



# JOHNSON STATE COLLEGE ANNUAL REPORT

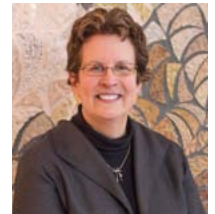
to the Board of Trustees, Reflecting on the 2014-15 Academic Year

SEPTEMBER 22, 2015



## OVERVIEW

We began the 2014-15 academic year with three new academic directions for undergraduates, six new and dynamic full-time faculty members, a new and refocused JSC website, and, with President Murphy's announcement that she would retire at the end of the fiscal year, the initial phase of a presidential search. By mid-February we were pleased to learn that the top candidate chosen by the trustees as well as JSC students, faculty and staff — Dr. Elaine C. Collins — had accepted the post and would become the 13th president of Johnson State College effective July 1, 2015.



President  
Elaine C. Collins



Work continued on our College plan, *JSC 2010-2015: A Plan for Access, Engagement & Success*, with most of our attention devoted to the critical issues of enrollment management and student retention. We made good progress in these areas, identifying new areas of focus within Admissions and Career Services and building on initiatives designed to enroll, engage and retain students as they progress toward graduation.

In addition to bidding farewell to President Murphy — now President Emerita Murphy — and welcoming President Collins, the year brought many highlights:

- Funding was renewed for several faculty-mentored student research projects — on asthma and exercise, microbial communities in a pond near an abandoned asbestos mine, watershed quality, landslide characteristics and infant humor — and several garnered national attention. Undergraduate students continue to work alongside faculty on all of these projects, co-authoring papers and presenting at professional conferences with faculty members.
- We welcomed our first class of “Early College” students — 19 high school students who completed their senior year at JSC, earning up to 30 credits tuition-free in a program made possible by Vermont’s new Flexible Pathways Act. The program proved tremendously successful at JSC. Not only did we exceed our initial enrollment cap of 18, the EC students were academically prepared, finishing the year with an average 3.5 GPA. It also is worth noting that nine of the 19 are continuing their education at JSC, for a 47% retention rate.
- We expanded services to veterans with the creation of a dedicated Veterans Lounge in Dewey Hall where veterans can access resources and gather.
- We entered the eighth year of our Common Reading Initiative, featuring a common book chosen by a group of students, faculty and staff who meet and read faithfully throughout



President Murphy holds the framed resolution granting her *President Emerita* status while listening to a reading of the resolution at the April 2015 board meeting.



the year. The program includes a wide range of book-inspired activities scheduled during the fall semester, including a visit by the author, art exhibits and presentations, discussions during orientation, and—as fits the book—field trips and conversations across the curriculum. Our 2014-15 book, *A Pearl in the Storm* by Tori Murden McClure, had students building wooden boats on campus under the guidance of volunteers from the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum.

- We joined Castleton and Lyndon on the list of the “Top 100 Most Affordable Small Colleges in America” published by BestValueSchools.com, and we were designated a “Military Friendly School” for the third consecutive year by Victory Media.



- Last but certainly not least, we awarded more than 305 bachelor’s degrees, 61 graduate degrees, and 7 associate’s degrees at our 148th Commencement exercises in May 2015. Our keynote speaker was Camille Holmes, an expert in racial justice and legal issues who serves as Director of Leadership and Racial Equity at the National Legal Aid and Defender Association in Washington, D.C. We were pleased to bestow an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters on Ms. Holmes as approved by the VSC Trustees.



President Murphy presents the honorary doctorate to Camille Holmes.

## ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

### PREPARING FOR NEASC REACCREDITATION

Our plans to focus much of the 2014-15 year on a self-study in preparation for a reaccreditation visit from the New England Association of Schools & Colleges this fall shifted with the announcement that President Murphy would retire. NEASC granted us a one-year extension so we could both focus on our presidential search and involve our new president in the work toward reaccreditation.

Thus, work on a searching self-study begins in earnest this year in preparation for a NEASC team visit in fall 2016. Faculty and staff have begun assembling materials and researching the answers to two probing and necessary questions:

- How do we know what we say we know about our academic programs and student support activities?
- What changes have we made in light of what we have learned?

As part of this process, academic departments are taking steps

to align their programs with two key priorities of our College Plan: (1) academic challenge and student achievement; and (2) early and ongoing student success.

### UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH & OTHER HIGH-IMPACT EXPERIENCES

We continue to take great pride in the ongoing faculty-mentored undergraduate research underway at JSC. Our laboratories and fieldwork sites were occupied and busy all summer, with students working alongside faculty as paid research assistants. The “JSC Lab Rats,” as the students are known, continue their regular roundtable meetings with faculty, during which they share their experiences and troubleshoot issues encountered in the lab and in the field.

Summer research on campus capped a year of significant accomplishments by JSC science students, who co-authored papers with their faculty sponsors, presented at regional and national professional conferences, won awards from the Vermont Genetics Network, earned a highly selective undergraduate poster award, and — for two students — secured membership in the prestigious Sigma Xi scientific research society.



Left: One of the meetings of the “JSC Lab Rats” in summer 2014; Right: Some of the 2015 Lab Rats show off their specially emblazoned hoodies.

This record of accomplishment extends to other fields in which JSC students demonstrated similar prowess during the year. Among other things, JSC students testified at the Vermont State House, completed the final 14-county oral-history and documentary film that Professor William Doyle has coordinated for as many years, and captured lead and supporting roles in community theaters throughout Vermont and beyond, including Burlington’s acclaimed Lyric Theater.

### NEW FULL-TIME FACULTY

Ongoing work to reinvigorate the ranks of full-time faculty at JSC through high-quality hires continued. While the number of searches was small due to budget constraints, we succeeded in attracting two extremely qualified individuals who are eager to work in a teaching and learning environment dedicated to high-impact education and advancement of positive social change.

- **Isaac Eddy** has joined our Fine & Performing Arts Department as an assistant professor to teach theater courses. Isaac recently completed a 12-year run as a member of the Blue Man Group, the elite, award-winning theatrical performance entourage. As part of the production, Isaac helped cast and train Blue Man performers, wrote material and performed in nightly shows in New York, Chicago, London



and Las Vegas. A Vermont native, Isaac has led workshops and lectured on improv and acting. He also has devised experimental theater at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts, the University of Michigan, Curry College and the Vermont Governor’s Institute on the Arts. He holds an M.F.A. in performance and interactive media art from the City University of New York, Brooklyn College, and a B.A. in film studies from Wesleyan University.

- Social psychologist **Leslie Johnson** joins our Behavioral Sciences Department as an associate professor, teaching undergraduate psychology courses. Leslie previously served as an assistant professor of psychology at Finlandia University in Michigan but knows Vermont well, as her Ph.D. is from the University of Vermont. She is “always



looking for students who are interested in getting hands-on experience conducting social psychological research” and expects to join her colleagues in expanding the culture of undergraduate research at JSC. Her own research focuses on the expression and experience of body weight-based stigma (e.g., prejudice and discrimination toward people who are overweight), on targets of stigma and their experiences of prejudice and discrimination, on the role of the self in interpersonal relationships, and on the history of women in social psychology.

## NEW ACADEMIC DIRECTIONS

- The 2014-15 marked the first year of our **new general education program**. Faculty completed plans for the final piece, the civic perspective, which is being implemented this fall.
- Plans were finalized for our new **criminal justice** concentration, which has a distinctive focus on restorative justice. It is available within two existing majors — anthropology/sociology and political science — and also is being implemented this fall.
- We launched a **sport management** concentration within our business major, a **health and sport psychology** track in our psychology major, and a **pre-physical therapy** track in our health sciences major.
- We filed early notification to the Council of Presidents of plans to develop a 30-credit **M.A. in Professional Studies** through our External Degree Program. This program would provide pathways for students to explore a professional domain of their choosing through the lens of at least one academic discipline in which they complete graduate-level coursework.

## PRECIP

We review each academic program at JSC every five years on a rotating basis as part of the continuous-program-improvement process known as PReCIP. At JSC, the 2014-15 academic year was very busy with PReCIP reviews. We reviewed all programs offered by the Fine & Performing Arts Department, several interdisciplinary programs, and (along with other VSC institutions) our general education program. We look forward to reviewing the recommendations from the various review committees.

## EXTERNAL DEGREE PROGRAM

Faced with declining enrollment in recent years, EDP explored new strategies to reach and appeal to prospective students, including modification of its delivery models. EDP piloted several intensive, seven-week courses, both online and in weekend format. The format proved successful and will be expanded in the future.

Staff also explored new and improved offerings for EDP students. Working closely with JSC's Business & Economics Department, EDP became the primary vehicle for delivery of JSC's new accounting certificate. The curriculum is designed to meet Vermont's revised requirements for licensed accountants and CPAs. EDP staff also worked with the JSC

Education Department to make it easier for EDP students to complete the requirements for teaching licensure endorsement. Considerable progress was made, and further changes are anticipated.

PReCIP reviews took place in the spring for two degree programs offered through EDP: Professional Studies and Interdisciplinary Studies. These two programs account for more than 40 percent of EDP enrollment. The program looks forward to implementing the recommendations that emerge this fall from the review process. Recommendations that emerge from the review process will be implemented this academic year.

Anticipating that JSC's new concentration in criminal justice will be of interest to EDP students, staff are exploring ways to make the program accessible statewide. Finally, special efforts are planned for the coming year to attract veterans and help them take advantage of EDP's flexible degree programs and learning options.

## STUDENT SUPPORT

Staff in Academic Affairs implemented both a long-planned consolidation in first-year advising and an expansion of learning communities — both of which are shown to hold promise for student success during the critical first year. Registrar Doug Eastman and his staff moved from Martinetti to Dewey Hall and joined with the Advising Center to form a combined Advising & Registration Center, streamlining services for students. We also designed a new Living & Learning Community for incoming students for fall 2015. "Self-ology: The Examined Life," led by professors Gina Mireault and Jensen Beach, combines the disciplines of psychology, literature and writing.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Preparations for NEASC reaccreditation will be a critical area of attention in the coming year, as will steps to analyze academic programs. While retention efforts will remain focused on first-year students — an effort bolstered by newly hired student advisors and a new early-alert system — we will be paying



EDP Director Valerie Edwards (right) meets with student Anjali Byrd.

further attention to initiatives designed to avert attrition in later years. Recognizing the critical importance of good advising to student success, we plan to deploy additional resources to support the advising capacity of faculty. We also expect to launch additional faculty searches in areas of critical need.

## STUDENT LIFE

With the nation's attention increasingly focused on issues of alcohol misuse and sexual violence on college campuses, we take pride in the proactive steps we have taken to stay "ahead of the curve" and build on our growing reputation as a campus known for safety and a supportive and caring environment.

At the same time, of course, we recognize that safety and comfort are baseline requirements. While they are high on the hierarchy of needs and essential factors in a successful student experience, true success — persistence to graduation — requires strong and targeted student-support services that go beyond the ordinary. This is a strength we offer at JSC and one we intend to build.



We have identified Dewey Hall — named appropriately for the educational philosopher who

espoused the value of what we now refer to as high-impact educational practices — as the designated hub of such support. We made several staff and office relocations in Dewey Hall during 2014-15 with the goal of better meeting student needs, without letting department organizational structures stand in the way.

One result is our new Advising & Registration Center, which combines two functions that previously occupied two separate buildings into one office in Dewey Hall. This fall, two new advisors who focus solely on first-year students were added

to the center to strengthen services. These positions, made possible by the GASB 45 Trust funds, returned to JSC from the central office, are part of our plan to increase JSC's first- to second-year retention rate.

Other changes in Dewey include the creation of a combined Career & Internship Center — reinforcing our message that students need to plan for life after JSC throughout their college career and that internships and careers are closely intertwined. Dewey is also home to our Disability Services office, located in the Office of Academic Support. Consistent with national trends, this area has seen a significant spike in inquiries regarding residential support of service or support animals.

Beyond restructuring services and relocating staff, we continue to explore new ways to connect students with services, such as providing academic coaching in the residence halls and offering outreach programs across campus. As we work to identify and address barriers to student success, we have launched a number of new initiatives. These include a gender-neutral housing option, a student emergency fund to help students meet urgent financial needs, partnerships with local agencies to bring public transportation to campus, focused learning and living communities, and a range of programs and services to support the growing diversity of our student body.

## PERSONNEL

At the end of the 2014-15 academic year, JSC saw the retirements of several staff and faculty, including President **Barbara E. Murphy**, Professor of Theater **Russ Longtin**, and Dibden Center Director **Jan Herder**. We also said goodbye to President Murphy's longtime administrative assistant, **Heloisa Herder**. While these good-byes were bittersweet, we were delighted to welcome our new president, **Dr. Elaine C. Collins**, two new full-time faculty members and several new staff.

As noted on page 3 of this report, we welcomed new faculty members **Leslie Johnson** (Behavioral Sciences) and **Isaac Eddy** (Fine & Performing Arts) to campus this fall. With the support of their faculty mentors, they are settling in well to their new posts and are very well received by students.

**Will Davis** is our new technical director in Dibden Center for the Arts. Joining us from Kentucky, Will is overseeing Dibden productions, communications and all things backstage — lighting, sound, carpentry and more — as well as managing student and professional crews. He replaces longtime Dibden director Jan Herder, who left us in May. Most recently, Will served as managing artistic director for Central Kentucky Community Theatre in Springfield, Ky. He has more than a

decade of experience in technical theater, working in a variety of positions with theaters in London, New York, Nebraska and Washington state.

**Cecilia North** has assumed the role of executive assistant to the president, Elaine Collins. Cecilia has diverse experience in administrative support, education and marketing. Most recently she was the office manager for the Department of Dermatology at Penn State Hershey Medical Center/College of Medicine, where she supervised administrative support staff and served as executive assistant to the chair of the department. She also has been a marketing and branding consultant for United Concordia Dental and held brand-management positions with the Hershey Company, Reckitt & Colman, Nabisco and Bristol-Myers Squibb. She has a B.A. in communication arts from Hofstra University and an M.B.A. in marketing from New York University.

**Ashley Cormier** and **Emily Neilsen** are our new first-year advisors in the Advising & Registration Center. Emily previously served as JSC's coordinator of first-year events in the Office of First-Year Experience. Ashley is a 2015 JSC graduate and a longtime student worker in the advising office.

**Miles Smith Jr.** is our new assistant athletic director and head men's basketball coach. A 2009 JSC graduate, Miles played varsity basketball during his time at Johnson and most recently served as the first head men's basketball coach at the newly co-ed Wilson College in Pennsylvania. He previously was an assistant coach at The College of New Jersey.



**Michelle Stemper** enters her first year as JSC's assistant athletics trainer, a position that was recently elevated to full time. In addition to managing day-to-day training duties, Michele will be implementing strength and conditioning programming for our 15 varsity teams. She comes to us from St. John's University in Minnesota, where she worked with the basketball and soccer teams. She played basketball at



Sterling Ridge as seen looking south from JSC's Minaert Fields

the University of Minnesota-Duluth and earned her master's degree in athletic training from the College of St. Scholastica.

## FINANCE & BUSINESS

Johnson State College concluded FY 2015 with a favorable balance of approximately \$126,000, and we are pleased to report that we did not need to use the \$675,000 of strategic reserve originally approved by the Board of Trustees. In addition, the college continues to maintain a positive relationship with auditors and anticipates passing the FY 2015 financial audit with no comments or concerns.

## FACILITIES

Improvements to campus facilities during 2014-2015 focused on building infrastructure and safety as well as cost savings:

- New roofs were installed on Stearns Student Center and Dibden Center for the Arts;
- The Martinetti parking lot was repaved;
- Electrical systems were upgraded and replaced in Senators Hall, a campus residence; and
- A one-acre, 150 kWh solar panel array was installed near the main campus entrance, just up the hill from the former "upper pond." The project was tied into Johnson Water & Light and started generating electricity in late fall 2014. The array is projected to generate enough power to meet the annual needs of both McClelland and Martinetti halls.



## LIBRARY & INFORMATION SYSTEMS

### LIBRARY

In a 2013 report, [“It Takes More Than a Major: Employer Priorities for College Learning and Student Success,”](#) high on the list of skills employers seek — just below critical thinking and analytic reasoning (82%), complex problem solving (81%) and written and oral communication (80%) — is information literacy (72%). The employers surveyed noted that “the location, organization, and evaluation of information from multiple sources” is a more important competency than innovation and creativity (71%), teamwork skills in diverse groups (67%) and quantitative reasoning (55%).

These data confirm that research self-sufficiency is power. Library staff have advocated for a comprehensive information-literacy curriculum at JSC for over a decade and have had a number of successes moving it forward, both on campus and through the External Degree Program. In the meantime, staff continue to deliver single instructional sessions by faculty request and to refine its online information literacy tutorial, TILT, which assesses what incoming students know about research strategies,

The Willey Library offers more than 60 hours a week of reference assistance to students on and off campus. Even with declining enrollments over the past few years, in-house attendance continues to grow, and with that growth comes a demand for personalized research help that can last just a few minutes or continue for hours and days.

Much of our reference interaction with distance students occurs through individual course in Moodle, where librarians embed themselves in online classes. This mode of support is popular with faculty and students alike, and faculty have noticed better sources and sharper paper topics since the embedded librarian service was expanding several years ago.

### INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

JSC Instructional Technology Coordinator Robert Gervais continued to work with faculty to introduce instructional technology during the year. Working with Staci Born and Gina Mireault (from Behavioral Sciences) he has introduced the first 1:1 devices into the M.A. in counseling curriculum. These devices enable students to access the Internet, digital course materials and digital textbooks without needing their own laptop, smart phone or other electronic device. In addition to providing equal access, 1:1 devices facilitate standardization, easy upgrades, simple networking and the ability to monitor student progress.

IT has worked closely with the Education Department to pilot electronic portfolios as well. The technology proved to be valuable, so all education students will begin using it this year.

New computers purchased at the end of the spring semester have been installed in several computer labs, improving student access to technology during and outside of class. IT will be redistributing the older models throughout campus to improve services elsewhere.

### PUBLIC SERVICE & SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

JSC has a well-deserved reputation for service to the community, writ large. This work is coordinated through a number of entities on campus, including JSC’s Student Government Association, Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC), SERVE Local, Badger Alternative Breaks, Residence Life, and several academic departments.

From gleaning fields in the fall (for the Johnson Food Shelf) to jumping into Lake Elmore in February (Polar Plunge), to putting on the ritz in March (JSC’s Casino Night to benefit the United Way) and serving Johnson’s weekly “CommUNITY” meal throughout the academic year, community service is always on the agenda at JSC.

This year SAAC launched what is to be a new tradition: a Special Olympics basketball clinic, which took place in March in Carter Gym. As a result of the success of this event, SAAC plans to coordinate and host the clinic annually in the spring.





SAAC members and supporters pose with a new friend after the March 2015 Special Olympics hoops clinic.

Awareness of JSC's role as an economic driver and valuable cultural and recreational resource in north-central Vermont and the greater Lamoille area gained considerable traction during the 2014-15 academic year. Related activities were summarized in our 2013-14 annual report and were the focus of our presentation to the VSC Board of Trustees at its February meeting; we also produced and distributed a report ("Community Impact, Community Connections") documenting JSC's many contributions to the region's vitality.

While few would dispute the importance of Johnson State College in this regard, it has been much more explicitly acknowledged of late by local leaders. Significantly, both Sen. Rich Westman and Rep. Mark Woodward —both JSC alums — led their remarks at the 2015 Johnson Town Meeting with statements noting the importance of JSC to the greater community. As well, JSC has been designated an entity warranting representation on several local planning initiatives and boards.

One topic in particular reinforced the importance of JSC to the broader community in 2014-15: the closing (temporary, as it turned out) of our indoor pool. To say that the closure of the pool resulted in a robust community dialogue is an understatement. The pool initially closed due to aging infrastructure and



a failing heating and ventilation system. In light of the need for repairs in excess of \$200,000, combined with the tight budget under which JSC was operating, the college considered closing the pool. The community response was clear: the pool was too vital a community resource to close. We received hundreds of communications from area residents underscoring the importance of the pool.

This was a good reminder that sometimes we provide the only opportunity for area residents

to partake in certain recreational and cultural offerings. Our outsized role and impact in the area is accompanied by a great deal of responsibility. We are a driver in making Lamoille County a vibrant and enjoyable place to live, study and work. Our role in helping to create this quality of life in turn makes Johnson State College more attractive to prospective students and their families.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The 2015-16 academic year is off to a good start. Our number of first-year Vermonters is up, and we long ago surpassed our goal for Early College enrollment. Additionally, we continue to see a steady uptick in the number of students choosing to live on campus after they are no longer required to do so. This good news is tempered by the fact that both out-of-state and EDP enrollment remains a challenge.

Our new president, Elaine Collins, has been working diligently since her arrival July 1 to sharpen our messaging by creating a set of talking points around JSC's liberal arts mission, identify new sources of revenue, explore new academic initiatives, and improve student retention. She also has committed to promote increased community engagement among internal and external constituents by providing more opportunities for people to be involved in institutional decision-making.

This year we expect to be hard at work ensuring we have the evidence to plan and implement effective actions to attract, engage and retain students who will thrive at Johnson State. This work in turn will be essential for successful NEASC reaccreditation next fall.





