

Great Leadership

STRATEGIES FOR LEADING HIGH-PERFORMING COMMUNITY COLLEGES

SPECIAL ISSUE:

Dr. Curtis L. Ivery is elected to the Board of Directors of AACC
 WCCCD's Executive Team Authors
 Groundbreaking New Book

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Congratulations Dr. Curtis L. Ivery
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Bill Cosby Salutes Community Colleges

An interview with Dr. Bill Cosby

By Vera Leonard, Editor



Dr. William "Bill" Cosby, Jr. and
 Martha Grier, Assistant to the
 Chancellor for Special Programs

During the 2008 WCCCD District Conference Day event, I had an opportunity to chat with the keynote speaker, Dr. Cosby, about his latest book, *Come On People: On the Path from Victims to Victors*.

VL. Dr. Cosby, you have been outspoken about the challenges within distressed communities for some time now. What prompted you to write this book about it?

BC. I have been traveling around this United States for the last two years speaking to communities in trouble. They are made up of people of all different colors. They are English speaking, Spanish speaking, and other languages. Most of them are in economic trouble. They are experiencing high rates of teenage pregnancy, and equally high rates of incarceration. They are people in trouble, people calling for help. This book speaks to those people. It offers them help and, I believe, it offers them hope.

VL. In Chapter 4, you talk about community colleges as one of the resources communities can look to for help. What makes community colleges stand out as a community resource?

BC. Because the community college is doing its job and the job of others. Public schools refuse to acknowledge their need to change. And, as a result, the children suffer. The community college willingly – intentionally – receives the results of these troubled communities – the broken, the abused, the depressed. And it does it without saying: "Look, somebody else better step up, because I'm not going to do this much longer. This is not my job."

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Bill Cosby Salutes Community Colleges

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VL. What makes community colleges different from other post-secondary education institutions?

BC. Let me tell you, I've traveled this country to San Francisco, Chicago, Birmingham, Alabama, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, all over the U.S., and I see community colleges saving people's lives. Yes, saving people's lives. You don't get that at any other educational organization – none!

VL. I hear a lot of passion in your voice; what makes this such a personal crusade for you?

BC. I realized when I was young that I was not the person I ought to be. So I got my GED and I graduated from a hospital corpsman school. I then went on to the physical therapy

***I see community colleges
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school. After I left the service, I went to college and eventually earned a doctorate. But it was in my work as a corpsman and physical therapist that I learned a great deal about human beings and hard work and giving and trying to do things to



help people fight against a situation which doctors have already said was not going to get any better.

VL. What motivates you to work with a person who has been told that their situation is not going to get better?



BC. The first step is to realize that even if it doesn't get any better, the sun still comes up. You work with that person because the sun came up. And it keeps coming up. And the person who works the hardest, cares the most and gets things done – that's the person who's going to win. I will tell you that you cannot find a harder working person than somebody

who just woke up and realized: "I don't like living like this. I don't want to be here. I have got to get an education!" And that person comes to a community college where there are people who will help him or her fight.

VL. So, are community colleges the answer to these community challenges?

BC. Community colleges can't do everything. Community college cannot heal the past, but it does provide a friend; someone people can trust. It receives people who are intelligent enough, who may want to do better, but who have real problems. Their experiences and environment have left them depressed. And depressed people have all kinds of behavior issues that interfere with their progress. Depression knows no prejudice. We need to help them. We need schools that will pay attention to children and work to meet their needs. We need psychiatrists and psychologists who will go into communities and understand what people are coping with.

VL. In one or two sentences, how would you sum up the message of your book?

BC. We have to work together. This country only works because people help each other. ■



Sustainability's COLLEGES

By Dr. Laurence Spraggs, Higher Education Consultant

In their formative years, community colleges were often referred to as “Democracy’s Colleges” due to the accessibility to higher education they provided and the impact an informed citizenry had on participatory democracy. Now, they have the opportunity to be known as “Sustainability’s Colleges.”

Issues regarding sustainability are being discussed on college campuses, by our government leaders, and in communities across the country. According to the 1987 UN Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future*, sustainability refers to “keeping in existence” or to “meet[ing] the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their

An economically sustainable future will need a new workforce that has skills and expertise in green technologies.

own needs.” In most conversations, sustainability is treated primarily as an environmental issue, but in a broader context, sustainability can be thought of as a three-legged stool where environmental sustainability issues make up one leg, while issues of social and economic sustainability provide the other two legs. When properly balanced on these three legs, communities and our nation can be sustainable and find new prosperity. Community college leaders have the opportunity – indeed, the responsibility – to make their colleges models of sustainability for the communities they serve.

Environmental sustainability on campus needs the buy-in of everyone: students, faculty and staff. Students who are concerned about their futures are probably the most enthusiastic adopters. Faculty should find many opportunities to weave sustainability issues into the curriculum. Once administrators see that sustainability concerns can have a long-term positive impact on the bottom line, they should be enthusiastic as well. Reducing the carbon footprint of the college through energy conservation may have some startup

expense but in the long term saves money as well as the environment. Policy development that considers sustainability can implement sustainable practices at a pace that will have little impact on immediate costs while creating a sustainable future.

Community colleges have long been engines of economic prosperity, but should now refocus this energy with an emphasis on a sustainable economy. An economically sustainable future will need a new workforce that has skills and expertise in green technologies. Community colleges have the capacity to train this workforce by new program development and modifications to existing programs. On another level, sustainability can be integrated into the general curriculum to expose all students to issues regarding sustainability and help make what some find a very abstract issue more concrete.

Societal sustainability brings us back to “democracy’s colleges” with a new twist. For communities to be sustainable, democracy must be sustainable. Citizens in a sustainable community need to understand the issues, adopt an informed, sustainable lifestyle and vote with an understanding of sustainability as they evaluate the candidates and the issues. With the accessibility of community colleges across the country, there is no better institution to take on this new challenge.

There are numerous resources for community college leaders as they move their institutions towards sustainability. The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) offers a comprehensive review of sustainability efforts across the country. There are over 600 signatories to “The American College and University Presidents’ Climate Commitment,” an organization with sustainability practices as its basis, which reports on these efforts regularly.

As the nation welcomes our new president with his commitment to sustainability and his recognition of the important role community colleges can play in this effort, this is the time for leadership to answer the call. Our country must embrace a sustainable future and community colleges are in the best position to lead this change. ■

Achieving the Dream: A Transitional Movement

By Dr. Christine Johnson McPhail, *Coach, Achieving the Dream*



Historically community colleges have promoted a unique mission to provide open access and affordable education to all who desire to learn. The colleges' capacity to educate a successful workforce, bring underserved student populations into the mainstream, move people from welfare to work, and support community and economic development is being threatened. Unfortunately, this core mission is being threatened by a myriad of economic, social, and political challenges that community college leaders must confront and overcome. With positive change, the taxpayers who fund the community colleges can have greater access to them and greater benefits from them.

The Achieving the Dream Initiative represents a timely and positive approach to help community colleges make systemic changes to respond to these challenges. Achieving the Dream is a multi-year national initiative dedicated to increasing the success of community college students, particularly those groups that have faced significant barriers in higher education, including low-income students, students of color and first-generation students.

I view the Achieving the Dream Initiative as a transitional movement for community colleges; it is an initiative that moves community colleges beyond open access to a systemic approach to facilitate student success. While each participating college, in its own uniqueness, brings something of great value to the initiative, the colleges are united under the umbrella of promoting student success in the nation's community colleges. During my involvement with the national Achieving the Dream Initiative, I have observed that the initiative works on multiple fronts to foster student success, including focusing all efforts at the community college to promote student success, evidence-based decision making, internal and external engagement, and public policy. It emphasizes the use of data to drive institutional change.

Currently, there are more than 80 institutions in 15 states participating in the national Achieving the Dream Initiative. WCCCD is a fourth-round institution, joining the initiative in

2008. WCCCD's Achieving the Dream Implementation Plan has identified four major priorities:

- Improve the advising process
- Increase the number of students completing developmental education
- Increase student retention
- Improve institutional effectiveness

Similar to other community colleges participating in the Achieving the Dream Initiative, the priorities were designed to provide a pathway to and through the college. Joining the Achieving the Dream Initiative was a perfect way for WCCCD to connect with other colleges and to gain national support to help fulfill its local empowerment mission:

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.

Through its empowerment mission and the initiative's priorities on student success, WCCCD is better positioned to fulfill the promises of the open door policy. Achieving the Dream helps the District to transition beyond the open door to focus key resources on promoting and sustaining student success. Over the past several years (serving as Strategy Coach to WCCCD's Initiative), I can bear witness to remarkable transformations at WCCCD that are possible only when students from diverse backgrounds get much-needed support to help them change the course of their lives. The open doors must not be closed—not with so many students requiring access to higher education. But we all know that the open door access policy is not enough. The Achieving the Dream Initiative challenges the colleges to go beyond the open door. I believe that Achieving the Dream work can help colleges find out what students and colleges need from each other, and can help them explore new models for more productive ways to



promote student success. If we can get all community college stakeholders excited about learning, we have a chance to move beyond simple access to student success.

Therefore, the value of Achieving the Dream is that it benefits not only the individual students participating in the interventions or the individual college's participation in the

Initiative, but serves society as well. Through its involvement with the Achieving the Dream Initiative, WCCCD can further strengthen educational opportunities for all students. It can demonstrate that these opportunities should not be limited to a particular age group, a particular community or income group, but should be available to all residents. ■

Displaced Workers: How Educators Can Help Ease Their Transition

By Dr. Ronald J. Harkness, *Provost, Career Preparation & Campus Operations, WCCCD*

The State of Michigan and its citizens, like many states across the nation, continue to go through economic hard times. Many of us either know someone that is faced with an imminent layoff, been released from their place of employment, or have faced one of these situations ourselves.

When such an event occurs, it can be hard to figure out all that we, as community college leaders, need to do. Any one of these events can be overwhelming on their own, but when our students experience them all at the same time, it can be very difficult to handle. As educators, we need to remember that students come to our campus with many of these challenges and struggles.

***Institutions of higher learning
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From a learning perspective, our classrooms are filled with students who have different skill sets. Many of them may be back in the classroom for the first time in years. Many are faced with developmental needs that have to be addressed. Many are extremely scared to embrace new ways after a lifetime of work. Some may be so afraid of failure that something as small as having a hard time finding a parking

spot may be enough to turn them from our doors. Some may have a disability that, while not observable, has a negative impact on their ability to learn.

These challenges do bring opportunities for each of us to help make this experience more rewarding. Instead of telling students that they must “march to our drummer” we need to find out what “beat we need to play” to make learning successful for each student. We may need to reflect on how we present instructional material and ask ourselves if there is a better way. How can we engage many who have been absent from the classroom for a long time or those that never felt comfortable in a structured school environment with concepts of critical thinking or problem-solving skills?

Institutions of higher learning may be the one place where some individuals feel hopeful and safe. Some individuals come to us in spite of lack of support at home by either parents or family members that do not see the value in post-secondary education.

We need to stay committed to helping those within our colleges deal with some of these challenging decisions. We, as life-long learners, need to keep our skills current and try new approaches to reaching our students.

W. H. Auden says, “A professor is someone who talks in someone else's sleep.” We each have the ability to be that professor or instructor in someone else's sleep. Strive for that status. You might be surprised at the power of such a gift. ■

WCCCD'S Executive Team Authors Groundbreaking New Book

By Dr. Stephanie Bulger, Vice Chancellor of Educational Affairs and Distance Learning, WCCCD

Community colleges have a growing responsibility to shape the workforce of the future by being inclusive of all people who want to learn, according to a groundbreaking new book titled "Reinventing the Open Door: Transformational Strategies for Community Colleges." The executive team at Wayne County Community College District (WCCCD) has collectively authored this new book, demonstrating the District's awareness and commitment to providing viable solutions to the current crisis.

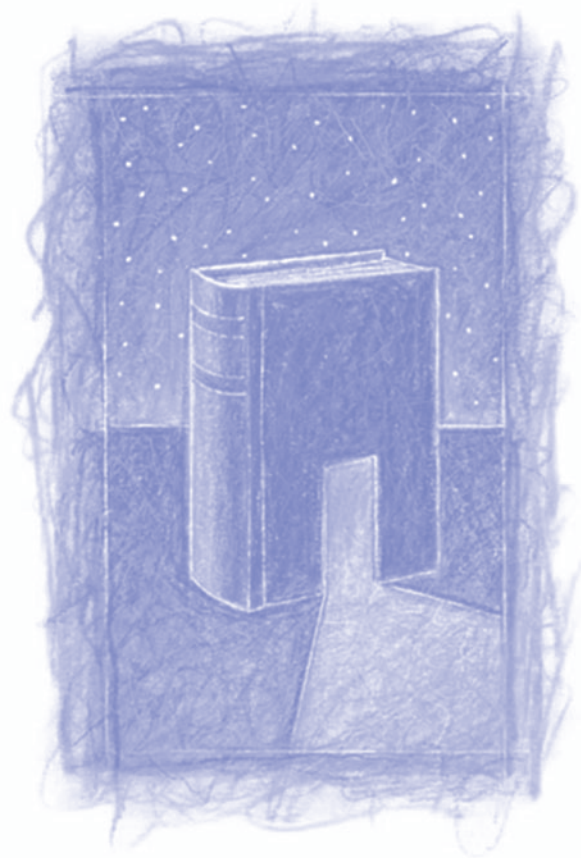
As one of the fastest-growing community colleges in the nation, WCCCD is committed to shaping the direction of open-door policies at community colleges nationwide. WCCCD Chancellor Dr. Curtis L. Ivery and several WCCCD

We must either transform our services to a rapidly growing diversity of constituencies or we will be marginalized.

leaders discuss the college district's commitment at length and provide a wealth of knowledge in the book.

"Reinventing the Open Door: Transformational Strategies for Community Colleges" was spurred out of a national conference held by WCCCD in 2006, titled "Leading Organizational Change to Re-Invent the Community College Open Door." The conference, which was co-sponsored with COMBASE and endorsed by the American Association of Community Colleges, serves as an example of how WCCCD is taking leadership in defining the "open-door" given changing times.

The book, which was prepared for the Community College Press of the American Association of Community Colleges, "is



a practical guide for community college leaders as they examine the open door at their own institutions," Dr. Ivery said.

"We are called to a new level of thinking and strategy as we reinvent the open door of the community college in response to dramatic, rapid and future-shaping internal and external change," Dr. Ivery said.

Contributing writer Dr. Debraha Watson, who is president of the WCCCD Northwest Campus, explains that open-door policy re-evaluation is increasingly important because the demographics of community colleges are shifting. While this presents community colleges with a set of new challenges, the changing student population provides an opportunity to create new policies and practices that are more inclusive to people of various backgrounds, Watson says in the book.



Meanwhile, Dr. Stephanie R. Bulger, vice chancellor for Educational Affairs and Distance Learning at WCCCD, emphasizes ways that technology has been used to reach students in developmental and high-enrollment classes, and also addresses the economic and social aspects of the digital divide. As prime examples of this trend, Dr. Bulger highlights curriculum developments, WCCCD's Virtual Middle College, and its partnership with the Eritrean Institute of Technology in Eritrea, East Africa.

"Reinventing the Open Door: Transformational Strategies for Community Colleges" also offers numerous lessons for community college leaders who are looking to embrace open-door doctrines. For instance, John Bolden, WCCCD'S executive vice-chancellor, describes how community colleges can partner with schools and employers to better train students for life after the K-12 school system.

Chapters by Dr. George Swan, WCCCD's vice chancellor of

Campus Operations, Shawna Forbes, executive associate vice chancellor for Educational Affairs, and Brian Singleton, associate vice chancellor of Instruction, provide insight on such issues as community engagement in open-door policies and national leadership in reinventing the community college open door.

"Reinventing the Open Door: Transformational Strategies for Community Colleges" was edited by Dr. Gunder Myran, senior consultant to Dr. Ivery.

As each of the contributors in the book would agree, Dr. Ivery contends that community colleges must continue to look for new ways to reach out and educate their communities as times change.

"We must either transform our services to a rapidly growing diversity of constituencies or we will be marginalized," Dr. Ivery said in the book. ■

Dr. Curtis L. Ivery **is elected to the** **Board of Directors** **of American Association** **of Community Colleges**



*Dr. Curtis L. Ivery
Chancellor*

We acknowledge and congratulate Dr. Ivery on his election to the Board of Directors of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). As the oldest and largest membership organization of associate-degree granting institutions in the United States, Dr. Ivery joins a select group charged with governing the association.

Congratulations Dr. Ivery!

EMBRACING SOCIAL MEDIA: A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW FOR COMMUNITY

By Vidya Moorthy, *Media Consultant*

Dr. Stephanie Bulger, *Vice Chancellor of Educational Affairs and Distance Learning, WCCCD*

The advent of social media has dramatically changed the way people communicate. Twitter, YouTube, MySpace, Facebook and countless other tools are revolutionizing the way information is shared.

Embracing this new trend is critical for leaders and managers who want to reach out to an increasingly Web-savvy audience. So it is important to understand why social media is so effective and becoming a pervasive force, as well as to recognize how this new media can be carefully leveraged for best results.

But what is social media? It is the phenomenon that describes the prevalence of consumers and receivers of information transforming themselves into content publishers by using digital technology. Simply put, social media allows users to create their own Web content, and actively participate in what they read or see on the Web.

Prior to social media, or Web 2.0 as it is sometimes called, the Internet only gave information to users. Now, social media provides users with opportunities to communicate on Web sites and with other Internet users. You can see examples of this when people post videos they've created to YouTube, or when they write a comment on a news story or someone's blog, or when they share an interesting Web site link with their friends on Facebook.

That means today's Internet users aren't just consumers – they're influencers. People who in the past only read online content are now writing and distributing content online. They are creating and sharing words, images, videos and opinions and influencing perception, attitudes, behaviors and, yes, even market share.

What does this mean for leaders of community colleges?

Audiences now make themselves available in small groups allowing community colleges to target and reach specific segments like never before. Colleges can choose a specific continuing education event, a particular program or a new campus facility and generate an online discussion about it.

For example, Facebook allows people to create groups that are related to specific schools, companies, events, or causes. A community college that creates such a group would be able to invite Facebook members to join the group, and send emails and event invitations specifically to group members. It also is possible to post videos, photos and recent news to Facebook groups, which are shared with members.





COLLEGE LEADERS

The benefit is that these messages are directed to people who have indicated they are interested in receiving the college's messages.



Before embarking on a social media campaign, community college executives need to set basic parameters that will help them be more successful in communicating with their target audience:

- Choose the audience with whom you want to communicate. Your message should have direct impact for a specific group with whom you're trying to engage. Trying to reach an undefined market means your message may be too vague to generate interest.
- Decide how you will measure the success of your social media campaign. Perhaps, it is the number of hits on the web page, or the number of students subscribing to an online newsletter from a certain department, or the number of faculty who actively participate in a conversation. Like any communication campaign, effectiveness needs to be measurable even if some of the outcomes such as reputation and attitudes are intangible.

Over the course of the century, every new media vehicle has revolutionized mankind. Web 2.0 is no different and understanding, embracing and using it will cease to remain an option for educational institutions in the years to come. Since the Web is constantly changing, the best way to learn about social media and its benefits is by trying it out for yourself. So log on, join in, and blog away. ■



ETHICS is a Matter of CHOICE

By **Gerry Tucker**, Vice President of Human Resources,
Austin Community College

As community college leaders, we have the opportunity to make major decisions impacting students, employees and the community. As we make those decisions, we should be mindful that ego, image and power can impact the decisions we make on a daily basis. While we don't like to think of ourselves as acting out of personal priorities, the truth is that every leader encounters a situation where he or she must decide "for whom am I making this decision?"

When we think of ethics, we think of the ethics of other people. The climate today is such that we have numerous opportunities to see the impact of the lack of ethics in business and the corporate world and even the educational environment. When we encounter an ethical situation in the educational environment we might question motives, whether persons are being fair, how they are making decisions and when a line is being crossed. However, the most important question is, "am I operating above the line?" Operating above the line means we are being honest, forthright, respectful, and clear in our communications. There are many opportunities to cross the line and even go below it and it becomes easy to justify why we do so when it is to our advantage.



Ethics is not just about decisions; it is also about actions. Does our behavior match our values? Are we compromising



our values to meet an unsubstantiated objective? Are we operating out of ego or power needs? Are we pushing the envelope to get what we want?

***It is a matter of choice;
a decision made in the moment
makes a difference.***

A recent situation on the campus highlighted how easy it is to cross the line just a little bit. An employee confronted a supervisor regarding a decision that was made to the advantage of another employee. The employee was outraged and inappropriately conveyed that to the supervisor. In return, the supervisor began to yell and rant and rave about the employee's performance.

The supervisor is an instructor in our Servant Leadership program and saw no relevance of his behavior to the S-L philosophy. We can't espouse principles and values in the classroom and, then, not model them in the workplace. It is the role of a leader not only to model ethical behavior but also to encourage such behavior in other employees and students.

It is a matter of choice; a decision made in the moment makes a difference. We must be clear about the values we want to impart to our students and our employees and be true to those values in our decisions. As leaders, we are being watched everyday. Our decisions are being scrutinized. Our actions are being modeled. Have you managed to stay above the line? If not, what can you do differently to model ethical behavior? Each day and with each decision you get to make a choice. Choose to stay above the line. ■



What Higher Education Can Learn from Business and Industry

By Dr. Rhonda T. Richards, Executive Dean for Academic Affairs, West Virginia University at Parkersburg

Recently I toured the Coldwater Creek Distribution Center located in Parkersburg, West Virginia. Founded in 1984, and headquartered in Sandpoint, Idaho, Coldwater Creek is a triple-channel retailer of women's apparel, gifts, jewelry, and accessories. The company sells its merchandise through a growing number of retail stores across the country. The East Coast distribution and customer contact center of more than 950,000 square feet is located in Parkersburg.

As I entered the large distribution center, I noted the non-descript exterior façade and the minimal signage. I was prepared for a long and tedious tour and was thankful for the



Cross-train for maximum efficiency.

comfortable shoes I wore. However, once inside the facility it became apparent that the external appearance did not fully represent the activity within the walls of the building. Within fifteen minutes into the tour, I noted that people were smiling, work was being accomplished with an “everyone chips in” attitude, and more importantly our tour guide—a top Coldwater Creek executive—knew everyone's name from the call center staff to the fork lift operator. While this particular industry may not be unique among other facilities of its kind, I left my visit that day with a notepad of the top ten lessons to be learned from business and industry that can be applied to higher education. These lessons include the following:

- [1] No person is larger than any job that needs to be accomplished in an organization. If the President needs to pack materials to be mailed overnight to a customer, the customer has priority over position or power.
- [2] Visual cues are important and internal branding is just as important as external branding. Signs, pictures, posters, and most importantly, evidence of the product being produced should be consistently and proudly displayed.

- [3] Cross-train for maximum efficiency. Aim for at least two-deep for every front line position so that the company's and customer's needs are met in a timely manner.
- [4] Information is not knowledge. Make sure that supervisors have first-hand, experiential knowledge of the job so that decisions are based on more than just information which can be misinterpreted or faulty.
- [5] Compassion is important. Caring should be sincere, not a casual afterthought. Little steps in this direction can yield far-reaching mileage. For example, posting nutrition information in the cafeteria to address dietary needs shows a concern for employees and others. Offering wellness options and activities further extends this effort to a concern for the total well-being of an employee.
- [6] Track your progress daily towards meeting your goals and then find a way to display this information. Use charts, graphs, monitors to get this information out to employees.
- [7] Invest in your full-time workers and when opportunities arise, reward them as opposed to hiring short-term workers who may not have the same level of loyalty or connection to the company.
- [8] Make sure that every employee is part of the culture of the company and is able to defend, describe, and articulate the company's vision and mission.

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What Higher Education Can Learn from Business and Industry

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- [9] Expect the leaders to lead, but also expect them to demonstrate how they contribute to the good of the whole. Expect the leaders to be visible and accessible.
- [10] Know your employees; know their names, their backgrounds, their culture and acknowledge that this is what comprises the fabric of your organization.

I learned these valuable lessons that day from a two-hour tour and with some subtle changes and a few expansions, these ideas could be infused into the daily operation of a higher education institution. My guess is that, similar to the employees from the company I visited, the residents of the college community ivory tower will be smiling and cheering their team on every step of the way. ■

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.

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 topics we publish deal with 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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