November 3, 2013

College Update

October is usually one of the busiest months of the academic year, with students negotiating mid-term exams, papers and the tough points of the courses challenging everyone. It is also when student activities ramp up, with Fall Fest, musical productions, athletics, club inductions, and many other events occur. For the continuing education program, it is when fall courses are hitting their stride and totals for the calendar year begin to finalize. I hope that you and most of your students have gotten through these hurdles and there is relatively smooth sailing to the end of the term. I thank those who have concluded the safety training and urge you all to complete this exercise. I also thank those who have completed or are in the middle of CAP professional development. This will help make retention and completion for students more attainable.

I am pleased to report that we had one of the most outstanding Leadership Institute programs ever thanks to the strong leadership of Brian Miller and his support team, which included Jeff Mobley, Bill Sypawka, Nicole Mitchell, and Lynn McCormick. I have never witnessed a group respond so quickly to the “frames of leadership” which Dr. Cheryl McFadden presented. I am looking forward to more interaction with this talented group of employees.

This is also the season when the College has more activities involving Pitt people in the outside community than usual, including the PCC Foundation scholarship reception, where donors and student recipients come together to celebrate the generosity of our supporters. We also host the PCC Foundation Golf Outing, and, of course, the Holiday Show, which is just concluding with tremendous success for our students. We owe many thanks to the Institutional Advancement Office for planning and coordinating these activities.

Certainly a major activity this fall has been the Bond Referendum campaign for facilities at PCC. It has been heartening to see so many employees, students, alumni, and friends come together to present our proposal to voters, urge people to come out to the polls, and advocate for passage for the first bond referendum for the College in twenty-four years. In a sense, it has been an extended “PCC in the Community” experience for me and many others, learning how we can serve our constituents better and hearing many stories of success from people who have graduated, had a son or granddaughter attend, or simply taken a continuing education class in computers. Whatever the final result, I am proud of what I have heard that YOU have done for our area.

Just in case you had any doubts of the need for a new science building, I would like to include part of a letter which Ms. Judith Kasperek, long-time Chair of the Science Department, sent to me. It was never printed by the Daily Reflector, but I think this unsolicited endorsement says a lot about how you have all persevered under less than ideal circumstances to move forward on our mission and goals:

I retired as chair of the PCC Science Department in September of 2012 after 34 years. The hardest part of my job was finding enough rooms and labs to meet the needs of our students. At
the time we moved into the Fulford building in 1993, we had three biology labs and one chemistry lab. They were scheduled from 8 AM until 10 PM Monday through Thursday and until 4 PM on Friday and Saturday. We also scheduled labs in regular classrooms because we simply did not have enough lab space. We doubled our lab space when the Simon building opened but within a year, those labs were also fully scheduled.

We were never able to meet the demands for our classes even when we added hybrid and Internet lecture classes. Laboratories which require hands-on manipulation and physical observation do require specialized laboratory space and equipment and do not fit into an Internet format. Even with the additional labs in the Simon building, we still had long waiting lists for our lab classes. So many times I had to tell a student that all the spaces in a class/lab were filled and that unfortunately it would be another semester or year before they could take the class/lab. And yes, that would mean the student couldn’t start the health sciences program of choice or transfer to a four-year college for an additional year. We simply didn’t have the space to add another class. Another year before the student would be able to enter the workforce as a health care professional, an engineer, a biologist, a biotechnologist, or a myriad of other careers that need the science training provided by the sciences at PCC. Another year before they could become a tax paying citizen.

Accomplishments and Recognitions

- Michael Stephenson has led a strong collection of student and community volunteers of the Bulldog Beat, the Chorus, and the Symphony in many venues, including the NCCCS 50th Anniversary Central Regional Dinner in Greensboro on October 23. Instructor RaSheeda Waddell has added much to these performances. The October 29 Orchestra performance was outstanding!
- Dr. Katalin Szucs and Bonnie Galloway were inducted into the Educators Hall of Fame at East Carolina University’s College of Education.
- Dr. Kimberly Williamson was elected President of the NC Community College Student Development Personnel Association, with Ty Davis, Shakeena White, and Starlette Vaught named officers of the group.

Finally, it is always rewarding to have students praise us, and the Echocardiography program received such feedback from Rita-Marie Samos recently: “I have never encountered such helpful and motivated academic faculty members. There is always an encouraging and ‘you will succeed’ attitude that students hear while going through such a demanding program.” I would say that this is very satisfying to us all.

If you can work it into your schedule, please volunteer to distribute campaign materials at a polling site on Tuesday. See Kathy Carnes for times and places. Best wishes for a great November!

G. Dennis Massey, President