



Inside Outreach

Perspectives and Beginnings

September 2004

Dear Colleagues,

The secret to a rich life is to have more beginnings than endings.

--David Weinbaum

Just the other evening while I was working out, I watched the wonderful production, *The Grange Fair—An American Tradition*, produced by Penn State Public Broadcasting. I encourage you to take the time to view the documentary (Copies are available for loan by contacting Mary Ann Clark at mzc3@outreach.psu.edu). Not only does it provide a warm perspective on a rich Pennsylvania tradition, but there is also much in the video relevant to Outreach. I was struck by the comments of C.J. Zimmerman, a young boy who lives on a Pennsylvania farm. He spoke about his love for the farm life, and how he didn't want to be a city kid because of the noise and traffic. In fact, he didn't like going to the city to visit his grandmother because it was too busy. Recently relinquishing (gladly) my hour commute in Baltimore, I thought he might be speaking of the challenging urban pace of a Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, or even Harrisburg. As it turns out, the congested, busy "city" where his grandmother lives is Millheim, a beautiful little town of 749 people, graced with a single traffic light!

C.J.'s comments reminded me that many things in life and our work depend on our perspective and the many diverse lenses we use to view our world. The beginning of the fall season can be seen as an ending—the long, slower pace of summer and our vacation evaporating, or as a beginning—the vibrant time of returning to school and a new year of learning and growth. It all depends on the unique lens we each use. In Outreach, we seem to operate at the same manic pace regardless of the season. However, the fall is a time to look back on all we've accomplished, and take stock and celebrate where we're going in the new year.

Conferences & Institutes recently completed a very successful calendar of youth and 4-H camps, allowing Outreach and its partners to bring both sport and academic opportunities to over 32,000 youth of Pennsylvania and beyond. Moreover, our academic camps have enabled faculty to introduce relevant research findings to a new audience, while at the same time planting the seeds of interest in Penn State as a future undergraduate destination for camp attendees. Our summer agenda of professional conferences was equally successful. One example is our National Autism Conference held at the Penn Stater in August. The conference provided a comprehensive program focusing on current topics related to autism spectrum disorders. This year the conference was attended by over 2,000 parents and professionals who were changed by the research and information presented, just one example of how Outreach is truly transforming lives!

Over the summer, there has been much activity surrounding many of our Outreach strategic initiatives:

- The World Campus completed its fifth successful year with record enrollments and is working on its next five-year plan.
- The CE Task Force has concluded its work and the report is now being vetted by various leadership councils across the university. The report portends of significant advances in Penn State's capability to respond to work force training needs across Pennsylvania.
- Daney Jackson assumed a new leadership role (as well as gaining the longest title of any Outreach staff member) as the newly appointed Director of Extension, Associate Vice President for Outreach, and Associate Dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences. Daney and his team of Regional Directors are working aggressively this year to maximize the effectiveness of the Regional Outreach Councils to further fulfill the promise of Outreach and bring all of Penn State's rich resources to bear on key challenges in the Commonwealth.
- With the help of the Outreach Diversity Council, we have also completed a new five-year diversity strategic action plan under the University's *Framework to Foster Diversity 2004-2009*. This plan will be available soon through the Office of Educational Equity web site, www.equity.psu.edu, and through the Document Library on My Outreach.

I'm very proud of all that we've accomplished, but I'm even more excited about what we'll be addressing in the coming year. One of the key organizational issues highlighted by the Strategic Positioning teams focused on how our cumbersome bureaucracy stifles innovation, risk-taking, and creativity. To help us consider alternative methods to manage our work, we have asked the leadership of the Penn State College of Medicine to speak to our Outreach leaders about the team management approach used so effectively at The Milton S. Hershey Medical Center. We hope that Outreach can adapt some of their management principles to foster changes in our culture.

We are also making progress with another exciting initiative. The Provost has requested that each unit across the University create a three-year strategic plan by early next spring. To strengthen Outreach partnerships and ensure alignment of our strategic plans, Gary Miller, Ted Krichels, Daney Jackson and I are meeting with each of the University Park deans and campus CEOs. We want to find out how Outreach can be a true partner and support their strategic priorities for the future. The meetings have uncovered a myriad of collaborative opportunities.

All this activity reminds us that many Outreach units will soon be moving and contractors continue to make progress with the new Outreach Innovation building. If all continues to go well, we are on schedule for a late spring opening. This state-of-the-art facility will house many Outreach units, including the World Campus, CE at UP, Marketing and Communications, and Public Broadcasting.

Finally, I am pleased to announce that PENNTAP, under the leadership of Jack Gido, will be joining Outreach. This highly successful business and technical consulting group provides an additional resource for Outreach to transform organizations and lives in the Commonwealth. Jack will be also be charged to lead our strategic theme initiative in economic and workforce development.

There is so much more to report about the incredible efforts in Outreach—the above is just a sampling of our work.

As we begin the new academic year, we are all challenged to move Outreach from good to great. Last year, I charged everyone to use their own leadership skills, regardless of their position in Outreach, to advance our initiatives and make our organization a better place to work. A few in Outreach have pondered how they can offer leadership given their positions in the organization. Once again, I'm reminded of a Grange Fair story. Michelle Carbonara, a young 4-H'er, has undertaken the task of learning how to handle an 800-pound steer—an animal about ten times her weight! Michelle has accepted the challenge of learning to lead and is setting an example among her peers.

I can mention many instances where Outreach employees have also accepted the leadership challenge, but the Outreach FISH! effort provides a good example. Our vice presidents' assistants group recognized the value of the FISH! philosophy as a way to bring energy and a positive attitude to our work and will share that philosophy with others in Outreach through the Fish! seminars they have scheduled for November.

Benjamin Franklin once said, "*Energy and persistence conquer all things.*" For me, those words epitomize the way we do business in Outreach. The talent and tenacity exhibited by Outreach employees allow us to do what we do so well—transform lives!

Let's all begin this new academic year by examining our work with new perspectives and refocused lenses. I hope that everyone's experiences in the coming year will be personally and professionally productive and fulfilling. And I know that each of you will continue to share my pride and enthusiasm in the Penn State community and in the Promise of Outreach.

Craig