

Inside Outreach

June 2005

What We Know So Far

To know that we know what we know, and that we do not know what we do not know, that is true knowledge.

Henry David Thoreau

Colleagues:

As I begin this month's Inside Outreach, and as I try to capture the current status of all of the changes occurring in Outreach, I feel the need to steal the title of President Spanier's monthly television and radio show, "To the Best of My Knowledge." So here goes—to the best of my knowledge!

I believe that this is clearly an exciting time to be part of Outreach. There are many new Outreach initiatives stemming from the recently approved University plan for administrative reorganization. As a result, Outreach has a unique opportunity to advance our mission *and* our journey from good to great. Unfortunately, the resultant changes are happening at such a breakneck speed that it is often difficult to digest the changes going on across the University and Outreach. And equally important—we need to understand what these changes mean.

Over the next year, I will try to update you frequently with what we know so far regarding these changes. However, I do realize that some of the new initiatives touch only a portion of our wide-ranging organization, and in fact, many of the changes will not be of interest to everyone, or will be of little impact. However, I would prefer to provide too much information rather than risking you not knowing what is going on within your home organization.

As Vice President for Outreach, I have been designated the University's chief advocate and organizational leader for the adult learner beginning July 1. This is an important role for Outreach and a priority for the University. It means we have a major stake in advancing campus activities statewide with respect to attracting and retaining non-traditional students and advancing workforce development programs. These initiatives are critically important to the University. We must clearly address the decline in the number of adult learners at Penn State and also forge a regional and statewide work force development initiative to bring all of Penn State's resources to bear in these crucial areas. It is important to point out that Outreach is playing a leadership role in addressing these two key initiatives; however, we are only one of many academic and administrative units

that care about these issues. Our role will be to work closely with these units to maximize our efforts. Organizationally, our designation as adult learner advocate will translate into two new administrative initiatives that will focus on the adult learner.

First, the Statewide Center for the Adult Learner will be part of Outreach and will take a lead role in supporting statewide recruitment and retention efforts at the campuses. The Center's Director, Dr. Charlene Harrison, and the staff of the existing Center for Adult Learner Services will relocate to Keller Building. We welcome these dedicated and experienced colleagues to Outreach. The Center's traditional focus of meeting the needs of University Park adult learners will be expanded to address policy, academic, and strategic issues impacting our capability to attract and retain adult learners.

Second, the establishment of the new Statewide Continuing Education and Workforce Development System will include the Directors of Continuing Education at each of the 19 Commonwealth Campuses and Great Valley Center. The Directors will have a direct report to Bill Curley, Senior Director for Statewide Continuing Education in Outreach, and a dotted line report to their campus Chancellor. The success of this initiative requires a close working relationship with the academic leaders at each campus. Our intent is to create a system that balances local autonomy with the appropriate central services (e.g. program development, marketing, etc.). Again, we are fortunate to have such a talented group of adult learning professionals join the Outreach organization. Welcome, DCE's!

In addition, the associate vice president for Outreach and Director of Continuing and Distance Education, Gary Miller, will lead the effort to refocus Continuing Education on credit programming for the adult learner. Our progress in this area will be measured not only by revenue but by other targets such as total adult student credit hours. However, to effectively meet the programming and service needs of adult learners, Continuing Education will require the full support of all campus resources (academic affairs, registrar, bursar, advising, etc.). Gary Miller and Bill Curley will be working closely with John Romano, Vice President for Commonwealth Campuses, and his staff in coordinating smooth cross-unit collaborations. Solid partnerships among the Chancellors, campus leadership, and Outreach will be critical to Penn State's success in this effort.

The reorganization plan also calls for Outreach to work with the e-Learning Cooperative to create Penn State Online, an integrated approach to e-learning that provides seamless access to all students in all locations. Penn State Online will advance Penn State's e-learning initiatives and create an innovative and coordinated University-wide online effort. This effort, which will be led by Dr. Jan Jacobs and me, is essential to offering seamless access to Penn State online resources for all students. Penn State Online also offers a wonderful opportunity

to engage Penn State Public Broadcasting in providing rich media to enhance our online learning pedagogy.

The work to advance the recommendations made by the Continuing Education Task Force is progressing. Committees with University-wide representation have recently been established to implement the recommendations put forth in the University plan for reorganization and the CE Task Force. The following Committees will be working through the summer and fall to facilitate implementation:

- Attract and Retain Adult Students—C. Weidemann, chair
- Realignment of the Campus CE Service Regions—C. Weidemann, chair
- Serving Major Commonwealth Employers—G. Miller, chair
- Serving the Three Major Pennsylvania Urban Areas—G. Miller, chair

I am confident that the role of the Regional Outreach Councils, comprised of membership from all Outreach units, will play an increasingly important role in advancing Penn State's connections across the Commonwealth. We are fortunate to have Extension and Continuing Education professionals already embedded in local communities. The long-term community relationships built by these members of the Regional Councils will significantly enhance our efforts to forge a regional and comprehensive response to Pennsylvania's needs.

Several other important Outreach initiatives are also making progress. The thematic initiatives that grew out of the Outreach strategic positioning process are moving forward. The teams have planned and identified program foci within each thematic area, and thematic funding has been earmarked for the new fiscal year that will allow implementation of programs within each area. I will provide a further update about each of the thematic groups after I receive their initial plan later this summer.

In addition, Outreach staff members in Penn State Public Broadcasting, Continuing and Distance Education, and Marketing Communications are moving this summer into the new Outreach Building at Innovation Park. This is a fabulous facility that you must stop by and visit when you are at the Penn Stater...it boasts outstanding technology in the new PSPB studio and great views of Mount Nittany from the third floor!

Also, be sure to mark your calendar for the Outreach Building "housewarming." The Celebration Team is planning a special event for late August just for Outreach employees. In addition, the official Building Dedication weekend is scheduled for September 8-10, 2005 and the Building Dedication Team is busy planning a stellar celebration! Both Teams will be sending out more information over the summer, so watch your e-mail.

Finally, President John F. Kennedy once said, "Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future." I think

we can all agree that change is certainly the law of life in Outreach! As we continue on our path from Good to Great, the changes we all are stewarding will help us better fulfill the Promise of Outreach, now and in the future.

Craig