



TO: President-Designate R. Barbara Gitenstein

FROM: The Faculty Senate

DATE: 16 November 1998

TOPIC: The Ten Big Issues Confronting TCNJ

During your campus visit in September, the Faculty Senate Executive Board called to your attention a cluster of ten issues. The full Senate has since broken itself into ten ad hoc committees, in order to frame each issue in greater detail. Those committees each drafted a report. At its meeting on 11 November, the Senate voted unanimously to approve the following document for your consideration.

Under the heading of **PROCESS**, we include three issues: Decision Making, Governance, and Strategic Planning.

Under the heading of **TEACHING AND SCHOLARSHIP**, we include four issues: Learning, Scholarship, The Library and Information Technology, and Adjunct Faculty.

Under the heading of **STUDENTS**, we include three issues: Student Growth and Development, Diversity in a Global Context, and Affordability.

The Faculty Senate Executive Board looks forward to discussing these and other matters with you during your upcoming visit.

Part One: Process

Decision Making

The process of decision making at The College of New Jersey is deeply flawed and in need of substantial change. In recent years any semblance of collegial decision making has disappeared. Top administrators have paid lip service to collegial dialogue but have practiced rigid centralization.

The defects of overcentralization are now apparent. A small circle of upper-level decision-makers has worked in virtual isolation. Academic deans and department chairs have been left to implement decisions made without consultation. Faculty and staff have been marginalized. Overall morale has plummeted.

A fresh start is needed. Academic decisions should be made in a collegial manner, taking advantage of faculty expertise. Administration and faculty must commit to an open exchange of information and ideas, tempered by mutual respect. Mid-level administrators, faculty, and staff need institutionalized means of presenting proposals to upper-level administrators. A structure must be created that allows for ideas to be discussed, consensus reached, and policies developed and implemented. We need to employ the best people, give them real authority, and hold them responsible for their performance.

For TCNJ to flourish we must reinvigorate our decision-making processes. Suitable structures, combined with a new atmosphere of trust and collegiality, will liberate heretofore-stifled talent, energy, and creativity. The following two sections on Governance and Strategic Planning will place matters of Process in more detailed perspective.

Governance

The governance system must provide a framework for effective collegial decision making. Unfortunately, the faculty has no confidence in current arrangements. A rebuilding process must be initiated.

In 1990 the governance system at the college was significantly restructured. Under the new system, the work of the college was divided among nine standing committees. Other councils and advisory committees were also established for advisory functions. Committee membership on standing committees generally consisted of 10 faculty, 5 students, 2 staff, and 4-7 administrators. A steering committee was established to oversee the governance system. Committees were asked to give advice and make recommendations to the President or other appropriate executive officers. Policy, procedures, and procedural implementation followed a ten-step approval process. Complete documentation of the system is contained in *College Governance Structure and Processes* (February 27, 1997, second revision) which is on the web.

Those with complaints about the system generally characterize it as complex, bureaucratic, and administrative in tone. It fails to generate timely and meaningful faculty input. The document defines administrative prerogative

broadly while narrowing shared governance. Many committees can only advise, and such advice can be brushed aside. The ten-step approval process, which requires time for both information sharing and responses from all constituencies, is not well understood. Contributing to the administrative tone of the system is a faculty perception that issues are decided by upper-level administrators without reference to governance. An administrative tone is also a byproduct of the permanent administrative membership that exists on most committees. The institutional memory of such permanent members may in theory be helpful, but it is not counterbalanced by any comparable influence from the Faculty Senate or the Student Government Association. The absence of any direct connection between the Faculty Senate and the existing collegewide committees has set the stage for gridlock and acrimony; the need for restructuring here is especially apparent.

Under current circumstances the system of governance has fallen into a state of decay. Seats on key committees go by default to untenured faculty, who are obligated to demonstrate service commitments but who are particularly unlikely to challenge administrative priorities. It would be wise to restrict untenured faculty and staff from chairing standing committees. Service expectations for tenure and reappointment decisions must be revised to afford other opportunities for untenured faculty.

In order to address the problems it faces in decision making, governance, and planning, the college should establish a task force on governance. It might be appropriate to hire an external consultant to review the existing system and make recommendations to the task force. Key issues include but are not limited to: 1. How are decisions made? 2. Who participates in decision making? 3. When and how do affected constituencies gain input into the system? 4. How can governance be restructured so as to rekindle faculty confidence and participation? 5. What is the appropriate relationship between collegial governance and the Board of Trustees?

Strategic Planning

Effective strategic planning requires a shared vision of the institutional mission and a process to review institutional goals and objectives on an ongoing basis so that they reflect the evolving needs of its various stakeholders. The absence of any such shared vision or process of review has become a gnawing problem. Top administrators have systematically excluded faculty and staff from strategic planning.

For the past two decades, the strategic plan for the college has had a single goal—student recruitment—and a policy focus on activities that would support recruitment of students with high SAT scores and class rank. TCNJ's emphasis

on student recruitment has had several facets. To appeal to students during pre-enrollment campus visits, the college has invested in tasteful landscaping and in Georgian architecture that evokes the image of an elite small college. Athletic programs have been promoted. Residential and dining facilities have been expanded and upgraded. Above all, the college has used merit scholarships and aggressive salesmanship to attract good students.

Had the recruitment program been combined with consistent academic upgrading, the faculty would have no complaint. Unfortunately academics have too often taken a back seat. The office of Academic Affairs has long failed to provide direction or leadership. Faculty efforts to upgrade educational quality—and to build programs to challenge excellent students—have been rebuffed. As will be explained in fuller detail below, decisions about hiring full-time faculty have been made in haphazard fashion, support for scholarship remains inadequate, the library has been neglected, and a revolving door of adjunct faculty continue to labor for low wages.

The time for fresh strategic planning has come; indeed it is long overdue. Student recruitment remains essential, but it can no longer be so narrowly defined as in the past. Because TCNJ has put itself in the spotlight as an exemplary “public ivy,” it may expect closer scrutiny. Such scrutiny may already have begun (see *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 13 Nov. 1998, p. A39-40, which highlights TCNJ’s inclusion on a list of “most overrated” colleges). Only by investing in the academic program will the college be able to deliver the quality of education that its students and the wider public now expect.

Part Two: Teaching and Scholarship

Learning

The college community is unified in its dedication to student learning; however, there are several areas where this mission has been clouded. The following paragraphs highlight ways in which TCNJ could more effectively promote student learning.

The development of a vibrant college community depends on the support of faculty as teacher-scholars. To develop as teacher-scholars, and thus bring their fields alive to their students, the faculty must have the time necessary to 1) interact with students both in and out of the classroom, 2) prepare challenging and innovative curricula, 3) thoroughly assess student performance, 4) interact with one another and exchange ideas, and 5) participate in the advancement of their fields. The current system does not provide faculty with the time and resources needed to develop this kind of

academic community. The college must encourage faculty involvement in all of these areas, and recognize the complexity of the commitment that faculty have made to promoting student learning.

Meaningful input into pedagogical decisions must be solicited from departments. Aside from teaching load, issues such as class size, course and program curricula, and advising/mentoring shape each TCNJ faculty member's ability to foster student learning. The recent push towards the centralization of decisions about these important issues is pedagogically unsound and demoralizing for teaching professionals. Clearly, the college must be run in a cost-effective manner. However, within broad guidelines, specific decisions about curricula, class size, and advising must remain at the department/program level.

The primary consideration in allocating academic space on campus should be that the facilities are conducive to student learning. This means providing adequate classroom space dedicated to each discipline, and creating additional spaces that promote interactions between faculty and students. Instructors frequently teach in several different buildings, and are regularly scheduled into rooms not designed for the needs of the specific discipline. Professors and students also need additional meeting spaces that could be equipped with journals and other materials appropriate for the particular discipline. Finally, when new facilities are being built, they should meet the discipline-specific needs of faculty and departments.

Today the College lacks sufficient hardware and adequate support staff to allow more than a few knowledgeable and interested faculty to support student learning with appropriate technology. Critical resources are scarce and unequally distributed, and support for the pedagogical dimension of teaching with technology is woefully lacking. The solution requires leadership that understands how technology can benefit our academic mission, and provides the material support and the appropriately skilled support staff to foster such growth.

Scholarship

Ongoing scholarly achievement distinguishes a high quality faculty. It is indispensable to a dynamic education. Faculty should impart to students a strong sense of inquiry and convey how knowledge is acquired in their discipline. Faculty should serve as intellectual role models. These qualities are best achieved by active scholars.

Institutional support in the form of time and resources is essential to build and sustain a faculty of teacher-scholars. Unfortunately current support and

recognition of scholarship at TCNJ are incompatible with the expectations held for faculty and with the type of institution we hope to become. We lack: 1) a clear definition of scholarship within various disciplines; 2) adequate resources in support of scholarly activity; 3) an environment that fosters the exchange of ideas and interactions between faculty; and 4) clear, consistent standards and expectations for scholarly accomplishment, particularly as related to reappointment, tenure, and promotion.

Approaches to scholarship and how accomplishments are recognized and assessed vary among disciplines. Provided that adequate resources are available institutionally, decisions concerning the level of expectation and what activities and personnel are to be supported are best left to those within each discipline. Decisions regarding support of scholarship should be based on an assessment of a faculty member's past record of accomplishment, including publications, books, exhibits, etc. New faculty should be assessed on the basis of scholarly promise.

While the type of direct support varies among disciplines, the common thread in support required for scholarship is time and resources. At an institution such as TCNJ, where extensive student-faculty interactions outside of the classroom characterize the education offered, teaching loads of faculty who demonstrate a history of serious scholarly endeavor must be regularly reduced. The number of faculty who qualify for such support has increased steadily, outstripping the ability of the Committee on Faculty Institutional Research and Sabbatical Leave (FIRSL) to provide sufficient awards of time and resources.

Within the governance system, current reappointment, tenure, and promotion documents contain stated criteria that favor scholarship in direct support of teaching or which involves students. All types of scholarship, whether or not it meets those criteria, enhance teaching and should be valued. Student involvement should be encouraged, but not favored. The term teacher-scholar describes the dual commitment faculty should have as first-rate educators. A community of teacher-scholars must be nurtured by the administration.

Scholarship is the cornerstone of an outstanding college. Therefore, it must become a factor in policy decisions made at every level of the institution.

The Library and Information Technology

A college of TCNJ's stature needs a modern library in which students have ample access to books, journals, and electronic media. The Library and Information Technology issues in particular need of attention include the management of Library and Information Services, the library building, funding for computing resources, faculty lines in the Library, and the Library

acquisitions budget.

The marriage of Library Services and Information Management allowed the library, which relies heavily on computing resources for all of its operations, to work closely with Information Management. In return, Information Management benefited from having a voice on the academic side of campus. The key position of Dean of Library and Information Management must be filled as soon as possible after a Provost is hired. Librarians and faculty should serve on the search committee.

Recently, the interim administration has launched a library building initiative with the goal of having plans prepared by spring 1999. We applaud the decision to move forward on this important project. However, we need to ensure that librarians, faculty, and students are all consulted as these plans take shape. The new President and a new Dean of Library and Information Services should oversee the planning process.

The College depends on computer resources for all of its operations. Today, computing resources must be requested many months in advance. This limits the flexibility of faculty in choosing the best possible resources for instruction and research. We recommend that computer resources budgets become more like the library acquisitions budget, where individual titles to be purchased are often unknown at the time of the budget request.

Librarian lines have been reduced by one-third over the last four years, thereby diminishing Library services. There should be no further reductions of faculty lines in the Library and if possible, a reinstatement of lost lines.

Finally, the College's superior students and faculty require resources for learning, teaching, and scholarship appropriate to their needs. The College must live up to its commitment of providing 2% of its budget for Library acquisitions.

Adjunct Faculty

Many departments must rely heavily on adjunct faculty. The administration should authorize additional full-time appointments in order to reach the goal of no more than 15% of classes taught by adjuncts, as called for in the College's Institutional Plan.

Although the College's over-reliance on adjuncts needs to be corrected, most adjunct instructors are talented and committed teachers. They deserve reasonable wages, effective mentoring, and working conditions commensurate with their important function. Adjuncts often do not receive information on

various resources that are readily available to full-time faculty. They are often unfamiliar with the college's physical plant and with institutional procedures regarding record keeping, attendance, exams, syllabi, grading, and other matters. Moreover, in many departments they have inadequate space to hold office hours and no computers to support their courses. In general, greater efforts should be made to integrate adjunct faculty into the life of the College. When possible, they should be involved in relevant departmental decision making.

The most significant problem regarding adjuncts is their low pay. Rutgers pays a minimum of \$2,250 for a three-credit course, versus TCNJ's current minimum of \$1,425. Current subminimal salaries produce poor morale and high rates of turnover among adjunct faculty. Adjunct salaries must be raised to a competitive level in order for the college to attract the best adjunct faculty. The college should establish compensation scales for adjunct faculty that take into account both qualifications and experience.

Adjunct teachers should have teaching evaluations done in their courses. Department chairs should help adjunct faculty place these evaluations in perspective, identifying strengths and pinpointing possible areas for improvement. There is no need for evaluations to go above the department level unless a department requests a salary increase for an adjunct faculty member.

Part Three: Students

Student Growth and Development

Over the last ten years the college has successfully and consistently recruited high-achieving students. We compete directly with Rutgers University for the best students in the state. For those of us who have been on this campus for more than ten years the improvement in the academic preparation of the incoming freshmen is apparent. We are very fortunate to have the pleasure of teaching such well-qualified students. When our college gets high rankings in national magazines, the quality of our students is the number one criterion that puts our institution among the top colleges.

Unfortunately, these national rankings are less likely to measure the "value-added" to a student's education as a result of attending a college or university. It is our responsibility as an institution that puts learning first to ensure that a TCNJ diploma means more than high admissions standards. We need to build on our successes in attracting academically talented students and focus now on the academic growth of those students during their four years on this campus. We need to be certain that we are offering our students academic

programs of the caliber they deserve and an academic environment that continually develops their talents. When our students graduate, they should have the preparation that will put them among the top college graduates in the state and the nation.

In order to offer the best educational environment to our students during their time at TCNJ, we need to assess our current academic performance. We should identify our academic strengths and determine ways to overcome weaknesses. The first step in any assessment process is to define institutional and departmental goals. A major goal should be to focus on “value-added”—how our well-prepared students develop while at TCNJ.

There must be a campus-wide understanding that we put learning first. It is imperative that the new administration and the faculty work together to concentrate efforts and resources on supporting academic programs. We need a well-equipped Library and computer facilities, as well as more specialized resources for specific programs. Fiscal concerns must be considered but these concerns should not prevent the planning of an optimal learning-centered environment. Academic strengthening must take center stage at TCNJ.

Diversity in a Global Context

Diversity must be more than a hollow slogan. The educational experience at TCNJ would be enhanced by the presence of more minorities, recent immigrants, and international students. High-achieving students in the 21st century need a global perspective—including a greater emphasis on international studies and foreign languages. More TCNJ students should study abroad. These issues involve admissions and recruitment. They also involve the experiences of students once they enroll here.

By strengthening its admissions standards, as measured by SATs and high school class rank, TCNJ has attracted an increasingly capable student body. Its success in this area has exceeded that of almost all other former teachers colleges in the United States. The faculty enthusiastically support what has been accomplished through a selective admissions process.

Nevertheless, there is still room for improvement. TCNJ could and should attract a more diverse student body. Homogeneity, whether defined in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, or other factors, is not a necessary state of affairs. Developing and extending affirmative action programs geared toward increasing diversity should be one of the college's foremost objectives. Serious consideration should be given to promising admission to the highest ranking students in *all* New Jersey high schools—for

example the top two or three percent—an approach that appears to have worked successfully elsewhere in American higher education.

In one area in particular, college policy has directly promoted homogeneity. A school that once enrolled significant numbers of non-traditional age students is now well on its way to becoming age homogeneous. Between 1991-92 and 1995-96, the percentage of undergraduates over the age of twenty-four fell from 17.8% to 11.8%, even as the percentage of transfer students remained stable. In practice, full-time transfer students of traditional college age have replaced those who used to bring greater experience and intensity to the college classroom.

A different appeal to prospective students might well promote diversity. The college depicts itself as safe, suburban, and cloistered to such an extent that we may well be discouraging the more venturesome risk-takers among the state's brightest high school graduates. In marketing aggressively to high school students, we may be missing those who wish to escape the banality of high school and move to a higher level. We may also be sending a discouraging message to urbanites, African-Americans, Hispanics, and the growing numbers of New Jersey families who have immigrated from overseas.

Much more could also be done to internationalize TCNJ's curriculum and undergraduate experience. Remarkably few students at TCNJ gain fluency in a foreign language during their years here. It is unlikely that any other college or university with a comparably selective admissions policy offers such a narrow range of foreign language study. The college has yet to commit itself in any but the most minimal and inadequate way to teaching Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, or Russian. Students at TCNJ are all too often illiterate about world affairs. The college has hired only one tenure-track faculty member in international relations in the past generation. The college's complex patterns of course requirements discourage students from studying abroad during their undergraduate years. TCNJ's commitment to student exchange is best described as grudging and minimal.

One thing is certain: today's undergraduates are destined to live in an ever more interconnected world. Colleges and universities that fail to prepare students for the global future are acting negligently. A college with the quality of students already enrolled at TCNJ--and with the potential to enroll an equally capable and even more diverse group of students in the future--cannot afford to stand still.

Affordability

TCNJ's high quality education must not become too costly. The new president should champion greater state support for public higher education and enlarge the college's base of charitable giving.

Everyone at TCNJ is justifiably proud of our consistent ranking as one of the best buys in college education. However, if we are to continue receiving and deserving this honor, we must take steps to cap increases in tuition, fees and expenses. At the same time we must ensure that those caps do not result in a decrease in quality of instruction and other services. Tuition, fees, and room and board have risen 9-11% annually since 1990. Almost 25% of the gross income of an average New Jersey family is needed to send a student to attend and live at The College of New Jersey.

Because of the high cost of even the "best buys", legislation is pending to limit the annual spending increases at state colleges and universities to match the Consumer Price Index or to 3%, whichever is higher. However, New Jersey already ranks near the bottom of all of the states in new investment in higher education. State appropriations for TCNJ currently fund only 43.5% of the budget. A major effort of the new administration must be to shore up the state investment in the only mid-size, multi-purpose, highly competitive institution in the state. We must make the case that without adequate funding, high achieving students will leave the state for their education, making it likely that they will not return to join the work force in New Jersey. This will result in a serious brain drain for the state.

Compounding this threat on the legislative side is the appalling record of charitable giving at our institution: the most recent annual figure is less than one percent of the operating budget. Gifts and bequests do not even cover the costs of the offices which solicit them. Unfortunately, The College of New Jersey has not cultivated its alumni or other potential donors. However, a new administration has the opportunity to make a fresh start. Persons with fundraising expertise say that TCNJ could increase private giving many times over.

One major area of fundraising that will help to meet the college's goal for diversity and generate greater local goodwill is to increase scholarships for low-income students in Trenton. An admission process to identify deserving, highly motivated, low-income students should be combined with a fundraising campaign to make more scholarships available to such students. On-campus academic assistance for low-income students should also be increased.