

# Great Leadership

STRATEGIES FOR LEADING HIGH-PERFORMING COMMUNITY COLLEGES

## Great Leadership Invites Guest Authors

Do you have an article you've written, the description of a successful work process, or the details of a leadership program that you want read by a broad audience of colleagues? The Great Leadership newsletter seeks to publish well-written, informative, forward thinking articles. The article topics focus broadly on leadership and leadership development. We also consider book reviews, reviews of videos and any other relevant leadership content. Articles submitted should be 200-500 words in length.

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### The Creative Community College *cont. from page 2*

potential donors. They realize that creating partnerships allows the creative community college to acquire needed resources that might otherwise be unavailable. Leaders also realize that they cannot do it all themselves. Building relationships outside the college walls is the responsibility of everyone in the college. Building community trust and providing testimony to the impact the college is having requires a common belief in relationships that is pervasive throughout the ranks of faculty, staff, and students.

The stereotype of external leader and informal followers is outdated. Relationships between departments prevent the silo effect. Faculty in creative community colleges realize that for students to understand how job skills transfer across multiple work environments, a requirement in today's labor market, the faculty must be the first to bridge departmental iron walls and encourage working together across disciplines. Learning communities are an invention of creative thought and abound in creative community colleges.

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[eight]



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Dr. Curtis L. Ivery Chancellor

### Table of Contents

- [one] **The Creative Community College: Leading Change Through Innovation**  
By John E. and Suanne D. Roueche
- [three] **Transparency and Accountability**  
By Michael Dotson
- [four] **Leadership With A Purpose: WCCCD Great Leadership Conference**  
By Christine Johnson McPhail
- [five] **Three Steps To Hiring Well**  
By Vera Leonard
- [six] **Lead By Trusting - Employees Self-Designing Their Work**  
By Dr. Ann Valentine
- [six] **Trust In The Workplace**  
By Dr. Paul Bernthal
- [seven] **Team Building Pointers**  
By Dr. Wright Lassiter
- [eight] **Great Leadership Invites Guest Authors**

### Mission Statement

**WCCCD's mission is to empower individuals, businesses and communities to achieve their goals through excellent and accessible services, culturally diverse experiences, and globally competitive higher education and career advancement programs.**

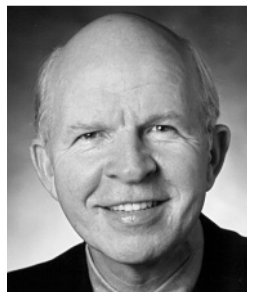
## The Creative Community College: Leading Change Through Innovation

**John E. Roueche**, *Sid W. Richardson Regents Chair in Community College Leadership and Professor and Director of the Community College Leadership Program, The University of Texas at Austin*

**Suanne D. Roueche**, *Senior Lecturer in the Department of Educational Administration, and editor of publications for the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD), The University of Texas at Austin*

The idea of the Creative Community College began taking shape several years ago as we watched community and technical colleges across the country take initiative and provide proactive leadership for the communities they served. Historically, community colleges have been urged to "respond to community needs" – a worthy and worthwhile educational goal for certain, but one that does not project the institution as the leader (or one of the leaders) of needed change in communities.

When faced with the immediate loss of several thousand textile jobs in Guilford County, North Carolina, Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC) conducted an immediate survey of all the businesses, health care providers, school systems, and the like in its service area to identify the number of jobs that might be available following a minimal, short-term training program. The college identified several thousand positions that could be filled with short-term training. GTCC moved boldly to create a "smart jobs" program, which enrolled several thousand displaced textile workers immediately. The great majority of those displaced quickly found meaningful employment in the Greater Greensboro area following short-term training.



John E. Roueche

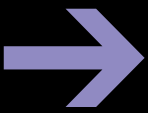
Guilford Technical Community College has also taken the lead in recruiting a new major FedEx facility to its service area. The college was part of the leadership team bringing FedEx to Greensboro and will be providing the entry-level training and continued training for hundreds of new employees. And, the college was instrumental in bringing a new Honda Jet Assembly Plant to Guilford County.



Suanne D. Roueche

The Guilford Tech story is a wonderful example of the creative initiative of a

*continued on page 2*



## The Creative Community College continued from front page

community college taking action to address critical community educational, social, and economic challenges.

We followed, with great interest, the pioneering student success and recruitment initiative at Iowa Central Community College – located in the middle of a nine-county rural region that has suffered from acute population decline over the past 20 years. As we know well, when adults leave a community, they take their families with them, resulting in a decline in public school enrollment. The nine counties served by Iowa Central Community College saw the number of high school seniors in the service area reduced from 2,062 in 1996, to 1,649 in 2006. When public school enrollment declines, it usually means an immediate decline in the enrollment of the local community college. Despite the loss of a significant adult population, Iowa Central Community College increased its student enrollment from 2,515 in fall 1995, to 5,491 in fall 2006. The college now has the highest market penetration rate in the State of Iowa, and is one of the fastest-growing community colleges in the entire nation.

**Relationships are a non-negotiable necessity within creative community colleges.**

Dr. Robert Paxton, the President of Iowa Central, began his tenure with a “student first” philosophy – creating a culture where students were identified early in their public school experience, contacted and visited by faculty and counselors to make sure that students knew of the financial aid possibilities at Iowa Central, the wide array of student-centered activities at the college, and the myriad of other student support services. It was also a college initiative to make sure that the parents of these students were aware of the career and professional opportunities available to students if they persisted beyond high school graduation.

Time and space do not permit a thorough discussion of the array of recruitment and retention strategies developed by the

faculty and staff at Iowa Central. Needless to say, the college has exceeded all expectations in its service to the K-12 school systems in its service area and to the thousands of students who have been wonderfully well served and educated by a community college that reached out to its constituency and provided immediate quality services to schools and individual students.

We followed this kind of creative proactivity in other community colleges across the country and decided to invite the presidents and chancellors of these institutions to “tell their story” in a contributed chapter, in a book recently published by the Community College Press.

What we have learned in the process of building these stories into a coherent book on change is that community colleges are no longer in the back seat of education in a reactionary role to national, state, and local policies. These creative community colleges are initiators in the most proactive sense. They provide the leadership for change. We found the leaders of these institutions possess strong value systems, provide flexibility, and require transparency within their colleges. It was obvious that these college leaders created solid institutional cultures that view the myriad of challenges our institutions now face as opportunities for evolution, if not indeed positive resolution. By focusing on values, these leaders have lead colleges to shift perceptions about mission in the most positive ways.

Relationships are a nonnegotiable necessity within creative community colleges. Leaders and followers alike understand that excellent education takes a village and that no one can be successful in these environments in isolation. Relationships make our lives outside of education meaningful. It is no different within the walls of a college. Through relationships, we create a vision for the future, test our integrity, and act courageously. We are social creatures by nature, and social by definition – all a community.

Creative leaders understand the importance of relationships because their jobs focus on creating them. Each year, a growing percentage of presidents’ workdays reportedly are spent on making connections with business, industry, and

*continued on page 8*

## Team Building Pointers

**Dr. Wright Lassiter**, *Chancellor*, Dallas County Community College District

I always encourage colleagues to follow this simple pointer when they are trying to create an atmosphere of teamwork and cooperation. Make sure you explore your team members’ individual strengths and work with the group to identify each member’s most important strengths. Then determine how each person’s strength can best contribute to accomplishing the goals of your group and what the group needs to do to get the most from each team member. Be sure to include your own strengths in the discussions. What is the result? Your group will know what to expect from everyone and be better able to make plans and allocate resources. Dr. Jeff Howard of Howard & Associates has developed his “Manager’s Mindset” training program that focuses on the power of expectations. His program has identified three key activities that can be utilized at all levels of an organization that should be embraced by all managers.

### 1. Set the standard

Dr. Howard encourages his staff to go beyond their current level of performance. In order to set a standard of learning he advises his managers to tell their employees, “If you want to make me happy, you’ve got to show a real willingness to take on new learning or work on challenging new stuff.”

### 2. Distribute the learning

I know from my own experience that many managers have a tendency to use a handful of talented employees as their “go-to people” for special assignments and leave the routine tasks for everyone else. I have learned that if you want to achieve more, you have to practice distributing challenging assignments all around and use those assignments for developing skills. According to Dr. Howard, “You have too much to do to depend on just yourself and a couple of stars. How much more could you get done if your entire team was running on all eight cylinders? How much more productive and less stressed out would you be?”

### 3. Fill the air with feedback

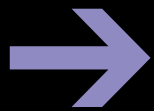
Whether your team or group succeeds, struggles or fails, give them feedback to help them improve their skills. Set up a schedule for regular feedback sessions.

All of this requires a certain amount of gumption on the manager’s part. In many organizations today, failure is an indication of a person’s limitations – the Peter Principle (in a hierarchy every employee tends to rise to his level of incompetence) in action. Howard finds truth in reversing that conventional wisdom. He says, “Failure or difficulty is the richest source of information on what to work on to improve.” Those who treat failure as a true opportunity to improve and learn will be able to enhance the talents of everyone in their departments and turn them into winners. “Don’t waste your people” is my mantra. Truly extraordinary leaders use their skills to stimulate and accelerate the development of every person who works for them. Remember this little expression – the largest room in any house is the room for improvement. Keep working toward improvement.

**“Don’t waste your people” is my mantra.**







## Leadership with a Purpose:

WCCCD's Great Leadership Conference places the spotlight on leadership, coaching and professional development

Christine Johnson McPhail, Professor and Coordinator of the Community College Leadership Doctoral Program, Morgan State University

More than 200 professionals representing higher education, business, nonprofit, and local and state government converged on the downtown campus of the Wayne County Community College District (WCCCD) on April 4, 2008 for the Great Leadership conference, a half-day event sponsored by WCCCD. The conference featured three dynamic sessions that provided practical advice focused on leading high performing organizations. The speakers offered strategies for women in leadership, techniques for developing and maintaining a positive professional image and coaching leaders to develop and hone the skills necessary to address the critical issues they face in their work.

Dr. Curtis L. Ivery, Chancellor, provided opening remarks. The opening remarks brought life to the complexities of the urban community college and placed the District's mantra, Where Learning Leads to a Better Life on center stage. Dr. Ivery stated:

*Pictured below, from left to right: Dr. Christa Adams, President of Owens Community College; Ron Dzwonkowski, Editor of the Detroit Free Press; Dr. Marshall Goldsmith, best-selling author and Executive Coach*

"We have to work everyday to be better than we were the day before. Higher education is very competitive. I've come to recognize that there is not much in the textbooks about what we do. There is a common thread in everything we do--that thread is student success. It is not about us--it is about the generations we will leave this to."

Dr. Christa Adams, President of Owens Community College in Toledo, opened the first session with a compelling description of her leadership journey. Dr. Adams' candid description of rewards and challenges inherent in serving in a leadership role in community colleges provided thought provoking reflection and advice to audience members. She characterized leadership as "transformative, togetherness, possibilities, difficult, and creating purpose."

The second speaker, Dr. Marshall Goldsmith, best-selling author and Executive Coach, engaged attendees in an interactive participation and dialogue on the strategies from his book, *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*. Goldsmith who has worked with some of the most influential leaders in Fortune 500 companies offered advice on developing oneself

as a leader and advised participants to "Ask, Listen, Think, Thank, Respond, Involve, Change and Follow Up."

Mr. Ron Dzwonkowski, Editor of the Detroit Free Press, discussed the positive and negative aspects of dealing with the media as well as the complexities. He also provided practical advice such as "don't bring an army with you to meet with the media, be careful about your image and the way you treat people in front of the media, watch your language, talk first-distribute your information later, be accessible and it really is okay to say you don't know."

At the close of the conference, I provided closing remarks that highlighted the vital role that community colleges play in

this country's economic and educational outlook and why community colleges such as WCCCD must hold fast to their mission of educating all students.

I found the Leading High Performing Organizations conference to be a breath of fresh air. WCCCD's conference provided the perfect setting to bring together individuals from all sectors to advance leadership skills, enhance institutional effectiveness, and professional performance. The Great Leadership Conference was coordinated by Dr. Stephanie R. Bulger, Vice Chancellor for Curriculum and Learning Technologies and Ms. Martha Grier, Assistant to the Chancellor, and was facilitated by Ms. Vera Leonard, Consultant and Executive Coach.

## Three Steps to Hiring Well

Vera Leonard, WCCCD Leadership Development Consultant and Executive Coach

Ask the average manager to identify the number one skill necessary for success and he or she will usually mention personal strengths or experience. Yet industry-leading, top-performing managers answer this question quite differently. They know something average managers haven't figured out. Successful managers hire well! That's it. It's that simple. Hire the best people you can find, equip them to do the job, help them clear any roadblocks they encounter and let them work.

What are the steps involved in hiring the best? It begins long before the first candidate arrives for an interview.

**STEP ONE** is to create a profile of the knowledge, skills and attributes the ideal candidate would possess.

- **Knowledge:** the body of information the candidate possesses as it relates to the specific job function or industry.
- **Skills:** the abilities the candidate brings such as computer proficiency, presentation skills or organizational skills.
- **Attributes:** the inherent character, personality traits or behaviors such as integrity, sense of humor or creativity.

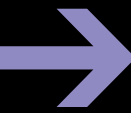
**STEP TWO** is to rank the importance of each item on the list. Here's a hint.

- Knowledge gaps can usually be taught quickly or provided in reading material.
- Gaps in skills can be overcome with training and practice.
- Attributes are deeply ingrained and generally cannot be taught. They can only be changed through a significant investment of time and practice. It is wiser to hire candidates that already possess the attributes you believe are critical for success in the position.

**STEP THREE** is to determine which items are "must-haves" and which items are "nice-to-haves." Start with Attributes. A candidate who is intelligent, cooperative, a self-starter, creative, ethical, calm in a crisis and goal-oriented may be worth the investment in training and professional development to fill gaps in knowledge and skill. The reverse is rarely true. Knowledge and skill are of little value if important personality and behavioral attributes are missing.

Want to be more successful? Hire the best. After all, it's all about the people, isn't it?





## Lead by Trusting: Employees Self-Designing Their Work

Dr. Ann Valentine, *President, Minnesota State Community and Technical College*

Sometimes leadership is best left to those who are in the trenches. At Minnesota State Community and Technical College (MSCTC), our student services intake processes needed significant attention. Bound by tight fiscal circumstances, we knew that adding a number of new positions to do the same work in the same way was a recipe for mediocrity. In the spring of 2006, a task force was charged with re-designing intake processes, jobs and document management.

Rather than assigning student services deans and other top management to the task force, the College decided to trust those who are on the front lines in serving students every day. They were asked to put aside their own job security, fears and doubts in order to design the best processes and services for the students. Assisted by a faculty member from the College's Customized Training Services unit, the group met several times to design an entirely new structure and intake process. When the new structure was revealed to the college body, there were concerns and predictions that "it will never work."

Next, the College charged an implementation team to create the new position descriptions and refine the actual applications

of new processes. Armed with some veterans from the design team and new representatives from the college work force, the implementation team also met several times to work through issues. Finally, a transition team assisted with bidding processes for the newly created jobs and a finalized timeline for implementation with a date and time to "flip the switch."

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**Sometimes leadership is best left to those who are in the trenches.**

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As I am writing this article, we are only 45 days into the new structure. We are processing student applications at a record pace and there are no major glitches. By working together with labor representatives, the position bidding went smoothly. By paying attention to their development needs, the college helped to prepare staff for their new assignments. There are still some things we could improve. The college promised opportunities for feedback and we are following up with that commitment. At MSCTC, we are convinced that taking the time to invest in staff that debated and designed new and more effective processes was well worth the wait.

## Trust in the Workplace

How would your colleagues or staff members rate your performance in these areas?

The top five ranked trust-building behaviors:

1. Communicates openly and honestly without distorting information
2. Shows confidence in my abilities by treating me as a skilled, competent employee
3. Keeps promises and commitments
4. Listens to and values what I say even if he or she may not agree
5. Works well with me and looks for ways in which we can help each other

The top five ranked trust-reducing behaviors:

1. Acts more concerned about his or her own welfare than anything else
2. Sends mixed messages about his or her stand on issues
3. Avoids taking responsibility for actions [passing the buck]
4. Jumps to conclusions without checking the facts first
5. Makes excuses or blames others when things don't work out

Source: Dr. Paul Bernthal, Development Dimensions International; 1225 Washington Pike, Bridgeville, PA 15017. To order a complete report, call 800-334-1514.

## Transparency and Accountability

at Wayne County Community College District

Michael Dotson, *Senior Associate Vice Chancellor for Budget and Finance, WCCCD*

In 2004, under the leadership of Dr. Curtis Ivery, Wayne County Community College District (WCCCD) launched its Transparency Initiative. Under this initiative the District began to post institutional data such as financial, operational and performance information on the web site.

Citing the goal of open and transparent relationships with all stakeholders, WCCCD embraced accountability by making available information regarding capital investments, campus expansion programs, revenues, expenses and student enrollment.

Organizational accountability can be used as a strategic opportunity and transformational tool. Lyn McDonell, a governance and organizational effectiveness consultant based in Toronto, Ontario, says, "Organizations that demonstrate accountability will have a strategic advantage and be tomorrow's sector leaders. Wise boards will anticipate this trend, step up to the plate and turn accountability into a cultural strength and positive asset."

WCCCD has demonstrated the validity of McDonell's statement with its performance, especially in the area of student enrollment. Student enrollment increased nearly 900% from 1996 to 2007.

Excerpts from recent press coverage highlight WCCCD's progress.

Inspired by an airport reading of "The Naked Corporation: How the Age of Transparency Will Revolutionize Business," Ivery is giving public access to 98 percent of all financial and day-to-day operations data. Starting September 22, everything from state audit results to the school's five-year financial plan will be [available]. A new call in number...already is in place for students, prospective students and critics to offer complaints or suggestions.

*Detroit Free Press 9-17-2004*

In effect, the district will be posting its own report card online... The initiative is good government. And it contrasts sharply with hide-the-record efforts – such as state lawmakers who oppose

keeping Standard & Poor's online evaluation of Michigan's secondary and elementary schools.

*Detroit News 9-20-2004*

Wayne County Community College District (WCCCD) continues to lead in the rate of increase in credit enrollment after Spring 2006. A weekly report from the Michigan Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers indicates that the college continues to lead the state with a 14 percent increase in total academic student enrollment.

*Michigan Chronicle 02-21-2006*

Wayne County Community College District has become – it seems overnight – the fastest growing community college in the state of Michigan. This is not just speculation, it is fact. Having surpassed more than 65,000 students at the five-campus institution... Under the leadership of its chancellor, Dr. Curtis Ivery, WCCCD has become a powerhouse in this region, serving 32 cities and townships across Wayne County.

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**Organizational accountability can be used as a strategic opportunity and transformational tool.**

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The integrity of its operations has been verified by accreditation agencies, state officials and peer institutions. The college district was one of the first to launch a transparency initiative on its website offering an open book on financials, operational reports and services.

*Michigan Chronicle 11-10-2007*

As publicly funded institutions, community colleges and other public institutions of higher education are placed under a higher level of scrutiny than most organizations. Taxpayers, students and community members need to be assured that their tuition and tax dollars are being used in the most effective and efficient manner possible. By demonstrating transparency, WCCCD, is leading the way in an effort to show their communities they are maintaining a high performing, effective and resourceful institution of higher education.