President Barack Obama's Visit to Hudson Valley Community College

September 21, 2009
Dear Friends,

I am honored that President Barack Obama visited Hudson Valley Community College on Monday, Sept. 21, 2009, to laud this college for taking a lead role in helping rebuild the regional economy.

The President used his visit to upstate New York to talk about the central importance of education in the nation’s economic resurgence, and the role community colleges will play in shaping the American workforce for the 21st century.

Using the Capital Region as an example of an area that’s moving in the right direction, President Obama spoke about the $4.2-billion GlobalFoundries computer chip factory project in Malta and how Hudson Valley Community College has partnered with the industry to provide trained workers who will be ready to fill technician positions when the facility is completed.

The President also praised Hudson Valley Community College for creating new training programs in the green technology fields – including solar panel installation, energy efficiency training and the new TEC-SMART training facility, which will be located in Malta, near the GlobalFoundries chip fabrication plant.

As President Obama stated, the building blocks of innovation are education, infrastructure, and research and the ability of new industries to thrive depends on workers with the knowledge and the know-how to contribute in those fields. Through innovative projects like TEC-SMART, we are helping to bring together education, infrastructure and research to prepare people for new technology jobs like those being created by GlobalFoundries.

The President toured several technology labs and chatted with students about their studies before speaking to approximately 300 students, college staff members, and local dignitaries in the college’s senior automotive lab.

Obama was accompanied by Dr. Jill Biden, the wife of Vice President Joe Biden. Dr. Biden is an English professor at a Washington, D.C.-area community college.

This publication commemorates that historic day when the Leader of the Free World, President Barack Obama, showcased to the world the importance of Hudson Valley Community College.

Andrew J. "Drew" Matonak
President, Hudson Valley Community College

For dozens of college staffers, President Obama’s visit was preceded by five days of frenzied, exhilarating around-the-clock preparations.

"I was in my office at about 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 16th when my phone rang, and it was the head of the White House advance team, asking if he and a few others could pay us a visit in 20 minutes,” said college President Drew Matonak. “We quickly put a team together on our end, and that meeting and walk around campus stretched into the late afternoon.”

As that preliminary walk-through continued, additional White House staffers and Secret Service arrived to join the group. Photos were taken of various spaces on campus, and then e-mailed to staffers down in Washington for their review.

Matonak got the call at about 5 p.m. that Obama’s visit to the college was a go. From that moment on, Matonak and other college employees worked frenetically to ensure a successful event.

The preparations started in earnest at 7 p.m. that Wednesday night, as Matonak and other key staffers met at the selected site – Williams Hall and Cogan Hall – and began to talk with White House staff about visit details. That evening, members of the media visited Matonak at the college and interviewed him about the upcoming visit.

"The media attention was intense,” said Matonak.

On Thursday morning, additional college staffers were brought into the planning process and a large meeting was held between White House advance staff and college staff.

"The White House team needed to establish an on-site makeshift office for themselves. They also needed to develop plans for the airport arrival and motorcade, establish telecommunications support for the president and the traveling national media, determine the path of the president’s walk-through, set up the space that would be used for the speech, and determine who would be invited to the event.

From Thursday to Monday, members of the college’s Computer Services staff assisted Verizon technicians to install a “massive amount of secure communications,” said John Fogarty, Associate Director of Computer Services. That staff also worked to meet the communication needs of the White House advance team and the national media, which included laptop setup, printer networking, and wireless access.

Continued on next page
The American workforce for the 21st century

Reporters from across the country cover President Obama’s speech on the central role community college will play in shaping the American workforce for the 21st century

Zachary Yannone, director of institutional services and events, had a similar experience as he and Andrew Fuda helped set up the staging, seating and signage. “They would have me stand in for the president because I was about his height. They’d take a photo, e-mail it to D.C., and a reply would come back ‘move the banner one foot to the right.’ They wanted the right angle for the cut shot. It got frustrating at times, but that’s the kind of detail that was necessary.”

In the midst of Saturday’s setup, it was agreed that the stage carpeting and the steps to the stage were not up to snuff. Yannone went to Home Depot to purchase new carpeting. Some students from the photovoltaics class helped out to install it on Saturday morning.

Porter said it took the faculty and students about two-and-a-half hours to assemble the PV arrays on Saturday morning, and then the White House advance team worked overtime to prune up the room that was selected as the president’s “hold room,” where he would have the opportunity to sit quietly with key staffers before the speech and use a secure phone if need be.

The college’s Physical Plant workers — custodians, electricians, groundskeepers, maintenance workers and HVAC technicians — were busy cleaning the building, painting walls, sweeping the streets, moving equipment and furniture, hanging photos in the hallway, covering the windows along the president’s path, building barricades to reduce visibility and control crowds, and planting flowers.

Karen Seward, Executive Manager of Physical Plant, coordinated the fix-up efforts. On the final night, she slept for three hours in her office. “We were there until 12:30 a.m. Monday morning. I got back to my office around 1 a.m., and they woke me up around 4 a.m.”

Yannone kept a similar amount. “When I left the event at about 2 p.m. Monday, I realized that in a stretch of 30 hours, I was at the college for 26 of them,” he said. “But it was worth it. It was interesting to see how an event like that comes together in such a short period of time, and it seemed to work out perfectly… There was not one jerk or one lousy representative on their side coordinating the event, and from our side everyone was more than willing to help out. They had such an appreciation for what we did for them, and the feeling was reciprocal.”

Sarah Boggess, the college’s vice president for institutional advancement, interfaced with Matonak and the White House team on preparing the guest list and distributing tickets. She needed to make certain that political officials received tickets, but also to meet White House demands on student and employee participation and Secret Service background checks.

“It was difficult because there were so few tickets available, and the White House was very direct in its expectations that students be amply represented,” Boggess said. “I remember staying late on that Friday night with Jim Countryman and Mike Bender, calling students who were fortunate enough to be selected to sit on risers near the president. All of those students needed to undergo a background check by the Secret Service, so we needed to collect vital information from the students.”

One of the highlights for Boggess was her ability to call students and faculty on Sunday who were selected to receive tickets as part of random drawings. “It was so touching — one student came to pick up her ticket and she was crying and jumping up and down. At the same time, it was hard to have to say ‘no’ to so many other people who wanted to attend.”

The work didn’t end on Monday afternoon. After the event, everything had to be put back together again. Crews had to disassemble the backdrops and restore order to the classrooms. “We had a lab scheduled for Tuesday morning to teach refrigeration technicians how to solder copper tubing, but all of the oxygen and settling tanks had been ordered removed from the building, so there was no gas for soldering,” Porter said. “Also, a classroom of desks and chairs had been stuffed into the room.”

Still, Porter said, “it was great. The students who got to meet him were absolutely thrilled.”

Other departments chipped in to take on enormous tasks. “It was chaotic. I was here 13-14 hours a day, Friday-Saturday-Sunday, just trying to get things organized. They took Room 117 completely apart, and we had to shove stuff into trailers, offices and storage spaces to make the place look neat,” said Richard Plum, department chairman of Building Systems Technologies. “And then we were trying to find the keys to all of the tool boxes. Everything that wasn’t lockable we had to get out of the building.”

Periodically, the building was visited by the fire marshal, Troy public safety officials and North Greenbush public safety officials, and those officials and the White House staff coordinated their decisions on the room setup and which materials could stay and which materials had to leave the building. Any materials considered hazardous had to leave the building. Any materials that were trying to find the keys to all of the tool boxes. Everything that wasn’t lockable we had to get out of the building.”

Faculty members Jim Countryman and Mike Bender helped to assemble the electronics backdrop. Joe Sarubbi, executive director of TEC-SMART – the college’s Training and Education Center for Semiconductor Manufacturing and Alternative and Renewable Technologies – interfaced with Alleris Renewable and General Electric, who each donated equipment – and finalized the tour that he would be giving to President Obama. Alleris provided a photovoltaic array to serve as a backdrop. Alleris had designs drawn quickly by an engineer, and their employee stayed up until three in the morning cutting and welding the steel bases,” Porter said. “This was Friday night into Saturday morning. Some students from the photovoltaics class helped out to install it on Saturday morning.”

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The American Graduation Initiative

“Now is the time to build a firmer, stronger foundation for growth that will not only withstand future economic storms, but one that helps us thrive and compete in a global economy. It’s time to reform our community colleges so that they provide Americans of all ages a chance to learn the skills and knowledge necessary to compete for the jobs of the future.”

– President Barack Obama

Maccob Community College
July 14, 2009

Fifty years ago, President Harry Truman called for a national network of community colleges to dramatically expand opportunities for veterans returning from World War II. Today, faced with rapid technological change and global competition, community colleges are needed more than ever to raise American skills and education levels and keep American businesses competitive.

On July 14, 2009, at Macomb Community College in Michigan, President Obama outlined his plan to reform this nation’s community colleges, calling for an additional five million community college graduates by 2020 and new initiatives to teach Americans the skills they will need to compete with workers from other nations. He outlined new initiatives to increase the effectiveness and impact of community colleges, raise graduation rates, modernize facilities, and create new online learning opportunities. These steps — an unprecedented increase in the support for community colleges — are to help rebuild the capacity and competitiveness of America’s workforce. Together, these steps will cost $12 billion over the next decade.

The American Graduation Initiative if passed by congress, would create the “Community College Challenge Fund,” fund innovative strategies to promote college completion; provide funding to catalyze $10 billion in community college facility investment; and create a new online skills laboratory.

At the time of his visit to Hudson Valley Community College, President Obama reaffirmed his commitment to this initiative.

A statement from President Andrew Matonak

Hudson Valley Community College is very excited to see that President Obama has identified community colleges as the engines of change. Community colleges are the engine driving workforce development – and economic development. It’s time to reform our community colleges so that they provide Americans of all ages a chance to learn the skills and knowledge necessary to compete for the jobs of the future.

Community colleges are inclusive institutions that offer educational opportunities to any and all individuals who desire to learn, are unemployed and underemployed – regardless of their financial resources or previous academic experience. Community colleges are responsive to business and industry. They understand economic trends, and educate and train students to excel in cutting-edge industries.

Many industries that show potential growth are innovation are closely tied with community colleges. Hudson Valley offers: biotechnology, nanotechnology, health care, energy, – all can fuel economic recovery and the United States. Best of all, many of the well-paying entry-level jobs in these industries will go to people with a community college degree.

I also am pleased that he recognizes that a government investment in community colleges is needed to achieve his goal of doubling the nation’s hope for economic renewal truly begins with community colleges, and this focus and investment in the community college sector bodes well for the American economy.

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Albany International Airport began preparing for the arrival of President Barack Obama well in advance of the scheduled landing of Air Force One. Prior to the Presidential visit, the White House dispatched staff from several departments to begin coordinating the arrival with airport staff. White House staff, Secret Service and Air Force One’s advance team conducted several planning meetings and briefings with the Albany County Sheriff’s Department, State Police, Colone Police and the staff of Million Air, the Airport’s fixed base operator, all in preparation for the President’s arrival. Each group had its own special mission and it took many airport staff people to fulfill all of their requests.

One day prior to the arrival of the President, two Air Force cargo planes arrived at the airport; one carrying two Presidential limousines and support vehicles; the other carrying additional support and communications equipment. The airport provided a secure overnight storage facility for the Presidential limousines.

Each phase of the arrival was programmed in minute detail. The resting position of Air Force One is determined by the aircraft’s advance team. One day prior to the arrival, the team affixed two wide pieces of white tape to the apron to create what is known as the “T.” The “T” was positioned to mark the exact location of the aircraft’s nose wheel when it came to a full stop. Later that day, the team conducted an Air Force One event briefing for airport personnel.

Security was a major concern during the Presidential visit. While buildings would offer a barrier between Air Force One and the public, the airport was asked to supply a number of pieces of heavy equipment, including dump trucks, to establish an additional barrier along a low-level area near the event site. Five media vans also were positioned to provide additional protection.

The Secret Service also asked for a stanchion barrier to be erected between the aircraft and the media. A secondary stanchion corral was to be established to contain guests that had been invited to witness the arrival. The Airport Authority reached out to the New York State Office of General Services, which provided nearly 400 feet of interlocking metal stanchions to provide the necessary protective barriers.

The White House Press Office requested that a flatbed trailer be positioned near Air Force One to enable photographers and reporters to have an unobstructed view of the President’s arrival. The flatbed was provided by Warren Fane Excavating and Concrete of Troy.

The flattop’s position was determined by the advance team from Air Force One and put into position two hours before the arrival of President Obama.

Members of the media covering the event were required to be on-site with their broadcasting and recording equipment nearly three hours before the scheduled arrival of President Obama. All electronic equipment was required to be in place prior to the arrival time. The media then exited the airfield while their equipment was searched. They would later return, where they were checked in and searched by the Secret Service.

Just before 11 a.m. word came that Air Force One was within range of the Albany International Airport. All other aircraft operations to and from the airport were restricted as airport operations came to a halt. As the Boeing 747 taxied and touched down.

A short distance away, a number of VIPS were gathered in Million Air, waiting for the President to arrive. As Air Force One rolled to a stop, White House staff escorted the guests to within the shadow of the aircraft to prepare to greet the President.

Crews now moved a rolling flight of stairs to the side of Air Force One and President Barack Obama stepped from the blue and white aircraft and waved to the crowd. Seconds later, he walked down the stairs accompanied by Jill Biden, wife of Vice President Joseph Biden and Congressman Paul Tonko. President Obama moved to the waiting guests and met briefly with Governor David Paterson, Albany Mayor Gerald Jennings and Congressman Scott Murphy. Within minutes, the Presidential motorcade departed for Hudson Valley Community College. Once the President was clear of the airport, normal operations resumed.

Less than two hours later, airport operations were again put on hold and security was tightened as the President and his motorcade returned. Quickly, the President climbed to the top of the stairway then turned and waved to the crowd that had gathered. The four engines began to whine as Air Force One taxied to the runway. Minutes later, the giant jet was airborne en route to New York City.

Steven Quick Student
Most soldiers only serve two tours of active duty, but not Steven Quick. During his six years in the Army, he was sent on four tours to Iraq. Now a fresh-
Education Programs and New Technology Jobs Set Stage for Presidential Visit

President Obama's visit to Hudson Valley Community College highlights the success of the Capital Region's private-public education, and high-tech economic development initiatives. Working together, Hudson Valley Community College and GlobalFoundries demonstrates a new partnership model for education and business institutions to create a modern economic engine that will increase opportunities for our business and the entire community.

In his address, President Obama said, “We have here in this community are talented people, entrepreneurs, and world-class learning institutions. The ingredients are right here for growth, and success and a better future. And early next year, Hudson Valley Community College’s state-of-the-art TEC-SMART training center is set to open side-by-side with GlobalFoundries’ coming state-of-the-art semiconductor plant.”

In July 2009, GlobalFoundries broke ground on the construction of Fab 2, the company’s new 300mm semiconductor manufacturing facility at the Luther Forest Technology Campus in Saratoga County, NY. When fully operational, the fab is expected to create approximately 1,400 new technology jobs.

The majority of these new jobs will be wafer fab and maintenance technicians, a specialized and highly skilled career field. Many of the qualified candidates for these new positions are expected to come from the area’s innovative education programs, such as Hudson Valley Community College’s TEC-SMART campus currently under construction in Malta, New York.

“The building blocks of innovation are education, infrastructure, and research. The ability of new industries to thrive depends on workers with the knowledge and the know-how to contribute in those fields,” said Andrew J. Matonak, president of Hudson Valley Community College. “Through innovative programs like TEC-SMART, we are helping to bring together education, infrastructure and research to prepare people for new technology jobs — like those being created by GlobalFoundries.”

"Hudson Valley’s TEC-SMART facility, being built next to our new Fab 2, will be a premier resource for clean energy and semiconductor manufacturing education,” said Norm Armour, vice president and general manager of Fab 2, GlobalFoundries. “We’re looking forward to TEC-SMART holding their first classes in January and we are working closely with Hudson Valley Community College as it develops its education program and facilities, including the campus’ new clean room and semiconductor manufacturing training center to train hundreds of workers for new technology jobs in this region.”

When completed, Fab 2 is expected to be the most advanced semiconductor manufacturing facility in the world capable of producing a range of critical semiconductor products that will serve as the foundation of devices powering today’s digital economy. The new jobs at Fab 2 represent an estimated annual payroll of more than $88 million. In addition, the project is expected to create approximately 5,000 new indirect jobs in the region with a sustained estimated total annual payroll of $290 million per year for all jobs.

In my view, you may ask, why are we here at Hudson Valley? We’re here because this is a place where anyone with the desire to take their career to a new level or start a new career altogether has the opportunity to pursue that dream. This is a place where people of all ages and backgrounds — even in the face of obstacles, even in the face of very difficult personal challenges — can take a chance on a brighter future for themselves and for their family.

I was just talking to the Mayor of Troy, and he was saying how he had studied calculus in the room where we were taking a picture. And I had to inform him I didn’t take calculus. But he was testimony, he was an example of what you can do because of an institution like this.

...And I know that here in Troy, you want and need that chance after so many years of hard times.

...After so many years of failing to act, there are those who now suggest that there’s really not much the government can or should do to make a difference, that what we’ve seen in places like Troy is inevitable; that we’re going to lose parts of our country that helped us lead in the last century don’t have what it takes to help us lead in this one. And I’m here to tell you that that is just flat out wrong. What we have here in this community is talented people, entrepreneurs, world-class learning institutions.

Students here are training full time while working part time at GE Energy in Schenectady, becoming a new generation of American leaders in a new generation of American manufacturing. IBM is partnering with the University at Albany; their partnership in nanotechnology is helping students train in the industries in which America has the potential to lead. Rensselaer is partnering not only with this institution but with businesses throughout the Tech Valley. And early next year, Hudson Valley Community College’s state-of-the-art TEC-SMART training facility is set to open side-by-side with GlobalFoundries’ coming state-of-the-art semiconductor plant.

We also know that in the coming years, jobs requiring at least an associate’s degree are projected to grow twice as fast as jobs requiring no college experience. Think about that — twice as fast. We will not fill those jobs, or keep those jobs here in America, without graduate students, including millions more students from community colleges.

That’s why I’ve asked Dr. Biden to travel the country promoting the opportunities that community colleges offer.

The same thing is true when it comes to energy. No area will need innovation more than in the development of new ways to produce and use and save energy. And you understand that here at Hudson Valley. I firmly believe that the nation that here at Hudson Valley, the nation that leads the development of new forms of energy to research into treatment of ancient diseases, there is so much potential to change our world and improve our lives — while creating countless jobs all across America. This is a reason if we are ready to embrace that potential, if we’re ready to lead, the way once more.

I think we’re ready. I’ve seen it all across America. This generation, generation of young people, sitting here, they have an unparalleled opportunity. We are called upon to help them seize the opportunity. That’s what you’re doing here at Hudson Valley Community College. That’s what I intend to make sure that we do in Washington. That’s what we will do as a nation.
"I understand, as all of you do, the power of these institutions to prepare students for 21st century jobs, and to prepare America for a 21st century global economy. And that's what's happening right here at Hudson Valley Community College."