn’t transfer well.

“They were saying, ‘Our obligation is to structure the experience for our students in a way that will get them to the finish line.’ It works in Nursing. It works in Diesel. It works in a lot of programs. More and more career and technical programs provide a structure that Liberal Arts students are probably desperate for. How do we take a degree with designation and structure that so it’s more clear?”

Do you think those ideas would be difficult to implement or is the structure in place for potential change?

“The key is going to be Student Affairs and Academic Affairs working together. Just as an example, we’re doing the Developmental Education redesign, and Colorado absolutely is moving in the right direction. We’re moving in the right direction. There are some institutions out there doing completely co-requisite Developmental Ed. So every student goes into college level and if they need a co-rec or additional support, then they’re provided that. That’s not something that you can do on just one side of the institution. Whatever wraparound our students need, we have to do that together. This is absolutely under our control.

“Now, if we were looking at more radical ideas, some of these came up at this meeting, including stopping assessment testing [laughs]. That’s a shocking idea for a lot of people. But I think that will be an interesting conversation. I think it will be an interesting conversation for us.

“But what CCA is doing well is that we’re having success in our English co-rec. We’re doing a better job expanding our tutoring services and providing support. We really do have to look at how we’re delivering advising. But I have great faith that if any college can innovate, and innovate really boldly at an institutional level, we can do it.”

The Colorado Department of Higher Education recently implemented a results-based funding model. How do you see that impacting CCA, and are we set up to accomplish what we need to in order to be competitive within that revised structure?

“We have to figure out ways to do better – to retain students, to help them complete – and again, the DevEd redesign is a step in the right direction. But in my view, there are things we can be doing that we’re not doing yet. I’m not concerned about the performance metrics. We’ve seen all our metrics go up. We’re having great success with transfer. How do you do that more broadly? How do you do the things you know work? And that’s the challenge we have.

“The thing that I have to be sure the college community understands, though, is that when we talk about student success, that does not mean we lower standards. That does not mean we don’t continue to concentrate on quality.

“The conversation is not around getting students through at all costs. We have an obligation to our students and partners to do the very best job that we can. If we’re passing a student on to a four-year institution that hasn’t gotten a strong foundation here, then we’re doing that student a disservice and shooting ourselves in the foot, because the four-years are going to say they’re not getting a quality education at the community colleges. If we send a student from a career and technical program into the workforce and that employer doesn’t get a student with the skills they need – including the

Sharing information with a University of Northern Colorado staffer at the Fall Transfer Fair at the CentreTech Rotunda.
soft skills – we’re not doing anybody a service.

“So this question of student success isn’t, ‘Let’s just lower our standards,’ it’s, ‘Let’s keep the bar high and figure out how to get them there.’”

Will results-based legislation impact CCA’s bottom line?

“As we go into next year’s budget, we are going to have some resource constraints until our last bond payment, which falls next year. After that, we’ll see an infusion in our operating budget, but we’re not going to feel it next year as much. So one of things I’m talking with senior leadership about is, when we talk about these budget conversations, there’s an undercurrent of, ‘We need a position here or there …’ But I think we need to be clear about where our application of resources is going to make the biggest difference. And that’s not always easy. But we put resources into concurrent enrollment, which is 25 percent of our total enrollment. That makes sense. Are we doing a sufficient amount there? Our adjunct faculty need support. We need to put resources into the work that they do. They are by far the greatest percentage of our faculty. At the same time, we want to grow our full-time faculty, because the ratio is out of sync.

“Students in those gateway courses – English, Math – what is going to be required of us to get them through? So, the answer to all those questions are the things that should be driving our budget decisions. And it all synchs up with our strategic plan, which makes sense and still identifies the priority issues here. But it’s challenging. We have a lot of need and not a lot of resources. And even though the funding formula is going to be different next year, and maybe we’ll see more resources, that would be great, our enrollment has not kept up with our budgeting and so we’re going to have to be more conservative next year until we can figure that out. I’m confident we will. But we haven’t yet.”

What do you believe are the impediments to enrollment growth?

“We haven’t had any work to do is that we’re not a real visible institution. We don’t have the luxury of being on the main drag where people drive by and see a nice big electronic billboard that says, ‘Community College of Aurora.’ We’re in a nice industrial park, but it’s an industrial park, and on an Air Force base. And when you drive by Lowry – that’s why I’m dying to have a tree or two – it doesn’t look lovely. And what’s so frustrating is that when you look inside, there’s so much incredible stuff inside those buildings. But it’s the curb appeal thing. We don’t have it at Lowry.

“I also think it’s an issue that our campuses are so close together, north of Mississippi (Ave.), and we don’t have a presence in a relatively large district. So we have to find out how to let the rest of the district know that we’re here. We need to continue working on the transfer equation and help closer to light rail, because some of the high school principals said for our kids, it’s easier to go down to Nine Mile, hop on the train and pop down to (Community College of Denver) than it is to get to you guys. So, some of it is continuing to challenge the mythology around community colleges in general, and some of it is just helping folks understand why they should consider CCA. … The other thing we need to do is continue helping student and families understand how they can afford to pursue higher education.

“Back to Complete College America and the ideas around assessment, I do think for some of our populations, assessment creates a barrier. I’m not really sure what to do about that right now. But there are fearful test takers, people in their 30s and 40s coming back. I knew them well when I advised and I just know that a lot of students never get in the door because they’re fearful. Many take the assessment and we never see them again. Right now, it feels like it’s a necessary evil, but I’m not sure if it is.”

Concurrent enrollment in many ways is driving CCA’s numbers. Is that a concern?

“I think concurrent enrollment is an incredible thing. Colorado really got it right, because it affords opportunities for so many students who may not have considered going to college. So, as a social good and part of our responsibility as a community college, concurrent enrollment is really important. We should be translating more of those students to the college itself.

“For those students who have taken concurrent enrollment in high school and don’t go on to the AS- CENT program, my hope is that we can encourage more of them to come here. Up until the last year we’ve not been very intentional about that. They’re good students. They can go anywhere. They’re college-ready with college credit. They can go to any public institution in Colorado and get a lot of bang for the buck. But they can also go here, finish up and go wherever.

“At the same time, we’ve relayed the message to high schools that not all of their students are going through concurrent enrollment. The other piece is taking the students who aren’t as well prepared and get them here and help them be successful. Another facet is our adult students. We’ve sort of assumed they’ll come to us, but perhaps we need to balance our focus on the high schools with more outreach to adults. Frankly, the population that may make the most sense is the ‘some college’ students. They’ve got some experience but no degree. How can
Q and A

From Page 4

we maybe invite them to come back?”
You mentioned earlier the prospect of a third campus that could reside in a densely populated section of Aurora, perhaps with light rail nearby. How realistic is that proposition currently?

“It’s an idea that’s very much alive. But CCA has always been so frugal and tight on resources that we just try to do everything ourselves, and we’re not equipped to do that with this issue. When I look around the college, we all have different areas of expertise. The senior leadership brings different areas of expertise. But there are times I think we have to go outside the institution and find an expert to help us out. And with this third location, that’s where we are.

“We’ve met with folks from the city and received some advice. We’ve heard a lot about the light rail and transit-related development around it. I’ve talked to superintendents and the city manager. But for us to really figure this out, we’ll need a consultant or someone to come in and give us the data and recommendations that we need.

“The expansion of Arapahoe Community College into Castle Rock has been a huge success. We probably would want to ease into it. Maybe we start with just services, an outreach office with advising and financial aid. But if we were going to go to the southeast portion of Aurora, and at one point the college was looking at the Southlands area where there’s a huge amount of development and high-income residents, those are going to be transfer students.

“So do we start doing general education courses out there? Do we do guaranteed transfer? Do we do English-MATH? I think we’d have to try out some things and see if they work and make sense. But I’m pretty confident that if we did that, we would have a good result.”

The adjunct faculty has organized internally and is trying to rally around issues that directly affect them. What are your thoughts on their efforts and the recommendations they’ve put forth?

“We’re going to try and be as responsive as we can be with the resources that we have and the things that are under our control. Nate Bork, who is the voice of the adjuncts on the Faculty Senate, has done a good job of having conversations with Janet (Brandau, vice president of Academic Affairs) and I, and it’s really important for us locally to hear from them about what we might be able to do to improve their work lives here.

“Our adjuncts are such a diverse group in terms of what they do and why they do it and what it is they need from the college. But what they need to know from us is that we value them and couldn’t do what we’re doing without them. And given CCA’s roots as a ‘College Without Walls’ it was always those flexible part-timers teaching all over Aurora that made this happen.

“We do have financial constraints. That’s just a hard reality. But there’s plenty of stuff we can do here. If we can figure out the new building (under consideration at CentreTech), part of the plan there was to free up more space in the Classroom Building so that we could give adjuncts more workspace. And the things that they’re asking for, most of them seem pretty doable. A lot of them reside with Janet and her academic administrators. But I think the conversations have been positive and constructive. There may be a time when we disappoint them. But we’re trying to do everything we can to be supportive.

“I think we have to do more with incorporating them into all of what we do. It was nice at the staff holiday party that we were able to give an award to an adjunct (Shanda Plock). And at the system level all the way down, we have to be really conscious that we give them opportunities for input and that they are included on committees and invited to meetings.”

Classroom technology has been an ongoing issue. Can you talk about where things stand with those planned improvements?

“The project is starting up where we’re bidding for the cabling and we do have a substantial amount of money allocated towards fixing our infrastructure. Sam (Thomas, director of Information Technology) said probably by next fall people will notice the fixes and feel it. We’ve done some quick fixes for students – adding power outlets in areas where they hang out so that they can plug things in. I’ve gotten questions about the need for better wireless. … but it’s a big project and it’s going to take time.

“I’m glad that we’re not just doing band-aids but taking a comprehensive approach towards fixing the problem.”

Globalization has been a topic discussed at CCA. Do you see more emphasis on that concept as we allocate resources or in terms of hiring?

“I think we’re going to continue doing better on this, and we’re off to a great start with our involvement in the Aurora Sister Cities program and the visit from the group from Adama, Ethiopia, and the opportunity to have (ESL chair) Chris Tombari go to Ethiopia with a contingent from the city. Bobby (pace, Political Science faculty) is involved with the Model United Nations and WorldDenver.

“What we’re trying to do is continue to acknowledge the international flavor of our student body and tap into that, but also to find ways to create educational experiences. We didn’t budget for most of these initiatives we’re into now, but we’re finding the resources and are pretty committed to make things happen. And as we find where these opportunities are for us, it will help us budget more effectively in the future so we can sustain it. There was a committee once upon a time. I think we’re close to having something like that again, which would be helpful.

“We are interested in diversifying our staff. There have not been specific conversations about internationalizing our faculty and staff. I think it’s more drawing from the community that we serve. If we do that, I think the chances are good that we’ll have more of an international flavor. But the overall conversation has been on the educational aspects and helping broaden our students’ understanding.”

What plans, if any, do you have to increase student involvement in academically enriching campus programs outside of the current student clubs?

“One of the things we’ve done well in the last year or so is add groups that represent different students. And those groups I know have connected with faculty on doing educational programs. The key at a college like this one is that Student Life and Academic Affairs have to work together.

“My big push when I came to CCA as VP of Student Affairs was that programming, even those outside of the classroom, should have some sort of learning outcome and be tied to the educational mission of the institution. I think what’s going to make it happen is that we’re going to have a new director of Student Life soon and I think we’ll see things gear up again in the spring.”

In closing, where do you see CCA in five years?

“My hope is that in five years we will have grown, and that whatever is happening to the rest of the system, our enrollments are continuing to rise. More importantly, my hope is that we have closed equity gaps and figured out through our experiences and via research, experimentation and bold decisions better ways to help our students be successful; in particular, our students of color.”
Clockwise from top left: Deb Hoefler, winner of the Exempt/Administrative Employee of the Year, gives a thumbs up to her Financial Aid co-workers; Santa (played by Security’s Jeremy Kimel) listens to the wish list of Sheryl Broadnax’s granddaughter, Amelia; Jonathan Layman in the CentreTech testing center (posing with girlfriend Katherine) goes the extra mile with his party wear; Paul Agner, son of administrative assistant Stephanie Agner, hangs out for the evening; JoAnne Barnes in Lowry Admissions gets a plate full of the night’s catering, which included turkey and all of the trimmings; Shanda Plock, an adjunct in the Art and Design Department and director of the Donna Moravec Gallery, smiles broadly after winning the Brosh Faculty Endowment Award.
Clockwise from top, Advising's Robin Blish, office manager Camille Leon and Institutional Research Director Catherine Truth strike a pose; English chair Scott Reichel with wife Tammy and twins Andrew and Estella; Social Sciences chair Geoff Hunt is framed; Financial Aid's Gina Campbell and husband Dan with new baby Vinny; Diesel Technology faculty Greg Atencio poses with wife Angela and son Gregory Jr.; Outreach and Recruitment's Kyla Antony with husband Trent; Early Childhood Education chair Natasha Turner poses with a table centerpiece; Faculty of the Year award winner Dr. Bobby Pace brought his mother to the festivities.
CCA Foundation sets new course as part of reboot
Increasing ties with faculty, staff to help shape direction

The Community College of Aurora Foundation always has given money to students. How it’s done is changing.

Twice during the closing days of the fall semester, students in two venues were publicly surprised when they were informed from Foundation members, in person, that they had received scholarships, eliciting smiles, and in some cases, gleeful shrieks from the recipients.

Executive Director Gene Sobczak dubbed the two instances “Oprah moments,” but, in reality, it speaks to an overall look under the hood at Foundation operations over his first year in the job.

In lockstep with a 16-person Board of Directors, Sobczak and Co. are trying to hatch a more effective means to distribute funds.

“After restructuring both our business operations and financial operations, it’s freed the Foundation staff and Foundation board to be able to do this sort of work,” Sobczak said.

It wasn’t just the personal touch that distinguished the two December giveaways.

It was the work behind the scenes that preceded it.

The Foundation has made it a point to solicit the input of faculty and staff to gauge their needs before distributing funds in a tactical fashion.

The scholarship giveaways at the annual Student Success Awards and in a ESL Healthcare Bridge classroom on the final day of the semester are prime examples of that two-way communication.

At the Student Success Awards, all 14 applicants for a $500 scholarship were awarded funding after four winners in previous years were selected from the total applicant pool.

The decision to go bigger – approved unanimously by the board – was cemented after perusing each of the accompanying essays and determining that all students were deserving and that the funding was available for an increased $5,000 expenditure. It also came after conversations with event organizer James Gray about making the 10th anniversary of the event a special occasion.

The 10 members of the Healthcare Bridge cohort each were given $1,000 to help fund their studies after the Foundation discovered that there was money in the coffers from Kaiser Permanante and that, despite requirements and restrictions attached, the program neatly fit the donor’s specifications.

“The college always speaks to giving this community support, and it is here at CCA,” Sobczak said.

“The Foundation is doing that as well and it wants students to know that there is this external support of business people, civic leaders and elected officials who are committed to their success.”

Underscoring that point, the Foundation soon will be dispersing $20,000 from Anschutz Family Foundation as part of a larger Colorado Community College System grant. The main thrust of this monetary dispersal is through the targeting of potential students who normally wouldn’t have access to college and/or are unaware that CCA is an option.

The social services sector in Aurora and Denver was asked by the Foundation to nominate possible recipients for spring scholarships. Eight students eventually will be selected to receive $2,500 apiece. A public announcement is expected this month.

“We wanted these community organizations to nominate people from within their service areas for these awards, with the assumption being, ‘Who would be a better judge of need and promise than the entity that’s working directly with the people?’” Sobczak said.

Getting to this point has been a steady, meticulous process. Sobczak and the board first needed to undertake a laborious review and assessment process of Foundation operations before focusing on future direction.

That review resulted in an overhaul of how the Foundation does its daily work. There now is less transactional business, such as processing invoices and receipts or entering checks. Some of that work has been moved to the college by mutual agreement.

Those changes have afforded more time to interact with staff, faculty, administration and the community on how the Foundation can more effectively serve its needs and discover areas of interest.

The hope is that through close working relationships with departments and divisions at CCA, more targeted pitches and appeals can be made to potential donors. That messaging will be distributed via direct mail, one-on-one contact and other mechanisms, such as future board appointments.

“This re-engineering really occurred at a much quicker pace than anyone would have anticipated, and we would not have been able to approach the restructuring with the momentum that we did if we didn’t have the support from Foundation board members, administration and college staff on a lot of these institutional and operational issues,” Sobczak said.

Help also has come in the form of the arrival of Cathy Berdon as the Foundation’s Director of Development last September. Berdon’s assignments embrace many functions, including the development and management of fundraising campaigns and solicitations.

Another recent change: the Foundation launched Auroraagives.org, a new landing spot on the web, in an effort to make it easier for donors and students to find information and another means to help ensure that private support for the college is maximized.

Sobczak insisted the new site is not a rebranding but a chance “to restate what our principle purpose is, which is to give to CCA and the citizens of Aurora.”

Members of the service area who are disenfranchised, whether through language, economic conditions or other factors, are of particular interest to the Foundation. Getting their stories to the public and making the community aware of the opportunities available at CCA are big pieces of upcoming missions.

“There’s going to be a lot more of what you’ve seen the last six to eight weeks, which is working with the college staff and faculty in determining areas of needs and interest,” Sobczak said. “We’ll then create solicitations to be able to draw philanthropic support for those areas and essentially partner with the college to achieve its goals of student enrollment, retention and completion.”
By popular demand, CCA now presents its Career PATHS Center.

The newly opened office gives students a single locale to discuss their present and future employment options, get advice on career path selection, receive help with transfer options, and more—all in a centralized location on the second floor of Building 901 at Lowry.

Barbara Lindsay, director of Career Services, has envisioned this type of center for years, and her vision was only reinforced by scores of students the last couple years requesting help with resume writing, job campaigns, class selections, and the like in a more convenient way.

The shift already has been a major success in one respect. Appointments that may have been difficult to get with career advisors are more available, and drop-in hours—something difficult to allow for previously, given staffing restrictions—are a four-hour daily option for students (11 a.m.-3 p.m., Monday through Friday).

“It’s been a really good thing,” Lindsay explained. “Advisors that would see a student at CentreTech or at Lowry Student Services hit a point where the student might say, ‘I don’t know what to register for because I don’t know what to do.’ They can immediately come over to the Career PATHS Center with the drop-in times, or one of us can free up time to see the student, if necessary.

“Worst-case scenario is we can set an appointment that same day if there isn’t one of us available. But the students don’t get lost, because when we get really busy, students may have had to wait sometimes for two weeks to see us based on our schedule and their schedule.”

What students will find when they enter the PATHS Center is an area with a lounge area for quiet reflection, as well as that full array of career services. In concert with advisor Bob Burnett, internship coordinator Barbara Young and career-focused transfer navigator Lauren Stroud, those needing help with information gathering, certificate and degree paths, job searches, and interview skills can find it.

Students even will receive access to employers through regular “company spotlights,” where businesses can come to either Lowry, CentreTech or both and have an opportunity to sell themselves and potentially foster future working relationships.

“Even having the lounge area is different because if a student isn’t necessary here for career services, we’ve had great connections with students coming here for their GED prep courses. They come over here to take a break from classes and it’s an opportunity to sell the college and the benefit of getting certificates and degrees that will help a population that maybe hasn’t considered that.”

An exciting pilot program also will open this spring. Verizon Wireless, which visited CCA’s fall career fair for the first time this past semester, has expanded the relationship with the college. Verizon has given real-world issues it’s faced in various areas of its operations and allowed college faculty to work with students on examining and problem-solving these issues.

A team of Verizon executives will come to campus at semester’s end and hear the solutions proffered by students, and if deemed applicable, will use them in their future operations. A marketing class will be the first to experience a real-life, problem-solving scenario under this new enterprise. Future classes involved could include those with a human resource, sales, customer service, or a computer information focus.

“This will definitely give a student insight into the company,” Lindsay said. “But it also can give students insight into getting where they want to go by interacting with Verizon. Do you want to be a vice president of a region? Here’s how you get there.”

Lindsay sees the potential to expand into other areas by using Verizon’s work in the classroom as an example for other companies, and thus continuing to create important connections in the workforce.

That latter goal is one at the forefront of Lindsay’s thought process as the PATHS Center develops. She envisions a potential future that will allow for her or another hire to serve as an employee relations point person in the local community to ensure as many lines of communication are open as possible inside the job market.

Logistically, she would like to see a revamped entryway with a dedicated staffer based in the hallway outside of the center, who can provide direction relating to whom they should speak, as well as point visitors/students in the right direction generally.

“I’m not done,” Lindsay promised.
Whether the ESL Healthcare Bridge program was a success may be demonstrated by the knowing glance shared by its co-instructors late in the semester.

Kate Noon-Ulvila, whose primary task was providing context for non-native speakers, and Dr. Sean Madden, a pharmacist by trade charged with imparting medical knowledge, had for months seen one of their quieter students beginning to emerge from her shell.

But at the end of fall semester, when this quiet, reserved student eloquently explained the human cardiovascular system, it served as an ‘a-ha moment’ that framed the success of the overall concept.

“You saw both things coming together,” Madden explained. “Her understanding of the medical content with the mastery of the language in her presentation. She traced a blood cell from the right atrium through the heart and lungs, out into the body, and back again. It was wonderful.”

“We just stopped and looked at her and thought, ‘Finally,” Noon-Ulvila added.

To top it off, Mimeh Meh, a member of the initial 10-person cohort at CCA and that shy student from Thailand, had entered the class — she thought — to learn medical terminology so that she could pursue a career in translation and interpretation in her community.

Now, after taking the first-semester classes that encompassed the bridge — Introduction to Healthcare, Healthcare Communication Strategies, Health Occupations Students of America (designed to build leadership among students) as well as Medical Terminology — Meh has her sights on a new career path.

“I want to work in a healthcare field,” she stated.

Noon-Ulvila knew success stories such as Meh’s were possible, having taught in a similar healthcare, co-faculty environment at Highline Community College in Des Moines, Wash. But CCA’s version, made possible by grant funding, expands upon the previous idea with more classes incorporated.

Adding Madden’s input and experience in the field created a synergy that soon made it evident that this was a bridge to somewhere.

“I think it’s really been successful,” said Madden, who has previously taught Pharmacy Technician curriculum. “And it’s been great seeing all of the elements come together. Kate teaches medical content as part of language; I teach some language as part of the medical content. So we overlap what we’re doing.

“I’ve seen the students grow substantially and gain confidence. The precision of their language has improved. Their written and oral work has improved. There’s still room for growth. We’d like them to stay in the program because we think they’re going to be even more successful if they complete second semester before going onto a more professional program. This is more of a pre-professional setup. But before they go onto something like Pharmacy Technician or the Integrated Nursing Pathway, they’ll have tremendous momentum.”

The very idea behind the healthcare bridge emanated from data that showed a lack of success in college-level prerequisite health courses while coming straight out of ESL courses.

Embedding the medical terminology into this class cluster, in addition to providing information on careers beyond the common nurse and physician roles, are cornerstones of the bridge concept.

“Each student has said to me individually that this was something they needed,” said Gina Iannelli, retention advising specialist in the Health Sciences department. “They were learning much more than they thought they would learn.

“You could tell from the students’ final presentations, that some of them initially didn’t know quite what they wanted to go into. Having these two instructors guide them and help them with the ESL and health-care portions and then having professionals come in and talk to them in different fields really reinforced for them or created ideas for them about what they wanted to do.”

Aside from a planned second semester for the first cohort this spring, a second cohort will begin its work. Iannelli has reached out to the community to expand the reach to the public and not just current CCA students.

After successfully completing the program, students receive The National Health Science Assessment and Certification, a training-ready certificate showing that the student is better prepared to enter and succeed in a college-level healthcare education program.

In addition, students will earn a certificate as a Home Health Assistant and obtain their CPR certification.

“Word’s getting out,” she added.
CCA on December 19 received a $106,000 grant over three years from the Colorado Department of Education that will pay to train North Aurora residents for job opportunities on the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. CCA is developing the Adult Learning Healthcare Bridge Project, a 10-week integrated basic education and healthcare skills training program, which begins in April. The grant runs through June 2017.

Funding for the grant emanated from Adult Basic Education legislation under House Bill 1085, which was sponsored by Rep. Rhonda Fields (D-Aurora). Grantees must provide demonstrable results in order to keep receiving allocations.

The project will be run in conjunction with numerous local partners, including the Community-Campus Partnership, Children’s Hospital Colorado, The Learning Source, Arapahoe/Douglas Works!, and the Adams County Workforce and Business Center in order to leverage funds to pay for training and expertise, community outreach, and job placement.

The grant represents the first concrete funding earmarked towards an initiative whose primary component is developing the workforce pipeline that comprises the Community-Campus Partnership’s mission.

CCA will create the bridge training program curriculum and run its classes that cover basic reading, writing and math skills; medical terminology; customer service in healthcare; and healthcare careers/employer expectations.

The Community-Campus Partnership, a collaborative between the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus and its surrounding neighborhoods, will provide a job navigator who is charged with resident recruiting, providing support services, and focusing on job placement.

Last August’s shooting of Michael Brown and a grand jury decision not to prosecute Officer Darren Wilson have sparked protests that have created an impact far beyond the town of Ferguson, Missouri.

The Community College of Aurora’s student body and the community it serves, many in the area are asking questions. With that in mind, the Behavioral Sciences, English, and ESL Departments and CCA Student Life are pleased to announce an upcoming panel discussion entitled “Discussing the Ferguson Riots: What Do They Mean For Us?” which will be held on Feb. 26 from 12:30-1:45 p.m. in the Fine Arts Forum (F100) on the CentreTech campus.

The event is free and open to the public.

So far, confirmed panelists include: Dr. Ann Dondapati Allen, adjunct faculty in Gender and Women’s Studies, University of Denver; Dr. Miguel De La Torre, professor of Social Ethics and Latino/a Studies, Iliff School of Theology; and Quincy Hines, director of Barbershop Talk. A fourth panelist is expected to be announced soon.

The all-college meeting to kick off the spring semester will take place Wednesday, Jan. 14, at the Fine Arts Forum. Breakfast will be served at 8 a.m., followed by the hour-long program at 8:30.

President Betsy Oudenhoven will adopt a theme playing off the recent holiday movie, “Into the Woods” entitled “Into the Classroom.” It will recount her experiences visiting more than 40 classes during the fall semester and lessons learned. Door prizes will be awarded, and each attendee will receive a unique giveaway.

This spring’s transfer fairs will take place Feb. 26 (CentreTech) and March 3 (Lowry). Both events will run from 11 a.m.-2:30 p.m. The events are co-sponsored by Academic Advising, Office of Student Life and the Student Success Center.

CCA is piloting a new program beginning this spring that focuses on the success of African-American and Latino male students.

The Brother to Brother (B2B) program is based on the following program pillars: personal leadership development, social integration, academic support, and career preparation. The initiative is being supported financially from innovation grants provided by the CCA Office of Strategic Partnerships and Resource Development.

Daniel Haupt, coordinator of the B2B program, is asking faculty to nominate students to participate in the program. Qualifications are male students with a minimum of 2.0 GPA who possess a strong desire to learn and will fully participate in the endeavor.

CCA faculty also is being asked to consider serving as program coaches, which entails 20-30 minutes monthly per student.

Please email Daniel.Haupt@ccaurora.edu or call him at 303-360-4794 for more information.

The State Board for Community College transfers agreements covering the vast majority of majors for community college transfers to a bachelor’s degree.

“The transfer and degrees with designation initiatives are important because the more certainty and focus a student has throughout his or her educational career, the more likely he or she is to complete a degree in a timely manner. This leads to improved student success in the forms of higher completion and graduation rates,” said Dr. Nancy McCallin, president of the Colorado Community Colleagueship System.

“‘Our top priority is to offer a learning environment that motivates students toward the completion of their goals. With the guaranteed transfer of the credits that degrees with designation offer, students know that the time and money they invest with us will pay off in the future. We are excited and pleased to open additional opportunities for our students.”

CCA closed its Colorado Combined Campaign and exceeded its goal by raising $10,909 for local charities. The college’s contributions were to be merged with those of other state employees to help further the State of Colorado’s goal of raising $1 million dollars. Contribution dollars go toward helping those that rely on assistance from charitable organizations.

Prize winners related to in-house charitable giving were awarded as follows: a half-day of administrative leave, Angie Tiedeman; free lunch with Dr. Oudenhoven, Tanya Cook; free treat at Starbucks with Dr. Elena Sandoval-Lucero, Geoffrey Chadwick and friends; $25.00 gift card to the CCA Bookstore, Barbara Lindsay.

New numbers released by College Prep ESL on its department demographics for Fall demonstrate just how much diversity resides at CCA.

There are 65 countries of origin represented, spanning from Afghanistan to Zambia. Ethiopia is by far the leader, claiming 32 percent of the 332 students enrolled.

Additionally, there are at least 60 languages spoken in College Prep ESL, including Luba-Kasai, Lingala, Kpelle, Tagalog, Tedim, and others that aren’t exactly discussed with regularity in the mainstream.

Amharic represents 25 percent of the native languages within the demographic survey, followed by a slew of unspecified languages at 25 percent. Spanish (nine percent), French and Arabic (eight), Tigrinya and Nepali (six) have the next-highest totals.

Directory of Human Resources Cindy Hesse has become the point person for the college’s work related to diversity, equity, inclusion and training.

Hesse will handle necessary support related to faculty and staff needs and projects that might currently be under way in relation to these initiatives.

STEM Day for Girls will be held Friday, Feb. 20, at Lowry from 9 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Students from schools around the Denver/Aurora areas span numerous grade levels and will spend the day on Science, Technology, Engineering and Math projects and get a chance to explore careers in those fields.