

1988 STATE-OF-THE-COLLEGE ADDRESS

In my 1987 State-of-the-College address, I indicated that we faced three major challenges for FY '88. First, our enrollment growth was threatening to overwhelm our ability to maintain an appropriate level of service to our students. Second, the College's infrastructure was weak in certain key areas unrelated to enrollment considerations but essential to our operations. Third, year two in the Challenge Grant Program had to be completed on time and consistent with the program's objectives.

Our dramatic enrollment growth continued during the past year, concluding with an official headcount of 6,844 plus 530 limited service students, for a total enrollment of 7,374. By this measure, we rank 11th in size out of New Jersey's 38 senior colleges and universities. We currently have enrolled 985 students more than we had at the same time last year, which represents a 16.9% increase. At the same time the general enrollment increased, there was a 24% increase in Black and Hispanic students.

While we have been delighted with these increases in enrollments, at the same time we have been severely tested in securing the resources necessary to service the increase in the student body. I am delighted to report to you that as a result of the FY '89 budget process, the College is in the process of adding 26 new positions. This increase in staffing should be sufficient to accommodate the current and near-term enrollment expected by the College.

There are certain essential academic and administrative functions a college must perform regardless of its size. Historically, Edison suffered greatly from the lack of attention to building this internal infrastructure. We were late getting automated; many of the College's processes were manual; we had no institutional research base, and, therefore, lacked information on which to make fundamental planning decisions; we lacked essential middle management in the Administration and Finance and Public Affairs Divisions of the College; and, by necessity, our priorities in adding new positions had been in Academic Affairs to service the enrollment growth.

At the end of last year, through our own resources, we created the Controller's position; the Office of Institutional Research and Outcomes Assessment; brought new leadership to the Development Office; provided additional clerical and staff support to Public Affairs; initiated major studies of our Public Relations and Development functions; implemented phase two of autonomy; contracted for an external audit; contracted for the automation of our accounting and financial ledger systems; and after two years of development, began the automation of our student data base evaluation and advising process. The strengthening of these essential internal administrative areas has brought successful resolution to infrastructure deficiencies that have plagued this college since its creation.

The Challenge Grant project is on schedule. The physical network architecture has been completed; CALL Network pilot sites were established; a distinguished panel of external evaluators has monitored the progress of the proposal, and we expect a laudatory report at the end of the project's third year; software development to support the simulated classroom continues, as does work on the diagnostic exams and on expanding the base of courses available through the various technologies; and we have over 800 Guided Study course-equivalent enrollments through the Center for Learning Through Telecommunications.

It is my view at this time that we can accommodate the continuing growth in enrollment, that the foundation for the College's infrastructure has been put in place, and that we are right on target in our implementation of the Challenge Grant Program. It is because of our response to these three concerns that I am able to report to you that the state of the College is excellent.

This morning I presented to the Board of Trustees a detailed and comprehensive Annual Report as to the College's activities of the past year. Each of you will be provided a copy of that report, so I shall not attempt to repeat its contents for you here. I think it useful, however, to list for you some of the highlights of the year and then give you my view of the major issues and challenges that await us in Fiscal Year 1989.

- * The five-year periodic review cycle of our accreditation with the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools was completed.

- * A comprehensive institutional research and outcomes assessment initiative was begun.
- * The Guided Study Program of the College was approved by the United States Department of Education for inclusion into the PELL and Federal Student Loan programs. In addition, the Guided Study Program was approved by the New Jersey Department of Higher Education to be included in the Tuition Aid Grant Program. This program was also recommended by the Department of Higher Education to the Veterans Administration as a program to be covered under veterans benefits.
- * Major new corporate collaborations were begun with the Aetna Institute of the Aetna Insurance Companies and with Wang Laboratories. In addition, the Center for Corporate Partnerships added to our corporate client roster Dow Jones, the Bergen County Police Academy, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Squibb, AT&T Bedminster, AT&T Cincinnati, and the Educational Testing Service.
- * The College's Black and Hispanic enrollment continues to increase towards our target goal of 18%. Our graduation rate continues to track favorably with our minority enrollment. We continue to be one of the few schools in the country showing this pattern.
- * After years of testing, the automated transcript evaluation and advising system has been completed, and the student data base is currently being loaded with over 7,000 active student records.

- * The Statewide Testing and Assessment Center has grown to 34 member institutions.
- * The last components of our baccalaureate nursing program are in place with the implementation of our last Performance Assessment Center for the administration of the nursing performance examinations.
- * We have completed the selection and begun the installation of an automated accounting system; begun the first external audit in the College's history; completed an inventory and recording of fixed assets; and acquired approximately 10,000 square feet to serve as an archival storage area in the Lee Building at 156 West State Street.
- * We have completed two major consultant studies in the Public Affairs area: one for the Development area and one for the Public Relations area. These studies set forth clear goals and objectives for this division, and their recommendations are currently being implemented.
- * The Guided Study Program reported over 800 course-equivalent enrollments for the past year.
- * New articulation agreements were finalized with Raritan Valley Community College, AT&T, Passaic County College, Dundalk County College in Maryland, and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 102.

- * The Center for Learning Through Telecommunications is heading up a joint course development project between Princeton University's Dr. Carl Brown, Chair of the Middle East Studies Program; the Open Learning Institute, British Columbia, Canada; and the International University Consortium. The course will be based on a Middle East series developed by Encyclopedia Britannica and on previous work done by the Center and Dr. Brown. When completed, the course will be distributed nationally.
- * The Library Learner Network Grant was successfully completed at the Woodbridge Public Library and the Camden County Library. In addition to academic and career advisement, the libraries provided computerized guidance information through the use of the SIGI and Discover programs. The grant was funded by the Kellogg Foundation.
- * The number of graduates has increased as compared to last year from 380 to 454.
- * The Alumni Association Phonathon recently received donations and pledges exceeding \$50,000 which represents a 20% increase over the previous year.

The College faces several major challenges for the coming year. Appropriately responding to these challenges will guide our major institutional goals and priorities.

First, we must successfully complete the Challenge Grant project and secure funding for the continuation of this program in the College's base budget beyond the expiration of the grant.

Secondly, we must secure adequate facilities and the equipment to support these facilities for the immediate and long-term needs of the College.

We have finally secured commitments for physical expansion that will hopefully be completed in approximately 18 months. To provide short-term, temporary relief of what is currently a crisis situation, we will be occupying quarters at 28 West State Street in the National State Bank Building. In this space we will house the Admissions Office, the Center for Corporate Partnerships, the Center for Learning Through Telecommunications, the Office of Communications and College Relations, and the Personnel Office. In approximately a year from now we will occupy the building at 167-169 Hanover Street. Our thinking at this time is that this facility will be occupied by Academic Programs, Nursing, Prior Learning Assessment, the Registrar, and Test Development and Research. The brownstones next to the Kelsey Building, following their renovation, will be occupied by those offices temporarily relocated to the National State Bank Building. Our expected timeframes are as follows: 28 West State within the next 45 days; the Hanover Street Building in about a year; and the brownstones in about 18 months.

When all of these facilities have been configured and occupied, it will just about triple our current square footage and provide appropriate facility support for the next five years. We will need your cooperation, assistance, and patience in both designing facilities that will support your work and putting up with the inconvenience and trouble associated with a relocation of this magnitude and complexity.

Third, we must successfully make operational the automated systems currently being brought on board to support student records administration which includes the evaluation and advising process. Likewise, the systems to support the finance and accounting operations must be deployed successfully.

Fourth, with the implementation of our final testing sites in support of the nursing program, we have reached a decision-point about the initiation of National League of Nursing accreditation for this program. We will probably initiate the self-study process towards this end during the year ahead.

Fifth, we should implement the major recommendations of our consultants on strengthening the development and public relations functions of the College in the Division of Public Affairs.

And finally, the process of continual self-examination inherent in the outcomes assessment process must be combined with the College's planning cycle towards producing a new long-range plan to replace the one which expires at the end of FY 1989.

Thomas A. Edison State College, like most institutions, experiences cycles. There is time for expansion, and there is time for consolidation. We are in a period of enormous expansion. Our enrollment has exploded. The year ahead, and probably beyond, suggests a prudent period of consolidating these gains, strengthening the previous initiatives, and ensuring a strong institutional foundation for launching the next stage of institutional evolution.

I do not wish to imply that we ought to stand still or even slow down. I have never believed in anything called an "institutional steady state," but the direction of our activity ought to be focused on ensuring that our recent gains are solidified and provide a stable base for our future. I expect that our enrollment will continue to expand, but probably not at such a dramatic rate. We have a great deal of work ahead of us in the next year or two, but probably not in the creation of the bold new initiative. We've laid a lot of track in the last few years. We need to make sure the ties and the spikes are in place.

A final comment about staffing. From January of '88 through December of '88 we will have recruited and hired over 50 people. That is a substantial cohort given the size of the permanent staff of this institution. A group of that size has the ability to make a major impact on the character and quality of the staff and the quality of work of the College. Some of you will make actual hiring decisions; many of you will give advice and consultation to inform those hiring decisions. It is important for you to keep in mind that it is not enough to be well-trained, experienced, and professionally competent. To be certain, these things are minimally required, but this College is more than a collection of individuals. It is a professional community. Select good people who share our values, who are passionately committed to our mission and students; people who are positive, pleasant, and fun to be with. If you exclude sleeping, eating, and television, you probably spend more time with your colleagues than with your spouse. Use just as much care in making your choice.

We have achieved so much not simply because we are competent and we work hard, but more because we share a common sense of purpose and a common respect and affection for each other. We care about each other. We respect each other. Make sure that you hire people like you.

I have talked a lot about numbers, systems, facilities, and resources. I have not explicitly addressed the issue of student learning. My omission of direct reference to this topic should not be construed as indifference, but, to the contrary, it is a preoccupation that is the object of all we do. We must be keenly aware that the "bottom line" is not on the balance sheet of our financial statements or in the efficiency of our computing systems, the quality of our publications, or the physical edifice in which we work. The "bottom line" is in the quality of the service we provide, the learning we stimulate, and, most importantly, the students we produce. Thank you.