**INTERVIEW WITH MARK KISELICA  
October 30, 2009**

**What attracted you to this position?** For many years I have taken a number of leadership roles at TCNJ, and as a result, I developed close ties with people across the campus. Through this work, I also discovered that I enjoy working with people in different disciplines. Since the Vice Provost position involves many cross-disciplinary initiatives, it had a great appeal to me.

**What aspect of the job description grabbed you?**  I am excited about many aspects of the job, including what my responsibilities will be and are. One of them is starting the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. In my position as Vice Provost, I will be in charge of getting that center started, with consultation from the Teaching and Learning Program Council, which is an advisory group of faculty members, staff members and students from across the campus. I’m very excited about what we have planned so far: we have tentative plans for our first event, which will be on January 27th, and we’re doing it in conjunction with the special celebration honoring Eunice Shriver. We plan on, as part of that event, bringing a nationally renowned expert on helping students with disabilities because we have learned there are many faculty members on campus that would like some more advice about how to work with students with special needs. We have other plans to develop major events on grading and the interrelated issues of advising, career education and instruction. We are also in the process of conducting a campus-wide assessment regarding services that can enhance the teaching and learning environment at TCNJ. We are also using an excellent draft mission statement that had been developed in 2008 by the Provost’s Ad Hoc Committee on The Teaching and Learning Initiative as our starting point for refining a mission statement for the center.

In addition to my ongoing work associated with the development of the center, I have been working closely with several administrative units and services on the campus that report to me, including International and Off-Campus Programs, Summer Programs, the Liberal Learning Program, the Bonner Center, the Municipal Land Use Center, the WILL program, SOSA, and MUSE. I have monthly meetings with the coordinators or directors of those respective programs, and my work with those individuals has been very exciting because it immerses me in many important initiatives of the college.

Another wonderful aspect of my work is that I report directly to Provost Carol Bresnahan. She has been a great mentor for me, and our weekly meetings are helping me to further define my role as Vice Provost and the duties of my office for the near future.

**What kind of programming do you anticipate this year besides the event on the 27th of January?**  My colleagues and I on the Teaching and Learning Council are in the process of conducing a campus-wide assessment that will help me to get a more quantitative feel for the needs of faculty, staff and student needs regarding teaching and learning. We were under the impression that there had been a pool of data that we could rely on for this work, but as it turned out, some of the prior reports pertaining to teaching and learning didn’t have much detail about specific needs related to teaching and learning, just support for the a general idea that faculty wanted assistance with their teaching. Since that is the case, what I want to do with the assistance of the Teaching and Learning Program Council is to hold focus group discussions with various stakeholders at TCNJ and to conduct a more quantitatively orientated survey about teaching and learning needs. These sources of information should provide some very rich data about how the center can enhance the teaching and learning process at TCNJ. Based on some preliminary data I have received, it appears that there are some needs that cut across the campus. As I already mentioned, one is helping students with special needs, and another is examining how grading is linked to student learning. A third is promoting the intersection of advising, career education and instruction. There is also a desire by many faculty members for the center to support additional projects that would support the infusion of quantitative reasoning into the curriculum. Those are just a few of the things that are percolating right now.

**This center is something that faculty have lobbied very hard for a long time. Is there anything that you would like the Senate or the faculty as a whole to be doing to help as you develop this?** I can think of an immediate answer and then I have another request of the Senate. The first is we may need the assistance of the Senate to try to collect the data that I mentioned. Historically, I have found that when the Faculty Senate is behind an initiative, there is much more buy-in by faculty across the campus. I recognize that the Senate is an invaluable resource to me in trying to achieve the objectives of this new center.

A separate issue that in some ways overlaps with the work of the new center is promoting interdisciplinarity at TCNJ, which is an initiative we haven’t discussed yet and which I haven’t had a chance to get started on because just this past week I finished my teaching responsibilities. However, once I am settled into the Vice Provost position full time, I will head a campus-wide discussion on the issues pertaining to interdisciplinarity. Last year, when Tom Hagedorn and I co-chaired the Ad Hoc Committee on the Structure of the Schools of Arts and Communication and Culture and Society, numerous faculty members brought up interdisciplinary issues during our conversations about structure. In fact, we identified 13 different issues pertaining to interdisciplinarity, which we highlighted in the final report of the committee. Based on that report and her own commitment to interdisciplinarity, Provost Bresnahan decided that a special task force should explore the topic of interdisciplinarity in more depth, and she has asked me to chair that task force. I will turn to the Senate for help on this work because I know the topic is of interest to faculty across the campus.

**You are also charged with overseeing the Liberal Learning program. What do you see as the strengths of what we are doing and what would you like to see change over time?** There are several strengths of the Liberal Learning Program. The first is that the program provides our students with a strong foundation in a variety of subjects and helps them to develop a wide range of skills that will serve them well for the rest of their lives. The academic transformation process we completed a few years ago has enhanced the delivery of the program through the transformation-prompted discussions about what we actually want to do in our classes and in the services outside of the classroom that support learning. As a result of those discussions, I think our faculty and staff on the whole have become much more reflective about their pedagogy and practices. Looking at the development of the Freshman Seminar Program, it is clear that a growing number of FSP classes are being linked to community-engaged learning experiences, which is really a wonderful marriage. It creates a kind of reflective learning that can live with students for many years to come and help them retain the material learned through their courses, whatever the subject matter, in a rich way that may not happen when more traditional modes of instruction are used. It is also great to see that the College has put a commitment toward promoting writing across the curriculum. I am really glad to see that conversations across campus are promoting ways that the skills that are a part of good writing become more diversified, such as the movement to address quantitative reasoning in the papers that students write.

Some of the challenges that I see ahead have to do with the College’s ability to provide resources to some of the crucial aspects of Liberal Learning. For example, we have brought on some very talented adjunct faculty members to teach crucial writing courses here, but probably not enough space to adequately serve the needs of the instructors. So I am in the process of exploring how we can get a commitment of a permanent infrastructure so that people who provide those important services to our students have what they need to do their jobs. We also have to move ahead with assessment in both more varied and deeper ways. There are three primary forms of data that should be collected in a comprehensive assessment process – enumerative data, opinion data, and outcome data. Some departments at the college are collecting all three types of data, and some are collecting none. So, we have to find some consistency of data collection across campus, and then use that data to guide us with enhancing the curriculum. There are still questions people have about the pros and cons of transformation: What did we gain from transformation? What have we lost? What are some of the areas where we can make improvements? I think working closely with our colleagues in institutional research and faculty across the campus on assessment issues will help us get a better handle on what transformation has brought and what we still need to do.

**We are almost out of time and we still haven’t touched on a lot of the aspects of your job. 15% of your job description is supposed to be promoting faculty-student collaboration, community engagement, and global programs. We talked about some of this, but this feels like a huge grouping of items to me. I was curious if you had priorities here that you thought needed particular attention.**  I sense that both the administration and the faculty value the community engagement movement that has occurred. I think that it is important for me as Vice Provost to affirm the good community-engaged work that is being done on a regular basis. Doing so will enhance student morale and promote the continuity of the fine activities that our students have been involved in. I also think that we have to think carefully about how to adequately support that movement. There are major logistical challenges associated with trying to take 1300 freshmen and make sure they have some truly meaningful community-engaged learning experience. For example, Wednesdays are their primary days for placing students with the community partners that provide our students with community engaged experiences. However, there has been a gradual growth of courses being taught on Wednesdays, which makes it more difficult for the staff of the Bonner Center to place students in the community. I think some discussions about this issue have to occur. I have already had a related conversation with the deans about how to protect that time because if we truly value community-engaged learning, we have to figure out a way to preserve time in the schedule for it to happen.

Another challenge is there had been, in terms of the model that was developed a few years ago, two phases of community-engaged learning. Currently, all of our students are engaged in the first phase, but we haven’t reached a campus-wide consensus as to what phase two should be. Over the course of the next year, we have to enter into some discussions of what that should that actually look like. Should it be for everyone? Should it be for select students? Should the types of experience vary by discipline? There are different ideas floating around. So, one of my jobs, working with the staff from the Bonner Center, would be to get a feel for those ideas and see if we can come up with a plan that gets us to phase 2.

**Finally, is there anything you would like to say about anything we haven’t touched on?** I have a privileged life, which includes my work in the academe and at TCNJ. I consider myself very fortunate and honored to be the Vice Provost of a fine institution that provides a distinguished education to students at both the undergraduate and graduate level. I’m very grateful for the people who supported my being chosen for this position, and I look forward to engaging with my colleagues as I move forward with my duties.

**Thank you for the job you are doing and thank you for the interview.**