

Subject: From the President's Desk

Date: Thu, 20 Apr 2006 09:15:26 -0700

From: "Raul Rodriguez" <rrodriguez@deltacollege.edu>

To: "Campus Wide Business" <campusbusiness@sjdccd.cc.ca.us>

Good morning! It's nice to finally see a few days of real sun after so many days of what felt like monsoonish weather. I hope everyone had a great spring break and happy Easter holiday. I'm sure I'm not alone in this, but the problem I had is that my children were all on a spring break schedule that didn't coincide with ours. My daughter had the week before our break and my two sons had this week. It obviously makes it a challenge to spend quality time as a family when everyone has a different week off.

Universal Design for Learning

About two weeks ago my wife and I went to the Stanford Center for Innovations in Learning (SCIL) to attend a lecture by Dr. David Rose. Dr. Rose is the co-founder of the Center for Applied Special Technology and he has been an adjunct professor at the Harvard Graduate School in Education for the last twenty years. The title of his talk was, "Teaching every student: Universal design for learning in the digital age."

Dr. Rose was trained as a neuroscientist. He bases his approach to designing curriculum and digital learning materials on the manner in which human brains process information. His thesis is that digital technology affords greater flexibility and customization to respond to the great variations in individual differences in learning. Dr. Rose believes that the manner in which each individual learns is as unique to each of us as is our DNA pattern or our fingerprints. In response to that variation, he and his colleagues have developed an approach called Universal Design for Learning (UDL). The term "universal" as they use it does not refer to the "one size fits all" connotation of that word. Instead, it uses the word universal to denote the need to access a wide range of methods and materials to meet the individual needs of a diverse audience of learners.

While Dr. Rose and his colleagues began their research and development in this area by focusing on the needs of severely disabled individuals, their work has now advanced to a stage where it is applicable to learners in all types of situations. Just based on an initial impression of his work, it appears to me that there are lots of implications in his work for how we might go about developing curriculum in the future. It seems like new digital tools are being developed every day. There is no inherent value in them, at least for educational purposes, unless we can figure out how to incorporate them into a broader learning approach or strategy. Dr. Rose's ideas at least show an exciting path down which to explore curriculum development in this context. When you consider that the vast majority of instructors still rely heavily on the lecture mode of instruction, which is tried and true, but only minimally effective, we need to do better at curriculum design and delivery if we are going to make greater gains with our students.

I hope to bring Dr. Rose to campus some time in the next academic year to share his thinking with us.

Designing Learning Spaces

One of the reasons why I even know about SCIL is that I have visited it several times previously to learn more about their work in designing instructional spaces. We are trying to learn from their efforts as we design new structures for this campus and for our new educational centers. Given that researchers have estimated that 80% of learning at a college campus occurs outside of the classroom, it is important to pay equal or even greater attention to the spaces outside of the classroom as you do to the actual classrooms. In classroom design, the word that best describes what we are hoping to achieve is flexibility. That is, all of the furniture in our classrooms in the future should be able to be moved easily so that the instructor has the ability to easily change the classroom design to fit different activities and lessons. In some cases, this will mean tables and chairs on roller wheels (the tables lock into place once they are located properly). It will mean classrooms that can expand or contract to fit larger or smaller groups of students. It will also mean plenty of “soft spaces” in corridors and other traffic areas on campus that will encourage students to congregate and continue classroom discussions or other learning activities. Of course, you can design the most fabulous learning space on the planet, but it doesn’t mean much without a solid curriculum and delivery method to drive it. That is why I am so interested in the work of Dr. Rose and others like him who are experimenting with curriculum design.

Kudos

Last Tuesday evening at the board meeting, we honored Delta’s two statewide MVPs in basketball: **Kevin Bland** in men’s basketball and **Necolia Simmons** in women’s basketball. It is a tremendous individual and institutional honor to have one player win the award, but when a single college has two players win the award, it is nothing short of spectacular! We all wish Kevin the best of luck at UC, Irvine, where he will continue his education and his basketball career. Luckily, Necolia will be back with the Lady Mustangs for a second season. Again, it is a credit to our two basketball coaches, **Gina Johnson** and **Brian Katz**, that they can recruit players of the caliber of Kevin and Necolia and consistently keep their teams at the top of the league standings.

Dr. Evia Moore was recently honored by the San Joaquin African-American Chamber of Commerce at their Women of Color Awards banquet for her personal and professional contributions. Evia is the president of the Stockton chapter of The Links Inc., is a member of the American Association of University Women, and has been involved with a number of other community organizations. She is a past recipient of the Susan B. Anthony Award.

Recently San Joaquin Delta College Engineering students competed in the 2006 American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) District D Student Design Contest held April 1-2, 2006, at Santa Clara University. Competing against university teams from Nevada and California, ASME team members **Dave Jennings**, **Mohammad Khan**, and **Pat Fischer** placed second, **Bianca Reali** and **Anthony Abel** placed fourth, **Betty Bullard** and **Nathaniel Spray** placed fifth, and **Nicole Carter** and **Sean Soulsby** placed seventh. First place was won by University of Nevada, Reno. Delta’s strong showing follows a remarkable twelve-year history of high-placed results at regional and national ASME student design contests, including regional first-place wins in 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002, and a national first-place win in 2000.

ASME student members were given the same design problem worldwide and compete in regional events (our district is California, Nevada, and Hawaii). Kudos to the students mentioned above on their outstanding placements as well as to their faculty advisors **Charlie Robinson** and **John Larson** for their great coaching!

