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A Note From Your Coordinator

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Greetings from the AFACCT Coordinator: Welcome to *Communitas*, the official journal of Maryland's Association of Faculty for Advancement of Community College Teaching (AFACCT).

Inside the pages of this journal, you will find articles that focus on faculty efforts to maintain excellence in teaching and faculty development. First, Professor Dave Thorndill (CCBC—Essex) takes us on a tour of the host campus for our upcoming AFACCT conference in January '11, the Essex campus of the Community College of Baltimore County. Then, continuing our series on faculty development centers, the Montgomery College's Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) is highlighted. Next, Dr. Katherine A. James presents her analysis of Goal 3 on diversity in the Maryland State Plan for Higher Education. And Dr. Diana Zilberman studies the impact of online learning, exploring the question of just how revolutionary is this method of learning.

Since it was founded in 1983, AFACCT has provided opportunities to community college faculty throughout the state of Maryland, both full-time and adjunct, for professional development, primarily in the form of AFACCT's statewide conference, held each year at the start of the spring (winter) semester. For hundreds of faculty members throughout Maryland, the annual AFACCT conference gives us all an opportunity to develop professional skills and knowledge,



Richard Siciliano

to share research and expertise, and to network with one another in our teaching disciplines. What makes AFACCT and its conference different from most organizations of this type is that it is organized entirely by faculty representatives of the 16 Maryland community colleges, with the financial support from the colleges for which we teach.

At AFACCT's next conference, to be held at the Essex campus of the Community College of Baltimore County, on January 6 and 7, 2011, the central theme will be "The Need for a Global and International Perspective for Maryland's Community College Faculty." Faculty presenters representing Maryland's community colleges will be exploring topics related to this theme, including such possible topics as travel studies initiatives, developing curricula with a global awareness, the challenges of teaching cultural diversity, cooperative efforts by Maryland community colleges to enhance international education, and many other related topics.

The keynote speakers for Conference '11 are no strangers to Maryland community colleges. On the first day of the conference,

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We invite you to submit articles on your classroom teaching/learning successes, current educational topics that you want to share, and your professional achievements. Send photos related to your article and one of yourself for publication. We invite articles from all disciplines.

January 6, 2011, Dr. David J. Smith of the United States Institute of Peace <<http://www.usip.org>> will be giving the keynote address. Dr. Smith was formerly a faculty member at Harford Community College. On the second day, January 7, Dr. Marilyn Pugh, formerly a professor of Economics and the former Director of the Center for Academic Resource Development at Prince George's Community College, will speak about PGCC's efforts to enhance international education and awareness. More details about both keynote speakers will be provided on the AFACCT Conference 2011 website.

The Call for Proposals for the AFACCT 2011 Conference is now available online. The proposal deadline is October 1, 2010. You are invited to submit a proposal on any topic related to the role community college faculty play. Submit your proposal today.

So, faculty colleagues, mark your calendars for January 6 and 7, 2011, plan on giving a presentation, and join us at the Community College of Baltimore County, Essex campus, for the 21th Annual AFACCT Conference.



Join Colleagues at the AFACCT Conference at CCBC Essex



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The Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) invites you to the Essex campus for the 21st annual conference of AFACCT. Located in northeast suburban Baltimore, the Essex campus is within a convenient drive from most community colleges within Maryland. The three campuses of CCBC are represented by David Thorndill, Essex; Nelda Nix-McCray, Catonsville; and Rosemarie Cramer, Dundalk. We all are working to make this conference run smoothly and provide a pleasant professional experience for all attendees.

The 147-acre Essex campus contains all of the buildings, parking, and athletic fields to support a thriving 21st-century suburban campus. A recently completed fitness-nature trail highlights a commitment to personal health, recreation and outdoor education.

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Join Colleagues

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Community College of Baltimore County is guided by Dr. Sandra Kurtinitis, President. She has helped establish the college as a nationally recognized leader in innovative learning strategies and a top provider of undergraduate education. Programs at CCBC lead to associate degrees and transfers to universities as well as technology training which helps people enhance or build new careers and provide the Baltimore area with a skilled workforce. In addition CCBC offers more than 100 certificate programs and lifelong learning that enrich the lives of 70,000 people yearly. Half of Baltimore County undergraduate students



Dr. Sandra Kurtinitis
CCBC President

attend CCBC. But CCBC is also the choice for students from around the state, around the country, and around the world (During the Spring 2010 semester 368 international students enrolled in credit courses.).

Until 1998, Baltimore County had three community colleges. Essex Community College began in Essex in 1957 and moved to the present Rossville Boulevard campus in 1968. Catonsville Community College also began in 1957, and Dundalk opened in 1971. Now all three main campuses and several satellite sites form a single college, multi-campus institution. Over 2000 students received degrees in May 2010.

Many good restaurants, hotels and shops reside near the Essex campus. In December, check the AFACCT website for recommended hotels. The AMC multiplex at The Avenue at Whitmarsh has 16 theatres with a nearby brewpub and eateries. Across the street hungry geese will entertain you for a mere slice of bread.

So come for the day to the AFACCT annual meeting at CCBC and expect stimulating, educational insights from colleagues around the state, or spend a night or two and also enjoy Baltimore County hospitality, cuisine and fun.



Bustling Montgomery College's Center for Teaching and Learning

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It's 2pm on Friday and Montgomery College's Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) is bustling. Up to 12 workshop series are being offered across all three campuses as part of the Professional Development Program for New Faculty (PDP-NF) and the director, Dr. Miller Newman, exudes a calm she says is a façade. The PDP-NF is a professional development program designed specifically for new full time faculty hires during the first three years of employment at Montgomery College. The deans have always recognized the value of the CTL and have supported this unit from its inception nearly ten years ago. Part of the support the deans provide is, whenever feasible, to offer new faculty a teaching schedule which allows them to participate in College-based professional development on the 2nd and 4th Friday of the month every semester. Our PDP-NF uses the cohort model which enables faculty to meet twice a month over the course of the semester. The program offers our new full-time faculty, opportunities to meet and work with peers in small facilitated groups on a broad range of topics and interests in teaching and learning. Most of the workshops are taught by faculty and staff at the College.

The CTL offers stand-alone workshops throughout the week, both face-to-face and online for all faculty. The

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Dr. Miller Newman
Director

online workshops are facilitated using Elluminate. A web-based conferencing system, *Elluminate*, allows faculty to login from a remote desktop and actively participate in real time or to come back later and access the entire presentation complete with audio and video. Additionally, the college also provides video-conferencing, connecting rooms across campuses (There are 18 rooms available across the three campuses.) with video and sound. The CTL is increasing its catalog of courses offered via these alternate delivery modes and the faculty have responded favorably. While many faculty say they enjoy the face-to-face interaction and don't mind the commute between campuses, an equal number of faculty find that they prefer to attend the same meeting or workshop via video conference.

As Montgomery College's principle provider of faculty professional development, the CTL's commitment to ensuring student success by working continuously to coach faculty in the art of teaching and learning is our driving mission. We educate ourselves, our staff, our associates and our faculty as part of our individual and collective commitment to lifelong learning. The CTL staff works collaboratively to ensure that professional development opportunities for faculty are need-

based and student-centered. Program offerings on best practices in pedagogy, teaching and learning theory and practice, student engagement, leadership, and assessment target all faculties at the College, and we model alternate delivery methods and instructional technology in as many of our offerings as possible to ensure the widest audience possible.

The CTL has a presence on all three campuses (Rockville, Germantown, and Takoma Park/Silver Spring) and provides training and support for a diverse population of almost 1400 full- and part-time faculty members. Each campus has an assigned instructional designer—who meets with faculty members one on one, and designs and delivers teaching and learning workshops—and staff service centers complete with workstations (PC and MAC) multimedia equipment, audio and video editing software, scanners, webcams, and headsets. While some of the CTL's offerings are designed as short, intensive workshops on the run, we are transitioning that format for a more comprehensive and long-term delivery format. The CTL also offers full- and part-time faculty the opportunity to participate in sponsored fellowships. Full-time faculty are offered release time to participate in a year-long fellowship on a contemporary issue in community college teaching and learning, and part-time faculty are offered a one semester fellowship in the spring on effective teaching and learning strategies. The College also offers a unique opportunity for all faculty to participate in the CTL's Professional Development Saturday Series (PDSS) which is held on three different Saturdays during the academic year. The PDSS is a conference-like event for faculty who can receive 6 hours of professional development credit for participating. Full-time faculty may use CTL professional development credits to meet

the professional development requirement that is part of their annual evaluation. Part-time faculty may use CTL professional development credits for rank and salary increases.

New this academic year is the Technology in the Learning Space Initiative, led by CTL's coordinator, Andrew Ryan. Ryan is working with faculty to enhance their use of technology in their classrooms. The goal of this initiative is not to create a large cadre of tech-savvy faculty, but to work with faculty to build their confidence in using technology as a learning tool and to help them include technology in their lesson planning. Using the latest theory on integrating technology into teaching.

Ryan is changing how the CTL creates and delivers workshops for faculty. By training, Ryan is an instructional designer and by desire a techy whose love of bells, whistles and all things technology cool have merged to our faculty's benefit. Ryan is one of the first people our new faculty see during their orientation session with the CTL, and he is the one who translates for novice technology users and veterans alike the technology resources they have access to that can enhance their course materials. According to Ryan, "when it comes to technology, people often don't know what they don't know. My goal is to introduce instructional technologies to faculty, not necessarily to 'wow' them, but rather to show them how technology can complement their content knowledge and maximize students' engagement in the learning process. And once they learn something new, something they didn't know they didn't know I know that I've done my job."



Some Lines For Narcissus



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The insolence was terrific.
To have sent that knife, cool jeweled haft
and blade of finest Delian bronze
on which you almost saw your reflection.
Who would have thought the kid would use
it?

*The longer it stands, the old seer told him,
the more dangerous it is.*

I suspect a woman,
maybe one of the Muses,
slipped him her serene face,
gave him a new regard for images.

Roil it with the fingers. Drink it.

Even that hellish boat
with the reeking ferry-slave glaring
at another batch of desperate shadows
couldn't keep his eyes away
from the sooty surface of the Styx.

I have been a snake. I know myself.



*Originally from Ukraine, Askold Skalsky teaches at Hagerstown Community College in Western Maryland and has had poems in numerous small press magazines and journals, most recently in **Cutthroat** and **The Istanbul Literary Review**. He has also published in Canada, England, and Ireland. Last year he received an award from the Maryland State Arts Council for his poetry and one of his poems was recently nominated for the Pushcart Prize.*



AFACCT Communitas

Kaleidoscope Communities

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Introduction

The Maryland State Plan for Higher Education is comprised of five comprehensive and far-reaching goals, all of which address the most important challenges facing Maryland community college faculty members in today's world. Goal 3 focuses on diversity and recognizes that the state's greatest resource is its diverse citizenry. By committing to ensuring equal access to high quality postsecondary education for all, educators can enable postsecondary students of heterogeneous backgrounds to demonstrate excellence in academic achievement, thus opening many opportunities for success in careers and in our society. In order for students to pursue such achievement, instructors must recognize that the continuous fluidity of our craft and the ways in which we carry out the delivery and interaction with the learners will influence and directly impact their success in reaching their life goals; we must ensure equity for all students and close specific gaps that impede their progress.

Analyzing Diversity

In looking further at the diversity around which Goal 3 is built, one must first limit the area in which the data apply—which in this case is the state of Maryland—then examine the various categorizations of diversity and extract those which have a critical relationship to education. Among the data which are most useful and appropriate are those



Dr. Katherine James

which provide information on social characteristics (including gender, marital status, disability status, foreign born, languages spoken at home, educational levels achieved, et al.); economic characteristics (such as income statistics); housing patterns; general characteristics (total population, disaggregated population data, age, racial categories, household size, family size, et al.). This information helps to provide a picture of the individuals who may be sitting in our classrooms

The Nature of a Kaleidoscope

When one first looks through a kaleidoscope, one sees a lovely pattern consisting of various shapes and colors. After a little twist or shake of the kaleidoscope, a different lovely pattern appears. The viewer can continue to see more beautiful, colorful patterns with just a small movement of the instrument. The kaleidoscope is an apt metaphor for the classrooms in which we find ourselves. The subject taught in the fall semester may be the same subject taught in the spring semester, yet the participants represent a shake or a twist of the container, yielding new and beautiful groupings, which will only shake and twist into still other groupings as we continue practicing our craft of teaching. We must recognize the changing patterns, appreciate each one, and adapt our instructional styles to each one.

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Next Steps

To proceed, we must have a good understanding of the meaning of the terms equity and equal access. We may then begin to probe the characteristics that have limited the equity and equal access of our students, particularly those that are cultural, academic, and financial. We must look for gaps that need to be closed.

Equity by definition means freedom from bias or favoritism; fairness and justice are also components of equity. In the realm of education, equity has to do with “leveling the playing field” so that every student receives fairness, justice, and freedom from bias or favoritism in his or her pursuit of learning. For educators to provide equity, we must be prepared to “scaffold” learning—that is, offer needed assistance for those individuals who have not reached the common level of the playing field in order for them to have a chance at success. For example, in order to be proficient in word-processing an assignment, a student may need keyboarding skills; students whose first language is something other than English may need tutoring in vocabulary, punctuation, and grammar; students with visual impairments may need specific technologies to participate fully in class; older students, such as senior citizens, may require more time or lessons in technology. A student cannot run the competitive educational race if he or she must start several steps behind the other participants; instructors must extend the needed support for everyone to begin at the starting line together. The “scaffolds” may be removed, once the students needing them are on equal footing with the others.

Equal access simply means that all

those who wish to pursue an education and enroll in postsecondary institutions must be given the same opportunities to do so. No one is to be denied enrollment in our institutions of higher learning on the basis of any discriminatory factor, including personal background, culture, race, religion, socioeconomic, disability, age, and the like—even if such denial is unintentional; we must examine our biases closely and be certain that they are not playing a part in our acceptance (or non-acceptance) of students in our classrooms and the way in which we teach them.

Limiting Characteristics

Equity and equal access may be well defined and well intentioned, but we must look more closely at the ways in which they have not been applied and thus create gaps. While there are several limiting characteristics that we must review continually to avoid injustice, we can begin with three of the most predominant: cultural, academic, and financial.

Regarding cultural characteristics that have historically limited student acceptance or participation in American postsecondary education, one must again turn to demographics over a period of time. We can see that only five decades ago, the population of American public schools was fairly homogeneous. Even after the racial integration of schools, there were primarily three dominant racial groups, including Hispanic populations in the southwest, with few students from other countries, with the possible exception of children from diplomatic families, who would not be permanent residents. In the twenty-first century, we see clearly that the demographics show much heterogeneity in more than one category, and cultural differences are becoming more widespread. The reasons for emigration are interesting to study and range from economic dif-

ferences to wars in other lands, with many other motivating factors. The once relatively homogeneous population was called upon to welcome newcomers and help them assimilate into the American education system. Many of the immigrants have done so, yet the current trend indicates a preference not to assimilate *per se* but to maintain their own customs as they study in a place many believe offers the best education. Differences are often welcome, but differences are often received negatively; religion, food, language, and family practices are but a few factors that usually differ from the American style of life in general. Observation of these differences, fears, lack of understanding, unease, and other feelings on the part of the host country’s residents have often led to a resistance in allowing new persons into the most basic areas of society, especially education. Even when accepted, the immigrants may be treated in ways that are not hospitable, whether intended or not. These actions interfere with equity and equal access.

Academic characteristics that may create inequities or lack of equal access for new populations may be more subtle. For example, if instructors are not familiar with the ways in which immigrants have been educated in their own countries, unintentional obstacles may be placed in the pathway. In some countries, students are expected to attend lectures, take notes, and not ask any questions, as doing so may make the instructor appear to be incompetent. Other students report that their education systems are corrupt and depend upon payment or other favors from the family for a student to pass. Many educational systems function on the student’s ability to write a final examination in essay form; such

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students may be completely unfamiliar with multiple choice questions, fill-in-the-blank, matching, true or false, coloring in a circle, short answer tests, pop quizzes, and the like. The result is that a student who may have excelled in his or her own country may appear to be mediocre in our system because of lack of familiarity with formats and approaches. In addition, students with various types of challenges (e.g., vision impairment, hearing impairment, dyslexia, limited mobility) may require accommodations which, by law, are expected. No one should be “written off” because the instructor or registrar senses that the individual will not be able to be competitive or even competent in the classroom. Too often, expectations are not high enough for all who choose to enroll, and more gaps are created.

Financial matters are a consideration for virtually all students in postsecondary institutions. Except for those individuals whose families are able to pay tuition without assistance, students are usually in search of financial aid in the form of loans, grants, scholarships, work-study opportunities, and the like. Immigrant students fall into the same categories, even when they may have arrived in this country with financial stability; expenses and unexpected situations arise, and many must drop out or interrupt their studies. Students with challenges may also encounter financial problems that others do not experience, depending upon their area of need. While a “free, appropriate, public education” (FAPE) is a federal mandate up to a defined age, extraneous expenses such as additional tutoring, extra paper for a notetaker, and other non-covered purchases may be required. Older citizens, who may often be able to attend class tuition-free, may

find that expenses other than tuition are greater than they had anticipated and may not be affordable on retirement pensions. While classroom instructors have little control over financial aspects, they can still have an impact by (1) continuing to treat all students equally, regardless of financial status, (2) support student financial aid through donations and other activities; (3) lobby the institutions to address more financial solutions for students.

Our Challenges and Our Responses

Our challenges as educators have been spelled out in the scenarios and research above. Our responses must match the situations so that solutions may be found. Three triads are recommended for educators to examine in order to select and implement those approaches that can be effective.

Triad I: Reach Down

Because the Maryland state plan acknowledges that many of the problems faced by college students begin long before college enrollment, as emphasized by Dr. James E. Lyons, Sr., Secretary of Higher Education, Maryland Higher Education Commission (January 2010), educators must reach down into the elementary, middle, and high schools to whet students’ appetites for learning that will build stability in the face of obstacles. We must promote careers; we must implement programs such as Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID); we must become involved with students at earliest levels. These actions will help to close gaps before some even develop.

Triad II: Reach Out

We must focus not simply on enrollment figures but more specifically on the degree pursuit of current college students and provide support for them to complete

their degrees. Educators need to develop “kaleidoscope curricula” and methods that resonate with diverse groups and be prepared to modify techniques so that all students can be reached. Again, closing learning gaps can be accomplished with thoughtful planning, preparation, and instruction.

Triad III: Reach Up

We must enhance the pedagogical component by keeping instruction fresh, new, and changing appropriately. We must develop and maintain cultural competency among all staff members through professional development, growth, and creativity. We must continue to be aware of possible biases in our approaches to instruction and interaction in the classroom. Certainly these thrusts can curb and eliminate gaps in student achievement. We must see that the alumni office develops and enhances methods of tracking students after graduation.

Synthesizing the Triads and Forming Action Plans

Each educator must continue to pursue professional development to stay current with the ever-changing patterns of learners in the classroom. Each must also examine the recommendations here and select one or more to carry out. We must continue to realize that education is a dynamic, not a static, phenomenon; we have to tap our kaleidoscopes daily to discover what new scenarios we are facing and embracing so that we can eliminate our biases and provide equity and equal access for all learners.

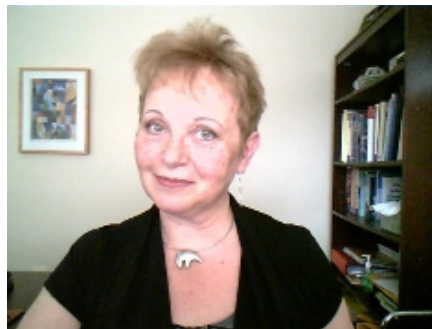


Online Learning— As Revolutionary As the Printing Press?

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At a recent conference, the keynote speaker remarked that when googling the word “professor” the first site that appears is <www.ratemyprofessors.com> I was surprised although I was familiar with this site, in which students evaluate their instructors in a similar way that we rate any other product purchased online. At the same conference, I was listening to one presenter after another lecture about how active learning with the use of technology is now dramatically changing higher education. The Big Change is coming, they were saying. Saying it and applying it in practice were two different things though. It was clear to me that even those familiar with the principles of the transformation now happening in higher education have difficulty shifting from how this business has been practiced in the last 1000 years.

First, education is no longer about a place: the college campus. Today students can take almost any course online and for that matter no longer be bound by geographic location in terms of what institution they want to be affiliated with. Today we speak of an individual student’s “learning space,” the physical, online, real or virtual space which a student creates using any learning modality currently available, from textbooks to online learning management systems, from classrooms to lecture podcasts. For that reason and many others, the university or the professors are no longer at the



Dr. Diana Zilberman

center of education: the learners are.

Gone are the days when professors were the main holders of knowledge. All of us have access to immediate information, so the question for teachers and students alike is how to manage it: how to access, sort good information from bad, categorize it, and ultimately be able to use it for solving problems. And the nature of the problems is changing as fast as the rate of new information created and disseminated. Why should students memorize the capitals of African nations when they can see them listed on <www.nationsonline.org>? Would not a better project be a study of the African population’s influx to cities in the last ten years? And better yet, an analysis of what triggered that migration?

But academia, with its millennium tradition, has a difficult time adapting to the New Millennium. Long-held traditions such as processions of its members clad in academic garb to the accompaniment of baroque music are evidence of how dear these traditions are to its members. And yet, many higher education institutions, and especially those whose students are non-traditional (working adults) have started responding to the needs of today’s learners. It is not surprising then that community colleges have embraced the Big Change for quite some time by offering online courses and entire programs while many universities

are still clinging to their resident students.

More people than ever are enrolled in online courses where the instructor’s role is guiding learning and not “professing” it. Following the model of other industries, more and more colleges and universities are now providing students with options of a variety of learning modalities and formats, from on campus to online to any blend in between. Similarly, students have choices of how to access college services. If online is not an option, they are more than likely to shop around and find the institution that offers this option, be it close to their home or outside of their state or even country. As an industry, education is now global, with the emergence of universities that offer online courses worldwide.

I look forward to attending a conference, some time in the near future, where presenters will lecture less and instead involve me and their audience in the modality in which they convey their topic. Never since the invention of the Guttenberg press in 1440 did higher education see a revolution similar to what it experiences today. After all, our books have been, and still are, one of the most user-friendly and easy to access media of communication. Now given a choice, what would we opt for: our books or our laptops?

