

# Core Team Meeting

February 27, 2015

Lynn Library 207

9:00 a.m.

## Minutes

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Bob Austin, Janet Barton, Carol Bevel, Dr. Tamara Clunis, , Janine Goode, Mark Hanna, Olga Kleffman, Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart, Jason Norman, April Sessler, Dr. Deborah Vess, and Reem Witherspoon

Others present: Lynae Jacob, Joy Brenneman, Kristin McDonald-Wiley

Recorder: Carolyn Leslie

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Susan Burks, Melanie Castro, Megan Eikner, Penny Massey, Kelly Prater, Heather Voran, Dr. Kathryn Wetzel, and Student Representatives: Andrew Alexander and Seth Brogdon

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES – (Bob Austin)

- Bob Austin asked for approval of the minutes from the January 16, 2015 No Excuses Core Team meeting. Mark Hannah made a motion to approve the minutes and Olga Kleffman seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by majority vote.

### CALL FOR ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS AND ACTION ITEMS - (Bob Austin)

- There were no additional agenda items or action items brought before the committee.

### DISCUSSION ITEMS

- **Advising Administrator of the Year – (April Sessler)**
  - Jason Norman was named Advising Administrator of the year for Texas at the NACADA conference in Corpus Christi. Congratulations were given to Jason for receiving this honor.
- **Dream 2015 Reflections – (All)**
  - Special guests: Lynae Jacob, Joy Brenneman and Kristin McDonald-Wiley attended the No Excuses meeting to give their feedback on the Dream Conference in Baltimore.
    - Lynae Jacob spoke about the session that the AC attendees presented on poverty. She said that several schools had similar ideas on beginning a program on campus but didn't know where to start. Many individuals didn't know how to connect with their local food bank. Lynae also said that the most valuable part of the trip was getting to know fellow AC employees. She now has a better understanding of who some of the people are that she didn't know before, and what their jobs entail. This will be very valuable in helping students find who they need to talk to on different issues.
  - A hand out of the speech Dr. Jill Biden gave at Dream 2015 was given to committee members. Dr. Biden's remarks reinforced the mission Amarillo College is trying to accomplish, which is making higher education accessible, affordable, and attainable for all American families.
  - The sessions at the conference were videotaped and will eventually be posted on the Achieving the Dream website. If anyone would like to show a session to the

committee, they can contact Bob Austin and he will arrange to show the session at a committee meeting.

- Students from other schools, who participated on a student panel, talked about the poverty presentation by Amarillo College and how good it was.
- Janet Barton went to a session on how the Human Resources Department can have an impact on students. The session discussed how the career center can help students with the job market. Janet spoke with Renee Weiss on how AC could implement this.
- Dr. Vess saw a film about first generation students who attend college and the fears they experience. She said that the film also discussed the part community colleges play in encouraging students to attend college. Bob suggested showing the film to faculty and staff at General Assembly. This would help to remind us about the obstacles students face to come to college. Janet said that comments were made after the film about how other advantages besides price are not given very often for attending a community college. Smaller class sizes are an advantage of attending a community college.
- There was a discussion on how to eliminate barriers that students face. Dr. Clunis does background checks to identify charges on student's records that may keep them from getting into certain programs at AC. Students who have criminal records can talk to Melodie Graves located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the library in 305G.
- Jason Norman will send out a campus wide email identifying the advisors, where they are located, and the programs they advise.
- Dr. Lowery-Hart said that a two hour student success orientation is being developed for all employees to attend that will help prioritize the most important things that employees should know in order to be informative and helpful to students.

## PROMISING PRACTICES

- **2015 Tax Week – (Jason Norman)**
  - Counselors began last week helping students file their taxes. This service will be extended for another week. This helps to educate students about the process of filing taxes.
  - An online service has been provided the past couple of years, which allows students to sit down with a trained bank counselor. This allows the student to apply for public benefits.
  - Next year, more counselors are needed, and everyone at AC qualifies to be a Benefit Bank Counselor. Jason Norman will put a list of names together so he can organize a training session.
  - AC has a Student Money Management Center, and students who receive a large tax return, can be put in contact with Lisa Bentley who can guide them to a wise decision on what to do with their tax return. This service is available for students and employees.
- **Wayfinding Signage Update – (Russell Lowery-Hart)**
  - A wayfinding contract was approved at the Board of Regents' meeting. The signage is being executed and will be up by this summer. Parking lots will be labeled with numbers and campus maps will lead students and visitors to a starting point. The starting point at AC campuses is being discussed.

## ACTION ITEMS

- Janet Barton received the Shawn Covey book, Seven Habits of Successful College Students, when she attended the Dream Conference. Bob asked Janet if she would talk about this at the April meeting. He may be able to get copies of the book after the presentation.

## ADJOURNMENT

- The meeting adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

## Next Meeting

- The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, April 17th at 9:00 a.m. in Lynn Library, room 207.

Recorder: Carolyn Leslie

Carolyn Leslie



BRIEFING ROOM

ISSUES

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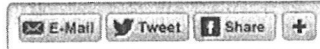
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For Immediate Release

February 20, 2015

## Remarks as Prepared for Delivery by Dr. Jill Biden at DREAM 2015

Good morning! Thank you for that warm welcome!

I'd like to thank Robin, for that wonderful introduction. I think she is the perfect example of why this convening and your work is so important. Let's give another round of applause for Robin—what an amazing student.

I also want to thank Achieving the Dream for inviting me to be part of this incredible effort to help more community college students succeed. As a community college professor who was grading papers on the way up here this morning, your work is very close to my heart.

When the President and Vice President were first elected to the White House in 2008, I told my husband Joe that I would use my position as Second Lady to highlight the critical role of community colleges in creating the best, most-educated workforce in the world. I also wanted to continue teaching full-time as well. So, one week after inauguration, I was back in the classroom. Because, teaching is not what I do; it is who I am.

I have been an educator for more than 30 years, and I have spent the last 20 years teaching at community colleges. Every day in my classroom I see the power of education to break down barriers, and to open students' eyes to the possibilities around them. I have students who attend classes on top of a full-time job. I teach moms who are juggling jobs and child care while preparing for new careers. I have many students working toward attending a four-year university.

Many of my students have doubts when they first arrive at college. They are unsure of their future, unaware of the abilities they possess. Then, two years later, those same students proudly accept their diplomas, knowing that they have achieved something that can never be taken away from them. It's a feeling you can get at most universities, but it's especially strong at community colleges—where the gap between what is imagined at the beginning and what is achieved at the end can be so wide.

I can honestly say that my students are my heroes. I am profoundly moved by their determination to learn, and their quest to make a better life for themselves and their families. But, we all know that the responsibility for educating students is not the student's alone. It is a responsibility that belongs to all of us.

As a lifelong educator, I am proud to be part of an administration that is committed to investing in our students, and restoring the promise of the American education system.

In the depths of the recession, this administration saw higher education as critical to our plans to revitalize the American economy, and moved quickly to support students and their families. We increased the dollar amount of Pell Grants as well as the number of students who qualify; increased tuition tax credits; let students cap their federal student loan payments at 10 percent of their income; and streamlined the financial aid process. We have invested two billion dollars into over 1,000 colleges, to strengthen partnerships between community colleges and employers to create the next generation of skilled workers.

Just last year, the President and my husband Joe, the Vice President, launched an apprenticeship initiative—a partnership among community colleges and employers—to provide a career pathway for students and workers. And, as you heard during the State of the Union, President Obama announced his plan to make two years of community college free for responsible students.

Over the last six years, we have made real progress, but our work is nowhere near finished. This administration will continue to make education a top priority because we believe all Americans deserve the opportunity to reach their full potential.

But, I am not a politician. I am an English professor. At one time, I was also a college student. I remember what it was like to go back to school while working and raising three children. It wasn't easy. Even though it took me 15

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years to earn two Master's degrees and eventually my Doctorate, I kept at it because education is my passion. That's also one of the reasons why my dissertation focused on student retention in community colleges.

Currently, nearly half of the 18 million undergraduate students attend one of America's Community Colleges. Yet, less than half of students who attend a community college will either graduate or transfer to a four-year school within six years.

Helping more students go to college, stay in school and earn their diploma is vital to the future our economy—to ensuring our country has a thriving middle class—because by the end of this decade two-thirds of all job openings will require some form of higher education.

When I started teaching at Northern Virginia Community College, one of the things I wanted to do was help women who are returning to school. So, I started the Women's Mentoring Project, which pairs women who are over 30 with a faculty member.

As part of the program, I helped one woman who was writing her scholarship essay for a four-year university. Her path had not been easy. She left an abusive relationship and was homeless, living in her car with her two kids. Once she got into a homeless shelter, she was encouraged to attend a community college, where I met her as part of a women's mentoring project. She went on to a four-year university where she earned her accounting degree and is creating a better life for herself and her family.

That is what community college is all about. Community colleges do not pick and choose their students; we work with students to help them become who they aspire to be. Our Administration is committed to strengthening that mission and ensuring that the students who need help the most, receive the support they deserve.

As I have traveled around the country as Second Lady, I have seen firsthand that the leadership of faculty and administration at community colleges makes transformative change on their campuses to help improve outcomes for their students.

I visited Delgado Community College in New Orleans a few years ago. Like a lot of community colleges across America after the recession, Delgado saw a spike in their enrollment numbers because more and more students and workers were looking for an affordable way to pursue their degree or obtain new skills.

Unfortunately, at the time, Delgado was turning away students because they didn't have the space to accommodate increased demand. It was 5 years after Hurricane Katrina had devastated the region. Many of their buildings had been underwater for weeks after the Hurricane, and they were still in no condition for students and faculty to use.

As the Chancellor said at the time, and I quote: "This is my 39th year in community colleges, and I never before turned away a student. Never."

During my visit, I learned that Delgado was able to tailor its curriculum to the job opportunities in post-Katrina New Orleans, and they were investing more into a mentoring program for their female students—which accounted for 70 percent of the student body.

Like the mentoring program I started at NOVA, Delgado's Women in Search of Excellence (WISE) program was providing their students with counseling services, workshops and an annual career and opportunity fair. As a result, students were more likely to graduate.

Even after a Hurricane, the doors of the community college were open to help their people recover, rebuild, and grow into careers they love. That's what's so special about community colleges—they have the ability to partner with local employers to provide new skills training, work to make sure classes are flexible for working families, and provide an affordable path for those who want to move on to a four-year university.

As President John F. Kennedy, said, "Let us think of education as the means of developing our greatest abilities, because in each of us there is a private hope and dream which, fulfilled, can be translated into benefit for everyone and greater strength for our nation."

We all reap the benefits when our citizens are well-educated and well-trained. It means that our economies are more vibrant, and our future is brighter. That's why the work that you are doing is so important. We need you to keep making your voices heard, and to bring others into the fold.

Over the next few months, the administration is going to build a coalition of elected officials, business and higher education leaders, philanthropists, and students like those of you here today to support our efforts to strengthen community colleges. Because higher education should be accessible, affordable, and attainable for all American families.

As I like to say, this is the moment for community colleges to shine.