Message from COMBASE President

A Strong Year for COMBASE:
Fall Conference Being Held in Bentonville, AR!

It’s been an eventful and rewarding time in COMBASE, your partner in enabling community and technical colleges to lead the way in innovative community-based programs. I count it a tremendous honor to have served as your president during the past two years.

COMBASE continues to move forward as we focus on enlarging our membership and enabling our institutions to use innovation and collaboration to meet the unique needs of our communities. The COMBASE board has planned a sponsorship and membership campaign aimed at adding to the richness and depth of the organization’s partners enhancing opportunities for collaboration. During the current board’s service, COMBASE also has brought on Dr. Richard C. Hinckley with the Center for Occupational Research and Development as executive director, allowing COMBASE to focus on strengthening its core services and opportunities for member institutions.

We gathered in Philadelphia this past October for our annual conference, where we gained important insight into such topics as partnering with competitor colleges and achieving positive outcomes, keeping the window open for developmental studies (when others are closing the door), and using social media strategies to increase enrollment and retention. Even greater than the full lineup of quality programs was the opportunity to meet with other colleagues and share ideas and best practices for community-based and performance-oriented education.

We hope you will be able to join us for the Sept. 30–Oct. 2, 2012, annual conference in Bentonville, Ark. Our community is home to such business innovation giants as Wal-Mart Stores Inc., J.B. Hunt Transport Services and Tyson Foods. We pledge to you that COMBASE 2012 – Natural Connections with Strategic Partnerships will be a don’t-miss event filled with great ideas and take-home strategies that you can use to build your programs and services and launch new ones. As an added bonus, conference participants will be able to visit Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, a world-class repository of American masterpieces by early portraitists Gilbert Stuart and John Singleton Copley, classics by later masters like Winslow Homer and Thomas Eakins, and contemporary works by Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein.

Certainly, one of the great strengths of COMBASE is its membership. The organization includes some 60 colleges across the country, all committed to using innovation and collaboration to meet the 21st century challenges of delivering top-quality community-based and performance-oriented education in a rapidly changing environment.

It’s been a privilege to serve as president of this dynamic and growing organization, and I urge you to encourage fellow college leaders in your states to join us in making COMBASE an essential partner in innovation.

Becky Paneitz, President

Call for COMBASE Conference Presentations

COMBASE will hold its annual fall conference, September 30 – October 2, 2012, hosted by NorthWest Arkansas Community College in Bentonville, Arkansas. The conference theme, Natural Connections with Strategic Partnerships will focus on providing you and your college current and relevant models to strengthen your work within your local community to both serve your students and provide further resource development.

The COMBASE Institutional Representatives are seeking proposals for session forums. Please visit the COMBASE website www.combase.org and click the Call for Presentations button on the homepage. Just complete and submit the presentation form directly from the website.

Additional conference news, automated registration and hotel links are also found on the COMBASE website.
Fueled by Oil and Gas, Aims Community College Maintains Flat Tuition Rates

GREELEY, COLO.—While institutions of higher education across the nation and abroad are forced to pass increasing cost burdens to students in the form of ballooning tuition rates, Aims Community College will maintain flat tuition rates going into the 2012-2013 academic year. Of course fiscal stewardship and diligent budgeting play a role in making this possible, but so does—as the real estate adage goes—location, location, location.

Aims Community College is in a local taxing district in Weld County, Colorado, which holds the distinction of having more active oil and gas wells than any other county in the nation. About 17,000 wells generated an unexpected $2 million windfall to the college in tax revenue for the 2011-2012 budget. Aims and its Board of Trustees determined the best way to spend that money would be to pass the windfall along to students. “Our tuition rate increase will be a welcome anomaly compared to others this year in that it will be zero. That is, no tuition increase for students this year,” said Aims President Marsi Liddell.

In an editorial column, Weld County’s largest newspaper, The Tribune, applauded Aims for its financial acumen. “We commend Aims for using its oil and gas revenues to benefit its students,” the editors wrote in a March 12 column. “It could have funneled the additional revenue to other projects or personnel, but instead is essentially giving it directly to its students.”

Further ensuring fiscal stability in unstable times, in March the college sold a small parcel of undevelopable land on the campus to oil and gas developers, retaining a portion of the mineral rights. Nine wells are in place, and cautiously optimistic projections place potential earnings for the college at $350,000 annually.

Additionally, the college is responding to community needs and economic development plans to provide a trained workforce for this burgeoning industry, which supports approximately 4,000 jobs in Weld County. Anticipating that number to grow, Aims secured a grant from the Department of Labor for $2 million to further develop the college’s Energy/Oil & Gas program. A large portion of the grant funding will be used to purchase equipment, including a mobile education station that can be moved to various Weld County businesses, drilling sites, schools or other locations for on-site training.

Oil and gas is also driving new relationships with the college and local industries. The Aims Foundation is working with local energy companies to establish an endowed professorship for the Energy/Oil & Gas program, and Weld County commissioners have approached Aims to establish an oil and gas museum on the college’s Fort Lupton campus where the program will be based.

“We are well positioned to help our students capitalize on the opportunities available right here in our own community,” said Marsi Liddell, president of Aims Community College. “It is our goal to help students not just take a job, but to have the skills, knowledge and drive to make a job a career.”
COMBASE Maintains Presence at Annual AACC Convention

As an affiliated council of AACC and a strong supporter of its national mission, COMBASE held its annual COMBASE Assembly Breakfast at the convention in April. COMBASE also presented at two forums, taking the opportunity to spread the word about the organization and some of its member’s work within their own communities.

Becky Paneitz, COMBASE President and President of Northwest Arkansas Community College, welcomed the COMBASE membership to its annual AACC Assembly.

Mary Thornley, President of Trident Technical College, provided testimony as to the value of sharing best practices among the presidents of COMBASE.

Greg Rutherford, President at York Technical College, reported on the meeting of the AACC Economic and Workforce Development Commission.

Noah Brown, President and CEO of the Association of Community College Trustees, addressed the COMBASE Assembly Breakfast meeting.

Neal Naigus, Assistant to the President at Portland Community College, provided the report on the activities of the COMBASE Institutional Representative.

Todd Kitchen, Vice President for Learner Support Services, Northwest Arkansas Community College, presented at the forum session, Career Pathways Resources to Extend Your Effectiveness.

Merna Saliman, President of Metropolitan Community College – Maple Woods, reported on the meeting of the AACC Academic, Student, and Community Development Commission.

Joe May, President of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, gave the Treasurer’s report.

Elliot Wyley, Vice President of External Affairs, Northwest Arkansas Community College; Terese Whitmire, Executive Director of Business Development, Northwest Arkansas Community College; and Jerry Weissberg, Vice President and General Manager of ed2go, presented at the COMBASE forum, Leveraging Strategic Partnerships.
Matthew Mason Honored at Metropolitan CC – Maple Woods

Matthew Mason’s story has been told again and again—at the time of his tragic death in Afghanistan nine months ago and more recently as members of the Kansas City Northland community stepped forward to remember a father, athlete, soldier and friend.

Metropolitan Community College-Maple Woods hosted a tribute ceremony for its one-time team leader and student—praising his athletic talent, and giving even more praise to his work ethic, his kindness, his dedication to family and country. His son Levi threw out a ceremonial first pitch, even though the event was moved indoors, continuing the family baseball tradition in the name of his father, a former right-fielder for the Monarchs. The Monarchs also retired Mason’s jersey, #11.

Mason, an MCC-Maple Woods alumnus and former player on the Monarchs baseball team, was serving as a member of the elite Naval Special Operations Command (SOC) when his Navy SEAL team was involved in a fatal helicopter crash in Afghanistan in August 2011. After graduating from Kearney High School in 1993, Mason spent two years at MCC-Maple Woods before moving on to the Northwest Missouri State University. He earned his Bachelor of Science degree before enlisting in the US Navy in 1999. In 2004, Mason was badly injured near Fallujah, Iraq—after numerous surgeries and months of physical therapy, he returned to active duty, accepting a position with the elite Navy SEALs.

“Matt possessed a great love for life’s adventures and this passion was contagious,” said Bobby Wisdom, a longtime friend and former teammate of Mason. “He impacted many lives, including those who never had the honor of meeting this great man. Matthew Mason was a remarkable husband, a dedicated father, and a loyal friend and teammate.”

To honor Mason’s memory, a scholarship fund was established to aid baseball players displaying his trademark heart, dedication and work ethic. The scholarship is funded through the sale of dog tags bearing Mason’s name and jersey number. Those interested in supporting the effort can purchase dog tags at http://www.facebook.com/events/348998591801584/.

In spite of the agreed-upon sentiment by his friends that Matt would never choose to stand in the limelight of his own accomplishments, a scholarship founded in his name would be just what Mason would have wanted.

“I think he would be so proud of what everyone has done here,” said wife Jessica Mason. “It means a lot to our family that Matt’s legacy is going to be continued and honored here.”

MGCCC, Southern Company Partner to Train Energy Workforce of the Future

Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, in partnership with the Southern Company, has established the Instrumentation and Controls Academy at the college’s Jackson County Campus. The 4,672 square foot academy with more than $2,000,000 in modern equipment will enhance the training of that power company employees as well as students preparing for careers in process operation and other energy-related fields. The academy classes are schedule to begin fall 2012.

“With this academy, the partnership is investing in ‘Tomorrow’s Workforce’ today by providing high-quality training programs with state of the art equipment,” said Gulf Coast president Dr. Mary S. Graham. “The opportunity to participate in hands-on activities using simulation and mock-ups to develop problem-solving and troubleshooting skills will ensure that existing and future employees are trained to industry standards and will offer excellent career opportunities for Gulf Coast students.”

The Jackson County Campus of Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College was a natural choice for the development of such an academy with existing Instrumentation and Controls programs, Process Operations Technology, and Electronics programs already preparing students as instrumentation and control technicians, process operators and electricians with local industry support. The Instrumentation and Controls Academy, which provides advanced and highly technical training to program participants, requires state of the art equipment, which includes a power generation simulator, programmable logic controls, advanced motor controls and other specialized equipment used in operating and maintaining power generation facilities.

In the hands-on and calibration laboratory area, a world class learning environment for the calibration and installation of instrument and control systems used in the process industry will be available for training. The laboratory houses AC Control trainers, DC Troubleshooting Trainers, Advanced Process Control Trainers, Motor Trainer, Fisher Control Valves, and Test equipment. State of the art pressure pumps and data communicators are used in the manipulation of pressures and vacuum under test.

Polaris HOT (Hands On Trainer) Unit weighing 12,000 pounds provides an industrial setting to study the measurement and control of pressure, level, flow, and temperature. The trainer is built to industrial standards and utilizes hardware that could be found in any industrial process. The HOT unit utilizes water to simulate the measurement and control of industrial processes.

Employees from Southern Company and its subsidiaries will update skills and knowledge utilizing real-world problems simulated on equipment currently in operation throughout the Southern Company. Future technology applications as well as traditional equipment
will be used for training simulations. The partnership between the college and the company creates a win-win environment through the sharing of highly technical equipment, learning resources, and facilities. Students enrolled in college credit technical programs will have the opportunity to experience real-life, hands-on application of classroom theory prior entering the workforce.

Southern Company and MGCCC will host an open house at the new facility on June 14. Information about the program and a tour of the new facility will be included in the event.

From left, Charles Hardt, Instrumentation and Electronics instructor at Gulf Coast; John Poelma, Electronics Technology instructor at Gulf Coast; and Keith Hunter, Instrumentation Controls instructor for Southern Company, stand in front of the some of the equipment for the new Instrumentation and Controls Academy at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College’s Jackson County Campus.

**Offshore Life 101 . . . College and Private Industries Partner to Reduce Industry Turnover**

A prevailing—and expensive—problem for the offshore oil industry is the large number of new hires who suddenly decide they can’t live on a massive oil platform miles from shore. Some aren’t ready for the cramped quarters and bunkhouse living arrangements. Others don’t like adhering to a schedule that resembles life in the military. Some have never been separated from their families and are distracted by homesickness.

Their reasons vary, but every day, new recruits on oil rigs ask to be taken home. It’s a pricey proposition for employers, who must absorb the cost of transporting them to shore by helicopter and who must pay to train their replacements. Now an innovative strategy deployed by the South Central Louisiana Technical College (SCLTC) shows real promise in preparing new hires for life on an oil platform.

In late 2011, the college unveiled dry-docked living quarters at its Young Memorial Campus in Morgan City, La. They will be used for training simulations. The partnership between the SCLTC, the Foundation for Louisiana’s Community & Technical Colleges (LCTCS Foundation), and several industry partners, including Petroleum Education Council (PEC) Premier, a Louisiana company specializing in professional offshore training. The Mandeville-based company partners frequently with SCLTC.

“Staff turnover on offshore rigs is a continuing problem and one that the industry would like to see improve,” says PEC Premier Business Development Manager Chris England. “Companies invest more than $2,000 into training each employee even before their first day of work. They want to do anything they can to increase employee retention.”

The private sector was enthusiastic about establishing the new program at SCLTC. The offshore support services company, Tidewater Marine, donated two living quarters valued at more than $150,000, which were moved by barge to the Young Memorial Campus in summer 2011. The larger of the two quarters sleeps 50; the smaller accommodates 20.
Relocating the structures was a massive undertaking. The H&B Young Foundation donated $50,000 to the LCTCS Foundation to help move the structures, and industry partners A&M Dockside, Canal Barge, Garber Brothers, Intermoor, Inc., Odyssey Marine, Stansbury & Associates and Tiger Tugz invested more than $45,000 in in-kind services toward the move. England says the project is “ultra important” in reducing employee attrition.

“Even if an individual has done all the training in the world, you still can’t tell if they’re going to be inclined to stick it out,” he says. “This increases the chances that they will.”

PEC Premier, which partners with SCLTC on training programs, took on the task of renovating the quarters. England says the company will likely invest about $300,000 in repairs and updates. In addition to bunkhouses, the two structures include galleys, recreation rooms and other amenities found in platform quarters offshore, says England. Like other case contributors, PEC was able to donate directly to the LCTCS Foundation, which was created in 2007 to facilitate private investment on behalf of individual colleges without burdening local administrators.

SCLTC is known around the nation for its marine curriculum programs, which include training for the Coast Guard and for a range of positions in the offshore petroleum industry. The campus is equipped with several safety programs available to new and existing employees, including a helicopter survival course that enables students to practice exiting an upended, submerged helicopter. Working in conjunction with PEC, SCLTC certifies and trains current workers interested in career advancement. SCLTC and PEC also operate a program to quickly train unemployed workers for offshore work called the Oil Patch Preparation System (OPPS).

Training for the industry has never been more important, as companies recruit younger employees to replace the wave of retiring Baby Boomers. The phenomenon is so sweeping it’s known in the field as “the great shift change,” says England. The marine curriculum programs at SCLTC are now able to take advantage of a major amenity that will ensure workers are not only technically trained, but emotionally prepared as well.

“The living quarters are very promising,” says Garrett. “We believe this will be tremendously beneficial to employers.” (http://news.pcc.edu/2012/05/hybrid-repair-research/)

**PCC a Beacon in Hybrid, Electric Car Repair Research**

A service repair on an internal combustible engine vehicle can cost hundreds of dollars. The replacement of a battery for a hybrid or electric car will cost thousands.

Portland Community College’s Automotive Service Technology Program at its Sylvania Campus (12000 S.W. 49th Ave.) is developing curriculum out of hybrid and electric car battery research to create a template for industry techs on how to service them more affordably.

According to PCC Auto Service instructors, they see the need because the industry is reporting more battery wear-and-tear stemming from the original hybrids that are more than a decade old. When trouble strikes, technicians typically just replace the battery pack, which costs the consumer roughly $2,000, rather than trouble-shooting the cause.

“The reality is that these vehicles are starting to get to the point where they are having component failure in the battery packs, the inverters and electric machines,” said Russ Jones, PCC Automotive Service Technology instructor and the lead on the program’s hybrid training. “The industry has not been very good at training technicians on how to deal with these cars safely as well as make diagnostic repairs. We’ve recognized the need to provide training for working technicians.”

**Battery research like ‘exercising’**—Through the program’s own research, PCC technicians have reconditioned batteries for two Honda Civic Hybrids, improving engine performance and fuel economy. Kim Kittinger, Automotive Service Technology instructor, said she and her students break the battery packs down, taking out individual modules and test how strong they are. They do that by seeing how long the power supply goes for by dropping the power down to their dead cells and then bringing them back up and maxing them out with energy. They repeat the process over and over.
“It’s like when we exercise and push ourselves, we get stronger,” Kittinger said. “Not all of them, but many of the batteries we can bring back to life. It’s really cool. Then we put them into the packs and back into the cars. We end up buying more time and more life for these packs. It’s vehicle maintenance really; the new form of it.

“Our research is letting us figure out how to test these by seeing what we can and can’t rebuild and what we can or can’t replace in it,” she added. “Hopefully, we’ll have a good answer on how long we can expect these to work after we rebuild them.”

Findings lead to new curriculum—The aim is to massage this research into its curriculum to share with students, local technicians, fellow community colleges and businesses across the Pacific Northwest and beyond. The program, which is developing a 30-credit hybrid-training certificate, has partnered with two local repair shops, Hawthorne Auto Clinic in Southeast Portland and Todd’s Import Automotive in Lake Grove, to look at how they can provide better and more affordable repair work for hybrid and electric cars.

“It gives us more validity of what we are doing by seeing how this works on a real-world customer’s car,” Jones said of using the repair shops in their research.

In particular, Hawthorne technicians are using PCC tools and equipment as well as the research in the auto shop’s lab to make repairs on their customer’s vehicles to test out the developments. In return, the shop and its customers give feedback to PCC on how well the cars are responding to the work. Jim Houser, co-owner of Hawthorne, said his company has had a longstanding relationship with PCC.

“We had also decided to focus on hybrid repair, but there’s a limited amount of information available to independent repair shops and even dealerships have just one or two people fully up to date on them,” said Houser, whose shop has been repairing hybrids since 2002. “Mistakes can be costly. If you do something you shouldn’t it will cost the shop owner a lot of money. For us it’s been a really good partnership with PCC and has given us the skills and confidence to go deeper than we would normally and do the repairs knowledgeably and safely.”

Federal funding helps train future green workforce—The college has invested approximately $350,000 in hybrid and electric equipment such as the purchase of 10 hybrid cars plus tools; built a hybrid mock-up for students to learn on (2006 Toyota Prius); offered continuing education training to fleet and industry techs; and integrated findings into the curriculum.

In September of 2010, PCC received a federal grant of $200,000 from the Small Business Administration (co-administered by the Department of Education). The college was one of several partners on the grant, but the only auto-related partner involved. The mission of the grant is to establish green jobs or advance the green skill set of workers in industry and make them more marketable.

Josh Miller, 30, of Southeast Portland and a native of Indiana, is in his first term in the Automotive Service Technology Program, pursuing a childhood dream of working on cars. He said the automotive repair field is changing and new technicians need those green skills.

“I don’t think you can work in this field and not know how to work on a hybrid vehicle at some point in your career,” Miller said. “Hybrid work is very new and unfamiliar, but I’m interested in getting further into it. I think these skills are very marketable. This is definitely needed. It seems like this is where everything is going.”

Houser said students with hybrid repair skills will be in demand.

“With new fuel economy standards coming, the most effective way for car manufacturers to meet them is to build some version of a hybrid,” Houser said. “Everybody has a hybrid. People have a big investment in those cars and they want to keep them longer.”
Siemens Energy in Charlotte has just completed a $350-million expansion to build and refurbish gas turbines for U.S. and worldwide customers. The company has built a 450,000-square-foot addition, which adjoins an existing steam turbine and generator plant. Building on a base of 700 employees in 2010, Siemens has hired an additional 430 hourly workers, as well as engineers, other salaried and administrative positions for a headcount of more than 1,400 since announcing the expansion in early 2010. Management expects to hire 400 additional employees by 2014.

Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC) has partnered with Siemens (originally Siemens Westinghouse) for more than a decade to provide training for employees. With the Siemens expansion and the commitment of senior management to provide “world class training,” the partnership with the company and the college has grown. CPCC is helping to assess the skills of potential new hires and provide post-hire training.

The training has been funded primarily by the State of North Carolina through a Customized Training grant administered by the North Carolina Community College System. The college managed $1.2 million in the customized training project from September 2010 through February 2012 and will provide the same level of training or more over the next 18 months. Thus far, CPCC has provided more than 600 classes to more 2,700 pre-employment candidates and employees.

The Customized Training Program has enabled Siemens and CPCC to build partnerships in other ways as well. Apprenticeships are an important part of workforce development at Siemens, and with the Charlotte expansion, the company has started an apprenticeship program expected to double in size each year for several years to come. CPCC is providing the mechatronics associate degree program for the Siemens apprenticeship employees.

CPCC reached out to another area of Siemens Global to become the first North Carolina community college to offer the Siemens Mechatronic Systems Certification Program. The college sent four instructors to the Siemens Technik Akademie-Berlin to become Level I and Level II certified to offer the Siemens Mechatronic Systems Certification to local companies, students and apprentices.

The partnership with Siemens and CPCC builds the strength of the workforce at Siemens Energy as well as the workforce pipeline with other local high-tech companies. This workforce development also enables the Charlotte region to reap the benefits of new capital investments and job creation.