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To: The Campus Community
From: R. Barbara Gitenstein, President 
Date: December 19, 2013
Subject: The Diversity and Inclusion Work Group Report

It is a pleasure to provide the community a summary of the report I received from the Work Group on Diversity and Inclusion and an outline of next steps in this year's focus on diversity and inclusion. Let me begin by thanking Provost Jacqueline Taylor, Vice President Gregory Pogue, Vice President Lisa Angeloni and Director Kerri Thompson Tillett for their exceptional work and thoughtful recommendations.

The members began their work by collecting comparative data regarding diversity in our students, faculty and staff. The results were enlightening. Our ranking with regard to underrepresented minorities in the student body within our comparator group of institutions is quite impressive: TCNJ ranks in the top 25% with regard to African American students and in the top 30% with regard to Hispanic students. Our numbers of underrepresented minorities in the tenure track faculty are also reassuring; we either meet or exceed the national average (TCNJ is one percent above the national average in African American faculty, at the national average in Hispanic faculty and above the national average by 4% in Asian faculty). In comparison to New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities (NJASCU) institutions, TCNJ does not fare as well. While we are second only to Thomas Edison in Asian faculty, we lag in comparison to NJASCU schools with regard to African American and Hispanic faculty. Administrative and staff representation at TCNJ indicates that at certain levels of leadership (e.g., Cabinet), there is good representation from underrepresented minorities, whereas at others there is not.

(The tables citing this data are available on the web. The source for data on students was the U.S. Higher Education Trust: www.edtrust.org/; on faculty the source was www.niche.com, utilizing data from IPEDS <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/>, NCES, <http://nces.ed.gov/>, and Common Data Sets, <http://ir.pages.tcnj.edu/common-data-set/>).

This data will be helpful as we move forward on hiring plans and modifications to recruitment and retention programs for students, faculty and staff. Under any circumstance, comparing ourselves to others does not adequately address our obligation to increase diversity in the ranks of students, faculty, staff and administration in order to further our mission. Just because higher education has paltry representation from underrepresented groups does not mean TCNJ should celebrate the *status quo*.

The Work Group report details a number of existing initiatives that encourage diversity and inclusion: programming for Freshmen Week, refinement of athletics recruitment processes, modifications of procedures for faculty/librarian recruitment, EEO training, a new mentoring program for first generation and underrepresented minorities, the establishment of a Differing Abilities Task Force, the “Your Voice Matters—Assessment of Learning, Living and Working on Campus” survey, the inclusion of diversity as an element of the TCNJ strategic plan (see updated Strategic Map: <http://strategicplanning.pages.tcnj.edu/files/2013/10/Strategic-Map-Revised-10-03-13.pdf>), the addition of diversity to the annual report rubric for cabinet officers and deans, the addition of diversity as a goal in non-unit evaluations, and the tracking of student applicants by disability, veterans and other protected status. Additional immediate recommendations that are in the process of being implemented include the organization of an Institutional Community Builders Advisory Committee to advise cabinet officers on diversity issues, enhancement of institutional events to foster an environment that embraces diversity, the creation of a Center for Student Success (focusing on student persistence and timely graduation with particular attention to first-generation and underrepresented students), greater inclusion of student organizations in diversity conversations, the creation of an adjunct hiring procedure to incorporate diversity considerations, and the improvement of strategies for creating diverse pools for all faculty, staff and administrative searches.

The report also includes a number of longer term recommendations which would further enhance institutional commitment to diversity and inclusion. These recommendations are the implementation of an annual report to the Board of Trustees, further refinements to recruitment processes, development of programs to enhance the feeling of inclusion, exit interviews with students who do not choose TCNJ, research of programs at highly selective and comparator schools that demonstrate high retention and graduation rates for underrepresented students, and enhanced training for staff and faculty on diversity and inclusion matters.

The continuation of the strategies and initiatives already in place and the implementation of the excellent longer term recommendations represent a bold and ambitious plan for enhancing diversity and inclusion on the TC NJ campus. As a consequence, I accept the recommendation of the Work Group to create an office responsible for leading these initiatives, monitoring the programs currently in place and assuring continuous improvement in this area. The unit will be led by an Associate Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer, reporting directly to the President, with support from student interns. I am very pleased to report that Kerri Thompson Tillett has agreed to assume this position, along with her current responsibilities as EEO officer.

In order to assure that there is broad institutional engagement in the implementation of the diversity and inclusion plan, I will also be appointing a Task Force on Inclusion and Diversity that will serve as advisory to AVP Tillett, composed of 7-10 community members, broadly representative of the campus. This Task Force will work closely with AVP Tillett, providing advice on 1) the long term recommendations of the Work Group report, 2) her monitoring of the initiatives and strategies already in place, and 3) recommendations on modifications and additions of other programs. The nomination process will be announced in January.

The Work Group on Diversity and Inclusion confronted some challenging issues and helped provide a foundation for TCNJ’s path ahead. In some cases, we found out that, in fact, our statistics with regard to diversity were better than we had expected. Even in those circumstances, the statistics are good simply because the underrepresented presence in higher education is inadequate. TCNJ can (and should) be the institution that develops a realistic and proactive plan to assure that our campus is a welcoming one for all people, a community that reflects the diversity of our country and our state.