

R. Barbara Gitenstein
President's Report
Board of Trustees Meeting
July 8, 2014

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is a pleasure to offer a short report to the Board of Trustees regarding the successes and challenges facing the college since the February meeting of the Board.

We have had a good number of media placements both regionally and nationally. The *Star Ledger* has been particularly responsive in stories ranging from the development of the new seal to the hosting of the USA Special Olympics to the Campus Town development. In this past weekend's article on the Department of Education list of tuition costs which brought attention to the fact of our high annual tuition, David Muha was prominently quoted pointing out the positive impact of our exceptional graduation rates on total cost for a baccalaureate degree. Fewer years in the classroom results in less total tuition paid, whatever the annual cost. We have also been included in a number of local, regional and national stories on sexual assault on college campuses. Indeed on the day of the Tuition Hearing, I was absent because I was one of five college presidents invited to the unveiling of the White House's white paper on addressing sexual assault on campuses. On the heels of that report, TCNJ immediately began a review of its recommendations to assure that we are continuing to be on the leading edge in providing services and training to our students as they navigate the challenges of such assaults and their aftermath.

In addition to this national positioning, our faculty and staff continue to be successful in publishing, presenting at national and regional conferences. They are holding important positions on national professional associations and task forces. Just in this last semester, I have also been active in raising the profile of TCNJ by presenting at two national conferences: the Association of Governing Boards (AGB) Conference and the American Council on Education (ACE) Conference. In addition, I was very gratified by the publication of my article: "Just Like Starting Over: the Need for Mid-Term Transitions," in *The Presidency* (ACE's premier publication).

In addition to the positive impact of these placements and presentations, it continues to be important that TCNJ remain involved in conversations regarding state government financial and legislative support. With Stacy Schuster's support,

we have maintained a close relationship with leadership in the assembly and senate. While we continue to advocate for financial support for higher education, we have continued to advocate more aggressively regarding the distinctive nature of TCNJ. Our greatest platform for this argument is our laser-like focus on excellent student outcomes. For instance, the recent 20 bill package that was proposed by Assemblyman Cryan and Assemblywoman Riley is founded on a premise that institutions of higher education should be held accountable for good results for the students who matriculate at their institutions. If an institution can demonstrate excellent outcomes, that institution is already meeting those accountability markers. Since TCNJ is currently ranked 4th in the nation in student graduation rates among public institutions, we have argued that such success should be accommodated, acknowledged and/or rewarded in any prospective legislation. I am pleased to report that our arguments seem to have resonated with a number of our legislative representatives.

Because of the state's financial challenges, this year was not a year to advocate for more resources for higher education; however, it was a year to advocate for steady state funding. I am very pleased to report that the higher education community was quite successful in accomplishing this result. While the outcome was positive, the path was a rocky one. Governor Christie's announcement in late May of an \$800 million budget deficit and falling revenues led the College to conduct a review of the budget college wide during the last several weeks of the fiscal year. We were able to slow down non-essential expense, preserving our investments in primary purpose (as required by Board benchmark). Now that we know that these resources will not be need to balance this past year's budget, we will be able to place the resources in reserve. These savings will be available for two primary purposes: first, to provide a buffer for any negative budget decisions in next year (resulting from any further state short fall in revenue or successful action to prevent the governor's plan to reduce pension payments) or to support one time projects that meet strategic priorities. I want to publicly thank every budget manager at the college who responded by agreeing to this limitation. I regretted that we had to take these measures, but I am confident they were necessary and relieved that we enter next year with a budget plan that continues to invest in our future and the primary purpose of TCNJ—educating exceptional students in an environment that encourages competition while nurturing collaboration.

In addition to the legislative advocacy and response to the budget worries of the state, I also took leadership on the New Jersey Presidents Council on academic program development, serving as the chair of the Council's Academic Issues

Committee. Through the work of the committee, we raised awareness across the state about the need for better self-regulation and accountability with regard to academic program quality. This has led the entire higher education community in a new, exciting, and responsible direction.

I will continue in these important discussions in the future and will likely enhance that involvement as I will continue to serve as a chair of the Academic Issues Committee and I have just been elected an officer of the New Jersey Presidents Council.

During this spring, we also had a number of exciting and successful fund raising and friend making events. There were many alumni events, including my meeting with alumni in every out of state professional trip I took. In Florida, I had the great opportunity to meet with over 30 alumni at the Villages, allowing me to update them on the exciting developments at TCNJ. April 25-27 was Reunion Weekend, during which we celebrated the careers and contributions of Major General Maria Falca-Dodson, Elizabeth Sheridan, and David Icenhower.

In addition, I want to thank Rosie and Lee Hymerling for their generosity in hosting a wonderful evening at their home on May 22. As always is true when Rosie is around, there was lots and lots of great food and great company. The Hymerlings welcomed 45 alumni, friends, and supporters into their beautiful home.

On April 24, we hosted the President's Scholarship Reception where we were able to thank all our donors and celebrate our exceptional student scholars and talented faculty. On that night, we formally announced the Barbara Meyers Pelson Chair in Faculty-Student Engagement, a wonderful \$1m gift for the first ever TCNJ endowed chair.

There were a number of other exciting events on campus and at 110 Murphy Drive, including the Student Leadership Awards, the Celebration of Student Achievement, honors recognitions (including the College Honors Dessert Reception and the Phi Beta Kappa induction), and academic department awards and dinners. The high point of course was Commencement, where over 2100 received TCNJ diplomas. That great day was preceded by another successful Senior Week and Senior Toast. This summer we held 5 dinners at 110 to recognize faculty and staff on their anniversaries and retirements. These are some of the greatest community building events of the year.

The College was also quite involved in bringing the outside community to the campus. For instance, this summer we hosted two very important events: we welcomed back Special Olympics NJ on May 30-June 1 and we joined other Mercer County venues to host Special Olympics USA on June 14-20. These occasions helped us highlight the campus as well as accentuate our community values.

Finally, I would like to express a personal thank to the larger TCNJ community and to the Board of Trustees. In mid April, Chairman Gibson and I wrote to the community announcing the institution's plan to conduct a comprehensive presidential assessment along with a self assessment of the Board of Trustees. We engaged Dr. Kenneth Shaw, emeritus Chancellor of Syracuse University and Association of Governing Boards consultant to support the process. Many of you generously offered time and thoughtful input in the presidential assessment. I thank you for your insights, support, and advice. But no one provided more time and engagement than members of the Board of Trustees. This spring and summer, we saw exceptional board engagement in the development and subsequent process of the comprehensive assessment. There is much to be learned from one another on the board and across the community. Great ideas for continuous improvement will come from this important integral leadership project. I want to thank Board members for their service and for their commitment to higher education, to the state of New Jersey and to TCNJ. We are fortunate that you have agreed to hold TCNJ in trust.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.