

President's Colloquium Speech Spring 2012

Ladies and gentlemen, members of the Ocean County College community, distinguished guests, welcome to the Spring 2012, Colloquium, marking the beginning of a new semester, a new year, and another new beginning for us all.

As I ruminated over my remarks for this event, I recalled some of the efforts of the year immediately past, and I think it is beneficial to begin there.

We made many new beginnings in 2011 and experienced some difficult challenges. But, as always here at this wonderful institution, our college community for the most part rose to the occasion and demonstrated the fundamental values, the qualities of mind, and the emotional intelligence that makes me proud to be a member of this outstanding collegiate institution.

Time and again, as we faced the financial challenges of a State economy in the doldrums, a fractious national political environment, a local unemployment crisis, and an enrollment picture that looked ominous, our staff, our faculty, our trustees, and our leadership team found ways to come together and devise a re-structured and refocused institution that will be more successful and more recognized for its achievements than we might ever have dreamed in the past.

To all of you who pitched in and helped in this often stressful and demanding task of reinvention, I thank you.

To all of you who put your faith in a future that may seem uncertain and risky, but highly promising for all of us, I thank you.

To all of you who set aside your doubts and fears and joined in defining a new model – a unique and efficient, and innovative and competent and progressive model that promises growth and prosperity and world-class status as a teaching and learning institution, I thank you.

Now, we are not out of the woods yet. But, if we can continue on the new path we have blazed, and do it together, helping one another, caring for one another, respecting one another, emphasizing the myriad positive achievements of our friends and colleagues around us, I have no doubt that we will achieve all that we have dreamed of, and more.

We need nothing more than willingness to achieve constructive self-awareness, realistic self-assessment, and a healthy sense of humor.

We need only to commit to genuine expression of trustworthiness and integrity, openness to change which – I am sorry to say – will be a constant for the rest of our lives; and to a modest degree of comfort with ambiguity – another requisite for navigating modern life here in the new millennium.

Naturally, a strong drive to achieve and optimism in the face of adversity is also a necessity if we are to be successful in the energetic and persistent pursuit of our goals as a college.

Throughout our struggles to face change with a smile, we must remember that we are in this together and seek to understand, support, and empathize with one another as we strive to grow talent, improve everywhere, and serve our students and community faithfully.

And not least, managing our relationships effectively and with professionalism, in common cause with a basic trust in our ability to use reason and fact and information to promote understanding and awareness, is and will remain critical to our ability to do what few organizations are capable of doing – what Apple Computer, and McDonald's, and Wal-mart, and IBM, and JP Morgan Chase, and Stanford, and Arizona State have done – by not settling for things as they have been, but rather by striving for things as they might be.

Thus, we have chosen the principal subject of today's Colloquium, one of the key ways in which academic institutions examine their values, beliefs, and interests and assess who they are and plan where they are going: the accreditation self study, which we formally embark upon this semester, leading ultimately to the submission of our Self-Study Report in April, 2014.

I'd like to begin by reviewing just a few salient facts about the history of accreditation and our accrediting body.

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), organizes, oversees, and adjudicates the accreditation and re-accreditation of 524 colleges and universities in the Middle-States region (New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, and D.C.). American University, Barnard College, Bucknell, Colgate, Cornell, Drew, all the way through the alphabet to Princeton and Susquehanna, to Vassar, Villanova, Westminster, and Yeshiva University—all 524 are members of the Middle States family and all of the members are required to engage in self-study and reporting procedures that address the identical standards of excellence.

The origins of the Middle States Association, the parent organization for the Commission, can be traced back to 1887. The Commission itself was formulated in 1919 and recently, in 2009, had a 90th anniversary celebration reviewing its history and progress in a document entitled *Highlights from the Commission's First Ninety Years*.

By 1921, the Middle States Commission had 58 institutions on its approved list, including the College of St. Elizabeth, Princeton, Rutgers, and Seton Hall from New Jersey. By 1924, all seven current regional accrediting agencies in the USA, including Middle States, had been founded and are currently loosely associated through the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), a national advocacy group for the self-regulation of academic quality through accreditation, with a membership of almost 3,000 degree-granting colleges and universities.

In 1946, members of the Middle States voted on the practice of re-visiting accredited campuses for compliance updates and by 1957, the ten-year cycle of assessment was established. In 1973, the *Periodic Review Report* (PRR) was established, a report to be completed five years following

the self-study. In 1988, Howard Simmons was appointed as the Commission's first African American Executive Director. Prior to this appointment, Howard had been the institutional liaison for Ocean County College and was a true friend to OCC. The current chief executive of the Commission, now titled President, is Dr. Elizabeth Sibolski, also a former institutional liaison and friend to OCC.

In 2002, Middle States began its globalization initiative with a pilot project for international memberships, a project that is now being assessed and is closed to new applicants. In recent years, Middle States has been active in the debate about Federal regulation of assessment and about the regulation and assessment of online learning and its relationship to academic standards. However, it is well to keep in mind that not only is there a long and respected tradition and method to this evaluation process, altogether it comprises an unparalleled opportunity to examine our values, goals and aspirations and to permanently impact and influence the future life of our college through its in-depth understanding of the institution, its fact-based recommendations, and the scrutiny it receives from external peer evaluators.

This is really what I want to talk about today to begin with – not the nuts and bolts of self-study, its processes and procedures – but, rather, how by becoming actively involved in the process you can make a lasting contribution to your college, help us to better understand our collective future, and better address the challenges and opportunities we face.

Here are what I believe to be the major benefits of participation in the process in some way:

- First, you learn more about “the whole college,” which helps you work better collaboratively. All of us tend to be compartmentalized within our various departments, and while this is necessary for us to do our jobs efficiently, it is also good for us to broaden our perspectives, to see all the moving parts of an institution and how we are mutually dependent and derive mutual benefit from the work of each part. Institutional integrity fundamentally is defined by how well all of its parts work together.
- Second, you learn to think more analytically about the college. Analysis means breaking things down into their component parts and examining how the parts work together, how integrity is achieved. Self-study reports require not only description, but also analysis, and thus call upon all participants to be knowledgeable about their college, to come to fact-based conclusions in a logical manner. Rather than thinking about just my desk and my focused work schedule, as a self-study participant, I begin to think in the analytic paradigm of Self-Study: Strengths, Weaknesses and Recommendations.
- Third, you are compelled to do positive solution thinking (that is, what issues need solutions; what are some possible, practicable solutions; what do they cost; can they be funded or are there cost-efficient alternatives?). Rather than daily gripes to vent and let off steam, which we all need to do (and we all do) from time to time, you are asked in self-study work not only to identify what needs to be fixed, but to constructively offer ideas on how best to fix what needs fixing.

- Fourth, you meet new people ... and we all need to meet new people from time to time! In all seriousness, the opportunity to meet new members of the college community and to work closely with them in a mutual gains enterprise can be a personally rewarding experience. Self-study brings a lot of veritable strangers together with a common purpose and this adventure in discovery creates new bonds which strengthen the entire workplace.
- Fifth, you become part of a productive force for good; a positive contributor; an actively engaged team member with a splendid opportunity to influence the future of our college. I don't think that I can emphasize enough the productive energy and sense of joy that is created through such positive work.
- Finally, as a result of Self-Study work, you derive pleasure from seeing the fruits of your labor in positive results and you develop a strong sense of institutional and personal pride. Middle States Teams give commendations to sections of reports or to entire reports when they think the institution has gone beyond compliance to excellence. These commendations are high praise indeed and deeply satisfying rewards to those who have been instrumental in earning them.

So, today, we want as many of you as is possible to attend the scheduled Colloquium workshops and actively participate in the development of the self-study design with each of the self-study teams. Your presence, your attention, your interest, your ideas and suggestions – all of these contributions will make the process come alive for both you and for the college, and that vitality will certainly ensure the success of the study in uncovering what we need to know about our institution in order to do what we need to do to continue our ongoing success in achieving our very unique and ambitious mission and goals.

Next, I'd like to provide a very short lexicon of accreditation 'lingo,' a sort of primer on what words and phrases are extremely meaningful to all accrediting agencies and their representatives. Mission and Goals: The institution's mission clearly defines its purpose within the context of higher education and indicates whom the institution serves and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's goals clearly specify how the institution will fulfill its mission. Our mission and goals statements are on the [college's website](#) and should be reviewed from time to time by each member of the college community. They should ring true in their definition of what we intend to do and should alert us to the need to do it well. We all realize that the major changes in our college mission over the past five years have been the open declaration of the transfer aspirations of a majority of our students as a defining force of what we are as a college and our aspiration of becoming the first truly global community college. We have not abandoned our career mission, but have simply emphasized the transfer mission as our primary one, based on almost fifty years of the clearly stated desire of a steady majority of our students, nor have we abandoned traditional delivery of educational content, but are merely emphasizing online learning as a growing part of our mission.

Characteristics of Excellence: These are the fourteen standards established by the MSCHE with which all colleges and universities must comply in order to be re-accredited. The fourteen discrete standards are grouped into two general categories:

1 - Learning Assessment: The means by which the college measures the learning outcomes achieved by all its students in the aggregate in addition to their evaluation by individual faculty. This demonstrates that students have acquired the knowledge, skills and competencies consistent with institutional and higher education goals. OCC has a many-faceted plan for Learning Outcomes Assessment, available for your review on the college's website.

2 - Institutional Effectiveness: The means by which the college measures institutional efficiency and progress. The institution has developed and implemented an institutional assessment process that evaluates the college's overall effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals in compliance with accreditation standards. Key Targets and Key Performance Indicators have been identified and assessed, Annual Reports have been written since 2005, and twenty-four Process Improvement Teams over the past six years have addressed issues identified by every segment of the college community.

One of the favorite words for accreditors is Outcomes. It means "results," but results of a very specific kind, answering the basic questions alluded to already: What is your mission? What are you doing to achieve it? How well have you done?

One final term we should remember—because in many ways it is the "last word"—is Compliance: It is the responsibility of the Commission and its Visiting Team, a group of about a dozen academic professionals who will read our report and visit our campus in April, 2014, to determine that the institution recognizes and meets all aspects of the requirements – that we are "in compliance" – with the fourteen standards that comprise the Characteristics of Excellence. If we are, we achieve the goal of reaccreditation.

There are several types of self-study designs that an institution can select. In the past, Ocean County College has chosen what is called "the comprehensive design." This means examining, in detail, all fourteen standards and what the college is doing to fulfill each one.

This time around, the college has elected to use a "selected topics design" which will allow us to focus on four specific topics that relate, in a major way, to the college's strategic plan for its future development. We will still have to demonstrate compliance with each standard, but will integrate that into the selected topics as well as illustrating on-going compliance through the use of our continuously updated document library. The four topics that we have selected to study are the topics you will be hearing about in detail at the Colloquium Workshops later today. They are, in summary:

- Restructuring the Institution for Effectiveness – (Thanks to Team Leaders Chris Kephart and Carolyn Showalter) This will view a series of institutional, divisional, and departmental reorganizations in line with the college's strategic goals and objectives;
- A Portrait of Institutional Leadership – (thanks to Team Leaders Beth Brierley and Mary Lancaster) This will examine the revision of College governance and administrative organization initiatives for the purpose of enhancing institutional effectiveness;

- The Entering Student – (Thanks to Caitlyn Cook and Mike Pezzimenti) This chapter will examine our revised emphasis on the needs of the entering student and the elements of student engagement particular to our institution and our major mission of graduation/transfer; and
- Building on Educational Success – (Thanks to Gary Schmidt and Chris Spencer). This chapter takes a look at the academic innovations for the 21st century we are pursuing and that continue to mark the curriculum and teaching/learning at OCC with the hallmarks of creativity, assessment, technological sophistication, and academic excellence.

And now let us take a moment to update you on some of the latest college developments.

First, I'd like to share with you some images and ideas from our recent trip to China. This past December, Dr. Jim McGinty, Dr. Xiao Ming Yang, and I visited Shanghai, Tianjin, and Xian, China to explore partnerships with the China Open University, an online public institution similar in some respects to the British Open University, with Xian International Studies University, a Tier-1 prestigious public institution, and with Xian International University, a Tier-2 private institution.

We engaged in extensive negotiations and came away with a promising expectation of beginning full degree program offerings online as early as next September. This extension of our current online offerings is made feasible through a unique three-way partnership with our technology and publishing partners, Time Cruiser Computing Corporation and Pearson Learning Solutions, with our Chinese university partners, and our Ocean County College online learning programs.

We have draft Memoranda of Understanding in the hands of each of our potential Chinese on-the-ground partners who would respectively provide all student and academic support services, marketing and recruitment, advising, and test proctoring. Our technology and publishing partners will provide 'cloud' delivered course content taught by our faculty, from their computing facilities in Denver, Colorado, and Shanghai, China.

The potential enrollment numbers and resultant revenues are eye popping: Tianjin and Xian are each comparable in size to New York City. Future sites where we may also form similar partnerships are much larger, with student populations graduating from high schools who wish to study in the U.S. who have the financial means to do so numbering in the hundreds of thousands annually.

We have a unique, golden opportunity, unmatched by any competitor, to become a truly global community college. We do not view or advocate this as a preferential deviation from our essential, local mission, but rather as an opportunity to supplant declining taxpayer supported aid to our college and as a means of generating a better understanding of our essential mission – teaching students effectively. As we become the world's best provider of learning at great distances, we will inform, improve, and transform our on-campus learning approaches and systems. As we become more proficient at providing excellent online learning, we will become better in every dimension of transforming an exceptional institution into a model for the future of higher education, for educational excellence, nationally and internationally.

If in the process of achieving such ambitious goals, we should also manage to reduce or eliminate our debt, rebuild the existing campus infrastructure, and invest the proceeds of success in scholarships and student development programs, and in every way provide for a better, more prosperous and more generous environment here at our Toms River campus – achievements that will set us apart and bring Ocean County College acknowledgment and credit – that also is a greater good that will have made this effort worthwhile.

As you can see, this was a most interesting and profitable visit. And, returning to accreditation for a moment, we were very pleased to recently receive acknowledgment from Middle States for our China partnership initiative.

Moving on now to the state of the college, Vice President of Finance and Administration, Sara Winchester, reports of recent congressional decisions regarding Pell Grants and the implications for our college. Many proposals were debated and appeared in the headlines over the last few months, proposals to reduce federal financial aid spending. In December, modifications to the Federal Financial Aid programs were finally passed that will not change the Pell maximum award to students of \$5,550 but will impact OCC nonetheless:

- First, students will only be eligible for Pell Grants for a total of 12 semesters (six years), down from 18 semesters (nine years); this provision is prorated for part-time students. This is particularly troubling for students who apply federal aid to remedial coursework.
- Also, very significantly, the zero Expected Family Contributions (EFC) income level is cut back from \$30,000 to \$23,000. This is the maximum amount a family can earn before being required to contribute to paying for undergraduate education and so reduces the number of students who can apply for Pell Grants.
- Finally, Pell Grant recipients are required to graduate from high school or to take a GED exam to receive the Grant. In the past, many home-schooled children could qualify by taking “ability to benefit” tests.

Additionally, in order to help pay for the Pell Grant program, Congress temporarily eliminated the interest subsidy during the grace period on subsidized undergraduate Direct Loans. This provision applies only to Federal Direct Stafford Loans made between July 1, 2012 and July 1, 2014. Typically, the government pays the interest for six months after a student graduates or leaves college.

These changes may have a negative effect on enrollment as students, particularly those from the middle class, struggle to find a way to pay for their education.

In addition, Sara reports that the division of Finance and Administration is in the process of converting the payroll system from ADP to Datatel. The Datatel system is now capable of providing the services we currently receive from ADP, including electronic delivery of payroll advices and W-2s. This conversion will result in significant annual savings for the College and

we should all appreciate and commend the extra efforts of the members of the Payroll Department who accomplished the conversion while still delivering our pay flawlessly.

Finally, Sara reports that a unique theatrical partnership has been forged between Ocean County College and the Ocean County Vocational Technical School. In November students from the College and the Performing Arts Academy came together on the OCC stage in *Lend Me a Tenor*. This is the beginning of a partnership that we hope will encourage Ocean County high school students interested in the arts not only to get involved in productions at OCC but also to become future full time students here.

Vice President of Academic Affairs, Richard Strada, reports:

From NURSING

- The School of Nursing in collaboration with Kean University is developing a blended program track to deliver a generic BSN degree.
- Under the leadership of Dean Colleen Manzetti, a proposal was submitted to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to analyze the effectiveness of several pathways designed to establish the Bachelor of Nursing Degree as the standard for professional nursing.

From LANGUAGE and the ARTS

- Dr. Henry Jackson presented his research entitled “Teachers’ Perspective of Professional Learning Communities as a Reform Initiative to Close the Achievement Gap” at the 90th annual California Educational Research Association Conference.
- Jennifer Dellner presented her paper “Interdisciplinarity, the Net, and the Self: Hypertext as a Question for Interdisciplinary” at the 33rd Annual Conference of the Association for Integrative Studies.

From SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMAN SERVICES

- Social Science is pursuing the establishment of an ROTC contingent on the OCC campus under the leadership of Richard O’Meara. This program would allow students to take course work in leadership, problem solving, strategic planning and professional ethics, as well as to gain access to funding for their college studies.

From MATHEMATICS, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY

- The members of the Science faculty of the School of Mathematics, Science and Technology have redesigned the individual science courses so that the lecture and laboratory will become individual courses.

- Through the leadership of Dean Yehia Elmogahzy, a 750,000 dollar proposal was submitted to the National Science Foundation for the purpose of developing an on-line Forensic Science Program.

One huge highlight for the fall 2011 Semester for Student Services was the opening of Ocean County Stadium. If you haven't yet had a chance to visit our beautiful stadium, put a visit on your to-do list!

The Women's Soccer team, no doubt inspired by their new digs, finished third in the nation in the inaugural season of the stadium. Additionally, 10 OCC athletes from all sports received the National Academic Excellence Award from the National Junior College Athletic Association for achieving a GPA in excess of 3.6.

The Student Support Services grant program reports more than 90% persistence rate of its 132 students from Fall Semester 2011 to Spring Semester 2012. Phi Theta Kappa continues to induct record numbers of students into the honor society, 160 inductees this past fall.

The Athletics program continues its winning tradition with the Women's Tennis team finishing fourth in the nation and Women's Cross Country team finishing third in the nation, while the Men's Cross Country team finished sixth.

For the first time in its history, the OCC Sailing Program produced an All Women's team that competed in the Princeton Women's Regatta held on the shifting current and choppy waters of the Raritan Bay.

And, best of all, Ilene Cohn has informed us that the Ocean County College Athletic Program is now ranked the No. 1 non-scholarship athletic program in the country. We were in the top ten for several years but this is truly a major achievement, holding the number one ranking. Hearty congratulations to Ilene and her staff who work so hard on behalf of our college's athletic programs and on behalf of our athletes—and of course, congratulations to all the athletes who give us 100% all the time.

Dr. McGinty reports that at either its January or February meeting, the Board of Trustees will be asked to approve a new Policy that will prohibit any person from carrying or possessing any firearm, weapon, or unlawful biological or explosive material or compound while on Ocean County College property, or at an OCC sanctioned or sponsored function.

It should be noted that under the proposed Policy, law enforcement officers or any OCC security officers who qualify under N.J. statute as retired law enforcement officers when they are acting in the performance of their official duties will be permitted to carry a weapon.

This means that pursuant to Board approval, some members of the OCC Security force will be carrying firearms while on duty. It should be noted that these same qualified security offices can, and often do, carry a weapon when not at work on the OCC campus.

Ken Olsen advises that Ocean County College continues its commitment to improving efficiency and its environmental profile through the New Jersey Clean Energy Pay for Performance Program. A 1.25 megawatt Combined Heat and Power Green Energy Plant is being constructed behind the Instructional Building. When completed, the facility will be providing electricity generated on-site, using natural gas as the fuel. Two by-products of this process are chilled water and hot water. The college will be supplying heat and cooling to various campus buildings at no cost. The new Gateway Building will receive electricity from the plant and our proposed new College Center would receive electricity as well as hot water for heating and chilled water for cooling.

Initially the college applied for and received a Clean Energy Grant in the amount of \$475,200. The college was advised by the NJBPU on December 5, 2011, that another of our grant applications was accepted and we are to receive an additional incentive payment of up to \$1 million for the construction of the plant. On December 27, 2011, New Jersey Natural Gas advised the college that they were authorized by the NJBPU to match the Clean Energy Grant with another incentive payment of up to \$1 million. So, we are doing very well indeed on the green energy front and on the finances it takes to create the best power generation available.

Tara Kelly announces three items relevant to College Advancement:

- The decentralization of CPE to better serve the community and consolidate resources in order to provide non-credit programming both on-site and on-line.
- The launch and execution of an extensive Internet marketing campaign to support enrollment growth.
- The successful launch and continued growth of our alumni and 55+ outreach programs with an expanding rewards program and new initiatives to best serve these important populations such as the Senior Expo in March and more focused Alumni events.

And so, we anticipate another successful semester as we continue to experience and enjoy growth and change. Our commitment to institutional flexibility and innovation is second only to our support of the many wonderful faculty and staff who do the daily work of our high calling that keeps us strong.

As you go about your business this Spring, please keep in mind how special we are here at Ocean County College, how exceptional we are, how blessed we are, and how vital your contribution is to our continued efforts to demonstrate excellence in all that we are and all that we strive to become.

Thank you! Have a great semester!