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Some musings about my time at Collin County Community College....

We were so lucky to have had the opportunity to get in on the ground floor of a brand, spanking new institution of higher education for so many reasons. As “new hires,” we were able to help form the structure and culture of the then Collin County Community College, or CCCC, as well as to form new and lasting friendships. We “built” the college from the ground up. There was an enthusiasm among all of us that permeated the walls of the Central Campus (the only campus, at the time) and that went home with us and filled our conversations with family, friends, community members and business acquaintances. From my perspective, it was exciting to go to work each day. Every morning, I just knew something exciting was going to happen and couldn’t wait to see what it was.

We also were lucky to have a visionary (see attached pictures of my favorite CCCC mug for one vision) leader, John Anthony, who viewed all of us as important contributors to the success of the institution and who instilled values into the culture that I believed in and that I carry with me, even to this day (Thank you, John!). For example, we all were “faculty,” including instructors, staff, custodians, and facilities people. There would be no castes, or classes, of employees; we each were important, and vital to the success of the institution. Additionally, we would have no “ghettoing.” John insisted on office suite diversity. My suite included Joe Jaynes (history), Sharon Hosack (math), Jeff Edwards (economics), and me (accounting). Nearby were Martha Ewing, now Ellis (psychology), Shelly Lane, now Miller (speech), and Jocelyn Chadwick Joshua (English). We had to get to know each other across disciplines, which made us better colleagues and friends, but beyond that, this arrangement made us all better teachers. It began an iterative process of pedagogical discourse, trial and error, success and failure, and sometimes coauthoring articles about observations along the way. We learned “what was being done” in other disciplines and figured out how these strategies might work in our own classrooms. We were on campus from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm on weekdays – another strategy that created a team who worked well together for the good of the institution.

The Faculty Senate

It didn’t take long before an institutional structure began to form. Early on, probably 1987, a group of teaching faculty formed in my office. As I recall, the group included the folks mentioned above, but also Mary Fields (chemistry). I apologize if I’m not remembering correctly and if someone is left out, or if I included someone who wasn’t there. Eventually, we began discussing the overall role of the teaching faculty, including how it should be helping to shape the institution, particularly the academic mission of the college. Someone suggested the formation of a faculty senate as an organization that could organize and represent the perspective of the teaching faculty. After much discussion, we decided to run the idea past John Anthony, who responded,

“I was wondering how long it would take you all to suggest this. I fully support the idea,” or something like that. We presented the idea to the other teaching faculty, held a meeting to approve the new Faculty Senate, and elected Martha Ewing (Ellis) to be its first President. She was excellent!

The Excellence Task Force

The teaching faculty were already accomplishing great things in addition to excellence in the classroom: conducting workshops, publishing papers, making presentations, and contributing to the community. It soon became apparent that there should be a way to support and recognize this type of activity. As a result, we formed the Excellence Task Force. Its initial charge was to make recommendations regarding allocation of stipends, travel money, and three-year contracts to faculty engaged in these activities.

The Spring Creek Campus, and then some...

As we began to outgrow the Central Campus, we began planning for a new campus in Plano. As construction proceeded, under the expert guidance of Walt Nilsen and Ron Jackson, the rest of the faculty continued to “build” the institution. The teaching faculty created an Honors Task Force to begin the formation of an Honors Program (under the excellent oversight of Peggy Brown and Kay Mizell), a Strategic Planning Task Force to move us beyond a fledgling institution, an All College Council to keep us all moving in the same direction and to facilitate communication as we began to grow, and a Council on Institutional Effectiveness to, well, measure our effectiveness (how are we doing, so far?). Whew! We also began planning a new Preston Ridge Campus. By 1991, we began our first self-study for institutional reaccreditation.

While CCCC, now CCCC D (D for District, since we had multiple campuses) was still taking shape, there were other things that shaped the institutional culture:

- Team Day (see attached files and pictures for examples of this crazy competition that brought us all together) – everyone participated in some way, including John Anthony.
- Rex Parcell’s killer aerobics classes that helped us burn off steam at the end of the day.
- Peggy Brown’s hilarious class play that not only involved her students, but also a variety of faculty (as defined by John Anthony)
- Gary Hodge’s standing-room-only human sexuality classes (how is accounting supposed to compete with that?)
- John Anthony changing from his business suit into his tennis clothes in his car while traveling on Central Expressway between Central Campus and the Spring Creek Campus (Yikes!)
- The John Anthony Roast (see attached files for examples and newspaper articles).

I am so grateful to have been at Collin County Community College (now Collin College) at this critical and exciting time, and to have worked with such amazing people, some of whom are still my dearest friends, and the others who still hold a special place in my heart. It is exciting to see how far Collin College has come since that time and how it successfully has become a full-fledged model of excellence in higher education.