December 3, 2012

College Update

*Time isn’t measured by length but by depth.*  
Isolde Kurz (1853-1944)

The period in the academic year after Thanksgiving break is crucial to the academic success of our credit students. The looks of concentration and concern in some of the faces I see across campus reflect the stakes at hand even as they register for the Spring 2013 semester and count down the days until final examinations and the Christmas/Hanukkah/New Year’s holidays. There also is the important matter looming of paying the tuition and fees charges for the coming term, not to mention the expenses of books and other materials vital for the start-up of the coming semester. Of course, if headed for East Carolina University, those numbers are even larger.

As some of you may remember, the college calendar did not always end before Xmas, though I am not making excuses for our students nor arguing that we should change back to another yearly schedule. There was a time when most colleges and universities began fall semester in September and did not conclude it until mid-January, a break now practiced by the Pitt County Schools. The Christmas holiday season had a completely different atmosphere for students with the specter of examinations looming after a return to campus, though there were some who welcomed the extra time to complete papers and other assignments. The quarter calendar became popular in the 1960’s because it offered shorter terms (10 weeks) and more choices for subjects and finished before Christmas, even though that meant that winter and spring quarters stretched well into June. There were even some colleges which moved up final exams before Thanksgiving, providing a 5-week winter break, though this did not substantially enhance student retention of learning or continued study.

Pitt Community College converted from the quarter to semester system in 1997. The rationale was a greater depth of knowledge afforded by a 16 week term and a reduction of time and funding with fewer starts and stops to the calendar. Even though PCC now provides a number of late-starting and even half-semester courses, the streamlined calendar has delivered on its promise of efficiency and enabled us to more effectively utilize the limited campus space we have (yes, Pitt remains the most crowded NC college even after the addition of two large instructional buildings this year!). Few students and faculty would trade our current calendar for the past.

The upcoming holiday season has sparked a number of events and service projects by students and employees which extend the Thanksgiving spirit into December and beyond. The PCC Association of Educational Office Professionals led by President Lenora Harvey sponsored the Lights of Knowledge Ceremony at which the Elements of Praise performed. Donations honoring loved ones and others fund student scholarships
from this group. The ESL Thanksgiving Celebration on November 15 at Covenant Church and on campus spread the holiday spirit to many who were unfamiliar with our customs. The TRIO program once again is identifying needy families and making their lives happier – gifts and donations from across campus are accepted until December 10. And there are many other student and employee groups which benefit our communities. So amidst the rush to complete courses, you please add cheer to the lives of others!

Recognitions and Announcements

• After consultation with the Department of Transportation, changes in traffic patterns and regulations will be announced soon to protect the health and safety of our students and employees. Change is never easy, but the benefits in the long run will be significant. Watch for the details coming soon.
• The Human Services Technology Program received reaccreditation by the Council for Standards in Human Service Education. A number of strengths in our program were identified. Many thanks to Department Chair Dr. Ray Taylor and the faculty in this important department.
• Michael Clendenen, Distance Learning Director, was featured in an NC State University report for utilizing cloud computing technology to support our Electronic Health Records training in Health Information Technology.
• Michael Shreves (Human Resources) and Valarie Kite (Planning and Analysis) assumed key positions in November. Please welcome them to PCC.
• Nicholas Vick (TRIO/Student Support Services) received the Outstanding Master’s degree program Student Award from the English Department at East Carolina University.

Later in December, the Board of Trustees will meet with our Pitt County state legislators, including new members Brian Brown and Susan Martin in the House of Representatives and Don Davis in the Senate as well as returning Representative Jean Farmer-Butterfield and Senator Louis Pate. Issues and proposals on the upcoming General Assembly Biennial session will be presented which can benefit our campus.

Best wishes for a successful end of the semester and a relaxing and meaningful Holiday season.

G. Dennis Massey, President