Writing allows even a stupid person to seem halfway intelligent, if only that person will write the same thought over and over again, improving it just a little bit each time. It is a lot like inflating a blimp with a bicycle pump. Anybody can do it. All it takes is time. (Kurt Vonnegut, from The Sun magazine)

One of my discoveries upon arriving in North Carolina in 2003 is a magazine which originates from Chapel Hill called The Sun. It is a collection of essays, poems, short stories, photos and interviews which was started by Sy Syfransky 40 years ago and continues his personable, probing, and unapologetically counter-culture voice and perspective to this day. Most notably, the magazine has no advertising, and its contributors are typically not the “personages” read in glossier publications. There is also a monthly topic eliciting submissions from general readers. I read it as a contrast to the Daily Reflector’s “Bless Your Heart” snippets.

I don’t ascribe to all of what is proposed or stated in this magazine, but I applaud its frequent common sense and its sincere effort to reward conscientious writing, which is why I began this month’s Update with the Vonnegut quote above. Repeated practice and refinement of writing, or almost any activity (e.g. ballroom dancing for me), results in improvement, whether it is disciplined approach to eating or exercise, or perfecting the craft of your job at Pitt Community College and connecting it with campus-wide goals and initiatives. Even when it may feel that you are trying to inflate a blimp with a single person’s efforts.

Just like it takes a village to raise a child, it takes an entire campus to realize institutional improvement. Individual efforts add up to College advancement. The challenge is though we depend upon all departments to “inflate the blimp,” we cannot witness individual contributions which help us accomplish our collective goals. Assessment of student learning, which was a focus in the SACS/COC accreditation process, depends not only on progress in classes but the services provided and the environment supporting the learning. It remains a major priority of Institutional Effectiveness as we approach the beginning of our preparation for our 2017 Five-Year Review, and it deserves regular and thoughtful monitoring in our Campus Labs reporting and other documentation.

In the preliminary 2014 Performance Measures study shared by the NC College System Office, Pitt Community College showed improvements in some categories but overall an average score compared with other NC Community Colleges. Progress on these performance measures will result in increased funding for the college (something we could use as our enrollment flattens out), but, more importantly, it will demonstrate a higher level of success by our students. These indicators of college advancement are definitely not a comprehensive reflection of Pitt Community College. But they are one set of criteria which help us supplement the anecdotal and very valid impressions which we all receive in this time of Academic Excellence achievements and upcoming commencement ceremony. We will succeed as an institution in pushing our standards and performance higher by individually and collectively pumping away.
Accomplishments and Recognitions

*Jamiee Radel* (Women’s Softball) has been recognized as the national pitcher of the week for two weeks consecutively in March, with an ERA of 1.15 for the year and 0.0 in her last 3 starts. Come out and watch our outstanding softball and baseball teams perform in the coming weeks.

*Morgan Norville* (Architectural Technology student) was praised by Tim Randall of Farrior & Sons Construction for the 3D model he created for the Greenville Community Shelter featured in the *Daily Reflector* on March 28.

*Alton Wadford* (Academic Affairs) reported that the 2014 High School Career Expo was a great success, with 114 students and 19 career areas represented by our faculty and staff.

*John Tate* (Biotechnology student) was selected for the competitive Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange for 2014-15, limited to 75 American students and featuring career study and travel in Germany, another boost for global education at PCC.

*Katherine Clyde, Stephanie Cox, and Charles Griffin* (Business Division) recently completed the Icehouse Entrepreneurial Facilitator training. This will aid many students and community members.

*Wendy Ayscue* (Respiratory Therapy) joined ECU and Vidant partners, including Dr. Robert Shaw, in a project featured in the *Respiratory Care Education Annual*.

*Norman Lilley* (Automotive Technology) reports great student performance in the partnership with Snap-on Industrial. 191 certificates were granted, far beyond our goal, qualifying for the 14.2 scanner update at no charge.

*Susan Nobles* (Institutional Advancement) was named the 2014 PCC Woman of Substance Award winner on March 5 from a strong group of nominees, including Gina Cox, Mae Daniels, Ty Davis, Janice Fisher, Leatrice Freer, Cara Herrington, Tabitha Miller, LaTonya Nixon, Karen Speight, Teresa Staton, and Wendy Wooten. Congratulations to all our talented nominees!

*Tammy Atchison* was a co-writer of an article in *Learning Abstracts* published by the League of Innovation.

*SGA president, La’Quon Rogers* was elected as the North Carolina Comprehensive Community College SGA President for 2014-2015. He also won the Daryl Mitchell Outstanding Student Award for the Eastern Division as well as the Ray Jeffries Award. This means that our own Mr. Rogers will be the first PCC student to serve on the State Board of Community Colleges in the coming year!

*Marguerite Stephens* was awarded the prestigious Karen Yerby Award for her strong leadership of our SGA club.

Looks like spring is finally with us. I wish you well in supporting our students as they near the finish line of the spring semester and in the important advising work for summer and fall which you will begin in April. I'll report in May on our progress with funding from the NC General Assembly, among other topics.

G. Dennis Massey, President