College Update

Some people have compared the SACS reaccreditation work to a marathon run because of the length of time involved, sensitivity to external conditions (Changing race courses/college, fluctuating weather status, shifting requirements by the federal government), and the pacing of preparations required to ensure successful completion. With the number of SACS Principles involved, it sometimes feels like a twisting course with a significant number of uphill climbs.

I have never run a marathon – a half marathon was the closest I came to that huge commitment of physical and mental effort and preparation – but one big difference seems to be that our reaccreditation was definitely a team undertaking, and this was clearly demonstrated during the On-Site Visit on September 18-20. It was clear in the Exit Conference that the reviewers were very impressed with all the Pitt Community College employees and students they met, and the longer they stayed, the more they were persuaded that we had the talent and commitment to more than satisfy their requirements in virtually all areas of inquiry. We are a self-reflecting college, and our faculty and staff plan, document our results, and modify our objectives accordingly to support student learning and serve our community.

Of the twenty-one core requirements, comprehensive standards, or federal requirements identified for further review last May, only one principle was targeted for further work, the match of faculty credentials to the courses they are teaching. Regarding the Career and Advising Plan (CAP) we proposed, the reviewers made many helpful suggestions for modification and expansion, including two recommendations regarding measurable goals and assessments tied to these specifics.

In the next few months, we will develop a response to these recommendations and any other comments in the formal report we will receive in the next 2 weeks. This Response Report, along with our revised QEP, will be reviewed by the SACS Commission on Colleges Board of Trustees at their meeting in June 2013. At that point, the marathon should be complete, though the QEP will be assessed over the next five years for progress and effectiveness. It is truly a system which is geared for continuous improvement.

The PCC Team has been active and interactive all along the way. The Leadership Team included Pamela Hilbert, Donald Spell, Lora Clark, Brian Miller, Susan Everett, Susan Nobles, Ricky Brown, Don Heisey, SACS Liaison Larry Dendy (until August 31), and myself. Brian Miller headed up the extensive Compliance Certification process, with key committee chairs Donna Neal, Stephanie Woodley, Dan Mayo, Lynn McCormick, Joanne Ceres, Tim Broadwell, and Mike Clendenen. Maria Pharr and Donna Neal did outstanding work in the crucially important area of Institutional Effectiveness and Student Learning Outcomes. The CAP plan was developed initially by chairs Bill Sypawka and Stephanie Rook. Andrew Walker is the CAP Director, and
he was supported strongly by Dana Parker, Kimberly Williamson, and Arwen Parris, with important guidance from VPs Spell and Hilbert. Communications depended upon many contributors led by Kelly Jones, Susan Nobles and Rob Goldberg. And the On-Site Visit Committee, chaired by Andre Gregory, provided personal and professional support for the reviewers during their visit. A special recognition is due to all the editors led by Darlene Smith-Worthington and the computer support coordinated by Rick Owens and Wes Wooten. The race would not have been successful without the help of all these people and many more.

The North Carolina Community College System Conference will be held on October 7-9 at the Raleigh Convention Center, and this year’s event is especially significant as it will kick off the System’s 50th Anniversary celebrations (yes, PCC predated the “System” by two years, as we began as an Industrial Education Center in 1961). There are 18 sessions being presented by PCC faculty/staff at this conference, and I have included an attachment describing their sessions with this Update. It is impressive that we will have over 60 employees attending and so many will be sharing our strongest accomplishments with our colleagues from across the state. An impressive array of talent!

Recognitions and Accomplishments

Director Jim Ensor received a $31,250 grant for “Growing America Through Entrepreneurship” from The Rural Center. Project GATE was selected from a competitive field of applicants to serve as the GATE site for the East/Northeastern Region of the Small Business Center Network.

VP Pamela Hilbert was appointed by President Scott Ralls and Senior VP Sharon Morrissey to serve on the Transfer Advisory Committee to review and strengthen the articulation agreement with the UNC System.

Dean Donna Neal was notified of continued accreditation for the Echocardiography program through 2017. Congrats to Director Heather Costanzo as well.

Dept. Chair Patricia Baldwin and Nicole Franklin promoted our American Sign Language students and program for Deaf Awareness Month, including recognition by Greenville Mayor Allen Thomas and many other programs and events.

Finally, the Dedication of the Charles Russell Classroom Building in early September was a very successful recognition of former President Charles Russell and a fitting display with pride of our new facilities across Reedy Branch Road. We are working with the Department of Transportation on responding to challenges involving pedestrians. A traffic study will be conducted this week, with interventions to improve safety to follow.

G. Dennis Massey, President