

Colloquium
January 20, 2009

An Environment of Positive Change
Jon H. Larson, Ph.D.

It is a pleasure to welcome everyone back to campus on this brisk January day as we begin the spring 2009 semester. January is the time of year when spring seems only a vague memory; and yet when we once again begin to feel the stirrings of hope for the renewal of life – of green buds emerging, and those youthful harbingers of summer's charm begin to pop up through the ground. And so it is with us as we prepare to welcome our budding scholars back to the cycle of academic life which is so much a part of the ritual of our lives. Thus, our winter-into-spring renewal metaphor both defines for us the miracle of the learning process, the bringing of minds, young and not so young, into new life, and provides a wellspring from which we draw our own continuing hope for the future.

We are also aware of the momentous historical significance of this day as we inaugurate a new President of the United States. Our thoughts and prayers are with President Obama as he assumes leadership of our nation and assumes responsibility for the grave challenges that confront us and the world. To be certain that no one is deprived of the opportunity to view them, we have asked Lee Kobus to record the Inaugural ceremonies and inaugural address and to make copies available upon request.

Welcome to Professor John Gardner, Executive Director of the Center for the Foundations of Excellence in the First Year of College at the University of South Carolina, who will be our keynote speaker

today. This year, we are inviting all members of the college community and not just the faculty to stay for Professor Gardner's remarks, because his remarks have college-wide implications. Professor Gardner is generally recognized as the leader of the first-year college movement, as it has come to be known, both nationally and globally, and it is from his work that I have drawn the theme for my remarks today.

In reviewing the nine foundational dimensions that Professor Gardner describes as the "aspirational principles" of excellence that serve as a framework upon which an institution and its service to students can be measured, I was struck by how closely these principles are aligned with our own institutional vision, values and mission.

So, in preparation for his remarks, let's briefly review this morning how three of these dimensions—Organization, Improvement, and Campus Culture—are being addressed at Ocean County College and how these activities color and characterize the current "state of the college." And, I am pleased to report to you the state of our college is exceptionally, and perhaps uniquely, robust and vibrant. At a time when many of the social, economic and political institutions of our society are in extraordinary disarray, it is with deep satisfaction that I report to you on the excellent health of both our fiscal and professional resources of our college.

Specifically, one of the foundational dimensions that Professor Gardner describes as an aspirational principle is the **Organization Dimension**. He quite accurately observes that organizational

structures and policies are key determinants of an institution's ability to provide service, and so I would like to review with you this morning, first, the college's organizational strategies over the past three years and the comprehensive reorganization planned for implementation on July 1st, 2009.

We have been reviewing the organizational structures and policies in all college divisions with two primary objectives in mind: First, to make them operationally leaner and more efficient; and, second, to infuse into key positions persons with new ideas and new passions, to prepare them for the major leadership transition that will impact our college over the next five years. It is imperative that as college leaders retire, they build - before they go - an able corps of successors to continue to implement effective practices wrought from the principles of deep change and culture shift that we seek to make the long term character and *modus Vivendi* of Ocean County College.

Let me say again, as you have heard me state many times, that one of the constant factors in any organization, certainly here at our college, is change. As Robert Quinn has written, "A map we have used in the past may be of limited value in new territory."¹ While we are proud of our college's history and our traditions, and while we honor the timeless virtues of engagement and commitment, as an educational institution we are, as a continuing aspiration, deeply obligated to understand the world that we are preparing our students to live in and to make corresponding and responsive changes of our own.

¹ Quinn, Robert E. *Deep Change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996, 59.

Had General Motors or Chrysler been more attentive to their organizational structures, to their long term financial obligations, to the worldwide supply chain impact on their businesses, to their competitors, to their clients and customers, and to their impact on the natural environment, they might not now be contemplating their own demise. The same can be said of course about Citicorp and Bear Sterns and AIG, and several other enterprises which, when everything seemed to be coming up roses, failed to sow the seeds that would provide for their future, which is what we are seeking to do now. Continuously assessing and improving our organizational structure and its ability to respond to the demands we face from similar forces in the world around us is an ongoing and unending process for us, one that each of the college's divisions undergoes in major or minor ways on a continuing basis.

Ladies and gentlemen, I need not tell you that these are difficult times in America. Many families in Ocean County are feeling the life-disrupting worry, shock, and sense of loss that unemployment and losses in the financial markets have brought to their homes. Can you just imagine how we and our families would feel if we were facing similar threats to our ability to pay our mortgage, feed our family, pay for our children's college education? Perhaps some of you have family members or friends whose lives have been disrupted by this economic crisis. It is frightening and worrisome, even to those who are fortunate, as we are, not to be impacted by loss of our jobs. And, all of us are aware of the sweeping and fundamental economic and national security stresses that confront our state, our nation and our world. We as a college, especially a **community** college, are morally obligated to respond. It is mandated by our mission that we do so ...

that we reach out a helping hand to all of our students and those in our community who need to learn a skill or obtain a credential that will offer hope for a brighter tomorrow, whether they are impacted by joblessness, by the mortgage crisis, by health insurance issues, or by concern for loved ones serving in the armed forces.

With our ever growing student population, over 10% in added credit hours in this semester alone, it is our responsibility to both retain our commitment to excellence while at the same time maximizing our cost effectiveness so we are able to make attending college as affordable as possible. And we are going to do that. We will continue to manage college expenses so as to minimally impact tuition costs to our students and their families. We will take steps to provide lowered textbook costs for all our students in order to stabilize their basic expense package. We will have no increase in student fees next year - zero. We will continue to provide generous scholarship support through the Ocean County College Foundation. And, we will continue to provide service excellence in Financial Aid so that we can match and even surpass the \$16 million dollars of educationally-enabling aid awarded to our students last year.

One of the ways we will respond to Governor Corzine's recent call for help in reducing costs to students will be through our reorganization strategy of consolidating administrative structures while strengthening our administrative effectiveness. Certainly, we anticipate a substantial cut in State funding for Fiscal Year 2010. This will come as no surprise. Certainly, we anticipate a continued extraordinary period of enrollment growth next year as well. But our strategy of cost containment by wringing expense from the budget

through reorganization, consolidation, and frugality anticipates these developments ... and we will, in spite of State budget cuts and unprecedented enrollment growth, achieve one of the lowest bottom line percentage cost increases of all the colleges and universities in New Jersey!

In fairness to our employees, we will not respond to the governor's call for a wage freeze, because we do not believe that makes good sense for an institution that will be at the forefront of stimulating NJ's economic recovery with innovative programs and services and enrollment expansion – a position I believe Governor Corzine understands - but we will be appropriately cautious when considering proposals to increase salaries and benefits. We will not abnegate our responsibility to fill critical new positions, but we will attempt to hire internal candidates through promotion from within whenever possible, to hire with all deliberate speed, and to leave vacant any and all positions possible through the normal course of attrition. To that end, I am announcing that we are postponing our search for the Vice President for Academic Affairs for one year, which alone will realize a significant salary savings. This is a reasonable and prudent measure because our initial search has not produced a candidate we believe fits our expectations and because Interim Vice President Richard Strada has done an admirable job, leading us to conclude that we can still make headway with our long term transition plans and in the meantime, achieve some salary savings. I wish to thank Richard for his willingness to continue to do extra duty and I commend him for his leadership.

We will also be very frugal with fringe benefits and discretionary expenses like travel, subscriptions, and non-essential line items and we will remain aware of the advantages presented to us by outsourcing services when lower costs are available and situations warrant such consideration. I have asked each of the Vice Presidents to specifically survey each operating unit in their areas to determine where opportunity exists to achieve better results and reduce expenses through outsourcing to private firms whose expertise is not being matched by our present organizational structure. Based on that request, I fully expect that in the near future we will outsource one or two additional functions where we can achieve greater effectiveness at lower cost.

In addition, we will continue to seek private funding for start-up programs, and we will rigorously test our assumptions about their effectiveness and potential for growth and persistence before we spend a dime. In short, we will continue to be prepared to change strategically and organizationally, utilizing grant funds and stimulus support from others wherever possible, so that we can continue to do what we must and fulfill our mission, upholding our commitment to high standards while operating effectively, efficiently and as economically as possible.

One of the first divisions to begin reorganization about three years ago, as a result of process mapping and process improvement recommendations, was the Student Affairs Division. Under the leadership of Vice President Don Doran, Student Affairs has constructed a seamless enrollment management system with the cross-training integration of a staff that serves students from

recruitment to registration and beyond to their orientation to their first year experience. From the moment a student expresses interest in OCC to the first day of his or her classes, Don's division is aware of and ready to serve a staggering array of needs, including economic opportunity concerns, advising, financial aid, and first-year orientation.

Don's latest commitment to the Foundations of Excellence process under the guidance of Professor Gardner, in partnership with the Academic Affairs Division and Dean Maureen Reustle, further underscores how this Student Affairs reorganization has developed a deeply embedded culture of awareness, planning, and assessment, especially critical in an era of unprecedented enrollment growth.

Another division that began a significant reorganization a few years ago is College Advancement under the leadership of Tara Kelly. The division began by increasing staff to accommodate the multiple challenges of public relations, college branding, events planning, college marketing, the management of media and public information, and a restructuring of the grants process.

Following its ambitious restructuring, College Advancement's ties to the OCC Foundation were strengthened, increasing shared human resources and innovations whenever possible. Currently, the division is reviewing its structure with an eye to outsourcing and consolidation of its grant funding, fundraising, and public relations functions, producing a new look for the college website under the expert leadership of Maureen Conlon, our web master, and is also developing more sophisticated strategies for using cable TV and the internet as marketing tools. College Advancement will also become more directly

involved in our non-credit operations with the intention of advancing the college by strengthening our bottom line results in Continuing and Professional Education and our Academy for Lifelong Learning.

The Financial Affairs Division, under Vice President Sara Winchester's leadership, has taken on additional functions during the last two years, including responsibilities for Human Resources, Employee Relations, and our SungardHE partnership for Information Technology. Looking forward, Financial Affairs will also undertake some internal realignments and alterations in reporting lines that are designed to further enhance institutional financial performance and cost effectiveness.

The Executive Vice President, Dr. Jim McGinty, has recently returned some responsibilities from his area to the Division of Academic Affairs so that he can pay closer attention to emerging major projects such as the growing and developing Kean@Ocean partnership. This alliance has now embarked on an ambitious building program to provide physical facilities for the rapidly-growing Kean student body, currently estimated to be close to 700 students and projected to exceed 1,000 students by year end.

Dr. McGinty will also soon take on the responsibility for the oversight of campus security as one of the outcomes of the recommendations of the Security Task Force, constituted after the Virginia Tech tragedy, to study in detail and improve if needed the climate of safety on our campus. In service to this objective, the college will also soon conduct an employment search for a "top cop," an experienced and highly qualified professional to direct and

coordinate the entire campus security operation. In addition, in January we began an extensive security audit of our campus utilizing a professional security evaluation firm, a process about which you will be hearing more during the coming weeks as their report is delivered and steps are taken to respond to its findings.

In November, the Division of Planning and Administration under Dr. Parrish's leadership concluded a divisional reorganization that realigned certain responsibilities and reporting lines and rewrote position descriptions to more evenly and efficiently distribute workload and supervisory effectiveness. Because we are engaged in an unprecedented period of capital facilities expansion and renewal, in response to our unprecedented enrollment growth and our Kean University partnership, Dr. Parrish and Ken Olsen will concentrate their time on managing the millions of details this expansion entails, also making maximum use of outsourced assistance in construction management, building systems commissioning, and use of third party financing where feasible. This is an extraordinary time where the availability of public funding for economic stimulus to the nation's and State's economy will offer opportunity for us to act quickly to obtain financial resources to support this building program – and we intend to make full use of that opportunity, including the addition of campus wide use of photovoltaic solar panels and construction of a combined heat and power plant that will allow the college to generate its own electric power. Numerous other energy saving and environmental sustainability projects are in the offing as well which, when finished, will make Ocean County College one of the most advanced technologically, greenest, and cleanest campuses in the nation.

The most recent organizational assessment and realignment has come in the Academic Affairs Division under the leadership of Interim Vice President Richard Strada. Academic Departments have been consolidated into three major Schools of Instruction in order to strengthen the Dean positions and create a more manageable number of reporting lines to the Vice President position, particularly now since the Library and E-Learning responsibilities have been organizationally placed within Academic Affairs. There will also be certain staffing realignments in the Vice President's office that will contribute to a more streamlined management of teaching/learning and learning outcomes assessment.

Another of the foundational dimensions that Professor Gardner defines is what he calls the **Improvement Dimension**. He defines it, in part, as the use of assessment by the institution "to guide planning, resource allocation, decision-making, and the improvement of policies and programs."² Professor Gardner goes on to comment: "A central component of institutional excellence is commitment to continuous improvement. Institutions improve by conducting assessments but more importantly by using the results of assessment to drive institutional change."³

President-elect Barak Obama recently reinforced this theme of accountability by nominating Arne Duncan as the new Secretary of Education. According to the *New York Times* (12/16/08), Mr. Duncan has argued "that the nations' schools need to be held accountable for student progress . . . [and] new teacher-training efforts."

² *Foundations of Excellence in the First College Year: 2008-2009 Guidebook for Task Force Members, Two year Institutions*. Policy Center on the First Year of College, 2008, A-20.

³ *Ibid.*

Over the past five years, under the dedicated leadership of Dr. Carolyn Lafferty, and with the work of the academic deans and the faculty, Ocean County College has developed a learning assessment outcomes design that is equal to or better than any in the nation. That design has been the object of both development and expansion during these years. Recently, as part of the research for the *Periodic Review Report* to the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, the learning assessment sub-committee writing Chapter 5 of the report stressed the need for an intensification the college's efforts to use the results of outcomes assessment for the improvement of teaching and learning in more comprehensive and sophisticated ways. To reiterate, now that we have a good assessment process we need to focus on better using that outcomes information to improve teaching and learning.

In line with these beliefs that the real value of assessment lies in its use for improvement, we will continue to take an aggressive institutional posture regarding the improvement of teaching and learning. We will move beyond the belief that just doing more of the same in the classroom will improve student learning toward the idea that what may be needed is a new vision, a better idea, a deeper commitment to innovation.

The Middle States Periodic Review Report writers recommend that we enhance teaching and learning by establishing a Master Teacher Initiative as a first step toward developing a Faculty Teaching and Learning Center, putting professional development in instructional best practices within easy reach of our entire faculty, both full time

and adjunct, right here on our own campus. In this way we can use the expertise of our own faculty to mentor colleagues, based on assessment outcomes, in the improvement of student learning.

We must also continue to stay in touch with the larger educational community through the use of national assessment instruments that measure our achievement against the sector. One of the instruments we have used here at OCC since 2004 is the Community College Survey of Student engagement—the so-called “Cessie” (CCSSE) survey that has gained national attention in the past few years. We are in our third cycle of CCSSE testing here at OCC and are well ahead of the curve in using the outcomes to help us intensify our students’ engagement with this college.

The CCSSE examiners are widely respected advocates for retention by engagement and this year they are pursuing the theme of “High Expectations, High Support.” A summary of their 2008 findings states:

Students do best when expectations are high and they receive support that helps them achieve at high levels. Lower the standard and quality suffers. Eliminate support and students flounder. But colleges that demonstrate both high expectations and high support give their students the essential tools to succeed. . . . Most students do their best when the bar is high but within reach. Colleges must set the standard and do so deliberately, clearly and consistently.

They also must provide the support—financial aid, advising, academic support—and so on . . . of course there is no magic wand. Helping a student develop an academic plan in and of itself will not lead to success. Simply telling students that tutoring services are available may not help them. Students do not necessarily make time for *optional* activities.⁴

With regard to these two critical areas, academic challenge and support, Ocean County College scored significantly above the mean for its sector on the portion of the CCSSE survey that addresses the **Academic Challenge** benchmark. This benchmark best responds to CCSSE’s concept of colleges setting the bar high enough for their students and we do it better than small, medium, large and extra large community college students who were tested.

I think it is important for us to know that 585 institutions across 48 states testing 343,378 students comprise the cohort for the 2008 CCSSE survey. We scored especially well in the **Challenge** category on the item asking about the number of written papers or reports required ... something of which we should be proud as an institution.

With regard to the **Support for Learners** benchmark, we fell slightly below the cohort mean, but not significantly in any one sub-category. In the general survey item that asks students to rate how their college is “providing the support you need to succeed at this college,” we ranked 2.84 while the entire cohort ranked 2.95 a differential which is only a moderately significant indicator (please don’t ask me to explain this ... ask Chengbo). Nonetheless, as a

⁴ *Essential Elements of Engagement: High Expectations, High Support*. “You Can’t Have One without the Other.” Community College Leadership Program: The University of Texas at Austin, 2008, 1.

result, we will be working harder on getting our students in touch with our excellent support services. As the CCSSE administrators say, “simply telling students that tutoring services are available may not help them.”

We also improved our position in the **Student-Faculty Interaction** benchmark in which we had been below the mean for the 2004 and 2006 survey, but now rank above the mean in that category. We are doing considerably better with several types of communications between faculty and students, which has contributed to our positive ranking.

As tedious as some of these data may sound to you—and to me!—it is important that you be aware of how significant this information becomes when trying to help us better engage with and retain our students. It is an area in which little things do mean a lot and so we must be prepared to pay attention. Don Doran will tell you that one of the best modes of retention for an absent student in the first three weeks of a course is an email from the Professor that says: “We miss you in class.” A simple gesture; a huge payoff.

A third area of concern that we have developed from studying our learning assessment outcomes lies in the area of Classroom Assessment. We are aware that how faculty members assess their students’ preparation for class is closely tied to course management and course design and it is not our intent to interfere in this process. But we are concerned that so few faculty members have been willing to report on the techniques that they use in this area so vitally related to student success and we are currently looking to the Learning

Assessment Committee members to develop a best practices project suitable for publishing and sharing with colleagues. Students who habitually come to class unprepared or under-prepared are attritional risks.

The third dimension from the *Foundations of Excellence* principles developed by Professor Gardner that I'd like to discuss with you this morning is the **Campus Culture** dimension. This is not a new topic for me, as you know, because I think it is a crucial dimension in the value and success of any organization, particularly for a college or university where the greatest and most effective learning community of all is the institution itself. You have heard me speak of what I'd like to think of at Ocean County College as a community of scholars and mentors bound to a community of learners by the common belief in a commitment to the examined life.

John Gardiner sees a collegiate culture as one that must also bear the hallmark of responsibility, a primary requisite of collegiality.

First, of course, we have the responsibility of behaving with civility and courtesy to one another. John Kennedy reminded us that "civility is not a weakness" and Barak Obama has frequently said that we may disagree but should not be disagreeable. I would add, that even as we all may challenge and sometimes **must** challenge ideas here on campus, we should avoid the temptation of name-calling and ridicule in the process.

Using boorish language is unnecessary to the free exchange of ideas and expression of disagreements. This is not a new notion ...

Thomas Jefferson averred in the early 1800's, "In truth, politeness is artificial good humor, it covers the natural want of it, and ends by rendering habitual a substitute nearly equivalent to the real virtue."

Our college culture strives to elevate the level of discourse rather than engaging in practices that demean others and in so doing demean us as a college. Radical free speech advocates will argue that citizens have a Constitutional right to use boorish language. But the reality is that, as employees of the college, we do not live our lives in a vacuum and what we say and how we choose to say it characterizes us, individually and as an institution. Because, like Jefferson, we believe "Taste cannot be controlled by law," we do not have a speech code. But one of my goals as President is to encourage the elevation of all our aspirations, the quality of our discourse included. I am proud to say this does characterize discourse at OCC for the most part.

We have already identified eleven principles of civility for Ocean County College that should guide our professional interactivity on this campus. I also urge that we allow our professional attitudes and beliefs to transcend our own space, our individual silos, and that we try to articulate solutions that are best for our students and for our college as a whole.

Our College Advancement staff works hard to symbolize our campus culture with images, logos, and publications that communicate our collegiality, our academic excellence, and our student-centered environment. These are all positive efforts to represent to the community and to our current and future students what we are about, what our case statement about OCC is as a collegiate learning

institution, and these are efforts that must be taken very seriously. Think for a moment about the power of symbols to speak to us about organizational culture. Our aspirations are atypical of a community college – and our constituents need to know that and be continuously reminded that we are striving as hard as we can to be the premier public college in New Jersey.

We do not always have the luxury of reaching out to people with rather lengthy Colloquium speeches. Sometimes we need to remind people what we stand for in the five seconds it takes to look at what is posted on a billboard or on the side of a bus. We believe that we have a responsibility to find ways to share our meaning as an institution emblematically. So, by the way, do most of the nation's other colleges and universities.

Another responsibility that we have is to try to make our faculty and staff aware of our expectations for their performance in very real and specific ways. Long gone are the days when checking off a few boxes can be said to satisfactorily develop our employees in ways that best serve the needs of the enterprise.

I think each and every employee has the right to know and to participate in examining the goals and objectives of his or her performance and we will be looking very carefully at employee evaluation that is designed to do this, partnering with everyone in order to designate institutional needs and assess individual performance in service to those needs. We must continually find ways to reward excellence and to shape individual professional goals as productively as is possible.

Professor Gardner is particularly concerned about faculty and staff understanding and taking special responsibility for new students. He argues that senior administrators must make new students a high priority, very simply because they are the students at greatest risk. We recognize at Ocean County College that the majority of our new students are at even higher risk because they need, in staggering numbers, to take developmental courses in English and mathematics—almost 90% in English and almost 67% in math of our entering full-time students in the fall of 2008.

For this reason, we have constituted a task force that has been working since last spring to examine developmental education at Ocean County College and to make recommendations based on twenty-two separate topics, about how best to serve this challenged population. The report from The Developmental Education Task Force will be forthcoming soon. It will be shared with the Foundations of Excellence assessment group, with the Divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, and with the college as a whole.

Another area of responsibility for our college community lies in the area of expanded workforce development and training. As our country faces daunting economic problems that include rising rates of unemployment, we must be ready to dedicate our workforce training staff to partner with county businessmen and work projects to provide the training that will be needed to get our citizens back to work.

We must also be ready to call upon faculty to assist with this training so that workers preparing for new jobs will have appropriate levels of literacy and computational skills. America's president-elect

has called upon the community college sector to provide this service and we at Ocean County College must stand ready to take a pro-active role. We are taking a leadership position in a state-wide job summit in partnership with the Workforce Development Consortium and will seek funds made available by President Obama's economic team for workforce retraining.

And so, what I am really saying once again this morning is that we are and must continue to be a community of caring. This attitude is and always has been at the heart of the community college mission. As we ponder the continuing sensitivity of our administrative organization to make needed changes, the challenges that currently face our state and nation, the obligation of the college to use evidence-based assessment in service to improvements, and the continuing insistence on civility and responsibility in our campus culture, we will have, I think, captured the spirit of Professor Gardner's message and thereby serve not only our new students, but all of our students, to the best of our ability.

Thank you all for your kind attention. May each of you have a wonderful and productive semester.

Longevity Awards:

Employees with 20 years of service

Neill Freiermuth	Adjunct Asst. Professor, Business
Salvatore Maraziti	Adjunct Asst. Professor, Humanities
Dennis Pieretti	Adjunct Asst. Professor, Mathematics
Francis Polk	Dean of Bus., Econ., Computer Studies

Migdalia Castro	Executive Asst. – Kean @ Ocean
Anne Lansing	Executive Asst. – VP Academic Affairs
Marcia Bradley	Professor of Science
Mary Ellen Carr	Professor of English & Literature
Katherine Dillon	Assoc. Professor of Business Studies
Karl Kleiner	Assoc. Professor of Business Studies
Richard Meyers	Professor of English & Literature
Randy Monroe	Assoc. Professor of English & Literature
Sandra Figner	Tech/Prep Program Administrator
Charles Jannarone	Coordinator of E-Learning
Melissa Cipolletti	Facilities Resource Technician
Megan Springsted	Recruitment Coordinator
Rosa Alicea	Administrative Assistant III
Donnie Clyburn	Media Distribution Assistant III
Calvert Gearon	Day Custodian
Judith Hicks	Security Shift Sergeant
Kathleen Langenbacher	Principal Bookkeeper
Arthur Pajak	Athletics Attendant

Employees with 30 years of service

Judith Angona	Professor of English & Literature
Mark Bowcock	Buyer/Compliance Agent

Employees with 40 years of service

Richard Strada Interim VP of Academic Affairs

William Rickert Professor of Mathematics