Good morning to you all. Thank you so very much for being here on this special day, a special day for this beautiful campus, this institution, our students, our staff, our faculty, the community we serve with such dedication and commitment and for me in so many valued and treasured ways.

Before I begin, I would like to extend my appreciation for a number of people who have helped pull today’s event together under the leadership of Celeste Fenton and Craig Johnson. This year was a true team effort and I am grateful for the work that everyone put into making All College Day meaningful and fun.

This event has been billed as All College Day since its inception and that is an apt description of why we are gathered here. The name implies, as it should, a moment to reflect on the totality of Hillsborough Community College’s vast reach across this place we call home. It is a time to come together as a cohesive body and not only enjoy each other’s fellowship, but to learn from one another and to celebrate the remarkable accomplishments that we have shared as colleagues and team members over the past year.

It is no mistake that one in twenty adults in Hillsborough County attend HCC.

For the recent high school graduate who wants to get the freshman and sophomore years completed before moving on to a four-year university, we are here for them.

For the recently laid-off salesman or woman who has always wanted to pursue a different career in the medical sciences, become a first responder, pursue education and become a teacher, we are here for them.

For those who aspire to forge a career in agriculture, aquaculture, or vet tech, we’re also here for them.
And for those who simply love the experience of learning for the sake of learning, we’re here for them too.

Our mission at Hillsborough Community College has remained unchanged throughout our 40-year history – to meet the educational needs of our students – students who come from all walks of life, varied economic backgrounds, different racial and cultural backgrounds and learning abilities.

We ask only one thing of our students – that they work hard, do your best and know that then anything is possible. You can achieve your dreams.

It is common on occasions such as this for me to regale you with a plethora of statistics affirming our success as an academic institution and so as not to disappoint you I will share a few facts and figures with you.

I have always been struck with the fact that in Florida, 60 percent of students enrolled in the state university system started at a community college. That is true for the University of South Florida as well.

That is an amazing number, underscoring our importance in preparing students for the academic rigors of university life. But we do more than simply provide our students the means to get a leg up to get into institutions such as USF, by virtue of their HCC experiences, we help them to stay there, earn their degrees and graduate.

And we do that for everybody who strides across our campuses, white, black, Hispanic, Asian, Native-American, young, old – men, women, the physically disabled – the Tampa Bay community in all its rich cultural, ethnic and racial diversity.
And we have been here for our community for 40 years, affording more than half-a-million students the opportunity to move onward and upward with their lives, their ambitions, their hopes. And we have grown with them, evidenced most vividly in the physical sense by our fifth campus, the SouthShore Center in Ruskin, which has been recognized nationally as a leader in green technology and architecture, further enhancing our commitment to be a faithful environmental steward in the communities we serve.

And thanks to so many of our generous donors we have been able to award more than a million dollars in scholarships to 850 deserving students last year. On their behalf, I thank you.

I could go on. I could go on about our distinguished and cherished faculty. I could go on about the superb support staff and administrators who make HCC run so efficiently and effectively every day. I could go on about our students, most of whom overcome great odds to achieve their goals.

But I will stop here. You get my point.

Working together, we have accomplished many great things during my 12-year tenure as your leader. Today, I want to announce to all gathered here for All College Day 2009 that I have decided that now is the right time for me to move on... I have informed our Board that my tenure as HCC’s president will end when my contract expires this coming June 2010.

I chose to announce my leaving now – nine months in advance of my retirement because I want the college to have ample time to conduct the search for my successor and to allow for a smooth transition process that will create a solid foundation for a new administration without the institution losing any of its positive momentum.
I have always acted on the belief that the college presidency is a trust, full of daunting challenges and existing opportunities all at the same time. It requires great fortitude, dedication, commitment, passion and ethics.

I am happy to have had this opportunity to serve as president of HCC for 12 years with the strong and loyal support of all of you and that of my husband of 38 years, Steve. During my tenure, I have been privileged to watch over an unprecedented era of growth for our college.

Over the years, many of you have told me that you wish I would stay longer, and I have been humbled by this sentiment. The strength and sincerity of that appreciation for my leadership has buoyed me through thick and thin. But we all know in reality, that there are cycles in organizations – as there are in life – and that part of the art of leading well – as of living well – is to recognize a new cycle struggling to emerge.

But we still have many goals to accomplish in the nine months that I have left. Being a lame duck is just not an option for me. And therefore, I assure you that my dedication and commitment to HCC will not waiver over the months that I have left. But for now, let’s all get about the business of All College Day. Thank you, again.