

## SPECIAL ISSUE FEATURE

# Letters to John Roueche

## Celebrating a Lasting Legacy

Among contemporary leaders of the community college movement, perhaps none have had a more profound impact than John E. Roueche, who is retiring after 41 years of leading the Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas at Austin.

The CCLP has produced more college leaders than any other program of its kind, and has played a groundbreaking role in advancing the careers of women and minorities. CCLP's reach has been extended by its affiliates NISOD (the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development) and CCSSE (the Community College Survey of Student Engagement). It is deeply involved in Achieving the Dream, a national organization dedicated to student success.

By studying in cohorts — or blocks, as they came to be called — CCLP students formed strong bonds with one another, and with Roueche.

As Roueche's retirement nears, *Community College Week* asked some of his CCLP graduates and colleagues to share their experiences in personal letters. Responses ranged from poems to heartfelt missives detailing how Roueche changed their lives. Here is a sampling:

### Baker:

## Teacher, Brother, Mentor, Friend

Dr. John E. Roueche

The time is spring 1970. I'm just back from my second tour in Vietnam, and fortunate to be alive, and to be assigned by the Marine Corps to seek a doctorate in educational leadership at Duke University. Always the non-traditional student, I told my advisor at Duke that I wanted experience above and beyond sitting and listening to lectures. Scarcely home two weeks, an appointment was arranged with Dr. John E. Roueche, who headed the community college division of the National Laboratory for Higher Education. After a brief interview, and based on instant rapport, I found myself riding the wave of the greatest experiential educational adventure of a lifetime. With the top change agents in the world, and under John Roueche's leadership, we set about to change the basic thinking and behavior of leaders and teachers regarding student success.

John, I found in you a teacher, brother, mentor, and friend, and that early powerful learning and experience has now lasted a lifetime. You brought me to the University of Texas at Austin, in 1978, and gave me responsibility far beyond my readiness. You believed even to this day, in the goodness of people, and the deep abiding love of being motivated to succeed. Now after 42 years as friends, and in the twilight of my years, you remain the most important professional scholar, teacher, and leader in the short history of the community college movement, and I am proud to be a star in your constellation.

Dr. George A. Baker III  
Distinguished University Professor, Emeritus  
North Carolina State University

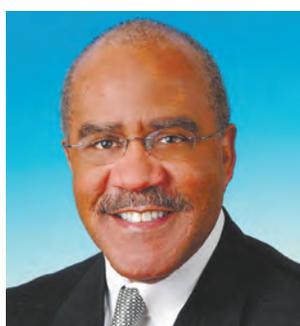


John E. Roueche with Craig Follins, CCLP graduate and president of Olive-Harvey College.

PHOTO COURTESY NISOD

### Bumphus:

## Viewed From a Front Row Seat



Walter Bumphus, Ph.D.  
President and CEO,  
AACC  
UT Distinguished Graduate  
1992

Dear John,

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for all you have done in preparing, literally hundreds of leaders of our nation's community colleges. You have had an impact on tens of thousands of educators through your scholarship, research, college visits and presentations. Your work has helped to inspire a generation of college faculty and staff toward improving student success.

Lastly, you will certainly be missed in your work at The University of Texas at Austin (UT) and the Community College Leadership Program (CCLP). Having had the opportunity of working directly with you at UT, I had a front row seat to witness the once in a lifetime work you have done for the university. In my humble opinion, your contributions are incomparable and appreciated by the field of community college

leaders like no one before you, and I dare say, there will never be another like you.

Thank you for your legacy of leadership my mentor, my friend, and my brother.

Walter G. Bumphus

### Hammons: Enduring Footprint

Dear John,

I will focus on the one aspect of your career that I am uniquely qualified to speak about—your footprint as a professor.

First, the overall assessment. As a professor, John, you really have no equal. You are truly in a league of your own.

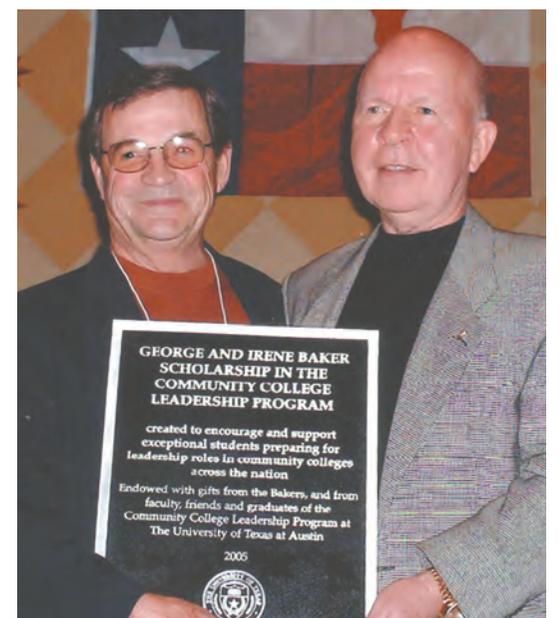
Let's look at some of what you have done. All of these should be preceded by the phrase—"more than anyone else". For example, "more than anyone else," you have: chaired more dissertations and dissertations of the year, received more service awards, more teaching awards, more merit increases, more research awards, more publication awards, more grants, authored or co-authored more books (40+) and articles (160+), and sited by more authors. And last, the professional achievement that is your most important contribution -you and your colleagues have admitted and graduated more women and minorities who became successful presidents and vice-presidents—than any other program.

In short, your "footprint" is huge and I cannot imagine anyone ever filling the shoes that made those footprints.

Finally, my life, like that of so many others, has truly been enriched because of my association with you.

Thank you, John.

Jim Hammons  
Professor of Higher Education  
University of Arkansas (1976-present)



George Baker III (left) and John Roueche at the establishment of the George and Irene Baker Community College Leadership Program Scholarship LP Scholarship



## Waiwaiole: Truly Transformational



**Evelyn N. Waiwaiole**  
Program Manager  
Center for Community  
College Student  
Engagement

John:

For over four decades you have taught, researched and written, celebrated faculty and leaders in the field through NISOD and the NISOD Excellence Awards, and modeled leadership. The word transformational is overused today – but you truly transformed the perception and mindset about community colleges and much is owed to you. I thank you for changing the way we think and for your investment in the human spirit – the encouragement of people – and for believing in the people that invested in the ‘every day’ student at the community college.

Evelyn N. Waiwaiole

## Perez “The Past is Prologue”

Dear John,

There are few words to capture all that you have given and shared with so many through your years of service to community colleges and colleagues around the globe. As I reflect on our first meeting at NISOD, when I was working as a software consultant in the corporate sector, to our most recent meeting—presenting to Block 67 as a 2012 Distinguished Graduate of the Community College Leadership Program—I recognize how you have shaped my career and influenced a professional path for me for my lifetime. My passion for community colleges was sparked from personal and positive experiences following this ‘open door’ to higher education, but my sincere commitment to community colleges was encouraged by your ideas about the work to be done and the ideal that there is great success to be gained in serving students who have yet to recognize all they can be—as you have recognized this in me and so many others.



**Stella Perez**  
COO and VP of  
Technology,  
League for Innovation in  
the Community College

I have so many favorite JER phrases, quotes, and messages you have shared through the years, but above all, my most favorite and most hopeful is your message of always looking forward—and in your words—“The Past is Prologue.” I wish you all the best of a new journey and new opportunities yet to come.

Sincerely,  
Stella

## Mathis: Looking Forward

John and Suanne,



**Margaretta brede Mathis**

What a wonderful occasion to celebrate your outstanding contributions to the community college field as well as your plans for the future. We are fortunate to have you as dear and cherished friends. We wish you the very best and look forward to many years of brainstorming, collaborating, and sharing good times together.

Margaretta and John Mathis



**Donald W. Cameron**

## Cameron Becoming a Better President

John,

Wow!!! It is very difficult for one to find the right words to express my gratitude to a man who has truly changed the community college movement in America. Through your writings, teaching, and consulting, your numerous contributions to America’s 1,200 community colleges will go unmatched.

I want to say a special thank you for the times I called upon you for guidance and advice. You never steered me wrong. While I served as president of Guilford Technical Community College, you always came to present at my President’s Leadership Seminar. By the way, you always received the highest ratings on the evaluation forms.

John, your legacy will live on forever in the halls of community colleges. I became a better president by being associated with you for over 40 years. I tried hard to model what the master taught.

Best always to you and Suanne in your future endeavors.

Sincerely,  
Donald W. Cameron



**Alfredo G. de los Santos Jr.**  
Tempe, AZ

## Alfredo Continueing to Contribute

Estimado Juanito,

For more than four decades, you have dedicated your life to the Community College Leadership Program; and with your drive, energy, leadership, and vision, you built it, as I have said many times, into the best in the world. As well, your research, publications, and other contributions to policy and practice will be part of your legacy. But, in my view, your most important legacy will be the hundreds of leaders you have helped to prepare to serve our community colleges throughout the country.

Amigo mío, I know that retiring is not easy. Also, I know that it is hard to let go. But all things have their season. Letting go opens up other options that one would not otherwise consider. John, since we met in the late 1960s, we have been friends and have worked together. I know that you will continue to contribute; I hope that we will have a chance to work together again. To you and yours, as always, I wish only the very best.

Suerte...de la buena.  
Amigos siempre,  
Alfredo G. de los Santos  
14 May 21012



**Gerardo de los Santos**  
President and CEO,  
League for Innovation in  
the Community College

## Gerardo Two Generations of CCLP'er

Dear John,

Heartfelt congratulations and thanks from a second-generation CCLP'er! You have made such a meaningful difference in the lives of so many of us, so many community college leaders, me especially. I've also so enjoyed the long-standing relationship that we've enjoyed via the League and CCLP partnership that you and Terry initiated from the beginning. And I look forward to our continued good work together as the opportunities before you will be unyielding.

With gratitude and affection,  
Gerardo



**Bob Paxton**

## Paxton Touched the Lives of Millions

Dr. Roueche,

I want to take this time to thank you for the mentorship you have provided to your graduates and the many community college staff through the years. You have been instrumental in shaping the landscape of community colleges in this nation. When you think about it, you have literally touched the lives of millions of community college graduates. You addressed so many critical issues that community colleges faced from diversity to the open door; and from excellence in teaching and learning to student success. We are all indebted to you for the passion and care you demonstrate to all of us. No one has a bigger heart and a brighter vision than you!

Thank you.  
Bob Paxton



## Noonan-Terry: Little Things Lead to Big Impacts

Dr. Roueche,

Not only was I fortunate to have you as one of my major professors and mentors, but I have been one of only a handful to have the privilege of calling you my boss.

I could write pages and pages about the impact you, a living legend, have made throughout your distinguished career and the recognition you have brought not only to the field of higher education and specifically community colleges, but also to The University of Texas at Austin, the College of Education, and the Department of Educational Administration. As only the second Director of the Community College Leadership Program (CCLP), you have helped build the best program in producing community college leaders in the world! Each day, students have the opportunity to meet with and learn from the most accomplished leaders in the field. Through your fundraising efforts, students are sent on site visits for up to a week at a time several times throughout the year. By using the cohort-method and your unique teaching style, your program



**Coral Noonan-Terry**  
Coral Noonan-Terry,  
Interim Director, NISOD

provides a seamless transition into the workplace so that graduate students can use what they have learned to transform community colleges. You have graduated hundreds of students and still always make time to stay in touch with and meet with your current and former students. I have never heard you say that you were too busy to meet with a student. At a conference recently, I heard from a newly appointed community college president (who is not an alumnus of the program) who exclaimed, "My day has been made! John Roueche knew my name!" That is the kind of icon you are, and yet by your humility one would never know.

During my tenure at the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) for the past eight years, I have observed how you model how to celebrate the people on the front lines of working with students — your staff. From the little things, a note on our desks to breakfast tacos in the mornings, that's the very caring person we love and appreciate.

There is not another person like you. We are so fortunate to have you bless our lives. Congratulations on your retirement from The University of Texas at Austin!

Coral

## Thornton: Genuine Caring and Concern



**Jerry Sue Thornton**  
President  
Cuyahoga Community  
College District  
Cleveland, Ohio

To Dr. John E. Roueche, the ultimate professor, lecturer, orator, author, and friend, I say thank you for your numerous and outstanding gifts that you have bestowed on me over the years as your student, colleague and friend. While you have made so many world-class contributions to the community college literature and body of knowledge, perhaps your most revered offerings have been the sharing of your personal stories, insights and genuine caring and concern about people. I have truly been the beneficiary of these very human characteristics that make you so elegantly unique. As you turn the page of one phase of your life to the next, may you always retain that essence of your connecting spirit that touches lives beyond the learning.

With gratitude,

Jerry Sue Thornton

## O'Banion: An Unmatched Record



**Terry O'Banion**  
Terry O'Banion, President  
Emeritus, League for  
Innovation

In the 110-year history of the community college movement there have been some great leaders — Koos, Eells, Bogue, Medsker, and Gleazer among them. But none of these historical giants come close to achieving the record set by you, John. And for the next 110 years your record (39 books, \$40 million in grants, 38 national awards, speaker at more than 1,300 colleges, and more than 500 CCLP graduates) will never be equaled. John, you are our Champion!

Terry O'Banion

## Boggs: Thanks for Your Work

Dear John:

As you complete this phase of your professional career, I want to thank you — for being my teacher, mentor, and friend. You have touched many lives and shaped the community college movement in ways that no one else has done. Your impact on community college faculty and administrators as well as your scholarship has improved every aspect of what we do for our students, our colleges, and our communities. I am honored to have been able to learn from you and to work with you. I look forward to continuing our work together in the years ahead.

George R. Boggs



**George R. Boggs**  
President  
and CEO Emeritus,  
American Association of  
Community Colleges

## McClenney:

## It's Not 'Goodbye' But 'What's Next?'

Dear John:

Thankfully, I have not failed along the way to express appreciation for constant collegueship and valued friendship. Still, I welcome this opportunity to make tribute to you and to Suanne, your partner, co-author and spouse.

Over many years now, you have been mentor and teacher — not just to me, but to hundreds of people across the country. Your support was central in making it possible for me to complete the Ph.D. And years later, it was your support that helped to make CCSSE and the Center for Community College Student Engagement a thriving reality.

With vision and ingenuity, you built a doctoral program that has prepared more women and more people of color for leadership positions that any other program of its kind. Along with their hundreds of fellow Community College Leadership Program graduates, these people carry into the future the legacy you have established — a legacy of commitment to access, excellence and equity.

With deep understanding of the importance of teaching excellence, you and Suanne invented and nurtured NISOD as it became the preeminent international gathering of community college faculty and an unparalleled celebration of teaching and learning.

With insight and intellect, and through highly crafted language, you and Suanne have long helped to bridge the chasm between research and educational practice, bringing to community colleges the kinds of knowledge and leadership tools they need to do the most challenging work in higher education.

But through all of that, the personal moments are of course the most precious: enjoying Cheerios and chardonnay for dinner in your home; petting the opossums and puppies residing and ruling at Casa Roueche; watching together with horror and grief the 9/11 destruction in New York City (then home to Byron and me); in stark contrast, watching with glee the final play of the UT national championship football game; sitting with you and Suanne in a hospital waiting room; sharing all the news, celebratory and sad, of friends and colleagues; walking the alleyways of Venice; and toasting the sunset in Bellagio.

The toast now is to you: to your accomplishments and your humanity. This is not, of course "goodbye." It is but "what next?"

Kay McClenney



**Kay McClenney**  
Kay McClenney  
Executive Director  
Community College  
Survey  
for Student  
Engagement

**With  
vision and  
ingenuity,  
you built a  
doctoral  
program  
that has  
prepared  
more women  
and more  
people of  
color for  
leadership  
positions  
that any  
other  
program  
of its  
kind.**

**Jackson:**

**Jannett N. Jackson**  
President, College of Alameda

**An Ode to JR**

A man of honor  
A man of pride  
A man who supports you  
Who cannot be denied

A man who stands for things that are just  
A man who we all know deserves our trust  
A man stalwart, forceful, and smart  
A man who was born to play this part

A man who follows his heart  
Where ever it leads him  
To the top of the mountain, and sometimes in the dark  
The dark of ignorance where he would always ignite a light  
On those things we oft forget but should never ever slight

His name is John E Roueche or JR for short  
And he will long be remembered  
Because he is extremely smart

Although words can never say  
What we truly feel today  
Know that deep within our heart  
JR will always be a part

An icon, a mentor, a friend and confidante  
JR we love you, and we shall never forget  
For it is because of you, that we are who we are,  
And your fame (as well as ours) has spread near... and far

So long to CCLP, the block, and the many in our flock  
Our time at UT was special but we can never turn  
back the clock

So long JR, there will never be another of your stature  
Although I know you will never be put out to pasture

Thank you JR  
(and this can be said by a legion of others)  
For you have left your indelible mark...  
on each of our hearts.

And in keeping with your style  
We simply say—by the while, “why thank you”,  
And leave you, with that ever so charming smile.  
For we know we shall all meet again  
When from the ashes CCLP will rise again!

All the best JR, we will miss you!!

Jannett N. Jackson



**Byron McClenney**  
Project Director and Senior  
Lecturer, CCLP

**McClenney: Focus on Student Success**

Dear John,

Thanks for the memories! I remember 1971 when I hosted the “Block” during my first year as a college president. I remember many visits like that over the next 33 years. The many interns you sent my way enriched life in my colleges, and we celebrated together as they moved into leadership roles. A highlight for me in most of those years was the guest lecture you invited me to deliver to the “Block”. It was an honor to be invited to contribute chapters in some of your many books, and a treat to do PBS specials with you and Suanne.

Just when I thought I would retire, you created a niche in the CCLP to enable me to do significant work on the student success agenda. The past eight years have exceeded my expectations as we worked on Achieving the Dream, Board of Trustees Institute, Bridges to Opportunity, Governance Institute for Student Success, California Leadership Alliance for Student Success, Developmental Education Initiative, Student Success By The Numbers, and now the Gulf Coast Partners Achieving Student Success.

Looking back on my 51 years in this business, it is easy for me to declare that no other person has contributed to the field in the way you have as a teacher, scholar, researcher, and friend.

Byron McClenney



**Barbara R. Kavalier**  
President, San Jose City College,  
Block 59,  
Senior Roueche Fellow

**Kavalier:****An Extraordinary Journey**

Like all “Blockers” who have passed through the doors of the Sanchez building, my life has been transformed by what I now know was an extraordinary journey through a magical program known as the CCLP. John, I felt privileged to study with you and am honored to have you as my mentor. You gave me the confidence to imagine a new path for myself – to reach new heights of success. I am especially proud to have co-authored The Entrepreneurial Community College with you. For this, and all other memories, I offer a heartfelt toast –

“To the incomparable John Roueche!”

Barbara R. Kavalier



**Myrtle E.B. Dorsey**  
Chancellor  
St. Louis Community College

**Dorsey: Invaluable Lessons**

Dear John,

I am fortunate to have the opportunity to learn from you, but more importantly for me to have you as a friend. You have only wanted the very best from all your students at the University of Texas-Community College Leadership Program, and we all know that.

What we learned from you has been invaluable. I remember when we came into “Block” classroom on the first day and it was reminiscent of my very first day of elementary school. I had butterflies in my stomach, I did not know anyone and you began to talk about this amazing journey we were all about to take. I was excited and privileged to have been part of this great program.

You kept your end of the bargain, we (the students) continue on this amazing journey.

Myrtle E.B. Dorsey



**Craig Follins**  
President  
Olive-Harvey College

**Follins:****You've Touched Thousands of Lives**

Dear John,

Over the course of a lifetime there are many people that come and go. Very few of the people who touch our lives leave a lifelong imprint. Such a person is Dr. John Roueche. You are a man of the highest integrity and one who sees what we can become; rather than what we currently are. Because of you and a host of others I am now a community college president. I can only hope that my legacy and contributions to this world are equal to half of yours. You are a remarkable man who has done things that we will need another lifetime to measure. I say thanks to you on behalf of my colleagues and family for all of your caring and guidance. Please know that through your leadership, you have and will touch the lives of thousands of students in the community college world.

Craig Follins

**Calaway: Improving Lives by Paying it Forward**

Dear John,

It is with mixed feelings that I take this opportunity to share my warmest congratulations as you retire after 40 plus years at The University of Texas. No single person has more deeply influenced the American community college and those who have studied in, taught at, and led our fine institutions. You are simply one of a kind.

I personally have been so blessed to have been touched by your kind heart and wise mind. Your per-

sonal mentoring, friendship, and guidance all have positively impacted my life and work. You have taught me how to be an effective president which has directly impacted all with whom I work on a daily basis. Every day I reference those values you instilled in me focused on learner success, quality, integrity, and respect for every student and every teacher. You have also developed in all you touch a motivation to positively improve the lives and opportunities of others - to personally pay it forward.

Both Marlene and I will never forget the day we met you and realized our lives would forever be changed for knowing you. You are more than simply a beloved friend. You are a brother whom we deeply cherish and say thanks for every day.

Godspeed, my friend, in your next adventure.

Terry Calaway  
President  
Johnson County Community College