



Dallas County Community College District

Office of the Chancellor

TO: DCCCD Board Members

FROM: Dr. Wright L. Lassiter, Jr.

DATE: July 10, 2009

RE: Weekend Memo #150

KEEP YOUR FORK!

Members of the district family have been touched by the departure of many of our friends from this life recently. In some cases the passing has been reasonably anticipated due to the age and/or health condition of the loved one. Such was not the case with other departures from this life. I, like many colleagues, have sat on the "front row" at the celebration of life of a loved one.

Being a minister, I have also delivered eulogies and memorial messages on many occasions, which always involved visitations with parishioners. I was recently poring through folders in my home office and came across an item that I had tucked away years ago. After re-reading it, it occurred to me that it could have utility for my DCCCD colleagues. For while it speaks to a "closing interview" between an old woman and her pastor, there is a deeper message that has contemporary application during this period of uncertainty, that currently envelopes us all. Here is this story.

There once was an old woman that had been diagnosed with a terminal illness and given three months to live. As she was getting her things in order, she contacted her pastor and he came to her house to discuss certain aspects of her final wishes. She told him which songs she wanted sung at the service, what scriptures she would like read, and what outfit she wanted to be buried in. The woman also requested to be buried with her favorite Bible. Everything was in order, but as the pastor was preparing to leave the woman suddenly remembered something very important to her.

"Oh, but there's one more thing, she said excitedly." "What's that?" came the pastor's reply. "This is very important," the woman continued. "I want to be buried with a fork in my right hand."

The pastor stood looking strangely at the woman, not knowing quite what to say. "That surprises you, doesn't it?" the woman asked. "Well, to be honest, I am a bit puzzled by the request," said the pastor.

The woman explained. "In all of my years attending church socials and potluck dinners, I remember that when the dishes of the main course were being cleared away, someone would inevitably lean over and say, 'keep your fork.' It was my favorite part of the eating event for I knew that something better was coming – like velvety chocolate cake or deep-dish apple pie. Something wonderful. Something with substance! I just want people to see me there in that casket with a fork in my hand, I want them to wonder 'What's the fork for?' Then I want you to tell them this: "Keep your fork – the best is yet to come!"

With that the pastor's eyes welled up with tears of joy as he hugged the woman good-bye. He knew this would be one of the last times he would see her before her death. But he also knew that the woman had a far better grasp of heaven than he did. She knew that something better was coming.

So at the funeral people were walking by the woman's casket and they noticed the pretty dress she was wearing and her favorite Bible and the fork placed in her right hand. Over and over the pastor heard the question: "What's with the fork?" And over and over he gently smiled.

During the message, the pastor told the people of the conversation he had with the woman shortly before she died. He also told them about the fork and about what it symbolized to her. He told the people how he could not stop thinking about the fork and that they probably would not be able to stop thinking about it either. And he was right!

So the next time you reach down for your fork at the dinner table, let it remind you that the best is yet to come!

Transitioning to the current scene, think along these lines. As uncertain as the future may be, we should be optimistic, hopeful and trusting that valued leaders will exert all their energies to confirm that "the best is yet to come."

DCCCD Administrative Offices

Betheny L. Reid, associate vice chancellor of district development and president of the DCCCD Foundation, was quoted extensively in an article in the July/August issue of *Currents*, a magazine of the Council for Advancement and Support of Education. The article, entitled "Matter of Scale," focuses on the emerging roles that community colleges across the country are playing now with the struggling economy and a changing workforce. Reid mentions how President Obama's emphasis on the environment, for instance, has driven community colleges to take a leadership role in sustainability by providing training for green energy jobs and LEED certification. She also talks about how community colleges have taken a significant role in providing programs to retrain displaced professionals into other careers, such as the alternative certification teaching program. "Community colleges have the kind of rubber-meets-the-road practicality that communities and the country need right now," Reid is quoted. "By putting together shortened timelines, by working with highly educated, highly skilled, and high-performing segments of the workforce, we're having an impact. That's good for those individuals, and that's good for our community." (See article attached.)

El Centro College

El Centro College's first new student orientation for fall 2009 took place June 27th. One hundred ninety-six (196) new-to-college students attended, many accompanied by family members and friends. After a warm welcome from the college president, Dr. Paul McCarthy, the students were provided workshops on student services and how to navigate eConnect. They were provided a free lunch, where they broke bread and shared conversation with college faculty, staff and administrators on a more personal basis. The rest of the day involved break-out sessions of their choice, from vocational programs such as fashion marketing and health occupations, to in-depth information about services such as financial aid and more. Each participant received a free college tee-shirt as well as lots of give-a-ways, and many of the door prizes involved bookstore gift cards.

During the month of June 2009, El Centro College's information technology programs and systems support division offered the fourth annual *eXtreme Techno Camp* to 36 high school juniors and seniors from 15 area high schools. During the camp, the students learned about social networking, created blogs, web pages and multimedia presentations using Photoshop, Dreamweaver, and Flash. They explored various Google tools, database management, digital video, open source software, virtual reality programming, 2D and 3D video game development, networking, hardware, smart home technology, Wi-Fi wireless networks, and voice over IP. Tuition was funded by a Title V Strengthening Hispanic Serving Institutions Grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Students received four college credit hours. Eighteen (18) IT faculty and staff members assisted with the presentation content. Students wrote comments about each day's activities in their blogs and delivered a final presentation, which included links to their deliverables from all content presented.

El Centro College is participating in the Dallas Summer Youth Program. Five low income students from DISD high schools are assisting in the facilities department with the building expansion and moving efforts, and in the office of student life. This program will acquaint the students with the world of work, provide needed summer income, and provide skills that they can use in future careers.

Bill J. Priest Institute (BJP) for Economic Development, a campus of El Centro College, has introduced a new training program for industrial maintenance mechanics. Trainees learn to install, maintain and repair industrial machinery and put themselves on a well-paying career path. The program includes learning basic machine shop skills, welding, blueprint reading, safety training and more. Through financial aid options, interested persons may qualify to take this training course without cost. Call 214-860-5900 at BJP for information and applications.

Brookhaven College

A letter to the editor at dallasnews.com, the official web site for *The Dallas Morning News* newspaper, offered a response with a Brookhaven College connection. The letter was a response to a recent article that profiled how some students had to choose state universities and community colleges instead of top-tier universities due to the recession. The writer sponsored a foreign student who wanted to go to school in America. That student chose Brookhaven College to learn English, earned a 4.0 grade point average in her college-level courses and went on to receive a scholarship to the University of Texas at Dallas, where she graduated with honors. Susan Maxey, geology professor, remembers this student and her enthusiasm for learning. The crux of the letter is that students can and should take advantage of all learning opportunities, even if it is not in the Ivy League. To read the full article, go to <http://dallasmorningviewsblog.dallasnews.com/archives/2009/06/fulfilling-a-co.html>. (See article attached.)

ADDISON, the magazine of the North Dallas Corridor, recognized Brookhaven College at its first annual *Reader's Choice Awards* July 1st. Dr. Richard D. McCrary, interim president, Vernon Hawkins,

associate vice president of workforce and continuing education, attended the reception and Hawkins accepted the award for the college. The college was honored as the favorite continuing education provider.

Richard Campbell, emergency medical services professor, recently attended the two-week, advanced Leadership Issues in EMS course at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland. The course used situational, scenario-based instruction as the foundation for the training, with an emphasis on problem-solving and decision-making techniques. It focused on educating upper-management persons who have organizational responsibility for EMS operations in their agency or jurisdiction and the leadership techniques as they relate to establishing and directing EMS work teams. Campbell said the course information will be used to improve EMS student's leadership skills as the EMS profession continues to grow and change in the future.

The Oxford Round Table (ORT) has invited Anahita Sidhwa, astronomy professor at Brookhaven College, to take part in this year's discussion of science, humanities and religion. The ORT sessions focus on a variety of issues that affect education, art, science, religion and charity around the world. The July 26th-31st round table session will investigate ways to reconcile science, humanities and religion. Sidhwa is bringing together her expertise in astronomy with her Zoroastrian beliefs stated in her paper titled "*The Sky: Connecting Science and Symmetry with Reverence.*" "When you look at the sky, you can't help but be amazed and inspired by everything that is out there," she said. "And so you do get a great sense of the divine." She was featured in an article in *The Dallas Morning News* on July 5th. To read the full article, go to http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/news/city/carrollton/stories/DN-anahita_05met.ART.Central.Edition1.4baf7b8.html. (See article attached.)

Mountain View College

Les Brinkerhoff, ESL instructor, represented Mountain View College on June 26th at a networking event sponsored by the Dallas County community supervision and corrections department. The event, entitled the *Spanish Expo*, was held at the Dallas County health and human services building and brought together twenty-five organizations that offered a variety of services such as counseling and education for a Spanish-speaking clientele. Brinkerhoff networked with probation officers and other community justice professionals who were eager to receive information about the college's ESL program.

Mountain View College hosted an employee retirement system benefits seminar on July 6th, which was open to all DCCCD employees. The seminar, which also served as a summer enrollment fair for all District employees, featured a number of representatives from a variety of vendors who gave presentations and fielded questions regarding employee benefits. Representatives from the following vendors participated: Fort Dearborn Life, HealthSelect, Caremark, TexFlex, Texa Saver, John Hancock, and Texas Tomorrow Fund.

On June 25th, students participating in continuing education summer modeling classes at Mountain View College demonstrated what they learned with a fashion show. About a dozen models, ages 10-14, showcased their favorite outfits in the "Models r Us" fashion show under the direction of Donyan Rogers, class instructor and models club advisor. Modeling classes promote self-confidence, self-esteem, and etiquette, while also informing students about the modeling field and modeling opportunities.

Mountain View College hosted the "Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas Interest Patch College" from July 6th-10th. About 30 Girl Scouts, ages 13-18, participated to fulfill prerequisites in eventually obtaining

their silver or gold awards. The scouts participated in a variety of classes taught by college instructors or business professionals. Classes included dance, pet care, environmental safety, healthy cooking/eating, and more. The *Interest Patch College* is an annual tradition at Mountain View College, designed to expose the scouts to a college environment and to promote higher education.

North Lake College

Our students – North Lake College Center for Visual and Performing Arts presented the *Student Choreographers Dance Concert* on July 1st. Student choreographers included Denise Roque, Tasha Vess, Ginny Byles, Magdalena Chavez, Chinmayi Chatkazu, Yennifer Orioli, Chasity Pierce, Jordan Vidal and Sheryl Glen. Brenda Parker-Braswell, dance faculty and program coordinator, directed the dance recital.

Our employees and community – SER-Jobs for Progress National, Inc. obtained a grant to fully fund 51 students in North Lake College's BOSS Software Application Specialist Certificate Program, this summer. The grant targets economically challenged 18 to 24-year-old Hispanics in the Irving area. Most of these students are first-generation college students. In addition to gaining vital software skills, students also develop basic workplace skills. After completing the courses, thirty participants will participate in a month-long paid internship. Lynne Smith-Brush, business/information technology instructor, and four office technology adjunct faculty are leading these courses, which will run until July 31st.

Our community – North Lake College hosted Austin artist Skip Noah's *Giraffes and Seaborses* exhibit June 11th-July 7th. The exhibition, which included more than 20 pieces of art, ranging from the early 1990s to the present, was featured on the cover of *The Dallas Morning News NeighborsGo*. A reception for the artist was held on June 17th. Steven A. Benezue, gallery director, provided the art exhibit for the community. (See article attached.)

Eastfield College

Starting June 26th, twenty-five teachers recruited internationally through DISD's alternative certification program, began taking courses in the weekend college program of the ESL Teaching Academy. The teachers are from Mexico, Panama, Phillipines, Venezuela, Honduras, Kenya, and Brazil. They will be at Eastfield College through mid-August. During their stay, the international teachers are being hosted by the Arts, Languages and Literature Division. They participated in a breakfast session and will also participate in an ice cream social. Dr. Veronica Pasternac, instructional specialist for DISD alternative certification, and Maria Caratini Prado, program director for ESL and the ESL Teaching Academy, are in charge of the partnership, which is in its third year.

College Planning and Management magazine announced in its June 2009 edition that the Eastfield College Learning Center was named the Honorable Mention Winner for the 2009 Education Design Showcase Project (EDSP). The award is for outstanding design and architecture. EDSP is a comprehensive database of cutting-edge projects, innovative solutions and inspiring designs for education by *School Planning & Management* and *College Planning & Management* magazines. To read the full article, go to <http://www.educationdesignshowcase.com/view.esiml?pid=257&lastsearch=grade%5Fid%3D9>. (See article attached.)

Eastfield College student Kivaun Parraway attended the week-long Phi Theta Kappa International Honors Institute in Richmond, VA, June 22nd-27th. Parraway joined over 70 other honor students and advisors to explore the honors study topic, "The Paradox of Affluence: Choices, Challenges and Consequences." Historian for the college's Psi Eta Chapter, Parraway will share what she learned with the chapter to enhance their scholarship programs during the coming academic year.

At the tenth annual *Erin Tierney Kramp Encouragement Scholarship Banquet*, held at The Adolphus Hotel on June 27th, Amanda Collins, Eastfield College student, was one of two students honored with the Kramp Encouragement Scholarship. From the Kramp Foundation, Collins will receive a scholarship to cover the cost of her tuition and books for the remainder of her two-year program. The scholarship is for students who have shown courage and perseverance in the face of adversity. Also at the banquet, Ron W. Moss, dean of SMU undergraduate admissions, awarded Dylan Lewis, Eastfield college student and 2008-09 Kramp scholarship recipient, the first SMU transfer scholarship for Erin Tierney Kramp scholars. Lewis will transfer to SMU this fall to study business. Present and past scholars were invited to stay the night at the hotel and gathered for a celebratory brunch on Sunday morning.

Cedar Valley College

Student Success – The Office of Student Life will present the film “*The Kite Runner*,” based on the national bestselling novel by Khaled Hosseini, on October 15th beginning at 10:00 a.m. and running continuously until 4:00 p.m. The film is being presented as a part of the Common Book Series. Additional events, speakers and focus group sessions for the book will be announced at a later date.

The Cedar Valley College Prefreshman Engineering Program (TexPREP) began June 15th with 48 middle school students who have demonstrated mathematical ability through academic performance and teacher recommendations. Students are studying logic, problem-solving, and engineering. This intensive program of study includes exposure to career speakers and professionals in the fields of science, mathematics, technology, engineering and education. They will be taking field trips to high tech businesses and industries in the Dallas area including Frontiers of Flight, Dallas; Center for Allied Health and Nursing at El Centro College; IMAX, Hurricane on the Bayou @ Fair Park; Planetarium at Richland College; the Waste Water Treatment Plant, Waxahachie; and the Matheson Tri-Gas Air Separation Plant in Irving. Graduation is planned for July 31, 2009.

Effective in the fall of 2009, Cedar Valley College will begin offering the Fire/Science Technology Program. Program participants upon completion may apply for either an Applied Arts and Sciences degree or one of two Level I certificates. The program will reside in the new science/vet tech/allied health building.

Richland College

Sustainable Community Building – “Equity, Economy, Environment” – Jerry Prater, DCCCD board chair and Diana Flores, vice chair, Wright L. Lassiter, Jr., chancellor, Ron Jones, Garland mayor, and Paul Mayer, Garland Chamber CEO joined Steve Mittelstet, president, a host of elected state and local officials, GISD and DCCCD officials, El Centro College and Eastfield College partners, and some 150 Richland College students, faculty, and staff volunteers to dedicate the LEED Gold-Designed Richland College Garland Campus, “Gateway to Education with DCCCD,” on June 30th. “*Evolving Dreams, Dreams in the Making*” was the ribbon-cutting theme for the official morning ceremony, followed by a well-attended afternoon Garland Chamber open house. A four-hour evening community gala open house and college fair was attended by an estimated 2,000 Garland residents. Approximately 200 college/ Richland College High School students, faculty, and staff volunteers performed and facilitated the event.

Employee Success – Dr. Zarina Blankenbaker, acting chief academic officer, helped facilitate the *Leadership Development Program in Higher Education (LDPHE)* at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, July 8th-11th. Dr. Blankenbaker serves as a program participant mentor. Created in 1997, LDPHE promotes professional development of Asian Pacific Islanders (APIs) in college and university leadership roles. Conducted by Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics, Inc. in partnership with Asian

Pacific Americans in Higher Education, LDPHE is the only U.S. program providing leadership training from a unique understanding of API values, concerns, and contributions. The program's success stems largely from personal coaching and invaluable insights provided by prominent API leaders.

Student Success – Richland College has been selected to join the network of *Achieving the Dream: Community Colleges Count* national initiative designed to help more community college students succeed, particularly students of color and low-income students. *Achieving the Dream* (AtD) was launched in 2004 with funding provided by the Lumina Foundation for Education. AtD will advance the college's ongoing efforts in assessing and implementing strategies designed to help more students earn degrees, complete certificates, or transfer to other institutions to continue their studies. Beginning this month, the college has made a two-year AtD commitment to focus additional national benchmarking efforts in closing performance gaps among students in targeted populations to its ongoing student retention initiatives. During the first year, faculty-led objectives will focus on achieving systematic institutional improvements in student retention/success. The Communities Foundation of Texas (CFT) has funded the college's team registration costs for the kick-off conference this year and for the next two years. CFT is also paying for the college's visits by the AtD institutional coach and AtD data coach the next two years.

Institutional Effectiveness – Dr. Steve Mittelstet, president, was invited, jointly by the U.S. Department of Education, Department of State, and Agency for International Development, to present at the U.S.-sponsored Community and Technical College Symposium in its Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) Initiative, held in Amman, Jordan, in June. Following President Obama's historic Cairo address, the symposium focused on how U.S. community colleges operate with agility in today's changing economic climate to help citizens become and remain productive participants in the workplace and constructive contributors to society. Ministries of education and business leaders from 14 BMENA nations (Afghanistan, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and Yemen) learned of U.S. community college partnerships across government, education, and the private sector to foster creative solutions to economic challenges and workforce training. Dr. Mittelstet illustrated how performance excellence models, such as the one Richland College has derived from the U.S. Department of Commerce Baldrige standards, use quality assurance, innovation, and productivity to help students learn to build sustainable local and world community. As a result, the college has been invited to assist in designing a BMENA prototype transfer community college in Qatar as a potential "sister college" partnership with Richland College in a joint sustainable world community-building initiative.

DCCCD Campus High Schools

Cynthia Ruiz, **Richland College High School** student, has been selected to attend the National High School Aerospace Scholars program in Houston, beginning July 20th. The program is an interactive, online learning experience highlighted by a six-day residential summer experience at NASA Johnson Space Center (JSC). Selected students explore math, science, engineering, and computer science concepts with engineers and scientists at JSC. This program is sponsored by NASA and funded by the State of Texas, Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, and Rotary NASA, at no cost to participants. During Cynthia's stay she will tour the JSC facilities, complete team projects and hands-on engineering activities directed by NASA engineers/mentors, participate in educational field trips, and take part in engineer, scientist, and astronaut briefings. Students are mentored by NASA engineers, college co-ops, and teacher counselors. These mentors become acquainted with their student teams via e-mail and online discussions and facilitate student research for planning a human mission to Mars. Mentors also offer guidance in developing the teams' final presentations to parents and legislators.