# Annual Report to the Board of Trustees Report
# Johnson State College
## September 4, 2008

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*The Johnson State College community believes in the power of higher education to transform lives. We express this commitment through an education that crosses academic and other boundaries, where possible; creates opportunities for students to extend their classroom learning to the field, the laboratory, the studio, the community, and the local and wider world; recognizes the diverse starting points and goals of students; and sustains active participation, high standards, vigorous debate and mutual respect.*

— Johnson State College Mission Statement
Adopted 2005

During this past year at Johnson State College, we have engaged in work designed to enhance our College, further our strategic goals, and strengthen our commitment to our students to provide them with an outstanding education.

We began this past academic year with our Convocation celebration, which offers our new students the chance to be honored by the JSC community and to hear from one of our distinguished faculty members. Professor Liz Dolci spoke eloquently about responsibility and growth, and of civic responsibility. These presentations by faculty members provide a very special connection for new JSC students. We brought the year to a close with commencement, at which Senator Patrick Leahy spoke about the impact of Vermonters on the history of our nation and the responsibility of JSC graduates to actively participate in their communities.

The JSC campus continues to serve as a hub for events and performances in Lamoille County. This past year more than 10,000 people attended JSC events, which ranged from musical and theatrical performances in Dibden; to lectures and films in Bentley Hall; to poetry readings, artistic exhibitions, faculty and student presentations across the campus.

We are entering the fourth year of our Title III grant to enhance student success, and have been engaged in assessment of initiatives made possible through Title III funding and looking toward sustainable funding for our most successful first-year programs. We launched our Common Reading Initiative for first-year students with the book A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier, by Ishmael Beah. The program was enormously successful, and this year we have chosen the book 1 dead in attic, by Times Picayune reporter Chris Rose, and expanded our cultural and artistic programming to support our students' reading of the book.

We continue to invest strategically in our faculty. F. Reed Brown, who was a visiting professor in fine and performing arts, has been appointed to a tenure-track position. We've also appointed new faculty members in writing and literature, and in mathematics: Assistant Professor Sharon Twigg, and Associate Professor Julie Theoret respectively. Visiting Professor, Jerry Himelstein, will return for a second year to our behavioral sciences department.

Perhaps the most visible initiative on campus this past year has been the renovation—what we at JSC refer to as "the transformation"—of Stearns Hall to create a 24-hour student center at the College. The transformation officially began with an April groundbreaking ceremony after much planning with student groups. Work will be completed this October. Our student center will fill a critical need at JSC by creating a center for our community, a hub for student activities, and a gathering place for study and recreation. Our development staff is currently engaged in fundraising for the facility, and to date we have firm commitments for naming four spaces within the facility and are in final discussions for naming another four spaces. Through extraordinary work by many, dining began in the new building in time for returning FA08 students—allowing students to see the immediate benefits of their investment.

Our effort to integrate comprehensive planning across the College is underway. This past year, Dean Daniel Regan began working with faculty to develop a strategic academic plan. Simultaneously, Dean Ken Schexnayder has appointed an advisory group to develop a Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) plan and model at the College. The results and recommendations of both initiatives will be reported to the board and to the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) as part of our re-accreditation.

This fall brings our largest residential population in decades, with more than 600 students in the residence halls. These students will be accommodated in part through a creative use of existing resident hall space, and the conversion of several floor lounges to quads. This year marks the peak of a multi-year trend that has seen annual increases in the number of residential students, driven by both an increase in the number of new students and in the retention of returners. In the past five years a record number of returning students have chosen to live on campus.

All of the initiatives launched this past year will continue into the next year as we engage in assessment of their success and implement refinements in this important work.

**Student Life**

The theme of last year's report was the prioritization of ongoing assessment as a means of continuously evaluating and improving the delivery of services to students. Accordingly, a wide range of efforts were undertaken to get student feedback. As was the case last year, the responses received were quite positive.

Students appreciated the high caliber of the College's offerings. Through survey responses, more than two-thirds of them consistently rated service areas at eight or higher on a ten-point scale. These positive responses were reflected across the spectrum of student services. For example, students gave high marks in response to questions about the courtesy, promptness, and knowledge of the health center staff; how well the SHAPE facility met their fitness needs; their experiences at the counseling center; and the residence life staff and sense of community in the residence halls. Students also "voted with their feet," as areas from the SHAPE to the counseling center saw increased use of services this past year. This undoubtedly was related to the higher number of students choosing to live on campus and staying on campus on weekends.

There is a general sense that student life departments and staff have maximized current resources in order to deliver services to students. Despite the positive ratings indicated above, feedback from students has continued to indicate that they would like more opportunities to connect with others and to have increased access to services and programmatic opportunities. Our rural location, while a major attraction and asset, results in very limited offerings for students in the immediate area. The campus can feel particularly isolated in the winter. Further, we have come to acknowledge that student schedules and needs do not always correspond well to the hours and services we are able to offer.

When we engaged in our campus master planning exercise, students rated a true student center among their top priorities. They envisioned a place in which they could gather, study, and hang-out after quiet hours in the residence halls. Consistent with the emphasis placed on student input, this project -- the renovation of Stearns Hall to create such a student center -- was subsequently made the first major project of the campus plan.

The Stearns project is undoubtedly the major focus of student life at JSC this year. The culmination of years of studies, design work, and student input, it represents the most significant improvement to the life of the campus in the past decade. We expect that it will provide an outlet for students, offer more opportunities for their interaction, and will enhance and strengthen our community. This building, facing the quad, will be a well-lit, inviting hub of activity. The focus of the staff in the student services division will be on maximizing this facility as a vehicle for enhancing student life and development. The Stearns renovation is a major investment in our campus, and we are putting a lot of stock in it.

The JSC athletics department has continued to be a presence in the local community through varsity athlete service projects, training camps, and sponsored programs with local agencies. Community members take advantage of our recreational resources by using the SHAPE facility, participating in the ever growing number of open classes, and attending athletic contests.

As we begin the upcoming year the athletics department is actively planning for the addi-

tion of our two new varsity sports: women's volleyball and men's golf. The staff will also be working with students to get feedback on plans for the renovation of the SHAPE facility, on which work is scheduled to begin in summer 2009.

**Personnel**

Our work to create an integrated Human Resources Office with a focus on advancing the JSC mission and ongoing professional development became a reality with the beginning of FY'07. The College hired a director of human resources and identified four areas for measuring success.
• High standards of human relations
• Employees engaged in productive employment
• Setting and meeting individual and department goals
• Employees involved in on-going learning

Over the course of the year, the Human Resources Office identified objectives and related activities that were supportive of our on-going HR goals. These activities included, but are not limited to:
• The creation of professional development seminars that provided group processing and facilitation tools for supervisory staff
• The development of a manual that increased efficiencies and informed users of hiring processes
• The increased access to wellness and retirement information sessions and services

**Faculty Appointments**
JSC continues to experience a very low rate of faculty turnover, including retirements; but, for the small number of vacancies that do exist, the College has enjoyed another successful year recruiting first choices to full-time faculty positions. **Sharon M. Twigg** (Ph.D. Wisconsin) will join Writing and Literature from a visiting position at Marquette University. **Julie Theoret** (Ph.D. University of Virginia), from Lyndon, will be Associate Professor of Mathematics. **F. Reed Brown** (MFA Illinois State University), whose directing productions have graced the Dibden stage these past two years, will become a tenure-stream assistant professor in Fine and Performing Arts. **Jerry Himelstein** (Ph.D. Louisiana State University) returns for a second year as a visiting sociology professor in Behavioral Sciences.

Several staff appointments have been made, each connected to and funded by the Title III grant. These include Heidi Wrighton, coordinator of career services; Sherlock Terry, coordinator of first-year events; and Amy Beattie, coordinator of online learning and services.

**Staff Transitions**
The College continues to invest in critical staff positions and is committed to ensuring that exceptional staff have the opportunity for advancement. This past year we have seen the following staff changes.

**Barbara Flathers** has been promoted to Assistant Director of Conference and Events.

**Sara Kinerson** has been promoted to Director of the Office of Advising and Career Services. Sara has been employed with JSC since 2001, and has a M.A. in Counseling from JSC.

Joining Sara is **Heidi Wrighton**, the new Coordinator of Career Services.

**Elga Gruner** has been promoted to Assistant Director of Admissions. Elga has a B.A. from JSC, and has been with the Admissions team since June 2006.

**Chelsea St. Louis** is the newest member of the Financial Aid Office. In addition to her job, she is pursuing a B.A. degree from JSC.

**Clyde Stats** has been promoted to Assistant Director Academic Support Services.

**Michele Whitmore** has been promoted to Assistant Dean for Campus Life.

**Andrea Wadlington** has joined the Business Office as our newest Account Specialist.

## Academic Affairs

### Early Student Success

Over the past year, under the leadership of Academic Dean, Dan Regan, Johnson State College maintained its focus on the Title III-supported goal of early student success. One important area of focus is the creation of First Year Seminars—required, as of FA08—of all incoming new students. As of this summer, 32 new first-year seminars have been created, each trying to challenge new students and prepare them for collegiate success.

According to guidelines approved by Faculty Assembly, each also aims to explore an innovative topic not confined to a traditional disciplinary approach; incorporate an extended classroom experience; explore the variety and commonality of human experience and/or perspectives; include information literacy and research skills; contain a public events component; and emphasize connections across the College.

In light of the importance of academic advising to student persistence and success, the College also used Title III funds to support professional development in advising. A highlight of the past year was a site visit and advising "audit" by Dr. Charlie Nutt, Executive Director of the National Academic Advising Association.

Much valuable effort went into institutionalizing the Common Reading Initiative—a program that we think could match many such projects offered by larger colleges or universities—and into refining the annual event to showcase a wide variety of "extended classroom experiences." A variety of initiatives brought "academic affairs" into the first-year residence halls. These included tutoring, advising, and support services, mini-lectures by faculty and staff, and a well-attended series of international food and cultural events.

### Student Voices

During his visit to JSC and the VSC annual retreat two years ago, Harvard's Richard Light asked us to listen closely to student voices, and to the stories students have to tell. Our attempts to heed his call over the past year have taken many forms. Notable among them has been the inclusion of several JSC students on the College-wide committee to select the common book, on which their contributions were truly noteworthy. Based loosely on the instrument that Light used to survey undergraduates at Harvard, we developed a "20 Questions" interview guide. Trained staff and faculty conducted individual, 45-minute interviews with first-year students. We are presently analyzing the results, which we hope will provide—along with the annual NSSE survey and other mechanisms--valuable information to gauge student experiences at the College.

Strategic Enrollment Management

Academic Affairs has joined other divisions across the College in a strategic enrollment management effort led by Dean of Institutional Advancement Ken Schexnayder. The task force seeks a comprehensive and integrated enrollment management approach, from recruitment and admissions right through student persistence and graduation. Some of the initiative is devoted to diversifying the mix of students, particularly through the External Degree Program, which continues to thrive and grow. An important part of the overall effort aims to increase our capacity to generate, analyze and interpret, and display relevant data. To those ends the College Registrar and Chief Institutional Researcher, Doug Eastman, has been a participant in several professional development activities, supported by Title III funding.

**Looking Ahead**
Academic Affairs has begun transitional planning to a post-Title III world, which will begin in late 2010. Besides addressing the sustainability of important, grant-funded activities, we aim to identify and plan for those early success initiatives that transcend "first year" and hold promise for more experienced students. We view the revamped first year as an incubator for teaching and learning practices that might be applied to other categories of students besides freshmen, for instance, to transfers and sophomores. Next year promises to be a busy and demanding one for Academic Affairs in other ways as well. Crafting an academic master plan and a report to NEASC will also be major tasks. Having received a favorable review on our recent Fulbright application, we also look forward to identifying and hosting a visiting scholar from the Islamic world.

## Finance and Development

**Finances**
With the exception of in-state graduate enrollment, the College realized an FPE increase in all enrollment categories compared to prior year and to budget. As revenue from enrollment accounts for approximately 75-80% of all College revenues, this was welcome and essential good news.

Total operating revenues, including tuition and fees, increased 6.7% over prior year. This increase is attributable to both an increase in tuition and fees revenue, which represents the largest contribution to operating revenue, and increase in auxiliary revenues.

The plant investments, including the purchase of 1096 College Hill Road, the conversion of classroom and office space to residential rooms, and creation of a pedestrian promenade were made using prior year carry-forward funds.
The College continues to have fully funded board required reserves, and will have a small additional amount of carry-forward for use in a future year.

The College's endowment continues to grow, and was at $1,817,996 as of June 30. Still pending are two installments of the Title III Endowment match, which will carry the College over the $2 million level this fall.

**Financial Aid**
For most JSC students, financial aid is critical to their ability to attend college. This past year, we awarded more than $18 million in total aid. Included in this total are more than $2 million in federal grants, more than $11 million in federal loans, more than $1 million in alternative loans, and more than $800,000 in institutional aid.

The 2007-2008 academic year brought changes to the way we award aid. A preferred lender list was required by law to be in place, and will continue to be required on a yearly basis. Working with the other Vermont State Colleges over 16 lenders provided us with survey information in order for the financial aid team to choose three lenders that we determined would best assist our students. Considering such factors as loan benefits, interest rates and customer service the lenders chosen were VSAC, Wachovia and EdAmerica.

Students, of course, have the right to choose any lender they wish. This in turn created the need for a new process for students to choose

lenders which involved updates to Web Services and Datatel processing of loans. Also because of the different lenders that we have to use we are now processing our loans through ELM Resources. ELM Resources provides a common and open information exchange and disbursement system online that seamlessly connects schools, lenders and guarantors while providing real-time loan inquiry to borrowers.

The Campaign for Johnson State College
The College's first comprehensive fundraising campaign is the major project for the President's advisory group on fundraising, the Fund for Johnson State College, and the JSC development staff. The campaign is currently in the leadership phase as we seek to bring definition to the overall campaign, organize solicitors, and identify select prospects. This three-pronged comprehensive campaign focuses on funding for the renovation of Stearns student center and other plant upgrades, increasing endowment (for student and faculty support), and encouraging academic excellence through current use dollars. During the Leadership Phase, we are focusing on prospect identification and cultivation, solicitation of current major donors, and attentive stewardship.

President's Fund for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and Scholarships
Awarded by the president to encourage students, faculty, and staff in their quest for excellence, the President's Fund endowment has grown to $70,000 with interest going in perpetuity to support this fund. Scholarship endowments reached a new high this year, crossing the $1,600,000 mark.

Annual Fund Emphasis Realigned
The emphasis for the Annual Fund was shifted this year from restricted, scholarship support to the solicitation of unrestricted monies, which can be directed to areas of greatest need. This new initiative was met with positive success, especially during the annual phone-a-thon where the average pledge rose from $25 in 2007 to $33.50 in 2008. In addition, 30% of the pledges received were from first-time donors. Even during these challenging times 98.5% of the pledges made during the phone-a-thon have been paid. For the 2009 annual fund drive the emphasis on general fund gifts will continue through direct mail appeals, phone-a-thon, and personal solicitations.

**Facilities**

Johnson State College began the construction and renovation of Stearns Hall with the goal of creating a 24-hour student center to serve as the hub of student activity on campus. DEW Contracting was hired to serve as the construction management firm, and an aggressive schedule of renovations was launched. Dining began in the new space with the start of classes. The facility will fully open in October.

Other renovations completed during 2008 included:

• Pedestrian Promenade: The portion of the "ring road" between Martinetti Hall and Dibden Center for the Arts was converted to a pedestrian promenade. This new walking path provides a beautiful view of the Sterling Mountain Range, and overlooks a spectacular new Won

Lee sculpture "The Meditators."
• Martinetti Dorm Conversion: The third floor of Martinetti Hall was converted from classrooms and offices to residential rooms. These new rooms, outfitted with furniture from the Vermont Offender's Program, provide housing for upperclass students with impressive grade point averages.

## Library and Information Systems

### Library

The Johnson State College Library embraced social networking tools such as Facebook, Flickr, and instant messaging this past year. The Library wasn't trying to be fashionable when it rolled out these tools; rather, it was paying close attention to how people, and not just those who fall into the category of "traditionally-aged students," communicate with one another.

According to a 2005 wire service story, 85 percent of college students use Facebook, and many more make use of instant messaging. Given the student response the library has received through these new access points, the decision to move in this direction has proven to be a good one. Reference librarians continue to field questions through previously established modes like the reference desk, the telephone, and e-mail.

The almost viral propagation of social networking tools is but a small aspect of the changes technology has made, and will continue to make, on academic libraries. Some of these changes are predictable and welcome, while others require constant scrutiny and a certain leap of faith. In the former category, is the emergence of open source tools in the library environment. Most promising is the development of automated library systems such as Koha and Evergreen. With the proprietary software market facing ever-increasing consolidation from venture capital groups, the sophistication of open source products is growing at a quick pace. Although the current rate of open source adoption by academic libraries is relatively modest, changes in the marketplace may speed this process up significantly.

Another area of the market that is particularly volatile concerns electronic content, and this may prove to be a much costlier and more complicated problem for libraries to solve.
For the past decade, libraries have managed to enjoy enormous cost savings by subscribing to aggregated databases, digital archives that provide full-text access to thousands of academic journals. However, this market is changing, and for several reasons. The first relates to changes in the way royalty payments are paid to publishers by the database companies. Where publishers once received royalties for each article in the database, they're now reimbursed only for articles that are accessed in full-text, an enormous change in compensation. The second reason is also economic, namely publishers deciding that it is in their financial self-interest to sell their digital products directly to libraries, rather than having them go through a middleman. While there may be an increase in quality and comprehensiveness with this model, it is fair to say that it will be more expensive. We're in the early stages of this shift, so there is ample time to follow its progress and prepare for any necessary adjustments.

### Information Technology

Our IT department has seen an increased use of our learning technologies platform, Blackboard, by faculty and staff as well as increased traffic in all areas. The department continues its emphasis on support and management of the College's computer infrastructure. This year's accomplishment's included the implementation of additional wireless access points, renovation of the academic computing center, and replacement of core switches and routers. IT continues to provide on request training for Content Collection and other key software.

Additionally, the College is planning for the conversion to Office 2007. Pilot implementa-

tions have been installed in numerous offices, and lead users have been selected to serve as primary points of contact for the conversion effort. Planning for FY2009 has begun, with additional implementations of wireless for residence halls and academic buildings topping the list of most desired projects.

**Public Service and Special Activities**

Two $40,000 workforce development grants have provided technical training workshops for environmental workers in the region and entry-level professionals in the non-profit sector. A third application for workforce development funding, this time to address the needs of behavioral interventionists in our region, is currently under consideration at the Vermont Department of Labor. The College has expanded its dual-enrollment program, bringing high school students to JSC. Most of all, a full range of extended classroom experiences, via student internships, research, service, and service learning, contribute to the communities around Johnson State College and make our institutional presence felt in them.

Through the Center for Service Learning JSC students provided more than 3,000 hours of service. 1,200 of these were provided through long-term placements in the Bonner Leader Program to local organizations such as the United Way of Lamoille County, Laraway Youth and Family Services, and the Waterville Town Library. Another 920 were provided by JSC reading partners to local elementary schools and early education programs through our America Reads program. Additionally, more than 700 hours were provided through JSC student volunteers in our CSLocal one-time service program—in projects anywhere from cleaning up the Lamoille River to raising awareness about domestic and sexual violence.

**Future Initiatives**

As we move into the new fiscal year, the College is continuing its work in assessment of programs and launching new initiatives designed to strengthen our strategic goals. The work of the President's Council—a group of campus leaders who meet monthly to advise the president—will shift in the coming year.

The Council is charged with designing a multi-year action plan for the College, built around drafted and refined priorities that will serve as the center of planning. While the President's Council will serve as the design and steering committee, the work of component initiatives will be carried out by multiple task forces or working groups, including the academic planning and Strategic Enrollment Management groups mentioned earlier in this document.

While we're refining our priorities for the year, the list will cross disciplines and professional areas of the College and will include the following strategic areas: strategic enrollment management, early student success, academic planning, development, civic engagement, human resources, and campus transformation.