

**President's Report
Academic and Professional Faculty Meeting
October 19, 2012**

Student Opinion Survey (SOS): Student Feedback on Teaching and Learning at New Paltz.

The SUNY-wide Student Opinion Survey is administered every three years, and measures student views and satisfaction with their institution and educational experience. We can track trends in student responses over time, and compare our scores and rankings relative to other SUNY campuses. Sharing and using such data to inform our decision making and self-evaluation – including celebrating areas of real strength – is a key part of building and sustaining a culture of assessment.

Here, I highlight selected 2012 survey results that point to areas of distinctive accomplishment in teaching and learning that are worth showcasing and celebrating.

New Paltz ranked #1 among the 12 SUNY colleges and either #1 or #2 among the 27 SUNY 4-year institutions on several items:

- Developing understanding of self;
- Understanding and appreciating ethnic/cultural diversity and other individual differences;
- Writing clearly and effectively;
- Understanding political and social issues;
- Developing an openness to the opinions of others;
- Availability of instructors outside of class;
- Health and wellness programs.

New Paltz ranked #1 among the 12 university colleges and #3 among the 27 4-year campuses on “Faculty respect for students” and “Received feedback (written or oral) from instructors on the quality of your work.”

New Paltz ranked #2 among 12 colleges and in the top 4 or 5 among 27 4-year campuses on the following items:

- Acquiring information, ideas, and concepts;
- Acquiring analytical thinking skills;
- Acquiring knowledge and skills for further academic study;
- Acquiring knowledge and skills for intellectual growth throughout your life;
- Understanding environmental and sustainability issues;
- Had faculty who required you to make judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods;
- Quality of instruction.

While the “effect size” of some of the differences with other campuses is small, the consistently high ranking on so many items reflects an exceptional quality of teaching and learning. We should take collective pride in these results, which grow out of the work of dedicated and highly capable faculty and staff. Congratulations!

The high level of student satisfaction on so many core items should mean that we pay particular attention to those items where student satisfaction is markedly lower. In last month's report, I shared our low rankings on course availability (both general education and major courses), part of the basis for the action that we are planning to revamp our course scheduling policies (see below). The Office of Institutional Research and Planning will be sharing the SOS results more broadly with faculty and staff in the coming months, including results pointing both to strengths and areas of needed improvement.

Sustainability and Climate Commitment. I am grateful for the excellent work that the Sustainability Committee has done in drafting a report to the "American College and University President's Climate Commitment." Committee chair K.T. Tobin introduced the report at last week's Academic Senate meeting and will do so at this week's Faculty meeting. As she wrote to you this week, we want the campus community to be aware of the substance of the report and to provide feedback for the committee's use in refining the draft. A revised draft will be forwarded for me to review, consider for approval, and submit a final report to the President's Climate Commitment.

I hope that you will take time to review the draft plan and give feedback. The plan describes an impressive array of accomplishments in our quest to reduce our carbon footprint and achieve long-term sustainability. The needs and initiatives identified in the plan provide a blueprint for future planning and action.

Drafting this report is one part of the Sustainability Committee's charge. Others include educating the entire College community about sustainability issues and opportunities; helping to incorporate environmental issues into our curriculum, research profile, and outreach; encouraging and supporting student leadership on climate neutrality; and promoting stewardship as a hallmark of our operations.

Many analysts and leading thinkers about sustainability believe that the most important contribution that colleges and universities can make to achieving sustainability for our nation and the world is to educate our students in sustainable living. Our draft report refers to the need to expand and refine our educational offerings in this realm, a topic for continued discussion (and a fundamental reason that the Sustainability Committee is positioned within faculty governance).

Course Scheduling. I have written and spoken about the need for us to schedule courses so that students can enroll in the courses they need to progress academically and graduate in a timely way. Your Department Chairs and Directors may have shared with you the information and assessments that Provost Mauceri and Vice President Eaton presented in a recent Administrative Council meeting. They spoke about evidence that course availability is a significant barrier to timely graduation and a source of considerable dissatisfaction among our students; provided data illustrating that our class scheduling is an "outlier" relative to other institutions; and outlined necessary changes in our course-scheduling policies and practices. They will be discussing this information in other venues and consulting further during the semester as we progress towards implementing these new practices. I would emphasize that most of the changes we will enact are directed at a different *balance* in the timing and format of our course offerings, not an "all-or-none" shift in class scheduling.

As I wrote/spoke about in this year's State of the College address, our discussions last year about teaching loads were focused on the ultimate goal of being certain that we are serving students well, **not** a goal to increase teaching loads. Last spring's critique of our course schedules, coupled with new faculty hires made possible through increased tuition revenue, created new options for us to achieve our goals for course availability. These factors persuaded us that we can address most or all course-availability deficiencies by changing the way we schedule courses – **without a wholesale increase in teaching load**. Of course, we must continue to evaluate and address inequities in teaching loads within and among units, and recent declines in graduate enrollments may demand a shift of effort from graduate to undergraduate instruction in some programs.

Information Security. New Paltz, like other colleges and universities and many other organizations, must pay increased attention to safeguarding the security of sensitive individual and institutional information. You will be hearing more from staff in Computer Services about this effort in the coming weeks and months, to include careful consideration of the confidentiality of information that you store and whether it is being adequately protected. We will be instituting new policies that require College laptops containing sensitive information to be encrypted, to protect data and ensure that information will be protected if the laptop is misplaced or stolen. You will receive periodic newsletters to advise you of basic security practices and to alert the campus community about the latest phishing scams and other means to trick people into revealing confidential information. I thank you in advance for your help and cooperation in keeping our systems and data secure.

Planning Updates. Our strategic planning process continued with an October 8-12 visit to campus by consultant William Weary. Dr. Weary met individually and in small groups with about 100 people, including the Steering Committee, faculty, staff, students, administrators, College Council, Foundation, and community members. Those interviews will frame the discussions and activities of a day-long planning retreat on November 3; about 80 people will be invited to participate in that work, which will provide the basis for a draft plan to be developed by the Steering Committee. The plan will identify 6-8 institutional-level objectives and initiatives that will receive special focus and resources for improving the College during the next 3-5 years. A draft of the plan will be available for review and feedback early in the spring semester, to be incorporated into a final plan by the end of this academic year. Information about the planning process is posted at <http://strategicplanning.newpaltz.edu/>.

On another planning front, we will soon announce the budget process to be used for identifying priorities for the coming year's budget-allocation decisions, a continuation of the process we used last year to allocate new tuition revenue. The amount of funding we will have available will not be known until later in the year, contingent on approval of another tuition increase and the outcome of decisions about a SUNY budget allocation formula. Ultimately, we will link our budget process to strategic planning, and will want to bring these processes together as much as possible as we finalize decisions for 2012-13 budget decisions. In the meantime, we will begin to identify and discuss our ongoing priorities for funding.

Vice Presidential Searches. The search for the Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations is underway. Shelly Wright, Chief of Staff and Associate Vice President for Communication, is chairing the committee; other members are Executive Director of

Compliance and Campus Climate Tanhena Pachecho Dunn, Dean Hadi Salavitabar, Professor Nancy Kassop, Development Office staff member and alumna Denise Kennedy Shane, Foundation Board Directors Patrick Doulin and Michael Keegan, and alumnus Mark Kalish. The committee's first tasks are developing a position description and selecting a search firm.

This week, I am finalizing plans for interim leadership of the Division of Administration and Finance after Vice President Jackie DiStefano's departure at the end of the month. We will initiate a national search immediately.

Upcoming events:

- Early-Career Faculty Gathering, Friday, October 19, 2 PM, CSB 222 (immediately prior to the faculty meeting). Provost Mauceri is now taking the lead on supporting this group, formed in spring 2011 to build personal and professional connections among faculty in their first four years at New Paltz, especially across departments and disciplines.
- Open House for prospective students and parents, October 27. Thank you in advance to the faculty, staff, departments, and units participating in this event that is so important in our student-recruitment efforts.
- Distinguished Speaker Series, Thursday, November 1, 7:30 PM. Amy Waldman, author of *"The Submission,"* this year's One Book/One New Paltz selection, is our speaker. More information is available at <http://www.newpaltz.edu/speakerseries/>.

I look forward to seeing you at Friday's faculty meeting and responding to your questions and comments.

Donald P. Christian
President