

# CITY CURRENTS



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CHANCELLOR DAY'S MID YEAR ADDRESS —

## The Great Seal of City College

By Dr. Philip R. Day, Jr.,  
Chancellor

Good morning and Happy New Year. I hope all of you enjoyed the holiday break and the celebration of a new year. Val and I were in New England, of course, where we hosted a growing family with grandchildren. Then, the two of us quietly toasted the beginning of the New Year. That's how we like to do it in Maine, quietly. Not for us the thousand pound Waterford crystal ball that descends in New York's Times Square before millions of viewers. Except our easternmost town, Eastport, Maine, demonstrated their own version of this tradition. From the roof of a three-story brick building on the main street, in front of a few hundred souls, they lowered a twenty-foot replica of a sardine at midnight. And now other towns are following suit. This year, in Lebanon, Pennsylvania, they lowered a loaf of bologna weighing 150 pounds. In Atlanta, it was an 800 pound peach. And in Tempe, Arizona, they dropped a giant tortilla chip into a jar of salsa. You can see why we prefer Maine. And in Eastport, they'll be storing the sardine safely until next year at a new restaurant, that just opened called...The Pickled Herring.

Now for today's address. I want to call your attention to something so omnipresent among us that it's taken for granted and often escapes our notice as a thing of importance. Sometimes you see it on glass or metal or cloth. Often, it's in a letter and it's always there on a pay check stub. It's on the college diploma

and it even adorns our most prominent building on the Ocean Campus. I speak, of course, about the great seal of City College with the emblematic pillar and its maxim, "The Truth Shall Make You Free." I was quite surprised, after an effort to discover the origin of this maxim, that no one seems to know how it came to be enshrined or exactly when it was adopted by the college, though it has been prominent since the late 1940s. It's not unusual, however, that a college seal would exalt truth. Many colleges have adopted some version of the Latin for truth, *veritas*, or *lux*, meaning light, or even a combination of the two as in "the lamp of truth." The seal expresses the legitimacy and authority of an institution. It also reflects the educational ideals of the institution. That is why it contains such symbols as an open book, a torch of light, the pillars of knowledge, or one of the Latin phrases.

And so we have the motto for City College: "The Truth Shall Make You Free." These words are usually associated with those of a great teacher including notables such **Jesus of Nazareth** (a master teacher according to his followers), **Alexis De Tocqueville**, **Jane Addams**, **William James** and **Mother Theresa**, to name a few. I have been told that some might have reservations about exalting these words because they are so connect-



Photo by Monica Davey

**Dr. Philip R. Day, Jr., Chancellor, delivers his Mid-Year Address on January 16, 2007 in the Diego Rivera Theatre on the Ocean Campus.**

ed to one religion, Christianity, when we live in a pluralistic society of many faiths. But I want to say that Christianity is not the only faith or belief system where the idea of truth and freedom is prominent. In a little book, written in and about San Francisco just this last year, I came across a little story that makes this point.

A young man asked the dharma teacher, "Since the Buddha said that Buddhism has nothing to teach, how can you be a teacher of Buddhism?"

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"I teach that there is nothing to teach," the dharma teacher replied.

"But you teach that we need to practice."

"Practice is necessary."

"So you do teach something."

Unruffled, the dharma teacher said nothing.

"And you teach about detachment, compassionate action, and many other things," said the young man. "These may all be good things, but to say that you aren't teaching is a bald-faced lie. You teach all the time."

Again, the dharma teacher made no reply.

"A Buddhist who teaches is a liar, even when what he teaches is the truth," the young man muttered to himself, vowing never to set foot in such a place again. Thus he stepped into his freedom.

Now much has been said and written about "the truth shall make you free," and I am not likely to add much to the meaning of the phrase as a whole. But I do like the paraphrase I read somewhere "The truth will set you free, but first it will make you miserable." Or the paraphrase of **Aldus Huxley**, "You shall know the truth, and the truth will make you mad." Which leads me to the word itself – truth, and more specifically the concept of truth in the context of education. That is what I want to highlight for a few moments. I think that the concept of truth, considering its prominence for the college, is worthy of some attention on our part.

## An Ideal of Educational Experience

Let's begin with what is truth. The simplest definition of truth is this: something that is true, in accordance with fact or reality, genuine, not spurious or counterfeit. We sometimes think of truth in con-

trast to its antonym, for example truth and lies. Perhaps you are familiar with what is called the Liar's Paradox. There are various versions of it, but it is conveyed in a story of a land in which all the people were either **Diogenes** or **Ananias**. The Diogenes always told the truth. The Ananias always lied. In that land, two men were walking on a road when they encountered a stranger. The stranger mumbled something that was inaudible. The first man said, "He said he was an Ananias." The second man said to the first one, "You're a liar." Now, by careful reasoning, we can know the identity of the two men. But, I'll spare you the consternation. The reasoning goes like this. The stranger who mumbled something could not have said that he was an Ananias. A liar could not say he was a liar, as he would then be telling the truth, something he could not have done. So, when the first man said that the stranger claimed he was an Ananias, he had to be lying. The first man was therefore an Ananias himself. The second man, who said the first man was lying, was correct. He was therefore a Diogenes, a truth teller. The message of the story is that truth is a quality of very high value but it can be hard to come by. In our courts, the oath taken by witnesses is to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. But, as someone has said, there are only two times when it is safe to tell the whole truth – anonymously or posthumously.

During the past few weeks, while giving thought to the idea of truth, I became aware of how often and how extensively this quality is valued. In the theater, I would discover in the notes about a play or in the review of a movie and the critics observation about the writer's concern with some fundamental truth. The same would be true in the program notes of a concert – the composer's devotion to the

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idea, the integrity of the idea. Or it would be in the commentary on a work of architecture or a treatise on history, the attention given to genuineness and honesty of form and content. We see this concern in the controversy among academics about the online encyclopedia, Wikipedia, and the veracity of entries, where anyone can write or edit articles and the number of articles surpasses the entire Encyclopedia Britannica. A new word has even entered our vocabulary, wikiality – a hybrid of “Wikipedia” and “reality,” truth based upon consensus rather than fact. Hence, the characterization of truth being a moving target! Yes, we may vigorously debate what truth is, but we pursue it mightily, maddening as it is to secure it.

As educators, truth is surely the motto of our pursuit. I’ll never forget how sharply clear this seemed to me when I first read the story of **Galileo**, the Italian physicist, astronomer, and philosopher, sometimes referred to as the “father of science.” There he was in a time when the universe was considered earth-centric, and he was arguing and attempting to prove scientifically that the planets revolve around the sun, not the earth. It was heresy and the church considered his teaching dangerous. He went to Rome to defend his views. Then he was ordered to appear before the Holy Office. But the court issued a sentence of condemnation and house-arrest, from which he never recovered. Now, Galileo was neither the originator of such ideas nor the final word. But he did stand for truth, to the extent that truth could be discerned. And we are forever in his debt for it.

And there the matter should stand – or so you would think. But, as with the **Darwin** controversy, it sometimes takes ages for truth to be revealed and accepted. And it is never fully revealed, mind you, as **Robinson Jeffers** wrote his poem, “The Silent Shepherds”...

...Science and mathematics

Run parallel to reality, they symbolize it, they squint at it,

They never touch it: consider what an explosion

Would rock the bones of men into little white fragments and unsky the world

If any mind for a moment touch truth.



There is a wonderful exchange in the beginning of **Stephen Hawking’s** *A Brief History of Time* which reflects the gravity of the pursuit of truth. He tells of a lecture, presumably given by **Bertrand Russell**, on the subject of astronomy. The speaker had just described how the solar system is organized, with the earth revolving around the sun and the sun orbiting around a vast collection of stars. Suddenly, a lady in the back of the hall spoke out, “What you have told us is rubbish. The world is really a flat plate supported on the back of a giant tortoise.” The scientist looked at her for a moment and then asked, “What is the tortoise

standing on?” And the old lady replied, “You’re very clever, young man, very clever. But it’s turtles all the way down!” Well, that story surely illustrates the challenge of reaching the truth. And it also reminds us of the heavy responsibility for its pursuit. It prompts us to consider what makes our version of events better than another’s. It cautions us about the

extent of our knowledge, what it is that we actually know and how we know it. And I think it alerts us, given the centrality of truth in our motto, to the boldness of the attempt to impart truth.

In preparing this speech, I almost despaired of mentioning the subject of truth, mostly because of the opaqueness of the subject. It seemed important to me, but I sensed danger in its abstractness. I was rescued, however, by discovering a book entitled *On Truth*, by **Harry G. Frankfurt**, published in 2006. It was a little book, beautifully bound in gold leaf and so small it could be considered an essay. In the introduction, Frankfurt tells

why he wrote it. He had previously written a book entitled, “On Bullshit,” and lest you write this off too quickly I must say that Harry Frankfurt is not a lightweight author. He is a retired professor of philosophy at Princeton University and formerly the chair of the Philosophy Department at Yale. In writing the first book, *On Bullshit*, he had sought to expose bullshitting as indifference to truth, in fact a disregard for conveying information and the blatant attempt to manipulate the opinions and attitudes of others. Frankfurt was, of course, responding to the pervasive tendency in

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our society, some would say the tidal wave, of bullshitting, whether in politics or in social relations or in the communications industry including television, the press, and the Internet. Frankfurt disclosed that in describing the insidious threat of bullshitting he assumed that his readers would share his view that being indifferent to truth is an undesirable and reprehensible characteristic. For that reason, he had omitted the explanation of why truth is important and why we should care about it. In the sequel, *On Truth*, he set about to provide illumination about what it is that makes truth so important.

Here, then, is a distillation of *On Truth*.

Frankfurt gives explicit reasons for what he calls the pervasive love of truth. Number one, it has practical utility. In order for society to be minimally functional, there has to be honesty and clarity in reporting facts, including a stubborn concern for accuracy. He speaks of our reliance on architects, engineers, and builders for correct and reliable measurements. He mentions medicine and the skills of sound judgment based upon facts. He cites writers, artists, and musicians who “get things right.” He even includes historians and social commentators, where subjectivity is inescapable but where the range of interpretations can be well understood and the variations within appropriate tolerances. Number two, the love of truth is an imperative for success. The regard for truth and distinguishing truth from lies enables societies to prosper and flourish. It causes people to eat

properly, to work correctly, and to raise children better. He suggests that having accurate information permits people to act with a reasonable expectation of success. It allows us to function intelligently, to appreciate the possibilities while understanding the risks, and then to accomplish our goals. He quotes **Spinoza**



Photo by Monica Davey

on the intrinsic joy people experience in discovering truth, recognizing the indispensability of truth, and the empowerment it provides to live fully. He concludes that we cannot refrain from wanting the truth, whether we are aware of it or not, and that we will strive to possess it because we cannot live without it.

I’ve decided that I’m glad City College has a motto that exalts truth. Truth is a worthy ideal and it sets a solid standard for education. And now that I’ve read Frankfurt, I take no small delight, in fact a renewed sense of pride in the notion that the college is a cultural counterforce to bullshitting. The college promotes the highest ideals of society in caring about

truth, teaching the pursuit of truth, and providing the joys and rewards of discovering truth.

## The Reality of Educational Experience

I suggested earlier that the seal of a college tends to reflect an educational ideal. Now, let’s compare the ideal to reality. To do this, I want to call your attention to two books written about seventy-five years apart, coincidentally framing the historic timeline of City College. The first was in print just before the founding of the college. *The Aims of Education*, by **Alfred North Whitehead** published in 1929, contained a number of essays prepared by the author for delivery in America and England. His intention was to protest dead knowledge and inert ideas. His thesis was this: that “students are alive, and the purpose of education is to stimulate and guide their self-development. It follows as a corollary ... that teachers should also be alive with living thoughts.” Since its publication and until recent times, the book appeared as a classic on many reading lists in higher education and in schools of education. Although the book is now dated, with its references to school boys and artisans’ children, it tells much about the thinking that shaped the modern era of higher education, including perhaps our own institution, founded in 1935\*. It clearly sought to transform education that had become pedantic, routine, and hodgepodge. It suggested a vision of education as purposeful and imaginative, calling for an intellectual revolution in teaching and learning.

Whitehead offered advice in every area of the curriculum: the classics or liberal education, technical education, the sciences, and mathematics. He addressed principals of pedagogy and suggested that education be matched to the developmental ages of students; that standard-

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ized examinations be replaced with questions tailored to specific classes and individual students; that theoretical and utilitarian applications be considered in relation to each other; and that beyond the beautifully crafted lecture instructors should teach with experiments and problem solving activities for students. He offered ideas about teaching algebra and quadratic equations, as well as geometry, physics, and Latin. He suggested organizing curricula to include both general education and a specialization. With respect to the disjointed nature of many programs of study which lacked purpose and integration, he wrote a particularly scathing attack:

\*NOTE: IN THE SPEECH I MISTAKENLY REFERRED TO CITY COLLEGE STARTING IN 1942 WHICH (OF COURSE IS NOT CORRECT...IT STARTED IN AUGUST, 1935). THE SCIENCE BUILDING TO WHICH OUR GREAT MOTTO, "THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE" IS AFFIXED, DID OPEN IN 1940. THE DATE OF 1942, WHICH WAS LATER REFERENCED IN THE TEXT, WAS THE YEAR THE PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION CONCLUDED ITS 8-YEAR STUDY OF UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION, THIS WAS MISTAKENLY LINKED TO THE FOUNDING DATE OF CITY COLLEGE. SORRY FOR THE CONFUSION AND SPECIAL APOLOGIES TO OUR COLLEGE HISTORIAN AND PROFESSOR, AUSTIN WHITE, WHO MUST HAVE WINCED AT MY OBVIOUS MISTAKE. IT MUST HAVE BEEN THE HEAD COLD!

"Instead of this single unity, we offer ... algebra, from which nothing follows; geometry, from which nothing follows; science, from which nothing follows; history, from which nothing follows; a couple of languages, never mastered; and lastly, most dreary of all, literature, represented by plays of Shakespeare, with

philological notes and short analyses of plot and character to be in substance committed to memory. Can such a list be said to represent Life, as it is known in the midst of living it? The best that can be said of it is that it is a rapid table of contents which a deity might run over in his mind while he was thinking of creating a world, and has not yet determined how to put it together."

Alfred North Whitehead called for a coherent curriculum that would integrate learning and lead to wisdom. In his way of thinking, he wanted students to arrive at the woods, or forest, through the trees. He wanted students to have an eye for the whole chessboard. He wanted students to be able to reason in the abstract and in the concrete. His vision was grand, and it set the stage for colleges and universities in the years that followed.

Before getting to the second book, I want to offer a comment or footnote related to City College at its beginning. In the period after Whitehead's book and prior to the establishment of City College in 1935, it seemed that little clarity had developed in higher education. In the year 1942 (seven years after the founding of City College), the Progressive Education Association concluded an eight-year study of undergraduate education with the following statement: "Liberal arts college faculties seldom state what they mean by liberal or general education. Perhaps they do not know." I can only conclude from this that the formation of a new college must have been an exhilarating experience. Imagine the opportunity to create a college and develop an educational vision, not tied to traditions or wed to the past. Whatever the challenges in the college's first year, and they have been well documented in Professor **Austin White's** book, I like to think that it was a good birth. The parents had to have great expectations for the college they founded ... and surely we are the better for it.

The second book I want to mention was published in 2006: *Our Underachieving Colleges*, by **Derek Bok**. This book also calls for examining the undergraduate educational experience. It is important to note, however, that the book is not entitled "Our Failed Colleges." It isn't intended to exploit negativism and capitalize on crisis, as did some books and reports on higher education in the 80s and 90s and even most recently with the release of the *Spelling's Commission Report on the Status of Higher Education*. Rather, *Our Underachieving Colleges* is an affirmation of the enormous success of American colleges and universities and proof of their ongoing contribution to society. The book tells us, for instance, that 75% of college alumni are satisfied or very satisfied with their undergraduate experience. It confirms that most graduating students believe they have made substantial intellectual progress. It cites studies indicating that college students overall achieve significant gains in critical thinking, general knowledge, moral reasoning, quantitative skills, and other competencies. But the book also tells us, in carefully researched chapters, that while students learn much and continue to grow in knowledge and skills they accomplish far less than they should. Many students graduate without being able to write well enough to satisfy their employers. Many cannot reason clearly or perform competently in analyzing complex, non-technical problems. Most have never taken a course in quantitative reasoning nor acquired cultural and aesthetic interests in college. Large majorities have not learned what they need to know in order to become active and informed citizen of a democracy. From such examples, the conclusion is drawn that students do not make gains in important areas and that they should be learning more in college.

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At this point, I want to offer another footnote related to City College. Clearly, what Bok is saying about the under-achievement of students in postsecondary education has exceptions. And if there is any segment of higher education that would be justified in claiming educational success above the norm it would be community colleges. Many faculty members have chosen to teach in community colleges because they are devoted to the centrality of teaching and the tangible development of students who respond so successfully to the extra effort and attention given to teaching and academic support. The success of this teaching is proven by the comparative performance of our students when they transfer to baccalaureate institutions. That said, community colleges are nevertheless not only faced with the same challenges as all other segments of higher education, but other high stakes challenges that are unique to our mission and role as the primary point of access to higher education. Together we need to keep examining the educational experience and how it can be done better. There is evidence that our students can, should and must do better.

In the event that we find it difficult to justify and consider parts of this rationale for responding affirmatively to the matter of “doing better” as a bit too esoteric or at too high a plane contextually for us to relate to, let me share with you some information that puts the need into a different context.

In the “leaky pipeline” of our current educational system 82/100 9th graders will not earn an Associates or Baccalaureate Degree. For every 100 9th graders, 68 will graduate from high school on time. Of those, only 40 will enroll in college and of those, 27 will still be enrolled the following year. Of those, 18 will earn an Associate’s Degree within 3 years or a B.A. within 6 years.

Incredibly, at a time in which we need as much educational and creative talent as possible, our delivery system, and I include all of K-16, doesn’t seem to be able to hit on all cylinders. Take a look at



*Photo by Monica Davey*

the education skill profile for today’s workforce. What we are witnessing are significant changes in our workplace and significant growth in the number of jobs in that workplace that require post-secondary education degrees through 2010. However, when you look at the education profile for today’s workforce, based on current Census Data, people 25 and over versus the education level required by a 2010 “creative” workforce there are stark differences between what we need versus what the current system is providing.

Obviously on this more pragmatic level, the stakes are considerably higher and the challenges related to achieving a greater degree of institutional and student success is much more real. At last year’s Global Conference on Education sponsored by the Milken Institute, a group of

Nobel Laureates in Science/Medicine were brought together to focus on and discuss the major problems facing our world today and their potential solutions. These scientists/doctors identified the

Top 10 Problems that humanity was going to face and address over the next 50 years. This included

Democracy

Disease

Education

Energy

Environment

Food

Population

Poverty

Terrorism and War

Water

The Top 10 Solutions for the Next 50 Years were also identified. In six out of the 10 issues/problems,

a quality education was determined to be the ultimate solution. I would have to further argue (correctly I believe) that a quality education is the primary basis for solving many of our global energy problems as well, but you can’t expect Nobel Laureates to get it right all the time!

If that were not enough to tweak our senses, we could focus on a rationale that directs its attention to the critical matter of economic and social justice. When we examine, who “wins” and who “loses” under the current performance scenario, all of the current research suggests that students of color, particularly those who are from economically impoverished backgrounds, are the primary “losers.” On practically all measures of educational equity and attainment these students who represent a growing segment of our

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society and workforce, who are primarily of African American and Hispanic origin, are at the bottom rung of the ladder of success and are over-represented in the number and percent associated with school dropout rates.

Clearly, the temptation would be to rationalize these critical issues, as K-12 problems which they need to address. Arguably, they really do need to refocus their efforts in this regard and we can and will assist directly in that process. However, I don't see a systemic solution or cure-all on the horizon and so for the immediate future we need to focus our efforts on the strategies that insure the highest degree of success for those students who overcome great conditions and barriers, arrive on our doorsteps and are looking for a better future, regardless of their level of preparation.

A former colleague of mine Dr. **Don Stewart**, the former President of the College Board (now President of the Chicago Community Foundation) once stated as he was releasing the Profile of SAT and Achievement Test Takers, that "Education is a great equalizer. If we don't use it to balance the scales of inequality, we will become an even more fragmented and divisive society." Simply stated, the community colleges of the future need to forge a leadership role in helping to solve this problem and contribute in a significant way to the achievement of this objective. For those of you who may not have read the guest editorial in Sunday's *Chronicle* by **Ria Sengupta**, entitled: "Community Colleges Asked to do Too Much," this challenge is now at our doorstep and policy makers, and elected officials are, with increasing frequency being drawn to it. Let me add (with a sense of pride and confidence), that no college in this state, or country for that matter is better positioned to meet this challenge than City College of San Francisco.

Getting back to the two books, the one by Alfred North Whitehead and the other by Derek Bok, the common message is that we should not take for granted the quality of higher education and the state of



*Photo by Monica Davey*

teaching and learning. For all the benefits that a college education brings, there are compelling questions that demand a serious look at how much students are learning and what is actually being accomplished in the classroom. What do we know about how students are progressing intellectually, culturally, and professionally? What do we know about methods of instruction that work best and for which students? And what about the curriculum – how do we know that the curriculum ensures that students achieve goals appropriate to a general or a career education? Derek Bok raises these questions and then provides a response. He says that many of these questions have been investigated by researchers and that some professors have been quite dedicated to finding better methods of teaching and

learning, but the results rarely spread to faculties in general or institutions as a whole. He finds that most of the discoveries that might improve educational experience appear piecemeal and few people even read about the findings. He points out that a great wall separates the world of research from the world of practice with respect to teaching and learning, a surprising divide given faculty commitment to research in their chosen fields. One might think that faculty committees organized to review and oversee the college curriculum at these great universities would take into account the relevant research and recognize the weaknesses it exposes in their undergraduate programs. It would seem that professors, trained in research, would be ideally prepared to take full advantage of empirical findings about undergraduate education and student learning.

Imagine what a boost it would be for students and the success of higher education if faculties were to rigorously identify the gaps between educational ideals and actual accomplishments and insist upon greater progress. And is that not the message of our college seal and the ideal of caring about truth? And is that not what we are dedicated to and for which we are striving?

## A Vision of Educational Experience

In speaking about this subject, I know that the responsibility for examining the college curriculum and instruction belongs in the domain of academic affairs, and specifically the faculty. Revitalizing the educational experience is

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not something a Chancellor can do, but the call for it is something he can do. It is the faculty, ultimately, who will engage. All I can do is ask you, a collective body, to seriously consider this proposition, bring to it the enormous talents that you have, and help us – for the sake of our college, for the sake of our legacy, for the sake of our students – to better achieve our ideals of education. But, what does this mean and how might we do it?

Let me respond by drawing on what City College has already said and in many cases is putting into practice. Over and over again, the college has spoken of revitalizing the educational experience – maybe not precisely in those words but in the plans adopted and the initiatives proposed. And, interestingly, I might add, I have often observed in many of these meetings that it is not uncommon for new ideas and creative propositions to emerge, all aimed at improving education at City College. More specifically, in the Strategic Plan for City College, it is made a priority with many associated initiatives identified for implementation. The second strategic goal is “to strengthen and improve academic programs and courses...” The objectives to accomplish this include reviewing and refining graduation requirements, diversifying the curriculum, promoting instructional methods that optimize student success, and adopting student learning outcomes that ensure coherence of the educational experience and the educational performance of students. The strategic objectives elsewhere in the plan further expand upon strengthening the education experience in the area of basic skills (Priority Number One) and career programs (Priority Number Three). Similar findings and proposals may be found in the most recent Self-Study Report prepared by the college for re-accreditation. And the Visiting Team, picking up on the college’s assessment, made one item a key

recommendation: namely the proposal for student learning outcomes as a core element of the college curriculum and programs of study.

When I consider the sheer number of recommendations and initiatives, I conclude that the City College faculty does not need me to ask for more educational revitalization. It is underway already. So what is it that we need to do? Well, after reading the two books already cited, I’ve had an epiphany – a little “e” mind you, certainly not the manifestation of a god or a demigod, but just a plain manifestation or a sense of something. In thinking about the various intentional initiatives, it seemed to me that there is one thing we could do to unite everything else and from which much would flow. I know it sounds like a “theory of everything,” but I am thinking that the one thing above other things is ... a clarification of the aims of education at City College and what we want students to achieve in completing a program and earning a degree. This is precisely what both books that I have mentioned say needs to be done. Accrediting agencies expect it periodically, and faculties themselves undertake it from time to time. They undertake a review of the aims and dimensions of the educational experience.

In suggesting the review of educational aims and expectations, I want to make it clear that I am speaking of curricula primarily at the degree and to some extent at the program level (although this will need further clarification), but definitely not at the course level. I believe this would be a more focused and hopefully a more simplified approach. I believe that if our faculty were to adopt an overarching pursuit of the aims and outcomes of core education, we would be taking a giant leap in the right direction. We would be addressing the major question – what do we want students to learn and be able to practice as a result of their col-

lege experience. The effort would lead to a more coherent and systematic curriculum at all levels. And from the effort, other initiatives would emerge. It is the one thing we can do to bring coherence and clarity to the educational experience. I am not saying that there has to be a single view of the curriculum or that the relation of general education and specializations would not be encompassed. I am simply saying that we would be able to articulate what a degree is and does for students particularly in terms of expected outcomes. And by genuinely applying ourselves to the endeavor, we could confidently say that our graduates upon completing their program of study, achieve the goals inherent to a quality education at City College.

Because the initiative is already underway, I want to make a connection between a review of educational aims and the effort to define student learning outcomes. I know that you have heard many words from us about student learning outcomes. And you know that we have needed to give attention to this activity, as there is a nation-wide expectation for it, mostly due to the inclusion of learning outcomes as a standard for re-accreditation. Individual members of our faculty have responded on a variety of levels to the initiative, and while we are pleased that so many have undertaken to do this we may have incorrectly assumed that all faculty members would agree and that learning outcomes would proliferate at the course level. So, while I wouldn’t want to discourage the continuing formulation of course objectives and student learning outcomes, I do want to suggest that the proposal for a review of the overall aims of a degree or program is another way of looking at the student learning outcomes initiative. By concentrating on outcomes at the degree level, and perhaps at the program level, we may

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achieve the intentions of the student learning outcomes effort and do it with greater unity and broader interest.

In order to advance this idea, I have had some preliminary discussions with the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate. Within the framework of our Institutional Self-Study, we agreed on the desirability of a Joint Task Force on Student Learning Outcomes, with members jointly appointed by the Chancellor and the Senate. The purpose of the task force would be to follow up on progress to date and provide coordination and direction for the initiative in the future. In further deliberations, the Executive Committee of the Senate suggested that the role statement for the task force include an examination of institutional and program learning outcomes and keeping them broad in scope. I think that is an excellent suggestion and very consistent with the proposal of today's address to define the overall aims and expectations of the educational experience, what might be called "the dimensions of core education at City College." I think it makes lots of sense to begin at the top.

Some years ago in Florida, we wanted to ensure that students could transfer easily from community colleges to the state universities and so we spent a considerable amount of time on the issues of common course numbering and identifying the different levels of instruction (at the course level I might add) that would be defined as "lower division" and "upper division" and the role that the community colleges and their academic departments would play in their delivery. But the most unifying thing we did was to define the core requirements and specifically, what we meant by the general education core.

Let me be more specific. Through a rather lengthy and fully participatory process, the faculty with the support of

an outside facilitator identified five (5) major areas of studies that were the basis for our curriculum framework for the Associate of Arts Degree. Those areas included:

Historical and Global Studies,

Cultural and Aesthetic Studies,

Mathematics, Science and Technology Studies,

Political and Economic Studies  
and

Social and Human Studies.

For each of these specific areas of study, the faculty also identified specific objectives/outcomes related to the curriculum area; what faculty would try to achieve in terms of impacting on students learning; and finally, what students needed to do to commit themselves as learners. For example, in the area of Historical and Global Studies the curriculum area would focus on teaching students so that they could acquire:

knowledge of national and global geography, including regional, cultural, and ecological factors;

knowledge of the roles of science in technology in shaping human history

understanding of the shifting views and orientations of gender, race, class, ethnicity over time and across cultures

etc.

From a teaching strategy standpoint in this same area of study, faculty would present Historical and Global Studies in ways which encourage the development of: a basic understanding of the core content areas associated with the area cluster; Advanced Reading Skills; written and oral communication skills including listening skills; research skills; an understanding of how to use information appropriately; the ability to work with others to understand and accept individual and cultural differences; the ability to

critically reflect upon one's relationship to local, national, and global communities, etc.

Students in this area of study would commit themselves to developing the capacity to accept and respect differences among people; an appreciation of how learning about others can lead to tolerance and harmony, etc.

I won't go into further details but the effort I just outlined was reflected in and for each of the five areas of study that the faculty had identified as the major components of the curriculum framework related to our Associate of Arts Degree Program. I can only say that it was the best step we could have taken in order to achieve comfortability and agreement across educational sectors, and it generated a strong sense of focus and coherence among community colleges throughout the state. In our upcoming discussions with the Joint Task Force, I hope that we can pursue the potential applicability of this approach to our own situation at City College of San Francisco. I want to continue to work with the Academic Senate on the idea of reviewing the overall aims and expectations of degrees and programs, as I think it is a promising path to advance and define what we mean by a quality education at City College.

As we move forward in this effort, I anticipate we will rely heavily on the expertise of our faculty and the newly hired Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs. Which brings me to one of the major challenges we face in the coming months which is to find viable candidates to "fill the shoes" of our distinguished friend and colleague Dr. **Don Griffin**, our Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs. City College has enjoyed the academic leadership of this extraordinary individual who has announced his official retirement and will be leaving us in June. Don Griffin

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has served the college for over 35 years, and his efforts in this regard have been unparalleled. In recent years, he has held two positions simultaneously, Vice Chancellor of Student Development and Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, a feat in itself. But it is his academic leadership that I want to honor today.

He has preserved both the stability and the progressiveness of our academic environment. He has continuously sought to advance the quality of education, and under his leadership the college has continued to achieve distinction. He has championed the cause of diversity relentlessly, and his leadership contributed enormously to the very favorable report on institutional re-accreditation. The incredible success we have enjoyed in terms of our focus on Basic Skills; Student Success; Enrollment Management; and other initiatives (e.g., the successful implementation of the Latino Services Network; the successful launching and funding of the Asian Pacific American Success Program (APASS), as well as the renewal of our commitment to strengthen the African American Scholastic Programs and other student retention efforts), are all due to his diligence, vision, leadership and extraordinary ability to get the job done.



*Photo by Monica Davey*

Don Griffin knows the extent to which I have personally valued his service to the college and especially his counsel to me. And while he might permit an occasional re-engagement if we need him in the future, he is entitled to a well deserved rest – at least a short rest before his next incarnation. Don, I know you'll have some words with me for this, but your accomplishments; humility; vision and commitment has been a source of inspiration for us all and at such a level that we in turn draw strength from it.

Accordingly and during the spring term, we will be searching for a Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs. I would like to suggest that this search could be seen as the opportunity for another generation of educational leadership consistent with the ideals to which we aspire and about which I have spoken today. It is too often the case, in the search process for educational leadership, that institutions settle

for a candidate who meets the qualifications and is the most agreeable to the largest number of constituents but who lacks the vision and energetic ability to spark genuine revitalization of the academic experience. I would like to see City College go beyond the norm in selecting its next academic leader. We should not settle for a gatekeeper or preserver of the status quo. We should seek a candidate who challenges us, who works within the collegial environment but urges us on in a forward direction. And, who articulates and truly practices the advancement of educational experience and student success.

It is precisely because of Don Griffin's leadership and accomplishments that we are in a position to aspire to the next period of growth and development in academic affairs. Our foundation is solid and the framework is in place for the future. I would therefore urge that in the selection of a new academic leader we establish the highest expectation of visionary and energetic leadership for educational improvement and student success. Let us have the finest academic leader in the land, let us renew the enduring vision of our college for education based upon the care for truth, and let us recommit ourselves collectively and individually to the revitalization of the educational experience.

## Closing

In closing, let me point out that today, we have talked about the great seal of City College and making the education of students an even more promising experience as an expression of the care for truth. Whenever you see the college seal or look up to the inscription over Science Hall, I hope you will be reminded of the value of truth in our calling as educators.

Many years ago, the story is told, there

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lived a hermit in the hills above a little village, through which a clear stream flowed providing water and sustenance to the people. But the hermit lived to himself and few villagers ever saw him. They were suspicious, therefore, and convinced one another that he was mean and to be feared. After a time, he died and the village was relieved. But soon, the sparkling stream began to turn brown and was no longer fit for use. When the villagers climbed to the head of the stream, they discovered what the old man must have been doing for all those years – cleaning the spring from silt so that fresh, clear water flowed to the village below. He was the “keeper of the spring” who kept the water pure and made possible the quality of life for others.

Teachers and educators, you/we are the

keepers of the springs of education. What we do keeps education pure, enables students to learn and grow, and ensures the quality of life for all. May you go about this work with the modesty of the hermit and the idealism of the great seal of City College and its watchword to care for truth.

Thank you, and have a great Spring Semester!!

*Editor’s note: The full text of the Chancellor’s address and accompanying powerpoint presentation will be available online at [www.ccsf.edu](http://www.ccsf.edu) under the Office of the Chancellor.*

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