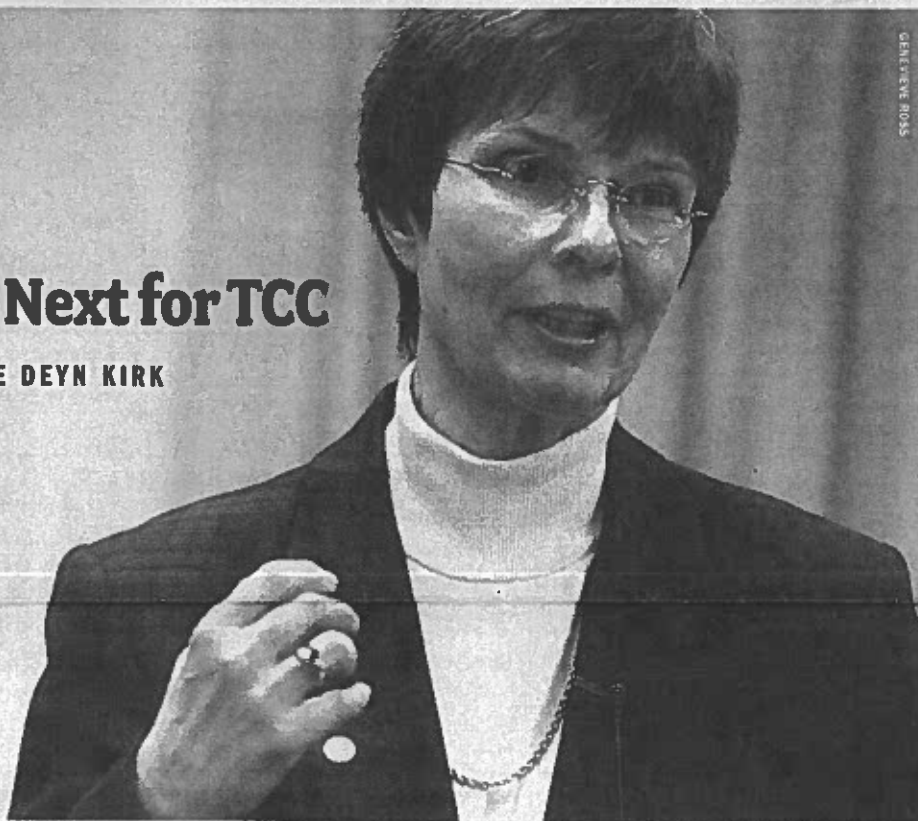


What's Next for TCC

BY KRISTEN DE DEYN KIRK



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AS SOON AS DEBORAH DICROCE speaks, she gives herself away as an academic ascendant:

"What this is about," she said recently to a group of journalists, "is an attempt to give you a sense of TCC, where it's headed in the broadest of senses."

And without a breath, she continued:

"In other words, the college in many ways, being founded in 1968, has really come into its own in terms of defining a place for itself. We like to think a critically important, strategically important place that in part gets its identity from both the challenges and the opportunities that are inherent in this area, be they in education, be they in economic development, be they in advancing the causes of social justice..."

Dicroce, president of Tidewater Community College for seven years, announced she would be sharing a "Power Point" that ran fifteen, twenty minutes tops.

Two and half hours later, the journalists were still with her, and glad to be: The TCC leader's loyalty makes her more than a student's best friends (she served as the Portsmouth campus Provost in 1989) — it makes her one of *Hampton Roads'* best friends. The school's estimated economic impact:

When TCC President Deborah Dicroce looks into the future, she sees plenty of possibilities — but not enough professors.

\$115 million annually, with 2,483 jobs and a \$5,028 return for every local dollar invested. It also has a long list of successes:

Since 1997, TCC's fulltime enrollment has grown by 47 percent to 34,940.

The anticipated growth was a half percent annually.

Last year, on-line courses grew by fifty-nine percent.

A new campus is on its way in Portsmouth, and a new division of the Chesapeake campus — the "Regional Automotive Technology Center" — is in the works.

Look for new, centralized offices for the administrative staff in Norfolk, too.

Oh — and student centers in Norfolk and Virginia Beach.

It wasn't surprising

then when Dicroce smiled and announced, "This is the calm before the storm."

Her eyes sparkled behind her rimless glasses as she tried to present her plans quickly. But her enthusiasm led her to share lots of details.

Opportunities abound, she believes: Employers want more non-credit training classes. TCC has the largest African American college enrollment in the state. What should the school do to partner more with Norfolk State University? Partnerships can be challenging, Dicroce has learned, but also rewarding. She's particularly proud of TCC's work with the City of Norfolk on the Roper Theater and with the City of Virginia Beach on the Advanced Technology Center. Could Norfolk and the school work on a joint library? Could Sentara be a good collaborator for a "Regional Health Profession Center"?

Other ideas include building on the culinary school successes with a tourism program and looking for new sources of money. A state funding increase allowed Dicroce to up her operating budget by five percent last year. Now she'd like to launch an \$8 to \$10 million capital campaign. And watch out alumni: Right now most of the money comes from corporations, but the school will form an alumni association in December. Graduates can expect to hear more about former classmates — and more about where to send their donations.

TCC is working on the first step of growing that alumni association with a student recruitment of sorts: With Governor Warner's Senior Year Plus program, in which seniors take TCC classes for college credit, students who may not have ever planned to attend the school now will.

While Dicroce calls the program a "win-win" and says the same for other partnerships with four-year colleges, which award full transfer credit for courses taken at TCC, she voiced reservations.

The arrangements, she said, "calls into question 'what constitutes college?'"

Will the four-year college experience be no more?

And what about those who originally were meant to be served by community colleges, those from humble backgrounds?

Dicroce asked: "What happens to those at the lowest socio-economic rung because they don't know how to play the game?"

She's not saying the Senior Year Plus program isn't a good idea. She only wants to "make sure no one gets left behind."

Another concern: The college doesn't have the professors it needs to maintain or surpass its current growth. Right now, it needs 98 fulltime teachers to offer all of the classes that students want. In 2002-2003, administrators had to cancel 60 classes because they didn't have the faculty to teach them. Fulltime faculty teach 41 percent of TCC's for-credit classes. The national benchmark is 55 percent.

The college president doesn't have much money to offer new recruits — average pay is about \$60,000. She instead hopes professors will be sold by her vision and her staff's commitment.

"The hook," she said, "is in the common bond — belief in good work."

TCC PORTSMOUTH CAMPUS RELOCATION TO THE VICTORY CROSSING BUSINESS PARK

	2003-'04	New Campus Phase 1	Eventual Build Out
Annual Headcount	6,249	8,000	16,500
Square footage	200,000	160,000	350,000
No. of buildings	1	3	5 to 6

The numbers do not include the current campus' Beazley Building and the new campus' planned student center.