

President's Report

January 20, 2010

The campus has been a buzz of activity over the past several weeks as we prepared for the arrival of over 1,600 new students at the beginning of spring semester. Despite a couple of nasty December storms, the campus parking lots and walkways are clear and dry. Our roads and grounds crews have done a superb job in assuring that the registration process, advising and counseling, and other related activities have gone on unabated by the snow and ice.

We are experiencing an increase in our enrollment compared to the opening of spring semester a year ago. Currently, we are 11.86% ahead of where we were last year with our credit FTE enrollment. It is important to note that there is a 32% increase in the number of financial aid applications from students over the age of 25. This suggests that the recession is continuing to drive many adult students back to college. Overall, we have 26% more applications for financial aid than last spring.

With the opening of the new semester, we have officially launched the search process for the College's Provost and Executive Vice President positions. The committees, under the leadership of Associate Professor Dave Richmond and Maria Coons (Provost), and Professor Tom Dowd and Cathy Brod (EVP), have met with our search consultant, developed position profiles, and an advertising plan. The positions will be announced nationally next week, and the closing date for applicants is February 17. We will be targeting the April Board meeting for possible hiring authorization from the Board.

Likewise, the Campus Master Planning Steering Committee has launched the campus-wide master plan discussion with the start of the spring semester. Last week, the campus community was briefed on the planning process through the "all-campus" meeting and during breakout sessions included in our professional development program. The master planning firm is on campus January 19 – 22 gathering additional information, and they will return throughout the spring semester. We expect a campus site plan by June 30, with the complete plan by August.

We used the relative "down" time last week to continue the design of our strategic planning residential conference to be held March 2 – 4. The "white paper" developed from the information gleaned from the College's Week of Engagement activities has been released in draft form to many internal College faculty and staff for reaction and feedback. The Board has received a copy and is also encouraged to provide feedback. The white paper will be one of many inputs attendees at the Strategic Planning Conference will be asked to consider as we continue to examine possible strategic directions for the College.

Clearly, the State of Illinois budget issues have been foremost in many of our minds as we prepare the budget for FY11. While there are probably more unknowns about the budget than what is known, it is a safe bet that we will not receive full funding for the current budget, and the College has already taken the steps necessary with respect to spending to assure that the budget will meet the Board-authorized balance (imbalance) at year end. Planning for the FY11 budget is being undertaken with the assumption that the State will fund only 50% of its appropriation to us. Remaining revenue needed to finance the College educational and operations budget will be derived from property tax revenue, tuition and fees, and miscellaneous income from our investments and business enterprises. To achieve a balanced budget, given the expenses we know of, would require the College to increase the cost of tuition by \$17 per credit hour. Clearly that is unacceptable and would place a severe burden on many of our students. We are currently examining a model that would require an \$11 per credit hour increase and a reduction of our expenses by \$2 million to assure a balanced budget. We are examining many alternatives to achieve these expense reductions. Other institutions in the State have implemented early retirement offerings, furloughs, voluntary reductions of contracted raises, frozen salaries and new positions, and the like. We will consider all of these alternatives and are actively soliciting employee input. Many excellent suggestions have already come forward. In the best of cases, if everyone gave a little, no one would have to give a lot. This is a critical time for our College and our ability to collaborate to solve tough problems. We will continue to brief the Board as we move forward during the very difficult budget-building process.

In other College news:

- We are proud to report that two of our students were recognized for excellence this last month. Jennifer Levey placed first in our region in the SML Math Competition and tenth nationally. The College placed second overall in regional competition. (I took note that Grand Rapids finished fifth.) Peggy Parhas was named the Region IV Division III, Player of the Week for week 7 of the women's basketball season;
- We have had over 60 students attend information sessions regarding the Public Safety degree completion program with NIU. We expect a large first-year cohort;
- Through our Career Center, we offered free job search workshops to 160 community members in January and will be sponsoring an Employer Connection Breakfast on Friday, February 5;
- Harper's new Emergency Alert System has been rolled out to the community. This new system called "Schoolmessenger" includes functionality for e-mail, text message, and voice calling. To date, over 1,790 people have enrolled. Board members are encouraged to enroll;
- The IT Division has been very helpful in the executive searches for Provost and EVP. The staff created a portal to support communication and posted documents that provide information and transparency as the searches progress;
- The construction of the virtual hospital in X Building is underway and on schedule to be substantially complete by February 1;

- A number of roofing projects were authorized in the FY10 budget. The construction documents for these projects are complete, and we are currently out to bid. The project is scheduled to go to the March Board meeting for approval.

The College is a busy, busy institution. Faculty and staff alike have a lot on their respective plates. While there is a fair amount of uncertainty with respect to the financial picture going forward, there is no uncertainty with respect to the primary task: *Creating Community Through Student Success*.

Regards,

Ken Ender