

President's Report
State Board of Community Colleges
Dr. R. Scott Ralls, President
Friday, November 18, 2011

One of my favorite concepts from my favorite business management book, *Good to Great*, by Jim Collins, is the flywheel effect. According to Collins, the truly great organizations achieve their results not through dramatic, revolutionary events, but rather from momentum and sustainable transformations that result from persistent pushing in a consistent direction. "Good to great comes about by cumulative process," says Collins, "step by step, action by action, decision by decision, turn by turn of the flywheel – that adds up to sustained and spectacular results."

Since the week of our planning meeting in October, a week that included the second visit by the President of the United States to one of our campuses, we have certainly received our share of attention. Positive mentions in *The Wall Street Journal* and in an AP article that was carried in *The Chicago Tribune* and *Community College Week*, a nod from CNN and Brookings Institution researchers as one of America's economic innovators for our SuccessNC efforts, and a visit by the U.S. Secretary of Education to Wake Tech this month might lead us to think that our flywheel is turning.

And even if it is not fully revolving on its axis, the presentations by Dr. Dennis Massey regarding the Health Information Technology grant, and Dr. Charles Chrestman regarding the advanced manufacturing grant – two of the largest grants in our System's history – clearly suggest that our flywheel is rocking back and forth. Their combined efforts have resulted in more than \$40 million in recent Federal funding for job training initiatives.

Further, if you think about our primary goals – to foster economic prosperity through workforce development opportunity and to further develop student success by moving students from registration to graduation lines – if you step back and look at some of the cumulative accomplishments in just the past month since our planning meeting – it's pretty impressive. Almost flywheel like.

For example, soon after the State Board Planning Meeting in Kannapolis was completed on October 21st, our presidents met in Lexington, NC, where they endorsed the work of the Performance Measures Committee and the eight measures of success they recommended and you approved today. One week later, 600 students and mentors from Minority Male Mentoring programs at 42 of our community colleges gathered here in Raleigh for what I think was without a doubt, our most successful Minority Male Mentoring conference.

The following week, our Developmental Education Initiative Policy Committee met to reinforce the beta and pilot testing that will begin in January at 12 of our colleges in developmental math, followed by a discussion meeting last week with Dr. Uri Treisman and his colleagues with the Dana Center at the University of Texas to conceptualize next steps in our math redesign efforts and collaborations with both public schools and the universities.

Last week we also participated with the Governor and our partners at the Department of Public Instruction in a statewide rollout of the new Career and College Promise program. Through this effort and your endorsement and subsequent policy changes, I think we can say that, through the pathways we have jointly developed, we are now more closely aligned with our educational partners than ever before. Our alignment will be furthered by a new three-year grant from the Gates Foundation that we learned we won just this week to integrate Common Core standards into our collaborative initiatives with the public schools and universities.

Last week, we hosted a team from the UK here to benchmark our customized training programs, and, just Wednesday, we had a great endorsement of the impacts of these programs when both the Siemens Energy facility in Charlotte, which I attended, and the new Caterpillar facility in Winston-Salem had their grand openings on the same day. Our colleges and their technical education and training capabilities were instrumental in the decisions of these two great companies to collectively create over 1,400 advanced manufacturing jobs and invest more than three quarters of a billion dollars in our state.

And if all of that is not enough cumulative sustained activity, using the language of *Good to Great*, just think about some of the efforts that you approved at this meeting.

You approved our eight new student success performance measures, and the new North Carolina High School to Community College Articulation Agreement which allows articulated credit for students earning a B or higher in 77 high school career technical courses to community colleges. You approved 20 new Basic Skills Plus programs, integrating literacy and occupational skills training at six additional community colleges in the state and allocated \$450,000 in Project Skill-Up grants to 24 colleges to assist individuals in tobacco-impacted communities attain occupational skill training. And in first-time initiatives, you allocated Health Science grants to ten colleges for retention initiatives and Health Science Boot Camps to reach underserved populations.

And if we needed a cherry on top for an incredibly productive month, for the first time in my memory, a community college instructor, Richard Cregar from Wake Tech, was named Tar Heel of the Week this past Sunday by *The News and Observer*, one week after he was honored by the White House as a “Champion of Change” for his work in preparing students for careers in sustainable transportation technologies. An automotive technology instructor with a rich and diverse background, Rich is also co-chairman of our Code Green Super CIP committee that is working on making sustainable technologies a part of all transportation programs among our 58 colleges. Rich demonstrates a passion for teaching, technology, and students found in so many of our community college faculty that is the real secret sauce of student success.

As we wrap up this busy and productive month and move into Thanksgiving week, I am gratified and proud of the work taking place all across our 58-college system. And I am thankful for the enlightened community college leaders, incredibly dedicated faculty and staff, and inspiring students who are collectively propelling our state forward and lifting us from our economic malaise.

I don't know that we have our flywheel spinning yet. But, dadgum, it was rockin' back and forth pretty hard this month.