

## Stockton to Unveil Portraits of 4 Previous Presidents at Inauguration of Harvey Kesselman on Sept. 23

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**Galloway, N.J.** - When Stockton University inaugurates its fifth president, Harvey Kesselman, on **Friday, Sept. 23**, the contributions of his predecessors will be honored as their portraits, painted by alumnus James Raczkowski, a New York-based artist, are unveiled in the Campus Center.

"Each of Stockton's four presidents was a mentor to me," said Kesselman, who was a student in Stockton's first class. "Richard Bjork established a community that welcomed and supported students, including first-generation college students such as myself. Peter Mitchell hired me for my first job here, as a tutor for the Education Opportunity Fund (EOF). Vera King Farris pushed me to get advanced degrees because she said she saw potential in me, and Herman Saatkamp supported my work as dean and then provost by establishing new schools at Stockton.

"Each of them played an enormous role during the 45-year journey that has brought Stockton from a brand-new, small college in the woods to a nationally recognized university," Kesselman continued. "I am honored to continue their legacy of excellence in teaching, support for scholarship and dedication to service."

Kesselman had requested that the presidents' portraits be painted in planning the inauguration ceremony, which is open to the public and serves as a rededication of the university and a reaffirmation of its values and traditions.

The presidential portraits will be put on display at a reception in the Campus Center following the inauguration in the Sports Center, which begins at 4 p.m. Some members of the former presidents' families are expected to attend and help to unveil the portraits.

Raczkowski graduated from Stockton in 2011 with a degree in Painting after serving in the military in Iraq. During his service, he was trained as a tanker and infantryman and after  
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receiving specialized security training, he conducted numerous special operations missions overseas. Much of his work has been influenced by the transformative events he experienced while deployed, he said.

He earned his MFA from the New York Academy of Art in May 2015, and currently lives in Brooklyn, N.Y. During his time at the Academy, he received the Academy Scholarship, the New Jersey Heart of a Hero Scholarship and was awarded a summer residency in Moscow. His work was recently published in an acclaimed book, "The Figure."

"Painting Stockton's presidents was an honor in which I took great pleasure," Raczkowski said. "By the end of the project, I felt as if I have known each of them personally, as if we were old friends. This mostly came from the fact that I must have stared into their eyes enough for a few years' worth of self-reflective mirror gazing.

"In particular, as an artist, I took great joy in remastering the University's old black and white photos. This process was both challenging and extremely satisfying," he said.

Raczkowski initially sketched the portraits digitally and then developed and painted them analog in oil paint.

"While working on them, I drew from some of the giants of portraiture, inspired by Rembrandt's light, Ingres' form, and Hans Holbein the Younger's detail," he said.

The inauguration marks the beginning of a presidency, but is also an opportunity to reflect on Stockton's values and look toward its future.

Kesselman, a member of Stockton's first class, has more than 35 years of experience in higher education and is a tenured professor in the School of Education.

In his previous role as provost and executive vice president, he implemented Stockton's Essential Learning Outcomes initiative, extended the community and global reach of the institution, and supported faculty initiatives and scholarly innovation through the university's 2020 strategic planning process.

Kesselman's other executive leadership roles at Stockton have included: dean of the School of Education, interim vice president for Administration and Finance, CEO of the Southern Regional Institute & Educational Technology Training Center, and vice president for Student Affairs.

He received his bachelor's degree in Political Science from Stockton, his master's degree in Student Personnel Services/Counseling from Rowan University, and his doctorate in Higher Education Administration from Widener University.

The inauguration will feature a special address by Jon Blair, an Academy Award-winning film producer and director with long-time ties to Stockton whose work includes the 1995 documentary, "Anne Frank Remembered."

Blair is the only director of documentaries working in the United Kingdom who has won all three of the premier awards in his field: an Oscar, two Emmys and a British Academy Award. He was appointed Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in 2015.

In 1994, Blair was awarded an honorary doctorate by Stockton for his contribution to human rights awareness through his film-making work. He also made a film about Stockton for its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration.

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Other speakers will include: State Sen. Christopher Connors, R- 9<sup>th</sup>, a 1978 Stockton graduate; state Sen. James Whelan, D- 2<sup>nd</sup>; President George A. Pruitt of Thomas Edison State University; Michael Klein, executive director of the N.J. Association of State Colleges and Universities; and Richard Dovey, chair of the University Foundation and a member of Stockton's first graduating class of 1975.

Faculty Senate President Brian Tyrrell and Student Senate President Maryam Sarhan will offer their groups' salutations. Board Chair Deininger will serve as the host and provide welcoming and closing remarks.

For more information and to RSVP to attend the inauguration, visit [Stockton.edu/president/inauguration](http://Stockton.edu/president/inauguration).

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