



OFFICIAL COLLEGE STATEMENT

April 2, 2018

Just One More

At our Flex Day to begin this spring semester, I asked each teacher, staff member and administrator to make an extra special City College effort to help one extra student complete the semester successfully. Success could be finishing a demanding required course or finishing all one's courses to graduate. Success could be applying for and then receiving financial aid. Success can be defined in many ways. I asked you to approach that one student who is the quiet one or the not-so-quiet one and ask this question: "Is there anything that is stressing you out and, if so, how can I help you with that?"

I developed this question during my years of teaching English full-time. The spring semester always seemed interminable to me. Each year I would struggle to get my own and my students' heads back in the game after spring break. Sure, I would try to exude enthusiasm and a "can-do" spirit and I would sincerely offer extra help to anyone who asked. But it often felt like I was slogging.

Because I never thought of myself as the best teacher in the world, I've always managed to ask for help when I needed some. I recall the advice of a colleague who said, "Students already know you will help them if they ask you. Instead, you need to ask *them*, but not as a group. Go up to one student and ask, "What's keeping you up at night these days?" or, "Is there something in your way, I can move out of your way?"

I started to try this and created other variant questions of my own and I found it really produced thoughtful responses that gave me an opportunity to learn about the real needs of my students and then to address their needs.

So I tried to do my part this semester by visiting the Puente class of Amy Miles and Gregoria Cahill at our Mission Center. I was so grateful for the invitation to meet these wonderful students. I told them they already knew how to write. The

key to success in a writing class is how to find one's authentic voice—and never to stop on this journey.

Last week a thank you card came to me signed by the students, one of whom wrote:

Thank you for taking the time to come and speak to us. To be honest I wanted to give up going to school because I am going through something, but when you came and said, "Don't quit, keep moving forward," I felt you were speaking directly to me. So thank you for that encouragement.

I am grateful to you for all you are doing to speak directly to your students to make sure they never give up. All I'm asking is, save just one more.

So now it's my own turn to ask you:

"Is there anything that is stressing you out and, if so, how can I help you with that?"

My door is open, always.

With kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Rocha', written in a cursive style.

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