Reem Hamodi likes to keep the mood light, even if the joke is at her own expense. When she discovered that her CCA math tutor, Gayle Smith, wasn’t a morning person, she immediately fired off an email telling Smith she planned on taking her 8 a.m. class. After clumsily navigating the narrow Accessibility Services Office, she told Kathleen Weisensel that she liked obstacle courses.

Reem gets special satisfaction playfully tormenting her family. She once told her mother she could see light just to gauge the reaction. To say that it spurred intense interest on her mom’s part is an understatement, given Reem’s blindness since birth.

Reem recalled her mother, Muna, hurriedly seeking out a light to put in front of her daughter’s eyes, only to discover that it was mom getting the wool pulled over hers.

Reem also has been known to use her walking cane to indiscriminately whack her parents or two siblings just for fun, and then laugh at their reaction.

As usual, Reem can’t hold onto the joke too long, punctuating her actions with a steady giggle. Hearing that joyful burst, it’s immediately clear that while Reem views life without optics, she perhaps compensates with extra doses of heart and mind.

There have been a couple woe-is-me moments in her life, but she insisted wallowing hasn’t been part of her fabric since she was seven, when neighborhood children in her Baghdad, Iraq, hometown cruelly told her that she couldn’t play a schoolyard game because of her blindness.
Positivity is drawn from her mother and grandmother, especially, who have constantly fed her confidence and harped on her mental acuity and heightened sense of compassion. So, ever since those kids singled her out, Reem has made it a point to avoid comparing herself to others, particularly those with sight. Today, so comfortable in her own skin, she’s not even sure if her vision could be restored surgically, as one uncle has suggested, she’d even do so.

Yet perhaps Reem Hamodi’s greatest trait is her determination to succeed. She spends weekends and off time reading not because it’s an assignment but because she can.

She does a lot of things with similar carefree ease. Problems are things she hopes to one day deal with professionally as a counselor. Wallowing in them isn’t part of her makeup.

“My mother used to tell me all the time a story about when I was born blind,” Reem recalled. “She took me to London and the doctor told her that she was very, very lucky, because if the (affected) nerve was a little bit to the back then I would have lost my mind. It didn’t affect my mind, just my sight. So, my mother reminds me of that all the time.”

Reem’s determined to use that mind to its fullest extent.

At CCA, it’s not unusual to see her in a darkened room, listening to her computer read passages aloud as she aggressively tackles a loaded summer class schedule. A Braille device also has been provided, but is used less often than her Job Access With Speech (JAWS) reader that, if it weren’t computerized, would be hoarse from all the talking.

“I feel used to my life,” Reem maintained. “I feel like everything is easy for me, and if I see, it’s going to be really hard and challenging for me because I’ve adapted. It’s not like I was born sighted and lost my sight. I was born blind.”

Muna, her mother, contracted Rubella during pregnancy but it was diagnosed as a simple high fever. A lack of medicine affected Reem in the womb irrevocably.

The family moved to Libya when Reem was five, then back to Iraq two years later. There were stops in Jordan, too, and in so many apartments that Reem can only guess there were about 18 of them growing up.

“Just looking. Checking everything out, trying to find out which country’s the best,” she joked.

One reason for the vagabond existence was her father seeking employment in the engineering field. But some of it, too, was trying to identify the best academic situation for Reem.

Schools for the blind were largely a misnomer in Iraq, with few student services.

Reem attended schools in three Middle Eastern countries and each had different methods of teaching math, even for simpler concepts like addition, subtraction, division, and multiplication.

Reem’s mother – really, a home and grandmother, especially, who taught her daughter Braille. By the time Reem reached 12, without bus service to the ‘blind school’ and no useful instructional materials even if she could have found her way to campus, circumstances dictated that she attend a ‘regular’ school.

The experience was strange and tested Reem’s positive nature. The director of the ‘regular’ school initially refused to admit Reem because of her blindness but was forced to relent.

“We asked a case manager to interfere, and he explained that it wasn’t her right to refuse me as a blind student. So finally I registered. She enrolled me because they couldn’t violate the law.”

Still, the experience resonated. Being told the school couldn’t handle her is a conversation Reem can vividly recall even today. She remembered weeping her first day of classes because despite her forced acceptance on the school rolls, it didn’t mean that there was widespread acceptance, particularly from the director who tried to bar her admission – and also taught classes.

“One day, I got sick and she didn’t even call my name. She called me ‘blind woman.’ It was like I didn’t even have a name. It was very hard for me.”

Over time, Reem developed a close group of friends. Many of the teachers didn’t share a similar cold-hearted nature as the school’s leader. Others persisted in their persecution. Reem recalled a Chemistry teacher needing visual aids for an assignment and telling the class that’s he didn’t want any excuses from “anyone who couldn’t see them.” One guess to whom that barb was aimed.

There would be other learning barriers for Reem, but just as many ways to overcome them. Her mother was a main source of aid, given the lack of materials in Braille. She would record all the lectures, read all the extra-credit assignments aloud, and come to the school to meet with the teachers to ensure that her daughter was getting everything necessary and didn’t require any special treatment.

“Whatever the electricity wasn’t good. They’d give it to us for three, four hours in a day, so my mother used to wake up in the middle of the night to read whenever I had a test,” Reem recalled. “She used to read to me. I couldn’t study myself. We’d use candles or a special machine, what you’d call, a generator?”

“One sympathetic teacher volunteered to read the test questions and write the answers down as Reem spoke them aloud, alleviating some of the pressure on mom. But that same teacher initially was hesitant until she was swayed by Reem’s character and drive.

“His teacher told me his mother initially that when I first came to her class, she had told the director she didn’t want to teach the class because of my blindness. But after the teacher saw me, she said she hoped all students would be like me – as far as participating and understanding all the materials.”

Reem’s marks on tests often were the highest in the class. Again, her engrained optimism was a key contributor, in spite of plenty of information presented that would have made lashing back seem appropriate and even understandable.

Study was her safe harbor, even without a textbook flapped open in front of her to serve as guide.

Staying even-keeled was a mantra.

“I just felt like I should look at the positive side all the time,” Reem explained. “I even wrote an article about positive psychology because if I give up, it’s going to make more barriers, in addition to the barriers I already have. Giving up is another barrier, so it doesn’t make sense. I thought if I could show them what blind people could accomplish, this could be a very useful thing – even to myself.”

And when graduation day arrived, it was no big surprise that Reem had earned the highest cumulative grade in the entire school.

The director who had opposed her from the get-go happened to hear that little nugget while Reem stood close by. And although she had never seen it, Reem could surmise from her mom’s description what stone-faced meant; could imagine a rigid, unaccepting posture.

One could imagine the self-satisfaction Reem felt having someone so detached from expressing compassion or even understanding towards her at least having to acknowledge what she’d accomplished.

“When I think back I feel so proud because I feel like it shaped my personality and it taught me so many things,” she said. “It taught me not to give up easily, and it taught me how to deal with all of the challenges.”

Reem began her college journey in Jordan after leaving that Iraqi school.
Barbara Williams processes FLAC (Faculty Load and Compensation) at CCA, meaning she handles faculty/adjunct payroll.

But give her flak? You better think twice.

Williams served nine years in the Army. And if that’s not enough, her son, Tremayne Dortch, is a two-time finalist in the NBC series American Ninja Warrior and currently seeking his third straight trip to Las Vegas with a chance at the $500,000 top prize.

“We kind of have an athletic family, and he has a lot of my dad’s muscular traits,” Williams said.

As for Williams’ contribution, “I think he gets his determination – I should say over-determination – from me,” she said with a laugh.

Her 28-year-old son, a personal trainer by trade in Houston, so far this season has advanced to the second day of regionals in Dallas, which airs July 7.

Williams knows where this is all headed on the show since the events are pre-taped well in advance and she attends all live tapings. But NBC would come down like legal ninjas on her if she provided hints, so she’s taking a vow of silence on the upcoming results.

Full episodes to date are available at http://www.nbc.com/american-ninja-warrior.

Either way, it’s clear Williams is proud of her son’s accomplishments.

He entered the contest at a friend’s suggestion two years ago and finished 13th in the Dallas regional without training specifically for the show. He improved to sixth in the Denver region in 2013 and, this year, moved up to third in the rankings going through Dallas.

The top 15 in each region comprise the 100 finalists invited to the Vegas finals.

“There’s pride and a mixture of hope he doesn’t fall down and hurt himself, because a lot of them get hurt,” Williams said. “It’s just so intense, and he’s so competitive.”

Williams said the odds are stacked against anyone winning the competition. (Only two men in 18 years have done so by completing the grueling 30-obstacle course that ends with a 40-foot rope climb.) But, should a successful outcome occur for Tremayne, proud mom may just ask for hazard pay for having to endure the stress of the competition.

“I don’t want much,” she said with a laugh. “He’s a good kid. I’m proud of him. He has a lot of family support.”

It’s also meant numerous frequent flyer miles for Williams, who isn’t about to try out herself for next year’s competition.

“Back in the day I could have”, she maintained. Williams paused, then added with a grin, “But I don’t think I could get back in that kind of shape again.”

Hamodi

From Page 2

Her mother tagged along to classes from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. to ensure that Reem made it to all the lectures and would read all of the textbooks in order to pass along that knowledge. But it soon became clear the situation wasn’t sustainable for the long haul.

A United Nations organization intervened at the family’s urging and suggested the family move outside the Middle East in order to help Reem further her studies.

When the group discovered Reem’s blindness in an in-person meeting, the United States became the destination. “The happiest day in my life,” Reem said.

Mainly an Arabic speaker with some knowledge of English, she initially transplanted to Houston before moving again, this time to the Denver area, where she attended the Colorado Center for the Blind. There, she received the technology she needed to become more proficient in the language. Reem’s spoken English at the time was slow and replete with mistakes. ESL classes helped her turn the corner and elevated her comfort level.

And with her confidence and skills boosted, she enrolled at CCA in 2012 to begin taking college courses.

“Sh e genuinely loves being a student. Her passion is really, really clear,” said Weissel, who has worked side by side with Hamodi for nearly a year as her Accessibility Specialist at CCA. “If you ever ask Reem what her weekend plans are, or summer plans, or over the break, ‘What are you doing?’ It’s always, ‘studying,’ or ‘reading.’ That’s what she wants to do. And it’s not out of some necessity, like, ‘If I don’t keep up with it then I’ll fall behind . . . ’ It’s just, ‘What I live and what I want to do,’ and she’s unapologetic about that.”

The technological tools at Reem’s disposal at CCA have allowed her to continue gaining the independence she desired so badly when she arrived in the U.S.

She was used to her mother’s voice reading to her – loved hearing it, actually, but she didn’t want to rely on it, either. Now, she no longer had to ask for help quite as often. She could conduct some of her own research on the Internet. And, yes, she could read, as many books as she wanted, assigned or not.

“It opened up everything,” Reem said.

Her high grades have reflected her dedication, as does a heavy course load that doesn’t seem to faze her even as it amazes others.

Reem’s smile only reinforces that she’s found what she’s sought, even without sight as the vehicle. Or, maybe the wide-grin she consistently shows off is merely the outward reflection of a private little joke that she’s not quite ready to share.

“All people have challenges, struggling with materials, but it’s not big issues for me,” she said. “I can ask teachers, Accessibility Services. CCA has good services in tutoring. I can get help from other people.”

If everything falls right, in about a half-dozen years Reem will be Dr. Hamodi. She intends on becoming a counselor, after finishing associate, bachelors, masters, and doctoral degrees in Psychology.

“I’m interested in helping people,” she stated, simply. “When I was young, I liked to help people. When I saw a conflict between friends, I didn’t like it and I’d try to resolve it.”

And who’s to argue that the study of the troubled mind isn’t a perfect fit?

The enjoyment of navigating obstacles seemingly is a perfect fit with that particular career path.
New CCA employees run the gamut in their activities off campus. One is an avid collector of farm and agricultural memorabilia. Another has attended and even worked four Comic Cons. Yet another has played trumpet for more than two decades. There’s even a salsa dancer among the myriad hires since the beginning of the new year.

What they share is a passion for higher education and the opportunity to enrich their professional lives while raising the college to greater heights in service, technology, teaching, recruitment, student success, and more.

“I was working for the state doing policy work and was ready to come back to work one-on-one with students and have more of an impact with that one student – right here, right now – to be able to help them get to that next place. I missed students,” said Tamara White, the college’s freshly minted dean of student success. “It gave me an opportunity to work with student activities, student life, some student conduct, counseling. Those are all areas I know and I’m comfortable with where I thought I could make an impact.”

White came to CCA from the Department of Higher Education where she served as director of admission and access policy.

Like many of her fellow new hires, past experience appears to seamlessly translate into revised responsibilities.

Dr. Derrick Haynes, the college’s executive director of advising, comes to CCA as an advanced degree-trained professional with 16 years of progressive experience in higher education leadership. He last served as director of the Student Academic Success Center at Metropolitan State University of Denver. Rebecca DePuy has been an assistant controller, field controller and assistant controller, working first at Community College of Denver and then for the State Board for Colorado Community Colleges and Occupational Education.

New Information Technology Director Samuel Thomas was the assistant infrastructure manager at Arapahoe Community College since June 2010, where he managed day-to-day operations of the server, network and telecommunications infrastructure.

“I already had a good familiarity with the system and some of the technology issues CCA was facing, because they were very similar to those that ACC had when I started there. So it was a really good fit,” said Thomas, who adds director’s responsibilities to the technical skillset of his new job. “And I’m excited about moving to the policy-type decisions and overall decisions as opposed to always being in the trenches.”

In total, there have been about two dozen new additions at CCA over the last six months, with other changes likely occurring soon.

With that turnover comes new perspectives, and perhaps if prodded at a staff gathering, even a salsa dance from one avid dance enthusiast. Discovering who that person is, or, say the former snowboard instructor who has to date visited eight countries, is part of the bonding process with co-workers in the coming months and years.

“We have hired highly skilled employees to help us continue on with the mission set forth by the college,” Assistant Director of Human Resources Debbie Irvine said. “Each individual brings a unique perspective to the positions they hold, and we envision a bright future moving forward with this knowledgeable and eclectic mix of talent.”

**Executive Director of Advising Dr. Derrick Haynes watches a presentation during the June All-College Forum in the Rotunda. Haynes joined CCA on June 9.**

**New CCA full-time employees since January**

- Rebecca DePuy, Controller
- Dr. Derrick Haynes, Executive Director of Advising
- Tamara White, Dean of Student Success
- Cynarra Tweed, Advising
- Samuel Thomas, Information Technology
- Christine Karry, Enrollment Services
- William Hepworth, Institutional Research
- Staci Shulman, Human Resources
- Tierra Arline and Carlos Martinez, Facilities
- Christopher Beeson, Assistant to the Dean
- Elda Bunyan, Facilities
- Debora Farley, Science/Computer Information Services
- Stacy Brown, Student Outreach and Recruitment
- Robyn Jackson, TRIO
- Monique Brousard, Student Success
- Catrina Semakula, Admissions, Registration & Records
- Anita Fleming-Rife, Director of Diversity and Training
- Dr. Christina “Chris” Murray, Associate Dean
- Selina Martinez and Austin Coleman, Security
- Alexander Nye, Instructional Technologist
- Amy Hughes, Liberal Arts
- Lauren Kang, Financial Aid

**All of Shakespeare - in 97 minutes**

Something wicked funny this way comes, as “The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)” graces the stage at Community College of Aurora from July 10-12 and 17-19 at 7 p.m.

The show is an irreverent, fast-paced romp through the Bard’s plays — with all 37 stage productions performed in a mere 97 minutes. Join madcap men in tights as they weave their way through all of Shakespeare’s comedies, histories and tragedies in one wild ride that will leave you breathless with laughter.

The show marks CCA’s first-ever performance in its outdoor amphitheater located behind the Fine Arts Building on the CentreTech Campus (16000 E. CentreTech Pkwy). Bring a blanket and picnic and enjoy an evening of hilarious comedy under the night sky. The family-friendly production will be a fundraiser for CCA Theatre. All tickets are $5. Seating is first-come, first-served.
Innovation grants provide key assist to CCA initiatives

Financial backing from the Colorado Community College System has resulted in forward-thinking programs that have recently benefited students and the college as a whole.

CCA received $200,000 in innovation funds from CCCS, which allocated monies throughout all of its statewide institutions for internal projects that would foster innovation and advance college’s progress towards meeting performance contract goals.

CCA projects were initiated by Cabinet and through a competitive grant process that invited staff and faculty to submit proposals for projects that would help the college meet these goals.

Funded projects afforded attendance at conferences, workshop creation, academic studies, community outreach, and the funding of tutoring in various areas.

Cabinet-driven projects had a more singular focus. “These are initiatives that will help us achieve the System’s performance metrics,” said Elena Sandoval-Lucero, vice president of Student Affairs. “So there were initiatives around transfer, financial aid awareness, tutoring, orientation, and graduation.”

Sandoval-Lucero added that by monitoring and intervening with students close to graduation, CCA was able to increase its number of graduates by 115. That’s one success story.

Seed money to develop dual ESL/Health Sciences curriculum for a healthcare “bridge” eventually translated into a $25,000 grant from the Roots and Branches Foundation, an initiative of Rose Community Foundation. Efforts by Financial Aid provided more than just community education.

Five local high schools received visits from staff members who presented 16 different sessions. Students and parents at Hinkley, Futures Academy, Rangeview, Vista Academy, and Aurora West Prep were given in-depth information about college costs, the value of community colleges, averting debt, and student loans.

Presentations were given in both English and Spanish, and in the end, 428 parents and students attended, including 67 Spanish-speakers. Just as important, 81 contacts requested more information from Outreach and Recruitment.

“It was very positive,” said Mary Anne Hunter, CCA’s debt and default management coordinator. “We were looking at getting the word out that there is financial aid available and, hopefully, helping with recruitment and retention by letting them know the process up front.”

The presentations primarily focused on low-income families and those on the cusp of becoming first-generation college students. It also showcased CCA as a neighborhood asset.

“Trying to get them on the college campus is sometimes hard,” Hunter said. “Their high school campus is more familiar territory for them.”

Success of the venture can be measured in another fashion: the high schools have invited CCA back next year for similar presentations.

Other Student Affairs projects funded through the CCCS grants touched upon personnel and infrastructure needs to drive student success.

Among those initiatives: early intervention with Veterans Administration students to provide aid if there were signs of struggle; bolstering tutoring for Student Success Center students in gatekeeper courses such as Math, English and Science; and, adding transfer stations that allow students to research potential future college destinations and, soon, give them the ability to directly link to some state colleges virtually through D2L to obtain timely transfer information.

“Our colleagues from four-year institutions said that we’re really creative when it comes to transfer and making the process easier for students,” said Libby Kling-smith, director of the Student Success Center. “This is just another way we’re doing that.”

Academic Affairs’ projects touched upon a wide array of subject matter.

“We were so blessed to have the System office give us this money to not only do some special types of smaller research grants to which faculty and staff had access, but it also allowed us to continue work that we think impacts students being successful.”

– Janet Brandau, Vice President of Academic Affairs

Those included expanding the use of On Course strategies in high-risk courses through additional faculty development; hiring a programmer to develop an Arts and Sciences student tracking database; providing additional tutors and open computer lab support; and supporting assessment initiatives through professional development.

“We were so blessed to have the System office give us this money to not only do some special types of smaller research grants to which faculty and staff had access, but it also allowed us to continue work that we think impacts students being successful,” said Janet Brandau, vice president of Academic Affairs.

“Many of these projects we would never have been able to fund without the innovation monies, and it put the funding in the hands of the people working with our students to affect positive changes.”
The first phase of EIE now has completed a full year since CCA began making efforts towards discovering impediments that may be adversely impacting the college’s African and African-American populations. The work of the last year now will continue in ensuing years, as recommendations are made and followed.

The project is led by the Center for Urban Education (CUE) at the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California, the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, and the Colorado Department of Higher Education, with financing from a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

The overarching goal of the project is to lead socially conscious research and develop tools for institutions of higher education to produce equity in student outcomes. CCA is one of 82 two- and four-year colleges and universities in eight states that has partnered with CUE to delve into the concept of “equity mindedness” as a foundational principle of institutional responsibility.

The last year at CCA has been mainly laying the groundwork, defining problems, assessing interventions and, now, beginning to implement solutions that increase undergraduate credentials, transfer rates, student retention, and remedial course completion, while reducing disparities in both credential and transfer-out rates.

Much of the early groundwork at CCA emanated from the observation of Advising and Student Success Center staffs, career/technical faculty, and others.


The ultimate goal of the initiative is to look at outcomes and have every group at CCA graduating at the same, high rate.

Metro State University and the University of Colorado-Denver are the other in-state entities participating in the program, which hopes to provide practical tools and systems to measure and improve student success.

CCA is the only Colorado community college in that group.

Equity in Excellence: A Brief Overview

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Scoring high marks: CUE program leaders view CCA on right path

No matter what the Equity Scorecard ultimately reads as CCA moves forward in implementing solutions to better serve all of its students, it already has earned high marks over the last 12 months for providing outstanding leadership and innovation in trying to attack the underlying problems that exist serving the college’s African-American population.

That was the clear message from leaders of the Center for Urban Education (CUE) who came to Denver for an Equity in Excellence Wrap-Up Institute June 19-20.

CCA was one of three state schools – and the lone community college – selected for an ongoing socially-conscious research project aimed at developing tools needed to produce equity in student outcomes. Members of the college leadership team and others joined peers from Metropolitan State University and the University of Colorado-Denver to share impact stories, exchange knowledge, and present evidence team findings since the June 2013 project launch.

School representatives also broke into small groups to further study equity issues in depth to conclude the conference.

“If somebody asked me to show a college that’s done really well with the equity scorecard, and where it’s made a difference, I would say, ‘I’ll take you to the Community College of Aurora.’ And I would,” said Dr. Estela Mara Bensimon, co-director of the CUE, which has been housed at USC’s Rossier School of Education since 1999.

Libby Klingsmith, director of the Student Success Center at CCA, and James Gray, math department chair, have been the team leaders for the college’s ongoing initiative, which already has fostered changes relating to curricula, composition of the college’s workforce, training and professional development, use of data, and the establishment of a year-long Equity Leadership Academy aimed at bringing the rest of the campus into the work.

Both submitted the college’s findings at the wrap-up event. Bensimon,
The following text is a natural representation of the content:

Klingsmith and Gray's presentation we've introduced. “And really internalized the concepts very good at that – they've exemplified getting things done – and they're very, because they are well organized at the top. I say that not only leadership among team leaders, they thought about that whole spectrum of leges and community colleges and if I worked with 100s of four-year colleaders, “Bensimon added. “We have seen how effective they were as team members, “Libby and James participated in Cabinet meetings because Betsy invited them and was willing to take time to listen to what they were doing. That's also unique. A lot of time presidents don't do that.”

An important follow-up to the work that's already been done is embedding equity-mindedness and related practices into the daily work of staff, faculty and administration within all CCA departments. It's perhaps illusory to consider an all-encompassing impact on all employees. Still, the college can attain critical mass on the topic with considerable buy-in towards “normalizing equity” – Bensimon's term – and voicing the need of achieving that standard.

“When Libby and James first heard of the concept of equity and the impact it stands to have, they engrained it in ways I've never seen anybody do before,” said Debbie Hanson, a project specialist at USC's Rossier School of Education and CCA's chief consultant over the last year. “They took on the idea that they want their entire campus to recognize the value of equity. That was their goal from Day One. And I've never had a team do that before. I see them doing interesting things and being very well spoken about their evidence and theory around race and ethnicity in a way that I think is really going to lend itself to their success.”

College leadership previously had a video conference with CUE to discuss next steps, even before the wrap-up conference.

“It's obvious in just about everything I've heard that this work has made a difference at CCA and I would say that they could be a model for other institutions,” Bensimon said. “I think they’ve learned enough that they can teach others within the institution and perhaps in the system.”
Oudenhoven: Enrollment boost an attainable goal

Raising enrollment figures was a key emphasis as Dr. Betsy Oudenhoven addressed faculty and staff at the monthly all-college forum in June.

CCAs president framed her comments by discussing the robust growth of the city, which is expected to surpass Denver in population later this century.

Oudenhoven called the college “well-positioned” for student increases.

“We will grow. Our intent is to grow,” she explained. "And in the strategic plan, we talk about optimizing enrollment by concentrating strategically on certain populations. We’re going to go after these particular groups and move the needle on enrollment.”

Some of the methodologies that are being employed to aggressively connect with potential students are a new automated marketing system, personalized e-mails, and targeted calls.

“We’re not physically positioned where people randomly drive by the college,” Oudenhoven noted. “So we need to do a good job of getting the word out.”

Regardless, CCA is “doing the right things,” she added.

Oudenhoven pointed to performance metrics that show a more than nine percent jump in the number of certificates and degrees attained during the last period calculated by the state system office (2012-13).

“Our expectation is whatever a student’s goal may be – and we know those goals vary – that they’re going to finish it,” Oudenhoven said.

“Along the way, things may get rocky, but we should make it clear to our students that it’s important to maintain continuous enrollment and just keep the momentum going. Because we expect to see them at graduation, or attain that certificate or degree.”

Numerous upcoming changes also were announced at the forum.

• Money is being set aside for scheduling software that will allow the college to schedule classes efficiently to meet student needs and allow the college to understand its capacity for growth. “We’re not maxed out here in any way,” Oudenhoven said. “But the scheduling software will help us pin it down a little more.”

• Hiring of an additional tutoring position, IT technician for Lowry campus, and a health-care adjunct.

• Renovation of classrooms will support new health programs such as community health worker and patient care technician and also support the health-care bridge that connects ESL students to industry jobs.

• Leadership training and staff and professional development will be an emphasis.

• Computer labs, classrooms and offices soon will benefit from improved cabling and network switching that currently is limited in its ability to push data.

• A new employee orientation is in the works that communicates what working at CCA is all about in terms of philosophy and service to students.

It also was officially announced that the School of Liberal Arts has undergone a makeover. Four departments that had ranged in size from 90 to 750 students were split to create seven independent areas – Social Sciences; Behavioral Sciences; Performing Arts; Humanities; Education, English, and ESL.

Language-spanish television station Telemundo Denver was on the CentreTech campus June 26 to shoot a segment tied to the extension of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) benefits. The spot featured current student Aneya Reyna discussing her family’s hesitancy to apply for DACA because of fears it was a ‘trap’. That mindset has since changed after getting additional information. Jose Guerrero-Baez, a CCA graduate now at the University of Colorado-Rado as part of the Integrated Nursing Pathway, told a contrasting story about how DACA allowed his participation in concurrent enrollment and AS-CENT, allowing him to earn two associates degrees in conjunction with his high school diploma.

MaryAnne Hunter, CCA’s Debt and Default Management Coordinator, was able to provide the global perspective on why DACA is valuable and should be a tool and not an obstacle for undocumented students to pay for college. The segment will air July 3.

College Communications has undergone an overhaul following the retirement of former department head Liz Vanlandingham. Ethan Ruzzano has been named Director of Marketing, while Lee Rasizer becomes Director of Public and Media Relations. Jaclyn Zwerg has been hired on a full-time basis as Graphic Design and Digital Media Specialist, joining Video and Multimedia Specialist Anna Pan in the department’s creation of numerous film projects, marketing materials, and social media content. A Web Content Specialist’s position soon will join the staff after a recruiting search and interviews.

Sheryl Broadnax in Accessibility Services is seeking a part-time assistant to help students with disabilities by providing academic materials in an accessible format. The new hire, expected to work 10-20 hours per week, will scan and edit textbooks into an alternate format for students who are blind or have learning disabilities. He/She also will be required to schedule appointments, greet students and assist students with online forms, and respond to general inquiries. Interested parties need to send a cover letter and resume to Sheryl.Broadnax@ccaurora.edu. No phone calls, please.

Counseling services held a “Laughter Yoga” session on June 26 at CentreTech. The thought process behind the lighthearted session was, “When you laugh, you change. When you change, the world around you changes.”

Outreach and Recruitment is seeking volunteers to give presentations covering New Student Orientation Part II sometimes during the period of July 12 through Aug. 29. The department needs help during the portion of the day when students rotate between Academic Success in the Classroom, Student Support Services, and Success at CCA presentations. Volunteers should respond with the dates and times they want to help and whether he/she has a presentation preference. Please contact Kyla.Doddridge@ccaurora.edu for a complete orientation schedule.

CCA has officially designated three lactation rooms within its facilities. The move places the college in compliance with the law and in support of nursing mothers who are students, staff, faculty and visitors to campus. Sites of the rooms are: CentreTech Classroom Building Room C111; Lowry North Quad, Second Floor, Room 205C; and Lowry Center for Simulation, Room 152 (private room off of women’s restroom). Any questions or concerns about the facilities provided should be directed to campus security, facilities, or human resources. HR can be reached by calling 303-360-4934.

CCA will host an evening of networking with law enforcement agencies and educational institutions July 8 from 4-7 p.m. The career fair will take place at the Lowry Conference Center (1061 Akron Way, Building 697). Professional dress is required for cadets and other visitors. No children please. Interested job seekers should bring a resume for submission to potential employers. Various local, state and federal law enforcement agencies, such as sheriff and police departments, Colorado State Troopers, and federal prisons, will be on hand for the event.
Clockwise from top: characters from Vanity Fair appear to come straight out of the pages during the Donna Moravec Gallery show entitled, “Ordinary to Extraordinary,” that runs through Aug. 30; Kathleen Potter and Mary Graham share a lighter moment at Josh Gold’s farewell celebration at CentreTech; Stacey D’Angelo joins the house band, including Chris Tombari, Gene Sobczak and Laura Stone, at the end of its Field Day set; Science department staffers Victor Andersen, Debora Farley and Tom Dillon have a side conversation during a retirement party for longtime faculty member Jim Weedin, who will retire at the conclusion of the current summer session.
Xcel Energy and CCA: Check mates

Xcel Energy’s Tom Henley, third from right, an area manager for the company’s southern metropolitan region, bestowed a $15,000 check to CCA Foundation to implement a pipeline program to get more Aurora Public School students exposed to Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) careers and academic programs before attending CCA. The Priming the STEM Pipeline project will pilot a new approach to increase the number of minority, low-income students transitioning from APS to CCA and into STEM certificate and degree programs. The project will include a four-part series of STEM college and career exposure workshops, math remediation and intensive student support services. Pictured from left are Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness Chris Ward, President Betsy Oudenhoven, Foundation Board Vice President Arthur McFarlane, Board President Amy McLaughry, CCA Dean Victor Vialpando, and Foundation Executive Director Gene Sobczak.

Registration deadline nearing for Community ESL classes

Time is running out to register for summer Community ESL and Citizenship classes at the Aurora Language Center.

Final registration (available in English and Spanish) for ESL classes will take place July 2 and 8 (4-7 p.m.).

Summer classes run from July 14 through Sept. 20. As always, a variety of class times are available, including Monday/Wednesday and Tuesday/Thursday blocks at either 9:30-11:30 a.m. or 6:30-8:30 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m-1 p.m. ESL classes cost $140 for 10 weeks of classes (four hours per week).

American Language and Culture classes run from July 15 to Sept. 18 for advanced ESL students and up pairs at a cost of $225. And thanks to a grant from United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), Citizenship classes (four hours weekly, 10 weeks) only cost $40. Both courses run Tuesdays and Thursdays either from 9-11:30 a.m. or 6-8:30 p.m. Register at the Aurora Language Center office.

All students may take free computer classes, as well. The Community ESL Program has ESL and Citizenship classes starting four times a year, in January, April, July, and October. Each term is 10 weeks long, and students can complete a level in as little as two terms. CCA offers six levels of ESL instruction plus Citizenship classes.

For more information, please call 303-340-7079. Aurora Language Center is located on the Lowry campus in the North Quad, Room 105.

PlumChoice finds right choice

CCA has entered a partnership with tech support provider PlumChoice tailored to the company’s desire to add skilled employees to its workforce. Students studying computer information systems and taking curriculum in those fields at the college have been targeted as potential part-time hires, who then have a chance at future advancement.

In other words, it’s a career start rather than just a job in the computer industry.

The program first launched in late March and has, to date, resulted in numerous hires as Technical Support Representatives.

PlumChoice was experiencing high turnover in its publicly advertised positions before the idea was hatched to target CCA computer students to mitigate that issue. These jobs are posted to CCA students only. Potential candidates must pass an interview process before undergoing paid training. A test follows. Those that pass will train at the company’s Broomfield facility, but after two months have the ability to conduct their business from home by remoting into clients’ computers.

“The biggest win-win is that PlumChoice has a clear understanding of what we’re about as an institution and see the value of our students, even though sometimes they get overlooked because it’s not a four-year degree,” said CCA Internship Coordinator Barbara Young, the college’s point person for the program.

Young initially works with interested parties who may be a good fit for the program on targeting their resumes and answering basic questions before getting the paperwork to the hiring manager.

Every CCA resume sent to date has resulted in at least a first round of interviews. CCA currently is recruiting for its July 14 class, which numbers between 10-20 students monthly.

The college makes sure interested parties understand the company culture beforehand and are a good fit for the jobs with which they’ll be tasked.

The part-time schedule affords students the ability to continue their studies and, in some cases, PlumChoice even suggests from what classes they could most benefit. So far, PlumChoice has set no limits on the number of students it’s willing to hire.

For more information, contact, please call Young at 303-340-7328. To research PlumChoice, please visit its website at www.plumchoice.com.