

From: Mary L. Carns
Sent: 12/1/2015 10:28:57 AM
To: Mary L. Carns
Cc:
Subject: TCL Talks: What TCL taught PSU

Dear Lowcountry,

Most of my career has been spent at Penn State University. I worked there for almost 20 years in recruitment and retention, in sponsored research and in advancement. When I took this position at TCL, the Lowcountry's community college, I did so with confidence. After all, my professional skills had been honed at one of the best public institutions of higher education in the country. Instead, and to my surprise, my education in higher education was just beginning.

Lesson number one: I had a four-year bias.

We need to change our university-for-all mentality to a post-secondary-education-for-all mindset. College-educated people tend to associate with other college-educated people and to think that a four-year degree is the norm—even that it should be the universal norm. Such a degree, however, is not for everyone - nor should it be. Education is crucial to our local economy and an education beyond high school is essential, but a four-year degree is not always the best choice.

A good career path must be aligned with economic need. By 2018 it is projected that only 33% of all jobs will require a four-year degree or more. The majority of jobs - some 57% - will be middle-skilled positions requiring more than a high school degree but less than four years of college. These jobs require associate degrees, certificates and diplomas – credentials earned at community colleges.

Community colleges like TCL are a career choice and for many, the right choice. Like their sibling four-year institutions, community colleges open doors to success. Community colleges like TCL are locally-based and career-oriented, specializing in the education and training necessary to meet the Lowcountry's workforce development needs. And, community colleges are affordable gateways to four-year schools. TCL offers pre-baccalaureate programs for students planning to transfer to the University of South Carolina, Clemson, Francis Marion, Coastal Carolina and Lander University. Tuition at TCL is generally about half the cost of the tuition at South Carolina's public universities.

Lesson number two: I had a biased definition of excellence.

At schools like Penn State, excellence is often defined by (1) the high price of admission, and (2) selectivity - the number of students **not** admitted. TCL and other community colleges measure success in an entirely different way. Those same factors, price and selectivity, make a community college excellent for its

home community. TCL is an inclusive, open access institution that welcomes all who desire to learn, regardless of wealth, heritage, or previous academic experience. TCL empowers all Lowcountry citizens to build a healthy future here in the Lowcountry, to live, work, and worship in our community, all the while taking courses and graduating with marketable, in demand skills. The College serves more than 5,000 students and graduates more than 300 students annually. These graduates receive associate degrees, diplomas and certificates. Fully 93% of TCL graduates either go on to four-year institutions or move directly into jobs - jobs here, in the Lowcountry.

Lesson number three: My respect for TCL and community colleges is past due. TCL is excellent for the Lowcountry.

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About TCL Talks.

TCL Talks is an e-missive on topics of community college education and workforce development important to the Lowcountry.