

President's Colloquium Remarks January 19, 2004

"It is important that students bring a certain ragamuffin, barefoot, irreverence to their studies; they are not here to worship what is known, but to question it."

– Jacob Bronowski

Good morning!

Welcome to the spring 2005 Colloquium.

It is genuinely my privilege and my pleasure to greet you and to bring congratulations to all of you from the Board of Trustees on your dedication and good work at the mid-point of this academic year as together we strive to make this the finest public college in New Jersey!

We are fortunate to be joined today by Trustees as we once again begin our work anew. Trustees: Dr. Bruce Greenfield, Van Thulin and his wife Kathleen, will you please stand and be recognized? Let me also ask you to acknowledge our distinguished colleague Freeholder John Bartlett.

Thank you!

Just as author Maltbie Babcock observed, "A day dawns, quite like other days; in it, a single hour comes, quite like other hours; but in that day and in that hour the chance of a lifetime faces us," today we have such an opportunity. It is one of the great joys of the academic calendar, to have so many new beginnings. The rhythm and meter of this cycle promise a continuing environment of hope—but hope based on achievement and the wisdom that the past has to impart.

Last Fall, I spoke with you about the state of the college, its continuing improvement and growing pattern of excellence, and I shared with you a vision of what I called the "New Community College," a vision in which our college strives for national recognition in: our academic standards, our teaching/learning innovations, our uses of technology, our management of resources, our relevance to our community and our times, our creative uses of local color imagery in our publications and promotional material, and our collaboration with other colleges, universities, and learning organizations to expand the possibilities open to our students.

Today, I would like you to consider some additional thoughts on the college's adaptation to its future, and ask you to join with me and numerous others who have been engaged in an ongoing review of our vision, seeking to look beyond the horizon and have our minds "opened by wonder."¹ I appreciate the efforts of all those who have contributed their creative thinking.

¹ "I would rather have a mind opened by wonder than one closed by belief."

- Gerry Spence

Your willingness to engage in this dialog, sometimes a debate, is a testament to your loyalty and love of our college.

To those who have not yet joined this conversation, let me say you are welcome to come to any of our regular meetings of faculty and staff groups and have at it! Like Frederick Douglass, I firmly believe that, "Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet deprecate agitation, are men who want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the roar of its many waters." So do not stand outside, peering in, reluctantly disdaining some imagined odium – just jump in...you'll find a dialog that is cleansing and invigorating!

I invite not only our faculty to enter into this dialogue, but all of our employees; this is our college, collectively, and every opinion and idea counts.

Now, believing as I do that our future is grounded in our past, I'd like first to take a moment to look back. As we conclude our 40th Anniversary celebrations here at OCC, it seems appropriate to ask, what, if anything, have we created that we might rightly call a tradition, a tradition on which to build our future vision. The entire community college movement in America—actually unique to America—has earned the right to claim a tradition of its own, and thus poses a question we should ask ourselves; notably, where will this larger 'tradition' lead us?

I believe if we examine our own traditions and values alongside those associated with community colleges nationally, we will be able to more clearly discover both our particular vision for the future and our special and distinctive place in the educational spectrum.

Over the past year, we've taken time to renew, revise, and refocus our culture statements to make them consistent and reflective of what OCC is today. I am so proud of the work that came out of that collaborative effort. It represents real improvement. But, to be truly progressive, we must not be content to let those aspirations guide us forever. If we are to continue to be viable as an academic institution, we must look beyond our present mission in search of opportunity, in search of relevance. Nobody can drive to the future on cruise control!

During the past millennium, a multitude of apparently invincible corporations, institutions, even nations, fell asleep at the wheel and paid a heavy price, becoming laggards and bystanders on the road to the future. Like desert sand formations sculpted by the winds of change, they were relentlessly eroded by their reluctance to respond to new technologies and new ideologies, shifting power irreversibly. This is a lesson no nation, no community, no college can ignore!

Indeed, it is never too soon to be on the lookout for opportunities to do more, to serve our populations better, to achieve the possible, to even speculate about what now may seem impossible. The greatest organizations in the world are consistently reinventing themselves in response to the needs

of their constituencies. America itself has flourished because of its unique ability to adapt, to assimilate, to renew. Success in any venture comes to those who are willing to take calculated risks - to explore options that may seem implausible at first but offer potential for a great payoff in the long run.

We need to invest our energy in finding ways to challenge the status quo – to question the validity of the old paradigm of what a community college is or should be and to redefine what a community college **can** be. We need to reassess our programs, review our methods, challenge our assumptions, and look in every direction for transformational opportunities.

Over the course of the last forty years, we have laid the groundwork and built a solid foundation for greatness. But do we aspire to greatness? Do we consciously examine who we are and challenge ourselves to walk the talk? Are we too smug? Are we too timid? Are we too comfortable in our success? If we are to truly aspire to greatness in all aspects of our existence as a college - - in our teaching, in our leadership, in our dedication to helping students learn, in our relationships with each other, and in our overall day to day life here at OCC, from our buildings to our beliefs -- we must work at it...and we must be ready to change. Christopher Morley writes, "There are three ingredients to the good life; the first is learning, the second is earning, and the third is yearning." We must embrace that yearning toward greatness. If we are to avoid the seduction of mediocrity, we must yearn for distinctiveness, allow our students to be "agents of their own learning,"² and, as the old curmudgeon who flaked for Smith Barney used to say on TV, we need to "earn it"!

How do we do that? A good place to begin is for each of us to **challenge ourselves**. If each of us could put aside our conventional selves in favor of realizing our true potential as educators – if we would experiment with unique ways to do our jobs, to teach tomorrow's students better, to research that topic we've been thinking about for years, to explore how we can use technology to reach students in ways we never thought possible – we can make a start!

Now, as we have deliberated how OCC might reasonably and profitably benefit from changes in the traditional mission of the community college, one of the first issues to rethink is access. What has access meant historically? What does **access** really mean today? And what we might do to make access new, better, and part of our expansive vision for the future?

The traditional definition for access, convenient location and open-door admissions, has been modified over time to include offering access to the varying kinds of education that students want. While some community colleges have emphasized workforce development, customized training, and

² ..."they need to be agents of their own learning".
-- Pat Hutchings

career programs, Ocean County College focuses more on transfer programs — because that is what most of our students want. While some career programs like Nursing will continue to be in demand, the demographics and economics of Ocean County simply do not call for a major investment in new career programs. Instead of following a formula for programs invented elsewhere, we should make OCC more appealing and relevant to the lives of those we actually serve – residents of Ocean County. That means providing increased access to non-traditional students as well as to our bread and butter market of transfer students who want a bachelor’s degree.

Further, we now better understand that, for today’s student with family and work obligations that prevent traditional residential attendance, access means extending opportunity well beyond our own institutional mission. We must extend our historic vision of access to include collaboration with baccalaureate degree granting institutions, bringing their programs to our campus, helping students achieve their goal of a baccalaureate degree without the long commutes heretofore necessary. This logic leads directly to recognition of the potential need to provide, on our campus, a separate facility for upper division courses and degrees, managed and delivered by four-year schools, but embraced and enabled by OCC.

We share a civic responsibility to provide multiple access options to our students whose changing life styles and commitments require such accommodation. These efforts serve to fundamentally alter the perceptions of our college among students and their parents, raising their appreciation for the quality of the OCC educational experience.

We began our initiatives in this direction with extension sites all over the county, and we expanded on this notion through the vision of Judy Icklan in the establishment of a permanent, comprehensive extension site, the Southern Education Center. Through collaboration with the MATES Academy this year, we will triple our capacity in that center, allowing us to better serve the rapidly growing South-county population.

Under the leadership of Jim McGinty and the pioneering work of Mary Burke, Dan Holt, and Chuck Jannarone, we also extended access into cyberspace. We now have nearly 1200 students who currently enroll in online courses offered through our Web-based portal and Web CT software. That electronic outreach continues as we move to the completion of our new digital television studio, a project shepherded by Richard Parrish, Ken Olsen, and Lee Kobus, slated for start-up by this coming summer. In this venture, our educational and financial partner is Ocean County. And we are currently exploring yet other frontiers in electronic delivery via wireless telecommunication, with potential partners in the corporate world of cellular communications. With our new Technology Building ready for full operation this spring, we realize the importance of fully utilizing these technology investments, and thus the challenge becomes: How can we further one of our

fundamental objectives, access to higher education, with new designs for learning that utilize technology to broaden opportunity for those we serve and achieve both quality improvements and economy?

In light of all of these successes and plans, we certainly have come a long way in the redefinition of what community college founders envisioned when they first declared "access" as one of our primary missions. But as we gaze over the horizon of this global village in which we dwell, it is reasonable to conclude that we must extend our reach. As John F. Kennedy once observed: ". . . in the final analysis, we all inhabit this same small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future."

Another of the initial fundamental characteristics of the community college can no longer be found in our lexicon... and that is 'affordability.' Sadly and all-too-frequently, affordability was interpreted in its narrowest sense, and that has worked against the best interests of OCC and other community colleges to mean inexpensive—or, even, cheap, and, by implication, lacking in high quality. Thomas Paine wrote, "A long habit of not thinking a thing wrong gives it a superficial appearance of being right." That can certainly be applied to the vexatious notion of affordability that has dogged us for so long.

While community colleges tried to create an image of institutions of high quality dedicated to superior teaching, it was always unconvincing to the public that high quality and low cost went together like birds of a feather, like Fred Astaire and Ginger Rodgers, like horse and carriage, like...well you get it.

Little in the consumer experience of students and parents bore out the assumption that you ever got the best in the bargain basement. Affordability was seen, in reality, as just another form of access, specifically economic access, and for years emphasizing affordability drove an environment of penuriousness that for many colleges tended to threaten the vitality of their growth and expansion.

One of the earliest resources for dispelling the notion that community colleges had to live in an environment of deprivation because they could not charge enough in tuition to properly fund the institution lay in the generosity of the colleges' local government sponsors. Ocean County College was always extremely fortunate, blessed, actually, in the quality of its Freeholders' commitment to, love of, and vision for the college.

Their sense that Ocean County owed its citizens a quality educational experience at OCC, that this was indeed a fundamental civic commitment, has always prompted them to fund the college well beyond just a bare-bones survival level, while remaining cognizant of the tax implications for its citizens. Our Freeholders have always kept that delicate balance, and support from men like our Liaison, Jim Lacey, and our colleague, John Bartlett, has continued into this present day.

One of the core strategies that make it possible for regular and reasonable tuition increases to work successfully here at OCC has been the

generosity of the College Foundation, directed by Sandy Broughton and Chaired by Harvey York. We are deeply appreciative of the contributions of our Foundation Board and those who have dedicated so much of their time to it, like Barbara Hiering, Dave Wintrode – this year’s Summer Gala honoree, and Steve Leone – our newest College Trustee, and of course Joe Citta, Dick Sambol, and Senator Bill Hiering.

We are approaching the point where a majority of our students is eligible for some form of publicly-funded financial aid and thus it is crucial that we be able to respond to this growing resource with requisite technology, timeliness, and skill. We owe this service to our students—and to our college. The sad fact is that, unbelievably, students at community colleges are still far less likely to apply for financial aid than students attending any other type of college or university. We cannot be satisfied with that fact.

There is also the world of college advancement which includes public grants, planned and annual giving, endowments, and other gifts that community colleges have come to recognize as significant resources to help elevate community colleges from the bargain basement. We have been fortunate at OCC in the acquisition of a number of grants that help us do wonderful work. Perkins, Robert Wood Johnson, the County of Ocean, Pew Charitable Trust – these organizations are just a few examples of our many grantors. We intend to increase that number over the next years as we strengthen our grants processes and renew our commitment to proactively seeking grant opportunities.

Other advancement initiatives to find resources beyond those from state and local government include the efforts of Don Doran, Roy Wilkins, and Bob O’Brien in establishing our very competitive and successful Sailing Program entirely based on private donations. A blue ribbon Advisory Board headed by Dr. Drew Siebert is now embarking on raising an endowment that will keep this program operating without public funding in perpetuity. Our Academy for Lifelong Learning, headed by Joanne Padrone, (to whom we extend well wishes) also manages a successful development program to secure outside funding as illustrated by our fruitful partnership with Sovereign Bank. Also, our Athletic Director, Ilene Cohen, has been very successful in seeking out sponsorship opportunities for our Vikings.

As you can see, each of these achievements exemplifies the roads to excellence available to us when we are not forced to assume the expediency of mediocrity, or fall into a complaisant, comfortable routine.

Another resource for innovatively addressing our aspiration of remaining viable and relevant in tomorrow’s world of higher education, a rich source of creative energy, is our faculty. In an academic institution, the skill, drive, dedication, and creativity of the faculty pretty much determine what kind of institution you will have. Over the past forty years, ours has done well. Time and again students return to our campus and tell us that this or that faculty

member was as good as, or better than, those they encountered at their transfer institutions.

This excellence is seen in faculty members like Dr. Al Longo who has taken on a leadership role in our education program through his many contributions on campus and his outreach to community schools, and like Dr. Catherine Murphy's involvement with the Hawaii National Great Teacher's Seminar, and Kaaren Finberg, who is a NJ NEXT 2004 Fellow.

We do have "great teachers" at OCC—like Pat Kennedy whose brilliant lectures in medieval book-making have been described by experts as a "demonstration of scribal prowess"...Yeow! And like Dr. Xiao-Ming Yang, internationally respected linguistic scholar and author. And like Judy Zinis, who has made innumerable contributions to film studies at OCC and was recently the recipient of a Mid-Career Fellowship for graduate study at Princeton—joining other Mid-Career Fellows Dr. Kathleen McCormick, Dr. Joan Rykiel, and Joe Kirchhofer.

Many at OCC were privileged to experience the marvelous joint presentation given last May by Dr. Sandra Brown and Karin Gargone, *And the Fire and the Rose Are One*, a beautiful project linking literature with music. The college also benefited from a Web-Based Information Literacy Tutorial developed by Torris Anderson and Pamela Dong and from the efforts of Rob Furstoss and Cathy Hoult to link honors courses through a sequenced and cohering curriculum model. Dr. Katherine Tietge has created enormously meaningful experiences for our students through her academic work in understanding religious life; Virginia Reilly continues to actively participate in scholarship and in the national dialogue on distance learning; and Dr. Maysa Hayward brings her international expertise to the scholarship and development of instructional materials in Arabic literature. These and many, many other talented faculty members are the stars in our firmament. Our light is their brilliance.

Because our faculty recognizes that we are primarily a teaching institution, their commitment is wholly to the learning process – to the curriculum, the students, the department, and the college. Our faculty understands that they cannot be fully actualized professionals by limiting their scope to self-defined activities, or by giving the minimum.

Now let me wax enthusiastic for a moment about our technology team. While this is a work in progress, we have come miles in the last few years! Our breakthrough achievements—on-line registration, our new Tech Building, our Cisco IP telephony, the soon-to-be-finished TV studio, and the implementation next month of the start of the computer replacement plan, suggest that by December, 2005, we will have pulled even in the tech race and perhaps, like a competitive sculling crew, have begun to inch into the lead.

Here are some of the new technology tools and gadgets that Dr. Jim McGinty has for you this year:

- 6 new robust servers have been recently installed, including a new high powered Web Server, a new Datatel Server, and new Web Advisor Server.
 - During the Winter Break, OIT completed the move of the remaining Computer Science and Computer Graphic labs to the Technology Building. This involved over 80 Lab and Office PC's.
 - We will replace on schedule all old PCs in faculty offices. The replacements will allow us to eventually bring every desktop to a Windows XP Professional standard, allowing faculty to better utilize new software and Datatel applications and allowing OIT to provide Push/Pull technology to update automatically each PC's security and virus protection every night.
 - The Benefactor software package will be fully implemented allowing the College and Foundation to keep better track of our donations and to help us raise more money for the College.
 - We will increase the number and frequency of technology-related training workshops for faculty and staff. Our goal is to have all members of the college community fully functional on the software applications we already have and to prepare them for the new applications as they become available.
 - This spring and summer each academic department will create a "basic" Faculty Web Page for each full and adjunct instructor, including several links to associated academic web sites.
 - OCC will be embarking on a partnership with NJEdge and fifty-four colleges and universities in New Jersey to allow both real-time and stored Internet-connected video conferencing.
- Coming in the near future –
 - Automatic class rosters for WebCT, allowing automatic uploading of class rosters from our Datatel system to our WebCT server.
 - Intrusion Detection / Prevention Security to eliminate viruses, worms, Trojan horses, and the like before they reach the campus, also ending problems we have when a person brings an infected laptop to campus and connects to the network.
 - Full on-line student admission and registration allowing convenient, secure, quick response from the College.
 - A secure virtual private network, allowing safe and secure access to faculty and staff who require network access from a remote site.
 - A Cyber Café in the remodeled Bookstore. Students and faculty will be able to enjoy a steaming Starbucks cappuccino while studying, accessing the Internet, or chatting with friends.
 - Wireless environment expansion, allowing wireless connectivity to all campus resources without needing a place to plug in. Read and answer your e-mail while sitting on the campus mall looking at the goldfish, or register for classes and check grades while playing Frisbee.
 - Instant online enrollment for Continuing and Professional Education, providing a look and feel similar to the online shopping carts found at Amazon

or Best Buy, helping to increase enrollment in CPE by allowing people to register for classes in a 24/7 environment.

- Full implementation of Resource 25, a dynamic software package allowing efficient scheduling and inventory of all College classrooms and facilities including "What If" scenarios for better space utilization.
- Implementation of E-commerce technology for our Bookstore, allowing students and faculty to purchase books from home and have them delivered directly to their doorstep.

Sounds like a tall order—but believe me, these things will happen!

It should be eminently clear to everyone by now that no institution of higher education in America today, not community colleges, not private elite liberal arts schools, not research universities, can operate without increasingly expensive technologies and the human resources—energetic and creative people—to make effective use of them. This is, very simply, the cost of doing business in higher education these days. While it would be nice to try to keep alive the myth of dedicated professors who need only a packet of chalk and a dog-eared text to work their miracles, the reality is that labor unions, competition with private industry, the technology explosion, student needs for diversified delivery systems, and intensified competition for student tuition dollars have all worked to change higher education forever. The community college has no choice but to engage—or be squeezed out by more aggressive competitors.

As a result, while we will try to keep our tuition reasonable, we can no longer envision restrictive tuition caps. Our tuition and fees must keep pace with our needs. We also must keep reminding our legislators on both the state and federal levels of their responsibilities to support this most American system of education that, frankly, makes democracy possible. We must engage in active facilities upgrades and plan for technology depreciation. We must take better care of our house so that our facilities are a credit to the college, not an embarrassment. We must remedy the oversights, omissions, and mistakes of the past as best as we can and attempt to keep from repeating them in the future.

Since we can no longer operate in an environment of scarcity, since we can no longer afford the label of "second best" for either our students, or ourselves, we must engage in a new *modus vivendi*, a "new frugality," that comes to mean economy without stinting—by implementing both effective resource management and increased productivity.

Managers must develop a heightened awareness of the effective use of resources. This does not mean, "don't spend"; it means, "spend wisely." The President's Planning and Budgeting Council has developed a system whereby budgeting is tied to assessment and planning and all budget managers are accountable for making both good plans and responsive budgets. Our CFO, Sara Winchester, has been highly alert to cost analysis and systemic waste

and we are daily revising redundancies and excesses out of our work processes. We have started an active 'process improvement team' initiative to identify opportunities for more productive uses of human and fiscal resources. And I call upon each of you today to think of individual ways in which you can help us to be more productive. We need everyone here on campus—if not 24-7 then at least 35-5, or whatever it takes—to pull on the oars, move our boat a notch ahead, and give us what you have to give. There really is no place any longer, not here and not in any modern community college, for part-time workers drawing full-time salaries.

Now, I am very much aware that the vast majority of faculty and staff are dedicated and hard-working professionals. Although I may not see each of you every day, I see the results of your efforts and I couldn't be more pleased. I know how much you do and the Board of Trustees and I take enormous pride in the excellence you achieve. But what I am saying is that the "new frugality" requires all of us to be true to our work ethic, not to let frustration or boredom or deterioration in our commitment sneak in and de-rail our efforts. As Winston Churchill said to the British people on the eve of war, "The price of greatness is responsibility." It is not always easy to maintain responsible ways, new eyes and renewed energy, but I think this is best achieved when one loves the work one does and daily plumbs it for new opportunities. The great joy of education is that there is always something new under the sun!

According to an opinion research project recently funded by the Ford Foundation, entitled "Expanding Opportunity: Communicating about the Role of the Community College," one crucial thing colleges need to do is more effectively communicate their image. In a section called "The Image Challenge," this report reveals that the two most common negatives about community college images is that they are fragmented and local, neither of which have proven particularly effective. This evaluation grows out of another community college traditional value, I think, and that is the perception that the college's ultimate value lies at the community level and that the college is compelled to present many different faces rather than a single unified image to its community.

It is just no longer viable to think of ourselves as just a small singular entity embedded within a locality, oblivious to our ties to the larger educational community. Naturally our origins and loyalties are to the citizens of Ocean County. But these citizens have hopes and aspirations that extend beyond this county. They wish to transfer or to find ways to continue their education beyond the Associate degree, to learn about diverse cultures, to become adept in languages in addition to English, to find here at OCC opportunities to develop business techniques appropriate to new global markets. They wish to discover travel and study opportunities abroad, connections to educational networks in New Jersey or around the world, international library access, and multiple opportunities that will prepare them—

to return to their homes in Ocean County, able to live to some degree as citizens of the world, or indeed to travel and work in that world.

As a result, it behooves us to create an image for Ocean County College that will persuade others of our rightful participation in the new global community of educators. We must convert the image of provincialism that so often accompanies the word "community" into a vision of expansiveness, of connection—to our state, to our nation, and to the world at large. And as we do this, we must manage to motivate our students to join us on this exciting journey, not only forward, but also outward.

We are fortunate to have the skills of a consummate College Relations staff to bring forth a unified image of the college as a place of outreach, a place where connections are made, where the world is traveled, even if that journey is first experienced inside a book. Each of our students will have a unique set of connections that he or she needs or wants to make. We must be ready to find the ways to get those connections made and to unify our image around that single idea: Come here to OCC and CONNECT!

Finally, community colleges have traditionally had a broad economic and social impact. Although the public has not always recognized this impact, it has still been of particular interest to students who consistently tell us, no matter what program they enroll in, that they believe that the single biggest advantage of their college degree is that it will enable them to earn more money in their lifetime. This, too, lies at the very core of the community college tradition—and is what for most students the word "opportunity" means: It means giving them their own chance at the American Dream.

Statistics continue to show that a community college education will yield graduates from \$250-300,000 dollars in increased lifetime earnings.

There have also been multiple studies on how the state and county benefit economically from community colleges. One recent study in Tennessee supports the conclusion that for every dollar invested in support for a two-year college degree, the average real return to society is \$10. This analysis found that the state re-coups its entire higher education subsidy in just the added sales taxes paid by the graduates, not to mention gains from other significant tax revenues.

In addition, the community college directly contributes to the economics of the community through institutional expenditures and employee and student buying. In Kansas, Johnson Community College studied its impact on the economy of Johnson County and discovered the total tangible economic impact to be more than \$209 million. This was determined to be more than four times the dollars received in state and local support, so the local tax payers were getting a 400% return on their investment in their college.

The more we are committed to state, local, national, and international partnerships, the greater our economic impact will be. And we should wish to be of positive value to the community that nurtures us. This is one of our

traditional values that we know will remain in tact, will only get better as our graduation rates rise.

So these bedrock values—access, affordability, outreach and socio-economic impact —can, I suppose, in the end, be said to have served us well. Their revisions have been useful to us in the revision of our own college culture statements, in re-defining our Vision and Mission. Like any traditional values, they need to be cherished—but also studied for the ways in which they can be made to renew us and sustain us and link us to our place and our time in history.

I truly cannot think of a more auspicious time in the history of the community college than now, today, or a place on the map more wonderful than here, Ocean County College, from which to contemplate the 21st century and what we can bring to it. There are no limits to what we can do once we set our minds to it—so I invite you to join me on this journey to our future. I can think of no better companions than all of you on this fabulous journey. As an old Taoist saying goes, "The journey is the reward." So let us make the most of our journey—today, together.

Thank you—have a great semester!!