

TO: Dr. Barbara Gitenstein, President
The College of New Jersey

FROM: Linda Lengyel, Chair
Interactive Communications Task Force

DATE: January, 2003

RE: **INTERIM REPORT**

SECTION I: TASK FORCE STEPS AND GOALS

The Task Force met four times during the fall semester 2002. We have structured our focus in the following manner:

- (1). Gather information regarding the Ewing Community's perceptions of The College of New Jersey as a presence and neighbor.
- (2). Make recommendations based on the responses from (1).
- (3). Gather sources and make recommendations as to methods of better interacting with the Ewing Community regarding access to resources and events available at The College of New Jersey and acquiring resources and information from Ewing Township.
- (4). Make recommendations to the College for evaluation of staff in the communication process with the Ewing Community.

SECTION II: TASK FORCE PROGRESS

We have begun the collection process by identifying what is available for and to the Community from the College. Secondly, we are putting together a list of potential avenues to get information to the Ewing Community from the College. We are gathering information as to what interaction the College presently has with the Community. We have begun to benchmark what other colleges do in their respective community settings

and also what problems they incur. We have not yet begun our search for a valid staff evaluation instrument. We are awaiting some initial information in this regard.

Our focus on Community perceptions of the College identified certain areas of concern, including off campus student behavior, physical intrusion into the Community, tax roll drain, lack of communication/notification of college activities that impact the community, physical and informational barriers to accessing the campus. We have begun to pursue ways of reducing their concerns and have identified our focus on opening up lines of communication between the College and the Community to address the aforementioned problems and issues as well as others that may arise in the future. We have undertaken our task by looking at the entire communication process of the College to the Community and the Community to the College. As to the former, we have begun a process of gathering the availability of sources on campus to disseminate college information to the Community. Once identified, a process should be devised to organize and centralize the information. Our second effort has been to identify resources in the Community that would be helpful in getting the message of the College into the eyes, ears and hands of the Community.

SECTION III: IDENTIFICATION OF COLLEGE RESOURCES

The following areas of campus life have been identified as vehicles of communication to the community: Center for Social Justice, Faculty Community-Based Research, Hands on Helpers, College Website, programs within the individual schools, Aquatic Center, Recreation Center, Athletics, Career Services, Service Learning (the Committee will consult with Nino Scarpatti for assistance and suggestions), extension of College Gold Card use in the Community, Cultural Events, Speakers Bureau, Community Day. Matt Lawson has volunteered to share the results of a survey taken on campus, to give us further insight into the extent of college involvement in the community. The Committee considered whether a college newsletter to the community would be an effective way of disseminating and centralizing information from the various sources at the college.

Linda Lengyel's spring research students will survey Ewing residents to solicit suggestions and specific recommendations for addressing their areas of concern and improving town/grown relations. This project will be done in partnership with the township. Linda Lengyel and Township Administrator, Fred Walters, will coordinate this project.

SECTION IV: AVENUES OF COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION

The Task Force suggests that there are community resources that the college could use to communicate with the community. The recent formation of the "Ewing Leaders" group between the President of The College of New Jersey and the governmental and business representatives of Ewing, the Committee feels is a very positive step. Consideration was also given to an insert being placed in the Ewing People Newspaper, similar to the one used by the Ewing schools. We are also pursuing the informational value of information about the College in other Mercer County periodicals. Several members of the Task Force attended a public forum in Ewing regarding College/Community issues. Matt Lawson has put together a summary of the event that the Task Force has just received. That will be discussed by the Task Force for further insight into our communication considerations. We have also decided to seek insight from other colleges and universities, as to their communication process with the external community.

SECTION V: FINAL COMMENTS

The Task Force feels that there is an integral connection between the communication process and identified problems and perceptions between the college and the community. We feel that without question, better lines of communication will open up the ability of both the college and the community to acknowledge each others presence, air concerns, and generally much better understand each other.