Making Sure We Are Organized to Maximize Student Success

Overview

Naugatuck Valley Community College has had a very productive and rewarding year. My fourth year as president of the College saw sustained growth in enrollment, continued curricular and scheduling innovation, the strengthening of academic support, multiple accomplishments from the second year of implementation of our strategic plan, significant improvement in student retention and graduation rates and engagement on campus and externally with our community partners. Campus-wide and significant teamwork produced our NEASC Self-Study report, now being circulated in first-draft form, to be finalized this summer. As an engaged academic community and working in concert with many colleagues, the College produced the competitive, successful submission and award of funding for a number of initiatives to include but not limited to the creation of the Bridge to College Office (funded by ConnCap, the WIA in-School Youth program, Community College Scholars Program, AmeriCorps and the College Access and Challenge Program), a Center for Advanced Manufacturing Technology, a Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence and a multi-million-dollar, multi-year GEAR UP grant designed to expand the good work of the Bridge to College Office. Additionally, the College worked successfully with a number of agencies to ensure evening bus service to the College and the City of Waterbury, effective October 24, 2011. This achievement has since been declared “The most significant public transportation initiative in the State of Connecticut for the year 2011”. The issuance of unlimited UPasses to students has resulted in about 80,000 student rides this academic year, including 3,400 evening bus rides by NVCC students.

The College managed a severely reduced budget that did not match enrollment while continuing to support our mission by earmarking available tuition revenues to provide scholarships for students and to support renewal and renovation of facilities in support of student learning. At this point, the College has used-up all reserves, and cannot sustain additional cuts without creating a deficit. We benefited from Capital Bond Funds allocated during the academic year 2011-2012, to support planning for a campus-wide improvement plan, the set up of the Advanced Manufacturing Technology Center and planning for the renovation of Founders Hall. The concepts of “community” and “student-centeredness” are at the center of our work in support of our high aspirations for our students. We have established our core values, founded on student success, respect and trust, effective communications, support for human diversity, and civic engagement and accountability. These values have served us well in particular this academic year 2011-2012, as we continued to be engaged and productive in an environment of budgetary uncertainty.

The Institutional Planning Committee (IPC), established three years ago, is our mechanism to ensure that goals are supported and carried through. It continues to serve as an effective vehicle for communication and in support of goal setting and subsequent follow ups. Additionally, with the support of the IPC and the engagement of stakeholders, we initiated work on our new strategic plan “Toward a Splendid College: Naugatuck Valley Community College 2010-2013”, also tied to our Wildly Important Goals (WIGs) or operational plan. Beginning with the Management Team and engaging multiple stakeholders, we worked diligently together to ensure that the second year of our strategic plan would be successful as it integrated system and college-wide priorities and NEASC accrediting expectations. A Task Force to write our NEASC Self-Study, set up in summer of 2010 and co-chaired by the Dean of Academic Affairs and a senior faculty member, worked along with over 100 college members on the 11 standards. The self-study is in almost final draft form as I write these words. The president presides over the NEASC Executive Committee, made up of the co-chairs of the Task Force and two senior members of the President’s Cabinet, the Provost and the Director of Human Resources.

Significant curricular development and syllabi revision took place in this “The Third Year of General Education” on campus, completing vehicles for outcomes assessment of competencies to be acquired as a result of the teaching and learning in our general education courses. As the newly created Connecticut State Colleges and Universities system works on the implementation of a newly approved policy on general education and transferability, the intelligent work of our faculty on the General
Education Committee has prepared NVCC to be ready for the next phase of the deliberations. Enrollments at the Danbury Center continued to climb to account for a 361 FTE and 801 Headcount or 24% growth since the Spring 2011 semester. The Center expanded this year by adding the third floor which is being used for a tutoring facility, a faculty office, a small lounge and a classroom. Workforce development activities resulted in a continued significant number of non-credit certificates. Much effort has also taken place to engage in careful assessment and review of the wide array of academic programs presently occupying our beautiful and generous campus. The College continued to use the facilities efficiently and in ways that are supportive of students’ needs by offering 6:30 a.m. weekday and Sunday afternoon classes, and creating a Late-Start semester. The Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) continued to offer tutoring services, seven days and four evenings a week. The new College-wide Advisement Initiative rolled out in the Fall of 2010, is in full swing, and has added 45-credit clinics. All full-time faculty members have significant advisement responsibilities.

Much has been done to underscore the importance of academic rigor and of supporting an educational experience that goes beyond the boundaries of the traditional classroom. We continued to reconfigure common spaces on campus to support intellectual discourse outside traditional classroom walls and to provide responsive student services, essential ingredients for student success. The grounds sing with love as they provide our students with multiple opportunities to learn, to celebrate community and to commune with nature. The following are brief responses to goals that had been set by the former Chancellor of the CT Community Colleges. Beginning with academic year 2012-2013, we will organize our goals around the new Board of Regents’ Strategic Priorities.

**System Goal I: Create an Environment in which Student Success is Our Expectation**

Providing access to support economic renewal and continued opportunities for the communities we serve is our top priority. Our Office of Institutional Research (OIR) reports that the credit enrollment totals in Fall 2011 and Spring 2012 continued to be the highest ever experienced at NVCC. From Fall 2008 to Fall 2011, both enrollments and FTE’s increased 20% each. According to the NVCC Office of Institutional Research’s most recent report, the Fall 2011 unduplicated headcount was 7,361 at freeze date with 4,429 FTE, representing 57% female and 43% male enrollments. The average age is 26 years. They attend full-time (37%) and part-time (63%). White (63%), Black (9%), Hispanic (21%), and all other (7%) comprise the College’s ethnic distribution.

Total enrollments for degree and certificate seekers grew about 1,612 students over the past three years, increasing nearly 32% since Fall of 2008, my first academic semester as the College president.

As enrollments have risen, some changes have occurred in certain demographic characteristics represented in the total student body of degree- and certificate-seeking students at NVCC. A greater number of students are Hispanic, 21% in Fall 2011, up from 15% and 17% in 2008 and 2009, respectively. From Fall 2008 to Fall 2011, Black student enrollment increased 36%, from 500 to 680 students.

Much work has been done to facilitate student success as measured by graduation rates. OIR reports that based on this year’s candidates for graduation, for the second year in a row, total completions at NVCC will rise. For 2011 candidates, the greatest gains were made in associate degrees. Rising about 47% from 472 awarded in 2008 to approximately 695 awards in 2012. Naugatuck Valley has firmly established a pattern of increasing degrees awarded. The gain at NVCC is the result of a 52% increase in the number of students receiving unduplicated degrees and certificates as compared to 502 in 2008. The total number of awards projected at this time is over 955 for approximately a 81% increase as compared to 529 total awards in 2008. Gains also were made in certificates awarded from 57 certificates during academic year 2007-2008 to 260 during 2011-2012, an approximate 356% increase.

The campus has engaged in a number of vigorous academic support activities and created instruments to monitor student success in developmental courses. Curricular changes include the alignment of developmental English outcomes in relation to general education guidelines and, in many cases, the complete overhaul/rewriting of department objectives and outcomes. OIR continues to work toward collecting and reporting the kind of data that supports an outcomes assessment process.
System Goal II:  Balance Enrollment Demands and Services with Existing Resources while Maintaining Flexibility to Manage and Improve Efficiency (Planning)

In Summer 2010, NVCC began the implementation of its new strategic plan. The results up to now, as reported in the preceding introductory overview, are very encouraging: Increased enrollments; increased retention and graduation rates; job satisfaction reported by faculty and staff; students who have participated widely in civic engagement from staffing a soup kitchen to testifying in Hartford on behalf of our budget; faculty assuming responsibility for a new college-wide advisement model; new additional hours of class offerings and academic support for our students; achievement of a far-reaching goal: bus service to the campus as of October 24, 2011; successful move to a new Danbury site and powerful enrollment growth at the Center; multiple cultural and intellectual events to enhance teaching beyond the classroom walls; the new “Earth Kind”, sustainable roses, project. This has been no easy task, as the times are difficult and the needs are great. In addition to the steering committee of the IPC, its four committees worked to ensure campus-wide consultation and accountability in the following areas: Committee on Responsive Academic Leadership and Programs, Committee on Student Success, Committee on Institutional Effectiveness and Committee on Environmental Scanning. Much work was done during academic year 2011-2012 to support a meaningful operational plan (WIGs, end-of-year status attached to this report) that ensures accountability, academic rigor, responsiveness to workforce needs, support of student success and viability of programs and services at the College.

System Goal III:  Diversify and Strengthen Resource Development and External Funding

Much preliminary work has taken place to position ourselves for fundraising. The NVCC Foundation has brought in eight new members and new leadership and a new executive board are in place. The Office of Community Engagement conducted a national search to identify its new director. In the first few months of her tenure, the office has merged with the Marketing Department, and transition and significant progress have taken place in this regard, including the creation of a Marketing Plan and a College Development Plan, both developed through college-wide consultation. More importantly, the Office of Community Engagement participated vigorously in the strategic planning process for the NVCC Foundation in support of the College’s new strategic plan, and more specifically, the newly created Advanced Manufacturing Technology Center. The College’s second annual Legislative Breakfast was held in January and meetings with elected officials have also taken place. The Regional Advisory Council (RAC) has seen expansion of its membership to include more regional and ethnic diversity. Important activities have come out of new dynamic leadership for the RAC, including a breakfast and campus tour for superintendents, school principals and counselors, now in its second year, continues to be very successful. Additionally, the Office of the President’s electronic e-mail newsletter distributed monthly to our community leaders and legislative delegation has grown and is very well-received by multiple internal and external constituencies. The President’s Circle of Student and Faculty Advocates, inaugurated last year, contributed to very positive representation for the College with the newly created ConnSCU system office (Connecticut State Colleges and Universities) and at multiple other events, including the legislative breakfasts and community meeting.

The results of efforts by the Office of Community Engagement also include funding in the following categories: student scholarships, continued funding by Northeast Utilities for students in Engineering Technology; and a major campaign now under way in support of the newly established Advanced Manufacturing Technology Center.

Collaborations with the Waterbury Board of Education and other community organizations have resulted in funding for the College Connections program in manufacturing for the fourth year with the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board (NWRIB). Other collaborations with the NWRIB have resulted in the graduation of 72 students receiving welding certificates, continued funding for our Connecticut Collegiate Awareness and Preparation (ConnCAP) program, and the WAVE (Workforce Achievers Value Education) grant.
Workforce development saw a significant number of grants in support of programs including a Health Investigations Course with Waterbury Hospital where 10 students completed a three-credit course, with five of these students now enrolled at the college taking other credit courses. We partnered in the following grant efforts to support instruction: Health Bridges DOL, Weatherization, Building Performance Analyst, DOE with Hudson Valley CC, CBIA High Growth Jobs Grant (Lean Manufacturing Certificate), SMART Grant, CT Clean Energy Fund Grant for Solar Thermal, TANF Grant with CBIA and CCEF for Solar PV, DOL Incumbent Worker Training, the CT Jobs Bill Program, SOAR, and numerous programs with the WIB including welding. NVCC also was chosen for a national Fulbright Scholar-In-Residence award, the first for the state’s community colleges.

Completion of Presidential Goals 2011-2012

As president of NVCC, I have led efforts and worked closely with the Management Team and colleagues on campus to put forward initiatives that support strategic planning, academic rigor, accountability, student success and community and relationship building with multiple stakeholders in the region. The following is a summary of some of the work undertaken as a College community under my leadership:

1. Successful completion of the second year of the College’s strategic plan *Toward a Splendid College: Naugatuck Valley Community College 2010-2013*, which outlines 5 Strategic Goals; 15 Strategic Initiatives; 10 Anticipated Outcomes. The five goals are:
   i. At NVCC, students achieve their goals.
   ii. NVCC faculty and staff make a difference—at the college, in the community, in their fields and in the lives of students.
   iii. NVCC programs meet and beat industry standards.
   iv. NVCC is an engine of change within Waterbury and the broader community.
   v. NVCC is an effective, performance-based institution.

For updates on progress, please consult *Community Report No. 1, Community Report No. 2, and Progress on our Journey Toward a Splendid College, Midpoint Report on Naugatuck Community College’s Strategic Plan, 2010-2013*. These documents are distributed widely and posted on our website.

2. Chaired, NVCC Institutional Planning Committee, and supported multiple initiatives:

- Preparation of NVCC NEASC Self-Study
- Creation of an Institutional Effectiveness Plan
- Creation of an Academic Master Plan
- Creation of an Enrollment and Retention Management Plan
- Creation of a Marketing Plan
- Creation of a College Development Plan
- Updated Website.
- First year of implementation of a Program Review Plan for cyclical review of programs which do not undergo accreditation by outside agencies amended and in place to begin implementation during academic year 2011-2012. Additionally, academic year 2011-2012 was declared “The Third Year of General Education” at NVCC, engaging the academic community in the identification of general education competencies for all of our courses.
- Continued success of the College Connections program in manufacturing, bringing to campus juniors and seniors from high schools in the region
- Efforts to build enrollments in Engineering Technology and Manufacturing have produced major curricular revisions. The programs received ABET accreditation.
- The IPC Institutional Effectiveness Committee has worked successfully with 30 departments and divisions on setting the foundations for continuous assessment.
3. Expanded Hours for the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE):

In September 2009, the ACE opened its doors to the College community. The mission of the Academic Center for Excellence is to provide students with the resources needed to excel in lifelong learning. Tutorial services and collaborative approaches combine to create a flexible learning environment where students can find assistance and inspiration. The ACE seeks to enable students to meet their courses expectations; to help students develop strategies, skills and behaviors required to be self-directed learners; and to support achievement of their academic goals. The center provides academic advisement, counseling, open computer lab, writing, math and ESL labs, and copier services. ACE saw significant e-tutoring growth this year and expanded its services to our Danbury Center. 22.2% of Waterbury students and 24% of Danbury students utilized ACE services. ACE users are 9% more likely to be retained than the overall population. Continued evaluations of the center indicate that students taking developmental mathematics who availed themselves twice a week of the services offered by ACE had a 100% pass rate in their course; students taking developmental English who were tutored once a week had a 20% higher pass rate than classmates who did not. The ACE now operates 66 hours per week, including Saturdays and Sundays.

4. Curricular and Student Support Innovations

There were a number of significant initiatives designed to enhance teaching and improve retention. Among those initiatives but not limited to, we highlight: The Math Department continued self-paced courses to improve completion rates in remedial math; the Carnegie Statway program, a two-semester math pathway that combines developmental math and statistics, had a successful pilot year with a 71% completion rate compared to the national average of 50%; the College piloted mandatory one-credit First Year Experience (FYE) courses to incoming full-time freshmen; the College expanded support to high-achieving students through the President’s Circle, which inducted six new members this fall; an Honors program was piloted, to be fully implemented by Fall 2012, allowing qualified applicants to graduate with Honors designation on their transcripts in 2013; Twenty NVCC students became members of M.E.N. by forming the Male Encouragement Network, a newly supported group dedicated to addressing the social, environmental, institutional and political barriers toward male college completion.

5. Creation of a Job Placement Center (JPC)

The Job Placement Center was created to provide support for our students in an easily identifiable and accessible location. The JPC represents a new initiative designed to support and facilitate our students’ employment. Over the summer of 2011, work began on the physical renovations of under-utilized space in the Library and in reassigning colleagues to support the work of the Job Placement Center. The better part of this academic year was spent by the staff in the creation of structures, both in the office and online, to support making the connection of students and graduates to jobs. Since opening, the JPC has held 11 workshops, received and posted 210 jobs for students, hosted 78 employers visiting the campus, and assisted 338 students overall. Currently, the director is working with the Office of Institutional Research to create baseline data and begin the process of reporting on their outcomes in support of the College’s Strategic Plan, and most importantly, of our students.

6. Expanded the role of the grounds as laboratories to support learning and campus quality of life

The work of faculty and students in the Horticulture program and in the Agro-Biology Club has resulted in the continued support of a number of our beautiful eight gardens. Students in Horticulture have adopted gardens as part of their class projects. These living laboratories build upon the only Horticulture program in the system. They affirm the College’s commitment to blend rigorous academic study with hands-on service learning. A new project, “Earth Kind” on sustainable roses, began this spring with the planting of 138 different roses by a number of volunteers. The “Earth Kind” Sustainable Rose project is supported by a national grant, in partnership with the NY Botanical Garden and Texas A&M University.
7. Community building and “friend-raising” for the College
The following is a partial list of some of the individuals, institutions and programs we are collaborating with: elected officials representing the College at the local, state, regional and national levels; the Connecticut Community Foundation; the United Way of Waterbury; the Waterbury Chamber of Commerce; the Smaller Manufacturers Association; the Mattatuck Museum; the Waterbury Mayor’s Office Leadership Team to Develop a Plan to End Homelessness in Waterbury; Police Activity League; Danbury CityCenter; Danbury High School; St. Vincent De Paul Soup Kitchen in Waterbury; principals of high schools in the service regions to include the creation of a Presidential Scholarship to support senior high school students coming to campus to take a course; continuing relationships with the Star-base program of the CT National Guard; and the Waterbury Symphony, to name a few. Our upcoming June 1st Community Meeting continues on the efforts begun at the 2010 Community Event in support of strategic planning which produced 40 Common Community Partnership Offers. Additionally, the College continued hosting the Confluencia/Confluence series, published the second issue of a reconfigured *Fresh Ink* literary magazine, continued to collaborate with the campus-based Jane Doe No More Foundation and the Women’s Business Development Center. The door to the first NVCC Women’s Center was opened. The campus hosted the Biennial International Conference on Dominican Studies, and multiple cultural and educational activities, workshops and events, organized and hosted by the Women’s Center.

8. Bridge to College Programs
The Bridge to College programs was created to manage a number of grants through very successful funded proposals and become the institutional vehicle to collaborate with public schools in our service areas. Born out of the strong foundation provided by the ConnCAP program, the Bridge to College is dedicated to providing early intervention and academic support services to selected students ensuring successful completion of high school, college matriculation and college graduation as well as empowering students to achieve their academic goals and to utilize their skills to serve the community through volunteerism.

In our strategic plan, we stated our commitment to serve the surrounding community through a number of initiatives that respond to the area’s educational, social, economic, healthcare and cultural needs. One of the specific strategies delineated under Goal 4 of the plan is the commitment to create and strengthen bridge programs with the local high schools that contribute to preparing college-ready students. These initiatives fall under the Bridge to College Office. They include programs that have been in place for a number of years, such as the Connecticut Collegiate Awareness and Preparation (ConnCap), as well as newly funded initiatives: WIA In-School Youth Program, Community College Scholars (CCS) Program, AmeriCorps and College Access and Challenge (CAC) Program. The Bridge to College program’s significant outside funding totaling $843,858 for academic year 2012-2013 will benefit from an additional $100,000 to fund the College Access and Challenge (CAC) Program, and the first year of a seven-year GEAR UP grant, for a total of $11.2 million to work with three middle schools in the City of Waterbury.

9. CAPSS (Center for Academic Planning and Student Success)
The Center for Academic Planning and Student Success has had a good transition year. The total number of Academic Advisors grew to 112 in April 2012 from the 62 in April 2010 benchmark for this initiative. Initiatives integrated, included but are not limited to the following: Improved communications through weekly updates to Division Directors regarding student hold status; more group initiatives integrated to the advisement process, for example, combined effort with Registrar and Divisions to conduct graduation reviews; increased collaboration with Allied Health Division to support pre-RN and Allied Health students; expanded opportunities for transfer counseling; and additional New Student Success Sessions and their follow up. Center for Academic Planning and Student Services (CAPSS) accomplishments are: three admissions workshops, Disabilities Awareness Month; sponsored the first evening Annual Fall Transfer Fair with 52 colleges represented; created a “student distress” guide with contacts for faculty and staff; and created an exam proctoring guide for Waterbury and Danbury.
10. Growth of the Danbury Center Initiative

The Danbury Center of Naugatuck Valley Community College has experienced a successful academic year. Danbury credit enrollment grew to over 800 students both in Fall 2011 and Spring 2012 as the Center added more and more courses to facilities, shared with the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board and the Connecticut Department of Labor. Much work continues to take place to support residents of Danbury and to continue to build community. The March Confluencia/Confluence took place at the Danbury Palace Theater, and the event was co-sponsored by the management of the theater. After securing additional space to accommodate growing needs in the form of an additional floor to house a tutoring center, faculty/staff room and a student lounge area, we find ourselves needing additional space and to acquire our own lease. Two meetings have been held with Danbury CityCenter officials and area businesses as we plan an event to be held this summer to promote how NVCC can advance our presence there and to determine how we can better meet the job needs of local businesses.

Presidential Goals for Academic Year 2012-2013:

- Successful implementation of the third year of the strategic plan for the College.
- Successful NEASC accreditation and completion of NEASC Self-Study 2012-2013 projections
- Successful full implementation of a new Freshman Year seminar, full implementation of Express Start developmental summer bridge program. Successful preparation for implementation of new system policy on developmental education.
- Successful preparation for full implementation of new system policy on Transfer-Articulation
- Successful recruitment and preparation of 75 students to complete certificates offered by the newly created Advanced Manufacturing Technology Center
- Continued growth of the Bridge to College program and successful implementation of the first year of the GEAR UP middle school initiative
- Expanded services at the Academic Center of Excellence, and the creation of additional innovative programs to support students’ successful navigation of developmental courses and our general education offerings.
- Aligning more firmly the work of Student Services and Academic Affairs to strengthen the continued implementation of a comprehensive Academic Advisement program for the campus.
- Successful implementation of Job Placement Center
- Successful implementation of an Honors Program.
- Full implementation of the proposed plan to expand services in the Danbury area and acquire additional space and our own lease in an appropriate location.
- Build on a new collaboration initiative with Western CT State University
- Continued strengthening of cultural life on campus in particular in our Arts and Humanities area, and progress towards the creation of an International Center for the Arts.
- Continued efforts to expand workforce development programs both on the main campus and at our Danbury site.
- Full implementation of cyclical assessment and program reviews for all departments.
- Creation and full implementation of an active Alumni Association.
- Continue exploration of planning for the construction of a Middle College on campus.
- Increased fund raising to support campus initiatives.