

STATE-OF-THE-COLLEGE ADDRESS

September 20, 1985

When I was preparing my Annual Report to the College Trustees in June, I was searching for an adjective to characterize and summarize the activity of the year past. As I reviewed our accomplishments and comments made by others, one word has been used repeatedly - and that is maturity. I believe that this College has come of age. We have put the capstone on a phase of our development and fulfilled significantly a number of long-sought aspirations.

During the past year the College awarded its 5,000th degree, enrolled its first class in the Nursing Program, ^{SECURED Approval For} ~~implemented~~ three new associate degree programs, and acquired the basic infrastructure to automate its administrative operation. The Electronic College has evolved beyond the conceptualization stage and is actually serving students. For the first time in its history, this College is awarding credit in its own name from collegiate instruction. In a period of general enrollment decline, the College continues to expand. We have crossed a major enrollment milestone, and we currently enroll over 5,000 students. For the first time in the College's history, we achieved 100% of our budgeted student revenue, and our fiscal condition is stable and solvent.

We have matured in the sense that the College has acquired a respected position of peerage within the New Jersey system of higher education and has maintained its leadership role nationally as an innovative advocate for the adult learner. We are no longer the little kid on the block.

If you will, for a moment, reflect with me on our past accomplishments as well as the portal of things to come, you will understand very clearly that young Thomas Edison has finally grown up. It is, therefore, my privilege to express our collective achievements in declaring that the state of the College is good. It is important that we publicly declare our accomplishments to ourselves and share our achievements with each other, for the achievements of this institution are the achievements of its people. I am fully aware that with sleeves rolled up grappling with the day to day minutia of delivering our mandate and fulfilling our mission, it is easy to lose perspective as to the direction or hues of the larger picture, for it is important that you be mindful of and prideful of your achievements and the professional esteem in which we are held across the state and nation. To quote one of my favorite philosophers, Mohammad Ali, "If you've done it, talkin about it ain't braggin."

When Middle States Association sought to develop standards and policies regarding the evaluation of credit for prior learning, it approached this College and Empire State in New York. As a result of that collaboration, Middle States, at its July meeting, adopted standards whose authorship was intimately affected by this institution. Dr. Jacobs of our staff, and a published author on the issue of quality assurance in prior learning assessment, represented the College.

Steven S. Smith, Pres

In December, there will be aired on New Jersey Network, a documentary about services available to the adult learner in New Jersey. This documentary will be anchored around this College and our role as a mini-system of higher education for the adult learner in this state.

Our Statewide Testing and Assessment Center will have grown to include 25 public and private colleges and universities within the next several months. We have permanent relationships with 37 corporations and organizations through our Program on Noncollegiate Sponsored Instruction. From a word processor two years ago, we are building the most sophisticated data processing capability of any of the state colleges.

I could go on and on, but I think the picture is very clear. From any point of view, using any objective measure relating to the vitality of an academic institution, the achievements of this College are outstanding. The challenges ahead of us are to move forward in an orderly manner while preserving and strengthening the quality of the work that has delivered us to our current place.

I thought it might be useful if, at this time, I shared with you some speculations about the period ahead. An informed understanding of this issue must start with our recently completed Three-Year Plan. It is an excellent document, and you are to be commended for your thoughtful preparation of it. It is an operational blueprint of where we're going and what we plan to do, devoid of all the ethereal and ambiguous rhetoric commonly associated with planning documents. Our plan is dynamic, and I do not see that it will collect dust on a shelf or make its principle contribution by taking up space in an archive someplace.

The plan talks about creating a reality that is both ambitious and achievable. In 2 1/2 years we have come from 3,000 to 5,000 students; from a budget of \$1.9 million to a budget of \$3.2 million; from ~~3~~ ^{Degree programs to 10 degree Programs} ~~6 baccalaureate and 3 associate degrees~~ to 4 baccalaureate and 6 associate degrees; from a manual environment to an automated environment; we have broadened the racial and economic profile of our students while at the same time maintaining the qualitative profile of our traditional ~~student~~ ^{Conservative} body.

It is time to consolidate, routinize, and debug the outcomes of this hectic pace. We shall, therefore, be proposing no new degree programs during the life of this plan. Rather our task is to stabilize, expand, and codify operational and qualitative issues associated with those things currently on board.

However, our declared intent of foresaking new degree programs should not be construed as a moratorium on ~~new~~ ^{our} initiatives. To the contrary, the Electronic College, while off to an ~~ambitious~~ ^{auspicious} beginning, is still in its developmental stages. Much work remains in both the telecourse and computer-based areas. The infrastructure of our baccalaureate program in nursing needs to be completed, along with the establishment of the performance-based examination sites required ~~of~~ ^{for} this program. During this fiscal year we will be implementing the three new associate degree programs that were approved by the Board of Higher Education in the late spring. We must nail down the integrity of our budget by ensuring that the laudable achievement in realizing our budgeted student revenues was not a one time anomaly, but represents the norm and the usual from here out.

We expect an enrollment growth to average 7% annually over the next three years. While our expectations of growth run contrary to statewide and national enrollment trends, our continued expansion is both reasonable and necessary for our institutional vitality. To support this effort, the Office of Admissions has been reconfigured, with increased professional and support staff. It is our expectation that this redeployment of resources will increase our enrollment, drawing from a pool of 30,000 inquiries annually handled by this office.

We need to strengthen and review our current degrees and curricula. In doing so, we will make continued use of outside consultants, develop an on-going, in-service program for adjunct faculty consultants who serve on the academic committees and who conduct assessment of student learning. We will, in the spring, begin building the structural groundwork for our five year Middle States report which is due in 1987.

Our Management Information System plan, while also off to a good start, will be fleshed out this year, and several major operational systems will be brought on line. It is crucially important that these systems be designed carefully, implemented gradually, and that there be a flow transference of ownership of these systems from the design group in our MIS staff to the users within the operational units of the College. This process, by necessity, is slow, methodical, and calculated; and despite the best efforts of all, there will be errors and defects that will have to be worked out. ^{for it is the nature of such work} It is the case with any new system development, particularly one as complicated and sophisticated as ours. To date, our MIS staff has done outstanding and exceptional work in this area. They are to be commended.

We will continue in our campaign to increase philanthropy as a source of support for the College. This past year, the Thomas A. Edison State College Foundation Board held its first meeting. The external members of the Board include Mr. Christian Yegen, Chairman of the Board, Integrity Financial Group; Mr. Edward Booher, Chairman of the Board (Retired), McGraw Hill Publishing Company; Mr. John Connolly, President, National State Bank; Mr. Richard Gillespie, President, Gillespie Advertising; and Mr. Frank Gubitose, President of Capitol State Bank. Mr. Gubitose replaces Mr. Larry Wolfe, President of Caesar's in Lake Tahoe whose participation on the Board was overcome by the difficulties imposed by his distance from us.

There are several external issues which will possibly impact upon us during this year. I expect that the autonomy legislation will be contested this winter. I hope you understand and support this crucial legislation, for I believe the achievement of autonomy is important to the future of this College as well as the welfare of its staff. Contract negotiations with the American Federation of Teachers will begin this fall. The current agreement expires June 30, 1986. And, finally, we are cautiously optimistic as to our participation in the Governor's Challenge Grant Program. As you are aware, Governor Kean, in his budget message, proposed a sum of \$10 million for the purpose of making "the State Colleges of New Jersey qualitatively second to none in the nation." Proposals were submitted for each of the institutions. These proposals, on the part of the nine state colleges, results in \$40 million of requests for \$10 million of funding. The Department of Higher Education is seeking support from the Governor for additional funding to more

appropriately support the expectations and aspirations generated by the Governor's call to excellence. Consultants reviewed these \$40 million in requests and, based solely on merit, recommended that \$17.7 million of these proposals merited funding. First round funding has gone to Jersey City State College and Kean College of New Jersey. Recommended for funding, but not receiving awards, were Trenton State College, Montclair State College, Stockton State College, and Edison State College. It is our hope that additional resources will be provided so that those four institutions, including Edison, which were recommended for funding but for which funding is not currently available, will eventually be funded. I am cautiously optimistic that this will occur. The majority of the recommended funding in this proposal, when and if finally secured, will largely go to support the Electronic College development. I am proud of our efforts in this exercise, and the quality of our work was apparent in the consultants' review of our submission. It was difficult and arduous work putting that excellent proposal together, and I am hopeful that it will bear fruit.

Read Gov's letter

The College has done well because you have done well; our students have been well served because you serve them well; our programs are well conceived because you conceived them well; our reputation and leadership is strong and vigorous because your leadership and work is strong and vigorous. As this College has now been applauded, I stand and applaud you; for we are all hands on the same ship.

The achievements of one of us are the achievements of all of us. For a College like any other institution, has no vitality of its own; it is the cooperation and collection of the talents of those people who serve it. I am proud of our collective achievements, for it is a pride that is not based on form and wrappings, but rather the knowledge of concrete achievement.

I am playing cheerleader this afternoon only because there are things to cheer about. I am delighted in the messages I bring to you, for I have good things to say. They are the kind of messages I like to bring, and I hope that they are the kind of messages you like to create. There is no reason, from the things that I know, why they should not continue undiminished in their tempo and enthusiasm.

Thank you.

I am now prepared for any questions you may have.

Intro Debbie Cooper