June 1, 2012

College Update

“What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Happy June 1! In this Update I will give a summary of where we are in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Reaccreditation process as well as the ever-changing state and county budgets, along with my usual congratulations to selected employees. Let me know if I have omitted any degree completers.

These times of commencements and graduations, which are celebrations of success for our students and the community as a whole, are also times of saying farewell to colleagues who have contributed much to what Pitt Community College has become during their tenure. At the Board of Trustees meeting on May 22, retiring employees with thirty years of service were honored – Joe Brittain, Jenny Edwards, Kathy Collins, and Linwood Woodard. Several more retirees were honored at the Employee Appreciation and Service Awards event in April. Pitt Community College’s success is built on the hard work, creativity, and service which all of our faculty and staff bring to their jobs.

We at PCC know firsthand the challenges of our graduates, who are confronting the job market with optimism but also a realistic assessment of employment. This is one reason for our determination that our proposed Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) topic will feature career information and active search experiences for students. Regarding the job market, there is positive change occurring. At the recent Pinning Ceremony for Associate Degree in Nursing graduates, the percentage of students who had early job offers rose significantly over 2011, and there are small increases in other curricular areas as well. Our QEP topic, Career and Academic Planning (CAP), will prepare students to explore and employees to help facilitate careful decision-making on career directions and course selection.

At this point we are finalizing CAP to send in July to the SACS review team of evaluators who will visit our campus on September 18-20. Vice President Pamela Hilbert is leading the QEP process, with strong support from Vice President Donald Spell, Assistant Vice President Larry Dendy, and Andrew Walker. We owe many thanks to the QEP Development Team, which has been led by Dean Stephanie Rook, for their thoughtful and detailed work on drafting CAP. It is a solid proposal on which we can build over the next five years, adjusting and improving as needed.

We have also received the preliminary report on the Compliance Certification, the self-assessment on the SACS principles and Federal requirements. We have until mid-July to put together a series of Focused Reports which respond to deficiencies identified.
Dr. Brian Miller is coordinating the work of many faculty and staff to compile this response. So we still have considerable work ahead of us before the SACS visit in September, but I feel that we are in a strong position for success and continuing to improve PCC.

The state and county budgets are still underway, but reductions in funding are inevitable in both sectors for PCC. Advocacy by Trustees and campus leaders may result in decreasing the cuts, but resources are limited and there is clearly great competition among state/county departments for attention. Unfortunately, Pitt will not have enrollment growth funding to cushion the cuts from the state. We are moving forward with a conservative approach which features reduced expenses but no reduction in current positions.

I included the quotation from Emerson above to remind us that, whatever challenges and travails we face, we have the human capital and institutional direction to succeed in following through on our college mission and goals. Students and service to the community will continue to be our priorities. And there is tremendous potential in the individuals and groups on our campus to be successful.

**Recognitions and Accomplishments**

- Congratulations to the employees who have earned degrees or certificates themselves this spring: Master’s Degrees: Amber Ream, Kimberlee J. Raper, Jasmin Spain, Kim Mills; Bachelor’s Degrees: Kendall Commodore, Terra Jones; Certified Nurse Educator: Angela Martin.
- NC Math Association of Two Year Colleges officers will include Glynis Mullins (President Elect) and Daniela Zemanek (Editor) for 2012-13
- Jamelle Moore will serve as AEOP secretary and College Council Recorder
- Helen Parke, Van Madray, Derek Hunter, David Lusk and others who contributed to a major Department of Labor grant proposal which was submitted in May.

Finally, I want to say farewell to a few others who provided services which made us a different, richer college this past year. Our Visiting Fulbright Scholars, Valerie Guerra from Uruguay and Xiu-Wen Lin from Taiwan, interacted regularly with students and staff and definitely internationalized our local community in ways which enhanced our living and learning. They were a true delight. Thanks especially to Andre Gregory and Dan Mayo for playing leading roles in coordinating their stay. Dan and Andre will be joined by Derek Hunter in representing PCC at Wuxi Institute of Technology this month where our first PCC graduates in China will receive their degrees.

Finally, Mr. Larry Spell, who has developed the PCC Orchestra so wondrously over the past few years, will be leaving us for a doctoral program in Salt Lake City later this summer. I know this musical outreach has definitely enriched campus and community members and added to the life inside us. Best wishes, Larry, and thanks!

G. Dennis Massey, President