2013-2014: A Year of Powerful Outcomes

Brief Summary:

As academic year 2013-2014 ends, we are about to embark on a series of activities to commemorate 50 years in the history of our institution. Our work, our commitment to mission and what the college represents for so many is tied to the most beautiful and fundamental democratic principles. These principles led to the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and also to the founding of community colleges in Connecticut. We are proud to say that our work continues to honor and support that vision of a just and inclusive society. It is in that spirit that we begin our annual report to the campus and multiple stakeholders.

A challenging year comes to an end with significant accomplishments for Naugatuck Valley Community College. The College continued its trajectory of fiscal responsibility, a growing number of associate degrees and certificates awarded, NEASC accreditation for another ten years and subsequent approval from the Commission on Higher Education Institutions for us to offer associate degrees in Danbury, now officially designated the NVCC Danbury Campus, successful implementation of our second year of the GEAR UP program and the Advanced Manufacturing Technology Center program. Facilities planning had an active year with the upcoming renovation of Founders Hall, the Campus Improvement project and the three laboratory renovations bonded on May 30.

The Institutional Planning Committee continued its work to ensure quality programs and access for students, academic program review presentations were regular features at Cabinet meetings, significant work on outcomes assessment took place and competencies for general education were adopted at our All-College meeting of May 2014, the continued contribution of the College to the social fabric of life was exemplified by the web-based multi-media project “Naniki” authored by our second Fulbright-Scholar in Residence, our hosting of the 5th Biennial Dominican Studies Conference, our participation in the St. Vincent de Paul Soup Kitchen, the continued presence of the Smaller Manufacturers Association of Connecticut offices on campus and hosting of a number of manufacturing-related activities on campus, including the SMA annual meeting, the upcoming Manufacturing Summit, hosted by Kimberly Clark on June 3rd, exemplifying our involvement with industry partners, the numbers of early college opportunities planned and ready for execution in the Fall of 2014, both with the school system in Waterbury and in Danbury, our soon to begin offerings in non-credit Allied Health in New Milford, and the continued growth in the number of rides taken by our students and Waterbury residents who avail themselves of evening bus services in the City of Waterbury.

Implementation of “Toward a Splendid College, NVCC Strategic Plan, 2013-2016” involved colleagues at the College and our community partners in very productive work on behalf of our students. The Office of Community Engagement’s signature event continues this coming June 13th with our Fifth Annual Community Event. In addition, our Academic Center for Excellence, certified by the College Reading and Learning Association’s International Tutor Training Program, continues to have significant impact on student outcomes, our Allied Health graduates continue to have exceptional success in their licensure exams and our Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Counseling (DARC) program has just received national accreditation.
Narrative:

Naugatuck Valley Community College has had a year of powerful achievements. My sixth year as President of the College saw sustained growth in enrollment in Danbury, continued curricular and scheduling innovation, the strengthening of academic support, multiple accomplishments produced through implementation of initiatives in the first year of our new strategic plan, significant improvement in student retention and graduation rates, increased engagement on campus and externally with our community partners, and another year where we celebrate continued growth in the number of associate degrees and certificates to be awarded at commencement on May 29th: 1310 and still counting!

Significant teamwork produced our application to NEASC to be accredited as an instructional site in Danbury and the progress made toward securing larger space to accommodate the growing number of students taking credit courses at our NVCC Danbury Campus. As an engaged academic community working in concert with many colleagues, the College produced the successful competitive submissions which resulted in the awarding of external funding for a number of initiatives that support the continued good work of the Bridge to College Office (funded by ConnCap, the WIA in-School Youth program, Community College Scholars Program, AmeriCorps and College Access and Challenge Program), the Center for Advanced Manufacturing Technology, a Fulbright Artist-in-Residence and the second year of a Gear Up multi-million, multi-year 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 the continued funding of evening bus service to the College and throughout the City of Waterbury, after October 24, 2014. This achievement declared “The most significant public transportation initiative in the State of Connecticut for the year 2011”, contributes immensely to the quality of life in the City of Waterbury as a whole. Reports indicate that since its inception two and a half years ago, it has served over 400,000 residents in the evening. In addition, our students using the U-PASS have taken over 200,000 day and evening rides. The College’s role in bringing evening bus service to the City of Waterbury was praised by members of the NEASC Commission and is noted in the College’s letter of accreditation. We have recently begun conversations around our initiative to be undertaken next year to secure bus service between our main campus in Waterbury and our Danbury campus.

Another particularly significant initiative, now in its fifth year, is that, as a direct result of an initiative by our students, the St. Vincent de Paul Soup Kitchen continues to be open on Sundays. This is an effort led by our Hispanic Student Union and supported by Webster Bank which has seen students, faculty, staff and management volunteering at the St. Vincent de Paul Soup Kitchen every Sunday of the year, including holidays.

The College successfully managed a severely reduced budget, made worse by an increase in the cost of fringe benefits, while continuing to support our core mission by earmarking tuition revenues to provide scholarships for students. The unexpected additional $180,000 cost of fringe benefits contributed significantly to our estimated $125,000 shortfall. The budget distribution formula resulted in an additional transfer out of $1,000,000, as compared to last year. Management is sound and fiscally responsible here but the challenges of this past year have been overwhelming and need to be recognized in future budget allocations. At this point, the College cannot sustain educational integrity, in the face of additional transfers out and unfunded mandates (e.g. SEBAC negotiated 5% salary increase, not funded). This year Capital Bond Funds were used to support planning for a campus-wide improvement plan, the renovation
of Founders Hall and the renovation of three science labs. It is our hope that support from Transform CSU 2020 will also provide a significant benefit in support of our good work.

Our Advanced Manufacturing Technology Center programs had another stellar year. On May 29th, a total of 113 Level I and Level II certificates will be awarded. 27 Level II students participated in internships provided by 21 manufacturing companies. Job offers are in process, and at this time 17 offers have been extended, with many more in progress. The work of our Manufacturing Center was supported by the NVCC Foundation which worked with the College to raise $55,000 to support the program and by our partners in the Northwest CT Workforce Investment Board which supported many students. Additionally, the Smaller Manufacturers Association, which continues to occupy an office at the College, has both assisted our students with job placement and the College with the creation of additional opportunities for our students and for local manufacturers, such as the support provided by the Precision Manufacturers Association.

The concepts of “community” and “student-centeredness” are at the heart of our work in support of our high aspirations for our students. We have established core values centered on student success, respect and trust, effective communications, support for human diversity, civic engagement and accountability. These values serve us well always but, most particularly, during academic year 2013-2014, as we continued to be engaged and productive despite an environment of budgetary uncertainty.

The Institutional Planning Committee, established five years ago, is our mechanism to ensure that goals are supported and carried through, and it continues to serve as an effective vehicle for communication, goal setting, and follow up. With the support of the IPC and the enthusiastic engagement of stake-holders we completed the first year of work delineated in our current strategic plan “Toward a Splendid College: Naugatuck Valley Community College 2013-2016”. Beginning with the Management Team and engaging multiple stake-holders, we worked diligently together to ensure that the first year of our strategic plan would be successful as it integrated system and college-wide priorities and NEASC accrediting expectations.

Significant curricular development and syllabi revision took place in this “The Fifth Year of General Education” on campus, completing vehicles necessary for outcomes assessment of competencies to be acquired as a result of the teaching and learning in our general education courses, and culminating in the adoption of competency based general education requirements closely aligned with the BOR system priorities. As the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities system works on the implementation of policy on general education and transferability, the thoughtful and generous work of our faculty on the General Education Committee ensured that NVCC would be ready for the next phase of the deliberations. Enrollments in Danbury for Spring 2014 continued to climb to 448 FTE and 977 headcount, representing an 10% growth in FTE compared to the Spring 2013 semester. Additionally, recognizing that at the May 2013 meeting of the Board of Regents, our Danbury Center received approval for the offering of two associate degrees and two certificates at the site, NEASC has granted us accreditation to offer associate degrees and to have the center designated as a campus in Danbury. We are in the process of working with the system office and state agencies on acquiring a lease for larger space. Workforce development activities in Danbury continue to produce significant numbers of non-credit certificates.

Much effort has also been devoted to engaging in careful assessment and review of a wide array of academic programs, with those reviews culminating in presentations before the President’s Cabinet. The findings of these program reviews will inform planning and priority
setting for Academic Affairs. The College continued to use our facilities efficiently and in ways that are supportive of students’ needs by offering 6:30 a.m. and Sunday afternoon classes, continuing to offer a Late-Start semester and creating a Winter Session. The Academic Center for Excellence continued to offer tutoring services, seven days and four evenings a week; we enjoyed weekend support funded as a one-time only grant by the NVCC Foundation for the ACE and Library. The college-wide Advisement Initiative rolled out in the Fall of 2010, is in full swing, and has added 45-credit clinics, multiple faculty and staff trainings and the development of a handbook to support advisement which is in its final draft, ready for implementation this coming fall semester. All full time faculty members have significant advisement responsibilities.

Student Services continued to reach out to the community in supportive ways. The Financial Aid Office held a series of interactive workshops for current and prospective students to help them and their families understand the financial aid process. More than 700 students and parents attended the largest New Student Orientation in NVCC history in the fall and approximately 600 students and their parents attended the College’s Second Annual Open House this spring to meet with professors and Student Services staff, tour the campus and learn about degree programs and certificates.

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. The work undertaken by Oonya Kempadoo, NVCC Fulbright-Scholar in Residence for Academic Year 2013-2014, culminated with the unveiling of the multimedia literary project “Naniki”, a collaboration of Ms. Kempadoo, students in her literature class, members of the Waterbury larger community and graduate students at Yale University. We continued to reconfigure common spaces on campus to support intellectual discourse outside traditional classroom walls, including new seating areas, and to provide responsive student services, essential ingredients for student success. The grounds, especially during the fall and spring semesters sing with love and hope, as they provide our students with multiple opportunities to learn, to celebrate community and to commune with nature.

In sum and to conclude, it has been an excellent year for Naugatuck Valley Community College because we are a committed and caring academic community. There is transparency and engagement. The values that guide our work and support our students are recorded powerfully in both small and big ways around campus, in our classrooms and in the engagement of our faculty, staff and students.

The summer affords us an opportunity to reflect and to plan, as we move forward with our summer programs and plan for our next academic year. We will take this time to reflect on the journey we have undertaken together with intelligence, engaged minds and generous hearts, and to consider the difference we are making in so many lives and how we might continue to increase access to quality education for our students and the communities we serve.

Mil gracias y bendiciones.

Daisy Cocco De Filippis, Ph.D.
President
Presidential Goals, Academic Year 2014-2015

- Successful implementation of the second year of the strategic plan for the College
- Successful implementation of Public Act No. 12-40
- Successful implementation of a new system policy on Transfer-Articulation
- Substantial contribution to the success of Transform CSCU 2020
- Continued growth of the Bridge to College program and successful implementation of the third year of the GEAR UP middle school initiative
- Expanded services at the Academic Center for Excellence, and the creation of more innovative programs to support students’ successful navigation of developmental courses and our general education offerings
- Successful alignment of the work of Student Services and Academic Affairs to strengthen the comprehensive Academic Advisement Program on campus and to enhance a faculty development and training program
- Continued implementation of the Honors Program, to include the development and implementation of a capstone honors seminar
- Successful completion of the move of our Danbury campus to larger quarters
- 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
- Continued cyclical assessment and program reviews for all departments and an institutional effectiveness initiative to ensure that strategic goals are met
- Full implementation of an active Alumni Association that contributes to the work of the institution
- Successful implementation of a number of early college opportunities for students at the Waterbury Career Academy and Danbury High School. Continued exploration of planning for the construction of an Early College on campus and early college opportunities for students in the communities we serve
- Fund raising to support campus activities