

BCC Faculty And Staff Express Concerns About Morale, Management

BY SUSAN USHER

An item that wasn't even on the agenda dominated discussion when Brunswick Community College trustees met last Wednesday: a survey of full-time faculty and staff and press coverage of results that indicate possible morale and management concerns.

The Management Status Review survey was distributed to all full-time faculty and staff. Of 59 questionnaires, 56 percent, or 32, were completed and returned. The results were discussed at a two-day retreat held Thursday and Friday by the college's Planning Council, a group of faculty, staff and students. The council met with Jim Young, a planning and Title III consultant, to discuss the results of the survey and consider recommendations.

The survey addressed the role, mission and emphases of the college; the challenges it faces; the changes respondents would most like to see; the school's perceived role and image as perceived by the community; the quality of the teaching faculty and administration; and morale of staff and faculty.

Most of the complaints made by faculty and staff related to administrative areas such as management, communications and program emphasis and direction. And while trustees and administrators were concerned with some of the specific responses contained in the document, most weren't surprised. Several said they would have liked to have seen the survey results before reading about them in a regional daily.

Noting the Planning Council schedule, President Michael Reaves told trustees he thought the in-house document was publicized prematurely, before the college community had had a chance to discuss it. He and several trustees were also concerned that staff and faculty had shared their views in the anonymous survey, but apparently were not comfortable sharing them through existing on-campus channels such as the Faculty Senate, Human Relations Council and Policy Council.

However, board Chairman David Kelly said of the situation, "We don't want to hide it; we don't want to shoot the messenger that leaked it. We want to learn from it. I myself could have anticipated some of these responses."

"Mike (Reaves) clearly has a long list of opportunities here," he continued.

Reaves agreed the survey indicates there are areas that need to be looked into and addressed, particularly regarding the need for open lines of communication with faculty and staff.

Kelly attributed some of the comments made in the survey to the extreme amount of change and associated stress during the past year at the college—relocation to the new campus and to new buildings, an entirely new management team, and adjusting to a reduced state budget at a time when enrollment is increasing. "It takes time to adjust," he said.

Trustee Kelly Holden, who is also District 1 Commissioner, agreed, and summed up the survey and its results in a few words: "It reflects what's happening in Brunswick County as a whole."

Vernon Ward of Shallotte Point, the college's former vice president, told the board, "Perceptions can be more damaging than facts. Take that survey and look at the areas; all four areas (faculty, staff, administration, community) have to work together with open dialogue. If any one group fails to participate, it falls out of line."

Parts of the survey are very reflective of attitudes of this staff," he continued, adding that faculty and staff have always tended to tell the president and board of trustees what "they think you want to hear."

"These surveys do serve as a fine medium to identify problems; everybody has to be sensitive to

others' feelings. Otherwise you will continue to just spin wheels."

Responses in many cases reflected the college's efforts to meet needs of various segments of the community. Respondents on the one hand urged greater emphasis on literacy education and expanded curriculum programs and an "open door" policy on the one hand, while either encouraging or discouraging efforts to establish a college transfer program.

Those answering agreed on the need to strengthen the college's counseling program, and to put a greater emphasis on students and student retention. Eleven cited money as the college's biggest problem or challenge, while six each cited management or student retention and adapting to meet student needs.

Most rated the teaching faculty a 3 or better on a scale of 1 to 5, with administration fairing similarly in most but not all areas.

Administrative personnel were rated slightly lower (more 2's than 3's) on planning capabilities, and knowledge and competence in management practices. One unhappy respondent gave the administration a "10" in four of eight management areas. Administration didn't earn 5's in any area but one, planning capabilities, which two people ranked high.

Respondents rated staff morale as low (10), very low (7) and average (8), with only three "good". Fourteen people rated faculty morale as low, while 10 ranked it as very low.

Comments focused on friction between faculty, staff and administration; a sense that administration doesn't know and doesn't care about academic affairs; and that expressing differences of opinion is considered unpopular. Reference was made to "a few individuals" who create rumors and attempt to lower morale and to morale being "clique dependent and ego oriented."

Respondents were divided as to whether the current organizational structure is effective in facilitating smooth and efficient management, with eight saying "no," seven saying "yes," five making no response and five saying it is "too early to tell."

Several others discussed need for better communication, delays in directives from management.

Given the freedom to change any three things, 12 focused on improving administrative management or related issues. Eight said they would increase staff and faculty, while seven said they would reduce staff and part-time faculty and hire more full-time faculty.

On six questionnaires four administrative-level people were identified as needed "changes". Six respondents also said they would improve channels of communication. Others offered specific suggestions that ranged from firing employees who don't do their share of the work to installing a pay phone for privacy.

Faculty and staff rated the college as about the same or better in relation to other two-year facilities in most areas except counseling services, student activities, industrial training and overall management practices, which they ranked as equal to or worse than; and physical facilities, which they ranked as much better.

Other Business

In other business, the board: —Learned from Vicki Spencer, executive director of the BCC Foundation and resources development officer, that the foundation's campus fund drive netted 100 percent response from full-time faculty and staff, 96 percent participation from part-time staff, and 40 percent participation from part-time faculty, with more than \$8,000 in contributions and pledges. During fall and winter quarter, the Foundation awarded \$7,800 in student scholarships. It has also purchased a com-

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—Trustee Kelly Holden
On BCC Survey

puter that will be placed in the library study room for student and public use.

—Agreed that staff should proceed with contacting other architectural firms regarding completion of the auditorium design and construction project, should material from the office of the late Jim Pittman, the architect who had been working on the project at the time of his death, arrive before the board's next meeting. A review of materials by

the State Office of Construction indicated the firm had done no work beyond the second phase, said Vice President Ben DeBois, which should aid in closing out that contract.

—Agreed to ask Daniel Pollitt, a Kenan law professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, to present at the January board meeting his proposal for a law school at the college's Southport annex. Pollitt has been discussing the possibility of leasing

a portion of the Lord Street campus for several years.

—Learned that Donald Bryant, president of Carteret Community College, will be a speaker at the board's Dec. 1-2 on-campus retreat. Trustees will also review several videotapes on trusteeship, and meet with staff, faculty and students to learn more about the school and its programs.

—Took no action on a request from the Brunswick Players to formally lease the old media center and room adjacent to the former woodworking shop on the Lord Street campus. The community theater group will continue to have informal use of the space for scenery storage and work, but trustees agreed that the college

should not lock itself into a long-term arrangement. The structures were formally abandoned by the college earlier, with the idea that they could be moved off-site or destroyed. "We need the space there, not the structures," said Lewis Stanley, chairman of the building and grounds committee.

—Heard President Michael Reaves announce that a physical equipment audit, or inventory, has drawn praise from the State Department of Community Colleges.

—Learned from Reaves that the college will formally request a college transfer contractual relationship with UNC-Wilmington, with action on the request expected in February or March.



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