The Sports Arena was filled to capacity not once, but twice, when Lee College awarded more than 300 associate’s degrees and certificates in two separate commencement ceremonies held Saturday, May 12.

An additional 89 students were “pinned” as Licensed Vocational Nurses and Registered Nurses in a separate ceremony.

The two Saturday ceremonies— held at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. and divided by discipline —were a first in the college’s 78-year history and were intended to accommodate increased attendance at the annual event.

“Participation in the commencement ceremony has risen 48 percent in the last six years,” explained Lee College Registrar Becki Griffith.

“With more than 300 graduates participating in the ceremony last year, and fewer than 1,100 spectator seats available, graduates were limited to four tickets for guests, forcing many family and friends to watch the ceremony via video broadcast.”

Griffith says the college was pleased with the results of the decision.

“This year, no tickets were issued and graduates were allowed to invite as many guests as they wished,” she continued. “We received very positive feedback from those in attendance and are pleased that so many friends, family and community members were on hand to support our students.”

Ceremonies began with remarks by Mark Himsel, former chairman of the Lee College Board of Regents and Lee College President Dr. Dennis Brown. Highlights included the induction of students Monica Bennett, Justin Gill and Lynna McGuyer into the Lee College Hall of Fame, and the presentation of the Wahrmund Excellence in Education Awards to English and Humanities instructor Georgeann Ward and Instrumentation instructor Richard Tunstall, as well as a keynote address by Lee College alumnus Agustin Loredo III.

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Aspen Institute recognizes Lee College again

State economy improves, but competition for dollars puts pressure on college’s budget

T he 2013 Legislative session is rapidly approaching, and officials at Lee College are bracing for possible cuts in state appropriations.

“We’re in a period of uncertainty right now,” said Steve Evans, vice president of finance and administration at Lee College. “On one hand Texas is beginning to emerge from the recession and sales tax revenues are up. On the other, we’re preparing to enter into the next legislative session and we’re already hearing rumblings of possible cuts.”

Evans says the college recently received a letter from the Legislative Budget Board advising officials to prepare for a potential 10-percent cut in the 2014-2015 biennium.

“The details weren’t really specified,” he explained, “so we don’t know if we should expect a 10-percent reduction up front, or if we’re looking at 10-percent over two separate years, as it was during the last biennium. A 10% reduction would amount to roughly $1 million dollars of lost funding for the college.”

To make things worse, Evans adds, a recalculation of funding based upon 2012 contact hours is also very likely.

“A 10 percent cut is the amount of time a student spends in class with and instructor,” he explained. “As Texas slowly starts emerging from the recession, enrollment in community colleges is leveling off, resulting in reduced contact hours statewide. Lee College itself is down about nine percent. If the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board reallocates 2013 funding based upon 2012 contact hours, we will definitely take another hit.”

To prepare, the college has begun a thorough analysis of college operations to identify potential areas for cost savings.

“Budget-wise, we did very well this year,” Evans said. “We are about 67-percent through the year and have only spent 62-percent of our budget. We’ve now frozen department budgets in an effort to retain as much as we can this year, and we’re starting to look at our options.

“There is every option being looked at,” he continued, “nothing is off the table.”

Health and Wellness at Lee College

Area residents interested in staying fit and healthy have a number of options to choose from at Lee College.

Indoor Track

Located in the Lee College Sports Arena concourse, the 100-meter indoor track is open to community members free of charge during the college’s hours of operation.

Open Swim

The college’s 25-meter lap-pool is located in the Gymnasium. The pool is open from 2 – 7 p.m. Monday – Thursday and from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Fridays. Costs is $25 per person per term or $75 per year.

Wellness Center

Featuring more than 25 Life Fitness cardio machines, a full line of Magnum selectorized resistance equipment, 20 overhead speakers, four televisions and a staff of trained physical educators, the Lee College Wellness Center offers area residents a friendly, comfortable place to get and stay in shape. Located in the college’s Sports Arena, the center is open 5:30 a.m. – 8 p.m. Monday – Thursday; 5:30 a.m. – 2 p.m. Fridays and 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. Saturdays. Costs for non-senior citizens range from $5 per day, $15 per week, $120 per term or $324 per year. Discounts are available for seniors age 65 and older.

For additional information, visit www.lee.edu/kaw/wellness.

Wayne Gray returns as Board of Regents chair

Long-time Lee College Regent Wayne Gray was recently named chairman of the Lee College Board of Regents. The appointment was part of a larger re-organization approved at the board’s May 17 meeting.

Regents Susan Moore-Fontenot, Pete C. Alfaro and Dr. Keith Coburn were also appointed vice-chair, secretary and assistant secretary, respectively. A lifetime resident of Baytown, Gray received his bachelor’s degree in chemistry from the University of Houston, worked for 23 years as a chemist for ExxonMobil, and is currently in the retail pharmacy business. He has served as chairman of the Baytown Parks and Recreation Board since 1996.

Honors student Celeste Butler had the opportunity to see her work immortalized in stone when the Harris County Historical Commission unveiled the college’s Historical Marker, recently. The narrative featured on the marker (GPHC), the Dennis Boe Award Zucha College Educational Opportunity Center (EOC), was based on Butler’s 2009 Honors thesis for the American Studies course. Butler’s role in the historical marker initiative was highlighted at the event and in news articles in the Baytown Sun, ABC 13 and in a live broadcast on News 92 FM Radio.

Eight adult prospective students are now one step closer to obtaining a GED and enrolling in college thanks to a generous donation by the Pilot Club of Baytown. Recently, Pilot Club Education Committee Chair Jenicie Golley presented the Lee College Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) with a check for $400. For the second consecutive year, research papers compiled by two Lee College Honors students have received the Dennis Bow Award. Lynn McGrayer and Caleb Shaver placed first and second in the competition, respectively. Sponsored by the Great Plains Honors Council (GPHC), the Dennis Bow Award showcases and rewards outstanding scholarly work by undergraduate honors program college students. To date, Lee College is the only GPHC institution to have two students receive two of the three awards in consecutive years.

In April, Vice President of Learning Dr. Cathy Kemper joined faculty members Roberta McClure, Dana Byal, Sharon Lockett and Al Zucka in attending the Entering Student Success Institute (ESSI) in Santa Fe, NM. Associate Degree Nursing students Daniel Gonzalez, Karla Palmer and Stacy Lumberas were recently honored at the Methodist Hospital’s Outstanding Student Nurse Gala. Nursing faculty member Dr. Crislyn McDaniel says program faculty selected the students from among 89 current matriculating students.

Former Honors Program student Amber Trent was recently recognized for her scholastic achievement in Germany by program faculty at UT-Arlington. Lee College’s first Jack Kent Cooke Scholar, Vanessa Rae Banks-Gonzales, recently received her Master of Science in Nursing from the University of Texas Health Science Center. Speech Communication Instructor Joe Ganakos was recently named chairperson of community colleges for the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board’s ACW Workgroup. The 12-member group is charged with reviewing and revising existing state curricular descriptions and learning outcomes for all speech courses in Texas community colleges and universities.

English and Humanities Instructor Jerry Hamby’s poem, “And a Gibbous Moon,” was published in the most recent issue of The Texas Review. Another poem, “Alfresco,” will appear in the 2013 Texas Poetry Calendar. Honors Program Coordinator John Britt was recently selected to be an Honorary Life Member of the Great Plains Honors Council (GPHC). Britt served as president of the council, which is comprised of more than 70 college and university honors programs in six states, from 2002-2003.

On May 5, Biology instructor Margene Lenamon and Process Piping Design lead instructor Donna Burroughs served as guest speakers at Carver Elementary’s Girls’ Science Conference. During the STEM-sponsored event, Lenamon helped students use microscopes to delve into forensic science while Burroughs taught them to calculate materials used in architectural structures and assemble a custom marshmallow launcher from PVC piping.

In May, Drafting instructor Dana Byal and Biology instructor Scott Nunez received the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development’s NISOD Excellence Award, and were honored at the organization’s International Conference on Teaching and Leadership Excellence in Austin.

On Thursday, May 17, Rocol Print Shop Manager James Grammer was named “Rocol Site Leader of the Year” by the global technology company’s Houston office.

Veterans Specialist Ehab Mustafa recently earned his master’s degree in Counseling from the University of Houston–Clear Lake and is now a Licensed Professional Counselor.

Head Volleyball Coach Tracie Johnson reports four Lady Rebel Volleyball players have been awarded athletic scholarships to NCACA-Division I universities. Monicia Preston and Janette Batista received scholarships to Prairie View A&M University, while Avery Lewis and Rachel Dunlap received scholarships to the University of Arkansas and Central Connecticut University, respectively.

Planned renovations to Rundell Hall, a college landmark and former administration building, remain on schedule, reports Lee College Vice President of Finance and Administration Steve Evans.

“The asbestos abatement in Rundell Hall has been completed and we are on track to begin construction on the second floor improvements in early July,” Evans said. “Renovations should be completed by summer 2013.”

Opened in 1951, Rundell Hall was the first building of the Lee College campus. Originally housing 18 classrooms, 20 administrative areas, the admissions office, two auditoriums, an orchestra room, and office space for each of seven previous Lee College presidents, the facility was closed in 2007 due to rising maintenance costs coupled with inadequate heating and cooling equipment. “Closing Rundell Hall was a very difficult decision,” Evans said. “It was the ‘face’ of Lee College. But it was no longer suitable for students or faculty.” That will soon change.

Once completed, Evans says the first phase of the proposed improvements—which include renovations to the second floor, as well as upgrades to the H-VAC system and building exterior—will accommodate more than 400 students enrolled in the Impact Early College High School (Impact ECHS), an innovative academic program established in partnership with Goose Creek CISD. Though plans for phase two of the renovation have yet to be finalized, the scope of work is anticipated to include renovations to the first floor, auditorium and Moody Center.

“Lee College has assembled a task force responsible for making recommendations regarding the first floor use Rundell Hall,” Evans said. “The task force is carefully weighing the college’s needs and helping design a master facilities plan for Rundell Hall.”

The cooperative effort, he says, will ensure the improvements will address the college’s needs for years to come.
Lee College Foundation recognizes new 2012 scholarships

- **Air Products Scholarship**
  - This $1,000 tuition scholarship is designed to encourage six worthy students to pursue a degree and future employment in the field of Process Technology.

- **East Harris County Manufacturers Association Scholarship**
  - $1,000 tuition scholarship encourages students to pursue a degree and future employment in the field of Process Technology.

- **Robert Gillette Memorial Scholarship**
  - Established by Mr. Gillette’s children, this $1000 tuition scholarship supports students seeking a variety of degrees.

- **The LaDell Hillard First Lee College Graduate Scholarship**
  - Established in honor of LaDell Hillard, one of four women to receive their associate’s degrees from Lee College in 1935, this $1000 scholarship is awarded to a student majoring in education.

- **The Robert E. Lee Class of 1960 Second Scholarship**
  - This scholarship will be awarded to a Lee High School graduate ranked among the top 25 percent of his or her class.

- **Bayshore Fine Rides Textbook Scholarship**
  - This $200 textbook scholarship will be awarded to a student who has participated in the Goose Creek CISD Stuart Career Center’s automotive trades program, is ranked in the top 25 percent of his or her automotive class and shows a talent and desire to continue his or her education in an automotive field.

- **Lawrence W. Maher, Jr., DDS, Memorial Scholarship**
  - Established in memory of Rene Maher’s late husband, this $200 textbook scholarship will be awarded to a student pursuing a degree in the nursing, allied health or pre-dental field.

- **William J. McNeil Memorial Scholarship**
  - Established in honor long-time Lee College history professor William J. McNeil, this $200 textbook scholarship supports students majoring in any field.

- **Rotary Club of Baytown Textbook Scholarship**
  - This $200 textbook scholarship supports students in any field of study.

- **Crescencio Ruiz Memorial Scholarship**
  - This $200 textbook scholarship supports students degree in any program of study.

New funding for higher education remains caught in the crosshairs of cutbacks and a sputtering economy, private donations to higher education are increasing across the country, and Baytown is no exception.

“This has been a banner year for the Lee College Foundation,” said Executive Director Pam Warford. “In addition to raising more than $100,000 for student scholarships and support services at our gala, we were also able to establish 15 new scholarships for worthy students.

“Most of the Foundation scholarships are named, endowed scholarships,” Warford explained. “In these instances, the original gift remains in the corpus of the Foundation, and the investment earnings are used for those scholarships. Of course, some donors choose not to endow their gift. In those instances, funds are distributed according to their wishes.”

Endowed tuition scholarships are $10,000 payable over a three-year period; endowed textbook scholarships are $5,000. Additional gifts help fund services for students on campus. The Foundation will award $265,000 to students during the upcoming academic year.

Although we are so proud of the work we have been able to accomplish, there is still much to be done to assist students, particularly now, when the cost of education continues to rise, and funding for public institutions continues to decline,” Warford added. “But thanks to the continued support of our generous benefactors, we know we are taking great strides toward our goal of ensuring that every worthy student is able to complete his or her education.”

Former-LEE welcomes new lifetime members

More than 30 former Lee College students have a chance to meet “the new guy” in charge, when the Association of Former Lee College Students (Former-LEE) hosted its second annual Lifetime Members Luncheon recently. Established in 2011, the annual event provides “lifetime” association members with the opportunity to network with the college president and former classmates as they learn more about the state of their Alma matter.

“The Lifetime Members Luncheon with the President is a benefit reserved exclusively for lifetime members, explained Lee College Director of Grant Development and Alumni Relations Ginni Whitten. “The luncheon is our way of identifying, recognizing and thanking those who have so generously donated to Lee College.”

Held in the Performing Arts Center Lobby, this year’s luncheon featured brief presentations by Former-LEE President Dr. Tim Planty, as well as Former-LEE members Pat Mann and Gertrude Teter. Highlights of the event included remarks from new Lee College President Dr. Dennis Brown, and the induction of 10 new lifetime members to the organization.

Whitten says memberships have increased 22 percent in the last year, a statistic she attributes in part to the success of the luncheon.

“The association is dedicated to creating and maintaining lifelong connections between Lee College, former students and friends and helping the college continue its growth as an institution of learning excellence. Our primary mission is to keep Lee College’s legacy alive. With the support of our members, we are able to continue to fulfill this goal.”

Lee College makes a name in literature, academia

“Now bad do you want it?”

For years, that question echoed in Glenn Blake’s ears, pushing him to write, re-write and re-submit his stories to countless magazines and publishing houses. Then, in 2001 the long-awaited phone call finally came: Blake’s first short story collection, Drowned Moon, was being published.

It was the culmination of a 25-year journey—one made possible by a handful of Lee College faculty who believed in the “most unlikely” distinguished alumnus and son of the late LC Regent Bill Blake.

“I had no business going to college, I had way too much fun in high school,” the Baytown native said. “Out of a class of 470 I was around number 450, and under my yearbook photo, it read, ‘Most likely to go to prison.’”

Originally planning to attend Southwest Texas State University, he enrolled at Lee College at the behest of family friend, Dee Wheatly III, then dean of student personnel services at the college.

Blake began his academic career slowly, securing a drama scholarship and enrolling in two classes his first semester. He added a class per term, became active in student life, joined the Honors Program, was inducted into the college Hall of Fame, and in 1976, graduated a Walter Russendall Scholar—the highest accolade bestowed upon a male student.

Lee instructors encouraged Blake to attend Rice University—where he triple majored in English, History and Philosophy—and supported him as he pursued advanced degrees at both the University of Houston and The Johns Hopkins University.

They kept in touch, Blake says, as he trekked along an arduous career path that has included teaching positions at Rice, UH and Johns Hopkins, editorial positions at magazines including The Texas Review, Gulf Coast and The Hopkins Review, two short story collections, a number of critically acclaimed short films, and a forthcoming novel.

And those that remain, including long-time mentor, Thurman Rowlett, Sr., sat in the front row, smirking as Blake returned to his Alma mater March 22, and read an excerpt from his first collection, at a special Former-LEE event held in his honor.

“I always knew Glenn had potential,” Rowlett said, “and he has gone on to achieve more than I could have ever hoped or dreamed for him.”

For Blake, anything less would have meant disappointing his biggest supporters.

“Lee College saved me,” he said. “I had professors here that I would stack up against my greatest professors at Rice, UH and Hopkins. I am where I am because they believed in me, and would not accept anything less than success.”
Lee College ranked fifth in the nation for degrees in science and technology

Community College Week Magazine recently ranked Lee College fifth in the nation among two-year institutions for associates degrees awarded in science and technology. The college jumped one spot in ranking from previous years. There are more than 1,200 public, two-year colleges in the U.S.

“At a time when increased attention is being focused upon degree and certificate completion, it is gratifying to see Lee College receive national recognition for its commitment to student success,” said Lee College Vice President of Learning Dr. Cathy Kemper. “As the data illustrates, we are making steady gains in closing the educational gaps among our diverse student population and fueling our local workforce.”

My Perspective

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staff the positions that are becoming vacant due to impending retirements. This will be accomplished through the offering of career and technical certificate and Associate of Applied Science degrees. The one- and two-year degree programs of study are ideally suited to provide prospective applicants for these highly sought after and well compensated jobs the requisite skills to be competitive in the hiring process. Lee College offers many of the programs that will prepare students for these rewarding careers.

Lee College has joined with industry, the community (including city and county government), and our partner school districts in the Workforce Preparedness Initiative, which is a strategy that will drive the planning and execution of efforts to ensure that a highly qualified workforce is in place to meet the impending needs of local industries. In meeting our role in this endeavor, Lee College will be re-imagining its strategy for both preparing the needed 21st Century workforce, but also meeting the corporate training needs of a highly technical workforce. Over the next year you will be hearing exciting news coming from Lee College that will transform the way Lee College serves our community and the businesses and industries that offer area residents a bright and successful future.

As your institution of higher education, Lee College stands ready to meet the needs of our communities for a vibrant economic future and the trained workforce that will be required to secure that future. The time is now, not tomorrow. Contact Lee College and find out how we can be a part of your future. It will be a bright and prosperous future.

President
Dr. Dennis Brown

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