

**FACULTY ASSOCIATION OF CNC**

**PRESENTATION TO THE COLLEGE BOARD**

**JUNE 24, 2005**

**by Jan Mastromatteo, President**

I would like to thank the Board for this opportunity to address College planning, priorities and directions from a faculty perspective. As I thought about what I wanted to say about our struggles to maintain educational quality, access and comprehensive program offerings for students at CNC, our priorities as faculty; it struck me that it was time to go beyond a demarcation of the problems we face with program cuts, faculty layoffs and diminishing services for students (what has become a well-known refrain at our this annual forum), and to review the context behind the priorities faculty share with not only our students and our colleagues in the PPWC, but also with management and the College Board. As a consequence, before I outline the planning priorities that the faculty at this year's AGM, voted unanimously to have me bring forward to the Board, I ask that you allow me a few moments to talk about an underlying context that can be seen to produce a set of standards and principles that all the stakeholders in the College community may well agree upon.

As faculty, we cannot be unaware of the external pressures on education. The business agenda set by governments is all too clear and the forces pushing to make post-secondary education private, for profit, competitive and market driven have become increasingly dominant in the passed two decades. As the Board's critical success factors indicate funding is subject to the College's ability to illustrate efficiency increases, measurable student outcomes with the focus blatantly linked to did graduates find jobs and are we serving industry needs, and evaluating employees, programs and services on instrumental although not particularly realistic standards. Yet in many ways we continue to be successful in terms of significant indicators even without the ability to factor in the social and economic demographics of our environment.

Student satisfaction has continued above the provincial average despite the narrow parameters of the measures as well as the lack of Ministry recognition of the difficulties more people face in meeting the costs of a post secondary education in a regional area that has been impacted by significant economic decline and cutbacks to social support services. The Ipsos-Reid study tells us that we are recognized and valued in the community in general and by our alumni (who continue to return to the College) in particular, Although the study also points to the need to market our strengths in more forceful and transparent ways, it sends a very strong message that people in our communities recognize the essential benefits of a post-secondary education, the benefits that lie in the quality of the education itself, in the need for high quality teaching, the comprehensiveness and transferability of our programs and courses, and in the tertiary services the College provides to its communities. I believe we need to listen and plan around these results in setting priorities at the College despite the barriers set out by the forces trying to privatize, commodify and find profits in education.

The priorities of educators parallel the findings contained in student and community surveys. Faculty continue the struggle to provide quality learning

experiences for their students in the face of considerable barriers because we are passionate about what we do. Like the majority of my colleagues I had the opportunity of a wide variety of educational experiences and was allowed to pursue my education unfettered by high tuition costs, unmanageable debt loads and the pressure of working endless hours in marginal jobs in order to supplement the costs of my schooling. For my generation, it was still clear that education was valuable in and of itself. It was and should not be merely a tool to provide mundane skills for the increasingly marginalized and competitive labour market at the expense of becoming a full participant in society. Educators continue to call for academic freedom for this reason. For a society to aspire to democratic ideals of any kind it requires a source of information and knowledge that resists partisan bias, that can provide critical analyses upon which an educated citizenry can base choices and decisions.

I was struck by an address given by professor Jacqueline Sfeir from Bethlehem University in Palestine at this year's FPSE AGM hosted by the Thompson Rivers University Faculty Association in Kamloops. A middle aged woman like myself, she told us her generation was the last to receive the benefits of an education in her Palestinian homeland. The two generations that have followed her own have grown up in a climate where schools have often been closed because of war, house arrest, and curfews. Two generations of children have risked their lives to get to schools when the doors were open. Traveling to and from schools has meant struggling through rubble and stone barriers, dealing with soldiers, check points, potential attacks, and stone throwing insurrection. Most of us have a difficult time imagining the determination of children faced with these horrendous barriers to acquiring even a basic education. Yet we cannot help but be struck by the bravery and determination of children and the willingness of their parents in allowing them to run the gauntlet in order to get to classrooms. For the last two generations, students like these in Palestine have not received even a basic education. Her studies bare out that today the situation is such that not just the students, but the teachers of those students, have not received education enough to meet even the basic requirements of life.

While we cannot compare our situation directly to this and other war torn areas of the world, what struck me was the similarity in the outcome for the current generations of students in Canada. We too have a crisis in basic education, not because of war, the threat of bombs, militant power struggles nor the absolute poverty they bring for the people living in those areas , but because of a political agenda that continues to erode access to publically-funded quality education.

For decades both federal and the majority of provincial governments have been unwilling to keep pace with the funding needs of k-12 and post-secondary education. For the post-secondary system in BC, per student funding has declined each year since 2001, and when adjusted for inflation, per student grants to institutions are about eight percent less than in 2001. More of the financial responsibility has been off-loaded to the individual student and the

institution itself. The latter of has forced a growing pressure to lobby the private sector for funds and to cater more exclusively to the needs of individual industries. At the same time, the economically privileged can always find ways to acquire quality education for their own, and we see this as a re-emerging phenomenon in Canada. With a growing class gap, more of us are affected by the erosion of a publically-funded, affordable, post-secondary system and thus deprived of the education required to give us the ability to make reasoned choices or even to access the programs necessary to meet entry level qualifications for meaningful work and challenging jobs.

### ***Meeting Constraints and Setting Priorities***

Faculty at CNC are currently faced with program cuts and layoffs nearly as devastating as those of 2002. The difference this year is that the continuous cutbacks since 2002 have placed in jeopardy the comprehensive nature of the only comprehensive post-secondary institution in the region. The faculty at the college are, with cause, angry and feeling powerless in attempts to have their concerns heard by the management and the College Board.

This spring the Faculty Association was given a list of twenty two of our members that would be served with layoff notices or workload reductions. The technology programs, niche offerings unique in the region, are being decimated. Although some internal and external pressure would seem to have influenced College decisions to reinstate fall intakes in Forestry and GIS, and the Faculty Association would like to commend the College for these decisions, Wood Technology, Electronics-Advanced Common Core, Engineering Design Technology, New Media Technology, and Computer Information Systems have been suspended or terminated. Faculty would have liked the opportunity to participate in program renewal beginning at a juncture when these programs are first identified as at risk. The College designated a two year, administrative position linked specifically to planning for technology programs, and yet this has been the ultimate outcome?

The faculty share the Board's concern with the deficit situation at the College. However, faculty do not share in ideas that would see solutions coming almost exclusively from cutting programs, courses, instructors, operational staff and raising tuition and service fees for students. Faculty are also clear that they are concerned about the planning process at the College, one that has lead to increasing the number of administrative positions at a time when decreases in both students and faculty continue to be significant. For example, this year the College moved from one Vice President to three, last year the College added Associate Director positions at both the Quesnel and Mackenzie campuses. Faculty do not see a compelling need for an Institute for Learning and Teaching at a time when the College faces both a fiscal crisis and declining enrolments. Faculty have a professional development fund that they can organize their activities around. Historically, faculty professional development needs were very

adequately met by one faculty member having a section release to coordinate professional development events and activities. The new and considerable costs being incurred with the Institute seem, at very least, an unnecessary burden within the context of the current fiscal situation at CNC. Given a choice, faculty would much rather see services like essay critiquing provided to serve students through the CSS returned to previous levels, or a less punitive pay parking policy, or a telephone receptionist re-instated, or planning around rebuilding and integrating developmental programming that would increase the likelihood of student success in all programs.

Faculty would once again like to bring attention to the deficit in the Continuing Education area, an area we have long recommended be re-integrated into the programming areas. We have recommended a return to the previous model the college utilized in offering student employment services along with a recommendation to work more closely with the Student Association in regard to posting employment opportunities. We also continue to support a long time faculty recommendation to develop co-op programs within the programming areas themselves.

At the AGM, our membership directed me to communicate to the Board their dissatisfaction with not only the threat to the comprehensiveness of the college, but what faculty see as a continued problem with a lack of consultation. I have delivered the specific details of faculty concerns to both the President and to the Chair of the College Board. The faculty have directed me to convey to the Board how disconcerting they found being told, without prior consultation, that CNC is to become a Learning College, one that seems to require extensive institutional transformation. Faculty members have long been involved in the work of learning/learner centered initiatives – providing education is what faculty do.

Faculty also feel that there should have been some prior, broad-based feedback sought around marketing initiatives, and we are very concerned about the costs being incurred to hire a range of contractors to begin a restructuring/renewal process, a process that appears to us to have gone forward without consultation or input being sought. Faculty are also concerned over the extensive renovations on the third floor of the College, renovations occurring during a time of fiscal restraint and downsizing of faculty and programs.

Until this year, the Faculty Association has not made public statements on issues related to the internal organization and processes at CNC. Our announcements and our lobbies have been directed to putting pressure on Government to provide adequate funding. This year, our members have said very clearly that they feel that CNC is at a crossroad, and they want the College Board to know that they feel that the administration must consider looking to administrative services for further sources of cost saving. The educational areas at the College cannot continue to take the brunt of the cutbacks and still offer quality education.

At the same time, I would like to also take this opportunity to recognize the very timely reply to our concerns that I have received from the President. Changes have occurred in the Employment Services and Co-op areas and there has been some administrative restructuring in the Continuing Education area as well. The President has also invited the Faculty Association to have regular discussions with him on general issues. The first of these meetings has already occurred and the Faculty Association looks forward to this forum as a means for bringing forward planning and organizational recommendations.

### ***Faculty Involvement in Student Recruitment and Retention***

I would like to complete my report by outlining some suggestions for faculty involvement in what is clearly our central priority, recruiting and retaining students. The following are some suggestions we have brought to the committee of common concerns this year, ideas aimed at maximizing the use of faculty resources at CNC:

- Faculty involvement in student recruitment sessions (i.e. phone sessions)
- Faculty initiatives in developing and updating departmental websites and promotional material – (making use of the GIS website as a template)
- College Open House – including departmental displays as well as mini-public lectures – aimed at the entire community
- More contests like the Math contest
- Reinstating visits to high schools by teaching faculty
- Faculty presentations to community organizations and groups
- Community interest lecture series
- Drawing upon unique faculty strengths: (i.e. poet/writer in residence)

### ***Faculty Input in Program Planning***

The Faculty Association would like to commend the College on recent program initiatives like the Pulp and Paper Worker program, the First Nations Certificate and Diploma program, the Fine Arts Certificate, ongoing work with new trades initiatives, the administrative efforts aimed at building partnerships and most recently, attempts to build program ties with Thompson Rivers University, as well as the continuing growth and success of CTC programs. As we have suggested for some time however, the Faculty Association believes that faculty input would be useful when a program or area is identified as at risk. Education Council is the institutional, governing body, that would be the most appropriate vehicle for faculty input into needs around program renewal and new program development. The recent BC Supreme Court decision regarding the role of Education Councils in advising College Boards on programming could be used as a template here.

Thank you once again for allowing me to speak to you today.

Respectfully submitted,

Jan Mastromatteo