November 30, 2011

College Update

“As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.” John F. Kennedy

I reported earlier this fall that during 2011-12 I am serving as president of the NC Association of Community College Presidents (NCACCP). This has taken me away from campus more than usual, including monthly meetings in Raleigh with the State Board of Community Colleges, the group which sets statewide policy and links directly with the NC General Assembly. Lieutenant Governor Walter Dalton sits on this Board, as does Treasurer Janet Cowell, who, by the way, visited PCC this Monday to talk with students about the financial responsibility related to student loans and financial aid. As part of my duties, I deliver a monthly report at their meetings, and I thought that I would share with you a part of what I presented at the November 18 State Board meeting:

“This is a busy season on campuses, with impending completion of Fall Semester as well as pre-registration for Spring 2012. This process has been complicated on Developmental Education Initiative pilot campuses like Pitt Community College, but the long-term benefits of facilitating student success is worth the challenge. We are thankful for the strong leadership which President Scott Ralls and his team are providing for Career and College Promise implementation with high schools.

A recent book by Atlantic writer Don Peck entitled Pinched: How the Great Recession has Narrowed Our Futures and What We Can Do About It comments on the very important mission of higher education in our society: “There would be no better tonic for the country’s recent ills than a resumption of the rapid advance of skills and abilities throughout the population. Clearly there is room for improvement.” SuccessNC’s goal of Student Access is vital, especially for male students, to enable the U.S. to increase its college completion rate substantially.

The economic realities are seen on NC campuses every day. At Pitt, for the first time in history, the number of students receiving Federal Pell grants, based on significant financial need, now comprises over 50% of the student body. The reductions in state funding compounded by the prospect of additional budget reversions this year will make it difficult for colleges to maintain access for students and vigorously support student success. Nevertheless, North Carolina’s community colleges are striving to meet these goals and continue to be the engines of workforce development and hope for students and their families.

I wish you a happy Thanksgiving and holiday season, and I thank you for your support of all 58 community colleges during these challenging times.”
I am certainly thankful for many things, including my recently-arrived third granddaughter(!), PCC’s great community and hard-working students, and, most assuredly, you faculty and staff for your caring and expert work. But during this year of my extra duties across the state, I am particularly grateful for an experienced and professional President’s Leadership Team as well as President’s Office staff, who have all stepped up to assume more responsibilities.

**Accomplishments and Recognitions**

* **Wanda Smith** (Arts & Sciences) was selected a member of the Rotary District 7720 Group Study Exchange to southwest Germany in June 2012.
* The entire team led by **Hilda Barrow** who ran the Developmental Math advising day on November 8 – great work by you all!
* **Happy Gingras** and **Jasmin Spain** for recognition as a 2011 Innovation of the Year Award winner for the Early Alert Initiative.
* **Joanne Ceres, Kimberly Williamson, former VA Counselor Angela Cline,** and others for Pitt being named “2012 Military Friendly School.”
* PCC Speaker’s Bureau for presentations all year on Pitt’s history. Don King was praised for an October 20 talk. Special thanks for **Lynn Smith** for keeping us on track!
* **Susan Nobles and the entire Institutional Advancement staff** for an outstanding Presidents’ Reception on November 18!

Best wishes for a successful end to Fall Semester and a meaningful and relaxing holiday season.

G. Dennis Massey, President