September 1, 2014

College Update

She has added to the strength
Of the people of this place
Through her willingness to grace
Us with her knowing

(Regina Garcia, “These are They”)

These are the last lines of a poem composed by our very own English instructor Regina Garcia in honor of Assistant Vice President for Student Development Services Leslie Rogers, who retired after over 30 years of dedicated service to Pitt Community College this past week. There are countless students and parents who know how much Leslie has meant to their success at PCC, and many alumni and colleagues sang her praises at a reception, but none so eloquently as Ms. Garcia. I have taken the liberty of attaching the complete poem as a testament to the sincerity, passion, and superb accomplishments of many of our individual faculty and staff. What a fitting Labor Day ode to all our efforts!

We are off to a fast start with Fall Semester after all New Student Orientations, Bulldog Briefings, and Walk-In Registrations have concluded. So many people have helped make this an auspicious beginning to the year. And now we are well into that crucially important first six weeks for a new college student, and the number of new students has increased over 4% so we have even more in need of assistance and support than usual this year. Please do all you can to welcome them and make them feel at home at PCC, where there is definitely hope and opportunity for all those who try hard to achieve their goals.

At the beginning of the semester, nevertheless, we are 2.95% down in students in our credit programs compared to this time last year. This is the first time in over 15 years we have experienced a decline. With the increase in new students, it is clear that we have a challenge in promoting student success in completing degrees or certificates when the loss in our continuing students is so high. This is why the national Completion by Design program being implemented in North Carolina, Ohio, and Florida with help from the Gates Foundation is so timely. We need to support students to complete their courses and to persist in securing credentials which will serve them and their future employers at a time when our economy is in need of positive advancement.

We are fortunate that the state of North Carolina continues to support our efforts at PCC at a level which enables us to meet the Strategic Goals and Objectives for 2014-17 which I shared with you at Fall Convocation. This year we received a 3.5% increase in funding, primarily due to improvements in Performance Measures and the approval of a new tier 1A funding for selected courses in our programs. Because of this increase, we were able to make modest increases in our numbers of faculty and staff and provide a supplement to the approved state salary increase.
However, without improved retention of students as well as increases in other programs, PCC may well drift down in funding as so many other campuses have and be less able to meet the needs of our students and community. In this sense, we are at a crossroads this year. We have a number of new senior staff and faculty in place, and it is important that we work together smoothly. Organizational changes in Student and Career Services have been made to integrate Academic Affairs and Student Development Services more closely than before.

In addition, we will see a closer interaction between credit and non-credit programs in the coming year which will benefit students and the employers we are seeking to support. The “stackable credentials” approach to promoting completion of professional certifications in both curriculum and continuing education areas will enable students to demonstrate in more ways that just a college transcript their mastery of skills and promote a feeling of accomplishment that is a stimulus to further achievement. This is a primary reason why university transfer students with an associate’s degree complete further degrees at a much higher rate (plus their credits transfer more easily in the articulation agreement). These elements of Completion by Design need support by our faculty and staff by instilling confidence in students that they can succeed.

**Recognitions and Accomplishments**

- **Elizabeth Toderick (Department Head, Nursing)** has shared that the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) has granted continuing accreditation to our Nursing program to 2022. Congratulations to Dean Neal, the faculty, and all who helped us accomplish this approval.
- **Tommianne Haithcock (Occupational Therapy)** has completed the Educational Specialist: Educational Leadership (Ed.S.) degree from Liberty University, an important step in earning the EdD degree from Liberty.
- **Jessica Jaimes (PCC Global), Jan Fisher (ESL Coordinator), Regina Garcia (Multicultural Affairs Committee)** and others welcomed over 100 international students at the Welcome Reception on August 26.
- **Alton Wadford (Academic Affairs)** has announced a major increase in high school students taking PCC courses, 298, and still growing. New technical programs have begun at Farmville Central and Ayden-Griffon High Schools.

At its August 26 meeting, the Board of Trustees adopted the 2014-17 Strategic Goals, Objectives and Measures. Chair Charles Long applauded the emphasis on Student Success and completion trustees are witnessing. The Board also approved extending the maintenance closure of the campus from December 20, 2014-January 4, 2015.

Best wishes for a very positive Fall 2014 semester.

G. Dennis Massey, President