

Coastal Senior College President Maryanne Ward's Report
delivered at the Annual Meeting on May 3, 2021

This has been a year that I am sure will be unique in our history. We have all been isolated by covid and we have had to adjust to unforeseen circumstances. Next year I plan an annual meeting that will get business done and then provide the kind of social time that we have all been denied. Won't it be wonderful to see everyone's faces? One advantage to Zoom for our generation is that you get to see people's faces with names provided.

As this term closes let me look back on our year of Zoom from my perspective as President.

CSC officially became independent from the university of Maine system on December 14, 2020. Many of you have lived through the process with us and I want you to know how grateful I am that at each step, when asked, members and non-members provided the extra help we needed. Board members did the fall registration by email, since Rockland was closed due to covid. The new website with our puffins appeared in December. Our Tech people did a great job – a special personal thank you to past president Shelly Swazey who has kept my spirits up each term by including at least one puffin on the website that made me laugh or which I want to adopt. We got legal help and advice from both our own people and *pro bono* work by Verrill Dana. All of us were willing to put in the extra hours because we know how important CSC is to our community. CSC has no paid employees; the only expenses involving staff we have are our phone answering service and our website provider. Both are very reasonable which helps the budget.

We currently have 256 members; down about 100 members from our usual number. So, when you get your fall catalog by email, send a copy to a friend or two - spread the word. Right now that is the most important volunteer activity you could do for the college. Word of mouth is the best advertisement we can get.

Having to switch to Zoom on short notice resulted in our offering fewer courses. Some subjects are difficult to present via Zoom and some instructors do not feel comfortable teaching electronically. I am frequently asked “when are you going to open up to in person learning” and my answer is simple: we have nothing to open up. We rent or are given access to sites throughout the community, sites we don’t control. This is another way we keep our costs down – some senior colleges have to charge as much as \$60 a course to make ends meet. At this point none of our sites which will have to conform to CDC guidelines is open. Churches are trying to figure out how to handle services. The retirement communities with their vulnerable populations will be under stricter guidelines than, say, libraries. Our first priority will be safety and then we will try to get courses that require AV support into spaces as soon as we can. The University of Maine has advised the Senior College Network not to count on in person learning before the end of 2021. That advice, given in April, is wise, but, rest assured, if things change radically and CDC guidelines allow we will move to some in person classes as soon as space becomes available.

And please note: Zoom teaching will not disappear when all restrictions are lifted. Many of you have said you find being able to participate from home very desirable. The ideal would be a mixture of Zoom, in person and hybrid classes which would require a site with room for a small class and stable internet access to offer the course simultaneously on Zoom. One of our sister senior colleges is experimenting with this concept right now and we will learn from their experience.

Speaking personally, I have developed a real respect for what Zoom or other such platforms have to offer for senior learners. The insistence that in person learning is the best way to teach students from pre-school through college cannot be denied. I have daughter who teaches French and is celebrating being back in the classroom. But what we are talking about with senior students is not five to six hours a day on Zoom with no socialization possible, but two hours a week and in some cases over the past year the only socialization possible during covid. Please do not misunderstand me; as a very experienced classroom teacher I value and enjoy in person learning. Once covid is no longer a threat we should be guided in

our choice of teaching method by the nature of the course, the instructor's preference and accessibility for students. A Zoom class does not mean that it won't be an effective or challenging class, as our student evaluations have indicated. Some larger classes may have trouble finding a suitable site if certain places are not open to us. Classes on Zoom are easily available to students throughout the Senior College network. The Brown Bag series is much more accessible via Zoom. So there are many good reasons to continue to Zoom for some of our activities.

Our move into the world of online registration and teaching via the internet has been accelerated by covid, but it was in our future. Several of the senior colleges were already on line and so had a much smoother transition to life in the time of a pandemic. CSC is grateful to the University of Maine for providing us with free Zoom accounts and instruction for faculty. We are now in a much better place technologically and will be able to build on this base. The dreaded snow day in Winter Term should be a thing of the past. CSC will be more prepared in the future to serve our members in a variety of formats.

Our first year as an independent college has been difficult, but rewarding. We look ahead to an exciting fall term and hope you will join us.