March 1, 2016

College Update

Estimated enrollment numbers are in for Spring 2016, and our projected FTE (full-time enrollment equivalent) is at first analysis down only slightly from last spring. After the steady growth of Pitt Community College for the past two decades, however, even this small decline is of concern, especially after a fall count which was down almost 6% from Fall 2014. The usual explanation for these fluctuations is that when the economy improves, community college enrollment goes down. But in Pitt County the population growth has cushioned PCC from these changes, at least until the last two years.

The state of North Carolina figures show drops in most community college campuses, some precipitous, over the past few years, with exceptions being the larger colleges such as Wake Tech, Central Piedmont, Fayetteville, and Cape Fear. Nationally, there are similar declines in many states. This downturn for PCC has implications for our regular budget. In addition, our Performance Measure funding, set by the State Board, has also lagged behind the top colleges in NC.

The 2014-17 Strategic Plan mirrors our PCC college mission in placing strong emphasis on Student Learning Success. We have used the Completion by Design framework and emphasis on student retention and degree attainment to move forward on our mission and increased services to students and our community. Governor McCrory has outlined a goal NC adults to have at least an associate’s degree or certificate to meet the projected demands of employers. The State Board of Community Colleges, led by Chair Scott Shook of Greenville, signed a resolution in January to increase to 67% by 2025 the number of working-aged North Carolinians with education and training beyond high school. This will require an increase of 440,000 completers statewide. To play a significant role, PCC must increase both our recruitment and retention of students.

Fortunately, we have a hard-working and talented group of faculty and staff at Pitt Community College to respond to this challenge. In the recent PACE climate study of all full-time employees, PCC scored much higher than our peers nationally in areas such as Student Focus and Teamwork. This was based on the shared opinions expressed by our own people.

The final report from the Aspen Institute consultants has not been received, but the initial draft included several recommendations regarding improving our environments and approaches to promoting student academic success. These consultants’ perspectives and recommendations are based on substantial individual and collective experience in reviewing the best community colleges from across the U.S., including several in North Carolina. Interestingly, most of what they suggested has fairly recently been proposed by our own personnel or is directly related to our Strategic Plan goals and objectives.
Later this month I will present to the College the Aspen Institute recommendations and demonstrate how we are going to respond to them now for implementation in the coming academic year. A more focused agenda for action with specific targets and responsibilities is vital. One thing is clear – not ramping up our approaches to student recruitment and first-year experience at Pitt Community College is not an option if we are to be one of the best community colleges in NC and, with collective efforts and persistence, one of the best in the U.S. I am confident that we can reach our objectives and more strongly adhere to our PCC mission and goals if we work together.

**Recognitions and Accomplishments**

- **Joy Moses Hall** and **Alison Davis**, advisors for the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society, welcomed 35 new members and awarded Honor Cords to 4 continuing members at an Initiation Ceremony on February 26.
- **Mitch Butts** served as director and **Michael Stephenson** and **Angela Davis** provided the musical accompaniment for a great production of “Nunsense” featuring campus students, employees and community members.
- **Stacy Jarrell** (Graphic Design) has received the James Peacock Scholarship from World View. Global educators across campus are very active in this organization and effort.
- **Laurie Weston** (Transitional Studies) has been selected to serve on the NC Continuing and Adult Education Association Board.
- **Ricky Brown** (Chief Financial Officer) is the 2016 President of the Association of Community College Business Officers.
- **Diminished Impressions**, a voice acapella group of PCC students, has reached the finals of the East Carolina Talent Search. Competition continues on March 4, but what a great accomplishment it is for these students.
- **Elaine Spencer** (Radiologic Sciences Chair) announced successful accreditation for eight years for Radiation Therapy. Many thanks to the faculty and staff who worked hard on this recognition.

I hope that you have been able to enjoy some of this spring-like weather of late. With Spring Break literally a week away, we can hope that the heavy rain, ice, and wind are behind us. The collective performances of our students in the classrooms, clubs, and community in activities such as the Academic Excellence ceremony, dramatic and art programs, athletics, and service to each other and our region continues to be the best harbinger of spring.

G. Dennis Massey  
President