

**President's Report  
Academic and Professional Faculty Meeting  
November 16, 2012**

**Hurricane Sandy.** We have designated Dean of Students Linda Eaton as an “ombudsperson” to assist students affected by Hurricane Sandy; her role is to guide them to available support and resources, and to help us inventory the kinds of impacts our students are experiencing and the support that they need. We have adjusted some processes in student accounts and other areas to support current students; are planning to make housing, food, and additional programming available over the Thanksgiving holiday for students who cannot return home; and are considering ways that we can help prospective students in areas impacted by the storm to complete their applications for admission for next year.

I was disheartened to hear last week from a student (home: south shore of Long Island) that on the Tuesday after the storm hit, an instructor flatly refused her request to turn in an assignment a day late. I hope that we all remain attuned to the devastating impact that this storm has had on many of our students and their families, and that some of these impacts are only now emerging (e.g., no cold-weather clothing; concern about spring-semester finances). I encourage you to provide as much support and flexibility as possible. And, if your interactions with students point to additional ways that we can assist those affected by the storm, please share those thoughts directly with Dean Eaton.

I would also like to commend those students, faculty and staff who are assisting with relief efforts in the hardest hit areas of Long Island, New York City and New Jersey. I am aware of and supportive of these initiatives. For example, James Halpern, director of the Institute for Disaster Mental Health, will offer Red Cross training to interested faculty, staff and students on Saturday, November 17, so that members of our campus community may engage more effectively with the recovery. Once trained, these individuals will assist in the Emergency Operations Center at American Red Cross in New York.

**Open House.** We hosted about 1,500 prospective students and over 4,200 total visitors during Open House on October 27. We received great feedback from prospective students and their parents about how informative and well-organized our open house is, how much parents and students appreciate their interaction with faculty and staff, and how bright, enthusiastic, and engaged our students are. Here are snippets of that feedback: *my daughter is more certain than before about New Paltz being her top choice... new paltz seemed even more perfect for me by the time i left [sic] ...I've been visiting colleges for over a year now and New Paltz is my first choice... Our daughter loves your school, and that was refreshing because we have toured many colleges and her response to New Paltz was over the top... very friendly and helpful...the most extensive tour I've ever been on/helped greatly in my decision making process...All of the professors seemed nice and engaged with their subjects and more than willing to help with information...The professors I met were very encouraging and made a good impression. This is a major factor in my choosing new Paltz as a first choice...xxx absolutely loves this school and campus. She felt that the xxx Department was amazing. She was so excited to find out about the small class learning and the focus put towards each student. After this tour this is the only school she can see herself attending.*

Thanks to the many faculty, staff, administrators, and students who gave of their weekend time to share information and perspective on our programs and offerings, and to the Admissions staff for their great work in organizing this event. Your work makes a real difference in our ability to recruit the number and caliber of students we want. I am grateful for all that you do to contribute to this aspect of our success in what is an increasingly challenging environment.

**Strategic Planning.** Steering Committee co-chairs Patricia Sullivan and Stella Turk reported to you recently on our very successful day-long strategic planning retreat on Saturday, November 3. Diverse members of our community - academic and professional faculty, students, administrators, classified staff, alumni, and Foundation Board members – worked through a series of activities and exercises informed by the interviews that many of you had early last month with Dr. Bill Weary, the consultant assisting us with this process. It was rewarding to see such a strong consensus emerge about the most important challenges that New Paltz faces and the work we need to undertake to address those challenges. We were proud of the engagement of our students in this work and the thoughtful contributions they made to the outcomes. The Steering Committee, with guidance from Dr. Weary, is using the substance of the retreat outcomes to prepare a draft strategic plan for review by me and the rest of Cabinet during the holiday break. Using our feedback, the committee will refine that draft plan to share with the campus community early in the spring semester. There will be abundant opportunity for consultation and input about the plan during the spring, and I encourage you to join these discussions.

**Budget Process.** Last week, Michele Halstead, Assistant Vice President for Finance and Administration, and I e-mailed you about this year's cycle of the budget process we initiated last spring. In this process, proposals for increased funding may be developed at any level of the institution, and submitted to supervisors for review and prioritization. The outcome of this process will inform decisions that the Cabinet will make about allocating new tuition revenues that we anticipate for next year. We have planned an open forum for November 15 (11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in LC 100) to discuss the process, which will also be a primary topic of discussion when the Provost meets with Department Chairs November 28 and among Department Chairs, Directors and other administrators at a December 3 Administrative Council meeting. We hope that you will engage in this process in your departments and units, and give us your feedback on the priorities as they emerge during the spring semester.

**Athletic Achievements.** Congratulations and kudos to our student-athletes and the coaches and staff who guide and support them for a phenomenal fall season. All fall teams - cross country, field hockey, men's soccer, women's soccer, tennis and women's volleyball - made their respective SUNYAC tournaments. New Paltz hosted the Field Hockey SUNYAC Championships, and won its first ever SUNYAC Championship, after setting a season record for wins (16); Coach Shanna Vitale was named SUNYAC Coach of the Year. Both field hockey and women's volleyball qualified for the NCAA Championships (women's volleyball survived two rounds before losing to Clarkson 15-13; field hockey lost in the first round to sixth-ranked Bowdoin College). Nichole Wischoff became the first New Paltz woman runner inducted into the SUNYAC Cross Country Hall of Fame by virtue of her fifth place finish at the SUNYAC Championships. Nearly 30 other individual men and women student-athletes were recognized by SUNYAC or other bodies for their accomplishments. It is rewarding to know that these

athletic achievements accompany academic accomplishments resulting in team-average GPAs often exceeding that of the overall student body.

**Campus Construction Update.** You no doubt have seen that Wooster is relatively well “skeletonized” in the first steps of this renovation project, which is progressing well, as is the construction of expanded parking on the east side of Route 32 and a new parking lot behind Lenape Hall. The need to regroup and issue a new RFP for the library project will result in about a one-year delay in that project. We will break ground on the new science building this spring, probably in March. Prospects for another round of major capital funding from the state are quite murky at this time and will be a major thrust in our advocacy efforts in Albany this year.

**Park Point.** Two years ago this month, I wrote to you that the developer of the “Park Point” housing project on 42 acres of Foundation-owned land adjacent to the south edge of campus had made their initial application to the Town of New Paltz for approval; this project will provide needed apartment-style housing for students and for new faculty and staff. You likely have read about recent developments in this project as the public comment period on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is underway. The campus Sustainability Committee has endorsed this project because it will contribute to efforts to reduce our carbon footprint, and the committee co-chairs spoke in favor of it during the public hearing. I regard the project as critical to the future of the College and our ability to recruit and serve students consistent with our mission as a residential college.

The following are particularly salient points about this project and its development:

- The seed for this project dates to 2004, when a Student Association survey reinforced the interest of students in apartment-style housing on or near the campus; students were consulted broadly in the development of the project, which has been part of a very open public process in the Town of New Paltz.
- Rental vacancy rates in New Paltz are well below 1%. Most analysts view a 5% vacancy rate as a threshold below which access, affordability, and quality often become issues. The lack of safe, quality, affordable apartment housing proximate to campus is a barrier to our recruitment of transfer students, many from our local community colleges, who want the advantages of a residential-college experience. We have not provided on-campus housing for transfer students since about 2008. Although many students stay in our residence halls throughout their time here because they want to be an integral part of the co-curricular environment, others remain in the residence halls longer than they might wish because of limited apartment-style housing options off-campus, displacing transfers. We are keenly aware that these same aspects of local housing force many new faculty and staff to reside in other communities.
- In about 2008, it was determined that the College could not borrow and re-pay the debt to construct apartments as a state-funded project **and** complete much-needed, long-delayed major renovation of our residence halls; undertaking this effort as a private partnership is the only currently viable path to building apartment housing.
- Wilmorite, the developer of the project, built its first campus-linked student housing in 1967, and has an outstanding reputation for collaboration with its partner campuses to provide housing for students and faculty/staff. For example, Wilmorite has a history of

working with a College's financial aid office to assist students in financing their housing, working with the students when loan checks are delayed.

- The project has been developed through multi-year consultation with local, county and state agencies and officials concerned with and responsible for individual and public health and environmental safety. These include the NYS DEC, Ulster County Health Department, Town of New Paltz Engineer, and the Town of New Paltz wetlands consultant. These entities have vetted the plans and mitigation approaches delineated in the DEIS.
- The project is to be built to National Green Building Standards (NGBS) specifications, a newer building standard than the perhaps more-familiar LEED. The two differ from each other, but many municipalities and agencies (including NYSERDA) accept either. One reason that NGBS was chosen for this particular project is that it takes into account site and landscape factors, which LEED does not. There is every reason to regard NGBS as a fully acceptable standard to guide the construction of this residential housing complex, and I endorse this choice as appropriate.

The current review of the DEIS is a regular stage in the process of gaining approval for such a project. The next public hearing on the DEIS will be Monday, November 19, at 7 PM in the Town Hall, and we welcome voices of support for this effort. Should all go well with the remainder of the review and approval process, the developer would hope to break ground in spring 2013 and have the first housing units available by August 2014. You may learn more about this project at [www.newpaltz.edu/parkpoint](http://www.newpaltz.edu/parkpoint) or [www.parkpointnewpaltz.com](http://www.parkpointnewpaltz.com).

**Gala.** This year's 10th annual Gala Celebrating New Paltz will be held at Mohonk Mountain House this weekend, Sunday, November 18. Ticket sales are strong and supporters have been generous. The Gala raises about \$50,000 annually for scholarship endowment for students from Ulster and surrounding counties attending New Paltz. This year's honorees are the presidents of our three geographically closest community colleges, Don Katt (Ulster), David Conklin (Dutchess), and Bill Richards (Orange). The largest numbers of our transfer students come from these partner institutions, and together we form a strong network of public higher education opportunities in the Hudson Valley. This year's scholarship recipient, who always attends the Gala, is Andrea Pacione '14, a transfer student from SUNY Orange, majoring in biology with hopes and dreams of earning a doctorate. I am grateful to the many New Paltz faculty and staff, along with community members, who support this effort by attending, organizing, and volunteering at the Gala. I will provide an update on our many recent and upcoming fund-raising and alumni-relations efforts in next month's report to the faculty.

**Holiday Party.** Please "save the date" for the annual Holiday Reception for academic and professional faculty at the President's residence from 2 to 4 p.m. and 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. on the afternoon-evening of December 8. Invitations will be coming out soon, and I hope that you will be able to join us.

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

Donald P. Christian  
President