Budget decisions at the state level in North Carolina have rarely been made by the end of the fiscal year, but this year appears to be an exception. Thanks to a modest and reasonable request by President Ralls and our own Board and Foundation members as well as several faculty and staff who contacted legislators, it appears that NC Community Colleges have been supported in the final deliberations. Although we will continue to suffer a cut in state funding in the coming year, the downsizing has been reduced somewhat. Moreover, we have been able to repurpose funds initially targeted for enrollment growth funding to serve our students, especially in mathematics instruction. The budget will not be final until it is signed by the Governor. We will be evaluating whether we can do even better than the 1.2% salary increase proposed by the General Assembly from state allocations. I will report to you soon on this.

There was not such good news from Pitt County. After agreeing in October 2010 that we move forward with the Vernon White Building renovation and repurposing (shifting Electricity/Electronics from Whichard and making important energy efficiency and structural changes), on June 18 the Pitt County Commissioners voted 7-1 not to approve our going for bids because of a shortfall in sales tax receipts and major objections from Pitt County Schools. Although a subsequent Daily Reflector article left the impression that we were going to move forward with the proposed work, we will obviously not be able to do this. Instead, we are preparing classrooms for Fall 2012 use and planning to do what we can with very limited funds to clean up the back of the building. The Board of Trustees and I set the following as one of our goals for 2012-13 months before the Vernon White decision by the County Commissioners: “Explore facility expansion in light of the Master Plan and current needs and opportunities.” We will continue to pursue this goal.

Speaking of enrollment, although our curriculum students dropped by 1.18% in 2011-12, we were still #16 among the 58 NC Community colleges in growth. In other words, only 11 colleges showed increases, and we were not far behind. Our immediate priority now is to maximize our Fall 2012 enrollment and return to the positive numbers which have been a feature of PCC for decades.

This has been a very busy period of orienting and registering new students to Pitt Community College, and I want to express my appreciation to the many faculty and staff who have contributed to this overall effort to help students get off to the best first step possible in pursuit of their academic/career goals at PCC this fall. With Student Development Services personnel taking the lead with vital support from deans and advisors in all the academic divisions, we have reached many students with quality information, and we have laid a strong foundation for registration of additional continuing and beginning students on July 18-19 and provided valuable insights for department chairs in developing new sections, when needed.
Why is this important? One of our three Strategic Goals is Student Access, and we know that more community members than ever must seek additional training if they are to be prepared for the jobs of the future. The American Dream of upward mobility is being challenged by the current economy, but that simply means that everyone must try harder than before to achieve their goals. I have quoted Thomas Friedman from the New York Times in my welcome to New Student Orientation groups that quantum advances in globalization and the computer revolution means that students must seek their “unique value contribution” to stand out from their peers in competition for jobs.

The most important goal, however, is student success. Degrees and certifications from quality colleges like PCC make a big difference in the lives of students and their families. Certainly a positive start in their first semester and year is important, but higher education is more similar to a long distance run than a sprint. Goals and skills refine and change over time. This is why our Quality Enhancement Plan topic of Career and Academic Planning (CAP) is a continuous process. It will go far toward helping students achieve their goals. To lead this program, I have selected Research Coordinator Andrew Walker to serve as Director of the Career and Academic Planning Program. He will report to Vice Presidents Spell and Hilbert and work with many on campus to focus on the tangible results of Student Success. More details to follow on this major initiative.

Recognitions and Accomplishments

- Pitt's chapter of Phi Theta Kappa received special commendation as a Three Star Chapter. Congrats to the student leaders and advisors Joy Moses-Hall and Allison
- Calvin Mayo was named Foreign Teacher of the Year at Wuxi Institute of Technology in China at the graduation ceremony where our first graduates in China received Associate's degrees. Dr. Donald Spell, Derek Hunter, Dr. Dan Mayo, Andre Gregory and other PCC instructors were present.
- PCC’s Gamma Beta Phi chapter exceeded its goal and raised $1506 this year.
- Bill Cooper, Bionetwork Manager, received praise from a Pitt County 8th grade science teacher for sparking interest among her students in Biotechnology in a recent talk.
- Kay Gooding, Health Information Technology and Region D Hitech Workforce Training Director, was selected as a presenter at the 2012 STEMtech Conference.

Thanks again for everyone who is working hard to advise and register students for Fall 2012. I hope everyone has a glorious July 4th holiday.

G. Dennis Massey, President