



Dallas County Community College District

Office of the Chancellor

TO: DCCCD Board Members

FROM: Dr. Wright L. Lassiter, Jr.

DATE: August 14, 2009

RE: Weekend Memo #155

THE POWER OF PLACE IN THE ENHANCEMENT
OF A LEARNING COMMUNITY
ENVIRONMENT

There was an interesting article by Earl Broussard in the May 1, 2009 issue of the Chronicle of Higher Education that caught my attention. I want to share some of his observations and juxtapose them against the fact that this fall we will open 95% of the new buildings under our 2004 capital improvement bond program.

Already several of our new facilities have been featured in various architectural magazines as outstanding examples of creative and innovative architectural design. Each of the new buildings cited are recognized for their focus and emphasis on unique learning environments. The five new community campuses that will all be open later this month are unique architectural models. As you find time to go to the various locations, don't miss the opportunity to set foot in architectural marvels that have been created by inclusive design teams.

Here is a direct quote from the opening of his article. "Colleges and universities should never underestimate the power of special, transformational, and even sacred spaces on their campuses. Such spaces help create lasting relationships between students and institutions, but too often colleges overlook the influential role that campus landscape can play."

Such is not the case in our district. Every single new structure has been designed with the active involvement of all work groups, and with the view that these new structures will contribute to the legacy of the DCCCD colleges. Ponder this quote from Broussard's article. "Universities are products of history and tradition. Not only are the institutions of scholarly learning, but they also are sites of memory and meaning . . ." While his statement was directed to universities and four-year institutions, I assert that we too recognize that our colleges are products of history and tradition. We are

building on the vision of the founding trustees that the physical facilities of the Dallas County Community College District will be models of architectural design.

I want to now present one of his thoughts that I take issue with. He writes, "At colleges that serve mainly commuters, the on-campus experience is often limited to the trip from the car to the classroom. The students miss out on an eclectic and robust experience marked by new and exciting places, meeting people, and touching the very heart of a university." Even before the advent of our new facilities, I believe that you too would take issue with his observation.

Our students do have the ability and time to walk, talk, laugh, stress, and socially interact on campus. As a result they do not miss out on the "collegiate experience." During the last stages of my tenure at El Centro College we built a new student center and center for information technology. We added an art gallery to the area of the student center, a student theater room was provided, and a bank of computers was provided in the student center complex. In addition, areas were created that enabled students to gather in small groups.

Our colleges are places, not a collection of buildings that create memories for our students. However, it is the connective tissue among buildings -- the landscape of the college -- in which we can find meaningful spaces.

The next sections of his article addressed distinct types of sacred spaces commonly found at traditional colleges and universities. It also spoke to the importance of branding in creating long-lasting loyalty among students. I would like to think that our current advertising program that features television spots highlighting just a few examples of our outstanding alumni addresses that point.

Then there was a section of his article that I found rich in its truth. "A true learning environment provides for both formal instruction and learning that takes place without instruction... Informal learning touches more than just the cerebral -- it combines the head, the heart, and the gut."

He asks the question -- "how do we create sacred spaces?" It begins with a firm commitment to the value of such spaces. In many cases they already exist, however they must be recognized, maintained, and supported. We must continually envision our campuses as "thought communities." A thought community is an academic village and a place of enculturation, not just a collection of buildings for students to rush into and rush out of when a class has ended.

Earlier this year a national symposium on learning spaces was held at Eastfield College in the college's new Learning Center. When Dr. Jean Conway made her opening remarks, she spoke of the serendipity factor that quickly emerged. Without any impetus from faculty members or administrators, students would leave class and begin to huddle in small groups to probe topics more deeply, to just be engaged with one

another in the learning process.

The author then speaks of first identifying sacred learning spaces, then to reinforce their function and develop their storylines. "What is the history of the site? What meaning does it have? Tell that story by using signage, seating, plantings, art, and paving -- elements that support but do not destroy the place's uniqueness."

I agree with him that opportunities exist to create new and meaningful spaces by identifying the weak fabric of a campus. He suggests that an analysis should be made of a campus by looking for the opportunity to create sacred learning spaces. His advice is to "wander the campus and look for opportunities where students approach the campus."

His closing paragraph is "on target." "Sacred and meaningful spaces have great power. In a society in which so many of our institutions are in a state of flux, colleges and universities have the opportunity -- and the duty -- to create such spaces. Higher education has a true opportunity to transform students, allowing them to touch and be touched by the stories, people, and spaces that contribute to a sense of place. After all, former students will continue to return to their campuses for decades after they have graduated -- long after their favorite professors have retired, long after the libraries have replaced books with electronic portals."

Colleagues, we must seize the opportunity to bring out the best with our new and current facilities. We have an obligation to support the vision of the founding trustees of the Dallas County Community College District.

District Service Center

The Asian American Pacific Islanders held their *2009 Annual Texas Regional Conference and Awards Gala* on July 29th at the DFW Airport Hyatt Regency Hotel. Their theme for this year was "Accessing Government and Corporate Resources for Expanding Your Business." The keynote speaker for the evening's program was Governor Rick Perry who recognized the outstanding achievements of the high school seniors, their Leadership Tomorrow Class graduates and the outstanding contributions of individuals and corporations in the Texas economy. Darcel Webb, district manager for business diversity, received the "Business Advocate of the Year" award for her work providing business opportunities for the Asian America community.

Pat Harris, accounts payable coordinator, was pictured in the July 31st issue of *The Dallas Morning News* presenting this year's recipient Tim Richardson, a Garland teacher, the "Friends of the Rowlett Public Library" scholarship. The scholarship is designed for a Rowlett resident who is pursuing a Masters Degree in Library Science. Pat is actively involved with the Friends serving this year as vice-president of the library advisory board and chair of the scholarship committee.

Richland College

Sustainable Community Building – "Healthy environment" - Richland College students, faculty, and staff assist the college facilities services in recycling approximately 60 tons of materials per month in recycle bins strategically placed throughout the campus. This effort spares 42 different types of materials such

as mixed paper, cardboard, carpet, glass, crushed light bulbs, tires, plastic bottles, and styrofoam from needlessly ending up in area landfills. The college grounds crews also re-purpose all tree clippings, wood chips, and dead plant materials into compost for re-use in landscaping on campus.

Student Success – Anticipating the return of large numbers of armed services veterans, Richland College Office of Veterans Affairs hosted two orientation sessions for returning veterans this week. The orientation sessions provided information and assistance in financial aid, tutoring and study skills, disability services, counseling, career planning, e-Connect, and tips on students' responsibilities in their success in college.

Employee Success – Congratulations to Katherine Wagner, Richland College adjunct art instructor, who has been named CEO of the North Texas Business for Culture and the Arts (NTBCA). The NTBCA is a non-profit organization, founded in 1988 by Raymond Nasher, and businesses commitment to improving quality of life and fostering economic development by active business participation in support of the arts.

Institutional Effectiveness – The Expanded Senior Leadership team completed Richland College's *10th Annual Strategic Planning Retreat* this week. During each annual two-day session the team reviews, revises, and confirms the college mission, vision, values, and institutional continuous improvement system. Faculty and staff provide input prior to the retreat and review changes after the retreat through various college councils after which the strategic plan is officially confirmed in September.

El Centro College

Congratulations are in order for Patricia Moore, Kristin Drauschke, Sarah Drzich and Joel Martino from the International Small Business Development Center for passing the Certified Global Business Professional (CGBP) exam given in June. The exam tests skills and knowledge in 4 domains: global management, global marketing, trade finance and supply chain management. The passing of this exam demonstrates to our small business clients that we possess a solid level of knowledge to be able to counsel them in their international business ventures. For more about the CGBP, visit their website at www.nasbitecgbp.org. (See article attached.)

Richland College and the International SBDC of the Bill J. Priest Institute submitted a successful proposal for the Title VI-B Business and International Education grant from the U.S. Department of Education. This 2-year grant was awarded to provide educational opportunities for faculty, students and the business community on international trade with an emphasis on trade compliance when doing business in Brazil and Russia.

On Thursday evening, August 6th, twenty-six LVN students celebrated their graduation with a pinning ceremony in the El Centro College performance hall. Presentations were made by each clinical group. Rosalyn Levy, Student of the Year for the LVN program, provided remarks to the class. Una Gordon, program coordinator, along with Van Ho, Mary Stretcher, Elizabeth Martin, faculty, and Jessie Beecham and Wende Galloway, adjunct faculty, participated in the ceremonies.

Darrell Cook, El Centro College Chess Club advisor, recently spent 10 days in Indianapolis, Indiana, participating in various festivities as part of the *U.S. Chess Federation's (USCF) 110th U.S. Open Chess Championship Tournament*. He attended the opening ceremonies for the 2009 Tournament of College Champions, one of many side events to the main tournament. And, at the USCF's College Chess Committee's annual workshop, he successfully captured a vacated seat on the committee making El Centro College only the second community college in the entire nation represented on the official policy-making body for all of college chess in the U.S., which is currently dominated by large 4-year and

research universities.

Mountain View College

More than 100 students participated in the Texas Prefreshman Engineering Program (TexPREP) from June 16th through July 30th at Mountain View College. The program is an academically intense, mathematics-based, summer enrichment program for students entering seventh, eighth, and ninth grades. TexPREP provides students who have demonstrated mathematical ability through academic performance the opportunity to study science, technology, engineering and math. Along with classroom instruction, participants in the program attended field trips to the University of Texas at Arlington, Southern Methodist University, Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway, the Space Center in Houston, and Six Flags Hurricane Harbor. A recognition ceremony was held July 30th, with approximately 300 attendees and special guests Felix A. Zamora, president of Mountain View College, as well as Diana Flores, DCCCD trustee. Six teachers and six program mentors also assisted the students under the direction of Liliana Ponce, TexPREP program director and administrative assistant to the president at the college.

Mountain View College has selected its “Student Ambassadors for the 2009-2010 Academic Year”: Ana Alvarez, Angelica Andrade, Kenna Bowers, Yazmin Chalico, Samara Chalott, Bryant Collins, Herschael Dejong, Minerva Faz, Christie Gaston, Luisa Gutierrez and Jeanette Rodriguez. Through their service as ambassadors for the college, students acquire public relations experience, develop professional networks, attend field trips and conferences, meet campus and community leaders, and gain overall personal enrichment. The highly visible group of student ambassadors selected must attend summer training, a challenge course of activities and various leadership workshops throughout the academic year, participate in at least six events each semester as assigned, maintain a grade point average of 3.0 or higher, and conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times. All student ambassador activities are conducted under the direction of the college Office of Student Life.

On August 10th, Mountain View College hosted one in a series of ESPN Deportes Soccer Clinics. Basic soccer skills and conditioning exercises were taught to more than 300 youngsters ages 6-12. Eight current college student soccer players assisted with the event, as well as a number of guest instructors with professional playing experience. Steve Rodriguez, the college soccer coach, also assisted in coordinating the event.

The Brookhaven Associate Degree Nursing Program at Mountain View College will be holding “Success Camp” for the second class admitted at the college on August 12th-13th. Students will be hosted by the nursing faculty and staff in the newly constructed Science and Allied Health Building. The purpose of the camp is to allow students to prepare for a rigorous 16-month program of study. It addresses various topics including program policies and procedures, study techniques, test-taking strategies, organization, and time management. The camp will also provide students the opportunity to socialize with other nursing students, identify organizations available to nursing students, prepare calendars, and become acquainted with resources available to all students at the college.

DCCCD Campus High Schools

Richland Collegiate High School (RCHS) Lea Ann Munkres, lead senior academic advisor, and Dr. Kristyn Edney, RCHS principal, recently presented college readiness information to the college workforce youth program participants. Sixty-eight students from Dallas County actively participated in sessions that would prepare them for dual-credit courses, the RCHS program, or college after high school completion. These curious students asked thought-provoking questions for more than an hour at the conclusion of the presentation, and more than half the students made declarations that they want to prepare themselves for one of the many dual-credit opportunities DCCCD colleges offer.

The **Early College High School at Mountain View College** held orientation for all new students August 10th-12th. About 110 students, primarily freshmen, underwent special instruction and orientation regarding math, reading, writing, and science requirements pertinent to the 2009-2010 academic school year and beyond.

Faculty of the **Early College High School at Brookhaven College (ECHS)** participated in the *Annual Early College High School Institute "Samples of Success: Building Strong Networks of Schools"* August 10th-12th in San Antonio. The institute was sponsored by the Texas High School Project of the Communities Foundation of Texas. Louis Harvill, Brandy G. Hickman, Joseph Kruk, Lottie Peppers, Jeanine Powell, Ann Reavis, teachers, and Pam Geisinger-Sandy, counselor, along with ECHS Marilyn K. Lynch, liaison and vice president of career and program resources, joined colleagues from throughout Texas for interactive breakout sessions as well as plenaries and key-note addresses focused on best practices. Lynch co-presented a session entitled "Adding Value as a College Liaison" with counterpart Charlotte Twardowski of Lone Star College, North Harris. She also served as one of four panelists for the plenary "What I Wish I had Known About Designing a Successful Early College High School."

North Lake College

Our community, our employees – The North Lake College South Campus (NLCSC) GED testing center received an overall rating of "Excellent" from the Texas Education Agency. This is the highest ranking given to a GED testing center. Since February, 2009, five hundred (500) students have been tested through NLCSC. Approximately three hundred (300) students achieved a successful passing score and are eligible for a GED diploma, while one hundred (100) other students continue to take preparation courses to complete their testing journey. A GED graduation ceremony will be held in December. Shakila Farmer is the chief GED examiner at the college.

Our students – Two North Lake College student publications received an "All American" rating from the National Scholastic Press Association (NSPA). The campus newspaper, the *News-Register*, received 904 points out of 1,090 and four marks of distinction in coverage & content, writing & editing, layout & design, and leadership. The literary magazine, *Duck Soup*, received 498 points out of 500, which included 48 bonus points for exceptional student work and four marks of distinction were earned in the areas of content, writing & editing, photography, art, graphics & typography. The *News-Register's* student editor in fall 2008/spring 2009 was Matt Keyser, the student designer was Tom Ritchey, and Kathleen Stockmier is the publication's advisor. *Duck Soup's* editor for fall 2009 was also Matt Keyser, design editor was Amanda K. Witt, Tom Ritchey was production editor, and Dr. Nancy Castilla was the faculty advisor. Chris Fulmer and Marty Ray, instructors, were art faculty advisors.

Our Community – North Lake College is playing host to a seismograph installed by SMU for a study of local microseismicity in the Dallas area. The director of the project at SMU is Brian Stump, Albritton chair of Geological Science. The seismograph (or seismometer) is installed behind the theater on a concrete pad, courtesy of the college theater department. The recording device is inside the building. The seismograph will stay at the college for approximately six months to monitor activity in the Irving area. Len Kubicek, geology faculty, is pleased to have this opportunity for his students to benefit from this activity. Kubicek spent two weeks this summer with a group of college students in Hawaii studying the role of earthquakes and volcanic activity in the islands.

Brookhaven College

The winners were recently announced for the 2008-2009 League for Innovation in the Community College Student Literary Competition. Two students in courses at Brookhaven College were among the

national winners. Erin Russell, freshman art student, was awarded first place in the Short Story category for her piece titled "That's What It's All About." Nancy Lubar was recognized for both her play, "Division," and her personal essay. Lubar has already completed a bachelor's degree from Mount Holyoke and a master's from University of North Texas. The competition included 60 literary works from League colleges. A catalog of all entries is currently being produced and will be mailed to all League members this fall. The competition, sponsored by the League for Innovation and hosted this year by Anne Arundel Community College, was created to encourage and reward creative writing skills of community college students. Nationally recognized writers judged the entries in four categories. The jurors for this year's student literary competition were Mary Kay Zuravleff, short story; Michael Glaser, poetry; Caleen Sinnette Jennings, one-act play; and John Lane, personal essay.

The Associate Degree Nursing Program (ADNP) at Brookhaven College maintained its outstanding pass rate for students, according to the latest report from the Texas Board of Nursing. The 2009 NCLEX-RN examination pass rates for the 3rd quarter of the 2009 examination year, October 1st through September 30th, have just been published. The 25 students who took the NCLEX-RN in the third quarter, April 1st to June 30th, all passed on their first attempt. The students have maintained one of the highest pass rates for ADN programs in the state with a 97.5 average for the year, with 39 of the 40 students who attempted the exam passing on their first attempt.

The Brookhaven College Students 50+ Education Program staff members conducted the first annual "Get a Running Start on the Semester" event on August 1st. Assisting with the event were DeBorah Whaley-Stephenson, senior adult student advisor, and Janice Groeneman, coordinator of client management, as well as instructors who teach computers, genealogy, Spanish, medical front office, financial planning and creative writing. This event was planned as part of the program's marketing, recruiting and retention plan, and offered an opportunity for students to visit with instructors as well as preview and register for fall courses. Students also were invited to join the Brookhaven Active Adult Student Club, which coordinates special activities including trips, special interest groups and lunches.

During the summer break, Trish Dodd, Ph.D., English professor, traveled to Guatemala with a human rights delegation in support of the literature course she teaches. Dr. Dodd joined a group called Rights Action, www.rightsaction.org, which organized the group to investigate the harms and human rights violations caused by large-scale "development" projects, such as hydro-electric dams and mineral resource extraction. The purpose of the trip was to examine this type of development within the context of Guatemala's alleged on-going impunity and lack of justice for indigenous peoples, exploitation and widespread poverty; and generalized lack of democracy. The group spent nine days visiting mass graves, meeting with development, environmental and human rights experts and activists. Rights Action is a multi-faceted community development, enviro- and human rights organization that channels funds directly to community-based organizations for human rights, development, education, environment and emergency relief projects in Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and El Salvador. Members also help build north-south alliances in their political and legal work in support of global equality and justice, global human rights, the environment and a just "development" model. (See article attached.)

Cedar Valley College

Student Success – This week, 25 individuals, including three Cedar Valley College instructors in training, traveled to the Cedar Valley College Center in Cedar Hill for five days of intensive Photovoltaic (PV) instruction and hands on training in solar electric installation. Upon completion of the 40-hour course, participants are now prepared to take the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners Certificate of Knowledge exam required to receive their PV Entry Level certificate. Participants

traveled from many far destinations including New Hampshire and Boulder, Colorado. The class was taught by Janet Hughes and James Haynes, lead instructors with the Ontility Company.

The Family Music Theater will hold auditions for their fall production, “Singin’ in the Rain,” on August 17th-18th at 7:00 p.m. Those interested in auditioning are to report to the band hall, room E105, prepared to sing 16 bars of a Broadway song and ready to read from a cold script. Auditions are open to the general public. Inquiries regarding auditioning may be directed to Dr. Sam Germany via email at sgermany@dcccd.edu.

The Student Services department at Cedar Valley College held a special “*Fall Preview Day*” this past Saturday. In addition to registration and orientation, students were provided information about various programs and services available on the campus. Student clubs were also on hand to provide information about campus activities. Guests were also provided tours of the campus.

LeCroy Center

LeCroy Center Provost Pam Quinn attended her first board meeting for the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) in Washington, D.C. August 4th-7th. Pam was elected to the AACC board as a council representative running as the candidate from the Instructional Technology Council. The line-up of speakers at the board retreat was quite impressive including Arne Duncan, Secretary of Education, Hilda Solis, Secretary of Labor, Martha Kanter, Under Secretary of Education, Kristina Johnson, Under Secretary of Energy, Dallas Tonsager, Under Secretary of Agriculture, Glenn Cummings, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Vocational Education, and Jane Oates, Assistant Secretary for Labor. Many of the speakers had risen to their positions in Washington with prior community college experience. The national focus in higher education is on community colleges because of the new “American Graduation Initiative” proposed recently by President Obama.

Eastfield College

Congratulations to Alexander Nelson of Fate, Texas, and Hilda Rodriguez of Rowlett, both Eastfield College students who were recently named 2009-10 DCCCD LeCroy Scholars. Nelson graduated this spring from Royce City High School, where he was president of the French Club, a member of the district orchestra in Monterey, Calif., prior to his move to Texas, and the recipient of the school orchestra’s Director’s award. Rodriguez, who works full time for Rockwall ISD as a bilingual instructional assistant, attends Eastfield College in the evening. She is the first among her family members to graduate from high school and attend college. When she was a student at Rowlett, she served as one of two students on the school’s Campus Improvement Committee and a leader in the Teacher Assistant Professional Preparation Program, which led to a visit to the college where she decided to go to school. She plans to transfer to A&M-Commerce to earn her bachelor’s degree in early childhood education. The program honors DCCCD’s former chancellor Dr. R. Jan LeCroy, who served in that capacity from 1981 to 1988. One other student is a returning 2008-09 LeCroy Scholar: Rachael Halsdorf of Forney, Eastfield College Mathematics major.

Over the past several months, several staffers have been hard at work developing a presence for Eastfield College on the major social networking sites. The college pages can now be found on Twitter (EFOnline), Myspace (eastfieldcollege), Flickr (eastfieldcollege), Youtube (efcollege) and Facebook (Eastfield Dallas). The college Communications and Community Outreach Office will be posting regular news and events on these various sites.

The *Greater East Dallas Chamber Business Awards Luncheon* on August 11th recognized Eastfield College as one of fourteen businesses nominated for the Chamber’s Congressman Jeb Hensarling Business of the Year award. This year’s luncheon was hosted by C.C. Young Retirement Village, one of the college’s

community partners for the college's Emeritus classes and the annual "Senior Fest" event held in August. Representing the college were Jean Conway, president, and Sharon Cook, college communications and community outreach director.

Eastfield College hosted its *13th Annual Senior Fest* for adults 50 and over on August 8th. There were over 700 people in attendance from the local area as well as across the Metroplex. More than 25 college and DCCCD members of the senior fest committee along with 121 volunteers helped the event run smoothly despite being interrupted by two fire alarms. A wide variety of classes from how to buy a digital camera to how to care for a loved one with dementia to senior housing options were offered to the attendees. Without the support of local sponsors such as Christian Care Center, CC Young Retirement Community, Comfort Keepers, The Waterford of Mesquite, and especially First State Bank of Mesquite this event would not be possible. Janet Loper, continuing education, was the coordinator for Senior Fest. Michael Guitierrez, vice president of learning, and Martha Sanchez-Metzger, trustee, gave a warm welcome to the breakfast crowd.