

Continuous improvement and continuing innovation: SUNY Broome sets course for spring

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With an iPhone in his right hand and a device the size of a hockey puck in his left, SUNY Broome President Kevin E. Drumm turned the Dining Hall into an impromptu concert venue.

Centuries ago, such a concert would have required finding and paying musicians – an expensive and time-consuming endeavor. But during Friday’s Faculty Staff Assembly, all Dr. Drumm required was a handheld device and Pandora Internet radio, tuned to the Van Morrison station. With the Puck, you can hold a dance party in the middle of the Maine woods, no orchestra required.

Just as technology is taking music from a public space to a private one, the digital revolution is also transforming classrooms, Dr. Drumm noted. In the music world, the first device to bring music into the home was the piano – followed by the phonograph, radio and, ultimately, online music. In the world of education, books transformed pedagogy – and ultimately civilization. Standardized textbooks were a revolutionary technology when they, too, emerged.

“What are we doing to adapt to millennials and the digital generation?” Dr. Drumm asked.

Dr. Drumm was reading Jose Antonio Bowen’s *Teaching Naked: How Moving Technology Out of Your College Classroom Will Improve Student Learning*. The book deals with a concept called “flipped classrooms,” in which lectures are viewed by students online and classroom time is reserved for discussions, projects and face-to-face interaction.

“We’re pretty darn innovative already. We’re a SUNY leader online,” said President Drumm unveiled the concept of “Continuous improvement and continuing innovation,” or CI², in the fall. “All of us need to bring the digital age into our classroom.”

***Conessione* and student success**

The theme for this semester’s assembly was *Conessione*, a term used by Leonardo DaVinci that involves the recognition of the interconnectedness of all things, according to Executive Vice President and Chief Academic Officer Francis Battisti.

The nexus of that interconnection is, as always, the classroom.

“Everything else we do is to support what goes on in the classroom, even the President’s Office,” Dr. Drumm said.

The state of the college is strong and improving, noted Drumm, who has been at SUNY Broome’s helm for five years. According to Friday’s report by the Registrar, Enrollment is up this spring by 5.75 percent, or 292 students; full-time equivalents are up 7.97 percent, or 159.

With those numbers SUNY Broome is bucking both state and national trends, which show declining enrollment, Dr. Drumm noted. The Student Village – now in its second semester – is full, and applications also appear to be up for the fall.

While the Binghamton Advantage Program and student housing make a major difference, most of the spring increase is largely due to student retention – good news for the college community.

“That means we’re doing a better job of serving our students,” Dr. Drumm said.

A less obvious factor in increasing student retention lies in changes to the college’s distribution of financial aid. Prior to Fall 2014, SUNY Broome disbursed financial aid when classes began – which wasn’t an incentive for students to attend, noted Vice President for Administrative and Financial Affairs Regina Losinger. By moving disbursement to the middle of the semester, the college has made students more likely to remain in class, she noted.

When it comes to student success, work remains to be done. Dr. Battisti outlined a plan of devising completion strategies, including offering courses in high school so that students don’t need developmental courses once they’re at SUNY Broome. Other measures include more work on seamless transfers, partnerships and articulation agreements to make it easier for students to continue their education, expanding prior learning assessments, implementing reverse transfer systems that allow students working on their bachelor’s to earn their associate’s degree, and creating pathways to help students discover their goals.

Celebrating achievements

The assembly is also a time to celebrate the previous semester’s achievements, honor retirees and greet new members of the faculty and staff. It was also a chance to showcase the campus’ musical talent; the college’s Chamber Singers – an audition-only group – performed under the direction of Fitzroy Stewart and accompanied by Peter Sicilian, both new instructors in the Music Department.

The Fall semester was full of major developments.

In June, SUNY Broome received the largest donation in its history from late Binghamton resident Emil Calice, an IBM retiree who had never attended the college. Now coming in at more than \$11 million – up from the initial \$10 million – the gift is likely the largest philanthropic gift ever presented to a SUNY community college.

The Student Village opened at the end of August with a full capacity of 365 students, the first ever to reside at SUNY Broome. SUNY Broome received funds for the Carnegie Library project, which will transform a historic building in downtown Binghamton into a center for hospitality programs, as well as \$3 million in SUNY 2020 funds to renovate the Mechanical Building, one of the original structures built in 1956.

SUNY 2020 also provided \$6 million in funding for the creation of the SUNY Bridge to Entrepreneurial Excellence (SUNY-BEE), which will nurture a vibrant start-up community for student-led ventures at the new Southern Tier High Technology Incubator. SUNY-BEE has added an entire new floor to the building, which will open in Fall 2016.

“That’s our floor, where we’re going to be growing entrepreneurs,” said Vice President for Student & Economic Development Debra Morello.

Overall, the past four years also saw the investment of \$74 million in campus facilities, including not only projects such as the Student Village and Natural Science Center, but significant maintenance and renovation work.

“The facilities are finally starting to reflect the quality of our instruction,” said Losinger.

During the assembly, faculty and staff also learned about the Accessibility Resource Office; developments in the Early Alert program and the implementation of Starfish, a student success software system; ongoing donations to the Broome Community College Foundation; service learning and civic engagement; shared governance updates and more.

They also learned about the [recent Health for Haiti class, which brought solar power, clean water, food and other initiatives to the island nation this January](#). Rachel Liddic, a student in the college’s [new AA1 program](#), took part in Health for Haiti, as well as a SUNY conference in New York City.

“I didn’t know I would get so much out of SUNY Broome,” she said.

Scenes from the Jan. 23, 2015, Faculty Staff
Assembly.

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