

**P**ublic college efforts in Waterbury date back to the 1930s post-Depression era that idled high school graduates who were eager for jobs through education and training....

Works Progress Administration (WPA) funding and collaboration between the YMCA and Board of Education offered afternoon and evening courses at the YMCA but after funding ran out, the Waterbury Higher Education, Inc. was organized to campaign for the establishment of a University of Connecticut Branch in Waterbury. That campaign succeeded in 1955 with the branch campus located at Hillside Avenue.

The Waterbury State Technical Institute opened in 1964 in response to the need for engineering technicians for the area's expanding industries. Three years later, the General Assembly upgraded the institute and renamed it a technical college, one of four in the state.



In 1965, a community-based subcommittee followed hearings about establishing a state system of community colleges. Legislation for the system was adopted later that year. The subcommittee looked to Waterbury Higher Education, Inc., which supported the project, and in June 1966, drafted a preliminary application for a community college. A year later in the fall of 1967, Governor John Dempsey, higher education officials and area legislators announced that Waterbury would open a community college. With the intent to increase efficiency through shared resources, it also was announced that this would

be the first step in the creation of a Higher Education Center to house the new community college, the University of Connecticut (UConn) Branch, and Waterbury State Technical College (WSTC). Construction of the new tri-college campus began in late 1973, just off I-84 on a 110-acre site in the west end of Waterbury.

Kenneth Fogg was the founding president of WSTC, which had its own building and a pioneering freshman class of 200 students. Over the next two decades, the college responded to the growing needs of industries in Waterbury (The Brass City) and its surrounding region. Technology degrees and certificates were offered in engineering, industrial management, fire technology, quality assurance, chemical engineering, data processing, automated manufacturing and computer-aided drafting/design, for example. President Fogg was succeeded in 1980 by Charles Ekstrom, until his untimely passing in 1992.





Dr. Charles Kinney was appointed the first president of Mattatuck Community College in 1967. His office was located in the Chase Building in space donated by the City of Waterbury. Admissions office space was provided at the Waterbury Republican-American building. When classes started that September, the college enrolled 288 full-time and 224 part-time students. The college used John F. Kennedy High School after 2:30 p.m. for its inaugural classes. By 1970, 42 full-time and nine part-time faculty served 1,800 students. Hospitals, businesses, churches, and other colleges provided additional classrooms and labs.

A grant-funded Educational Facilities Charette held over four days during April 1970 developed ideas for construction of the higher education complex. As part of Phase I, the building for Mattatuck Community College was to be completed first to accommodate the college's rapid enrollment growth. Facilities for WSTC and the UConn Branch were to follow. Building began in 1972 for the Central Naugatuck Valley Higher Education Center. Construction of Phase II began in 1987, focusing on the learning resources center, music, art, auditorium, and student services.

The years 1971 and 1972 saw the offering of the early childhood education and the nursing programs. The temporary Post Office building on Harvester Road was converted for college use. Several prefabricated buildings were erected adjacent to WSTC so the college could move out of the high school. Full accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) was achieved. Fall 1972 enrollments at Mattatuck Community College were 1,433 full-time and 750 part-time students, the largest enrollment among the city's three public two-year colleges. By the fall of 1977, with the exception of some classrooms and labs, the Mattatuck Community College Building was opened to house students, faculty, administration and staff at a single campus site.

Dr. Kinney retired in 1980, completing 13 years of campus leadership and growth. After a brief interim administration by Dr. Kenneth Summerer, the search for a new president ended with the September 1980 inauguration of Dr. N. Patricia Yarborough. She reorganized some of the college, prepared for NEASC's 10-year accreditation visit, restructured counseling services, introduced self-paced instruction into the Learning Center, and established the Professional Development Center.

This period saw the incorporation of the Friends of Mattatuck, a fundraising group of the Regional Advisory Council which became the Mattatuck Community College Foundation. The college continued to expand its services to students and encouraged development of student activities, cultural events, and sports teams.

Dr. Yarborough resigned in 1982 to accept a position in private industry. The Board of Trustees once again appointed Dr. Kenneth Summerer as interim president, a position he held for the next two years during which time the college was awarded continuing accreditation by NEASC and the licensure of the Automotive Technician and Food Services Management program.

Dr. Richard L. Sanders became the third permanent president in July 1984. His tenure included the final plans for construction and appropriation of



funds for Phase II, revision of the General Studies and Liberal Arts programs, growth in student financial aid, and the construction of an observatory. By 1987, the college served a student body of over 5,000 credit and non-credit students and 200 faculty and staff.

The General Assembly's 1989 legislation to consolidate the boards of trustees governing the technical colleges and the community colleges was followed in 1992 with the merger of Waterbury State Technical College and Mattatuck Community College. The merged college was called Naugatuck Valley Community-Technical College which was shortened in 1999 to Naugatuck Valley Community College (NVCC).

Dr. Sanders retired in 2008. Shortly after, his previous efforts resulted in the construction of the new Technology Hall that replaced the "temporary" buildings that housed classes and special programs. Later that year the board named Dr. Daisy Cocco DeFilippis as the college's fourth president. In her 12 years tenure, Dr. De Filippis presided over the expansion of the school's advanced manufacturing center, the opening of the Danbury campus, and new investments in the college's infrastructure. Her commitment to putting students first and her passionate expectations for student success marked her presidency, especially her advocacy to establish evening bus service to the campus and the entire City of Waterbury.



The college's rich history of community leadership and its commitment to higher education access and academic excellence has answered, and will continue to answer, the challenges of improving the quality of life in the region.