

WALK THE HALLS OF  
TIME WITH OUR STUDENTS IN THOSE SAME  
ONCE STUDIED IN. I CONSISTENTLY  
EACH AND EVERY DAY TO MA  
CHOICE. WHAT



**JOLIET**  
JUNIOR COLLEGE  
1901-

# CONNECTIONS

joliet junior college magazine



## CELEBRATING THE END OF A JOURNEY

**DR. JUDY MITCHELL RETIRES**



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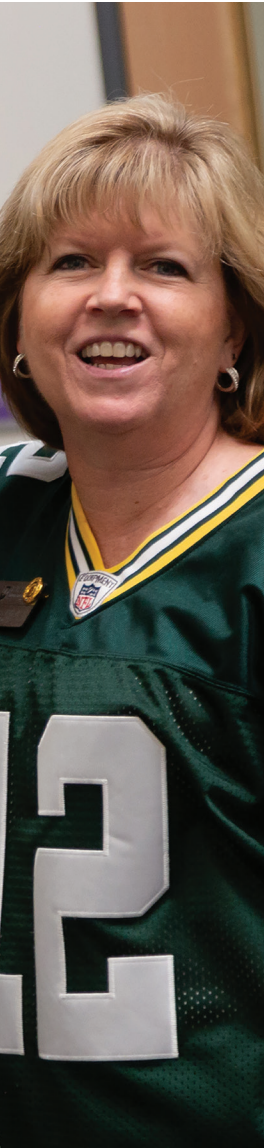
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The purpose of Connections is to strengthen the relationship between JJC, its alumni and community. By sharing their stories and accomplishments, Connections serves as another example of the college's commitment to excellence in teaching and learning. Connections is published two times a year by the Communications and Marketing Division and the Institutional Advancement Office.



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**JOLIET**  
JUNIOR COLLEGE  
—1901—

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



I am proud to present the college's annual report and the JJC Foundation's annual report for the final time in this spring issue of our biannual magazine, Connections. It has been the honor of a lifetime to serve as the president of Joliet Junior College. While my retirement is right around the corner, know that I will always be a tireless advocate for JJC. This institution has been my heart and soul for 30 years.

My story is one that many JJC students can identify with. Long ago, I was a working mom that decided to go back to school after 15 years outside of a classroom. I knew deep down there was more opportunity for me if I invested in an education. I took night classes while raising my son and daughter. I persisted. And through a series of wonderful career opportunities and education, I went from JJC student to JJC president! When I look back, I couldn't have imagined my path would lead here, yet I cannot imagine my life any other way.

As you learn about the incredible strides we have made over the last year, I encourage you to value our past and embrace the opportunities inherent in the college's future. We are ready to enter a new chapter, a post-pandemic chapter, and a chapter that will affirm the college as a leader in post-secondary education and training.

**Judy Mitchell, Ed.D.**  
President



Me enorgullece presentar el informe anual de la universidad y el informe anual de la Fundación JJC por última vez en esta edición de primavera de nuestra revista bianual, Connections. Ha sido el honor de mi vida desempeñarme como presidenta de Joliet Junior College. Si bien mi jubilación está a la vuelta de la esquina, sé que siempre seré una incansable defensora de JJC. Esta institución ha estado en mi corazón y en mi alma durante 30 años.

Mi historia es una con la que muchos estudiantes de JJC pueden identificarse. Hace mucho tiempo, era una madre trabajadora que decidió volver a la escuela después de 15 años fuera de un aula. Sabía que habría más oportunidades para mí si invertía en mi educación. Tomé clases nocturnas mientras criaba a mis hijos. Persistí. Y a través de una serie de maravillosas oportunidades profesionales y de educación, pasé de ser estudiante de JJC a ser presidenta de JJC. Al mirar en retrospectiva, nunca hubiera imaginado que mi camino me traería hasta aquí, pero ahora no puedo imaginar mi vida de ninguna otra manera.

A medida que aprenden sobre los increíbles avances que hemos logrado durante el último año, los invito a valorar nuestro pasado y a aprovechar las oportunidades inherentes al futuro de la universidad. Estamos listos para comenzar un nuevo capítulo, un capítulo posterior a la pandemia y un capítulo que ratificará a la universidad como líder en educación y capacitación postsecundaria.

**Judy Mitchell, Ed.D.**  
Presidenta



# LETTER FROM THE JJC FOUNDATION



Dear Alumni and Friends,

To say that these past two years have been difficult is an understatement. Although these times are extremely challenging, the JJC Foundation has remained committed to our students and their success, providing access to an invaluable and transformative education. None of this would be possible without our community of donors, who gave \$2.14 million in contributions last year.

In this issue, you will learn more about the many ways giving is driving change and fostering student success at JJC. Last year, the foundation provided over \$800,000 in scholarships to students. The pandemic continues to create financial emergencies for our students as well, resulting in a 225% increase in support to students for food insecurities, books, tuition and other emergency needs.

Although I continue to share the success of our foundation, I am saddened to share that we have lost a longtime member of our foundation board, Dr. Peter Nichols. Dr. Nichols served on the board since 1983 and has been influential to our financial growth and stability over the years. I know he is looking down on us and would be proud of our continued success this year.

As I close this letter, I want to thank President Dr. Judy Mitchell. I have been fortunate to work with her during her tenure as president. She has been instrumental to our increase in donor support and has been an advocate for our work in the foundation. I wish her well in her retirement and know her legacy will live on in the Dr. Judy Mitchell Endowed Scholarship.

The success of our students and our community today, and in the future, depends on those who support our mission. Thank you for supporting the Joliet Junior College Foundation and making education possible for our students.

Sincerely,

**Kristin Mulvey, MSM**

Executive Director, JJC Foundation

Executive Director, Institutional Advancement

## WELCOME TO OUR NEW JJC FOUNDATION BOARD MEMBERS



Brian Van Acker



Lawrence Wiers



# AWARDS FOR INNOVATION AND EXCELLENCE



## \$33,778

IN GRANT FUNDS AWARDED TO  
FACULTY AND STAFF FOR INNOVATIVE  
PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS.



The Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) program received \$25,000 from the JJC Foundation's Awards for Innovation and Excellence grant program. This grant provided tools and equipment to enhance safety and the student experience on current and future Habitat for Humanity housing projects. This partnership provides JJC students with hands-on experience and training in a high-skill, high-growth, high-wage industry, while giving back to the community.



**JOLIET**  
JUNIOR COLLEGE  
—1901—  
FOUNDATION

## Make Your Impact Today

Give to the JJC Foundation at  
[www.jjc.edu/givetojjc](http://www.jjc.edu/givetojjc)  
or use the enclosed envelope  
to mail in your donation.

# FOUNDATION REPORT



## EMERGENCY SUPPORT TO STUDENTS

**225%**   
**INCREASE**

In Emergency Support to Students

**\$21,600** in FY21

**\$70,236** in FY22





ZOEY WOODS

Evelyn Barnes Memorial  
Scholarship Recipient

SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED



**\$802,798**

Total Scholarships Awarded

# MANNY ESPARZA

Juan J. Aguilar Memorial  
Scholarship Recipient

## INVESTMENT VALUE



**Total Assets**  
**\$34,409,057**

## ALUMNI GIVING

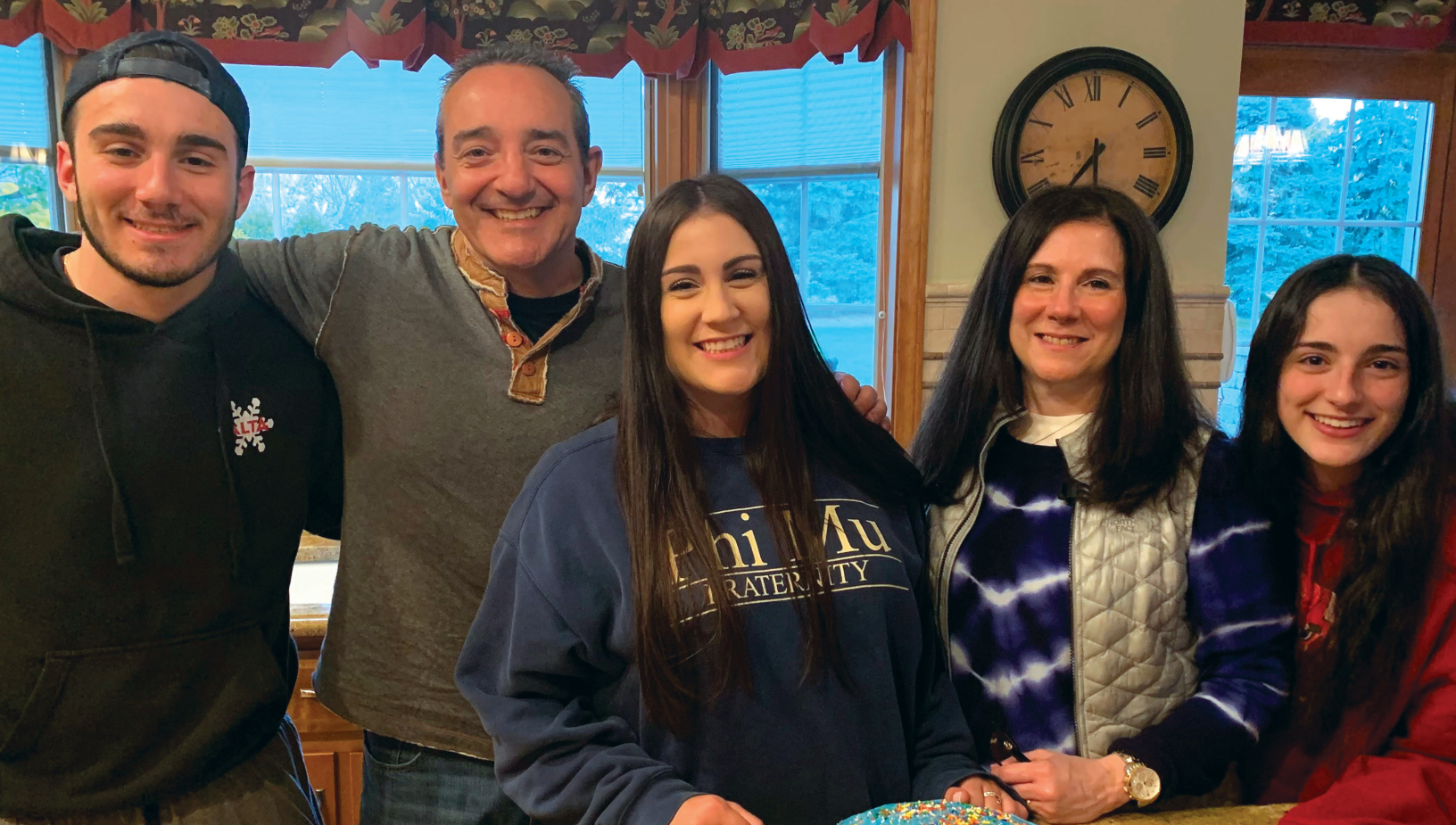
**51%**   
**INCREASE**



FY 2021  
**\$458,253**



FY 2022  
**\$690,772**



## WILLIAM R. CONTE FAMILY ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

Making the decision to attend Joliet Junior College was an easy one for William Conte. It opened the door to a variety of opportunities and he still attributes much of his early success to the professors he worked with in his accounting and business courses. Conte graduated from JJC in 1985 and continued his education in finance at Illinois State University.

Throughout his career, Conte has been one of JJC's biggest supporters. He has served on the Joliet Junior College Foundation Board since 2007 and is the Vice President and Chair of the Investment Committee. In 2021, Conte received the Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award at our Annual Night of Stars event for demonstrating outstanding success in his field and for providing humanitarian service in our community.

In his acceptance speech, Conte shared, "From a young age, my parents preached that education was the key to success." It was with that early lesson and a lifetime of experience that he decided to establish the William R. Conte Family Endowed Scholarship. This scholarship will provide financial assistance to a full or part-time student majoring in business at Joliet Junior College with an interest in pursuing finance.



### ENDOWMENTS

**26%**   
**INCREASE**

FY 2021

**\$13,595,157**

FY 2022

**\$17,086,834**



## EMPLOYEE GIVING

# \$93,759

In **FY22**, JJC employees gave **\$93,759** in donations to support student scholarships, academic programs, athletics and student emergency.

A **13% increase** from FY21.



# Employee Giving



**98%**   
**INCREASE**

Giving to Year End Campaign  
2020: \$304,519  
2021: **\$601,460**

**\$2.14**  
**MILLION**

Total Contributions FY21  
**61% INCREASE**

# COLLEGE REPORT

## JJC DRIVES THE WORKFORCE



**2** TOP DIVERSITY  
EMPLOYER  
YEARS

Named Top Diversity Employer for two straight years by DiversityJobs, an online job board dedicated to diversity and inclusion in the workplace.



**9<sup>TH</sup>** LARGEST  
EMPLOYER  
IN WILL COUNTY, IL

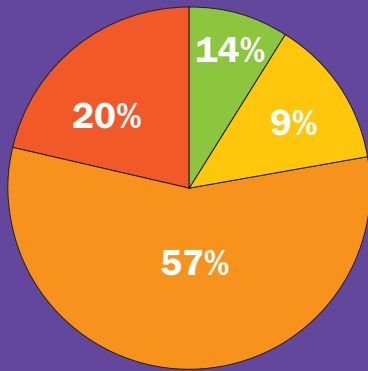
TOTAL NUMBER  
OF EMPLOYEES  
**1,500**

# JJC IS EQUITABLE

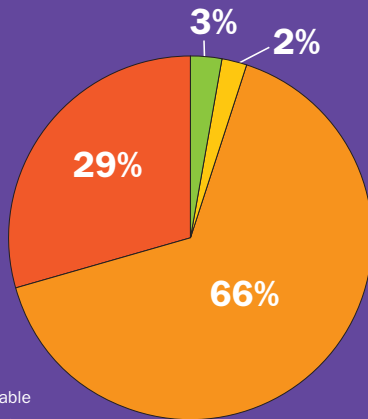
JJC’s Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Compliance is committed to carrying out the college’s core values of respect and inclusion. In 2020, DEIC began offering workshops to help build culturally competent and consciously inclusive employees. These cultural competency workshops (CCW) offered safe and open environments that encouraged real dialogue. As of January, over 900 employees have completed the workshop. Survey results show 95% of participants were either somewhat or highly comfortable addressing diversity and equity issues that occur at work, compared to 77% prior to the workshop.

**How comfortable do you feel addressing diversity and equity issues (including micro-iniquities) that occur at work?**

## PRE



## POST



- Highly Comfortable
- Somewhat Comfortable
- Want to Address/Don't Know How
- Not Confident

The DEI Book Club provides employees a chance to have meaningful conversations about race, explored by reading important books and learning from others’ experiences. Each Book Club cohort is made up of small groups that include two co-facilitators. Since 2020, there have been three cohorts, with over 150 participants.



“Being a part of the DEI book club has changed my life in some really profound ways. I’ve become a better listener, a better advocate, a better colleague, and a better friend. The ‘trust tree’ that my group established early on made it possible for us to openly admit mistakes and misunderstandings, which made all the difference in the world.”

– Jennifer Davis;  
Annual Giving Manager  
and Alumni Relations

# DR. JUDY MITCHELL

## INVESTMENTS OVER A



# 29

YEAR  
JOURNEY

When you work hard and invest in a company that invests in you, good things happen. That philosophy was imparted early on in Dr. Judy Mitchell, who in her first 10 years after high school worked for a telecommunications firm, and before the age of 30 was scheduling multi-million-dollar heliax and coaxial cable production lines. When Mitchell took a step back to spend more time with her growing family, she didn't sit idle, coaching her children's sports teams and selling Tupperware and Avon on the side.

While Mitchell's investment in higher education didn't begin until 34, she ascended quickly. Over an 18-year span, she earned five degrees that spurred multiple career advancements, culminating in 2016 when she became president of Joliet Junior College. As Mitchell prepares for retirement this fall, that guiding philosophy is reflected in her presidential achievements.



## Investments in Fiscal Responsibility

Mitchell's financial acumen predates even those first accounting courses that launched her JJC career in 1993, and she carried it through her most recent role, vice president for administrative services. As president, she's continued that commitment to financial stability, while also carrying out visions of new programming, and strengthening student success and community support.

"We've been very strategic," she said. "Always proactive to keep JJC in a financial state that builds for future success. It's keeping in mind the global picture. I'm very proud of the work we've done and have continued to do."

Mitchell's transition into the presidency occurred around the time of the State of Illinois' lengthy budget impasse. To manage the revenue gap, she encouraged more creative funding streams, and during the next four years helped the college reduce its operating costs by over \$2 million. Each year under Mitchell's leadership, JJC's financial team has been recognized nationally for exhibiting the highest principles of governmental budgeting.

## Investments in Adaptation

A key financial focus is tuition, something Mitchell, her Cabinet, and the Board of Trustees have worked to keep low throughout her presidency. In 2018, in anticipation of reduced state funding, they made the difficult decision to raise rates. But after better than expected state revenues, JJC made the unprecedented move to provide a partial reimbursement to students. It was the only community college in Illinois to do so.

"We were able to reimburse our students \$16 of the \$19 per credit hour increase that they incurred," said Mitchell. "It was our commitment to our students that we do listen and we care about them, and appreciated their support during those difficult times."

When the college adopted the guided academic pathways model in 2020, simplifying how students choose majors to complete degrees on time, it added another support mechanism. Assistance has become more holistic to address student health and well-being, with new offices like the Student Advising Center and the Center for Multicultural Access and Success.

"Creating those new departments and divisions, although difficult decisions at times, were the right decisions and now look at the success of our students and the impact we're making."

**"We've been very strategic. Always proactive to keep JJC in a financial state that builds for future success. It's keeping in mind the global picture. I'm very proud of the work we've done and have continued to do."**

– Dr. Judy Mitchell

Mitchell's Pizza with the Prez and Donuts with the Doc student sessions offer opportunities for intimate conversations, and her semesterly Student for a Day experience allows Mitchell to directly engage in the classroom. The feedback she receives is critical.

"The students test us. And we need to be tested. We cannot become complacent. We have to continue to be visionary to meet their needs."

## Investments in Employees

In order for the collective work of the college to thrive, employee support is also critical. That's included professional development enhancements to grow workplace skills and leaders through internal conferences like EDUCON and the President's Academy for Leadership. By implementing a program peer review model, introducing new technology in classrooms, and upgrading campus facilities, Mitchell has overseen initiatives that have empowered faculty and staff to do more and improve services.

"Whether it's talking to faculty in the hall, whether it's attending the meetings, sitting in their classrooms as a student for the day, all of those help me make better decisions in my role."

From celebrating employee accomplishments to hosting candid conversations on challenging topics, Mitchell has sought varying ways at the individual and campus-wide levels to engage with JJC's more than 1,500 faculty and staff.



## Investments in Inclusivity

A key focus for Mitchell has been building upon JJC's climate of mutual respect and inclusion, a pledge she made when appointed president. It started in 2016 when she prioritized the President's Diversity and Inclusion Council.

"Listening and working with so many of our employees, diversity and inclusion was so important to me because everyone has a voice. Everyone needs to be heard. Everyone needs to have that opportunity."

In 2020, the college formed the Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Compliance. More employees have since become engaged through cultural competency workshops and small group discussions. It's strengthened employee recruitment, leading to more diverse candidate pools. These efforts earned national prominence in 2021, when JJC received the Award for Excellence in Advancing Diversity by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC).

"Listening and working with so many of our employees, diversity and inclusion was so important to me because everyone has a voice. Everyone needs to be heard. Everyone needs to have that opportunity."

– Dr. Judy Mitchell

"You learn to work with everyone, and everyone's opinion is important. Whether it be their cultural beliefs or background, you learn so much. That's what makes us all grow personally and professionally. I'm so proud of the work we're doing with DEI and I hope this continues to grow for years and years to come."



## Investments in Global Outreach

From expanding degree options and trainings to support local industry to growing stakeholder relations, community partnerships have flourished under Mitchell. Her annual State of the College address has seen attendance increase by 25% since her first speech in 2016.

“The community, our partnerships and our donors are instrumental to the success of JJC and our students. Just this past year over \$800,000 in scholarships were provided to our students. That’s because of our amazing partners throughout the community that invest in us, and who we support.”

“The community, our partnerships and our donors are instrumental to the success of JJC and our students.”

– Dr. Judy Mitchell

Mitchell has personally contributed 40% in funding to support returning adult students through what is now called the Dr. Judy Mitchell Scholarship. It’s opened doors for those charting similar paths as her. Five years since starting the scholarship, Mitchell and JJC employees have combined to gift \$54,000 to over 85 students. She fondly recalls meetings with scholarship recipients to learn about their academic journey, and what brought them back to school.

“The one session I remember there were a few tears and then we would laugh. That’s what we’re here for. To make a difference in someone’s life, and to let them know that they’re not alone. They walk out and feel good and are like ‘yes I can do it, I can make a difference and I can graduate.’”

Mitchell’s community outreach extends beyond her capacity as president. She currently serves on the board or as a member of seven civic organizations, and has been recognized for her involvement. In honor of her contributions to improving the status of women locally, Mitchell received the Zonta Club of Joliet’s Woman of Distinction Award in 2018. She’s also a 2021 recipient of the Gary W. Davis Ethical Leadership Award from the Illinois Community College Trustees Association, which honors outstanding contributions in ethical leadership and decision-making.



## Celebrate Dr. Mitchell's Legacy

Help us Celebrate Dr. Mitchell's Legacy with a gift to the Dr. Judy Mitchell Scholarship!

Use the enclosed envelope or make a donation online at [www.jjc.edu/givetojjc](http://www.jjc.edu/givetojjc).



## Investments in Teamwork

At its highest level, decision-making requires strategic thinking, and is best supported by team members who are working toward the same goals. Mitchell says she's grateful to her leadership team, the President's Cabinet, in helping position JJC as the first choice for learning, working and cultivating pathways to prosperity.

"It's not just one person. You have a team. That's what defines your success. I've been very fortunate to have a strong team throughout to help us achieve these goals."

## Investments in The Future

Just as Mitchell learned right out of high school, good things happen when you work hard and invest in a company that invests in you. That philosophy guided her academic journey, career milestones and through her presidency. It will continue to be a guiding force in retirement.

"Although the next chapter of my life isn't defined yet, I will continue to be an advocate for JJC in any way that I can to support future generations; just like Joliet Junior College has supported me."

– Dr. Judy Mitchell





# A LOOK BACK





**DIANE URBANCZYK**

**Manager, University Partnerships  
and Transfer Initiatives Department**

## UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS GROWTH

Transferring after JJC to complete a bachelor's degree or beyond is a very common goal for many JJC students. Thanks to JJC's University Partnerships and Transfer Initiatives Department (UPTI), those goals are more attainable than ever before. Some transfer students are able to complete their bachelor's degree without ever moving away or even leaving JJC. Others are able to go to the next school of their dreams with a smooth transfer agreement, specialized scholarships or tuition discounts.

**“We want JJC students to know that they should never feel that they have to figure out their transfer plans on their own.”**

– Diane Urbanczyk

This recently revitalized department has many services and benefits in place now for JJC transfer students, with more planned to come this year. The UPTI team manages more than 100 agreements between JJC and four-year institutions, spanning several different programs of study. Some are transfer agreements that ensure a partner institution will accept a student's credits in a particular program; some are “3+1” agreements, which means the partner institution teaches their upper-level courses online or at the JJC Romeoville Campus, making it easier than ever before for JJC students to complete a bachelor's degree.

“Our main goal is to provide opportunities for students looking to continue their education that may include benefits such as specialized scholarships, tuition discounts, additional advising and/or university courses offered at the Romeoville campus,” said Diane Urbanczyk, manager of UPTI.

The department also staffs the University Center at the Romeoville Campus, a dedicated area where JJC students can meet with representatives from four-year partners and learn about their programs, and which also provides office space for instructors from partner schools when they are on campus to teach. Some of JJC's four-year partners that utilize the University Center include SIU-Edwardsville and Governors State University.

“We want JJC students to know that they should never feel that they have to figure out their transfer plans on their own,” said Urbanczyk. “When they work with their advisors, they will find that our transfer agreements eliminate any guesswork or stress for them.”

Students in a 3+1 program can also take advantage of a special scholarship available through the JJC Foundation. Dr. Carolyn Engers, who retired from JJC in 2000 after 32 years working in various roles, has funded the Dr. Carolyn M. T. Engers 3 + 1 University Partnership Scholarship. Students must be in the first year of a 3+1 program, have a minimum GPA of 2.5, and be enrolled in six or more credit hours. Funds may be used for tuition, fees, and books. To date, seven students have been awarded this scholarship.

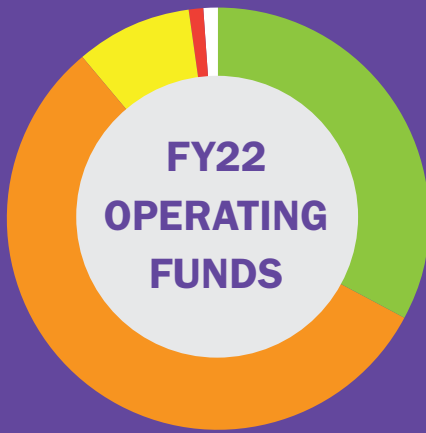
**100+**



**The UPTI Team Manages  
100+ Agreements With**

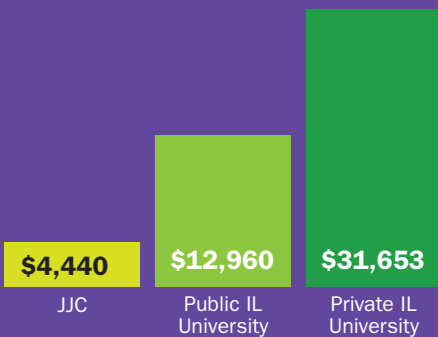
**FOUR-YEAR  
INSTITUTIONS**

## JJC IS RESILIENT



(Operating Fund Revenues FY22)

## JJC IS AFFORDABLE



### Tuition & Fee Comparisons

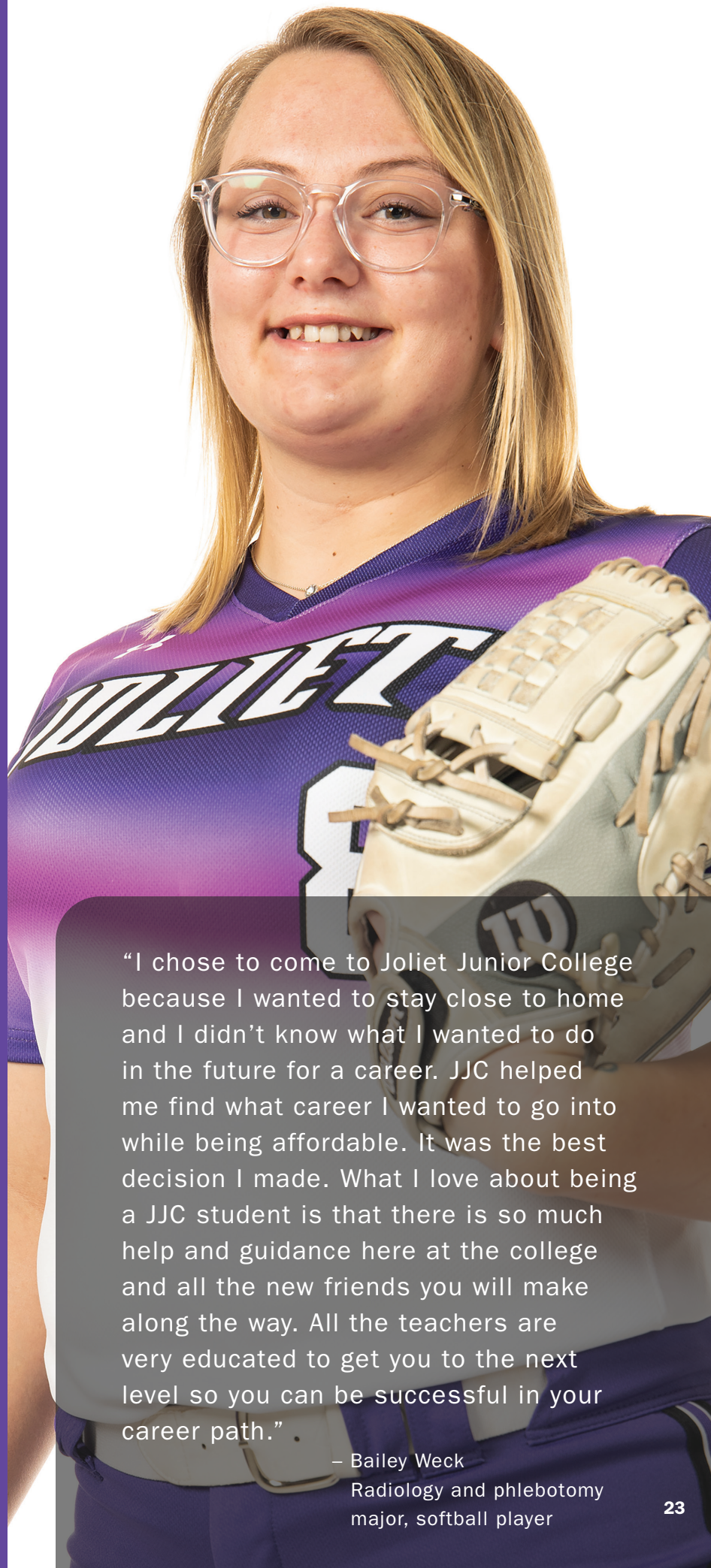
Tuition and fees quoted as full-time (15 hours per semester) based on 2020-2021 rates.

## FALL 2021 ATTENDANCE



**32%** **3,657**  
FULL-TIME STUDENTS

**68%** **7,894**  
PART-TIME STUDENTS



“I chose to come to Joliet Junior College because I wanted to stay close to home and I didn’t know what I wanted to do in the future for a career. JJC helped me find what career I wanted to go into while being affordable. It was the best decision I made. What I love about being a JJC student is that there is so much help and guidance here at the college and all the new friends you will make along the way. All the teachers are very educated to get you to the next level so you can be successful in your career path.”

– Bailey Weck  
Radiology and phlebotomy major, softball player

# FROM THE ARCHIVES

# JJC's Past Presidents

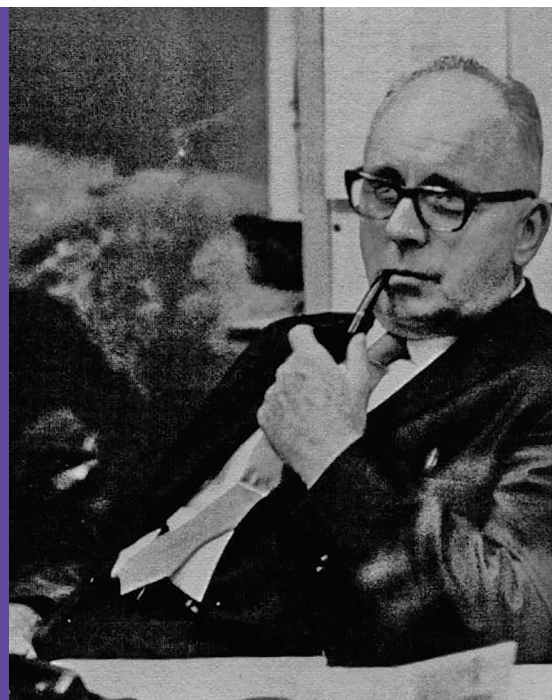
PROGRESS BY VIRTUE OF LEADERSHIP

By Amy Chellino

In January of 2022, JJC President J.D. Ross was asked about leadership and responded, "Those who are given great opportunities must give the best of themselves." Ross observed, "I never saw a successful leader who was not fully committed to the institution, trustworthy, a team builder, and willing to share credit for successes." Later this year, the tenth president of the college will be appointed. This retrospective provides career highlights from the tenure of JJC's past presidents. Their collective contributions generated a multitude of educational opportunities, produced an intelligent, innovative and thoughtful community, and shaped JJC into a revolutionary and trendsetting college.

## 1. ELMER ROWLEY 1967-1970

Rowley retired from JJC in 1967 after a twenty-year career as a dean at Joliet Junior College. With his wealth of knowledge and his dedication, later that same year, Rowley was persuaded by the board to return and become Joliet Junior College's first president. Rowley was instrumental in establishing JJC as a Class I district, ending the 66-year relationship with Joliet Township High School and becoming Illinois Junior College District 525. During Rowley's tenure, 28 new programs were introduced at the college. He was a prominent voice in selecting the site for the permanent campus and improving the college's identity within the community. Our Main Campus on Houbolt Road as we know it today is due to Rowley's insight for envisioning JJC as a community hub for education and self-improvement. Rowley also formed the first President's Round Table to provide a forum for students to ask questions and express concerns from leaders at the college.



## 2. H.D. MCANINCH 1971-1979

McAninch began his presidency in 1971 and oversaw the completion of Phase I and the groundbreaking of Phase II of the permanent campus. Under McAninch's keen eye, JJC's bridge was built, joining the two building phases. The bridge was designed to be a comfortable area where students could relax and study and continues to be a favorite space on campus. Additionally, road improvements were an important project of McAninch's that involved paving roads and constructing highway interchanges which provided essential access for students to commute to campus. This decade was also notable for the advancement of computers. A Blazer article from February 27, 1978 announced that JJC would be spending \$10,000 to purchase a micro-computer. "There are great capabilities for this machine," announced McAninch.



### 3. DEREK NUNNEY 1979-1984

Nunney furthered the development of JJC's campus with the groundbreaking of the fine arts building in 1980. Looking beyond main campus, Nunney secured the acquisition of the Louis Joliet Renaissance Center in downtown Joliet to provide additional space for Culinary Arts. The North Campus was expanded with leased space in Bolingbrook. Nunney pledged to offer opportunities to meet student needs in a changing society. With more women than ever going back to school and entering the workforce, Nunney's support of JJC's Child Care Center provided mothers of young children the ability to attend college. In Alumni Action from Spring 1979, Nunney explained, "In looking in history, one of the most unique contributions to education is the community college... Our job is to offer education to all those people who want to come. It's an open-door policy."

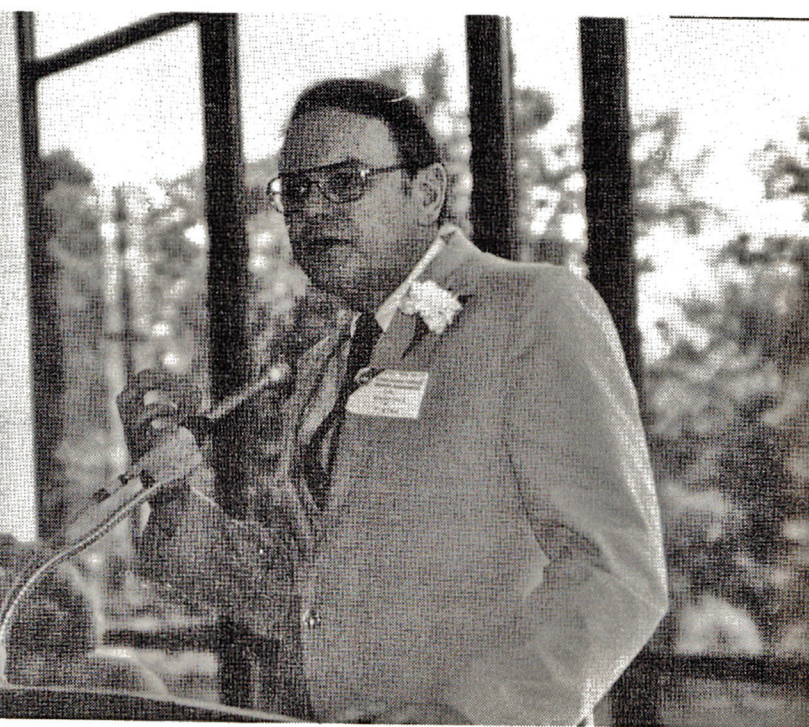
## JJC WELCOMES NEW PRESIDENT DR. DEREK NUNNEY



DR. DEREK NUNNEY

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## Appoints New President



Dr. A. Pietak, of Philadelphia, is the new president of Joliet Junior College. He was appointed president by the JJC Board of Trustees at its monthly meeting on May 1, 1985, and assumed the presidency during the week of May 6, 1985.

Dr. Pietak is 51 years old, was provost of the Community College of Philadelphia, and served as the chief academic officer with total responsibility in the absence of the president. He administered a budget of \$13 million a year for 52 career programs, six college parallel curricula, and seven development

### 4. RAYMOND PIETAK 1985-1995

"Long live [JJC's] tradition of service which enables our students to become all they are capable of being," Pietak declared at JJC's 85th Birthday Celebration as quoted in Alumni Action from Spring-Summer 1986. At ten years of leadership, Pietak is JJC's longest term president and was focused on offering innovative educational opportunities to the JJC community. Pietak shepherded the groundbreakings for Romeoville's permanent campus and the Business and Technology Center at Main Campus. With his support, the JJC Library was automated, and the first distance learning courses were introduced at the college. Upon his resignation, Board Chairperson Joyce Heap affirmed to the Blazer on February 20, 1995, "Through [Pietak's] leadership..., the college has advanced to the benefit of our students and the community... Educational programs have been upgraded, facilities have been improved" (Blazer, February 20, 1995).

## 5. THOMAS E. GAMBLE 1995-1998

Gamble is notable for forming an agreement in 1998 with seven other Illinois community colleges to expand educational offerings to students out of district. If a community college does not offer a specific certificate or degree, a student from out of district can pay in-district tuition at a participating college that offers the program. This reciprocal agreement opened a myriad of options for sharing coursework and programs with students from other community college districts and vice versa. "This institution is filled with people from many counties and it belongs to them," Gamble stated to the Blazer on October 17, 1995.



## 6. J.D. ROSS 1999-2006

J.D. Ross was cheered into office with a standing ovation by the board in 1999. Ross had been with the college for 25 years before being elected as JJC's sixth president. Ross became a notable figure in the community and an emblem of JJC's message of providing exemplary education and extraordinary opportunities. Ross proclaimed in a Blazer article from May 3, 2006, "Not only is JJC the oldest community college in the country, but I believe it's one of the best, and it is so because of the faculty, staff and students that we have here." In a January 25, 2022 interview, when asked about his favorite moment during his presidency, Ross replied, "My favorite moments at the college were any times that I was with students... I was grateful for the opportunity to answer questions and offer words of encouragement to those who stopped to talk with me." When asked about his greatest accomplishment as president of JJC, he replied, "My favorite project was planning for the John H. Weitendorf Sr. Agricultural Education Center... It took months of planning, back and forth discussion, and compromise to turn a dream into a really special educational center."



## 7. GENA PROULX 2006-2011

As JJC's first female president, Proulx was instrumental in putting JJC on the map for a state-of-the-art, environmentally thoughtful Campus Center. Leading the \$190 million Master Plan, the Campus Center was is a LEED gold standard building for its eco-friendly design. Proulx envisioned a welcome center with easy access to essential offices like advising, career services, the bookstore, and library that would be convenient and easy for students to navigate in a cheerful space filled with natural light. "We will put the front door of the campus at the front of the college," declared Proulx at the groundbreaking of the Campus Center in August of 2009. As president, she connected with students by keeping their successes central to the college's mission. A dynamic and progressive leader, the Campus Center is dedicated in her name.



## 8. DEBRA DANIELS 2012-2016

As a graduate of a community college, Daniels said in a Blazer interview, “I wouldn’t be here today if it weren’t for a community college.” Daniels had many accomplishments during her four-year employment with the college. She developed the international student program, opened a new Tutoring and Learning Center and a Veterans Resource Center. The groundbreaking for the Multipurpose Facility was also during her tenure in 2015.



BY KAT BOEHLE  
*Editor-in-Chief*

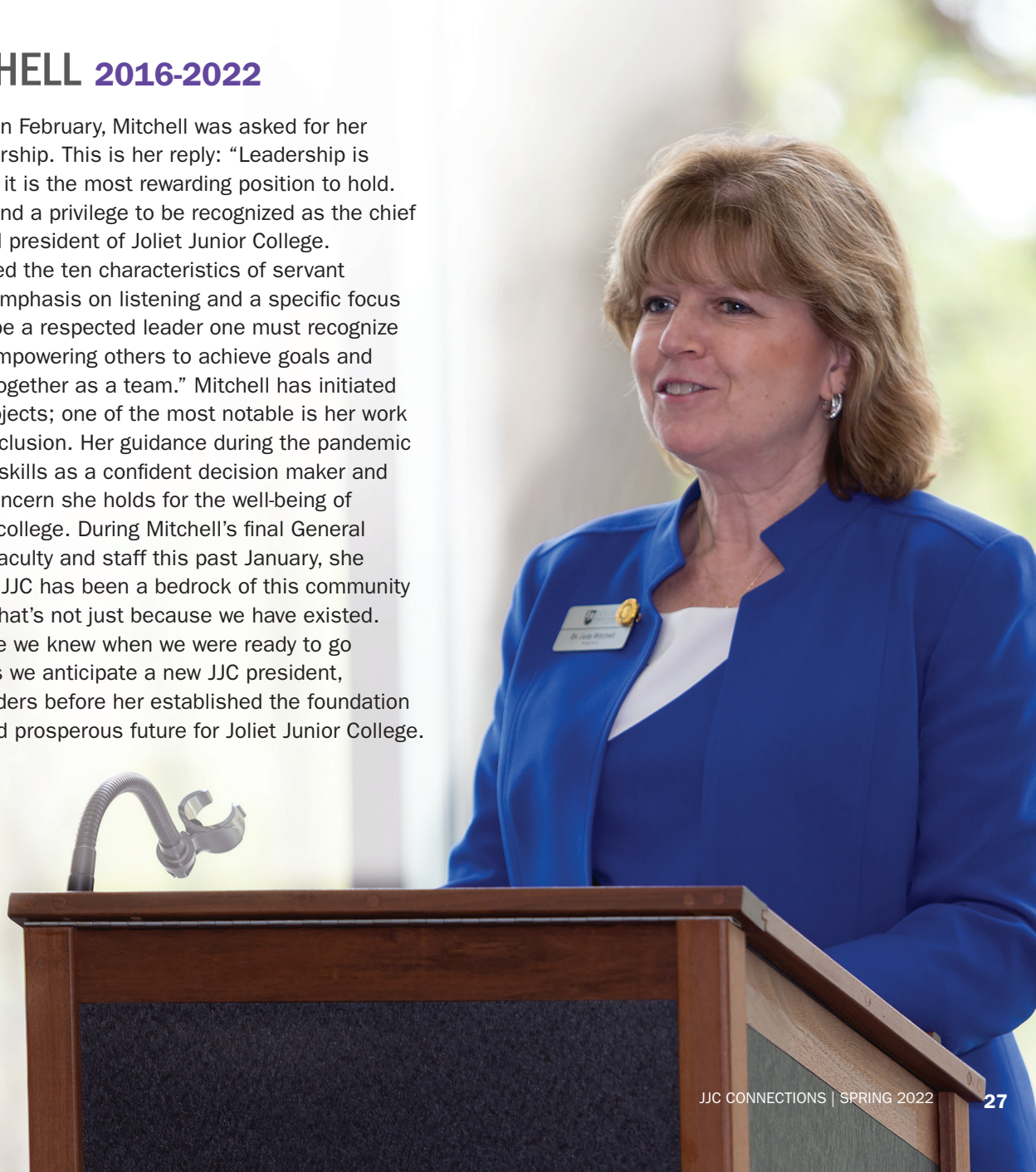
After reviewing more than two dozen applications and narrowing it down to three candidates, the Joliet Junior College Board of Trustees approved Dr. Debra Daniels as JJC’s eighth president at the Dec. 13 board meeting.

The search committee to find candidates for JJC’s new president was comprised of 14 people who represented all aspects of the college, including representatives from the board, full-time and adjunct faculty, facility services, campus police and the student body.

When the committee had narrowed down the applications to three final candidates, public forums were held for each of the candidates so that people in

## 9. JUDY MITCHELL 2016-2022

During an interview in February, Mitchell was asked for her insights about leadership. This is her reply: “Leadership is not always easy, but it is the most rewarding position to hold. It is both an honor and a privilege to be recognized as the chief executive officer and president of Joliet Junior College. I have always followed the ten characteristics of servant leadership with an emphasis on listening and a specific focus on stewardship. To be a respected leader one must recognize the importance of empowering others to achieve goals and initiatives, working together as a team.” Mitchell has initiated many successful projects; one of the most notable is her work with Diversity and Inclusion. Her guidance during the pandemic has showcased her skills as a confident decision maker and made evident the concern she holds for the well-being of the students at the college. During Mitchell’s final General Session speech to faculty and staff this past January, she proudly expressed, “JJC has been a bedrock of this community for 120 years. And that’s not just because we have existed. It happened because we knew when we were ready to go somewhere new.” As we anticipate a new JJC president, Mitchell and the leaders before her established the foundation for a progressive and prosperous future for Joliet Junior College.



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## Alisha Brennon '18

Alisha Brennon began her career in the Joliet Junior College Orthotics and Prosthetics Technology program in the spring of 2016. Brennon was hired at the Shirley Ryan Ability Lab as an orthotics and prosthetics technician. While working in this new position, she continued to volunteer at JJC creating prosthetic devices for animals and working with new students coming into the OPT program.

In 2021, Brennon's career path changed when she accepted a position as a prosthetics professor at JJC. Since then, her team has collected over 200 dolls that they will fit for prosthetic devices and donate to local children's hospitals. These dolls will be given specifically to children who have similar devices. Her team also is also working with the JJC MakerLab to get students involved in the creation of their own prosthetic components to better prepare them for the ever-changing technology of O and P.

Brennon won the 2021 Pacesetter Award from the Illinois Community College Trustees Association (ICCTA), which recognizes the accomplishments of recent Illinois community college graduates who have overcome obstacles, demonstrated promise in a chosen career, and for their service to the community. It's clear that Brennon has a bright future ahead of her.

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