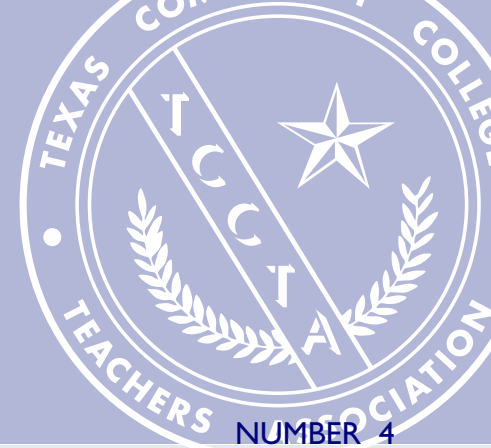


TCCTA MESSENGER

www.tccta.org

A Publication of the TEXAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

5113 Southwest Parkway, Suite 185 Austin, Texas 78735
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Board Adopts Commissioner's Recommendations

On April 24 the Coordinating Board unanimously endorsed a set of dramatic recommendations by Commissioner of Higher Education Raymund Paredes on performance funding and developmental education. While the Legislature is under no statutory obligation to enact the changes, the Board's decision guarantees that the proposals will be considered fully in 2009.

As pointed out in updates on the TCCTA Web site, the commissioner's proposals differ starkly from recommendations of the Community and Technical College Formula Advisory Committee (consisting of presidents and other educators from the schools).

The commissioner—and now the board—recommend that formula funding be based on “completers” of courses, rather than contact hour enrollment, as currently practiced. This fundamental change is designed, the commissioner said, to encourage schools to focus their efforts on retention and persistence of students. According to the plan, students will not be required to pass courses in order to count as “completers.” Degrees and certificates conferred and successful transfers will also be rewarded if the proposal becomes policy.

The commissioner did follow the CTCFAC recommendation of 100 percent formula funding, minus tuition and fees (which are retained locally by schools).

This amount would, according to comments by Board staffers, boost the funding level to 67 percent of the “full formula.” It is currently funded at 52 percent.

College personnel are urged to keep in mind that the formula serves as a means of distribution only. Elected representatives and senators determine the overall amount through the complex appropriations process.

According to the commissioner, a four-year transition period would be funded along traditional lines as colleges adapt to the new rules. Extra funds would also be allowed for “dramatic” enrollment growth. The base year calendar would have to be adjusted to accommodate the time span between enrollment and completion.

Chair of the CTCFAC is Gregory Williams, president of Odessa College. He urged a Senate panel on March 24 to approach incentive funding with great caution. “Research hasn't been done,” he said, particularly with the affect upon “at risk” students. This could jeopardize the Closing the Gaps initiative, since “Making an F doesn't accomplish anything,” Dr. Williams said.

The commissioner's developmental education proposals are discussed on page 11 of this issue of the *Messenger*.

The commissioner's developmental education proposals are discussed on page 9 of this issue of the Messenger.

TCCTA Responds

Shortly after hearings began in March, after consulting with association leaders, TCCTA president Terry S. Mouchayleh sent a letter to Dr. Williams. The letter addresses several pedagogical concerns of our association regarding the commissioner's proposal. Ms. Mouchayleh also serves on the advisory panel. The letter is the first step in a dialogue that will continue into the next Regular Session.

Below is the text of the letter. Members are urged to draw upon its points in discussing this issue with lawmakers and other public officials during the interim.

Dear Dr. Williams:

This letter is intended to summarize the perspectives of TCCTA on the recent proposal by Commissioner Paredes to shift formula funding to a model based on completers rather than enrollment. I hope you will find the information useful as our committee proceeds with its work. We have been consulting with faculty members from around the state and, while our membership is rarely unanimous on matters of controversy, it is safe to assume they basically share the concerns expressed below.

(Continued on Page Ten)

Also In This Issue...

State President Revis Bell reflects on the challenges and opportunities of the coming year Page 2

Read about Proportionality “Talking Points”—and a special message from Beaman Floyd Page 3

Danita McAnally discusses the new Career Clusters that will affect the curricula at all colleges Page 4

News Briefs and Links Page 5

Come to the TCCTA Roundup for Great Teaching and Leading from the Middle Conferences! Pages 6-7

The Phi Theta Kappa speaker at the TCCTA annual convention says, “You Are All Heroes” Page 8

Important changes may be in store for developmental education. Find out what you need to know! Page 9

Look for familiar faces at the 2008 annual convention at the Fairmont Dallas! Page 12



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



It is truly an honor to serve as your president for the coming year. Although summer is approaching, rest assured that your TCCTA leadership is working hard to make 2008-09 successful for you and your colleagues.

As I write this, there is a great deal of bad news on the state of the economy.

Those of us who have been around for a while realize that economic cycles come and go. However, our current situation strikes many people as particularly daunting. Interestingly, it also may be rich with opportunity for our association.

If you step back from daily headlines and focus on the larger landscape, it's hard to avoid a conclusion that the American middle class is in jeopardy. Think about home ownership. Affordable health insurance and transportation. A secure retirement. Productive employment. Trained nurses for the sick. Talented, experienced public school teachers. A college education for all who want to earn it.

These aren't luxuries, rather pillars of a healthy society that now appear to be getting wobbly.

In fact, some argue that, for the first time in U.S. history, the next generation could be worse off than their parents. If most Americans don't share robustly in the future's goods and services, our society will look very different than it does now.

This is also the implicit message of Steve Murdoch, the state's official demographer, in countless hours of testimony at the Capitol. To the Legislature's credit, it is a diagnosis heard frequently, as painful as it might be to hear. The Closing the Gaps initiative arose out of these concerns. Public officials and candidates of both parties are addressing the problem in a variety of ways.

The causes and symptoms are complicated, but it is interesting to note that the cure may be simple: strong community colleges.

TCCTA does an amazing job addressing the vital issues that concern our profession, as a mere perusal of the *Messenger*—or our fine Web site—will confirm. We are respected in Austin for integrity, clear thinking, constructive behavior, and the accuracy of our communications. Not to mention Beaman Floyd, our great lobbyist!

It seems to me, however, that we should increasingly emphasize the "broader" importance of community colleges. And we need your help.

Here in my hometown of San Antonio, for instance, the Toyota Corporation has started cranking out new pickup trucks, providing good jobs to hundreds of folks in the area—thousands if you include suppliers and the infusion of money into the economy. Company officials have made it clear that they rely upon the Alamo Community College District for skilled employees. In fact, the presence of an outstanding community college was crucial in their decision to come here. You may have a similar story in your area. Please tell it.

Just as important to stress is the general education of a new electorate and citizenry. The core curriculum at Texas community colleges is bountiful in critical thinking skills, reading, writing, and mathematics. Voters and consumers need these tools to see through the fog in the free-for-all of today's digital media.

We also should mention the increasing emphasis at our schools on personal and social responsibility. This component of a complete education is vital if our country is to remain unified and free. American individualism is great, but "We Are In This Together" is a lesson that deserves fortification.

So let's all intensify our work to remind local policy makers, business officials, media leaders, and neighbors of the larger dimension of community colleges in our society.

With enough public support, community colleges can help rescue the middle class.

Join the Daily Discussion!

Members are urged to mark the TCCTA Web site as a "favorite" on their computers and to visit frequently.

The main page contains the latest "News and Announcements" on important subjects, such as new proposals to fundamentally change formula funding and developmental education. This section will be crucial in keeping informed as the next Regular Session of the Texas Legislature approaches. Timely developments from the Coordinating Board will also be posted here as they occur, as well as any news regarding Social Security in Congress.

Also on the main page is the "Blog" feature, which covers daily headlines on teaching techniques, news summaries, and alerts on items from a host of journalistic and professional sources.

The "Events" section is the best place to find out about upcoming TCCTA conferences, Webinars, and other dates to keep in mind for planning ahead.

"Legislative Resources" has all the information community and technical college educators need to stay informed and participate in the political process, with links to find out "Who Represents Me?" and contact information to policy makers. The association plans to assemble a concise and handy series of "Talking Points" on the issues most likely to affect the profession in the coming months.

The "News and Publications" area contains links for all past updates, blog entries, and copies of past editions of the *Messenger*.

www.tccta.org



Proportionality “Talking Points” Offered

Based on Gov. Perry’s published statements and the interim charges of the Texas Legislature, we know that “proportionality” will be back when the next Regular Session convenes in January. TCCTA frequently offers testimony on the subject when hearings are held in various House and Senate committees.

Briefly, proportionality would fund the health benefits for community college educators based on the state’s “share” of the cost in funding these schools. There is more than one way to calculate this percentage. Ironically, as the state’s share has decreased, the potential damage of proportionality has gone up for community colleges.

TCCTA has consistently opposed proportionality.

For background information on the governor’s veto of these funds last summer, and their restoration last fall, visit the “Legislative” section of the Blog at www.tccta.org.

While the Legislative and Executive Committees are still months away from formulating TCCTA’s legislative program for 2009, below are some points the association makes when discussing proportionality with public officials. Members may find them useful in communicating with lawmakers while they are “at home” in the districts, especially when they are campaigning.

IMPORTANT: Do not use college equipment, e-mail addresses, or stationery when communicating with state policy makers. Also, it is important to always be constructive when communicating with public officials. Be sure to thank them for their hard work on behalf of the people of Texas.

Proportionality “Talking Points” for State Policy Makers

- If the state reduces appropriations for community college health benefits, the revenue must be replaced with local funds. Inevitably, this means increased property taxes, higher fees, and diminished instructional support for students. Proportionality would hence jeopardize the Closing the Gaps initiative, a state program that recognizes explicitly the vital role of community colleges.
- Proportionality would penalize colleges for subsidizing instructional programs with local revenue—in effect punishing them for good behavior.
- Proportionality would not be an issue for community colleges if the state fully funded the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board’s instructional formula, which is based on actual student enrollment and associated costs.
- For many years, community college educators have been hired under an assumption of state responsibility for health benefits. Applying proportionality would “change the rules in the middle of the game.” Any perceived loss of security could hinder recruitment of talented professionals from the private sector, other states, and universities.
- Community college educators ask to remain full participants in the Group Benefits Program (GBP) for state and higher education employees under the Employees Retirement System of Texas (ERS). ☆

Capitol and Campus

by Beaman Floyd
TCCTA Lobbyist

Now that the primaries and runoffs are over for the Texas Legislature, the nominees representing both major parties are gearing up for the November general election. For the next several months they will be home in the district a great deal. This stage of campaigning consists typically of public appearances before community organizations and raising money.

Let’s talk about money.

Under the Texas Constitution, our representatives and senators are “citizen lawmakers.” This means they generally do other things for a living, since their salary (currently at \$7200 per year, plus expenses while in session) is, to put it mildly, modest.

The good news is that, when they are not in session, they are out there with us, earning a living, buying gasoline, taking the kids to school, and performing the activities their constituents do. This undoubtedly helps public officials relate to problems as they are discussed at the Rotary Club or the Dairy Queen.

The bad part is obvious. Since lawmakers must earn a living (except for the very few who are independently wealthy), they are amazingly harried individuals, with little time for raising campaign funds.

Under Texas law, there are abundant rules and restrictions on campaign contributions by companies and organizations. In practical terms, this means that most campaign revenue must come from individuals.

That’s where you come in.

I urge you to make a campaign contribution to the candidate of your choice for the Texas House of Representatives and Texas Senate (not all senators are up for election in 2008, but all 150 representatives are). You may be surprised to learn that many such contributions come in modest amounts. All are appreciated. And, in these times of heightened partisanship, it is important to note that both political parties have candidates who are consistent supporters of community colleges.

Your contribution will not “buy” influence. That’s not how it works, in spite of what many pundits, bloggers, and other commentators may tell you. It is simply a gesture of support—given in the same spirit as a contribution to a charity or civic organization. What your money does do is make you a part of the civic culture in a whole new way, with some “skin in the game,” so to speak.

So please write a personal check, in any amount you can afford. The campaign organizations of your local representative and senator should be easy to find in your area. And please do it early, before the media saturation begins in earnest. You may want to also keep in mind that incumbents almost always win in November when it comes to the Texas Legislature.

Later, I’ll have more to say about what you can do this fall, after school starts again. For now, please consult the *Guide to Political Participation* on the TCCTA Web site under “Legislative Publications.”

Frankly, for all the work we do at the Capitol, it is always preferable for lawmakers to be informed by their own constituents, and the *Guide* provides the best advice on how to communicate effectively with your representative and senator. ☆



Beaman Floyd

For the latest news or
bulletins on the most
urgent developments,
please visit the
“News and Publications”
section of the TCCTA
Web site at
www.tccta.org.

Career Clusters Set to Transform Texas Community Colleges

by **Danita McAnally**
Associate Dean of
Assessment and Development
Amarillo College

“To stop globalization would be the exact wrong thing to do; we have to embrace what’s happening. It’s in place and will remain in place. We need to help unemployed workers, make them better trained and skilled so they can get better jobs.”

—Mark Zandi
Chief Economist
Moody’s Economy



Danita McAnally

America’s concern about its workforce has begun the next transformation of community colleges.

Several factors are driving this concern: Many American jobs have moved overseas; the manufacturing age shifted to the information age; technology advances changed workforce demands; and a new generation of workers viewed education and the workplace differently than did previous generations.

All of these factors influenced the Department of Labor and the Department of Education to collaborate on a project which resulted in a new vision for education—career clusters.

The 16 career clusters restructured jobs into broad categories with common skills which allow an educated employee or potential employee to shift within the industry as technology and workforce changes dictate. In addition to the common skills, programs of study identify jobs within each career cluster into broad career pathways.

The transformation of instruction into a new organizational structure will be completed during the next few years. It is important for us all to understand these changes, regardless of our disciplines or responsibilities on campus.

Community colleges accepting Perkins funds under the Perkins Act of 2006 must restructure instruction into the career cluster programs of study. Such restructuring must be based around their service areas and the state’s high demand, high skill, or high wage positions. Therefore, each funded community college must listen and respond to business and industry representatives from the region and align the curricula with the industry’s preferences and the statewide career cluster teams’ programs of study.

Career clusters were introduced more than a decade ago and most states embraced statewide career cluster pathways about five years ago. A large number of states accepted grants from the Office of Vocational Education and created the national Web site for career clusters.

The Texas statewide career clusters initiative began about five years ago for secondary schools with the assistance of universities. The state Web site is Achieve Texas, at www.achievetexas.org. However, Texas community colleges only became involved in 2008.

Since community colleges are in the center of the

Texas career cluster pipelines, they were required to begin the alignment with secondary schools. A Perkins Leadership grant was awarded to North Lake College with project direction assigned to Shannon Weaver and Tish Waters. It has an aggressive deadline of completing a statewide program of study for all 16 career clusters by August 31st.

As of April 1st, more than half of the career cluster teams have begun this task. A few more career cluster teams will be accepting appointments in the upcoming weeks.

Interested faculty may apply to serve on these teams by contacting the project directors.

While past Perkins funding only permitted the funds to serve technical programs, the new Perkins funds will fund all career and technical education (CTE) programs that fit the requirement of high demand, high skill, or high wage—including those degree programs that feed into baccalaureate degrees. Additionally, all CTE programs are required to include academic rigor.

The career clusters pipelines also include multiple entrances and exits to accommodate adult populations and special populations. Thus, faculty and staff from various disciplines will become involved in the transition to career cluster programs of study.

Community colleges will once again be shaped by external demands.

Below are the some relevant Web sites and the contact information for those involved at the state level:

National—www.careerclusters.org

Achieve Texas—www.achievetexas.org

Texas Career Clusters—www.txcareerclusters.org

Texas Career Clusters Project Contacts

Shannon Weaver—Project Director, Texas Career Clusters Project and Director of Fiscal Affairs and Compliance, North Lake College, Dallas County Community College District, sweaver@dcccd.edu, (972) 273-3367.

Tish Waters—Coordinator, Texas Career Clusters Project and Grants Management Technical Education, North Lake College, DCCCD, twaters@dcccd.edu, (972) 273-3255.

Don Perry—Facilitator, Texas Career Clusters Project, Associate Vice Chancellor, Educational Affairs DCCCD District Office, don.perry@dcccd.edu, (214) 860-2450.

Lee Sloan—Facilitator of Texas Career Clusters Project, Dean of Business/Professional/Technical Education, Del Mar College, lsloan@delmar.edu, (361) 698-1703.

News Briefs and Links

Attrition Not Just About Coursework

The new Survey of Entering Student Engagement contains an interesting implication: Courses and subject matter don't determine whether community college students drop out of school. The *Chronicle of Higher Education*, dated March 28, summarizes the annual survey.

As reported also on this page of the *Messenger*, one course-related factor that may help retain students is the use of learning communities. However, according to the survey, much more depends upon such factors as campus atmosphere, counseling, and orientation services.

The first semester is crucial.

Many students are not aware that such services exist when they begin attending classes. Not surprisingly, available revenue for these purposes may determine whether schools offer such extra help.

The article reports: "Only a third of respondents said that in the first few weeks of the term, an adviser helped them set academic goals and devise a plan to achieve them. Forty-one percent said they never used academic-planning services in the first few weeks. Less than a third said a financial-aid staff member helped them analyze their needs for financial aid. Thirty-eight percent said they attended an on-campus orientation before classes began, while 20 percent said they were not aware of an orientation program or course."

Community colleges, the survey and report concludes, should reach out to their new students earlier and more aggressively in such areas as orientation, academic advising, and financial aid.

"The more investment you make in a student coming in, the more likely the student is going to be successful," says Regina S. Peruggi, president of Kingsborough Community College of the City University of New York, where officials have created learning communities of approximately 25 first-year students to usher them through their first semester.

But, she adds, "You can't drop it afterward. If you invest in the first year, you have to continue that onward. You don't get a new student overnight."

Deadline for Fulbright Program Approaches

August 1 is the deadline to apply for the Fulbright Scholar Program, which offers over 900 award opportunities in over 130 countries for U.S. college and university faculty, administrators, professionals and independent scholars. Awards are listed in 45 different fields or disciplines plus a variety of sub-disciplines and interdisciplinary fields. They are open to every academic rank.

Some awards call for a precise field, a specific host institution, or prescribed grant activities. Other awards—called All Disciplines—offer applicants greater flexibility over project activities, within limits that depend upon the host. Awards vary in activity and length of stay. Grant stipends and benefits also vary by country, program, and type of award.

The program site can be accessed at www.cies.org.

Learning Communities Help Developmental Students

It's certainly no silver bullet, but a new study seems to indicate that learning communities (in which a class-size cohort of students takes a sequence of courses together as a unit) help developmental students succeed.

As reported in *Inside Higher Ed.* on April 15, the study was conducted by MDRC, a research organization. It focused on Kingsborough Community College in New York.

Significantly, the study allowed for a "randomized" trial—a factor important to validate any findings.

According to the article, "Students were assigned either to the learning community or a control group. Much education research takes place either after a college has made a change (so there is no control group) or with volunteer pilot projects (in which issues of self-selection may raise doubts about the outcome). The MDRC researchers believe theirs is the first study of its kind to use a true random trial."

Do You Suffer From Syllabus Creep?

Ring cell phones. Students munching on snacks during class while chatting loudly. Text messaging and Internet surfing during class discussion.

These are just some of the behaviors that professors are increasingly trying to proscribe by including restrictions in course syllabi. Other instructors attempt to cover themselves in case there is a legal challenge, by compelling students to sign a contract listing ground rules—assignment due dates, class protocol, and a wide assortment of do's and don'ts.

An article in the March 14 issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* attempts to get a handle on current trends toward "syllabus creep"—the tendency for more length and detail in the governing document of each class.

The article reports, "With its ever-lengthening number of contingency clauses, disclaimers, and provisos, the college syllabus can bear as much resemblance to a prenuptial agreement as an intellectual enterprise. But experts say that when things go wrong in the classroom, fuzzy expectations are almost always to blame."

However, Sharon Rubin, a professor of American studies at Ramapo College, says, "Ninety-five percent of the students will meet your expectations. The other five percent won't live up to them no matter how many negative things you have on your syllabus. So why let them define the class for the class?"

Professors Strike Back!

College teachers who feel wounded because their online student ranking is pathetic—or they didn't earn a red chili pepper on the Hotness Meter—now have a chance to respond.

The popular Web site *Ratemyprofessors.com* now allows responses by instructors who think they are ranked unfairly, or perhaps that it's absurd to evaluate teachers on the Clarity, Easiness, Hotness, and Helpfulness scale the site uses.

"With its ever-lengthening number of contingency clauses, disclaimers, and provisos, the college syllabus can bear as much resemblance to a prenuptial agreement as it does to an expression of intellectual enterprise."

“The interaction and learning that occurs at these retreats offers faculty a meaningful respite from the ongoing demands of academic work, as well as a rich mine of ideas and inspiration.”

—Terry Stewart Mouchayleh,
Austin Community College



Come to the Great Teaching Round Up!

“One of the most respected professional development programs for Texas community college teachers” The Great Teaching Round Up, founded by Don Bass at College of the Mainland in 1982, is scheduled for May 12-15, 2008, at the T Bar M Resort, New Braunfels, Texas. The event provides two year colleges with a meaningful way to recognize outstanding teachers. Schools and faculty organizations are encouraged to sponsor faculty members who have achieved a particular distinction during the school year.

What to Expect The Great Teaching Round Up differs from most conferences in that, for the most part, *the program is created by the participants themselves.* The staff’s major role is facilitation. The format varies but often includes: teaching clinics, panels, organized discussions, “hands on” workshops, and presentations by participants or Round Up staff. It also features choices among activities. The exchange takes place not only in scheduled sessions but also informally on walks around the ranch, in conversations at dinner, or on excursions to Bandera.

Focus The goals of the seminar include: Sharing methods and techniques ... Celebrating good teaching ... Creative, realistic problem solving ... An exploration of new ideas ... Serious introspection and self-appraisal ... Professional and personal renewal.

The process is simple Assemble a group of people who really care about teaching and place them in an isolated, unstructured setting in the beautiful Texas hill country. But the rewards can be astounding: Over the years, many teachers have reported that the Round Up allowed them to believe in their chosen profession as never before.

tccta.org/roundup

FACILITATORS:

David Lydic, Austin Community College Tim Gill, Tyler Junior College
Laurie Passmore, Cy-Fair College Helen Jackson, Houston Community College



“Participants identify feelings of ‘renewal’ & ‘recommitment.’ The experience goes on well beyond the actual retreat: it is carried right into the classroom.”

—Patsy Lemaster, Amarillo College

“The key to success is simplification.”



GREAT TEACHING ROUND-UP
NEW BRAUNFELS, TEXAS
MAY 12-15, 2008

REGISTRATION FOR 2008 GREAT TEACHING ROUND UP

EARLY REGISTRATION: \$550.00 (Per person/double occupancy. Includes room and meals, but not transportation. Additional \$100.00 for single occupancy.) AFTER MAY 1: \$575.00. My check in the amount of \$_____, payable to TCCTA, is enclosed. I understand that full refunds will be made if reservations are cancelled before April 25 and that no refund will be made for reservations cancelled after that date. SEND TO: GREAT TEACHING ROUND UP, TCCTA, 5113 Southwest Parkway, Suite 185, Austin, Texas 78735. Fax: (512) 328-1086. For more information or to verify availability, contact Carol Fricke, at (800) 288-6850, Ext. 11. E-mail: cfricke@tccta.org.

PRINT NAME: _____

COLLEGE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____ E-MAIL: _____

TEACHING DISCIPLINE: _____

Join us for this intensive four-day leadership program

“Leading from the Middle”



Westin Riverwalk
San Antonio, Texas
July 27 - 30

Deadline to Register: July 7

— SCHEDULE OF EVENTS —

Sunday, July 27

Evening Session: “Implementing Ethics on Campus”

Monday, July 28

First Morning Session: “The Personal Excellence Map: Using Emotional Intelligence to Navigate Critical and Key Administrator Skills,” *Rito Silva, Alice Campus Director, Coastal Bend College, and Rick Hammett, Owner, Hammett Associates*

Second Morning Session: “How Texas Works,” *Beaman Floyd, Professional Lobbyist, Texas Community College Teachers Association, and Rey Garcia, President, Texas Association of Community Colleges*

Afternoon Session: “What Works: Programs to Increase Student Participation and Success,” *Joe Stafford, Assistant Commissioner of Academic Affairs and Research, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board*

Tuesday, July 29

First Morning Session: “Damage Control: Communication in Difficult Situations,” *Pam Baggett, CEO, Persuasion Communication*

Second Morning Session: “Approaching Digital Literacy: Creating a Networked Culture on Campus,” *David Parry, Assistant Professor of Emerging and Communications, University of Texas at Dallas*

Afternoon Session: “Nuts and Bolts: Managing Internal and External Constituents,” *Martha Ellis, President, Lee College, and Myles Shelton, President, Galveston College*

Wednesday, July 30

First Morning Session: “Legal Issues in Higher Education,” *Frank W. Hill, Attorney at Law*

Second Morning Session: “Making the Most of Generational Differences,” *Terry Mouchayleb, Director of Professional Development and Evaluation, Austin Community College*

ethics

emotional
intelligence

statewide
perspective

legal issues

technology

LEADERSHIP

tccta

texas community college
teachers association

This event is sponsored by the Texas Community College Teachers Association, in conjunction with the Texas Leadership Alliance, a Carl Perkins Project funded through the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

To register, please visit:

www.tccta.org



“You Are All Heroes to Me”

by Jonathan Carey

Collin County Community College
Texas Regional President
Phi Theta Kappa



Jonathan Carey

[Editor’s Note: Following are remarks by Jonathan Carey, Texas Regional President of Phi Theta Kappa, at the 61st Annual Convention of the Texas Community College Teachers Association. Mr. Carey’s Chapter Advisor at Collin County Community College is Angela Putman, professor of communication studies.]

I am truly honored to have a chance to speak with you all today. It was funny because, once I was told that I’d be speaking to a group of community college teachers, I thought to myself, “Here I am speaking to a room full of experts and I don’t even have an associate’s degree yet!”

How can I possibly connect with you all?

Then, when I finally sat down and began to brainstorm about what I should say, I was surprised to find out how easy it was. I think the reason for this is because I have so much to thank you for.

You see, mine is a story of success, and at the base of my success are two groups of people. The more obvious is my family, especially my father who has been a mentor and helping hand throughout my entire life.

Second, of course, is you, my community college professors. You all continue to impress me with every class I take, and you have always stood out beyond any other type of teachers that I have ever had.

My first semester in college was actually at a four-year university, and my short time there could be described as less than extraordinary. I found myself surrounded by degree-bearing graduate students, intimidating professors, and a slew of fellow students who seemed far better prepared to take on the challenge of college life.

On top of all this, my confidence was shot by the fact that I was enrolled at my second-choice college since I had not been accepted to my school of choice. You can imagine how I was suffering mentally. The impersonal environment of that university mixed with my emotions, so my grades, my spirits, and my sunny disposition fell by the wayside.

I knew I wasn’t happy there and I wanted to get away, so I dropped out after my first semester. The next semester I worked as a waiter in the grueling time of my life that my dad would call “Learning the Value of a Dollar.”

The worst part of this period was that the entire time I knew I was smart enough to get a college education. I only needed a simple place where I could do my studies, make my grades, and move on.

I received far more than that.

In the summer of 2006 I swallowed by pride and enrolled at Collin County Community College. In retrospect this was the best decision I ever made in my life. If it weren’t for my enrolling there, I would never have been exposed to the honor society Phi Theta Kappa and I would never have had the chance to hold the important leadership position I do now.

Thanks to my professors at Collin County Community College, I felt much more capable of learning. My math professor, Mr. Ardis, inspired me to enjoy mathematics. During every class I would see him go out of his way to ensure that everyone in the class understood the material he was teaching. This kind of teaching empowered my classmates and me, and I believe that my success in professor Ardis’s class inspired me to do well in my other classes.

I also came to realize that my community college professors were interested in teaching the class how to better our lives, by learning about aspects of life outside the textbook.

For instance, my government professor, Dr. Wendel, required everyone in her class to perform 40 hours of community service. I spent time at a homeless shelter downtown where I had the chance to help those in need and to really make a difference in their lives. The sense of responsibility and caring for our fellow humans is a feature that Dr. Wendel instilled in me for perhaps the rest of my life.

The thing that I enjoyed most about community college professors was that they were not afraid to engage in fellowship with their students. No longer will I ever be intimidated by a professor, because I know that they are people just like me and, most of the time, they are very friendly. I sometimes find myself sharing a meal with an old professor, or in some cases playing basketball in the gym between classes.

All the while I am very aware of the fact that community college teachers just like you are the reason for the positive changes in my life over the past two years. Thank you all very much for being an inspiration, for expanding my scope of knowledge, and for being friendly to your students.

You are all heroes to me.

I encourage everyone to continue to change lives like mine. Rest assured, all of your students, myself included, will be ever grateful.

Thank you all once again, and God bless you too. ☆

Convention Programs Online

Members who were unable to attend the 61st Annual TCCTA Convention in Dallas can access many of the programs from the association’s Web site.

Visit www.tccta.org and click on “News and Announcements.”

Included at this site is a video of the keynote address by James Bower on “Positive Pressure in the Pipeline: Reaching Students Where They Live (Virtually),” and PowerPoint presentations by the Professional Development Seminar panelists on “What Works: High Impact Programs for Student Success.”

For photos from the convention, see page 12 of this issue of the *Messenger*. ☆

“All the while I am very aware of the fact that community college teachers just like you are the reason for the positive changes in my life over the past two years.”

Commissioner Says Developmental Education Needs Major Overhaul

A second key recommendation (see page one of this issue of the *Messenger*) of Commissioner of Higher Education Raymund Paredes was also approved unanimously by the Coordinating Board on April 24, but generated several pointed questions by Board members.

Rather than appropriate an extra ten percent above the funding formula for developmental education, as recommended by the Community and Technical College Formula Advisory Committee (to allow schools to provide non-course programs such as tutoring and laboratories), the commissioner recommended that \$30 million be trusted to the Board.

The CTCFAC consists of community college educators, and includes TCCTA Immediate Past President Terry S. Mouchayleh, Austin Community College. The group deliberates each biennium and makes formal recommendations to the commissioner.

Commissioner Paredes told the Board that these trusted funds would be distributed to community colleges in pilot programs, using a completely different format. First, experts would be brought in from around the country to provide the latest innovations and technical assistance. Then money would be granted for demonstration projects. A conference funded by the Houston Endowment foundation would also be used to assemble the best evidence for success. Finally, appropriated revenue would be distributed on a competitive basis to schools.

During this period, developmental courses at community colleges would still be funded through the formula.

Some Board members said there had been inadequate planning for changing the entire focus of developmental education. One wondered why it would be necessary to assemble national experts, when the Coordinating Board routinely offers STAR awards to Texas schools documenting great success in developmental education.

The commissioner said, “We are trying to find ways to break the mold.” He repeatedly cites a grim statistic: Only eleven percent of developmental students go on to pass the first college-level credit mathematics class. The record in reading and writing is better, but still far short of acceptable, Dr. Paredes said.

He also told the House Committee on Higher Education on April 1 that developmental education in Texas “is not a pretty picture.” Sixty percent of entering freshmen are not “college ready,” as determined by placement examinations. Dr. Paredes stated that he personally believed, based on studies from ACT, that only 18 percent are ready nationwide. And Texas has lower ACT and SAT scores than the national average, which likely makes our state even worse, he said.

Dr. Paredes pointed out, however, that, if students complete courses in developmental education, the majority succeed later. “Those who persist do well,” he said.

The problem, then, is lack of persistence. The commissioner was using data for a cohort of students who started college in 2003. The situation may be improving, he said, since the “recommended” curriculum in high school is now the default by law. New College Readiness Standards are also currently being formulated for use in the public schools in Texas.

He noted that universities presently offer only 8.3 percent of developmental courses, down from 20 percent. This means, of course, that community colleges provide almost all the rest.

Colleges determine readiness based on examinations used for placement purposes under the Texas Success Initiative.

At the April 24 meeting, Coordinating Board chairman Bob Shepard asked Dr. Paredes, “Can you show us a plan? What about the advisory committees?” Since the commissioner first made his recommendations, many observers have wondered if there are any states with demonstrated success in developmental education.

Commissioner Paredes responded that there are successful smaller models such as those advocated by the Achieving the Dream organization, but “We don’t have an institution-wide model for overhauling all developmental education.”

He said at an earlier hearing that many noteworthy programs around the country emphasize cultural values to students, since the parents of first-generation attendees often do not provide this sort of training to their children. Students need to learn about attendance, decorum, and punctuality, for instance.

“The way we do developmental education right now is not working,” the commissioner said. ☆

Textbook Selection Probed by House Panel

It looks like there will be another round of bills in 2009 intended to regulate—or at least mitigate—the spiraling costs of college textbooks. On April 1, the House Committee on Higher Education conducted an exploratory hearing with invited witnesses.

In 2007, several bills were introduced, driven by understandable concerns about the cost to students of college texts. Books reportedly cost more than tuition and fees for some students.

One bill last session sought to exempt textbooks from sales taxes. Another, HB 956, by Rep. Scott Hochberg (D-Houston), placed a number of proscriptions and requirements on college faculty in making their choices. Some of this bill’s provisions were innocuous, such as a stipulation that instructors take cost into account. Another, however, would have criminalized (by way of a Class B Misdemeanor) the acceptance of “gifts” by faculty from publishers that could influence a decision. A full definition of such “gifts” was not provided. The bill failed to pass.

During the recent hearing, Rep. Diane Patrick (R-Arlington), a former university professor, said she never encountered evidence of such “gifts” in her career.

TCCTA Executive Director Richard Moore testified against HB 956 in 2007.

Of particular interest to lawmakers is the practice of “bundling” textbooks with supplemental materials such as workbooks, CDs, and software that, according to testimony, drive up the cost and are rarely required by faculty or used by students. ☆

Members are urged to visit the TCCTA Web site frequently for the latest updates on this important issue.

TCCTA Letter Spells Out Educational Problems with Funding Proposal

(Continued from Page One)

“Ironically, therefore, the commissioner’s proposal could place the interests of students at odds with the interests of institutions. We believe a student should never be advised to take any course of action because of the way the college receives its appropriation.”

We deeply appreciate your leadership on the Formula Advisory Committee and wish to continue to work closely with you and the Texas Association of Community Colleges to insure that student success is the major focus of higher education policy in Texas. Our concerns in this letter will emphasize pedagogy and a few of the practical—and ethical—implications of the commissioner’s proposal. I will not address any prospective impact upon the instructional budgets of community colleges, a subject worthy of intense evaluation as well.

We share the desire to help higher education students, especially first-generation students, succeed. Our association’s goal has always been student success. No one wants students to succeed academically more than faculty. The commissioner’s proposal assumes that a new funding mechanism will create a novel motivation and improve student performance. Frankly, we see no evidence to suggest that this program would positively affect student success.

Second, implementation would potentially unleash a host of unintended consequences and complexities if done too quickly. The commissioner’s proposal does not constitute a mere tweaking of the formula, but a major shift in policy, as Dr. Paredes has stated. We know of no model or precedent for this proposal. If the state wishes to undertake such a drastic course, with profound implications for our colleges, it should do so carefully and with ample opportunity for our students, faculty, and others to provide insights about the impact it will have.

In short, we believe that more study and research is needed, paying attention to any such policies in other states. Here in Texas, an excellent procedural example to follow would be the creation of the Core Curriculum in the 1990s, a collaborative effort that worked splendidly, but took several years to formulate.

In the Formula Advisory Committee’s March 27 meeting, it was apparent that even a rudimentary analysis of this proposal’s impact had not been done. Such analysis would presumably include focus groups with students, advisors, counselors, faculty, and administrators, and would consider the impact of not funding the full enrollment for which a school must encumber itself at the beginning of each semester.

Third, our members are deeply concerned about academic integrity and grade inflation. While we are aware that a student would not have to pass a given course to count as a completer, the logic of the commissioner’s model would create a culture that rewards staying in school above all other options. This may seem commendable, but schools would be compelled to adjust their policies to preclude, except in the most extreme cases, student withdrawals altogether. It doesn’t take much imagination to predict what students would ask their instructors: “Since I have to stay in the course, why can’t I pass?” Students would understandably feel that money trumps their own needs, as it would be no secret why dropping a course has become more difficult. Ironically, therefore, the commissioner’s proposal could place the interests of students at odds with the interests of institutions. We believe a student should never be advised to take any course of action because of the way the college receives its appropriation.

In a perfect world, no college administrator would ask (or imply) that a faculty member should lower standards,

and no teacher would ever consider it. But we get reports of such suggestions, even under the current system of funding. We fear these anecdotes would become epidemic under the commissioner’s proposal—the rule rather than an exception. Faculty would be evaluated based on how many “Fs” they award, since it is hard to imagine students persisting after outright failure, thus affecting funding. The distinction between “F” and “W” is less discrete than many might think. After an “F,” it is particularly hard to convince a student to hang in there. Many will simply disappear. Is this any way to Close the Gaps?

Sen. Steve Ogden once commented in a Finance Committee hearing that “Paying for diplomas scares me to death.” It scares us to death, too.

Fourth, faculty members and counselors often advise students that the best decision for them is to drop a course. Giving such advice is painful, but, as you know, our students are often in precarious straits financially, academically, and in their family situations. There are times, faculty members say almost in unison, when advising a student to stay in class would be unethical, since a failing grade often closes the door on a fresh start later. These decisions are highly personal and complex and should not be subjected to a simplistic remedy.

Colleges around the state tell us that one of the main factors in enrollment and withdrawals is the health of the local economy. The statistics we see paint a picture of students moving back and forth between economic opportunities and educational opportunities. Such flexibility is good for the economy of Texas while still leaving the door open to continuing one’s education where it was left off. We strongly believe that Dr. Paredes’s proposal may shut the door on one opportunity or the other, putting students in the position of choosing between short-term opportunities and their long-term future.

The average age of a community college student is 27. These students are taxpayers, valuable employees, and through their education, future leaders and valuable citizens. Reducing the flexibility of their education creates an inefficiency that not only costs them, but the entire State of Texas.

Dr. Williams, as you know, TCCTA has consistently supported all valid measurements of accountability, including the Performance Measures collected under current law by the Coordinating Board. We welcome such efforts and are in full agreement with the “incentive funding” component of TACC’s New Compact. We also agree with TACC that the formula should be funded fully before incentive funding innovations are attempted.

The commissioner’s most recent proposal is in a whole new universe and fraught with fundamental problems. At the very least, such a concept should be discussed and studied extensively before discarding the current method of funding, which evolved over time with appropriate adjustments every biennium.

We look forward to working with you. Please don’t hesitate to contact our state office with any questions, concerns, or ideas.

Sincerely,
Terry S. Mouchayleh
President
Texas Community College Teachers Association

General Sessions

Sunday, May 25



Ron Williams
Vice President
The College Board

Monday, May 26



Vincent Tinto
Distinguished University Professor
Syracuse University (NY)
2008 Suanne Davis Roueche
Distinguished Lecturer

Tuesday, May 27



Larry Gatlin
Singer/Songwriter/Actor
2008 Journey of Excellence
Award Recipient

Wednesday, May 28



Excellence Awards Celebration
More than 1,300 faculty, staff, and administrators will be celebrated during this inspirational dose to the conference.

Morning Preconference Seminars • Sunday, May 25 • 9:30-11:30 a.m.



Women Leaders: Reflecting on the Past and Inspiring the Future

Cindy Miles, President, Hialeah Campus, Miami Dade College (FL)
Jerry Sue Thornton, President, Cuyahoga Community College (OH)
Dorothy Duran, Vice President, Academic Affairs, Iowa Western Community College



Deanna R. Robinson, Professor, Mathematics, and Faculty Organization President, San Jacinto College North (TX)



Suanne D. Roueche, Editor, NISOD Publications, and Senior Lecturer, Department of Educational Administration, The University of Texas at Austin (Moderator)



Middle College and Early Colleges: Does Your Community Need One?

Cecilia Cunningham, Director, Middle College National Consortium (NY)



Leicha Shaver, Principal, Middle College High School, El Centro College (TX)



Howard Finney, Executive Dean, Business/Public Service, El Centro College (TX)

Suzanne Nicholson, Middle College High School Counselor, El Centro College (TX)



Fundamentals of Good Assessment: Student Learning and Outcomes

Cathrael Kazin, Director of Strategic Relations, Higher Education Division, Educational Testing Service (ETS) (NJ)

Afternoon Preconference Seminars • Sunday, May 25 • 1:00-3:00 p.m.



Growing Your Own: How to Develop a World-Class Leadership Development Institute

Walter G. Bumphus, A.M. Aikin Regents Chair in Junior and Community College Education Leadership, The University of Texas at Austin



Angel Royal, Director, Special Program and Initiatives, Best Associates (TX)



Richard Rhodes, President, El Paso Community College (TX)

Donald Cameron, President, Guilford Technical Community College (NC)

Phillip W. Neal, Doctoral Student, Community College Leadership Program, The University of Texas at Austin



Dual Enrollment Academy Programs

Nicolas Gonzalez, Director of High School Programs and Services, South Texas College



Lupe Chavez, Coordinator for Dual Enrollment Academies, South Texas College

Shirley A. Reed, President, South Texas College



Factors Affecting Student Performance—and How to Influence Them

Jim Hammons, Professor, Higher Education, The University of Arkansas



Achieving the Dream: Lessons Learned in Fostering Institutional Transformation and Implementing Interventions

Byron McClenney, Director, Achieving the Dream, Community College Leadership Program; and Senior Lecturer, Department of Educational Administration, The University of Texas at Austin

Margaretta Mathis, Associate Director, Achieving the Dream, Community College Leadership Program; and Senior Lecturer, Department of Educational Administration, The University of Texas at Austin



Innovative Workforce Education Responses to Community Needs

Steve Kinslow, President, Austin Community College (TX)

Mike Midgley, Vice President, Workforce Education and Business Development, Austin Community College (TX)



Enhancing Economic Prosperity and Sustainability via Innovation and Entrepreneurialism

Steven VanAusdler, President, Walla Walla Community College (WA)

2008 CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS



2007-08 PRESIDENT Terry Stewart Mouchayleh, Austin Community College, presided over the General Session of the 61st Annual Convention at The Fairmont Dallas Hotel.



The TECHNOLOGY SEMINARS are always a popular highlight of the TCCTA convention. Manoucher Khosrowshahi, Tyler Junior College, gave attendees some practical pointers on how to educate the Millennial Generation—those born after 1980.



TCCTA PRESIDENT for 2008-09 Revis Bell, St. Philip's College (left), joined Mary Page, Houston Community College (center), and Anna Maria Mendiola, Laredo Community College, for a tour of the Exhibit Hall.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR PANELISTS Becki Williams, Richland College (left), Richard Rhodes, El Paso Community College (center), and John Fitzpatrick, executive director of the Texas High School Project, led a discussion on "What Works: High Impact Programs for Student Success."

Web designer, neurophysiologist, and author JAMES BOWER (right) discussed the importance of "Spanning Generations," the TCCTA convention theme for 2008.



Traffic in the EXHIBIT HALL was brisk at the TCCTA convention at The Fairmont Dallas Hotel. New textbooks, the latest instructional technology, and a wide range of educational services were on display.



Another lucky winner! The RAFFLE in the Exhibit Hall is a popular attraction, featuring many valuable prizes from corporate sponsors of the TCCTA convention. Gifts included an iPod Nano, software, books, and two nights' hotel accommodations for the 2009 Convention at the Austin Renaissance Hotel.