

2014 Welcome Back Address  
R. Barbara Gitenstein  
August 27, 2014

As has been true in years past, we begin the academic year on a very strong footing.

The College and individual programs at the College received national recognition for excellence. For instance, this summer TCNJ was included in *Money Magazine's* ranking of institutional value (TCNJ was listed as #53 among all 4 year institutions in the nation and #17 among all public four year) and in the *Forbes* list based on their analysis of return on investment (TCNJ was one of only 3 New Jersey institutions included in the top 200). I am especially pleased that The College was included in *The Chronicle of Higher Education's* most recent listing of "Best Colleges to Work For." Only 92 of the 278 institutions that participated in the survey were so recognized and TCNJ is the only New Jersey institution on the list. The College of New Jersey was one of only 5 institutions in the nation to receive the 2014 Training and Intervention Procedures (TIPS) Award of Excellence, a peer education program which addresses high-risk drinking behavior. Individual academic programs also won national recognition, including the Rex Mix Program of Excellence Award for best undergraduate Communication Studies department in the United States and the Bloomberg *Businessweek* ranking of our School of Business (#63 undergraduate program in the country, and #1 in New Jersey).

Increasingly, individual TCNJ students have received regional and national awards. Last year, 3 students received Fulbrights, 2 received Borens (one to study in Russia, the other to study in Tajikistan), 2 received Gilmans (which supports students with financial aid in studying abroad), 2 were named New Jersey Distinguished Teachers and one alumnus was named a Pickering award winner (Pickering Fellows must successfully complete all requirements, including passing the foreign service exam, to serve in the foreign service and must make a commitment to a minimum of five years of service as a foreign service officer).

Our students again demonstrated preparation for entry into professional fields by their very high pass rates on exit exams upon graduation. Some highlights include a 100% pass rate for the Clinical Nurse Leader certification students, a 90<sup>th</sup> percentile or higher in 8 of 9 categories on the ETS Major Fields Test in Business, a 38 out of 39 pass rate for the National Counselor Exam and an 85% pass rate for the Fundamentals of Engineering. Our students also continue to be accepted at very competitive graduate school programs (including Yale Medical School, University of Pennsylvania, Carnegie Mellon, Lehigh and Brown). Other graduates have been hired by JPMorgan Chase and Lockheed Martin just to name a few. Last year our chorale again performed at Jazz at Lincoln Center's Rose Hall and our combined vocal groups will join with the College orchestra next year to perform the Faure Requiem.

TCNJ has been recognized as a leader in addressing some of the most difficult problems confronting college campuses across the nation. I was one of five college presidents invited to the White House for the unveiling of the first report from the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault. Since that April meeting, TCNJ has been assessing how to implement the recommendations from the Task Force as well as the multiple (and unfortunately sometimes contradictory) recommendations included in federal and state legislation. Just to give you a sense of the complexity of compliance in this area: there are five Federal laws

governing issues of sexual violence on campus (Reauthorization of Violence Against Women Act, VAWA; Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security and Campus Crime Statistics Act; Higher Education Opportunity Act, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; and FERPA) one state law (Campus Sexual Assault Victim's Bill of Rights); and three Federal Guidelines (White House Task Force Report; 52-point Q&A from the Office of Civil Rights, OCR; and the April 2011 Dear Colleague Letter issued by OCR). In addition there is one pending piece of Federal Legislation (Campus Accountability and Safety Act) and two pending pieces of state legislation (a bill requiring report of allegations to law enforcement and a bill authorizes the Secretary of Higher Education to impose fines for failure to respond appropriately to allegations). As we carefully study these laws and guidelines, we will refine our training for students, faculty and staff on sexual assault, bullying, and Title IX compliance.

While TCNJ has nationally noteworthy retention and graduation rates, last year we embraced a commitment to increase those rates. Staff resources were redeployed to a Center for Student Success, focusing particularly on students who have not yet declared a major. In addition, we initiated several programs to assist special populations, including underrepresented male students. This fall the PRIDE Peer Mentoring Program will provide additional support for newly admitted students who are first generation students and/or students of color. Other special populations received enhanced attention last year with the establishment of TCNJ's DisAbility Task Force. Under new leadership, Disability Services at TCNJ is moving beyond compliance to cross campus education and collaboration.

A wide range of out of class programming for students was an important focus for the new leadership in Student Affairs. In partnership with Sodexo, we are on schedule to start the exciting transformation of the Brower Student Center next spring. The second year of the College Engagement Intern program supported 22 students who worked throughout the campus using their expertise to advance the College as they expanded their own skill sets. In athletics, the College celebrated two national championships and 10 New Jersey Athletic Conference (NJAC) championships in our intercollegiate programs as well as a national championship for a club sport. TCNJ was instrumental in the development of a ground breaking new partnership between NJAC and the Capital Athletic Conference which will provide greater stability in the football schedule. Greek life has become a significant feature of our campus life (about 23% of the student body are members of sororities and fraternities). Last year, the Greek community expanded its service outreach to the local community; and for the seventh year in a row, the all fraternity and all sorority GPA exceeded that of unaffiliated students. The division of Student Affairs was instrumental in last year's progress on leadership development, one of our signature experiences, by supporting the establishment of the Lions Leadership Institute (27 students and 7 mentors) and the launching of Omicron Delta Kappa, a National Leadership Honor Society.

Our success in admissions for this fall suggests that we will continue to see the kinds of achievements I have just detailed. We received the second highest number of applications ever for our current freshman class (10,935) which resulted in the enrollment of one of our largest freshman classes ever. Despite that growth, we maintained the quality of the class and experienced a substantial increase in Black, Hispanic and Puerto Rican matriculants. This result is particularly noteworthy considering the heightened competition for traditional aged students because of the significant declines in high school graduates in all of the northeastern United States over the last two years.

The division of Academic Affairs exhibited extraordinary leadership in a number of very important initiatives. We identified Five Signature Experiences at TCNJ to guide program development and fund raising (Personalized, Collaborative, and Rigorous Education; Undergraduate Research, Mentored Internships, and Field Experiences; Community Engaged Learning; Global Engagement; and Leadership Development). Modifications to the scheduling grid and the academic calendar were guided through the campus governance process, changes that will result in more course offerings for students. Collaborating with the dedicated leadership of the Committee on Faculty Affairs, the provost was able to present a preliminary document for Trustee discussion in July on guidelines for tenure and promotion, responsive to the new tenure bill that the legislature passed last winter. This document also includes the opportunity for delayed review for tenure and reappointment in the event of a qualifying life event. Significant progress was made in Global Engagement, with increased international enrollment and study abroad participation. (This fall we welcomed 120 international students and more than 360 students studied abroad). In addition, there has been growth in the pre-college summer programs and online courses developed for the summer and winter terms.

This coming year, academic leadership will work with the faculty to complete the new promotion and tenure processes; finalize a number of MOAs with AFT; invest in faculty and staff development; revise Liberal Learning outcomes, structure and evaluation; and build on the growth in Global Engagement, pre-college summer programs and online courses for the summer and winter terms. Academic Affairs will begin discussions regarding program development in other growth areas, such as health related programs and continuing and professional education.

Because of such programmatic growth, there has been a strategic decision to increase the number of tenure track faculty appointments. Preliminary evidence can be seen in that 12 tenure track faculty joined us this fall, whereas during FY15, there will be 23 tenure track searches. As we plan for this growth in tenure track appointments, Academic Affairs will be looking closely at the percentage of courses currently taught by tenure-line faculty, average class size, numbers of majors, strength of applicant pool, and contributions to the Liberal Learning curriculum, in determining where to increase tenure-line faculty and where vacated lines should best be allocated.

This year's new tenure track positions represent a wide range of fields: from communication studies to criminology and justice studies, from political science to counselor education, from special education language and literacy to electrical and computer engineering, from nursing to chemistry, from the library to mathematics and statistics. These exciting new faculty boast terminal degrees from University of Arizona, Louisiana State, Virginia Tech, Brown University, University of Maryland, Princeton, Montclair, Penn State, Drexel, Rutgers and the Robert Wood Johnson/New Jersey Nursing Initiative; they held previous teaching positions at the University of Iowa, Indiana State, University of Utah, Rutgers, Rowan and James Madison University; one worked at the Washington DC Statistical Analysis Center, another held a post doctoral fellowship at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and another worked for 25 years in developing hardware and software for video and television applications. I am thrilled to report that four of these new faculty members are returning TCNJ alumni! These new faculty join our extraordinary returning faculty, individuals who are recognized nationally and internationally as experts in their fields and inspiring mentors by their students.

In the last decade we have acknowledged just how much student learning occurs outside the classroom. Last year for instance the Community Engaged Learning program mobilized 2,212 volunteers who completed over 52,000 hours of service and raised over a half a million dollars to support the College's service to the community. Our commitment to faculty-student collaboration has grown, with impressive participation in the spring Celebration of Student Achievement and increasingly strong faculty proposals for programs like MUSE (Mentored Undergraduate Summer Experience). This collaboration has resulted in a record number of student presentations at national and international scholarly conferences, including a paper delivered at the Sorbonne which was co-sponsored by Harvard Medical School.

In the year to come, the academic division will focus a great deal on planning: including the preliminary plans for the next College strategic plan, strategic plans for online/blended learning opportunities and for Global Studies and a comprehensive faculty development plan. In addition, the division will refine the department chair professional development program and develop an interdisciplinary research forum. We continue to identify additional resources to support faculty work. Last spring, the first Gitenstein-Hart Sabbatical Prize winner was named and this fall the process for naming the recipient of the first Barbara Meyers Pelson Professor will be published.

As we develop new programs that are responsive to institutional and regional needs, we must depend on useful and accurate information. BlackBoard analytics and new staffing have allowed the Center for Institutional Effectiveness (CIE) to become more sophisticated and responsive to institutional needs for data. It has helped us appreciate that a thoughtful institution of higher education must strike a balance between available resources and desired results but in a way that encourages creativity and does not allow complacency. CIE was instrumental in preparing information for a wide range of uses last year—from brand marketing and promotion to business and finance reports to accreditation documents. I want to thank those of you who spent so much time on these accreditation reports, particularly on the self study for Middle States Commission on Higher Education. I am confident we will have a productive and positive visit next March.

The work of the CIE was especially responsive to two of the three key strategic planning priorities announced at last year's Welcome Back remarks. Throughout last year, the CIE worked extensively with cabinet members and their direct reports to make data-driven planning and decision-making a common practice at TCNJ. Specifically, progress has been made in developing metrics and reporting templates to determine the effectiveness of academic and student affairs programs and signature experiences.

The third planning priority of last year was to enhance revenue. Last year two relatively new programs generated significant revenue for the college: English as a Second Language and American Studies and the three RN to BSN degree completion programs offered in partnership between the Department of Nursing and area hospitals. These programs will serve as models for other professional and continuing education programs. In addition, last year was a remarkable year in fund raising, raising \$5,820,710, a 29% increase from the year before. The Foundation's investment portfolio experienced a positive rate of return of 13.72%. I am very pleased to report that the Endowment is now approaching \$31.6 million.

The fourth strategic planning priority announced last year designated diversity and inclusion as transformative values of TCNJ's mission. Work on this priority began with a preliminary report

from a small administrative team. The report which was shared with the campus in December provided a descriptive analysis of the campus and recommended a number of short term actions and longer term areas for further investigation. With a more realistic understanding of TCNJ's status in recruiting and retaining a diverse community, we were better positioned to decide on areas of focus. We confirmed that the population of our campus does not mirror the diversity of the state of New Jersey, but that it is similar to the complexion of peer institutions across the country. If TCNJ embraces the notion of diversity and inclusion as transformative values, then TCNJ should embrace its responsibility as a leader in this matter. Therefore, we should not be satisfied that we look more like Truman State in Missouri than a public institution of higher education in New Jersey.

In order to begin effecting this change, I accepted the recommendations of the Task Force. I named Kerri Thompson Tillett Associate Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer; we revised the College's Strategic Planning Map to include the concept of "Living a Culture of Diversity and Inclusion" as an underpinning to the strategic plan; diversity was added to the annual report for cabinet officers and the tenure-track faculty recruitment policy was modified to enhance focus on broadening the pool of applicants. Additionally, a college wide Institutional Community Builders Advisory Committee was charged with providing advice and recommendations to the Chief Diversity Officer and the Cabinet. A student diversity council and a faculty committee on LGBT concerns will be established this year. This past year's greater focus on support services for special student populations and global engagement were part of the inclusion initiative. In the coming year the adjunct hiring procedure will be modified to incorporate consideration of diversity; we will again sponsor events that celebrate the rich diversity of our nation. The Committee and the Chief Diversity officer will be considering suggestions that were made at the President's Leadership Council retreat on June 4 for recommendation to the Cabinet. These include the formal establishment of facilitated dialogues regarding inclusion, modification of strategic hiring procedures, and further consideration of weaving diversity and inclusion into Community Engaged Learning programs.

TCNJ's ambitions have grown and it has become even more important that we invest resources in developing external support. The wisdom of that investment is clearly supported in the success of last year's fund raising. Additionally, alumni involvement and commitment grew: Homecoming attracted approximately 10,000 individuals and there was a 50% increase in overall participation during Reunion Weekend. Last year the College was highlighted in a number of high profile events including the Campus Town Ground Breaking, the New Jersey Special Olympics and the National Special Olympics. We garnered a great deal of attention for art openings, and music events. The opening of the Sarnoff Collection brought great recognition to the College.

We successfully launched a new visual identity which incorporated features of our past in a bold new look and placed faculty and staff stories in the *Trenton Times*, the *Star Ledger*, ACE's *The Presidency* and on NBC Morning News. Our web and social media presence expanded significantly with our website attracting more than 1.2 million users.

We continued to receive support from the business and professional communities for our academic programs as in the establishment of the Ernst and Young Audit Lab which opened last fall. Last year there was sustained involvement in grantsmanship, including our partnership with the New Jersey Attorney General's Office in the Trenton Violence Reduction Strategy. The

School of Science was awarded over \$2.6 million in external grants during 2013-2014. School wide competitions, supported by private philanthropy, have encouraged student ingenuity and interdisciplinary team work such as the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Mayo Business Plan Competition. This year's winner, SolarKick, was a team comprised of business and engineering students, who developed a solar and motion-activated phone charger.

We continue to invest in facilities and in technology. Seeing the apartments in Campus Town rise above that big green fence on Metzger has been truly thrilling. On Monday I took a tour of the site. I have always thought that this project would be an important addition to the campus life at TCNJ, but having walked down the path that will become the main street and imagining students, faculty, staff, and alumni gathering in the square, I am confident that this project will be transformative. We owe a great deal to everyone involved in the progress of Campus Town—our staff from Campus Planning and particularly our partners at PRC who have committed extra time and resources to assure that the project is ahead of schedule.

The steering committees for the new STEM building and the Brower Student Center renovation are refining the programs—meeting the needs of the community while managing the cost. Major renovation projects for next year include the renovation of Norsworthy and the next phase of investments in the 5-year technology plan with wireless connectivity being completed in the School of Business, Physics, Chemistry and Biology Buildings, Music Building, Decker and Cromwell. The new learning management system, Canvas, has been implemented.

I am very proud that we have realized these accomplishments while still maintaining the kind of fiscal conservatism that has been applauded by every bond rating agency with which we conferred. While minimizing tuition and fee increase for the coming year, we built a budget that honored the board approved key performance indicators, assuring that at least 2/3 of our operating budget be allocated to primary purpose, at least 13% and no more than 16% of college funds be allocated to student aid and that at least 2% of the budget be invested in strategic initiatives. The result for last year's budget was: 75% of our budget supported primary purpose, 14.1% was allocated to student financial support and \$22.9 million to strategic initiatives.

This is a moment of importance for TCNJ. Like all of higher education, we are facing daunting challenges, but unlike many of our colleagues we can face these challenges with a certain confidence. Currently, we have a great leadership team, a leadership team that is ready to address the complexities of our contemporary world, responding to new pressures, remaining nimble and flexible, while honoring our past. This shared perspective promises a constructive, energetic and creative environment.

One of the reasons why TCNJ is so well prepared to address today's challenges to higher education is that we are committed to self reflection and evaluation. Even though we receive third party recognitions, we are skeptical of these rankings and realize there must be other means by which we evaluate our performance. For instance, last spring, The Board of Trustees engaged the services of the Association of Governing Boards (AGB) to conduct a comprehensive review of the work of the president and the Board. On June 23, at its retreat the Board and I reviewed input and evaluative comments from the campus community and opinion leaders across the state and nation. I want to thank those of you who participated in this project for your thoughtful

insights which have become the foundation for our plans to refine and enhance the work of the board as well as focus my attention as president for the foreseeable future.

Those areas of focus along with the recommendations that came from the retreat of the President's Leadership Council will help us build on the work of last year as we improve academic advising for students, increase revenue, enhance our commitment to a diverse and inclusive community and enhance the partnerships between student affairs and academic affairs.

As we look to the challenges of the near term, people will make the difference. To that end, next year's budget continues to invest in development of personnel. Human Resources has created three tracks for professional development of staff interested in improving their administrative, leadership, and supervisory skills. Academic Affairs will add training programs in the use of technology in the classroom and refinement of the training for academic department chairs to its faculty development programs. Student Affairs has enhanced its support for professional development of its staff, particularly with regard to participation in national professional organizations. Again, I want to thank the TCNJ Foundation for its third year of investment in faculty and staff development to support the President's Initiative on Academic Excellence.

One of the most exciting projects of next year will be the next steps of TCNJ's first ever Capital Campaign. In the fall, there will be a soft launch, an internal campus wide event, and in the spring, a major public announcement. The campaign will focus on a number of themes I have talked about in recent years—the growth of the endowment, investment in students, investment in faculty, investment in the TCNJ experience especially as expressed in our signature experiences, and investment in infrastructure to support these students, faculty, staff, and programs.

But these plans are short term. And they are for the most part instrumentalist. The important question is to what end these strategies. To what end these evaluations? What is the vision for the TCNJ of the future, for TCNJ in 2020, for the TCNJ that prepares students for the world beyond the confines of our beautiful campus. What should be the characteristics of that community?

First and foremost, we need the right people. We need faculty, student and staff who understand the interpersonal nature of our kind of education, who want to challenge each other and themselves to be part of transforming their world and their disciplines, who do not accept easy answers to complex problems, who respect others for their talents and their difference, and who embrace an environment that demands as much from the individual as it nurtures the promise of that individual. We must make sure that we have robust and thoughtful recruitment and retention programs and we must maintain investment in the intellectual growth and engagement of our staff and faculty.

Second, as we seek to create this kind of scholarly and creative community, we must adhere to a notion of community that is broad and inviting, challenging narrow discrimination but encouraging the kind of discrimination that is the result of an inquisitive mind. We can build on our projects that have increased mentoring support for African American and Latino males, the Safe Zone Project, Leadershape, programs that have resulted in the growth in international students, councils and taskforces that bring together individuals across disciplines and perspectives, training and development in areas of Title IX and embracing diversity, and

partnerships that enhance collaboration between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs. But we must recognize that these projects are not as important in themselves as they are as models for the entire enterprise.

Third, while we create a powerful commitment to this internal community, we must remember that we do not exist in a vacuum. How could we possibly do so in a world where images of horror and destruction bombard us daily—from Gaza, from the Ukraine, from Syria, from Iraq and from Ferguson, Missouri. The struggle and loss in these other places must be incorporated in our sense of self and our sense of institutional purpose. We must engage in those painful conversations that will come from confronting our differing perspectives on solutions to these very difficult problems, but we must do so while resisting the kind of hate filled speech that has drowned out productive discourse in places like Paris and Rome, and apparently on Monday in New York City.

Fourth, we must acknowledge the challenges threatening higher education. At the same time we must not be overwhelmed by the loudest critics. Unlike the political and bureaucratic worlds, we must adhere to a much more sophisticated notion of assessment. Since I joined TCNJ in 1999, I have emphasized accountability and outcomes. We are obliged to justify the value of the TCNJ experience and to acknowledge that such value is better told by what happens to our students, faculty and staff during their years at TCNJ, than by what they bring on entry to our community. However, the discussion of measurement of higher education in the last several years has become dangerous. Measurement like that which will inform the federal government's ranking system based on the salary of graduates in their first year out of undergraduate school would be laughable were it not so treacherous. In contrast, TCNJ has to ask the right questions in order to assess our effectiveness; we have to have the right measurements.

Gert J. J. Biesta's *The Beautiful Risk of Education* is instructive in developing a thoughtful response to the political and bureaucratic tendency towards simplistic measurement. Professor of Educational Theory and Policy at the University of Luxembourg and former president of the Philosophy of Education Society, Dr. Biesta takes issue with a number of current trends in assessing education. He cites too much emphasis on objectivity, measurement and absolutism without acknowledging the impact of subjectivity and interpersonal aspects of learning, an overemphasis on learning with a concomitant underemphasis on teaching and the acceptance of creation as what he terms a metaphysical rather than an existential notion. For Biesta, creativity does not make something anew, it names something that already exists. He argues that there are three domains to education: *qualification* or "equipping [the student] with knowledge, skills and dispositions," *socialization* or "the 'insertion' of newcomers into existing order," and *subjectification* or "how we exist 'outside' such orders." Only *subjectification* has to do with freedom and transformation of the individual. (128-9). Education focused merely on measurement never attains *subjectification*. In Biesta's theory, education is not something that is done to someone else, it is a group enterprise; it is a corollary of freedom, emancipation, and creativity. He cites Hannah Arendt's notion of freedom – "being together in plurality" and that such freedom "calls something into being which did not exist before" (105, Arendt *Between Past and Future*, 151).

The TCNJ community should become the place for "being together in plurality," an inclusive community where each person's work and talent are integral to the success of the whole. The learner (whether that be a student, a faculty member or a staff member) digests knowledge,



places himself within a context and then breaks free of that context to be individually transformed. Such a community benefits from the transformation that happens to every idea, creation, and product because there are others who interact with the idea, creation and product. Colleagues seek partners across divisions, schools and departments to craft solutions to the intransigent problems that surround our campus (in the Ukraine, in Gaza, in Syria, in Iraq, in Ferguson), create art that speaks in new ways to the complex human condition of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and inspires us to be our better selves, conduct research that addresses the major scientific, health-related, engineering problems that limit individuals and nations and implement business plans that are sustainable. We should be that place where students begin an education that could lead to finally eradicating Ebola and AIDS, where student teachers embrace the opportunity to teach in Newark and Trenton as well as West Windsor and Princeton, where students work collaboratively to create technology to enhance the lives of the elderly and the physically challenged, where students understand the complexity of economic forces in the creation and destruction of communities.

This is truly risky business, and it cannot be effective unless there is information widely shared and deeply understood. We must know what is happening in the world, across the campus and within our own departments. By its very nature, this education is organic and multifaceted. There is a powerful alchemy that can be created in a community—with the right people, the right support structures, the right values, and the right spaces. TCNJ should be that community. We must emulate Emily Dickinson’s bird in flight:

Out of sight? What of that?  
See the Bird — reach it!  
Curve by Curve — Sweep by Sweep —  
Round the Steep Air —  
Danger! What is that to Her?  
Better 'tis to fail — there —  
Than debate — here —

703

Like the Dickinson bird, TCNJ will “round the steep air” and embrace that danger. We will not fail, we will not get distracted by the wrong measurements or question our mission to soar “out of sight.”

Thank you.

Biesta, Gert J. J. *The Beautiful Risk of Education*. Boulder and London: Paradigm Publishers, 2014.