

STOCKTON COLLEGE

THE RICHARD STOCKTON COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY



Richard Stockton College of NJ Hosts Site Visit by Commission on Presidential Debates

College Shines in Bid for 2012 Presidential or Vice Presidential Debate

For Immediate Release

Thursday, May 12, 2011

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Galloway Township, NJ- The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey completed the next step today in its bid to host a 2012 Presidential or Vice Presidential Debate.

President Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr. hosted a comprehensive site visit from a three-person delegation representing the Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD) that included inspection of the 4,000 – seat Sports Center, proposed site of the Debate Hall. The delegation also toured additional campus facilities, including the new Campus Center, and interviewed College personnel responsible for the logistics of staging a debate that would focus positive international attention on Stockton, the region and New Jersey.

“Stockton’s reputation for academic excellence and community engagement make it a natural choice for a debate site,” Dr. Saatkamp said. “Our facilities, location and infrastructure make it a practical choice as well.”

Dr. Saatkamp noted the College location is a short drive from the nation’s first and fourth-largest media markets and just 15 minutes from a secure federal facility, the William J. Hughes Federal Aviation Administration Technical Center. He said that Stockton’s recent purchase of the historic Seaview Resort, just five minutes from the main campus, and the College’s proximity to Atlantic City International Airport would facilitate presidential and candidate travel and accommodations. The Airport/Tech Center complex is also home to the Air National Guard’s 177th Fighter Wing and the NextGen Aviation Research and Technology Park.

Stockton’s bid for a debate was formally submitted in March to Janet H. Brown, Executive Director of the CPD. It has the support of Governor Chris Christie, Ambassador William J. Hughes, a former longtime area congressional representative and ambassador to Panama, U.S. Senators Robber Menendez and Frank Lautenberg, U.S. Rep. Frank LoBiondo, State Sen. James Whelan, and Assemblymen John Amodeo and Vince Polistina. Among the many other public supporters are Atlantic County Executive Dennis Levinson, Galloway Mayor Keith Hartman, Casino Reinvestment Development Authority Chairman James Kehoe, South Jersey Transportation Authority Executive Director Bart Mueller, President and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce of Southern New Jersey Debra Di Lorenzo, Greater Atlantic City Chamber of

Commerce President Joseph Kelly and President of the Constitutional Officers Association of New Jersey, Rita Marie Fulginiti.

“Additionally, we have received an outpouring of support from area community members, businesses and schools,” noted Dr. Saatkamp.

Thursday’s visit by CPD representatives was coordinated by Sharon Schulman, Special Assistant to the President and Executive Director of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy. In addition to the campus and Sports Center tours, the CPD and Stockton delegations discussed debate requirements for infrastructure, communications, event support and security.

“We are confident Stockton’s many distinctive features, along with community support, will fare impressively in all aspects the CPD requires to host an event of this magnitude,” Dr. Saatkamp said. “A Presidential Debate or Vice Presidential Debate at Stockton will showcase the region and state in a most favorable light and in a global sense, illustrate how the free exchange of ideas and free elections work in a great democracy.”

Located on a scenic 2,000-acre main campus set in the heart of the Pinelands National Reserve, Stockton’s 60-mile proximity to Philadelphia, 125 miles to New York and 175 miles to Washington D.C. place it within easy travel range of one-third of the nation’s population. The College is serviced not only by Atlantic City’s own international airport and rail station but those of the nation’s capital and two of its largest cities. Dr. Saatkamp said several Atlantic City hotel properties have committed to provide the 3,000 rooms required to accommodate international media and debate guests.

Stockton’s purchase of Seaview enables the participants to prepare for the event in a world-class resort with conference center facilities and large room-blocks just a 10-minute shuttle ride away from the Debate Hall. Dr. Saatkamp noted Seaview is a learning laboratory for its Hospitality and Tourism Management Studies program students. If chosen to host the debate, the College’s political science and communications students and community as a whole would benefit, he said.

“The advantages of hosting a Presidential or Vice Presidential Debate are key elements to our mission as an educational institution and community partner,” Dr. Saatkamp said. “Such civic and community engagement is a longstanding tradition at Stockton.” Stockton was recognized earlier in year by the Carnegie Foundation with the prestigious Community Engagement Classification. He also noted the College’s experience in hosting national and international events involving U.S. and foreign Olympic and World Cup organizations.

Dr. Saatkamp pointed out the millions of dollars a debate would bring to the local and regional economies through the purchase of hotel rooms and visitor spending and through the resulting positive media attention.

“When considering all the aspects needed to host an event of this importance and scope, it becomes clear Stockton has the physical and human resources, ability, experience and desire to make a successful debate happen here,” he said. “What a remarkable message this would send to students, faculty, staff and community: we are engaged at the highest levels and prepared to display our abilities on the international stage.”

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