

# Monumental Leader

## SG opens new doors for Monroe CC's Daniel O'Hanlon

By John Lamothe, associate editor

What do you get when you combine the presidency of a major national student organization, a seat as speaker of the senate at a community college, and the completion of a \$100,000 community service project? For Daniel O'Hanlon, 32, of Monroe Community College in New York, you have the makings of a new phase in life.

O'Hanlon, a non-traditional student, came back to school after careers as a chef and truck driver. But he hasn't waited to finish his degree before using the leadership skills developed in his previous careers. "As a returning adult student, Dan is focused," says Susan Salvador, vice president of student services. "He has clarified his career goals, and he wants to make a difference."

Originally, O'Hanlon intended to study computer technology so he could make more money. It wasn't long, however, before he realized that his true calling was in politics. "I started in Student Government just as a club I thought I'd like to try," O'Hanlon says. "Now, I have a passion about what I'm studying and doing."

After joining SG as a freshman, O'Hanlon quickly moved up from senator to speaker of the senate, a role that serves as liaison between the senate and administration at MCC. In SG, he discovered an interest in education issues, which he pursued by attending the national convention of the American Student Association of Community Colleges (ASACC), a national organization that advocates students' interests in the U.S. Congress to ensure grassroots input on student needs (Learn more about national SG organizations in *Student Leader's* Fall 2002 issue at [www.studentleader.com](http://www.studentleader.com).) "ASACC was a way for me to tell what I really feel about

education issues," O'Hanlon says. "I wanted to see how far [these concerns for education] would take me."

O'Hanlon enjoyed his time at the conference so much that he applied for the ASACC presidency a short time later. He never expected to win, but his passion was evident to the board, which elected him the 2003 ASACC president. "I was very humbled and very stunned to be elected," O'Hanlon says.

"Dan was chosen from a strong field of candidates from across the nation because of his work ethic and vision," says Phil Clegg,

to offer friends of the college community, as well as members of the Rochester area, a place to pay their respects for the thousands that were lost that day and a place to memorialize what they cherish in their lives,"

he says. (Find out more about the 9/11 memorial in *Student Leader's* Fall 2002 issue at [www.studentleader.com](http://www.studentleader.com).)

"In my 26 years here at MCC, I can't remember any program, project, or event that has served to bring this entire campus community together as the 9/11 memorial did," says Douglas Brown, director of the student center. "I've worked with some excellent student leaders who accomplished great things for our campus community, but I'm not sure any of the past leaders, even with their



Monroe CC students and community members lined up around the block to view the monument on the one-year memorial of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, O'Hanlon's (inset) hallmark project.

ASACC executive director and director of student activities at Utah Valley State College. "ASACC needed a student leader who was willing to roll up his sleeves and go to work in recruiting new members and building the association." From his first day in office, O'Hanlon did work toward improving ASACC. His first objective was improving the organization's communications—not an easy feat since the board members are spread throughout the country. Through vigilant use of e-mail, the internet, and conference calls, he established a more effective communication network. O'Hanlon also began an ASACC Alumni Association so former members could continue to support the cause.

O'Hanlon's vision extends far beyond his work with ASACC. When the former SG president at MCC had an idea to build a memorial to honor the victims of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, O'Hanlon spearheaded the project that eventually resulted in a \$100,000 memorial and remembrance ceremony. "The purpose of the memorial is

combined efforts, could have assembled the support that Dan did."

What began as an idea for a plaque placed on a boulder to memorialize the tragic events quickly evolved into a wall made of concrete and steel depicting the New York City skyline with two voids where the World Trade Center Towers once stood. For this 100-percent student-led project, O'Hanlon served as the middleman between the architectural firm, administration, and students.

"The memorial is probably one of the most, if not the most, impressive memorials organized by students on any college campus," Salvador says. "When you look at the wall, you know that we'll always remember and always care." **SL**

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Read the full story on Daniel O'Hanlon at [www.studentleader.com](http://www.studentleader.com)

### O'Hanlon's Leadership Tips

- 1) Compassion.** It's important that you have compassion not only when dealing with others on a team but also when dealing with yourself and understanding your limits.
- 2) Desire.** A leader shouldn't just take the "status quo"—the good leader reaches for the next level time after time.
- 3) Vision.** Vision must come from the heart and run like a train—never stopping at the station of contentedness, always moving from place to place, goal to goal.
- 4) Passion.** If you lead with passion, you'll empower all those you contact. You'll influence everyone, from the smallest way to the largest.
- 5) Time management.** If you're not organized, then your leadership may not be organized.