College Update

Revenues necessary for public community colleges to do their job of supporting students for workforce preparation, university transfer, or other educational goals come from various sources, depending on the state: state funds, local property taxes, local or state sales taxes, student tuition, county or city allocations, federal funds such as Pell or Perkins Grants, self-support programs (frequently for continuing education), gifts and grants from private, non-profit, or national/local organizations. NC relies primarily on state funds for personnel, equipment, and other costs, and county funds for capital projects as well as annual funds for utilities, maintenance and grounds, public safety, and other expenses.

During the economic recession of the last 6-7 years, many states and colleges have increased student tuition/fees at a rate faster than state/local funds. North Carolina has participated in this increase, though starting from a relatively low tuition rate has meant that our long-time commitment to student access has been somewhat protected. NC has the fourth lowest tuition rate for community colleges in the U.S., trailing only California, New Mexico, and Texas as the most affordable two-year public higher education.

Gifts and grants have become increasingly important for supporting ongoing programs as well as special initiatives. A $2M grant for PCC from the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration was announced in January, allowing the Science Building to expand from 67K to 75K square feet. This will accommodate more short-term training for business and industry as well as STEM programming for credit students, including those in the new Early College High School (ECHS) being phased in beginning Fall 2015. A New Schools grant, state funding, and Pitt County Schools will also support ECHS.

Private funds from the Eddie and Jo Allison Smith Family Foundation have been combined with PCC Foundation funds to create and expand the VISIONS and HORIZONS programs to provide scholarships and student support for many students over the past ten years. These funds have provided access for many who would not attend PCC otherwise. This “transformation” program is an extension of the scholarship support by the PCC Foundation and the Institutional Advancement Division which is so vital to keeping students on a positive track.

The Pitt County American Legion Agricultural Fair Board's recent contributions and development of a $50,000 endowed scholarship fund is a great example of this very important local community assistance. TRIO funding from the US Department of Education also attracts students to higher education opportunities and supports them academically. Director LaTonya Nixon and her staff compete for a major grant to sustain these services at a high level.

The Golden LEAF Foundation has been instrumental in making possible many innovative and essential programs here at PCC, most notably equipment for biotechnology and the health sciences programming in the Simon Building. VP Thomas Gould headed up a major grant with Wayne Community College which does an
excellent job of training faculty and focusing new programs in Advanced Manufacturing thanks to Golden LEAF support. Many CIT faculty have benefited from the coordination of Amy Stephenson in rolling out this effort. Citizens in eastern NC will earn “stackable” credentials in mechanical engineering, AutoCAD and other areas through this training.

These are only a few examples of the major efforts being made to benefit our community and individual students and their families. I have said many times that gifts and grants help us move from a good to an excellent community college. They have become an essential component of our operations and bring talent and opportunities to our campus for staff and students. I appreciate the strong efforts of those who have been instrumental in landing and wisely utilizing these resources.

Next month, I will focus on the state and county budget priorities in my Update as we position ourselves for 2015-16.

Accomplishments and Recognitions

- **Laurie Weston (Transitional Studies)** and her staff hosted an Adult Basic Skill Professional Development series of workshops from Appalachian State University in important content areas on January 5-8. Laurie also made excellent presentations to the Board of Trustees and College Council on the career directions of high school equivalency and adult basic education.

- **Happy Gingras and Patricia Adams (Sociology, Psychology)** were selected to present at the Gateway Course Experience Conference in Charlotte, part of a national institute on Excellence in Undergraduate Education.

- **K.S. Robinson, a Wilson police officer and alumnus of both the Criminal Justice and BLET program,** was recognized recently for going above and beyond the call of duty to assist an 87-year-old man who had been involved in a wreck. See more details on the PCC website. (Thanks to Criminal Justice Department Chair Phil Baggett for this information)

I want to thank everyone for helping us get off to a good start this Spring Semester, though I know that several late-starting classes are still to come. In both headcount and FTE we are below where we were a year ago, but this is not out of line with other NC colleges or national trends. Our major goal is to support student success, so we will continue to promote Completion by Design and all efforts to retain students to achieve their educational goals, including degrees and certifications, which will advance them and our overall community in the future.

G. Dennis Massey, President