

AC Plugged In

Faculty & Staff NEWSLETTER

Welcome



Welcome to the inaugural issue of *Plugged In*.

This is your faculty/staff newsletter. It will be produced quarterly. It is intended first to inform and second to encourage and enhance communication among all of us who work for Amarillo College.

Should it on occasion gently serve to amuse, that's ok, too, though no amount of crisp or witty commentary will cause us to overlook sentiment expressed by the anonymous quotation: "There's nothing wrong with having nothing to say – unless you insist on saying it."

The point is, your time is precious, so we will try to present items that are meaningful and concise. Contributors are asked to draft something brief and then tighten it. I will apply the final squeeze.

This policy should not only stimulate readership of the newsletter, it ought to help alleviate the fear of being asked to contribute to it.

I invite (and will solicit) the contribution of valid AC news to *Plugged In*, which will appear on or about the 15th day of October, January, April and July. In the meantime, I also invite you to read, enjoy, discuss and, yes, criticize it. To accomplish the latter, I am at wyatt-jv@actx.edu and generally sit within reach of 371-5139.

Thanks to everyone who pitched in to help make this first issue possible.

Now, let's all do ourselves a favor and get *Plugged In* to AC.

Joe Wyatt
Communications Coordinator

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An AC Milestone

Amarillo College's MySpace page has been named "MySpace of the Month" for October by DIOSA | Communications, which maintains the portal for higher education on MySpace. It monitors college pages, provides research and schedules webinars for schools using Web 2.0 technologies to reach students. You can view AC's MySpace page at myspace.com/amarillocollege.

Since July 21, we have more than doubled our MySpace friends list from 400 to 900. Most of these new friends are in high school. We are on track to reach 1,000 by the end of October.

Message from the Administration



By Paul Matney
Vice President/Dean of Instruction

Welcome to the first issue of *Plugged In*, a quarterly electronic newsletter for the AC community. Our recent position study indicated we need creative ways to communicate better with our AC family. This will be one good way to do it.

What a great way to begin our new academic year by breaking ground August 20 on our new \$8.5 million three-story Science Laboratory Building. Thousands of students will benefit from the new addition to the Washington Street Campus. Look for actual construction to begin soon.

I've been asked what AC's institutional priorities are this year. They are many and varied. First, we'll continue with programming, renovation, and construction on our \$68.3 million bond issue passed last November. Also, Dr. Laura Grandgenett and her IT team continue to lead us in implementing our IT Tactical Plan including purchasing much-needed new technology for our campus.

Our new Center for Teaching and Learning, which combines e-Learning and Professional and Organizational Development, gives us the opportunity to provide first-rate instructional technology support to our faculty and to continue innovative professional development opportunities for all employees. As a result of a recommendation from our hard-working LMS Team, we have purchased a new online learning management system called Angel Learning. Faculty training on the new system will begin soon. Search committees are actively engaged in important searches for a chief information officer and a director of e-Learning.

Pursuing Real Opportunities (PRO), a collaborative effort of AC, AISD, and AEDC, will ensure that students, parents, teachers, and counselors know that good careers are possible with a technical certificate or associate's degree. Look for an aggressive community launch of PRO on November 11.

We are planning new training programs in wind energy and machining to meet the needs of business and industry. AC teams have been working for months to make these new initiatives a reality.

We enjoyed a very positive SACS visit to our Hereford Campus in August and are currently working on our SACS Fifth Year Interim Report and a substantive change in distance learning. Both projects are vital to our future. And, of course, we'll be looking for ways to use what we learned from the recent positioning research project to capitalize on our strengths and to make improvements in suggested areas.

I hope you are as enthusiastic as I am about our 10,000+ academic students and thousands of continuing education students enrolled in our classes this Fall in Amarillo, Moore County and Hereford. Our mission truly is teaching and learning. Our greatest resource is our dedicated employees—faculty, classified staff and administrators that make AC a great place to work. Thank you for all you do to make Amarillo College the best we can be.

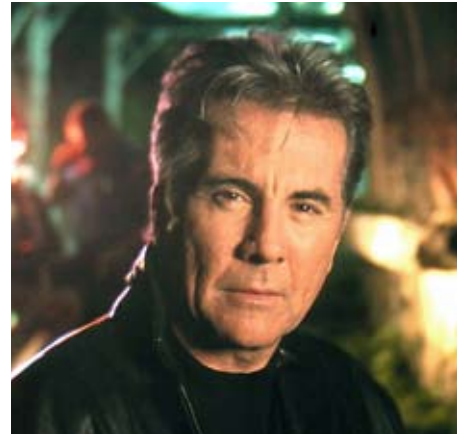
Distinguished Lecture Series

By Heather Atchley
Student Activities Coordinator

In 1992, the Student Government Association invited William F. Buckley, Jr. to speak to Amarillo College students and community members. That successful event sparked a trend that has become a thriving annual tradition: the Distinguished Lecture Series. Over the past decade, the lecture has featured notable speakers such as Barbara Bush, Oliver Stone, James Earl Jones, General Wesley Clark, and most recently, Christopher Gardner, subject of the film *The Pursuit of Happyness*. His lecture drew an audience of over 700 and raised more than \$7,000 in scholarship funds.

With this lecture series, the students strive not only to raise scholarship funds for their peers, but also to bring a notable speaker to our community to expose students, staff, and community members to differing opinions; they enhance their own leadership abilities in the process. As the students plan and execute every aspect of this event, it is a truly remarkable undertaking and experience for them all.

This year, the Student Government proudly presents John Walsh. Mr. Walsh, host of the popular television show *America's Most Wanted*, lost his son to homicide more than 25 years ago. During his lecture, *Living Life with a Mission*, Walsh delivers a "gripping story of how he channeled the most painful event of his life into a mission that would change law enforcement, legislation, and television as we know it." This moving story proves that one person can truly make a difference, no matter how great or small the mission.



John Walsh's lecture will take place at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, Nov. 11, at the Amarillo Globe-News Center for the Performing Arts. A question and answer session will follow. A private reception will be held at the Sky Room of the Amarillo National Bank Building from 6-7 p.m. Tickets will be on sale by late October at all campus Assistance Centers. Prices are as follows:

\$5.00 – Amarillo College Students
\$15.00 – Employees and Community Members
\$50.00 – Private Reception and Reserved Lecture Seating

For more information, please contact the Student Activities Office – 371-5322. Thank you to our sponsors: Student Government Association, AC Foundation, Wells Fargo, and SandersBaker Law Firm.

AC Accolades

Paula Sosebee, testing specialist in Testing Services, recently received the Outstanding Chief Administrator award at the GED Conference in Austin.

Sally Evans, director of the Advising and Counseling Center, recently received her Master Career Counselor (MCC) designation, a status granted by the National Career Development Association to members who provide a full range of career services, including assessment, to clients.

New Logo



Be on the lookout for Amarillo College's new Badger Logo, designed by Kevin White of Umami Design. It will soon be popping up all over.

From the President's Cabinet

By Ellen Green
Dean of Communication and Marketing

The President's Cabinet is made up of AC employees who report directly to the President. In addition to the College President, at present, the cabinet consists of the following people:

Dr. Paul Matney
Vice President & Dean of Instruction

Bob Austin
Dean of Enrollment Management

Terry Berg
Dean of Finance & Administrative Services

Laura Grandgenett
Chief Information Officer

Ellen Green
Dean of Communication and Marketing

Danita McAnally
Dean of College Advancement

Damaris Schlong
Dean of Workforce & Economic Development

The Cabinet meets once each month to vet issues that affect the college as a whole. Discussions may be about financial, budgetary, or policy issues, as well as matters associated with enrollment, marketing, or college funding. Other college employees are often asked to give reports to the Cabinet. Each spring, members are involved in conversations and negotiations concerning the annual budget and this group is the last to agree upon a proposed budget before it goes to the Board of Regents for approval.

Minutes from Cabinet meetings are posted on the Amarillo College website under the menu item titled "About AC" the dropdown "President's Page" and the subtitle "minutes."

Anyone interested in the latest news from the President's Cabinet can catch up on the last several meetings. In upcoming newsletters, I will be providing highlights.

Workforce Development

By Damaris Schlong
Dean of Workforce & Economic Development

Amarillo prides itself on its uniqueness and individuality. Case in point: most of the nation, is facing economic hardship, in some cases bordering on recession, while Amarillo has the third lowest unemployment rate in the state. However, like most of the nation we share a common economic problem in our lack of a skilled workforce, what Bill Williamson calls "[The Perfect Storm](#)," in which demand is greater than supply.

For several decades, the baby-boomer generation supplied the nation's skilled workforce—machinists, welders, construction workers, etc. These careers provide vital skill sets and livable incomes that feed into our local and national economy. But in our push to send all high school graduates to college, it seems we may have over-promoted the four-year degree while under-valuing the importance of two-year, certificate, and continuing education programs offered by community colleges. Coupled with state mandates to ensure that all high school students receive the four core subjects all four years of high school, school districts were forced to cut back on the career and technical education programs that once were so attractive to students who had little or no interest in the traditional four-year college route.

But "the storm" also provides an eye in the center that,

in the case of Amarillo, has spawned a new workforce development initiative designed to address the impending waves of skilled workforce shortage. PRO (Pursuing Real Opportunities) is a partnership between Amarillo College, Amarillo ISD, and Amarillo EDC. Birthed out of an experimental mentoring program between the City of Amarillo and AISD, PRO has developed into a full-blown partnership with multiple business and community partners targeting high school and college students as well as adult career seekers.

Built around four Career Clusters (Manufacturing; Architecture and Construction; Finance; and Transportation, Distribution and Logistics), PRO provides an avenue for students and career seekers to connect with employers in need of qualified applicants. Rest assured that local employers are indeed interested and hiring PRO students. Of the 22 AISD students that went through the City of Amarillo's mentoring program, half of them seniors, the City hired five full time upon graduation. This is where AC plays an important role! Our employers need a trained workforce and AC has many of the programs specifically designed to meet these needs. We are working closely with AISD to strengthen our relationship and align our programs!

Now, more than ever before, we must be more attentive to the interests expressed by our students and steer them toward a rewarding career.

Human Resources “Job Interview 101”

By Lynn Thornton
Director of Human Resources

The interview is a primary tool used by Amarillo College in the employee selection process. All of us involved in hiring have gone through interview training; however, an occasional refresher can be beneficial.

What we can and cannot ask potential employees is governed by several federal laws. Three that come readily to mind are Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967. These laws prohibit discrimination in employment based on race, color, religion, gender, national origin, disability or perceived disability, and age (40 and over). The laws cover all aspects of employment including the hiring process.

Amarillo College uses a list of pre-approved questions for the interview. The goal is to avoid potential problems by asking the same questions of all applicants. Where we often get into trouble is with “follow-up” questions. Remember, the applicant may open the door to an area by a response to an approved question ... but that does not mean we are free to walk through the door into forbidden areas.

While there is no such thing as an exhaustive definitive list of illegal questions, following is a list of things not to ask:

Do you have children?
Are you pregnant?
Do you plan to have children in the future?
Are you married?
Are you dating anyone right now?
If hired, what do you plan to do about childcare?
How old are you? (This includes questions about dates of high school and college graduation.)
What is your nationality or race?
Do you own your own home?
Do you have a disability?
What is your religion?
Have you ever been a member of a union?
What clubs, societies, or lodges do you belong to?
What is your political affiliation?

This is far from a complete list, but any of these questions or related questions used to get at the same information may open Amarillo College to charges of discrimination. The best advice to stay out of trouble with employment questions is to make sure each question is job-related. If not, it should not be asked.

A Banner Year



The newest promotional tool for Amarillo College is the banner stand, and the Office of College Relations has a plentiful and assorted supply that includes banners specific to the 16 career clusters. These eye-catching banners can be used at job fairs and recruitment functions pretty much anywhere. They are easily transported and assembled, and they can be reserved and checked out for your departmental initiatives simply by calling Connie de Jesus at 371-5130.

Faculty Senate Report

By Lana Jackson
President of Faculty Senate

MYTH: Faculty don't work on Fridays.

FACT: Faculty utilize Fridays for one-day classes, committee and departmental meetings, online course maintenance, professional development and training ... the list of Friday activities is as diverse as the faculty themselves.

Composed of faculty from across campuses and disciplines, the Faculty Senate unifies this diverse group of individuals in an effort to proactively meet the needs of faculty, students, and the larger AC community. Our goal this year has been to clarify concerns and identify opportunities for enhancing lives at AC. We want to make a difference.

Communication

Key to our endeavor has been improving communication among faculty and between employee groups. As identified in our annual Faculty Survey, clear communication of information regarding current and future events builds trust while encouraging participation in the educational process. The Senate has released e-news updates to the faculty group, sought to engage more faculty across college committees to better represent faculty interests, and worked with personnel from all employee groups to build understanding and support throughout the institution.

Accountability Standards: Completers

Anticipated legislative mandates will change traditional formula-based funding for community colleges to

state funding based upon course and program/degree "completers." Faculty must lead the way in engaging students in an educational experience that is both individually rewarding and stimulates a climate of success for the entire College community. With the support and participation of classified and administrator employee groups, faculty will be charged with transitioning to a culture of "completers." Institution-wide efforts are already in motion to smooth the transition to this cultural shift. The Senate will engage in identified opportunities and actions to advance the role of faculty in this endeavor.

Results from the Positioning Study

A more elusive objective will be to respond to the results of the Positioning Study prepared by Creative Consumer Research. The Faculty Senate is identifying activities and actions faculty can promote to instill pride in AC students and promote the value of an associate degree. Watch your e-mail for opportunities to participate.

Did I mention the ongoing maintenance activities of the Senate? Senate sub-committees continuously work to monitor education legislation, celebrate outstanding faculty, represent faculty interests on multiple institutional committees, and communicate campus/peer opinions, needs, and interests to external interest groups.

MYTH: Faculty don't work on Fridays.

FACT: Faculty Senate meets monthly... on Fridays at 3 p.m.

Join us.

Campus Notes

Hereford Campus – Daniel Esquivel, executive director at the Hereford Campus, reports growing community support. The campus has 226 academic students enrolled this semester, and approximately 50 students are taking ESL classes through a partnership with Caviness Beef Packers in Hereford. Esquivel also reports that two new faculty are on board in Hereford, and that academic students now can take all the basics of their general education programs there.

Moore County Campus – An ongoing remodeling project at the campus will provide a fully equipped "smart" classroom and an industrial lab. ACMCC serves about 300 academic students, almost 200 technical, workforce, and continuing education students and nearly 80 dual-credit students from Dumas and Sunray.

Polk Street Campus – On Aug. 1, Shawn Fouts, Ed.D., (Corporate Development Consultant) joined the Workforce Development Division in a revamped position recently vacated by LuLu Cowan, who assumed her new responsibilities as Special Assistant to the President. Fouts' major emphasis is to build and maintain healthy collaborative relationships with previous, current, and potential clients to provide non-technical workforce training solutions.

Washington Street Campus – Some commotion will be evident in and around Parcels Hall these next several weeks as installation proceeds on a 295-ton chiller in the building's basement that ultimately will serve as infrastructure for the new science lab. Your patience as this project progresses is appreciated.

Learning Management System

By Becky Easton
LMS Project Team Leader

The first few Amarillo College online faculty members began to learn how to use AC Online, which is AC's customized version of Angel, on Oct. 3. A representative from the company came to Amarillo to lead two sessions for those instructors who have volunteered to train the rest of the faculty.

The training will include information on migrating courses from WebCT, editing courses in AC Online, navigating through the new online environment, and more.

A small pilot group of faculty will test AC Online by teaching with it during Spring Too, 2009. These instructors will be trained in AC Online before those who will teach after the conversion, which will occur just before the first summer session.

All faculty will need to be trained in AC Online before teaching online after the conversion.

Once faculty are trained in AC Online, they will be able to prepare their courses in the new system.

One advantage of AC Online is that faculty will not need to go to a separate server, like the ELCdev server, to create and update their online courses. Instead, AC Online uses master courses. A master course is a template where instructors can work on the latest ver-

sion of their courses. Just before the beginning of each semester, instructors can copy the master course into their live sections with only five mouse clicks.

Master courses can also be shared. Thus, a department has the option to have a single master course developed by a single instructor but taught in different sections by several instructors.

Each faculty member will also have an AC Online Learning Object Repository, or LOR. Items in a faculty member's LOR—such as documents, quizzes, PowerPoint presentations, and the like—can be stored in the LOR and linked to several classes. If the instructor makes a change to the learning object in the LOR, the change will automatically be reflected in all of the classes using that learning object.

Additional repositories can be created for groups such as departments, allowing for the sharing of learning objects between faculty members.

For more detailed information on AC Online, watch for the next LMS Online Newsletter, which is sent in a Groupwise "everyone" email approximately once a month.

The LMS Online Newsletter contains a link to yet-to-be-seen AC Online commercials, starring David Hernandez and Sam Schwarzlose.

Update - Bond Issue

Last November, when the \$68.3 million bond issue passed public muster, it was the culmination of a lengthy, well-conceived and coordinated effort. However, polling-place passage of the bond also signaled a genesis for Amarillo College—the beginning of a number of pivotal projects that, to varying degrees, will ensure growth and vitality for the College long into the future.

The new parking lot that sprang up over the summer on the east edge of the Washington Street Campus gave us our first glimpse of bond-issue fruition; it whet our appetites in anticipation of a main course that's on the serving tray now.

The largest addition at the Washington Street Campus will be construction of a three-story, \$8.5 million Science Laboratory Building directly east of Warren Hall. Recent closure of the Herring Parking Lot (located east of Warren Hall), which will be used by contractors as a staging area, signaled the physical birth of the project.

An even larger venture will be construction of a three-

story, \$10.8 million Nursing-Dental Health Center at the West Campus, where a ground-breaking ceremony is being planned for early spring. Both new buildings have been designed by Shiver-Megert & Associates architects, which has provided architectural renderings that may be viewed, along with a plethora of other information about bond election projects, soon on a new website.



New Programs - Insurance Office Professional

By Gay Mills

Assistant Professor of Office Administration

The Office Administration Department is proud to announce a new specialty option for its majors. Beginning Spring 2009 (pending Academic Affairs approval), students will have another plan of study from which to choose, Insurance Office Administrative Professional (AAS or 15-month certificate). Four new courses will be offered that focus on insurance terminology, customer service and delivering services. The courses are offered for both academic and continuing education credit. The first course, Principles of Insurance, will be offered in the spring. A description of the four courses follows:

Principles of Insurance—Organization of insurance companies, state regulations, types of policies, and career opportunities in the field. Topics include concepts of risk, insurance protection, and prohibited practices.

Insurance Customer Service Representatives—Prepares participants to work in insurance agencies as entry-level customer service representatives. It includes information about policies, terminology, and customer service procedures. The course may prepare students to take the licensing exam sponsored by the Texas Department of Insurance.

Personal Insurance—Introduction to personal loss exposures and personal insurance policies and handling these exposures (including auto, homeowners, life, health, marine, and various government insurance programs).

Delivering Insurance Services—Application of the principles of total quality management to the insurance business and to service businesses in general. Topics include the application of quality principles and the team approach to everyday business activities.

Offering these courses is the culmination of a year-long research project that began last fall when members of the Panhandle Insurance Agents Association approached AC about offering insurance courses for their administrative professionals and to increase the number of applicants applying for these positions in insurance offices. Several insurance agencies have expressed support about training their current employees more fully by completing our courses.

Office Administration Department also offers the following plans of study:

1. Office Assistant (9-month)
2. Administrative Professional (AAS or 15-month certificate)
3. Medical Office Administrative Professional (AAS or 15-month certificate)
4. Legal Office Administrative Professional (AAS or 15-month certificate)
5. Office Manager (AAS or 15-month certificate)
6. Information Management Specialist (AAS)

For more information about the new insurance option or other courses offered through the Office Administration Department, contact Gay Mills or Debbie Bailey.



Plugged In's Fall Photo

The day was picturesque, the food was free and music echoed throughout the Washington Street Campus Sept. 25 for AC's annual FallFest, which this year employed an '80s theme and drew enthusiastic participants like the KISS wanna-be pictured here with Heather Atchley, Student Activities Coordinator.