

Spring Colloquium
January 21, 2011
State of the College
Dr. Jon H. Larson, President

Good morning. Once again, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the Spring Colloquium and to wish everyone assembled here a successful upcoming semester.

"When one door closes, another opens; but we often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened."

- Alexander Graham Bell

These are trying times, ladies and gentlemen, for our nation, our state, our county and our college. I have spoken to you in the past about challenges that we face in higher education in America in general—and also about more specific challenges that we face in the community college sector.

This past September, I spoke more bluntly than I ever have about our specific economic challenges in the context of our local and national circumstance, and pointed out in some detail how the State of New Jersey was in a particularly fragile condition. I guess it would have been more succinct to describe New Jersey's plight just by quoting Governor Chris Christie who has said, quite simply, "We're broke. We don't have any money."

Perhaps even more deleterious than the economic disasters that face us, however, is the growing national loss of trust as we encounter, daily, a media blitz of pseudo-crises, mixed messages, endless bickering and conflict. As every screaming news story is told and then re-told

by the 24-hour news cycle, we are continually bombarded with noise: positions, counter-positions, accusations, and counter-accusations. We have reached a point where the economic truth seems not just elusive but, in fact, non-existent; and actions often seem, at best, provisional; at worst, political or ineffectual.

The news media, regardless of their particular bias, are incredibly judgmental of just about everything, expecting that decisions will have immediate effects and that positive results will happen instantaneously, within the current news day, preferably just before prime time. It is no wonder that the American people have become skeptical, cynical, and even paranoid when economic issues are broached. It is no wonder that we have become suspicious of the political process.

We seem less and less able to distinguish between leadership and power and we are left looking through the dark glass of our TV or PC screens with disdain for those who would claim to lead us, but who appear to desire only power, unearned and ineffective.

As a result of the recent tragedy in Tucson and the senseless assassination and near assassination of federal officials and private citizens, we are even more fully aware of the need to communicate more effectively and authentically with each other and as a nation. Our heartfelt thoughts extend to the injured and the families of the dead as a result of this most recent act of delusional violence in our country and I pause this morning to re-emphasize the responsibility of Ocean County College, taken on after the Virginia Tech shootings, to make every effort humanly possible to safeguard our campus against preventable violence.

You know that we have taken extensive measures to refit the campus facilities and communications with numerous added safety features. You know that we have sharpened our

security presence, practices and personnel. You are aware of the campus CARE Team, designed to oversee many aspects of campus safety, including responses to disruptive or agitated members of the campus community. In the very near future, Robert Kumpf, Director of College Security, and a representative of the college's CARE Committee, will be visiting all academic departments to further discuss the appropriate management of disruptive or agitated students.

As past violent events have demonstrated, a potential assassin is under scrutiny by more than just the college community to which he is attached. Friends, neighbors, family, local law enforcement officers, counselors, physicians—all have had their eyes on these people and, in these tragic cases, none have been able to prevent the ensuing violence. But our greatest ally on campus is the ability of the members of our college community to observe and report appropriately. We will continue to do everything in our power to create such an observant community.

Returning to our other prevailing problem, the economic malaise, it has been amidst this increasingly cynical environment I described earlier that the leadership team of this college has had to confront the disturbing economic factors that face us: falling enrollments, reduced county aid, negligible and unreliable state aid among the chief factors.

This economic outlook was difficult enough to confront, but in an environment of doubt and mistrust, it was even more difficult. In addition, the significant reduction in our three primary revenue streams could not be viewed as just temporary blips on the radar screen. They reflect the unprecedented economic realities that some are now rather inelegantly calling “the new normal,” a protracted state of recessionary tendencies with no predictable end in sight.

While community colleges tend to do well in bad times, we have no real historical indexes of how we do in *very* bad times, and so we have had to chart a new course and take the measures we feel necessary to prepare for what will probably be a prolonged voyage in troubled waters.

We see many of our full-time students migrating to a part-time status, with a subsequent loss of credit hours for the college. We feel that this migration is perceived by our students as an economic necessity because, no matter how much financial aid is available, many students just need more income in addition to tuition reimbursement. Spend less on college and earn more at work: this is the new economic reality for many of our students and it makes perfect sense for them.

And so we must continue to develop strategies to address this new reality while we continue to serve our students at the same time. One obvious solution is for us to expand affordable distance learning courses that students can schedule without impacting their work hours or work location.

I have spoken recently with all of you in a series of fall meetings about the particulars of the College's financial status for FY 2012, specifics I will not detail again this morning, but if you wish to examine them they are available for your review on the college's web site. You have, I trust, also read the details of our Restructuring Plan. Some of you have responded with comments and some very practical suggestions, for which I thank you.

Some of the suggestions we received, on the other hand, while no doubt well-meaning, were either not possible, literally, or would not have generated savings that justify the negative impacts they would have caused.

Not all of you agreed with all of the elements of the plan finally approved by the Board, which is understandable, but by-and-large we received positive responses about the plan; and, we appreciated your contributions and hope that they will continue.

I specifically invite you to be mindful of the dictum of New Jersey's own Thomas Edison, "There is a way to do it better. Find it."

And, when you do, tell us about it!

I love Edison. He understood that, "Discontent is the first necessity of progress." And he was famous for saying: "Hell there are no rules here – we're trying to accomplish something!" So, please ... help us accomplish something meaningful for our institution by continuing to offer suggestions and great, innovative ideas.

Our plan is a starting point, a place where we begin to respond to our new circumstances, but we look to you each and every day for continuing support in our efforts to construct a leaner and more efficient college. Our Vice Presidents are using the Restructuring Plan as a basis for their divisional planning documents and will be relying on you to supply both the big ideas and the details that will move us forward toward successful implementation and renewal.

I want to focus this morning for a moment on three of what I believe to be the most positive elements of the Restructuring Plan and then on some good and positive news about the college.

The great Italian Renaissance writer, Giovanni Boccaccio, sets his master work, *The Decameron*, in an Italian villa during the dark years of the Black Plague. You will all recall this, I'm sure.

He writes a collection of stories supposedly designed to distract ten young people encamped in the villa, in the country, away from the plague-ridden city of Florence. One of the young courtiers tells a messenger who is going into Florence on an errand to “bring back only cheerful news.” A grand idea, indeed! And, this is what I wish to do this morning, to bring you cheerful news. We have no plague, we have no villa, but we do have good news!

First, I think it is significant that our long-range Facilities Master Plan is still in very good shape and moving forward. Some of you have asked how we can be building in bad economic times and why we need new buildings when enrollments are down. I’d like to respond to both those queries in some detail because the answers really do define good news for the college and will perhaps help all of us shift our eyes from the door that has closed to better see the one that has opened.

While there is always some connection between capital and operational funding—you build a building, you have to heat it and clean it, of course—still, the bulk of the dollars vested in new construction is not operational money, so does not impact the college’s day-to-day expenses in a major way.

In addition, as some of you may know, to conceive, plan, and erect a building takes from five to seven years, depending on the complexity of the facility, so it is something that needs to be planned well in advance. In the past, the college was, at best, uneven in its construction planning process (I’m being diplomatically generous here) and, additionally, was tied to the inconsistent largesse of the state with regard to capital funding. Thankfully, we were beneficiaries of the generosity of Ocean County in leaner times.

But, we determined several years ago that if we wanted to continue to view the college as a growing and expanding entity, and, especially through the alliance with Kean, as a four-year college campus, then we needed a reliable, consistent and predictable source of funds to pursue this kind of regulated and evenly-paced facilities planning and expansion. Given the county's geographic distance from public four-year colleges, we owe the citizens of Ocean County this four-year campus to level the playing field by equalizing their access to a baccalaureate education within the same geographical proximity that other New Jersey students enjoy.

I might also note that it is not only growth and access that we developed the facilities plan to achieve, but also excellence. The Arts and Community Center and the Planetarium are two examples of building renovations that were less interested in added square feet than they were in significantly improved building quality. We are also interested in greening the campus and in campus sustainability, which also comes at a price. None of this can be managed very well while cooling our jets and waiting for handouts from the state. So we determined that at a very low cost we could borrow the money, build our facilities, and prepare our campus for the future before the future was upon us.

The scale of the enrollment downturn in FY 11, in both fall and spring semesters, did catch us by surprise, no question. We had been comforted by the very positive growth rate over the previous six years and, based on that trend data, felt that a 3% growth projection was very conservative, indeed. Local demographics more than supported our numbers as well as double-digit increases in Kean enrollments, not to mention the very large number of NJ STARS students we were able to attract. But the deepening economic recession, the mortgage crisis, the threatened retraction of the STARS II program, the State budget shortfall and budget cuts, and

the significant shift of full-time students to part-time enrollment created the perfect storm that temporarily reversed our fortunes.

We believe, however, that while certain significant economic factors will remain in place and will sustain the recessionary mode for some time, our enrollments will nevertheless begin again to rise, and State support will also stabilize, albeit at some reduced level.

We believe, in short, that the US economy will move back, from *very* bad times to plain old routine bad times, and that Ocean County College will enjoy a renewed prosperity because we have readied ourselves to deal with it in such a way that we can offer the best for less. It is our business to stay strong and weather the next two or three years, to continue to prepare for the future, and then to rise up to meet it. We believe our facilities plan creates a very important vehicle with which we can do this.

In a very real way, our facilities plan also shows faith in our country's economy and participates in its recovery by investing in the future and by providing real jobs along the way. This \$30 million facility will create a significant number of jobs that will last for at least 18 months, something we should take pride in bringing to our local economy.

As to the rumored canard that we are building so-called "personal monuments," I think we have heard enough of that nonsense. Everyone affiliated with this college, every student, every employee, every visitor and guest can and does take pride and pleasure in, and in some way benefits from, our renovations and new construction.

Sit in a classroom, go to a concert in the theater, or a Planetarium show, watch a basketball game, or just walk around the campus on a beautiful day. This college campus is the property of everyone who loves it and uses it; and we have a duty to make it functionally

excellent, but also beautiful. “If you foolishly ignore beauty,” Frank Lloyd Wright said, “you will soon find yourself without it. Your life will be impoverished. But if you invest in beauty, it will remain with you all the days of your life.”

A second very strong and positive element in the Restructuring Plan is our renewed and invigorated vision of distance learning, both here and abroad. As we have investigated the DL markets and the best niches for us to occupy, we have rejected some options and have seriously explored others. We are persuaded that if we offer distance learning globally, we need carefully selected and focused markets and experienced partners in the enterprise. We have decided that if we expand our offerings nationally, we need to develop a series of master course designs in order to keep our standards high and our quality reliable. We are moving forward on the many fronts in play on our DL expansion and will need the help of the entire college community to make this dream both a reality and a positive source of revenue enhancement. We are proceeding cautiously, meanwhile, trying to get everything right but are poised to begin some pilot programs in the near future. We have just concluded our first pilot in expanding class sizes for DL courses with much success.

We feel that the third very strong element of the Restructuring Plan is the organizational changes we have made. While several of you suggested the elimination of varied administrative positions, and we did in fact make all the cutbacks in administrative or staff positions, those proffered recommendations as to who should go and who should assume the responsibilities assigned to the ‘dearly-loved’ departed were, to be frank, unrealistic.

We have streamlined the administrative organization with realistic reassignments and changes in reporting structures without over-burdening any single office or Vice President – with the possible exception of Vice President Strada who will get some help soon.

Some of the changes are temporary in nature, freezing certain open positions until we can redeploy resources to staff them. Other changes are permanent, more in line with contemporary administrative management systems, such as the fusion of Finance with Administration and Planning. While these changes will require a certain reorientation in work flow and function, these will be well worth the transition in order to more effectively carry out our mission at a significantly reduced cost.

I saw one document submitted by a group of contributing employees that, taken as a whole set of recommendations, saved less money and inflicted considerably more hardship on the college's work force than the plan that was ultimately adopted by the Board of Trustees. While some of the suggestions were interesting and made good sense, other elements from that list of suggestions would have extracted a great deal from employees and students, reading, in part, as follows:

- A \$2.00 tuition increase
- Across the board 5% non-personnel budget reductions for every department
- A pledge from every employee of a \$50.00 minimum contribution to a student scholarship fund [while we can encourage this, and will, we cannot force a pledge nor an amount]
- Faculty will teach one course free [this is illegal]
- Furlough days

- A roll back of 3.8% in salary increases
- Charge students for parking [not an effective enrollment-building strategy].

Now, it is not my purpose to merely criticize these suggestions, but rather it is to illustrate how alternative suggestions that might initially sound good are not necessarily either cost-saving, or revenue-producing, or legally do-able, practically do-able, or even fair. (And some we received were, clearly of the ilk of our time, just stone throwing.)

We are today even more confident that the vast majority of the work force and all of the students at OCC will feel no negative effects whatsoever from the officially-adopted Restructuring Plan, as opposed to many of the suggestions I just noted which would have negatively affected literally thousands of people.

However, I once again urge everyone to continue to offer up ideas. We need good ones. We want good ones. We don't care where they come from or from whom they come. New Jersey's own Thomas Edison once wrote, "Results! Why, man, I have gotten a lot of results. I know several thousand things that won't work!"

But he also understood that getting discouraged and giving up was the pathway to failure. So, don't give up. Keep the ideas coming!

Now, let me take a moment to update you and relay good news from the various divisions of the college:

~From College Advancement, we are pleased to report that the grants program continues to make progress with a total of approximately \$1.7 million in new grant money for programs in health care, information technology, and support services for at-risk students as well as a new

grant for \$475,000 from the NJ Economic Development Administration for the new combined heat and power cogeneration plant.

The OCC Rewards program continues to thrive with more than 150 business partnerships; and a new major marketing campaign, tailored to the new normal, has been launched, continuing our branding effort to highlight OCC as a great value for quality education without unnecessarily burdening our students with debt. The Foundation recently secured a very generous legacy donation for student scholarships, and the Continuing and Professional Education department recorded a 20% profit last year. CPE will continue to develop web-based programs to help expand markets and increase enrollments.

~From Facilities, the very good news is that on December 10, 2010, the Board of Trustees voted to approve a contract with Niram Construction to build the 74,000 square foot Gateway Building. The \$30 million cost is being shared: 50% Kean, 25% Ocean County and 25% Ocean County College. Gateway will be the first of several future buildings planned for the upper mall, which also includes parking, roads, and campus student malls. The building itself will include classrooms, computer labs, offices, lounge space, a 225-seat lecture hall, seminar rooms, conference rooms, a graphic design studio, a fifth-floor 50 seat multi-purpose conference space, and a basement storage area. It will be a magnificent facility for students and faculty.

Also, construction will begin shortly on the combined heat and power plant at the lower part of the hill behind the Instruction Building. The building's generator and chiller/heater will distribute hot and cold water to campus buildings, creating an energy package that will produce a significant energy cost savings for the college.

~From Finance, we learn that our Financial Aid success continues and that over the last three years, the College has seen an increase of 56% in processed student financial aid applications which has produced a 74% increase in financial aid awards. Our Pell grants alone increased 35% over last year.

Students have certainly been able to avail themselves of all the aid programs out there, both federal and state as well as gift aid or self help, to assist in financing their education at Ocean County College. On a related note, OCC is hosting College Goal Sunday on January 30 for the 3rd straight year, a very popular community event designed to help potential students reach their college goals by assisting them with financial aid information and procedures.

The OCC Bookstore has begun to offer textbook rentals as another way to keep costs down for students. This is in addition to the Textbook Buyback and Viking Bucks Reward Programs that remain popular among students.

Finance also notes that the Payroll, Accounting and Purchasing Departments are going green. In fiscal year 2009-2010, they distributed 73.9% of pay checks using direct deposit. Beginning with calendar year end 2010, employees are able to choose electronic receipt of their W2's. Direct deposit of expense reimbursement checks was also recently implemented.

Another green initiative is the imaging of invoices. All vendor invoices are now approved electronically and paper copies are no longer necessary. The Purchasing portal is now live. All public bids and RFPs are posted electronically and available to all on the web. The College no longer bears the expense of copying and mailing bid documents to interested vendors. In addition to the obvious printing and paper savings, we are experiencing savings in time, postage, and file space.

~Good News from Academic Affairs consists of a potpourri of faculty achievements:

- Ali Botein-Furrevig was awarded the USA Book News Best Books Award, 2011, for Religion for her book, *The Heart of the Stranger*.
- Marc LaBella was named to Montclair Who's Who among Collegiate Faculty for 2011.
- Marcia Bradley was named to Who's Who in North American Education – Edition 2010 – 2011.
- Heidi Sheridan, Lynn Kraemer-Siracusa, Catherine Pontoriero and Caitlyn Cook developed and presented: *Teaching the Google Generation: Integrating Information Literacy into First-Year English Courses* at the Fall 2010 Two-Year English Association Conference.
- Jennifer Dellner presented: *Narrative and (Dis)Order in The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* at the Community College Humanities Association.
- Maria Tamburro, Linda Canobbio, and Jim Brown presented two webinars for the Instructional Technology Council: “Teaching Science Online Part I” and “Ten Tips to Teaching Science Totally Online.”
- Dr. Katja Hawlitchka presented: *Too Sexy for the Veil? Terrorist Islam in Contemporary Popular Fiction* at the Pacific Ancient and Modern Language Association Conference, Nov. 12-14. Also, Dr. Hawlitchka's proposal, *Housewives of Millennial Television*, was accepted by the Northeast Modern Language Association for their upcoming conference in April.
- Lynn Kraemer Siracusa presented a paper at the New Jersey Writer's Alliance, *Team-Based Learning in Literature Classes*.

- Pat Kennedy gave lectures in the Egyptian gallery at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- Jayanti Tamm's memoir, *Cartwheels in a Sari*, was released by Random House as a paperback, and it was selected by Target stores as part of their "Emerging Author" series.
- Dr. Sandy Brown performed Handel's Messiah with the Shrewsbury Chorale and the Garden State Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus, the orchestra in residence at Ocean County College
- Judy Angona was appointed TYCA Northeast Regional Executive Committee Liaison to the National TYCA Executive Council.

In addition, we have good news about the progress of our Homeland Security program. The courses have been approved by the Board of Trustees and three of the courses are offered for spring, 2011. The AS degree is expected to be approved by the NJ President's Council in February which will allow OCC to offer an AS in Homeland Security in the Fall, 2011. OCC is finalizing an articulation agreement with Monmouth University that will allow an OCC student to seamlessly transition with an AS in Homeland Security to Monmouth's Homeland Security Bachelor's degree program. As many as 72 credits will be accepted by Monmouth.

From Student Services, we hear of a great many noteworthy achievements:

- OCC's Athletic Director, Ilene Cohen has been selected to be honored this Feb. 6, 2011, by the NJ-AIAW (New Jersey Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women) for her outstanding contributions to Girls and Women in Sports in the state of NJ.
- OCC's Women's Cross Country team finished the season 2nd in the nation. For the second consecutive year, we won the Region XIX championship with three runners selected as All Americans.

- The Women's Soccer team took 3rd place in the national tournament in Maryland and had two All Americans.
- The Student Government and the NJ Stars Club donated over \$1,000 to the American Cancer Society and walked in the annual Making Strides against Breast Cancer walk in Pt. Pleasant in October.
- Our outstanding Sailing Program has a record number of student participants this year – 31 students for fall semester, one of the highest participation rates for any collegiate team in the middle Atlantic region.
- The NJ Stars club and the Veterans club working with the Lavallette Elementary School students shipped more than 20 boxes of supplies to US soldiers stationed in Afghanistan in time for the holidays.
- We have broken ground on the new OCC Soccer field with play set to begin in the fall 2011 season.

From the EOF Office, we are pleased to report that the program enjoyed full enrollment for FA 2010 with 149 funded students, having met its first-time, full-time goal with 75 new students and 74 returning. Computers from a Financial Aid grant were installed this fall and have received lots of use by students and, in May 2010, OCC graduated 29 EOF students, and 33 students made the *President's List*.

The Office of Multi-Cultural Services recently co-sponsored the presentation, *A Breach of Peace*, featuring **Eric Etheridge**, photographer, and **Lewis Zuchman**, Freedom Rider from the civil rights, civil disobedience movement of the 1960's. They shared a rousing presentation that told the tale of the activist youth of that era.

OCC also co-sponsored a Hate and Bias Crimes workshop with **Detective David D'Amico** featuring crimes statistics about criminal activities in New Jersey based upon class, color, sexual orientation. And, finally, the Organization of Black Unity (OBU) is active again on our campus and ran a successful winter clothing drive in Lakewood; the club received great press and is organizing a February program in recognition of Black History Month.

In addition to all this cheerful news, it is my distinct pleasure to report to you this morning on an added initiative for Ocean County College, an initiative we have called **Curricular Transformation**. In fact, this activity began modestly last spring when a group of faculty expressed an interest in further discussing some of the topics I spoke about in my Spring 2010 Colloquium Speech, topics related to curricular needs for the 21st Century student, the millennial generation.

Seven faculty members—Dan Baker, Mary Burke, Jennifer Dellner, Ted Gordon, Al Longo, Gary Schmidt and Chris Spencer—plus Don Doran, Janet Hubbs, and I, met several times during the spring term and found our unstructured and casual conversation turning to several topics that might represent curricular transformation at Ocean County College, curricular changes that have existing parallels in colleges and universities across the country.

These topics were identified, refined, and constitute the inception of the faculty presentations scheduled for this morning and this afternoon during the Colloquium Workshop sessions in Bartlett Hall and the Tech Building, immediately following my remarks. (Schedules were e-mailed and are available from Toni Clay.)

It is our hope that these workshops will be just the start of a faculty-wide conversation this spring that concludes with concrete proposals and changes that will infuse our curriculum

with new ideas and new vitality. We are hoping that all faculty members will attend both sessions of the workshops in order to get grounded in at least two of the topics on the schedule. We think that interdisciplinarity, e-portfolios, workplace readiness, and a common vocabulary for our general education goals are challenging topics ... ideas whose time has come to the College with some cutting-edge applications that are tailored to our curricular needs.

I want to thank you all once again for your participation in helping the college to develop a progressive Restructuring Plan to position us to face whatever comes our way; I want to thank the faculty who worked hard and long to develop these presentations this morning in order to further our primary institutional goal, academic excellence; most of all I want to thank you for the patience and commitment that will be required in the months to come as we keep our eyes on the prize.

I am confident we will do what is asked of us because I believe, as the great American writer, William Faulkner, expressed in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech: "... that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance."

Thank you for your kind attention. Have a wonderful Spring semester!

And now for the employee service awards:

40 years of service

Name	Service	Position title
Kathleen M. McCormick	40.12	Professor of Social Sciences

30 years of service

Name	Service	Position Title
A. Leah Kelly	30.11	Professor of Nursing
Neil J. Lavender	30.12	Professor of Social Sciences
Debra S. Pfaff	30.38	Coordinator of Academic Affairs
Wendy R. Giarratana	30.77	Administrative Assistant I
Rita M. Pascarelli	30.21	Bldg Mnt Wkr

20 years of Service

Name	Service	Position Title
Garrett L. Joest	20.12	Adj Asst Prof of Business
Joseph V. Picaro	20.12	Adj Asst Prof of Mathematics
Morris E. Spector	19.95	Adj Asst Prof of Humanities
Daniel G. Baker	20.12	Professor of Humanities
Patricia A. Demko	20.12	Professor of Science
Shirley H. Grone	20.13	Asst Prof of Mathematics
Nancy J. Schlossbach	20.13	Professor of Nursing
Arlene M. Witman	20.73	Assoc Prof of Nursing
Pamela S. Donohue	20.45	Coord of Advising
Yvonne M. Doval	20.5	Asst Dir of EOF
Stephen Scribellito	20.1	Lab Technician/Engn Studies
Catherine M. Czarnecki	20.4	Administrative Assistant I