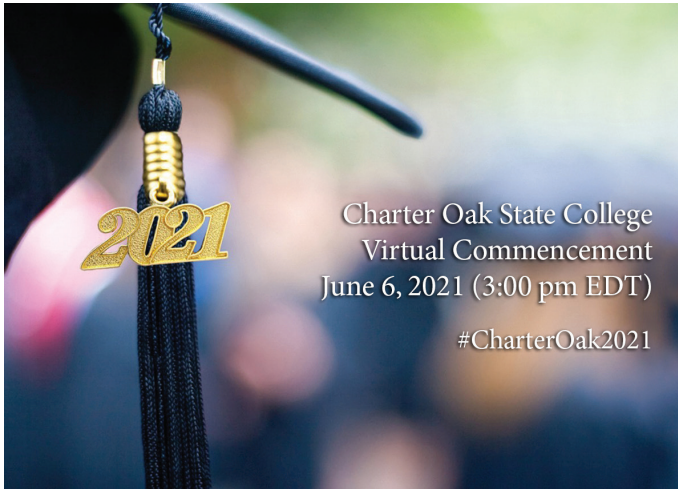


Commencement Ceremony Honors 2021 Graduates Virtually



With the pandemic threat fading but not gone, Charter Oak State College celebrated its 2021 graduates with its second Virtual Commencement Ceremony. Graduates and their friends and families were able to tune in simultaneously from their homes for the video event prepared especially for this group of graduates. This was the second year in a row the College held a virtual commencement ceremony online honoring its graduating class out of an abundance of caution as the spread continues to wind down in the U.S. This 47th Commencement celebration honored the Class of 2021 with pre-recorded footage of speakers, students, and congratulatory messages from faculty, staff, and alumni, along with the appearance of each graduate's name and degree.

Nearly 500 students were honored in a video designed to send well wishes and kudos during the ceremony hosted with live chat for some lively interaction on the College's YouTube channel on Sunday, June 6th, at 3PM ET. The webcast remains on www.CharterOak.edu/graduation for those graduates and families unable to attend and those wishing to re-watch the event.

College President Ed Klonoski addressed the graduates as well as Honorary Degree Recipient, David Henderson, Faculty Emeritus and Student Speaker, Uneeder Ruth. Both Jane McBride Gates, Interim President, Provost & Senior VP Academic & Student Affairs of the

Connecticut State Colleges and Universities and Matt Fleury, Chair of the Connecticut Board of Regents for Higher Education and Charter Oak Alum, also offered pre-recorded congratulatory messages to the graduates.

In his remarks, President Klonoski welcomed the viewing audience and congratulated the graduates acknowledging their hard work and completion of long-awaited dreams often delayed by false starts, work, and family responsibilities. He commended them for their courage to try again, putting aside things that delayed their original degree efforts. He said, "to me, taking the risk to start again is far more interesting than the reasons why you didn't finish the first time." He also acknowledged the COVID-19 outbreak and reminded the graduates that "facing these challenges and continuing to push forward and navigate in uncharted times, shows the true depth of your character and how resilient you are." He closed by applauding their courage and generosity and encouraged them to share their time, talent, and knowledge with those around them. He verbally conferred all degrees and invited the graduates to move their tassels from right to left.

The student speaker was Uneeder Ruth, Class of 2021, a candidate for a Bachelor of Science in General Studies with a Concentration in Organizational Leadership. She told the class that, in the midst of unpredictable challenges, "we have proven what hard work looks like. We are here today because of our tenacity, will-power, and mindset. This is what success looks like when you decide to push through." Ruth encouraged her class to make themselves a priority and encounter obstacles with intention, focus, and commitment. She closed by challenging her fellow graduates "to continue your journey on to the next chapter of your life. Dream and dream BIG! Go for the next promotion; get your masters or Ph.D.; become a CEO; buy your dream house or dream car. When the unexpected interrupts your life, remember that "Giving up is not an option! Congratulations class of 2021! We did it!"

The College Honorary Degree was awarded to David Henderson, Faculty Emeritus. He served as a member of the Consulting Faculty from 1987 until his retirement in 2019. During that long tenure he served as Dean of Faculty, Associate Dean of Faculty, and Chair of the

[continued on pg. 2](#)

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held June 6

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A Post Covid Vision

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Welcome and Updates

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Program Updates

6 Foundation News
Giving Report

THE PRESIDENT'S TAKE



A Post Covid Vision

Welcome to summer 2021! Let's hope it includes a return to our normal pleasures including a picnic, a day at the beach, a bike ride, and summer camp. I am trying to strike a positive tone because, after a very long time, I believe our world is beginning to open up. The pandemic is slowly ending, and all of us are imagining a return to something closer to normal.

For Charter Oak that means we are planning for the day our staff returns to our offices. My CFO has suggested we buy everyone some lunches that first week, so we can all have the time to reconnect, to tell our Covid stories, and to catch up on each other's lives. We are in the planning stages of an in-person event to be held this fall. We want to give our 2020 and 2021 graduates a moment to wear their gowns and celebrate with their families. We are working on a location for this event that will make for a fun day for everyone. In addition, we have had a number of staff retirements during this challenging period, and we were unable to celebrate those milestones as a community. We are going to fix that by inviting all our retirees back to New Britain for a party in their honor. So, you can see that we are busy planning a variety of gatherings to celebrate the end of our isolation.

And on the programming front, we are busy expanding our offerings. We now have three Master's degrees on the street. Beginning with our first program, Organizational Effectiveness and Leadership, we now offer Health Care Administration and Health Informatics. Our current thinking is that these three degree programs should be complemented by a series of smaller

programs, we use the word certificate to describe them, that will attract an audience of career professionals who are looking to add skills to their personal portfolio. As you know, Charter Oak is unabashedly focused on helping working adults move forward in their careers. We are a workforce focused College. Our thinking is that degree completion is a piece of that market, but increasingly so are smaller credentials. In fact, we believe that there is a robust market of degreed workers who need to add credentials to their existing degree in order to find better employment in growing markets.

We have taken the same approach in our Early Childhood Education offerings where we offer degrees, certifications, and even an Alternative Route to Certification to bachelor's degree holders who want to become certified teachers in early childhood. There is a pattern to these offerings. First, we build the central degree or degrees, and then we build certificates that are the on ramps and off ramps to these degrees. We make sure that the certificates coordinate with a degree, but a student can take and use the various certificates to make an immediate impact on their income.

So, as you make your plans for the summer, know that Charter Oak will be ready to support you as you look to revitalize your career portfolio. You know that we have always believed in lifelong learning, but as I've detailed here, we also believe in lifelong career development. Visit our website and take a look at what's new. And as always, I look forward to hearing from you.

Ed Klonoski, President

"Commencement Ceremony" continued from pg. 1



Student Speaker, Uneeder Ruth

Math, Science, and Technology Committee. Dr. Henderson was always available to approve plans of study, develop program outcomes, review transfer credentials, and he helped grow the College from a credit aggregator to a full online college. He thanked Charter Oak for the Honorary Degree and said, "it was always a privilege

to work with so many students over the years" and spoke of the fact that he had no idea when he started he'd stay for 30 years! He said, "it always makes me happy to see people fulfill their long-term goals and acknowledged the hard work of juggling work, family, and college that only adult learners can do".

Dr. Shirley Adams, retiring Provost of Charter Oak State College shared demographic facts about the Class of 2021, including that 71% were women; graduates ranged in age from 17 to 63, with the average age being 37; graduates hailed from 27 states and Canada with 66% from Connecticut; 42% earned honors; 25 graduated with a Master's degree, over 410 graduated with a Bachelor's degree, more than 50 graduated with an Associate's degree; many Master's

degree recipients also earned a Bachelor's at Charter Oak previously, a third of graduates used multiple methods to earn college credit and most of the graduates earned their degrees while also working full time. The WIT and CT-WAGE special programs graduated eight students. The new RN/ADN to BSN program graduated its first class of 12, many of whom completed clinical hours performing contact tracing with the CT Department of Public Health.

Graduates Loren Bowe, Durham, CT; Christine Elliott, Hamden, CT; Robin Manning, Wendell, NC; Elizabeth Marrero, Bristol, CT; and Jacqueline A. Nguyen, Worcester, MA all earned Awards for Outstanding Academic Achievement.

[Congratulations to the Class of 2021 and welcome new Alumni!](#)

Welcome Message to the Graduating Class of 2021

As the Alumni Association President, I have the privilege of officially welcoming you to the Charter Oak Alumni Community. **Welcome!**

The Charter Oak Alumni Association was created for all alumni with the purpose of uniting us through meaningful connections, to build relationships that support our educational and career satisfaction, and to expand our common purpose and increase engagement.

The experience you have had at Charter Oak, I know, has been a foundational one and will serve you well as you pursue your futures. And as you set your sights on what is ahead, I humbly ask you to consider becoming an active, registered member of the Charter Oak State College Alumni Association.



John Thomas, Class of 2013,
President, Alumni Association

Alumni Memberships for 2021

- \$15 – Alumni Association one-year membership
- \$40 – Alumni Association one-year membership + Oaklee
- \$40 – Alumni Association one-year membership + Mug
- \$175 – Alumni Lifetime Membership + Oaklee and Mug

Alumni Association Update from Associate Director of Development, Carol Hall

The Charter Oak State College Alumni Association began 2020/21 with BIG plans and goals. However, the pandemic put a stop to our in-person meetings, and tragedy struck our board (and our communities). We paused, but did not give up. As I work with the Volunteer Board of Directors and we engage in social events, plan activities and opportunities, the unwavering commitment to our Alumni and Charter Oak community is strong and clear. This is a group of hard-working, creative, and committed professional, fun-loving people working to provide a variety of activities throughout the year. A few highlights of our activities and benefits include:

1. The 2020 **Alumni Association Masters' Degree \$1,000 Scholarship** which was awarded to Anecia M. Forbes. Anecia shared her struggles and successes with the scholarship committee in her application. She was working full time as a single mother with goals and aspirations. As she stated "I knew the importance of education for elevation. Finding Charter Oak was a dream; it not only provided flexibility, but it also gave me hope." During her final course of her master's program, Organizational Effectiveness and Leadership, she found herself unemployed after 22 years with the same organization, the scholarship alleviated some financial burdens and enabled her to stay the course and finish her degree in December.
2. **Renewal of our Vision and Purpose Statements**
Alumni Purpose Statement: Volunteer leadership uniting Charter Oak's Alumni Community through meaningful connections.
Vision Statement: To be a vast community of engaged partners who build relationships and empower the pursuit of education and career satisfaction.

3. **Committees formed to better define** Member Benefits, Partnerships/Grants, Volunteer Network (Acorns in Action), Social Events and Activities, Student Association partnership, and Leveraging Board Member skill sets.

Interested in volunteering? Email alumni@charteroak.edu and we will get you connected to a committee of interest!

4. **In lieu of in-person events, the Association switched to Virtual Events that included:**

April 2020 – A Virtual Meet & Greet

November 2020 – What's New at Charter Oak? A Meet-up with Admissions Staff

December 2020 – Alumni Happy Hour & Bingo

February 2021 – Board Recruitment Opportunities

March 2021 – Mindful Mondays throughout March and Alumni BINGO!

April 2021 – Acorns in Action, Spring into Action Challenge

May 2021 – Board Elections & Meeting

June 2021 – Virtual Meet & Greet with COSC President, Ed Klonoski

Member Benefits

Alumni Gear Online Store

- Support the master's degree scholarship program with your purchase www.rhinogift.com/charter-oak.htm

Legal & Insurance Discounts

- Legal Shield Group Discount – coming soon!
- Meyers & Associates cosc.meyerandassoc.com
Services include Life/Auto/Home/Travel/Pet Insurance, Real Estate, ID Theft, and Advisory Services

Social Media Connections

- Join our Official Alumni Facebook page www.facebook.com/groups/23087759808 and LinkedIn www.linkedin.com/groups/113038/
- Send us your update and be part of our #WeAreCharterOak series

Upcoming In-Person Events

Sunday, September 5, 2021 ~ 2020 & 2021 Graduation Celebration

Info at www.CharterOak.edu/Graduation/Yard-Goats-Event

Alumni Summer Gathering ~ Thursday, August 12, 7:00 pm ~ South Windsor Summer Concert, Featuring Mass-Conn-Fusion

Email alumni@charteroak.edu for specifics on these events.

Welcome New 2021 Alumni Association Board Members

Meet our newest board members as they share why they applied to join the Board. The Alumni community is now over 17,000 graduates strong and our volunteer leaders work tirelessly to advance the mission for the Alumni community – **to be a vast community of engaged partners who build relationships and empower the pursuit of education and career satisfaction.**

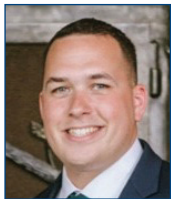


Mervin J. Alexander
Class of 2018
Bloomfield, CT

Mervin is currently working in Waste Management and

Customer Service for The Dollar Tree and The Family Dollar Stores. He is interested in expanding his professional experience and network by joining the Board.

As Mervin explains, "My reason for wanting to be a part of this group is to afford me the ability to give back to society through this establishment. I have always been passionate about serving people. It is my intent to assist in any way that I can, be it through volunteering at fundraisers or be part of the volunteer or ambassador teams geared at promoting the school publicly."



Sean Peltier
Class of 2020
Norwalk, CT

A recent graduate and a member of the Danbury Fire Department and Fire

Service Instructor, Sean is also an Executive Board Member of the Danbury Professional Firefighters, IAFF Local 801. Sean joined the board because, "Like so many who are lucky enough to complete their education at Charter Oak State College, my academic

journey was anything but typical. When I finally found my home at Charter Oak, I was pleasantly surprised to become involved with a network of hard working, but more importantly, dedicated students and faculty from across the country. I believe that these students go on to make great alumni, and I look forward to the opportunity to help build engagement within that network."



Daniel Lee Perea
Class of 2018
Monroe, LA

A marketing specialist with BancorpSouth, serving in the U.S. Coast

Guard Auxiliary, and a freelance writer, and film producer, Daniel is pursuing a Master's in Journalism at Harvard University Extension School.

Daniel shares, "My personal adult educational journey culminated in becoming the first member of my family to graduate from college. With a BS in Business Administration from Charter Oak State College, I was able to obtain a better paying job and provide more for my family. I have been inspired by Charter Oak's mission. I believe the Alumni Association can help both alumni and students alike connect with opportunities and information to make a positive impact in their lives and communities."



Joel Raffone
Class of 2019
Northford, CT

Joel works for the Madison Board of Education and is an

instructor at Rae's Driving School of North Haven. Joel says, "It has been my desire and dedication to help others obtain their education as I did, but most of all achieve their goals. One of my own goals was to become an alumni board member which allows me the opportunity to give back to Charter Oak."



Tenell G. Rhodes, Sr.
Class of 2020
Wethersfield, CT

Currently a student at Charter Oak pursuing his Master's in

Organizational Effectiveness and Leadership and the VP of Business Development at Triple Helix Corporation, Tenell is also serving as Treasurer of the Charter Oak Student Association.

Tenell showcased his public speaking skills as the Student Speaker for our first ever virtual commencement in 2020 and is anxious to help expand the reputation of the College by serving as an Ambassador as well.

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John Thomas, President
Steve Foerster, Vice President
Secretary

Chris May, Treasurer
Cecilia Kozlowski, Co-Treasurer

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Cecelia Peppers-Johnson, Director (20-22)
Daniel Perea, Director (21-23)
Joel Raffone, Director (21-23)
Tenell Rhodes, Director (21-23)
Trebawan Soomaroo, Director (20-22)
Lisa Wilson, Director (20-22)

Carol Hall, Associate Director and
Staff Liaison, COSC

connections

SUMMER/FALL 2021 • Volume XLVIII, Number 2

Issued semi-annually for alumni and friends
of Charter Oak State College.

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STATE COLLEGE

A Higher Degree of Online Learning

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and affirmative action.

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State of Connecticut
Ned Lamont, *Governor*
Board of Regents
Terrence Cheng, *President*
Charter Oak State College
Ed Klonoski, *President*

happenings

Longtime Provost, Dr. Shirley Adams, retired on July 1, after nearly 20 years with Charter Oak. She helped evolve the College from a credit aggregating institution to an online college with academic programs that lead students to career satisfaction and economic improvement. She tirelessly managed the academics, the staff, and the many details required to keep the College achieving academic accreditations, and likewise, students achieving academic successes. Adult learners, especially first-generation college students, were her personal and professional passion.

Please welcome incoming Provost Dr. David Ferreira to the role of Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs. Dr. Ferreira joins Charter Oak having established a career in higher education providing academic leadership for urban and rural public college students in Connecticut, Maryland, South Carolina, and Florida. Dr. Ferreira was most recently the Interim AVP of Academic Operations at the future Connecticut State Community College, as well as the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs, Northwestern Connecticut Community College. He holds a B.S. in Political Science from Southern Connecticut State University, a M.A. in Political Science from American University, and an Ed.D from Northcentral University.

Updates from Our Program Directors

The Health Information Management program reports a new course was added to the Healthcare Administration list of elective options last Fall. *Technology in Healthcare* has run two times, been taken by 30 students, and has had excellent reviews. This new course was created because technology in healthcare is a hot topic and a necessary skill set for many healthcare professionals, and will only continue to be on the forefront of both treatment and office tasks in any healthcare organization.

A new *Certificate in Clinical Documentation Improvement* is in the works and will go live in January 2022. This career area usually employs nurses, but is increasingly seeing the addition of medical coders and health information management personnel in the profession. Because Charter Oak offers programs in all these areas – nursing, medical coding, and health information management – this certificate is a natural addition to the Health Science and Technology Department curriculum.

The Health Science and Technology Department reports that Chair, Brooke Palkie, Ed.D, was a featured webinar speaker in June for Connecticut based, health technology company, BlueBack Health. She spoke on matters of population health and unwinding the social determinants of health, health inequities, and how to improve health literacy in vulnerable populations. The college is partnering with BlueBack Health on internships for our HI and HIM students.

The M.S. in Organizational Effectiveness and Leadership Program has launched a major asynchronous lecture initiative that will be completed by December 2021. All courses in this graduate program will contain not only all previous instructor PowerPoints, videos, and readings that students normally access, but every course will now contain asynchronous lectures created by the course Lead Instructor. Students will be able to view and playback lectures delivered by their instructors in each week of the course. Our graduate students asked for this and we are delivering it!

The Nursing Program was notified in June that *"The RN/ADN to BSN program at Charter Oak State College is accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, 655 K Street NW, Suite 750, Washington, DC 20001, 202-887-6791."* The accreditation confirms that we are offering a program that meets the highest industry standards. Additionally, Baccalaureate Accreditation is often required by graduate programs that many of our students will be seeking admission to as well as more and more employers. Kudos to the College Nursing Team for their hard work obtaining this prestigious accreditation and ensuring our students are well credentialed!

Early Childhood Education Programs are seeking to obtain accreditation through NAEYC for its undergraduate programs in ECE and Child Studies and are hoping for a Fall 2021 approval. The College has graduated many from its programs who have become leaders in the early childhood field. Combining an ECE undergraduate degree with an MS in Organizational Effectiveness and Leadership can help strengthen leadership skills in the early childhood field. The Early Childhood team offers career workshops, so be sure to reach out to Careers_ECE@charteroak.edu and they will add you to their mailing list. Visit www.CharterOak.edu for details on all programs.

The College has launched a new logo and brand identity as evidenced by this newly designed Connections! We are excited to unveil this new, updated look that more accurately reflects the College today. We feel it expresses our brand as a strong, contemporary Online College dedicated to providing "A Higher Degree of Online Learning." While the updates reflect our evolution, be assured we remain dedicated to the mission and core values of Charter Oak. You will see the new logo in important places such as the public website, the Student Portal, the Blackboard Course platform, Social Media platforms, and more. It was a comprehensive process including all stakeholders and we thank all who participated in the surveys and voting for your preferred new look!

Enrollment – Finally, as people emerge at different rates from a challenging year, the College offers the online option many desire. Please share www.CharterOak.edu with anyone you think may benefit from an online degree program

Fiscal Year 2021, July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021

Donor Recognition and Appreciation

As we recognize our donors listed below, we also extend our sincerest appreciation!
Together we are helping create Brighter Futures!

To Increase Giving Impact, the COSC Foundation works with individuals, corporations, and foundations to create legacy endowment funds. An endowment gift to a 501(c)3 such as Charter Oak State College Foundation, is a permanent gift that is protected. Distributions are made (from the earnings) for specific or general purposes as established.

Together, we are making a lasting impact on our students, as we provide financial assistance in various forms. Scholarships, Grants, Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), Women in Transition (WIT), and the new Parents Intent on Improving Tomorrow (PIIT), for parents of color, single or married, in low paying jobs, living at or in poverty.

We want to thank our community of donors who generously gave close to \$220,000 in Fiscal Year 2021, which includes our Annual Appeal unrestricted goal of \$21,500. Thank YOU!

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Greater New Britain Chamber
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Hartford Interval House
Intuit
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Capacity Building Grant

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Clifford Stanley Williams
Dr. Robert J. & Mania Zabek
Ashley M. Zennis

Senior Legacy Fund, Class of 2021

Michelle N. Ahing
Tracy Atkins
Shantel M. Bremmer
Corrie Bridgeforth
Elaine H. P. Brooks
Rohaine M. Brown
Lee Roy Corry
Amanda DeMaio
John DeMaio
Christal Dunnaville-Wingate
Luke Fredsall
Mom & Mark Gilbert
Mark & Jane Grein
Taneisha Hancel
Michalia N. Hanson
Jovan W. Hoheb
Anne Marie Jack
Tricia D. Little
Myron Mckoy
Rudolph Martin
Kelly Mooney
Traci O'Brien
Alice Obas
Pierre A. Obas
Joseph J. Pellicchia
Matt Rankin
Dania Redding
Denise Reo
Rudy Santos
Kerron Simpson

Kyron Simpson-Peters
Kristina M. Surgeon
Kali Temple
Demetrios Totonis
Roceli Trister
Donna Whitbeck
Debra Wingate-Jenkins
Robin Wingate-Pettway,
LMSW
Taylor M. Wolf
Tonya Zachary

Gifts in Memory of

Elizabeth Andel

Ashley M. Zennis &
Michael B. Roberto

Pauline R. Allen

Constance Rotondo

Delores Bell

Christine McNab Visick
Kate Rockefeller

Richard Calder

Carlo Esidore

Mark Carr

Network for Good
Nicolin Carr

Doris Cassiday

Bryan Cassiday
Mary-Jane Foster

Tom Desmond

Ed Klonoski

Norma Fascendini Martel

Carol M. Hall

Kazimierz & Stefania Gorniak

Krystyna Gorniak-
Kocikowska

David John Grietti

Mario Grietti

Joseph L. Kaplowe Jr.

Barbara Kaplowe

Joan S. LeMosy

Lora M. LeMosy

Rita H. Leonard

Kathleen Langan

Michael A. Marusa

Sheila Donnelly
Kathy Marusa
Mike Marusa

Dr. Frank A. Scalia

Rebeka Scalia

Dr. Bernard Shea

Dr. Sarah Emerson Shea
Peter Hagerty Shea
Jennifer Hall Shea &
Peter Bruns

Lucy Tarangelo

Helen F. Lozada

Delores Tracey Wisdom

Brandee Stefano

In 2021, the following Endowment Funds were established through the generous donations of our Charter Oak Community to provide hope and opportunity. Thank you, forever!

New Endowment Funds

The Dr. George G. Moker Endowed Scholarship Fund

Dr. Moker, a 1989 Graduate of Charter Oak State College, leveraged his degree, expanded his knowledge, and enjoyed a successful career. His legacy will provide financial assistance to Charter Oak students striving to complete their Business Administrative undergraduate degree, or a degree with a small business or entrepreneurial concentration.

The Shirley M. Adams, Ph.D., Scholarship Fund – New Beginnings

Dr. Adams served as Provost for Charter Oak State College for just under 20 years. She helped evolve the college from a credit aggregating institution to an online college with academic programs that lead our students to career satisfaction and economic improvement. The **New Beginnings Scholarship** is for a student that is an adult with some college credit, who is in a low paying job or living in poverty, and

is a first-generation college student. Students that help to educate our communities, such as Early Childhood Education (ARC, Bachelors, or Masters) programs will be encouraged to apply, and will be given preference.

New Scholarship Programs (2021)

Elizabeth Andel Memorial Scholarship

This fund was established to honor the memory of Elizabeth Andel, an amazing educator who devoted her life to teaching students with special needs. Born with spina bifida, Liz served as an example of strength, perseverance, and passion to all who had the honor of knowing her. This scholarship will be awarded to Charter Oak students who embody Liz's determination and have overcome significant obstacles to pursue their education. Preference will be given to students who are currently working or interested in special education or a related field. Award amount \$500.

Fund Established in Loving Memory by, Ashley M. Zennis & Michael B. Roberto

Intent on Improving Tomorrow for Parents of Color

A scholarship solution to economic and racial disparities, derived from the 2020 Shea Series Call-to-Action. The Scholarship is an intentional resource, aimed at parents of color living in poverty or working in low-paying jobs, to help remove financial barriers to degree completion programs at Charter Oak State College. Award amount for Fall 2021 is \$2,000 per student.

**STAY
CONNECTED!**

We always like to hear from our alumni about promotions, graduate degrees, awards, marriages, births, and other significant successes in your life. Email updates to share to chall@charteroak.edu.