

August 26, 2008

Dear colleagues,

Welcome to – or back to – The College of New Jersey! Whether you are returning from archives, travel, the field, teaching, reading, the lab, the studio, or from well-deserved family and vacation time, you are poised to begin a new academic year at what I am finding to be a very special place. Having arrived on campus about eight weeks ago, I have already begun to discover and admire the intellectual energy and talent of the people who work and learn here at TCNJ.

Last year saw several important achievements at the College, and this year will bring a number of challenges and opportunities. I am happy to review some of these with you.

First, the entire campus owes its sincerest thanks to **Dr. Beth Paul**, whose superlative service as interim provost yielded a number of the accomplishments described below. I am delighted that Dr. Paul has agreed to serve as vice provost, in which capacity she will oversee several areas of campus-wide academic importance.

We welcome **eighteen new tenure-track faculty**, in thirteen different departments, to the TCNJ community. You can read about them at www.tcnj.edu/~academic/Newfaculty2008-09.doc. Their work spans the arts, humanities, social sciences, pedagogy, science, health, business and technology. In addition, we welcome **the class of 2012**, comprising about 1300 first-year students. Once again, TCNJ has recruited a remarkably talented group, with impressive class standing (on average, incoming students ranked in the top 9% of their high school class), excellent average SAT scores of 1243, and, compared to the class of 2011, greater diversity (over 8% from outside New Jersey, and over 23% from underrepresented groups).

Every year, the College chooses an important theme for a series of programs and events. This year's theme, "**Human Health and Environmental Sustainability**," seems especially timely. This week, we began to explore this theme through a shared reading experience of James Howard Kunstler's *World Made by Hand*, which imagines life in upper New York state after environmental and political crises return the U.S. to a localized, pre-industrial economy. Mark your calendars for Mr. Kunstler's visit to campus on Sept. 17. Throughout the year, we will learn about ways to address our theme, and will turn our attention to how our own campus can embrace sustainability and become "greener."

We begin this year with **two new deans**, one of them familiar to our community, one of them new to it. Dr. Deb Compte has taken the position of interim dean of the School of Culture and Society, and Dr. Steven Schreiner, a biomedical engineer who comes to us from Western New England College, has joined the College as dean of the School of Engineering. We thank and congratulate them.

This year, the College will take a close look at the **structures of the schools of Culture and Society and of the Arts and Communication** to be sure that those structures are

optimally serving our students and faculty. The process will include substantial faculty participation and will take place in partnership with the Faculty Senate. Look for opportunities to have your voice heard this semester.

Last year, a committee recommended the establishment of a **Center for Teaching and Learning** at TCNJ. The profile created for TCNJ's provost search seconded this call. In the coming months, I anticipate working with faculty and administrators to make this center a reality.

When TCNJ adopted its new Reappointment, Tenure, and Promotion Document in May, 2007, several issues remained, including the establishment of a process and guidelines for **peer review of teaching**. In May, 2008, the Committee on Faculty Affairs, drawing upon the Faculty Senate/CFA Committee on Teaching Excellence, made its final recommendation, which has been added as Appendix III of the [Reappointment, Tenure, and Promotion Document](#) and also separately in the [College's Policy Manual](#). The process is in effect immediately, and faculty applying for reappointment or tenure in spring, 2009, and those applying for promotion in fall, 2009, will include the results in their dossiers. These new guidelines are of importance for all faculty since, according to the new process, "Faculty members who have been granted tenure should be observed by a peer once every other year, excluding sabbatical years and leaves-of-absence."

Last year, the Committee on Academic Policies developed the following statement on **Reading Days**.

The time designated as the "final exam period" contains both reading days and final exam days. It is expected that reading days will be a time during which students will be able to devote substantial time and effort to preparing for final evaluations. During this period, students will have an opportunity to reflect on what they have learned and integrate course material in a long-lasting and meaningful way. During the reading period, there should be no mandatory scheduled activities for a course, including in-class examinations (including make-up exams), presentations, or required meetings with instructors. There is an understanding that faculty should be accessible to students during reading period.

The full Final Evaluation Policy is available through the [TCNJ Policy Manual](#).

As part of a three-year review of **SOSA policies and procedures**, the Committee on Faculty Affairs has [prepared an extensive set of recommendations](#), which interim Provost Paul approved. Beginning with SOSAs approved for fall, 2009, all awards will cover a two-year period; for this year only, both one- and two-year awards will be considered. These new guidelines are set out in the new [Request for Proposals](#)—and those proposals will be due on October 6, 2008.

As the number of requests for **sabbaticals** has grown, the Committee on Faculty Affairs has recommended a new [Sabbaticals Committee](#) be formed, removing consideration of sabbatical requests from the SOSA committee. I have asked Faculty Senate President Michael Robertson to name members of a new committee whose composition will

parallel that of SOSA. The RFP will be released shortly, with a deadline of November 7 for proposals.

Finally, I wish to thank everyone who has stopped by the Office of Academic Affairs to welcome me or who has greeted me at events on or off the campus. I am scheduled to meet with the faculty of each academic department over the course of this year, and I look forward to learning more about each one.

Once again, welcome back – and best wishes for a wonderful, productive academic year.

Carol M. Bresnahan

Professor of History

Provost and Executive Vice President