



JOHNSON STATE COLLEGE

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

to the Vermont State Colleges Board of Trustees

OCTOBER 30, 2014



SEARCH FOR NEW JSC PRESIDENT BEGINS

The Johnson State College community is eager to be part of the Board of Trustees' process as the presidential search process launches. JSC sophomore Shayna Bennett, an environmental science major from Belvidere, Vt., joins JSC Professor Ken Leslie (Art), Assistant Professor Kathleen Brinegar (Education), Director of Advising Sara Kinerson and Director of Athletics Jamey Ventura to represent JSC on the committee.

Search Committee members Diamond, Dickenson, Slaimen, Moore and Donovan hosted two open forums and attended an academic department chairs' meeting on Thursday, Oct. 16, to present an outline of the search process over the next five months and to hear from students, faculty and staff about the skills and qualities they would like to see in the next president. These sessions were well-attended and generated good discussion about opportunities for the College's future. Effective Oct. 27, there is a web presence for the search on the JSC website at www.jsc.edu/PresidentSearch.



ANOTHER GENEROUS GIFT FROM THE FUSS FAMILY FOR THE PRESIDENT'S FUND FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING & LEARNING

Peter and Evelyn Fuss of Morrisville are longtime friends of and donors to JSC. They share the priorities that guide awards made from The President's Fund for Excellence in Teaching & Learning, the fund to which they direct their gifts, which supports teaching and learning opportunities that extend beyond the classroom to include student travel and attendance at professional meetings and conferences. The Fusses especially value the research, professional and creative work faculty members do in the company of students. Over the past several years, they have provided annual gifts of \$20,000 to support student presentations at conferences, summer research stipends for students, guest speakers, opportunities for students to present at professional conferences, and several educational travel opportunities.

Recently the Fusses chose to make a significant gift to this fund, bringing the size of the endowment to just over \$511,000 as of Sept. 30. We are extremely grateful for this extraordinary and truly transformative gift.

Since its inception, the President's Fund has granted more than \$206,000 to support the participation of students, faculty and staff in projects large and small, including technology enhancements in classrooms and labs, student/faculty inquiry, scholarships for deserving students, distinguished guest scholars, faculty enrichment, and student travel and seminars. A report on allocations from October 2013 – October 2014 is available [here](#).



POSITIVE INDICATORS

While we continue to live in lean budget times and in a demographic downturn in the number of young adults in Vermont and throughout New England, the fall semester at JSC started with some positive numbers, including a significant uptick in the number of residential students over last year (495 from 471) and the largest incoming class of fall athletes (91, from a previous high of 75). Another promising indicator is the increased persistence of first- to second-year students. This fall saw that number increase by 5 percent, which includes students from Vermont, neighboring New England states and other out-of-state students.

Our successful prevention and outreach programming around alcohol, drugs and healthy relationships continues, with incoming students for the second straight year taking online



courses on these topics. Our “iChoose” social norms campaign has returned for a second year as well, with a strong and positive response from students. At a late-September event, 55 students signed up indicating interest in working with the group and helping with programming. Dean of Student Life & College Relations Dave Bergh presented on these promising trends to the Board of Trustees at its October committee meetings. Of particular note is the marked change — in a positive direction — of use patterns *after* arriving at JSC.

NEW STUDENT SUCCESS INITIATIVES

We launched several new “student success” initiatives this fall:

- The “JPass” program connects staff members with students in First-Year Seminars to serve as mentors and as an additional point of contact and support for new students. Twenty-three staff members are serving as volunteer mentors, with one to two in each of the 16 First-Year Seminars.
- The Career Development Office is connecting with first-year students in the classroom, and many of the 15 classes attended by staff to date have been First-Year Seminars. This outreach is the logical extension of a push to help students begin to connect their college programs and choices to their life and career goals starting their very first semester at JSC.
- Our two learning communities for first-year students are off to a good start this year. We plan to double the number of learning communities next year and involve five distinct academic areas and faculty members in creating communities of learners for new students.
- JSC’s Student Government Association is making an effort to better connect with commuting students, holding well-received informational and social gatherings for this group.

A ‘MILITARY FRIENDLY’ JSC

Johnson State College has been designated a “Military Friendly School” in recognition of our demonstrated commitment to supporting student veterans on campus and in their careers.

JSC is one of about 1,600 American colleges and universities that have earned the certification from a veteran-owned business called Victory Media, which assesses colleges on their programs and services for veterans and bestows the designation at no cost.

This is not the first time JSC has been recognized for its support of military students. For example:

- In 2013, we received a \$10,000 grant from the Vermont Community Foundation to expand programs in support of veterans and their families.
- JSC serves as an outpost of the South Burlington Vet Center on Fridays, providing counseling and information about

veterans’ benefits to students and area community members who otherwise would have to travel to centers in Burlington or White River Junction.

- Efforts by JSC Student Government Association President Shane Bouthillette in 2013-14 led to his appointment by Gov. Peter Shumlin to a two-year term on the state’s Veterans Advisory Council. Bouthillette, who graduated from JSC in 2014, is a member of the Vermont National Guard.

VISITING SCHOLAR JOANNE ST. LEWIS

The Ellsworth Trust celebrated its 40th anniversary by hosting Joanne St. Lewis, a law professor from the University of Ottawa



and a lecturer in the University of Southern California’s Executive Program on Counter-Terrorism, the week of Oct. 20. Professor St. Lewis’s work examines the operation of social justice principles and legal culture. Her areas of current research include digital defamation and social justice communities; art, culture and the law; and the equality rights of African/Canadian women and girls.

JSC had the benefit of Professor St. Lewis’s presence in classes as wide-ranging as education, history, political science, sociology and anthropology. All participants — especially students — were delighted and challenged by her presentations and dialogue. She concluded her visit with an all-college reception and conversations with the men’s basketball team.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF NOTE

A supplement to this report noting recent accomplishments by JSC faculty, staff, students and alumni is posted on our website and available for reading here. We encourage you to follow this link and read about our wide-ranging accomplishments.

FOREST-MANAGEMENT PLAN IN THE WORKS

Recognizing that managing our woodlands will open up wildlife habitat and provide watershed protection as well as generate revenue through the sale of timber, JSC is implementing a new forest-management strategy. The goal is to selectively harvest mature and over-mature trees, which stimulates regeneration. Following conversations with key users — those who use our woods for cross-country running, disc golf and the ropes course — we are marking trees for harvesting and preparing to solicit bids. Harvesting will be scheduled during the winter, if the temperatures are cold enough to provide a protective frozen

base. JSC has selected Lamoille County Forester Raymond Toolan to oversee and guide the process. Mr. Toolan works in the Forest Resource Management Division of the Vermont Department of Forest, Parks & Recreation.

REORGANIZING OUR WORK

Late this summer we merged the Business and Financial Aid offices into a combined Office of Student Financial Services, with the goal of making the financial aid and billing functions more comprehensible to students and families, for whom “a bill is a bill” regardless from where it originates or how it will be settled. We know that the more we can clarify and streamline the process for settling a bill (with financial aid, loans, scholarships and/or direct payments), the happier our customers — our students and their families — will be.

In addition, we are in the process of combining our Advising and Registrar offices — now located in separate campus buildings and carrying out separate functions — into a single Advising & Registration Center, to be housed in Dewey Hall. Reflecting a model in place at many colleges, the move will expand the role of our Registrar’s staff, enabling them to partner with Advising to help students navigate the successful completion of their degrees.



CAMPUS SOLAR INSTALLATION

Installation of a 150 kWh solar array is under way on campus near the main entrance, just up the hill from the former “upper pond.” Our investment partner in this project is Encore of Burlington. Major construction is scheduled to complete by the end of October, and it is scheduled to be tied into Johnson Water & Light by the end of the calendar year. This solar farm continues the College’s sustainability focus, enables us to decrease our reliance on fossil fuels and thus reduce our “carbon footprint,” and is a natural extension of our energy-conservation efforts. This is a modest project and it’s difficult to estimate exactly how much energy will be produced on any given day, but it’s estimated the farm will generate the amount of power equivalent to heating both McClelland and Martinetti halls.



Assistant Professor Amy Welch, of JSC’s Environmental & Health Sciences Department, confers with a student during class.

NEASC ACCREDITATION

We originally were scheduled this year to complete our self-study for reaccreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges and to host a NEASC reaccreditation team next year (the 2015-16 academic year). With the announcement of President Murphy’s forthcoming retirement, NEASC has agreed to postpone this work for a year so we can focus this year on a presidential search. Reaccreditation committee work will continue this year, albeit under much less pressure; our self-study will be done next year, and the visit from NEASC will happen in the 2016-17 academic year.



Aly speaks about winning the national championship and being part of the Women’s Rugby Club at JSC during a December 2011 victory celebration in Stearns Hall.

REMEMBERING ALYSON FINN

The JSC community mourns the loss of Aly Finn, class of 2013, who died in a car accident earlier this month. Aly was instrumental in re-establishing a women’s rugby club at JSC in 2010 and was captain of the team that first year, when JSC won the national championship in its division. A memorial

service and rugby scrimmage (JSC alumni vs. Lyndon State alumni) is scheduled for Sunday afternoon, Oct. 26.

