

RECOVERY – RENEWAL – REIMAGINING

The Year 2012-2013 in Review

Dr. Wright L. Lassiter, Jr. - Chancellor

The words – Recovery – Renewal – Reimagining – describes the work that has transpired in the DCCCD for this year. When this governing board took bold actions regarding tuition, taxes, compensation and other unmet needs, we began the process of recovery from three-plus years of diminished resources. Through your actions it was possible to craft a viable three-year financial plan. Also through your actions, we began the needed process of recovery from an extended period when it was not possible to provide salary adjustments. Additionally, through your action we began the process of making structural changes in the compensation levels for faculty and professional support staff.

In alignment with the DCCCD mission, as a governing board you identified the challenges of the current accountability models in Texas higher education, and established a set of “Thematic Priorities” supported by “Strategic Objectives” to ensure that the District remains sustainable as:

- *A reliable workforce supply resource.*
- *A vital resource for excellence in teaching and learning.*
- *A forerunner in innovative lifelong education.*
- *A leader in community service and engagement.*

The board’s thematic themes were consistent with those of the district colleges and staff, and were designed to provide assurance that the mission of the district is both carried out and carried forward. The themes being:

- *Student Success*
- *Community Engagement*
- *Institutional Effectiveness*
- *Employee Success*

As you hear the reports from the presidents and senior staff you will note how their plans and accomplishments were aligned with the priorities and strategic objectives.

For the first time in the recent history of the district, all seven colleges were engaged in the accreditation reaffirmation process at the same time. Regular reports were provided to the board on what transpired with the off-site compliance report review, the on-site review, and any associated follow-up requests.

In that regard, we responded to your request to be informed with respect to the Quality Enhancement Plans for the colleges by having a special presentation at the beginning of each board meeting. That activity has concluded and now the presentations focus on some aspect of student success at the colleges.

Last month we all literally cheered and shouted for joy when it was announced that all seven colleges will be reaffirmed as accredited colleges. We are all aware of the challenges that we faced in this

reaffirmation cycle with our organizational model of seven separately-accredited colleges. That challenge was adequately and appropriately addressed.

The recently completed 83rd Legislative Session was our first one in recent years when there was not the fear of continued budget cuts. The legislators were literally astonished that all fifty community colleges were in agreement on a 5-point legislative plan. Thus, we fared better than expected. Our CFO will speak directly to the overall status in his report. A major outcome was the formal adoption of a performance-based funding model -- 90% based on enrollment and 10% based on successful outcomes. A second major outcome was the transfer of the responsibility for adult basic education from the Texas Education Agency to the Texas Workforce Commission. That bodes well for the district.

The American Association of Community Colleges issued the first blueprint for the community colleges of the nation since the early 1990's -- "Reclaiming the American Dream: Community Colleges and the Nation's Future."

The report contained a number of harsh judgments. Beginning with despite our historic successes and amidst serious contemporary challenges, community colleges need to be redesigned for new times. What we find today are student success rates that are unacceptably low, employment preparation is inadequately connected to job market needs, and there are disconnects in transitions from high school to community college to senior institutions. Community colleges, the report cites, have been historically underfunded, but also have been financed in ways that encouraged enrollment, without adequately supporting that growth, and also without incentives for promoting student success.

The report builds on the legacy of the contributions of the nation's community colleges, but calls for a new vision grounded in the three "R's" cited below. As you read the plans of the colleges and system officers, you should have noted how this district is committed to the three R's of:

- *Redesign student's educational experiences*
- *Reinvent institutional roles*
- *Reset the system*

You will also see the various approaches being put in place to address the following:

- *Increase completion rates by 50% by the year 2020*
- *Dramatically improve college readiness*
- *Close the skills gaps*
- *Take needed actions to meet 21st century education and employment needs*
- *Implement policies and practices that promote rigor, transparency, and accountability.*
- *Embrace fully the objectives of the Texas Completes student success plan*

Each year when I provide this overview in advance of the individual presentations my objective is to place all that which you will hear in the proper context.

I will address any questions that you wish to direct to me, if there are any. If there are no questions the next voice that you hear will be that of Executive Vice Chancellor DesPlas.
