



COMMISSION NEWS

October 2009

COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERS MEET IN HARRISBURG

Community college presidents and trustees from across the Commonwealth gathered in the state's capital city in late September to discuss topics surrounding the state budget and other legislative issues, and to learn more about the President's Community College Initiative.

J. Noah Brown, President & CEO with the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT), presented on the national landscape and the President's initiative. But the spotlight was on the keynote address from Dr. Sara Goldrick-Rab. Dr. Goldrick-Rab was the primary author of the Brookings Report, *Transforming America's Community Colleges: A Federal Proposal to Expand Opportunity and Promote Economic Prosperity*, released earlier this year. This report clearly influenced the development of President Obama's bold agenda.

In the President's announcement of the American Graduation Initiative this summer, he offered these words: "Not since the passage of the original GI Bill and the work of President Truman's Commission on Higher Education... have we taken such a historic step on behalf of community college in America." Dr. Goldrick-Rab reinforced the President's remarks by urging the presidents and trustees to consider two key take-aways from her presentation and the Brookings report.

- The President and the nation are poised to make a historic investment in community colleges. Now is the time to respond with real leadership and impact.
- Tackle the biggest challenges and embrace accountability – this will put you at the forefront of higher education.

During her research for the Brookings report, Dr. Goldrick-Rab noted that community colleges serve higher shares of minority and lower-income, college-going youth; that enrollment growth in the two-year sector is outpacing that in the four-year sector (43% to 24%); and that occupational projections suggest continued growth in jobs requiring less than a baccalaureate degree. Adding to this is also the inequity in funding. Federal funding per FTE student at public 4-year institutions outstrips that at community colleges by 3 to 1 – or \$2,594 to just \$791. *(continued on page 2)*



College Presidents & Trustees gather in Harrisburg



J. Noah Brown, President & CEO, Association of Community College Trustees



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Dr. Goldrick-Rab highlighted the serious challenges that community colleges face. Among these, the multiple missions of the colleges, dropout rates approaching 50%, the scarce resources for community colleges and the reliance on recession-dwindling state and local funding. She added that the kinds of funding inequities facing community colleges would be a state or national outcry if this same inequity were occurring at the K-12 level. She argues that the funding inequities are a barrier to the ability of community colleges to focus on assisting students and improving student outcomes.

Drawing on the connections between the Brookings report and the President's initiative for community colleges, she urged the presidents and trustees to "partner to innovate." In this respect, Dr. Goldrick-Rab encouraged the group to work together – with as many partners as possible – to rethink and innovate as well as to expect the best from all students. She closed by adding that they should seize this historic moment to demonstrate a willingness to rebuild something better and, above all, "take the lead."

Following her presentation, Dr. Jerry Parker, the Commission's President, provided the annual update on the Commission's activities. He reported on the newly adopted strategic plan which focuses on 4 key areas:

- **Student Access and Success:** *Student Support, Financial Aid and Adult Education*
- **Resources and Infrastructure:** *Funding and Governance*
- **Policy Role and Support:** *Transfer, Workforce Development and Dual Enrollment*
- **Strategic Educational Services:** *Serving more areas of the Commonwealth*

The group also heard a legislative update from Tony Crisci, a lobbyist representing the Commission, and Diane Bosak, the Commission's Executive Director. The Commission's budget request for 2010-11 and legislative priorities were reviewed with the presidents and trustees and will be available on the Commission's website under the Advocacy Center in the near future.

Community College
of Allegheny County
www.ccac.edu

Community College
of Beaver County
www.ccbc.edu

Bucks County
Community College
www.bucks.edu

Butler County
Community College
www.bc3.edu

Delaware County
Community College
www.dccc.edu

Harrisburg Area
Community College
www.hacc.edu

Lehigh Carbon
Community College
www.lccc.edu

Luzerne County
Community College
www.luzerne.edu

Montgomery County
Community College
www.mc3.edu

Northampton
Community College
www.northampton.edu

Pennsylvania Highlands
Community College
www.pennhighlands.edu

Community College
of Philadelphia
www.ccp.edu

Reading Area
Community College
www.racc.edu

Westmoreland County
Community College
www.wccc.edu

For the latest Legislative priorities and issues surrounding Pennsylvania's Community Colleges, check out the Advocacy Center section of our website.

www.pacommunitycolleges.org



With the fall semester well underway, Pennsylvania's 14 community colleges opened their doors to more than 13,000 new students - the equivalent of one entire new community college in Pennsylvania. This number represents a historic high and corresponds with a 10% increase on average over last fall's enrollment.



STATE BUDGET IMPASSE ENDS

After 101 days, the General Assembly and Governor came to an agreement around the state's FY 2009-10 budget. While the budget is final, there are still components of the overall agreement that must be acted upon by the legislature including expansion of gaming and the non-preferred appropriations. A timeline for completion of these items is not yet clear.

For community colleges, the final budget held a number of disappointments including a reduction in the operating line item by 0.21% or about ½ million dollars. This reduction was accompanied by language providing for pro-rated distribution of funding – simply put, the community college statute requires that the operating funding level can not be decreased from prior year's funding level. Since the legislature did not abide by this provision, the pro rata language will guide the distribution of the reduced funding level. The total allocation for operating also includes \$21.5 million from the federal stimulus dollars. This may be a potential problem in two years when federal stimulus dollars dry up.

Unfortunately, this operating level does little to help the community colleges meet the historic enrollment increases. Over the last several years, the appropriations increases for community colleges have not kept pace with inflation in higher education; and, during a period of exceptional enrollment growth, the consequence has been erosion in the Commonwealth's level of support for our students. This has resulted in a shifting of the cost burden to students, many from low income families unable to bear such costs. If colleges raise tuition and fees to offset dwindling public support, that action would only serve to disenfranchise those who can least afford higher education. Pennsylvania's community college tuition already rises significantly above the national average.

The budget did include a modest adjustment in capital funding reflecting the Governor's original request of an additional \$1.8 million. While this will meet current capital obligations and allow for a few new projects to be funded, it does not help address the growing backlog of deferred maintenance, new facilities, or equipment needs. Three years ago, Pennsylvania's community colleges documented approximately \$800 million in unmet capital needs among the 14 institutions and offered a multi-year funding plan that would help reduce the immediate impact on the Commonwealth's budget. However, there has been no substantive increase in the state's funding for community college capital funding during those three years, even though there have been significant capital projects approved for the PASSHE and the state related universities.

Direct support for community colleges through the operating and capital line items are not the only areas in the budget of concern. Reductions in other state funded programs such as dual enrollment (for high school students) and New Choices/ New Options (for unemployed and underemployed students) will also impact the programs and services our institutions provide.

Last year, Pennsylvania's community colleges served more than 11,000 students in 302 public school districts and 28 career and technical centers through our dual enrollment initiative. Those 11,000 students now have a chance to enter higher education with a decided advantage: their transition to college will be far more seamless; and both time to degree and college costs will be reduced over the long run.

In addition, our colleges maintained support services to nearly 2,300 students through the Act 101 program, providing assistance to educationally disadvantaged and minority students.

(continued on page 4)

For students struggling to overcome economic hardships – such as TANF recipients or single parents without financial means – the KEYS program served about 1,800 students last year and New Choices/New Options served more than 1,200.

Customized job training which includes guaranteed free training to employers through a program called WEDNET is also facing a dramatic reduction. All of the 14 colleges have utilized these programs to help meet the needs of local employers for a trained and skilled workforce.

On the brighter side, the legislature approved an expansion of transfer and articulation for community colleges and state system (PASSHE) universities. In 2006, the first step to provide a seamless transition for community college students to state system universities occurred with the guarantee of the transfer of 30 credits. The expansion included in the recently approved Act 50 of 2009 provides for the full transfer of the associate degree (AA and AS) with a minimum transfer of 60 credits and full junior standing in the parallel baccalaureate program/institution. Over the course of the next two years, the community colleges and the state system universities will work with the Pennsylvania Department of Education to refine the details before full implementation of the new transfer provisions can be in place for students. With this action, the Commonwealth joins the majority of states with strong transfer policies and accomplishes a major policy initiative advocated by the Commission for many years.

Pennsylvania's FY 2009-10 budget will certainly be memorable for the various political ups and downs, deals and no deals, and a painfully long process. What the FY 2010-11 budget process holds remains to be seen but next year is an election cycle and that could make the budget dynamics even more interesting. To paraphrase the famous line from the 1950 movie, *All About Eve*, buckle your seat belts, it is going to be a bumpy new budget year.



PA COMMUNITY COLLEGES ACCEPT PRESIDENT'S CHALLENGE

Following the announcement of President Barack Obama's American Graduation Initiative, Pennsylvania's community colleges banded together in support of this national challenge.

A Resolution was developed and endorsed by leaders from Pennsylvania's 14 community colleges, and states that, among other things, the colleges acknowledge and support that:

- President Obama has charged community colleges with ensuring "that we are educating and preparing our people for the new jobs of the 21st century and preparing our people with the skills they need to compete in this global economy."
- President Obama has set a goal for America: "By 2020, this nation will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world." And "Through this plan, we seek to help an additional 5 million Americans earn degrees and certifications in the next decade."
- In the coming years, jobs requiring at least an associate degree are projected to grow twice as fast as jobs requiring no college experience. We will not be able to fill those jobs without the training and education provided by community colleges.
- President Obama has agreed to back "\$10 billion in loans to renovate and rebuild college classrooms and buildings all across the country" in an effort to modernize facilities in order to help community colleges raise their level of education and resources.

FAST FACTS...

The 2009-2010 academic year saw the addition of 84 credential programs at Pennsylvania's 14 community colleges - eight diploma programs, 32 certificate programs, and 44 degree and/or transfer programs. A total of 1,356 credential programs are currently offered.



COMMUNITY COLLEGE SPOTLIGHT...

Here are a few “shining stars” among Pennsylvania’s Community Colleges

NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE

NCC has received a \$203,751 grant from the Business Information Systems Initiative to help train local teachers and incumbent workers in information and communications technology. NCC will use this funding to expand its Cisco Networking Academy, train instructors, purchase lab equipment and offer a series of workshops.

HARRISBURG AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

HACC is expanding its services to Juniata and Mifflin counties this fall, with six entry-level college courses being offered in the evening. Courses will be offered at Juniata High School and Lewistown Area High School.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY

CCAC has hosted a groundbreaking ceremony for its new K. Leroy Irvis Science Center on the Allegheny Campus. The science center, will be five floors and approximately 65,000 square feet. The \$20 million facility is named in honor of the late speaker of Pennsylvania’s House of Representatives, whose career was instrumental in forming CCAC and the other community colleges in Pennsylvania.

READING AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

RACC has received a \$5,000 grant from Verizon’s Check Into Literacy initiative to train 150 noncredit students to use electronic courseware for reading for education, workforce development and career readiness.

NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE

NCC has launched its Apple Authorized Training Center. The latest addition to the college’s Fowler Family Southside Center houses 12 state-of-the-art Mac Workstations, and promises to provide access to the highest quality, most current training available.

WESTMORELAND COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The WCCC board of trustees has named the former chancellor at Penn State New Kingston to be its vice president for academic affairs and student services. Carol Rush of Pittsburgh has served as dean of mathematics and sciences at WCCC since October 2008. As vice president, she will oversee the five credit academic divisions, the Learning Resources Center, the College Learning Center and the Student Services and Institutional Research/Data Services Departments.

HARRISBURG AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Jason Rosenberry, a math instructor at HACC, has developed an Introduction to Statistics podcasting course that was recognized as “New and Notable” and a “Featured Course” by Apple Computers’ iTunes University. This course was also the top downloaded mathematics course among all those presented through HACC iTunes University. The iTunes U site was developed by Apple to deliver educational content, as a supplement to the popular iTunes Music Store. Rosenberry was the first HACC faculty member to use SMART Notebook software to record his instructional podcasts on the iTunes U Website.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY

CCAC has received a \$252,727 grant from the U.S. Department of Education to develop and implement a campus-based, all-hazards emergency management plan to serve its four campuses and six educational centers. The college will use the funds, in part, to create a planning team to review existing emergency management measures and design new components.

If you have a submission for the Community College Spotlight, please send it to khoutz@pacommunitycolleges.org



COUNCIL OF TRUSTEES RECONSIDERS ROLE

By: John Biondi, Trustee, Community College of Beaver County and Co-Chair of the Council of Trustees, PA Commission for Community Colleges

Members of the Commission's Council of Trustees met during the September All Trustees Assembly to consider the Council's activities for the year ahead. The discussion was lively and passionate and showed a high level of interest in the challenges our colleges are facing in these times of economic uncertainty. But the future of the Council remains cloudy as we struggle with defining a renewed role.

Our biggest hurdle does not seem to be in our commitment to community colleges, particularly the college we represent, but how we can best translate that passion into an effective and influential voice. For community colleges to have more of an impact on state budget and policy decisions in the halls of the capitol in Harrisburg, our approach to legislative advocacy must include more involvement from trustees and, at times, from our students as well.

The Council of Trustees was originally formed under the Commission as a committee in 2004 when the community colleges were facing a state funding crisis. The committee of trustees evolved over the next two years to become the Council, a type of formal mechanism to mobilize the trustees for legislative advocacy. The mission developed for the Council was, as follows, "To work with trustees from all of Pennsylvania's 14 community colleges in a broad range of state-level activities, including interaction with legislators and other state officials. The Council will also support the legislative agenda and priorities of the Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges as set by the 14 community colleges through the Commission's Board of Directors".

There is little doubt that trustees need to be active and involved in the legislative agenda of the Commission for Community Colleges. As a recent publication by ACCT (the national Association of Community College Trustees) states, "Trustees, in partnership with presidents, have both the opportunity and the responsibility to take an active role in shaping public policies that benefit the communities served by the colleges they govern."

How we go about our involvement is yet to be determined but the Commission remains the primary conduit for gathering information and knowledge about legislative and budget issues. Then each college president can provide the trustees with specifics about how a particular issue might impact their institution. Combining the statewide perspective through the Commission with this campus-based information will make each trustee a more powerful advocate.

I strongly encourage each and every trustee to become engaged, informed, and active. Even if we do not have the formal mechanism of the Council of Trustees in the future, your role as an advocate remains critical. The challenges and obstacles our community colleges will not cease but, by working together, we have an opportunity to make a difference and to change the way our legislators and Governor view the importance of community colleges as a major force in access to higher education and job training.

SAVE THE DATE

**Commission Annual Meeting
April 12, 2010
Harrisburg Hilton, Harrisburg, PA**

**Annual Lobby Day Activities
April 13, 2010
PA State Capitol, Harrisburg, PA**