

September, 2007

Dear colleagues:

Warm greetings as we begin a new academic year!

I begin by extending my congratulations and gratitude for the many accomplishments we realized—individually and collectively—in 2006-07. Through collective good will and difficult budget decisions we have been able to make important advancements in keeping with our mission, despite the severe fiscal constraints with which we began last year. Several of our key accomplishments in 2006-07 include the following:

- We made significant progress on recommendations from the [Teacher-Scholar Task Force](#) including a refreshed new-faculty mentoring program. Last year's working group that focused on mentoring and support for the teacher-scholar has resulted in recommendations for professional development resources and opportunities (<http://www.tcnj.edu/~academic/mentoringsurvey.pdf>), enhanced opportunities for pedagogical exchange and enrichment, new leadership and increased funding for student-faculty engaged scholarly and creative activity, and increased funding for faculty and student professional travel.
- The revised Reappointment and Promotions document was revised through the governance process, reviewed with the AFT and approved, effective immediately, with slight modification of the promotion process calendar for 2007-08 only (<http://www.tcnj.edu/~fhh/Reappointment-Promotion2007.pdf>). Three elements have been identified for further development and/or deliberation: peer observation of teaching (<http://www.tcnj.edu/~senate/resources/documents/PeerEvaluation5-2-07.doc>), external review, and grades and grading practices. Recommendations will be submitted to the governance system for consideration as emendations to the Reappointment and Promotions document. Disciplinary standards for scholarship have been developed for all academic departments and programs; current drafts are on file and under review in Academic Affairs.
- A new Final Exam / Evaluation Policy (<http://www.tcnj.edu/~academic/policy/finalevaluations.htm>) was approved, effective immediately.
- The MOA 62 faculty workload agreement and Faculty Professional Activities reporting process was implemented. This success is a testament to effective leadership of our chairs and deans and the professional integrity of our faculty.
- For the first time in 7 years, we realigned budgets in academic departments and schools, facilitating increased support for program priorities.

- The Bonner Center for Civic and Community Engagement, under the direction of Pat Donohue, in collaboration with Student Affairs implemented a new model for the first-year civic responsibility requirement in our Liberal Learning curriculum. In addition, the Bonner Scholars Program was restructured and expanded, resulting in a significant diversification of Bonner Scholars as well as enhancement of TCNJ's network of community partners and community-engaged learning opportunities.
- Thanks to the tenacious leadership of Nancy Freudenthal and David Venturo, and our local PBK community, we received a Phi Beta Kappa chapter.

2007-08 promises to be an even more exciting year, filled with academic engagement, innovation, and accomplishment. I am especially pleased to report that the operating budget for mission-targeted academic experiences has been increased by \$800,000 for 2007-2008. As discussed below, this major increase in funding will support student-faculty collaborative scholarly and creative activity, field-based study and community-engaged learning, student and faculty professional travel, and other activities which will contribute to a livelier intellectual climate beyond the classroom at TCNJ, as well as deeper student-scholar and teacher-scholar development opportunities.

I am also delighted to welcome eight fascinating and accomplished new faculty colleagues (see attachment) this fall. For 2007-2008, we are initiating 24 tenure-stream faculty searches that address strategic priorities and maximize our faculty line resources. We will begin the process of hiring an architect in late fall of 2007 for the design of the new Education Building, and we will break ground on the new Art and Interactive Multimedia building in spring of 2008. Our commitment to a shared cultural and intellectual community is continued this year with a new campus theme: "Religion, Culture, and Identity." A vigorous learning community has formed and an exciting schedule of programs has been developed (<http://www.tcnj.edu/~philos/religion/community.html>), including Community Learning Day on October 3<sup>rd</sup> featuring Sister Helen Prejean, gallery exhibitions, a variety of lectures and film screenings, and a symposium on "Bosnia: Reflections on Religion, Nation, and State."

### *Looking forward*

As a result of years of strong leadership and collective effort, TCNJ has become a national exemplar of public higher education. I know you share my pride in our outstanding and dedicated teacher-scholars and practitioners, excellent programs and courses, and our very capable and promising students and alumni.

Now that we *are* a national exemplar in public higher education, we compete for students who can choose from among the best schools in the country! And at the same time, we face unprecedented state and national challenges that threaten to interfere with our progress. These challenges require serious and honest reflection, new thinking, and determined action.

We must ask anew questions about our effectiveness in achieving our mission and aspirations. *Are we, indeed, providing a most powerful learning experience for all of our students?* How

effectively are we preparing “students to excel in their chosen fields and to create, preserve and transmit knowledge, arts and wisdom” and to “sustain and advance the communities in which they live,” as stated in our mission? At TCNJ, three critical elements work together to facilitate powerful learning and development: learning in the classroom, intellectual engagement beyond the classroom, and a campus environment that fosters the development of students as whole persons. With the recent academic transformation, we have made significant advancements in the currency and quality of our academic programs. With the Student Affairs transformation currently under way, we are making important progress in augmenting our facilitation of comprehensive student development (<http://www.tcnj.edu/~sa/transform.html>).

As we continue to advance and integrate these progressive changes, we must turn also to further developing the campus intellectual culture—including the many promising learning opportunities that occur outside of the classroom (both credit- and non-credit bearing) that are critical to our students’ futures as leaders in their profession and in a global society. Examples of such opportunities abound, including internships and practica, field and clinical components of courses, small-group disciplinary and interdisciplinary dialogue and debate, undergraduate research, community-engaged learning, national and international study, professional leadership development, participation in scholarly meetings and events, public performance and exhibits, participation in competitions, etc. We must (a) encourage cross-disciplinary sharing of best practices and innovation, (b) move core support of these experiences from *soft* to College funding, and (c) increase student access and engagement. Critical to this initiative is the continued support and advancement of TCNJ’s “community of active and accessible teacher-scholars” that gives “students ample opportunities to engage in their own scholarship, to participate in faculty scholarship, and to understand how scholarship takes place on a national and international level” (<http://www.tcnj.edu/~academic/TeacherScholarReport.doc>).

An important corollary is making more explicit how these learning experiences raise students’ sense of possibility and raise their expectations and plans for post-graduate success.

#### *Priorities for 2007-08*

To ensure that TCNJ continues to move forward in realizing our strategic aspirations, the following mission-based initiatives will be priorities for 2007-08:

- 1) *Teaching and learning initiative*

The visit of Dee Fink, distinguished scholar of teaching and learning, on September 5, 2007, kicks off a planning process for a new TCNJ teaching and learning initiative. The Teacher-Scholar Task Force report called for the establishment of a *center* that offers “workshops and consultations for faculty and academic staff seeking to improve their teaching outside already established review practices. The Center should provide an interdisciplinary home for the scholarship of teaching, encouraging faculty and academic staff to share new pedagogical approaches.” Such an initiative should also be a site for “intellectual innovation,” sharing, developing, and supporting best practices for building in- and out-of-classroom intellectual engagement. I invite nominations for participants for a planning process that will advance this important initiative. The Faculty Senate will form a planning committee.

2) *Funding and leadership for mission-critical learning initiatives focused on student engagement*

As I mentioned above, we have made a significant investment in our operating budget to powerful learning opportunities that promote deep student engagement. These experiences are integral to building intellectual culture and bolstering student outcomes (e.g., student-faculty collaborative scholarly and creative activity; local, national, and global field-based study and community-engaged learning; student and faculty professional travel; out-of-class intellectual community building activity; etc.).

- *Student-faculty collaborative scholarly and creative activity.* Janet Morrison now serves as director of student-faculty collaborative scholarly and creative activity, including leadership of the Summer Undergraduate Research Program and other academic year initiatives across all schools. We welcome *from all schools* proposals for innovative initiatives that engage students as developing scholars, exposing them first hand to disciplinary and interdisciplinary inquiry and practice.
- *Community-engaged learning.* The Bonner Center for Civic and Community Engagement will continue its expansion of community-engaged learning opportunities for first-year *and* upper-level students, both in course-based and outside-of-class models. I welcome you to get a first-hand look at one of the innovative approaches they have created for our first-year students—*Community Engaged Learning (CEL) days* (<http://www.tcnj.edu/~liberal/ce.html>).
- *Integrating the curriculum and co-curriculum.* Student Affairs and Academic Affairs will partner on a new campus lecture series, in addition to initiatives that build intellectual community in residence, and that focus on students' pursuit of ambitious post-graduation education and employment.

3) *Internationalization*

We will intensify our efforts this year to internationalize our campus culture, including further enhancement of our curriculum, increasing student- and faculty-international exchange, and expanding campus multicultural learning experiences. In an increasingly interconnected world, institutions of higher education like TCNJ must prepare students to be global citizens. Students need to understand other peoples, their cultures, histories and languages if they are to recognize their common humanity and peacefully solve the many vexing problems that cross national borders. International Education Week in November, 2007, will both celebrate current efforts and stimulate cross-campus dialogue and planning for new efforts.

4) *Institutional effectiveness and student learning outcomes assessment*

As a national leader in public higher education, we work to deliver high quality programs, invent strategic innovations, and respond nimbly to new challenges and opportunities. We also hold *integrity* as a central institutional value—striving to

ensure the effectiveness of our efforts in achieving key outcomes and fulfilling our obligation to public accountability. To these aims, we have just established this year the Center for Institutional Effectiveness (CIE) to assist us in enhancing college operations and outcomes through critical inquiry and reflection. The Center will work collaboratively with all units in designing, performing, and communicating analyses of institutional data for the evaluation and improvement of TCNJ's overall institutional effectiveness.

- *Retention and graduation rates.* We will focus this year on analyzing and improving our retention and graduation rates, including the development of support efforts targeting specific student subpopulations.
  - *Enrollment planning.* We will continue to advance our enrollment planning efforts to ensure alignment of resources while increasing the excellence of our programs. We will study course enrollments, ensuring that they are appropriate to pedagogical approaches and thereby facilitative of high-quality transformational learning experiences, as well as faculty line allocations and adjunct usage.
  - *Student learning outcomes assessment.* A key aspect of evaluating institutional effectiveness is student learning outcomes assessment. We will continue to advance program-level outcomes assessment through the “One question/one answer” approach as well as through professional school accreditation-required assessment initiatives. Paula Maas, Director of Assessment, will be meeting with department chairs, program coordinators, and deans to review and provide feedback and guidance on program assessment activities.
  - *Liberal Learning outcomes assessment.* Liberal Learning outcomes assessment will also advance this year by (a) our participation in a cross-sectional administration of the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), a national effort of the Council for Aid to Education to provide empirical evidence of critical thinking, analytic reasoning, problem solving, and writing, (b) the pilot of a Capstone-based assessment of writing outcomes, and (c) the creation of a team of faculty and staff (in collaboration with Paula Maas, Bob Anderson, and the Liberal Learning Program Council) focused on refining institutional learning goals and developing strategies for assessment.
  - *Academic Program Review.* We will also begin implementing the Academic Program Review process this year (<http://www.tcnj.edu/~steering/200506/CPFFinalRecDeptPlanning.doc>) in five programs. Departmental strategic plans and assessment results form a significant basis for program review.
- 5) *Revenue generation.* Certainly, The College now faces a new economic playing field that necessitates fresh approaches to budget management and revenue generation. We must continue to engage in thoughtful and forward-looking dialogue about our aspirations and mission, and to make difficult decisions about programmatic and budget priorities. We must also diversify revenue streams so that we can move forward proactively despite declining state and federal support.

In addition to significantly enhanced development and fundraising efforts, we will also target summer as a time of great potential for innovation and revenue generation. We will pilot a set of summer academic initiatives for summer 2008 that can enhance our intellectual and cultural community, create attractive supplemental professional opportunities for faculty and staff, while also bolstering the financial standing of The College.

6) *Other key initiatives*

Other initiatives for 2007-08 include the following: (a) ongoing effort to articulate guiding principles for graduate education at TCNJ; (b) continued implementation of recommendations for improving the quality of advising (<http://www.tcnj.edu/~advising/documents/ASSSPCFinalDraft.doc>), including student and faculty assessments of current advising practices; (c) the implementation of Institutional Review Board improvements including the new *eIRB* online research ethics review system; (d) implementation of recommendations from the ad hoc academic integrity review committee (<http://www.tcnj.edu/~academic/Academicintegritytaskforcereport.doc>); (e) and continued implementation of MOA 62, specifically the “Individual Faculty Member Self Study” process mandated for development and implementation in 2007-08 by MOA 62.

I look forward to working with you this year to enhance our campus culture of intellectual engagement and innovation. I am confident that, together, we can take TCNJ to new heights.

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