



# Dallas County Community College District

---

## Office of the Chancellor

TO: DCCCD Board Members

FROM: Dr. Wright L. Lassiter, Jr.

DATE: August 21, 2009

RE: Weekend Memo #156

DURING TIMES OF CRISIS  
AVOID THE SILENCE PATTERN

*In the leadership classes that I teach at the graduate level, there will be an occasion when I will ask my students - "How do you spell leadership?" They know that it is a question with an associated message. The answer and message is expressed this way. Leadership is spelled INFLUENCE. Influence is the essence of leadership, and that is what I consistently strive to pursue as an ultimate objective in my leadership role. Obviously, I have the hope and belief that my associates and colleagues also will share that view.*

*It has been said that we will be working and serving in a state of "permanent crisis." Consequently certain behaviors should be embraced by leaders and made a part of the leadership culture. I have been working at the CEO level for three decades. It is a common practice of mine to have a small so-called inner circle of senior executives that I work with. We generally meet behind closed doors for it is necessary to conduct what is called "back stage work." This is a necessary practice, but I have learned that one must be aware of negatives that can result from such work if certain behaviors are not appropriately addressed.*

*Since audiences know of the "back stage work," these meetings can reinforce feelings of unpredictability, misunderstanding, lack of control, and the indifference of management, which will ultimately make things harder on everyone. These are practices that I strive to observe in my work.*

*Don't retreat and hide. Do not hide from your people. Such behavior can be interpreted as a sign that something bad is about to happen. This will speed up the rumor mill and employees will "hunker down and be less productive, waiting for the proverbial shoe to drop."*

Be discreet when decisions are made. During a downturn, or a time of crisis, the pressure is on to make decisions that demand a shared understanding of rapidly evolving scenarios, options, and constraints. Often it is impossible to open up this messy decision process to broader involvement and scrutiny, which might not only threaten legal and ethical requirements for confidentiality but could also lead to worse decisions. Information leaks can hurt people or be downright embarrassing. In short, think decisions through decisively and carefully.

Rely on peers. Some closed-door mystery is inevitable. And even the hardest of leaders need some time away from the fray to recharge. But don't let such needed absences go unexplained (we all recall the unfortunate set of circumstances involving the unexplained absence of the Governor of South Carolina). Do not let such useful periods of being away go unexplained. Your colleagues can appreciate the stress that a leader is under, and desirably will not begrudge the leader an occasional break. I don't make a practice of burdening others with my troubles when they have their own – but my management team and I can support one another.

The key point to keep in mind is that a leader needs to be deeply sensitive to people's interpretations. Closed-door meetings should be followed with longer open-door meetings. Everything that can be communicated should be communicated, both in writing and face-to-face. You know that I use the Chancellor's Bulletin and the Weekend Memo commentary as two of my primary written communication sources. I also schedule 1601 Dialogue meetings for my colleagues in the District Office complex. With the telecommunication resources that we have at the LeCroy Center, I make an occasional DVD that can be made available to individuals and groups of employees. It is my understanding that the presidents and other senior executives have related communication patterns that they have put in place.

Whether one oversees just a few direct reports or serves as the CEO of a college or one of the support arms, these frightening times that we live and work in places certain challenges before us. We may need to rethink our responsibilities as a boss. This means that more than anything else our colleagues need leaders and managers to address these four areas that will conclude this week's commentary.

Predictability. Give people as much information as you can about what will happen and when. If major shocks through change are preceded by fair warnings, people not only have time to brace themselves, but also get a chance to breathe easier.

Understanding. Explain why the changes being proposed/planned are necessary. Never assume that you need to do so only once. Communicate – Communicate – Communicate.

Control. In the instances of a bewildering change challenge, work to break it down into "small win," or "low-hanging fruit" opportunities. In situations where you are not able to give people much influence over what happens, at least give them a say in

*how it will happen.*

*Compassion. Put yourself in the other person's shoes. Express empathy and – when appropriate – sorrow for any painful actions that have to be taken.*

*These are tough and challenging times that we must live through. My obligation is to be the voice of reason, hope and optimism.*

### **North Lake College**

*Our community* – The new Workforce Development Center (WDC) on the North Lake College Central Campus was recently awarded LEED® certification from the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). LEED is the USGBC's leading rating system for designing and constructing the world's greenest, most energy efficient and high performing buildings. LEED certification of the center was based on a number of green designs and construction features that positively impact the project and the community. Some features include reducing water use by at least 45 percent, and building with materials where more than 22 percent of its content was manufactured using recycled materials. The WDC is a 10,000 square-foot facility, which was opened in February 2009.

*Our employees* – As part of North Lake College's Blue/Green Day for faculty and staff, the college hosted Dr. Kay McClenney, director of the community college survey of student engagement and an adjunct faculty member in the Community College Leadership Program at The University of Texas at Austin. Dr. McClenney shared her expertise, insights and research on community college students, with a focus on student retention and success. Her presentation also included clips from a PBS special, *Discounted Dreams*, which included comments from Dr. McClenney. The documentary follows the journey of four very different students and discusses their challenges and successes, and also provides commentary on what the community college system is doing well and how it can improve.

### **El Centro College**

Ronny Congleton, Texas Workforce commissioner, visited El Centro College's Bill Priest Institute for Economic Development on Wednesday, August 19th, to present the college with a check for its latest Skills Development Fund Grant. The Consortium for Logistics, Aerospace and Manufacturing grant, a \$2.9 million project, will provide training for over 2,600 employees of the 13 partnering businesses.

On Monday, August 17th, El Centro College held its return day program with Dr. Elisabeth Warren, director of housing and residence life at the University of North Texas, as the main speaker. In a humorous and lively presentation, Dr. Warren spoke on the subject of "Torts and Retorts...A New Twist on Integrity, Discernment and Using Your Words Wisely." Later in the day, Dr. Alexei Matveev, director of quality enhancement and assessment at Norfolk State University, held faculty consultations and served as the main speaker at the college's adjunct faculty general assembly, discussing student learning outcomes and curriculum mapping.

The Bill J. Priest campus of El Centro College will hold a fall career fair on Thursday, August 27th, from 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m. with more than 20 companies signed up to welcome applicants for a variety of occupations. Included among the companies will be Auto Zone, Continental Truck School, Dallas Police Department, Denton Fire Department, Garland Police Department, HCR Manor Care, Primerica, Pro Collect, RPC Company, Televista, Tom Thumb, UPS and Volt Workforce Solutions.

El Centro College's new West Campus at 3330 North Hampton Road in West Dallas is planning a ribbon-cutting ceremony. It will be held on Friday, October 9th from 1:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. with an opening ceremony scheduled at 1:45 p.m. Tours and other activities are being planned for the afternoon's celebration. Make plans now to attend this exciting event for El Centro College, the Dallas County Community College District and the West Dallas community. The West Campus first opened last June for summer school students. Fall marks the first full semester for the new facility.

### **Brookhaven College**

Brookhaven College employees came together August 18th for convocation ceremonies in the performance hall to kick-off the new academic year. In addition to a particularly jovial welcome for new employees and a review of the college's strengths, Dr. Richard D. McCrary, interim president, encouraged employees to have lunch at the annual "Grilling for Green Backs" fundraising event, and to come back in the afternoon to hear the keynote speaker, Dr. Kay McClenney. As director of the Community College Survey of Student Engagement, Dr. McClenney presented on "Strengthening Student Success: What Matters Most." A follow-up discussion, and question and answer period followed the speech for employees to address current practices impacting student success. Dr. McClenney is also an adjunct faculty member in the Community College Leadership Program at The University of Texas at Austin. Those in student services who missed convocation, due to fall registration, were invited to participate in the all-college discussion online and to view a taped version of Dr. McClenney's speech.

As preparations were underway for the fall Nursing Success Camp at Brookhaven College, Dr. Mark Meyer, assistant dean of nursing, received some great news. His paper "Protective Factors for HIV Infection among Mexican-American Men Who Have Sex with Men" was accepted for publication in the *Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care*. The piece was a manuscript Meyer had written for his doctoral dissertation.

A little fresh air at Brookhaven College provided a lot of relief to staff and faculty members of Thomas Jefferson High School (TJHS) this week. Marilyn K. Lynch, associate vice president for career and program resources, pulled together resources and personnel from around the college to respond to an unexpected request for help from Mr. Ed Conger, TJHS principal. The high school employees gathered for their back-to-school meetings and learned quickly that they faced a total lack of air conditioning. Diane Brownlee, director of the Ellison Miles Geotechnology Institute, found space for the group the same day and Curt Capetillo, room use coordinator, found alternative spaces for their second day of meetings. Lynch, and JoAnn McKnight, division secretary, were able to get maps to the new locations to the TJHS group before they left on the first day, while air conditioning repairmen worked at the high school in 100-degree heat.

### **Richland College**

*Sustainable Community Building* – "Social equity and justice", "economic viability", "environmental vitality" – Ever committed to Richland College's vision, *to be the best place we can be to learn, teach, and build sustainable local and world community*, faculty and staff, joined by LeCroy and various District staff, filled the performance hall on August 18th to participate in this year's fall convocation, *LEEDing the Way to Our \*GREEN\*Richland Commons (\*GREEN\*-**Greening Richland through the Equity - Economy - Environment **N**exus)***. This annual gathering provides the opportunity for the college community to recommit to student learning success, review college initiatives for the new academic year, welcome new employees, and celebrate excellence in teaching and student service through various employee awards.

*Student Success* – Congratulations to Teresa Tijerina and Eduardo Salmeron, Interactive Simulation and Game Technology (ISGT) students, and Casey Smith, student and ISGT lab assistant, who contributed their creative energy, skills, talents, inspiration, and sheer joy to a delightful, seven-minute game video that animated the fall convocation theme, *LEEDing the Way to Our \*GREEN\*Richland Commons (\*GREEN\*--Greening Richland through the Equity - Economy - Environment Nexus)*. The ISGT program introduces students to the technology and skills critical to success in the flourishing game design industry. The program also provides training in fields such as medical and industrial simulation, and educational game design.

*Employee Success* – Congratulations to Randy Conine, Richland College English/Peace Studies professor, who was selected and recognized by his teaching peers to receive the college's Excellence in Teaching award for full-time faculty during the college's fall convocation on August 18th. Randy will also be honored during the May 2010 graduation as he has been invited to represent his teaching colleagues in delivering the commencement address to the graduates.

*Institutional Effectiveness* – Roy Bond, Richland College associate dean of organizational & staff development, was recently named to the Quality Texas Foundation's Board of Governors (QTFBOG) for a three-year term beginning September 2009. The QTFBOG oversees the Texas Award for Performance Excellence program, which recognizes role model institutions across the state of Texas using the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Performance Excellence criteria.

### **DCCCD Campus High Schools**

**Middle College High School (MCHS) at El Centro College** faculty and staff returned this week for orientation and planning meetings. The emphasis is on increasing student success in college classes and applying strategies that were introduced at Middle College National Consortium staff development training over the summer. Several MCHS faculty and staff received service awards at the college's fall report day program. Ron Romanchek and Melinda Zeares were recognized for five years of service and Kristy Coots, LaShonda Watson, and John Yarbrough were recognized for ten years of service. MCHS has added a new science teacher. Jaclyn Cobb holds BS and MS degrees in Biology from Texas Tech University and Texas A&M University in Commerce, and has several years experience in medical pathology. During Summer I and II, MCHS students took a total of 128 classes with eighty-eight percent of students making a grade of A, B, or C, and an overall GPA of 3.3. Overall in 2008-2009, MCHS students took 655 classes with eighty-six percent making a grade of A, B, or C.

Rosa (Rosie) Oliveira was announced as the new principal of the Carrollton-Farmers Branch Independent School District's (C-FBISD) **Early College High School (ECHS) at Brookhaven College**. The announcement was made at the August 13th C-FBISD Board meeting. Mrs. Oliveira "hit the ground running" as she and ECHS faculty and staff, assisted by Marilyn K. Lynch, the college's ECHS liaison, and Jo Ann McKnight, administrative assistant, prepared to set up teacher-parent meetings. The group met with 11th- and 12th-grade students and parents at the college August 14th, and with 9th- and 10th-grade students and parents August 15th at Ranchview High School. Principal Oliveira has served in educational roles as a C-FBISD elementary school principal, a high school English teacher and department chair, and an adjunct faculty member at Del Mar College.

Congratulations to Roland LeGrand, 2009 **Richland Collegiate High School** graduate, who was awarded the Eagle Scout distinction this month, the highest ranking in Boy Scouts of America. For his Eagle Scout community service project, Roland relocated a structure for the Plano Senior Citizens Center. He will be attending the University of Illinois this fall, majoring in electrical engineering, and he was offered over \$355,000 in scholarships from various colleges and universities throughout the country.

Teachers of the **Early College High School at Mountain View College** have been in training this week for the upcoming 2009-2010 academic year. Among the myriad of topics on which they have received training is the Chancery SMS on-line attendance system. The new system allows for a completely paperless method of recording the attendance of all students, as well as the electronic delivery of that information to administrative personnel with the Dallas Independent School District (DISD). The college staff and faculty have also worked jointly with DISD to ensure that accurate attendance is kept for students attending college level courses as well.

### **Mountain View College**

Mountain View College held its 2009 fall convocation ceremonies under the theme of “Creating and Inspiring Student Success” on Tuesday, August 18th. The ceremonies included a state of the college address by President Felix A. Zamora, followed by a keynote presentation by Dr. Sanford C. Shugart, president of Valencia Community College. Dr. Shugart discussed a myriad of compelling topics ranging from the cultural history of higher education to changing institutional cultures for the purposes of greater student success and retention. Also at convocation, it was announced that Professor Martin Guerra is this year’s nominee for the prestigious Minnie Stevens Piper Award for Excellence in Teaching. Student Ambassadors for the 2009-2010 academic year were formally introduced to the campus community.

Mountain View College recently welcomed more than fifty 14-15 year-olds onto campus as part of the Texas Workforce Summer Youth Employment Program. The program, which was sponsored by the Richland College Department of Corporate Services in conjunction with the college Division of Business Services, is designed to introduce high school students to higher education opportunities by offering part-time employment and employment enhancement classes in offices and divisions where valuable exposure can be gained. About a dozen departments at the college participated in the program, hosting the students from July 20th through August 13th. Participating students were primarily from Dallas and Grand Prairie. Claralyn Jefferson, director of community events and programs, served as campus coordinator for the event.

On Saturday, August 15th, Mountain View College served as the host site for an information symposium and celebration to advocate the passage of the DREAM Act by U.S. Congress. The symposium, sponsored by the Texas DREAM Coalition, was free of charge and opened to all organizations, businesses, and elected officials to show support for the DREAM Act and the students who could potentially be impacted by the legislation. The DREAM Act is a bill currently being considered by the United States Congress that would enable thousands of high school graduates who do not currently have legal status as U.S. citizens to have equal access to universities and an eventual pathway to citizenship.

About fifteen administrators, staff and faculty from Mountain View College attended workshops at the El Centro West Campus on August 13th-14th. The workshops, led by Dr. Alexei G. Matveev, director of the office of quality enhancement and assessment at Norfolk State University, focused on aligning course and program learning outcomes with curriculum mapping to improve student learning and retention. The event was sponsored by the ¡HOLA!, a committee of El Centro College, which is funded through a retention award provided by the DCCCD.

### **LeCroy Center**

Teams from the LeCroy Center including Dallas TeleCollge, FAST Team, and the Dallas TeleLearning National Marketing group are participating in return week activities for faculty and staff district-wide. LeCroy Center staff presenters included Robin Bartoletti, David Wood, Cheryl Wells, Nick Hernandez,

Lauren Mang, Theresa Roffino, Angela Auzenne, Ed Bowen, Pat Lawton, Susan Long and Becky Stinson. Topics covered included FAST Team faculty services, tackling accessibility issues, blackboard 9.0 training, soft chalk instructional design, using the digital video and resource repository, and using social networking to teach.

On Tuesday afternoon, Becky Stinson and Theresa Roffino presented as part of the Eastfield College convocation activities. Theresa shared the FAST Team's extensive faculty services from universal curriculum design to social media support, and Becky walked through the Digital Resource Repository videos and interactive content available to faculty. Ed Bowen consulted one-on-one with a faculty member to formulate ideas to increase student engagement. Becky Stinson and Alishia Nelson distributed FAST Team information at Northlake College's convocation and conducted Digital Resource Repository training at Weatherford College. Weatherford is part of the Virtual College of Texas, which licenses our content for 52 college districts statewide.

### Eastfield College

The Eastfield College 2009 Big Thicket Summer Research Institute (BTSRI) culminated with student research presentations and receptions on July 29th. The evening audience was estimated to be 90 attendees representing family and friends of the researchers. This was the largest crowd to ever attend the presentations. BTSRI is part of Project Pathways, a Science Talent Expansion Program funded by the National Science Foundation. BTSRI was one of two summer research projects conducted from the first of June through the end of July. All researchers had to compose a research paper, design a power point presentation, create a scientific poster and give a public presentation on their projects. The Big Thicket National Preserve was the site for the field research team conducting summer projects. The researchers and their topics were: Charles Bannister, III, surface morphology of entolomataceae spores; Mary Blake, lateral lines of blacktail shiners; Stephanie Campos, comparison of achene plant dimensions; Nathaniel Dulin, water quality in the Big Thicket and Trinity River; Jamison Hammett, micro habitat of the leopard frog; James Mueck, characteristics of particular mushrooms; Mark Riofta, comparative analysis of North and South Texas surface water; Rocio Santiago, variation in the lesser smooth cap moss; and Aracely Vazquez, comparison of dentition of four Big Thicket snakes. Students were assisted by expert mentors in their research topics including Jeff Hughes, Rik Post and Mark Kelly, college professors, in addition to others.

Science Teacher Access to Resources (STARS), part of Eastfield College Project Pathways, is funded by the National Science Foundation. The Graduate School of Biomedical Research at the University of Texas Southwestern (UTSW) hosted the STARS research team in the medical center's scientific laboratories during June and July. The UTSW research team members, and their faculty mentors and topics were: Amanda Collins with Zenyi Ma, Ph.D., protein cells relationship to lung cancer; Struthy Issac with Sherwood Brown, M.D, Ph.D., studied corticosteroid-induced changes on the Hippocampus; Thara Issac worked with Juan Arenas, M.D., on blood and oxygen perfusion during surgery; Sara Linehan and Harold Garner, Ph.D., researched a gene suspected to be involved in the development of breast cancer; An Lu with Joel Pessa, M.D. analyzed a new anatomic boundary on the lateral neck; and Daniel Stanley worked with Xiankai Sun, Ph.D. to design an apparatus that could enable multiple mice to be scanned simultaneously to improve future studies in early cancer detection. The STARS researchers presented findings at the UTSW campus on July 30th. College staff and BTSRI researchers attended the forum along with area high school teachers and UT staff. Summer research students receive a \$3,000 stipend and college credit for the 8-week program. Project Pathways is a collaborative partnership of Texas schools, colleges, non-profits and government entities seeking to increase the number of minorities, females and students with disabilities in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. The \$1.8 million grant was awarded in 2005.

Five employees from Eastfield College, Anastasia Lankford, Renee Green and Theresa Sternat from the Learning Assistance Center; Fay Guy, human resources director; and Johnetta Bolden, college police department assistant, attended the Take Your Brain to Lunch event at the Park Cities Club in Dallas on August 12th. Randy Mayeux, co-founder of Creative Communications Network and adjunct faculty member, presented synopses of “Women Don’t Ask” by Linda Babcock and Susan Laschever, and of “Play Like a Man, Win Like a Woman: What Men Know about Success that Women Need to Learn” by Gail Evans. Anastasia Lankford served as a discussion facilitator for the round table discussions of the topics after each presentation.

Although it’s much less material than was in the original write up on [insidehighered.com](http://www.insidehighered.com) at <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2009/03/19/pathways>, Eastfield College’s National Science Foundation (NSF) STEP grant was referenced in the August 2009 edition of the *Howard Hughes Medical Institute Bulletin*. The article, titled “Building Solid Bridges...Community College Students Interested in Pursuing Science are on Surer Footing, Thanks to Welcomed Support,” shared the benefit of undergraduate research opportunities. In the publication, Christine Su, free lance writer, shares information about the college’s NSF grant and the summer research institutes, boasting the increased STEM enrollments that resulted. The full article can be found at <http://www.hhmi.org/bulletin/aug2009/features/bridges.html>. (See articles attached.)