**General Faculty Meeting**

**Fall, 2015**

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I have the honor of making comments at what Benjamin Franklin might have named an “august assembly.” Here at the beginning of the academic year, to our new colleagues, I say welcome to Clayton State University. To our returning colleagues, I say welcome back. It used to be the case that a return might be associated with the smell of number 2 pencils in the air—presently it might just be associated with assessing the speed of loading D2L. We hope that you will all, together with staff, join us however briefly this afternoon, for libations, snacks, and modest choices of adult beverages (even the sherry hour tradition for the faculty of the college of arts and sciences at Harvard proclaims that more beer than sherry is consumed, and more denim than tweed is worn).

Perhaps the above are examples of all of our efforts to search carefully among our many traditions to separate those that are simply a function of old habits—and those that are modified or even transformed so as to address our core responsibilities for learning—of students, of faculty, of staff, of our community.

George Seimons, Chronicle, August 6, 2015, “…some for-profit players are unnecessarily “antagonistic” to higher education, he argued, failing to recognize that colleges serve other missions beyond operating efficiently, like educating well-rounded citizens and broadening access to education in underserved communities.” Certainly since 2009, we have made every effort to address, acknowledge and support the **AAUP Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities** (recently cited by the USG Faculty Council as worthy of Board support). And we will continue to do that while moving forward with the important shared work of creating a more educated Georgia. With your help, careful and yet timely adaptations can be made to this changing environment.

And so not inconsistent with practices in previous years, I wish to do three things—to feature some exceptional accomplishments of Clayton State and our colleagues in the last few months; to express some new or continuing issues for us to address as a university; and to suggest directions we take that builds on the strengths as a means of addressing our challenges.

As usual, the good is illustrative rather than exhaustive. Good-- increased annual fund by 62% in 3 years, 276% in need based scholarships) last week distributed $40,000 in retention funds raised as a part of a matching effort during May and June. The **Chronicle on Higher Education** featured us as a national leader of moving classes taught by part time instructors to full time instructors.

We will celebrate the ribbon cutting for the new science building September 17, although our hope is that our colleagues and students will have a chance to use the space for learning sooner than that. It has been long in coming, and reflects the power of collaboration across departments and programs—Corlis Cummings and her colleagues, Nasser Momayezi and Michelle Furlong and her colleagues, Rhonda Buchanan in grants plotting with Dr. Furlong to get as much scientific equipment as possible within budget limits—so many people have worked to make this a model location for student and faculty learning. Our renovations in the library continue to progress, and we expect to complete that project in the not too distant future—a focal point for helping our students continue to find new ways of learning.

We will host next week a session of the high demand career initiative program sponsored by the State Department of Economic Development—feature presentations from the chancellor, the commissioner of the technical and career programs of Georgia, and Governor Deal, reflecting appreciation of one of the many roles we have for the south metropolitan area of Atlanta—I was amused to hear a report on the Georgia Film Academy this week that included the statement that Clayton State was not the only participant in this area—even as Barton Bond, the work of our media colleagues and continuing education continues to identified as leaders in the state in this area, and hopefully partners with the emerging system Georgia Film Academy.

Colleagues such as Sam Maddox and Elaine Manglitz were asked by the Community Foundation of Metro Atlanta to advise them on future work for Clayton County—and their participation will help guide future partnerships. Our colleagues in the college of health continue to attract attention and new partners to help with their distinguished leadership in health education. Together with the college of business, they have partnered successfully with the Daejeon College of health sciences to bring student cohorts here to learn. Jonathan Harris in Visual and Performing Arts was in Daejeon extending the possibility of exchanges to media studies and film. The college of business has been featured in a new partnership with Indian Institutions. Dean Lila Roberts and colleagues in the College of information and mathematical sciences has been consistently recognized as partners with k-12 schools to enhance mathematical learning.

We have continued to make progress in the re-invention of our support systems for student academic recruitment and academic success—following Dr. Mark Daddona, Dr. Stephen Schultheis has begun the process of overseeing our enrollment management efforts—and coordinated them with Eric Tack’s emerging advising and student success work, as well as Stephen Jenkins leadership in admissions—together with Dr. Antoinette Miller’s leadership with PACE—she has this summer met with every area school superintendent and chamber of commerce president to engage them in her broader advisory group. The EDGE internship and experiential learning initiative had a formative year, and we believe can be one of several means of attracting and retaining students here.

I remain honored and humbled by the number of colleagues who act on behalf of their dedication to their students and their colleagues—and we must continue to find new and creative ways to support them.

And these gains provide comfort at ways to address challenges—and that area frames the second part of my presentation--Challenging times—and here I only want to touch on a few of those challenges as I see them, understanding that we each experience these challenges through our own lens. I only mention 5 here—but the list is not exhaustive

1 External—existential questions based on consolidations and mergers—and even if I would be the only person guaranteed to be affected by such a move, it creates an understandable backdrop of concern throughout much of the university system. I can only say that the continued excellence of our colleagues focused on learning is the best foil for compelled changes in organizational structures here.

2. Existential questions about declining levels of state support and likely end to access to all but minimal funds from increases in tuition and fees—in many ways a student population such as ours, where more than 60% of students are full Pell eligible, is especially sensitive to increases in costs, certainly in an external environment moving more to loans rather than grants. And yet tuition and fees are required to fund an increasing portion of our activities. It is particularly frustrating to watch many of our colleagues elsewhere in the nation and even in the state because of declines in enrollments not have access to even the one percent average salary increases made available through state appropriations. And finding ways to continue to build on our modest efforts over the last 5 years of salary stressors and modest increases needs to be a part of continued internal budget discussions.

3. There are continued questions about the value of higher education. There are repeated questions about whether residential education can be replaced entirely by on-line learning, or perhaps worse, return residential post-secondary experiences to an elite and wealthy group of students and families. Among other targets of light reading this summer, I read Kevin Carey’s **End of College** in which the author moves from experiences with an on line MIT Biology Course to a confident prediction that university life as we know it is near an end. It is the case that Carey’s observations that some assumptions of what constitutes a university—parts of Oxford tutorials, German research institutions, American Normal Schools, and Big Ten/SEC football championships—probably cannot serve as a sustainable model for the education of every student in the US. But it also the case that it is incumbent on many of us to help work through how we can support and be supported for our student’s and community’s learning.

4. Enrollments are a changing communication challenge—we want students to make decisions on where they learn based on the support and environment and expertise they receive for their learning—unfortunately their choices are frequently affected by other factors—climbing walls, lazy rivers, zip lines on the campus, and. Yes, football. And while we may not be able to eliminate that, we can continue to find ways to reinforce the importance of learning at affordable costs and with preparation for next steps that will help our students receive a return on what they and their families invested in education here.

5. The ability to manage a civil society. Many of us have seen civility and cultivating possibilities for citizenship and civil society as one of our essential responsibilities for student faulty staff and community learning. And this institution has for a very long time demonstrated a kind of internal civility that makes it a safe place for students of all kind to learn. But we live in angry times—and honestly, there are some things outside that could make a lot of people angry—issues of class and race and gender and income and orientation and often the insistence of some individuals who are political or economic leaders to say hateful or even dumb things. And within that context, events that seem to one person to be unrelated to such events are connected by others to those outside sources of anger.

And so what do we do? I propose three areas of work that will help us frame a meaningful institutional response to many of these issues. And frame it we must, knowing that the alternatives are more likely than not to be hurtful to ourselves—and not advancing our personal or collective projects for learning. There are three areas of broad based action that we believe can move us to some shared perspectives and successful outcomes.

1. Strategic planning—choices of what will or will not be done—or at least what will be done more and what will be done less—ambitious and quantifiable or at least measurable outcomes—and internal rewards to individuals, departments, colleges and divisions for their contributions in this area. SWOT analysis has begun, and we will be communicating next steps for the process—including consultants to help guide our activities and make participation as broad as possible for the campus and the community. I for one believe that inclusiveness must serve as a major portion of this planning discussion. One of the consistent NSSE responses we receive from our students is that compared to mean national responses, they report above average opportunities to interact with people who are not like them. If we have learned anything over the last year in the world around us, it is a reminder that as a society as a whole, we must all do better at being intentional in interacting with people who are different from us. This must be an effort far greater than simply adding up characteristics of race and age and gender and orientation. It is a systematic and reoccurring effort to be with others unlike us, and to listen to how those differences affect our ability to create a safe environment for learning. Respect across races, protecting and supporting the right of men and women alike to free from sexual coercion. I am convinced that if we do this, we will be looked at as an exemplar—and telling students why they should learn here, faculty and staff why they should learn and work and stay here, and outside audiences why they should support what we do and can do here.
2. Budget analysis-open process with planning and budget advisory committee, as well as the open meetings at least once each semester –driven by the plan, and thus likely to be more systematic as we advance the process—limited resources, and choices made reflected general directions discussed throughout the year—with a reduction of total credit hour reduction, the number of dollars available for one time projects has been reduced over time—and those focused allocations to finalizing library renovations, and completion activities associated with the new science building—in time of relatively limited number of dollars, the attention to communication and conversation. Planning inevitably leads to choices, and choices are better made or at least better understood, under circumstances of transparency.
3. Leadership opportunities—based on conversations late last semester of engaging our colleagues in leadership opportunities that emerged, either temporary or permanent, general request—and to match them with occasional conversations on leadership and higher education issues across the campus—Jim Collins providing development of a generation of Level 5 Leader: Builds enduring greatness through a paradoxical combination of personal humility and professional will-It was Collins whose work attempted to disabuse individuals of a private business/higher education dichotomy. Rather, Collins advances the view of excellent vs. not so excellent organizations, and holds the belief that organizations ought to be judged on excellence—and in our case, excellence in fostering learning for students, faculty, staff and community.

Taken together these actions must frame the foundation for making this a destination campus for a growing number of students. Equally importantly, it will help frame a compelling vision for present and future faculty and staff that will attract both and keep them with us to move forward a powerful set of visions and goals and outcomes.

There are times in which it could be quite easy to give a bit less than our best. There would be reasons to share the observations of Bruce Willis’ character John McClain when asked how he was doing, reports that he was feeling pretty ##### underappreciated. My sincere hope is that we will continue to search to find ways to transform the lives of our students and the communities we serve. Or in response to the lament found in a dialogue from the film: A League of Their Own—that the effort had just gotten hard.

“It's supposed to be hard. If it wasn't hard everyone would do it. The hard is what makes it great.” And the things that are accomplished here each day by our colleagues are often hard—and that, is what make it so great. Thanks to deans, vice presidents, the staff and faculty councils, and the student government association, and to each of you who have been involved, and who continue to be at the heart of making our institution a place where dreams are or can be made real.