President’s Comments

Faculty Meeting

May 1, 2012

I want to begin with a statement of thanks to all you do. Earlier this month, Clayton State was identified as one of the Top 100 places to work in Metro Atlanta—15th for large organizations—this reflects responses of more than 35% of colleagues working here. Or as noted in the AJC “So there you have it. If you are listed on these pages, it’s a pretty big deal.” We will send out in the next few weeks some save the date cards for a campus party in the early fall to celebrate this.

While we have still to analyze the specific results applied by you to all of us, there is a pattern clear of perceptions:

A belief in the direction of the institution

A belief in support for and a commitment to continued improvements in communications within and about the institution.

And a belief that the organization is focused on its people and the people it serves. And we don’t always get it right, but we will always try.

Literally scores of pages have been produced to indicate first year progress for the strategic planning initiative (outlined in October). And our intention is to have a report card for the campus and for us. But it will certainly include items such as the completion of a review of our institutional brand and results of that review shared throughout the year by our partners at STAMATS. (See charts distributed—with announcements to follow). And it will include the preparation of web presence for that branding by the shared conversion to the Content Management System—the end of Microsoft’s support for FrontPage will lead to a revolution in our campus ability to use web tools to communication—jointly managed by OITS and University Communications. The report card will certainly include the recruitment of Ms. Catherine Troelstra, currently major gifts officer at Clemson University, who will join us in June as new Vice President for External Relations. Our joy here is only dimmed by the degree we will be missing General Steve Stephens, who will be retiring at the end of June. Let me express my personal appreciation to Steve for his incredible loyalty to the University and its students, faculty and staff—and for his help in making me feel at home at Clayton State and the larger community. And the report card will include the excellent work of the budget office and the planning and budget advisory committee to use the budget to drive strategic directions. And the report card will include the provost office’s excellent work with the faculty senate to modify our governance and our personnel policies documents. And it will include the collaborative work of academic and student affairs to modify our thinking about classroom management issues and student success. It will clearly include the acquisition of Clayton Station as an additional location for student learning and campus life. And it will include the successful recruitment of a new Athletic Direct, Carl McAloose, whose task is to continue to build on the balance of athletic and academic successes which are the hallmark of great Division II athletic programs—4 academic all Americans last year, yet another of the 22 conference championships—and by my count several college academic award winners we believe the numbers will continue to be strong.

Even as we are positioned to adapt to change, we must be prepared for many changes from external sources. While we had the best budget outcomes from the state that we have had in many years, the state has still not provided support for salary increases for our colleagues. And the 10% of available funds devoted to increase support for positions remains but start—but hopefully a good start.

Complete College Georgia and Projected formula funding discussions linked to campus performances in Complete College Georgia Goals lie ahead. (See for example, <http://www.usg.edu/fiscal_affairs/documents/Consolidated_Formula_Presentation_-_November_Board_-_Final.pdf> So too does our work on the SACS reaffirmation work, which will be a chance to grow as a campus.

 I am convinced that we will find ways to succeed in making our case. That case states that support for the faculty and staff and students of Clayton State is a great investment for Georgia. Sometimes when changes occur, questions are asked—as they should be. What’s all this about on-line, for example? And what’s in this for us. And my answer is that we must go in this and other directions, even as our plan uses innovation and active learning and community engagement and partnerships and diversity as means for adhering to our core values of learning writ large:

Peter Durden observes: “Few observers doubt that distance learning will be an important platform for the delivery and sharing of information and practical knowledge in the coming decades. It is already effective at delivering workplace training and adult continuing education. Growing evidence also suggests that it may be a useful supplement to liberal education--providing discrete knowledge or even coursework not readily available in a particular residential setting…

Disenfranchised students, as much as their affluent and advantaged peers, deserve a chance at a residential, liberal education--not an unproven alternative. Those students deserve the opportunity to break the destructive cycle, finally, and receive, not just placebos, but the education that they need. They deserve a chance to obtain the type of education that will substantially increase their access to power and success.”

<http://www.aacu.org/CALL/testimonials/CALL-durden.cfm> Peter Durden, Making the case for liberal education, 2001

Jeff Borden, notes in August, 2011 “the reality is technology will not replace the teacher, even in fully online learning environments. Although some instructors fear technology will increase their workload, effective education technology tools provide instructors with new ways to better engage and teach students, without additional demands on time.”

“…This new generation of educational leaders will be called on to use technology in the fully online and blended learning classrooms, thereby changing the way courses are taught. Instead of demanding memorization and feedback, instructors will employ tools that enable application of knowledge…” <http://elearnmag.acm.org/featured.cfm?aid=2024704> “ Rich Demillo of Georgia Tech wrote this week in a similar vein:

The classroom is the handmaiden of a factory model of higher education, and the colleges that are truly strategically focused are already abandoning that model. Their technology investments will be aimed at reinventing education.

And with leadership in academic affairs and from new plans for technology, we will find those leaders here!!

Let me end where I began—thanks—to the leadership team who has the unenviable task of translating me. To Valerie Lancaster and Brenda Carr, I say thanks every day for helping us every day. And to faculty staff and students, who for me make this the best place to work in Metropolitan Atlanta—every day.