



Photo by John Rizzo

# A Farewell to Timothy L. Hall

## *Mercy College's Student Success President*

**O**n April 17, 2015, Timothy L. Hall was formally inaugurated as the 12th president of Mercy College, feeling “awed and grateful” to join the Mercy family and serve as leader of the institution. In June 2023, he and his wife, Lee Nicholson Hall, will retire to Texas, a prospect he describes a bit differently as “blessed and nerve-wracking.” “I’ve worked steadily all my life. I never had a gap except during law school,” Hall explained. Have I saved enough to support my beloved wife, who has very good genes, and whose mother is 99 as we speak?”

Hall came to Mercy with an impressive list of accomplishments, then added quite a few more: the College was recognized by the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics as a “Bright Spot in Hispanic Education” and went on to receive the “Seal of *Excelencia*,” making it the first private college in the country to be nationally recognized by *Excelencia* in Education for meaningfully advancing the prospects of its Hispanic students. Mercy added a new, 350-bed residence hall on its Dobbs Ferry Campus and did a complete makeover of its MercyManhattan Campus with new state-of-the-art facilities, dormitory and academic programs; it purchased and renovated a historic Tarrytown, New York mansion for community and alumni gatherings; it undertook a “teach out” of students from the closing of The College of New Rochelle, which brought in 1,800 students and several new academic programs; and he launched an ambitious student success platform (the “Mercy Success Toolkit”), employing strategies for student engagement and achievement which has significantly increased retention and graduation rates for all students, especially our Black and Hispanic students. His time at Mercy, he says, has been enriching — and surprising.

“I didn’t expect to learn so much. I thought, ‘All right, this is the last stage, probably, of my professional career. And this is the stage to which I get to bring all the things that I’ve learned.’ I didn’t expect that this would be the stage when I learned the most. I thought I knew a lot about student success when I came to New York, but I was just a babe in the woods compared to what I know today because of my experiences at Mercy.”



Photo by Leslie Kahan Photography



President Hall entertaining students at his home.

Former Mercy College Board of Trustees Chairman Gary Brown says while Hall had all the best credentials on paper, it was his heart that made him the best candidate to lead the College.

“Tim was absolutely the standout because of who Tim is. He has enhanced the academics of the College, and the standing nationally of the College, but for me and all of us on the Board, the focus is on how he interfaces with the students,” said Brown. “It’s not that common among presidents of colleges. He’s somebody who can get down and relate to kids who are struggling. He’s lived that, I’ve lived that, having to pull ourselves up from different but humble backgrounds. Tim has a heart for what the mission of Mercy College truly is.”

“When I came here, the Board said, ‘We think you should spend the time working within the College to make it better,’” says Hall. “And when they talked about making it better for students, they meant the students we have, the ones we’re serving right now.”

Just prior to his arrival, however, Mercy had raised its admission standards — putting pressure on the stand-by-your-students philosophy. “That one decision cut the freshman class by a third. And so far, as I can see, not a lot of people really appreciated what that would mean. When you cut your class by a third, that’s going to roll through your enrollment for a minimum of six years and probably more like eight. We’ve been combating that the whole way,” Hall said. “I’m happy to tell you that our freshman enrollments are significantly higher today than they were when I arrived.”

Hall chose to invest in success wherever possible. Although Mercy relies on an economic model of low tuition and a core group of full-time faculty, “We deliberately used some surplus money to hire more full-time faculty. I want to keep that investment.” And he pushed for such measures as proactive advising for students in need of additional support and the use of data analytics to improve educational outcomes.

It was all part of a strategy to position Mercy as “student ready” rather than relying on students to be “college ready.” Career preparedness is also central to the Mercy Success Toolkit. “We are trying to be much more intentional about embedding career education throughout our curriculum, because virtually all students are not in the slightest persuaded by the general values of being educated as being a citizen. They’re looking for a job. They want to see that happen.”

As he explains it, this success model isn’t brain surgery: the Toolkit, he says, simply adapts what is already working elsewhere to Mercy students and their needs.

Through the years, Hall has gotten to know lots and lots of Mercy students. He made it a priority to have them feel “seen and known.” He has been a fixture in the cafeteria, at athletic games, concerts and lectures. “I tell myself regularly, ‘Probably half your job should be paying attention to



President Hall and Mrs. Lee Nicholson Hall hosting student government leaders at their home.

people, especially to students — seeing them, hearing them, interacting with them, letting them know that they can make a difference by what they say to me. This is very, very important work.”

**“Probably half your job should be paying attention to people, especially to students — seeing them, hearing them, interacting with them, letting them know that they can make a difference.”**

There is leading. And then there is leading through the unimaginable. The COVID-19 pandemic briefly closed the campuses, then forced the College to re-emerge offering education online, which immediately and disproportionately compromised Mercy’s first-generation and low-income students, who studies show perform better in class than remotely. Under Hall the College moved decisively to help students through the challenging times while maintaining health and safety: expanding access to the Mav Market food pantry; establishing a Student Emergency Fund; sending computers to students’ homes; and keeping all academic instruction going at a distance until it was safe to come back. Not every institution of higher education had the underlying financials to survive the pandemic. On Hall’s watch, Mercy College did.

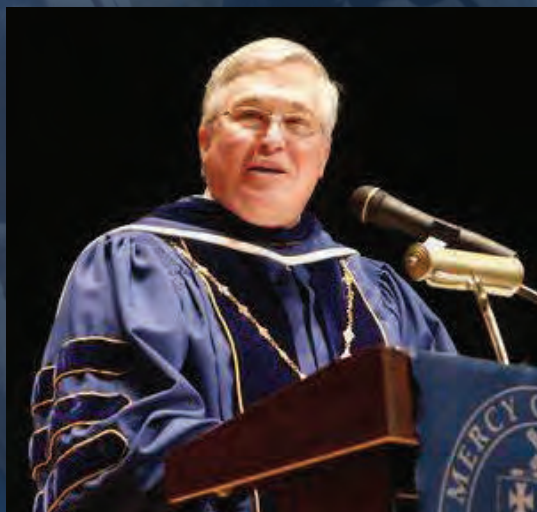
With a few months until retirement, Hall now has a new mandate from the Board: Don’t slow down. He drove the launch of CERTiFi by Mercy College as a strategic business decision to meet the demands of a competitive marketplace and evolving labor force. CERTiFi, offering non-credit, certificate courses, is “...more adult focused, something that brought new students that didn’t come to us traditionally. CERTiFi is a very deliberate attempt to diversify our sources of revenue, so that we can’t be so impacted as COVID impacted us,” said Hall. In March, the College started the approval process with New York State to become Mercy University later this year.

Asked what retirement looks like to him, he says the focus is family. But he leaves with the same convictions that brought him to Mercy. Student success is possible if those entrusted with educating them commit to following the path.

“There are very specific things — not so widely known in higher education — that especially help the students who need the most help. And — it’s almost mathematical. If you do these things, they get the help, and they soar.”

# President Hall

## A TIMELINE OF EVENTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS



First Commencement Ceremony  
Westchester County Center  
May 2014



Ribbon Cutting  
Opening of Hudson Hall  
Dobbs Ferry Campus  
December 2015

### Launch of the Mercy Scholars Scholarship Program

Providing qualified students with a full four years of tuition, books and fees, making the dream of a college education possible for those who – even with federal and state assistance – may not be able to afford it.  
September 2016



2014

2015

2016



Groundbreaking  
Hudson Hall  
Dobbs Ferry Campus  
August 2014



President Hall at  
his Inauguration  
with Senator  
Chuck Schumer  
Dobbs Ferry  
Campus  
April 2015



President Hall with students at  
Jian Qiao University, Shanghai, China  
September 2016



Opening of the Mav Market Food and Resource Pantry on the Bronx Campus  
October 2017



Ribbon Cutting  
Victory Hall Sports Center\*  
Dobbs Ferry Campus  
October 2018

\*later renamed the Neil Judge Student Athlete Center in December 2022



Opening of Veterans' Center  
Bronx Campus  
October 2016

## 2017



Student Success National Thought Leader Forum  
Dobbs Ferry Campus  
March 2017



Ribbon Cutting for Simulation Lab  
Dobbs Ferry Campus  
May 2017

## 2018



Ribbon Cutting  
Veterans' Center  
Dobbs Ferry Campus  
November 2018

As part of the Student Success Series, Mercy welcomed David Rosenthal, award-winning musical director & keyboardist for Billy Joel.  
October 2018





Ribbon Cutting and re-dedication ceremony for the newly expanded and fully renovated Manhattan Campus October 2019

View of Empire State Building from MercyManhattan



The Tarrytown Offices were purchased in 2019, including the Moller House, which created a home for Mercy and CNR Alumni.



Voted "Best College" by Westchester Magazine 2019



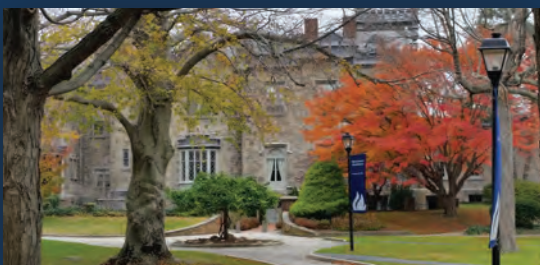
Painting by World-Renowned Artist Synthia SAINT JAMES Unveiled at MercyManhattan Ribbon Cutting October 2019



New entrance on 34th Street MercyManhattan

2019

2020



Mercy community welcomes students from The College of New Rochelle after CNR ceases operation. Students thrive and alumni find a new home at Mercy. 2019



Mercy holds first virtual Commencement due to COVID-19 Pandemic May 2020



Voted "Best College" by Westchester Magazine 2020



President Hall with Student Orientation Leaders August 2020





## President Tim Hall Recognized for Outstanding Leadership

- Effective Leadership Award by The Latino Center on Aging, 2018
- Distinguished Leader in Education by Education Update, 2019
- Individual Changemaker Award by Nonprofit Westchester, 2019
- Power 100 List for Westchester and New York City by City & State Magazine, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023
- Transformation in Education Award from Don Bosco Community Center, 2021



Mercy launches CERTiFi, a new division that offers courses and credentials to help working adults advance their careers. January 2022



Mercy's S&P rating has been consistent throughout President Hall's tenure.



Voted "Best College" by Westchester Magazine 2022



Mercy earns the prestigious "Seal of *Excelencia*" from *Excelencia* in Education. This national recognition is awarded to Mercy for its determination and progress in ensuring Hispanic students are supported and persist to graduation. September 2022

2021

2022

2023



Men's Lacrosse Wins ECC Championship and Advances to National Championship Game May 2022



At Mercy Veterans Day event, Reverend Viviana DeCohen '16, M.S. '18 presents President Hall with a letter from New York State, which recognizes his commitment to serving the unique needs of veteran students. November 2022



President Hall signs the petition to the NYS Education Department for a charter amendment to become Mercy University later this year. March 2023



# The Mercy Commu

## **Nancy Harkins CNR SAS '75**

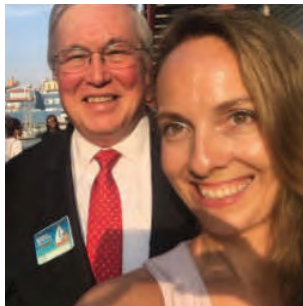
I am so grateful to President Hall for his vision and leadership that enabled not only CNR students but alumni as well to find a new home at Mercy College. Thanks to his generosity of spirit, the legacy of CNR may continue to flourish.

## **Mary Elizabeth Lacerenza CNR SAS '72**

Thank you so much for all of your hard work on behalf of the Mercy students and particularly in your innovative plan to accept CNR students and give CNR alumni a home away from home. Your efforts were a great success and are so very much appreciated. You are truly an inspiring leader and any college or university will be so lucky to have you as its president or any organization would be lucky to have you as a key member of its leadership team. You have a gift in being able to relate to people and are obviously a great administrator and have the ability to bring out the best in your amazing staff. I wish you and your family the very best.

## **Jenny Bruno '25**

I want to say thank you, President Hall, for always being so supportive of your students. You always make it a goal to appear at all school events that students may host, as well as athletic games. Thanks for supporting the Mercy Scholars.



## **Irina Ellison Associate Professor, Health Sciences, Associate Dean of the School of Health and Natural Sciences and Co-Director of the Mercy Global Honors Program**

Thank you so much for your leadership, President Hall! Your unparalleled focus on student success has not only given Mercy College a unified direction in which to move but has also reinvigorated my passion as a faculty member! Your warmth, generosity and humanity have permeated our campuses and we are better for having had the opportunity to learn from and work with you! All best wishes as you continue your adventures!

## **Thomas Isekenegebe President, Bronx Community College**

Congratulations on your retirement! It's an accomplishment to be celebrated. I am privileged to have worked with you as a community partner for the betterment of students' lives. Your leadership, vision and commitment to higher education have made a lasting impact on the lives of countless students and faculty. I wish you all the best in your well-deserved retirement and hope you enjoy this new chapter in your life. It is my hope that you have a long and happy retirement, filled with all of the relaxation, adventure and enjoyment that you deserve. Thank you for your tireless work in shaping the future of higher education.

## **Michael Romita**

### **President & CEO, Westchester County Association**

I have a lasting image of Tim from the first time we met just a few years ago. I was not leading the WCA at that time and neither Tim nor I knew of the many initiatives we would develop together. I was not running a big company. I was not an alumnus or a college parent. I was not a Mercy booster. Tim just wanted to meet me because my family had been involved in The College of New Rochelle for many years. He wanted to understand that relationship so he could better serve the CNR legacy which he had adopted when Mercy embraced the students of that institution and brought them into his own. Tim displayed absolutely no self interest and focused entirely on serving his students, his school and his community. He brought those same qualities to his service on the WCA's board of directors and executive committee and we are better for it. We are really going to miss him.



## **Vanessa Pimentel '23**

I had the honor of meeting President Hall in the spring of 2022 and fall 2022. I am a member of the theatre club, and I performed in the showcase we had for spring of 2022. It was nice to see him come and support us. The second time I met him was for the staff Thanksgiving

lunch at the Bronx Campus. Since I work for Campus Life, I helped set up the room for the staff. I conversed with President Hall for a bit and took a photo. He was very nice and delightful!

## **Marlene Tutera CNR SAS '71 and Mercy Trustee**

In the midst of crisis and chaos, I first met Mercy's President, Tim Hall. The College of New Rochelle, my beloved alma mater was on the brink of closure, and I along with my fellow trustees were faced with the task of finding the best path for our students to complete their degrees. I was feeling hopeless, and then suddenly there was a light in the darkness. Tim Hall arrived. He entered the room with a small blue notebook full of his handwritten notes. He listened, asked questions, gave us comfort. Along with the Mercy Board, Tim started the work of making this process work. It was complicated, unprecedented and seemingly endless but in the end it happened. I knew that through the entire negotiation that I was collaborating with an extraordinary leader, committed educator and compassionate individual. I also found a friend who cared about not only our students but CNR's alumni community. In the days that have passed since then, my admiration has grown. Tim Hall is a remarkable individual, who loves his family, books, music, art and conversation. He is patient, kind and optimistic. He has served Mercy well and I will miss him very much. Tim, in the words of Dale Evans and Roy Rogers, "Happy Trails to You, Until We Meet Again."

# Community Thanks President Hall

## **Delia Amsterdam**

### **Associate Director, PACT**

My favorite memory of President Hall was seeing him for the first time walking around the Bronx Campus. It was my first time seeing a president of an institution outside of their office. From then on, I would see him, and he would say hi to me. When I moved to the Manhattan Campus it was not any different. Thank you, President Hall, for all you have done for Mercy College, the students, and the staff. You will be truly missed! Enjoy your retirement! I cannot wait to see all the adventures you go on. I will live vicariously through your Instagram posts.

## **Ann Grow**

### **Professor Emerita, Philosophy**

Thank you, Tim. It's been a wonderful number of years having you as our leader. You've been a great friend to all of us, to everyone at the College. You've opened up our hearts to being kind to one another and being interested and aware of the needs of the College. You've added enormous building space, beautiful buildings, beautiful kinds of grounds. You've been good to the faculty, you've been reasonable — all the kinds of things that a president should be. And I'm very grateful to have had time working with you. Good luck now and say hello to Texas!



## **Patrick McCabe**

### **Associate Professor, Literacy and Multilingual Studies, School of Education**

First, I want to wish you the best as you return to Texas. You certainly earned it, but I know you will be very sad to miss the New York winters. You may recall that I was on the interview team when you came to the

College for your final interview with faculty representatives. I thought then and know now that we made the best decision to hire you. Also, I want to thank you for your successful efforts to build that path to the Metro-North Train on which the Health and Safety committee headed by Tom Simmonds worked. The truth is that I never thought I would see that completed, but you proved me wrong. Finally, thank you for changing the atmosphere of the College to one that is more student sensitive and friendly. Again, thank you, and good luck and happiness to you and Lee.

## **Matt Kilcullen Jr.**

### **Assistant Vice President, Athletics**

On behalf of the Athletics Department staff, coaches and student-athletes, we want to wish you the very best on your retirement. You have done a terrific job for all students during your tenure at Mercy, especially our student-athletes. We are going to miss seeing you in your favorite spot at midcourt in the gym and at midfield on top of the hill of our turf field!! All the best and Go Mavs!!

## **Faculty Association Executive Committee**

The FA Executive Committee would like to thank President Hall for his leadership, especially during unprecedented, turbulent, and often challenging times. We wish him only the best in his future endeavors and hope he has an enjoyable and relaxing retirement.



## **Patricia Anderson '05, M.S. '09**

I have so many wonderful memories being an active member of the Mercy College Alumni Council attending Mercy events with President Hall and his beautiful wife Lee. I stay amazed at his energy and continuous enthusiasm participating in all the college activities. He was "Phenomenal."

President Hall will be a very hard act to follow. I wish him a wonderful retirement.

## **Ramon Cordies '83**

I first met President Hall at a Yankees baseball game. My first impression was that he was a very down-to-earth, approachable guy, who did not put on airs. My first impression turned out to be correct. I'm sure he will be remembered as one of Mercy College's best and most influential presidents. His successor will have to fill very big shoes. I hope the College continues to improve. It is a great institution for minorities. I'm a prime example of that. Mercy gave me a second chance to excel in my studies, whereas the school that I started at, made it extremely difficult to remain matriculated. I will always remain grateful to Mercy College and its staff for that second chance!



## **John R. Thompson '82, H.D. '18** **Vice Chairman, Mercy Board of Trustees**

My tenure as a Trustee started when you arrived. As a result, I've enjoyed a front row seat as you've guided the College toward improvements in so many facets that honor and support our mission. As you approach retirement in 2023, you leave us

with a strong foundation upon which we can continue to build our reputation. Importantly, you've made us all proud to have known you and Lee for your tireless efforts to ensure Mercy's underserved students all had the opportunity and support needed to graduate college. Thank you and God bless.



Scan the QR code or visit [www.mercy.edu/presidenthallmemories](http://www.mercy.edu/presidenthallmemories) to read more messages to President Hall.