

March 4, 2002

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**OCC'S PRESIDENT, MARGARET A. GRATTON,  
ANNOUNCES INTENTION TO RETIRE**

Margaret A. Gratton, Orange Coast College's president for the past six years, announced Monday (March 4) her intention to retire at the end of the 2001-02 academic year.

Gratton, 64, has been a community college educator and leader for 32 years. She spent 26 years in Oregon before becoming Orange Coast College's seventh president on July 10, 1996. She is the only woman to occupy that post in the college's 54-year history.

The Laguna Beach resident said she plans to retire when her second three-year contract with the Coast Community College District expires, on Monday, July 15.

"When I was a child my mother used to say, 'Always leave the party while you're having fun.' I'm still having fun, but it's time for me to seek a greater balance in my personal life and complete some other professional goals.

"I've thoroughly enjoyed my time at Orange Coast College. I've never loved an institution like I love OCC. I won't forget this place or its people."

As she prepares to leave the college, Gratton says she is gratified by the fact that most of the institution's goals over the past six years have been achieved. During her presidency, OCC's enrollment increased by almost 3,000 students. The college enrolled 25,176 students during her first semester on campus. Enrollment last fall was 27,907, and is expected to top 28,000 this spring.

She also hired a hundred new faculty members during her tenure, and secured 20 new full-time faculty positions.

"Those positions have strengthened our faculty and have brought new energy and vitality to the campus community," she said.

In January of 2001, the college received a full six-year accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC).

OCC's Foundation has just completed its most successful year ever, raising nearly \$3 million in cash and in-kind donations. The college recently began the 2002 calendar year with a \$1 million gift to construct a new \$2.5 million Arts Pavilion on campus. Ground

breaking will take place next fall. The college's high-tech \$15 million, 78,000-square-foot state-funded Arts Center opened this spring.

"We've built new buildings, renovated and retrofit older ones, completed our all weather track, and have significantly expanded our technology network," she said.

Online learning has also mushroomed during her presidency, and nearly 2,000 students are currently enrolled in online, Internet classes. Service Learning, a program that has provided 6,000 OCC students with an opportunity to earn academic credits while contributing service to a variety of community agencies and organizations, was launched under her leadership.

The college's Honors Program has expanded dramatically, and the Middle College High School -- a collaboration between OCC and the Newport-Mesa Unified School District -- designed for high-potential underachieving high school students, has flourished on Orange Coast College's campus under her guidance.

Outreach and transfer initiatives have increased during her six-year presidency and, this year, OCC became the state's leader -- out of 108 community colleges -- in transferring students to California State University campuses. OCC is one of the leading transfer institutions in the nation.

The college also celebrated its 50th anniversary during her tenure.

Last fall, Gratton received the 2001 Outstanding President Award from the California Community College Council for Staff and Organizational Development . She was cited for making "significant contributions to staf and organizational development through outstanding leadership on campus and statewide."

She was one of 22 founding members of the American Association of Women in Community Colleges. In 1997, she was named one of Orange County's 35 "Remarkable Women" by the National Association of Women Business Owners. The Oregon Chapter of the Association of Women in Community Colleges honored her in 1997 as Oregon's Leader of the Year. In 2000, Gratton was named Woman of Distinction by the Girl Scout Council of Orange County.

She is a member of the advisory board of the National Institute for Leadership Development, and serves as an accreditation evaluator for both the Northwest Commission on Colleges and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges in California.

"We have supported one another through cycles of joy, and sorrow and loss, including the tragedy of September 11, 2001," she wrote Monday (March 4) in a letter to OCC's faculty and staff. Staff members were caught by surprise at her announcement. It wasn't anticipated.

She is proud of the accomplishments that have been realized, and admits that leaving the college won't be easy.

"I have been blessed with significant support from the Board of Trustees, the District, and OCC's administrative team, faculty and staff," she said in her letter. "What has been accomplished during the last six years we did together.

"I have come to love Orange Coast College and I have a passionate regard, respect and gratitude for the excellence of this place. The Coast legacy is strong and I leave confident that it will only grow stronger in the years to come."

Gratton began her community college career in 1968 as a composition and literature instructor at Mt. Hood Community College in Gresham, Ore. During her final 22 years at the school, she served in a number of administrative posts. She was the college's associate dean of humanities, assistant to the president for staff and organizational development and dean of instruction.

A native of Idaho who grew up in Vancouver, Wash., just across the Columbia River from Portland, Gratton earned B.A. and M.A. degrees in English from the University of Portland. She also earned a master of science degree from Pepperdine University in organization development.

Gratton has three grown children and four grandchildren. In her spare time, she writes poetry and practices yoga.

## **ORANGE COAST COLLEGE'S PRESIDENTS**

1947-64 Basil H. Peterson

1964 Norman E. Watson

1964-82 Robert B. Moore

1982-84 Bernard J. Luskin

1985-89 Donald R. Bronsard

1989-95 David A. Grant

1996-02 Margaret A. Gratton