

Transcript

Strengthening Leaders for Student Success Conference Hewlett Leaders in Student Success Luncheon Anaheim Marriott October 2, 2008

Introduction – Linda Umbdenstock, executive director of Hewlett Leaders –

On behalf of the RP Group, our partners and our sponsors, I would like to thank all of you for participating in Strengthening Student Success: Basic Skills and Beyond and welcome you to this very special luncheon during which we will announce the first annual Hewlett Leaders in Student Success honorees.

What are Leaders in Student Success? To understand that, we will introduce you to presidents and campus leaders who have led winning strategies, faculty who have dramatically altered their teaching approaches, and students who have become engaged and inspired by their ability to learn, and fundamentally changed their lives in the process. Quite simply, the strategies and programs that we have identified have turned traditional basic skills education into super-charged models for building sound pre-collegiate skills.

The process for vetting these honorees began with rigorous data analysis, setting criteria by a distinguished panel, and on-site observation by our team of experts from across the country. The program developed a “gold standard” for measuring successful progress through the basic skills sequence and used the following parameters at the colleges as we tracked college efforts that led to success:

- **Curriculum** aligned and organized for effectiveness
- **Learner-centered** classroom practices
- **Integration** of academic support and student services
- **Equity**, pursued by assessing learning and progress rates by cohort
- **Institutional leadership and support**, reflected in mission, planning, evaluation and investment

For more detail about why The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation found this work to be important, I will turn the program over to Pamela Burdman, program officer, The Hewlett Foundation.

[Linda Umbdenstock welcomes Pamela Burdman to the stage]

Pamela Burdman, Hewlett Foundation program officer for education:

In keeping with The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation mission to advance access to and the sustainability of effective community college programs, our purpose in funding the RP Group to administer the Hewlett Leaders in Student Success program was to enable the identification of college leaders in basic skills, and as a result of sharing their work, help strengthen and expedite the mighty task in which you are all engaged. By recognizing the four colleges today and those in subsequent years who have documented success, we hope additional colleges will implement comprehensive, innovative, and sustainable approaches for advancing students who need help with basic English and math skills. Further, this work can provide concrete examples and documented success in the improvement of basic skills to policy makers, thus elevating its priority on their agendas.

As many of you know much of our next guest's work has centered on furthering the California Community Colleges system's strategic agenda and its statewide Basic Skills Initiative. For greater perspective on the value of effective pre-collegiate programs to the state and nation, I will turn the stage over to the esteemed Chancellor of the California Community Colleges system, Diane Woodruff.

Diane Woodruff, California Community Colleges Chancellor:

Thank you so much, Pam. I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank you and the Hewlett Foundation so much for your work and your support of the California community colleges.

I want you to all know that Pam Burdman is a person I really admire. She is committed 100% ...with every fiber of her being ...to supporting student success in our community colleges. She is always ready to listen and to support efforts that will result in greater student success.

The Hewlett Foundation has invested more than \$20 million in the last 3 years in our community colleges and more than 40 colleges have been directly involved in the many projects they have funded. All 110 of our colleges have directly benefitted from the general projects they have funded.

Today, the Hewlett Foundation is giving \$15,000 to each college that is being honored at this luncheon so that these colleges, in turn, will be able to share their successful pre-collegiate strategies with other colleges.

Please join me in thanking Pam Burdman and the Hewlett Foundation for all of their support not only for today's ceremony ...but also for their incredible generosity over the last several years.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the Research and Planning Group and the Statewide Academic Senate for their joint partnership in planning and hosting this important conference. The RP Group and the Academic Senate have made such a difference for our system. Will the members of the RP group and the Statewide Academic senate please stand and be recognized.

Those of you who know me know that my number 1 priority as Chancellor has been to improve student success in our community colleges. Everywhere I have gone the past year and a half, I have talked about how important it is for all of us to make this our #1 priority.

Thus, you can imagine how happy I am delighted to be here today to announce and recognize four community colleges for their outstanding work in improving student success and basic skills education in our colleges.

Before I recognize the 4 colleges, I want to say how proud I am of the progress we have made as a system in the last several years in the area of precollegiate education and how good I feel about how we are approaching this issue. Let me take just a moment to tell you about all of the things we are doing as a system to improve student success.

First, it has been very exciting to see the unprecedented collaboration that has been happening between the RP Group, the statewide Academic Senate, the CIOs, CSSOs and the Chancellor's office on this important issue.

Second, the RP group's extensive review of the literature which identified 26 model practices in basic skills, that is, 26 things we now know about that colleges can do to improve their student success rates...really moved us forward and showed us how specifically we needed to change. I commend the RP group for their leadership in producing this very important document.

The Third thing we've done is to develop a self assessment tool so districts could assess how they are doing with respect to the 26 effective practices.

Fourth, all 110 colleges have turned in their action and expenditure plans last May to tell us how they are changing their curriculum and programs to implement the 26 effective practices to ensure more student success. They are using the money to fund more math and writing labs, more tutors, IAs, linked classes, staff development and many other things that are helping students succeed.

Fifth, we have conducted numerous workshops for more than 2600 faculty, administrators and staff at all 110 community colleges. And more workshops are being planned this fall. The statewide academic senate's leadership on this issue has been exemplary.

Yes, the Basic Skills Initiative is one of the most important initiatives in California Community colleges ever. Many faculty and staff are telling me that they have never been involved in anything that is making such a difference for students.

I believe that we are creating a new culture that is breaking down the silos between instruction and students services. I see us working together as never before to help our most vulnerable students be successful. I commend and thank all of you in this room for your dedication and efforts to help our students be successful and to realize their dreams. With this important work you are doing, you are changing lives and giving people the knowledge and skills to succeed and to realize the American Dream of getting a college education and a better life.

So while we are here to honor 4 colleges today, I wanted to take a moment to acknowledge that the transformation that is taking place in our California community colleges in the area of basic skills is not just happening in 4 colleges, but in all 110 colleges. It was difficult to choose just 4 colleges to recognize, because so much is happening everywhere we look to transform the way to teach precollegiate education in our colleges.

Nonetheless, it is important to recognize excellence and that is what we are here to do today.

The colleges that are being honored have developed and implemented successful, replicable, pre-collegiate strategies. Each school has instituted structured and systematic activities that have resulted in measurable improvements in math and English basic skills that have allowed students to earn program certificates, associate degrees, or the ability to transfer to a four-year college.

I am so excited to announce that those schools that are being honored today are Columbia College, De Anza College, Santa Barbara City College, and Southwestern College.

We have a real treat for you today. Students from the four colleges are going to tell you in their own words about the difference that their community college has made in their lives.

Linda Umbdenstock: First I'd like to welcome Johnny Proctor, Associated Student Body President – Columbia College – to the podium. He is joined by these Columbia representatives:

Joan Smith, Ph.D., President

Annie Cavagnaro, Math Instructor

Melissa Colon, Computer Science Instructor and Distance Education Coordinator

Adrienne Webster, Child Development Instructor

[Student Presentation: Johnny Proctor, Columbia College]

Thank you. I am tremendously happy to be here today, representing Columbia College and, most importantly as Columbia's student body president, representing the rest of our students. Many of my college peers are not your typical students. In many cases, we are not fresh out of high school. We have had some unique life experiences that propel us in non-linear directions. I returned to college after eight years of being a motorcycle mechanic, living overseas, marrying a Swedish woman and even gaining my pilot's license. It sounds adventurous but I came back to my hometown and to Columbia because something was missing.

It's been an interesting decade. I was a trouble maker, had my brushes with "Johnny Law." My life wasn't cookie-cutter at all. It wasn't "Leave it to Beaver," and we weren't people of means.

If I had to say one thing about my community college experience, it's that it offers me a lot more than an opportunity to get my degree; it's offered me the opportunity for real personal growth. I have not only learned, but more importantly, I've learned how to learn.

As an older student – I'm now 30 – I had come to a decision. Given what the blue-collar world had to offer me, I thought college would be better. I was in for a bit of a surprise when I had to take remedial math. But in hindsight, that was the best thing that could have happened.

For me, working through remedial classes established the framework. Now I always pre-read chapters and recopy my notes into a second notebook right after class, while a lecture is still fresh in my mind. I do my homework immediately after class and submit it on time. And if there are mistakes, I correct them. Most importantly, I have learned how to organize. This framework didn't just work for me in my math classes. It worked in English and in all of my subjects.

The cross-discipline learning has been incredible – talk about growth. I write a paper, a research essay, say, that includes the intricacy of trigonometry. It's been a rewiring of my brain that allows me to pay strict attention to detail. This is a dream come true that I didn't know I had.

The virtue of college, though, is that I found my family and I found myself by having such a supportive network here. This has given me a tremendous amount of self-confidence – and I have to attribute that to Columbia College.

This school has the best supplemental instruction support. I have spent so much time in the math lab that they should put a cot there for me and a permanent pot of coffee on autopilot. Not a week goes by that I don't work with a tutor and now

I'm a tutor myself. Frankly, I'm not sure that I would have gotten through calculus 2 without a paid supplemental instructor – they're one part math coach and two parts life coach. The thing is, they never doubt you.

Also, the instructor-to-student ratio is so low that we know if a professor's dog is sick or if his sick goldfish died. It's so supportive here. So back to that confidence that I now have – I actually have two career goals. If I'm accepted at Cal Berkeley, I'm hoping to study economy and go to law school – I love legal novels. I have a 3.7 average, however, so if I can't get into Berkeley, I'll go to Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo and study construction management. It's a good career and I know a lot of people in that industry. It involves working on infrastructure such as water plants, levees, etc. And, as everyone knows right now, this country needs a lot of work done on its levees – so I'll always have my work cut out for me. I would feel comfortable in that.

Lastly, I'm not here to talk about me, me, me, but rather to acknowledge Columbia College as a provider of a truly supportive network that facilitates the best in basic skills learning. And, believe me, I know.

Linda Umbdenstock: Please join me in welcoming Lois Webber, a student at De Anza College, and the following De Anza representatives:

Christina Espinosa-Pieb, Interim VP of Instruction, accepting on behalf of President Brian Murphy who is attending an educational meeting in Europe and cannot attend.

Edwina Stoll, Speech Communication
Herminio Hernandez, Math Performance Success Counselor

[Student Presentation: Lois Webber, De Anza]

I am delighted to be here today to talk about the importance of basic skills development for young students and adults alike. People probably wouldn't look at me and think that I was deficient in a key basic skill. Math is something that we take for granted – to be able to calculate a loan or basic measurements is a given, or is it?

I have suffered lifelong inadequacy about my lack of math skills. I'm an older, returning student, 49-years-old, and was taught math years ago, when females weren't the focus of instruction. It's hard to believe now, but when I was growing up on New York's Fire Island, there were only 300 permanent residents and one school with three distinct classrooms.

From kindergarten to sixth grade – I only had three teachers. The principal, who we addressed as "sir," taught fourth, fifth and sixth graders in a single classroom.

He would call the fourth graders to his desk and give a lesson, while the fifth and sixth graders did other tasks. You couldn't ask questions because you didn't have time – at least if you were a girl. “Sir” would send the girls to their seats and allow the boys to stay while he answered their questions for another five minutes.

So I pretty much got lost in fourth-grade math. Working with fractions just blew me away and it's been a struggle ever since. I graduated from Bay Shore High School in '77 with a very basic understanding. After high school I went to work until I hit walls there and realized I needed to go to college.

That proved difficult. When I asked my dad to provide financial papers so that I could go to college, he said no. You see, he had dropped out of school in the ninth grade and felt that he did just fine.

My sister's invitation to come to California provided a real opportunity to change my life. I entered De Anza for the first time – avoiding math completely, of course, met and married my husband, and thought of having a family. I was studying video, going out doing shoots and working in the lab until all hours. But when I became pregnant that proved to be problematic. So, I dropped out.

I was given the impression that, due to my minimal education, I had to stay at home, that I wasn't going to be in the work force. That's a lot to get over.

So, three kids later, I re-entered De Anza, in part due to my son Brian's suggestion, and still failed miserably in two math classes. Math became my Achilles' heel. In the fall of 2005, however, Herminio Hernandez invited me to join the MPS program and suddenly there was a breakthrough. The MPS lecture was two hours and instead of covering a chapter every day, like most of the classes, we would work on a chapter all week long and have intense instruction until we got it right. Working with tutors at the MPS study center after class, we did practical applicable work sheets or we would go out on campus and do exercises for statistics. I would routinely do two hours of tutoring and then work at home.

Without the MPS program, I would still be struggling. I earned two associate degrees last June and hope to transfer to San Jose State University next fall to pursue a professional photography degree. In fact, I'm a little off schedule. Brian, influenced by my interest, graduated in three years with bachelor's degree in industrial photography from a premier photography school, and is waiting for me to graduate. We are pursuing a photography business together and have already gotten some clients.

In fact, all three of my children have been impressed with my dedication to earning a degree. My youngest son now attends De Anza and my daughter is a

senior in high school. I am a straight-A student and will remain so in order to transfer to San Jose State from a position of strength.

Linda Umbdenstock: Please join me in welcoming Melina Caputto, a student at Santa Barbara City College and the following City College representatives:

Andreea Serban, Ph.D., Superintendent/President
Ignacio Alarcon, President Academic Senate, Math Instructor
Jerry Pike, Director Learning Center
Sheila Wiley, English Skills Instructor
Alice Scharper, Dean Educational Programs

[Student Presentation: Melina Caputo, Santa Barbara City College]

Good afternoon.

I came to Santa Barbara City College after graduating from high school in New Jersey. While researching colleges in my senior year, I learned that SBCC was the number one feeder school for the University of California at Santa Barbara. I decided to take a few classes at the City College and transfer to UC Santa Barbara to complete my bachelor's degree in botany.

SBCC serves a diverse student population. There are students like me, who are looking for a pipeline into the more competitive UC system, and there are students who have great promise, but require additional attention and assistance due to language barriers, long breaks in their education, and the need to strengthen their basic knowledge in core subjects like math, English and science before attempting to take college level courses.

While taking an Astronomy course at SBCC, I learned about the college's Gateway to Success program. The Gateway program is an advising and tutoring collaboration between academic departments and student services to support basic skills education. As a part of the college's Partnership for Success initiative, the program offered free tutors for all students in my class.

To encourage us to take advantage of the tutors, my professor offered extra credit for getting tutoring help, and although I was a strong science student, I took advantage of the opportunity. I did very well in that class and my professor asked me to join his tutor team the following term. I have been a tutor ever since, assisting non-native English speakers with language skills, and supporting students in their pre-collegiate English and science courses.

Offering a student-centered, comfortable and convenient way to get help has been extremely important to my success and my ability to assist my fellow classmates. The Gateway Center is open five days a week, up to 10 hours a day.

These extended hours are crucial to students who are trying to work, or care for their families while going to school.

This semester, I'm tutoring an Astronomy student who is working full-time and returning to school after a long break. In addition, she has decided to change her major, so you might say the odds of her succeeding are not stacked in her favor. At the start of the term, she expressed her concerns to me regarding her survival in one of the more difficult science courses offered at the college. Through weekly sessions, I have been able to help her regain her confidence and the necessary skills to do well in Astronomy. Last week, she showed me the results from her first test: she received an A, and I couldn't be happier for her.

For students who are struggling or insecure in their abilities, it is often embarrassing to seek out extra help. Having peer tutors in basic skills classes makes it easier to identify and encourage students to access the help they need. Tutors also offer insightful test preparation and note-taking tips as well as facilitate communication between students and professors.

Since I have been at the City College, the Gateway program and the Partnership for Success have been strengthening and expanding their reach. Thanks to Dr. Pike and Sheila, the goal is to offer Gateway services to students in 25 percent of all classes offered at the college.

It's hard to lose motivation when services are focused on student success and so many people want you to do well. I am so pleased to be a part of the SBCC and Gateway family, and I look forward to using my experiences as a student and tutor as I continue my studies and work to become a college professor. Thank you.

Linda Umbdenstock: Please join me in welcoming Griselda Torres, a student at Southwestern and the following Southwestern representatives:

Raj K. Chopra, Ph.D., Superintendent/President
Kathy Tyner, Dean, School of Mathematics, Science & Engineering
Bea Zamora-Aguilar, Dean, School of Counseling/ Personal Development
Maya Bloch, Co-Coordinator, BSI Intervention Model
Valerie Goodwin, Health, Exercise Science & Athletics Professor
Eileen Zamora, Basic Skills Initiative Coordinator – Academic
Mark Meadows, VP, Academic Affairs

[Student Presentation: Griselda Torres]

Good afternoon, I am happy to be here to tell you about how Southwestern changed my life and how its innovative basic studies and ESL programs

transform the lives of students -- empowering them to realize their dreams of a career and a brighter future for themselves, their families, and their community.

I truly feel blessed to be here today, quite literally. Not so long ago, I found myself crossing the border from Mexico in order to escape a violent marriage. I was 40 years old, now a single mother with four children to bring up, and I did not speak a word of English.

I went to live with my mother in Lemon Grove and although she thought I was crazy to even try, I signed up for a new "experimental" Spanish to English Child Development program that was going to start at Southwestern College.

When I enrolled in the program, I learned that Southwestern is committed to building a skilled, bilingual California workforce. In addition to my Spanish-to-English Child Development program -- which is taught initially in Spanish and then progresses to English as language skills develop -- bilingual instructors also teach sequences in medical and legal office skills, and in electronics. Today these programs are very popular. They empower students like me to integrate our culture and language with workforce skills.

When I enrolled in the Spanish to English Child Development program, I became part of another family, the Southwestern family. I formed a strong bond with my classmates -- we helped each other, especially when we were having difficulty juggling school with the demands of husbands, children, jobs and financial challenges. The faculty was and continues to be supportive and encouraging. They are always there to answer questions and give extra time to help me achieve my academic pursuits.

I remember the day Professor Corona graded my first test in an all English class. She told me, "You got a "B! Griselda, now take your wings, and fly; you are ready, nobody can stop you!"

Today, I am a confident woman. I have earned three certificates and am only 4 classes away from completing an Associate of Arts degree. My college experience has also resulted in all four of my children attending college. Next month I start my job with AmeriCorps in to hope of helping others, the way I have been helped.

In life we lose a lot of things -- people and material things - but no one can take my knowledge away from me. Learning and going to Southwestern is the reason I get up every day.

Closing Remarks -- Linda Umbdenstock --

As you can see, these are remarkable stories of just a few of the students who have been positively motivated by these innovative programs. [It will not surprise

you to know that I have received e-mails in the middle of the night from them and have talked with them in the midst of their preparations for sponsoring presidential debate viewing parties on their campus, and as they prepare other students for their midterms this week.} They and countless others have evolved from feeling inadequate and anxious about their ability to handle college work to being confident about their promise and the future.

I would like to thank them and our other special guests today including the faculty and staff who have encouraged these students and the presidents and staff who have demonstrated the kind of leadership that's made a difference. Also, I would be remiss if I didn't ask those members of our esteemed expert criteria panel and visiting team who are here to stand and be recognized for their countless hours of research and analysis that led us to these honorees. Several are here today: Elaine Baker, Rose Asera, Wade Ellis as well as staff Margaret Miller and Loann Solem.

My hope is that all of you feel encouraged by what we've learned about these programs today and I would ask you to consider the kinds of innovations in basic skills that could be instituted at your colleges. You can learn much more detail in the follow-up session and on our website. Thank you again, this concludes our program.