



DVC FORUM



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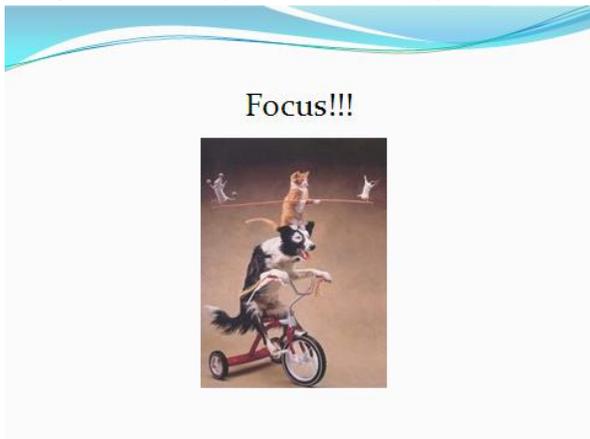
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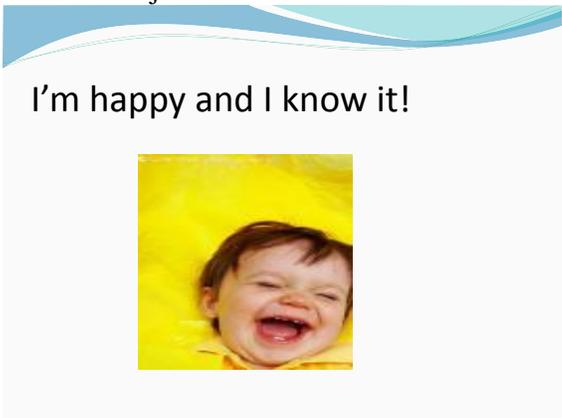
be due before the end of the week, and today is Wednesday. People keep showing up physically at our offices and visually through our email or in hard copy messages sent through the campus or snail mail.

Would this be a good time to ask, “Is everybody happy?” Or should I ask if this clip is more indicative of how you are feeling at this moment.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ybXrrTX3LuI>

Every day I come to work, and I would be lying to you if I said that every morning started out as joyful praise for the work day that was coming up. Sometimes, I feel like the character we just saw, while other times I feel like the characters on this slide.



I am not always sure if I am the one pedaling as fast as I can, or the one keeping my balance on the head of the dog, or if I am one of the mice, just standing there juggling. Although, I must say I do have a fair number of days when I feel just like this.



I think it is the smiling child in me that I want to understand more. Where does that happiness come from?

IF YOU ARE HAPPY AND YOU KNOW IT, CLAP YOUR HANDS!
Nancy Zink, English Instructor

First I want to acknowledge how honored I feel being selected as the 2010 Faculty Lecturer. Thank you to those who nominated me and convinced me that I really might have something to say. I would also like to thank all of those people I interviewed: thank you for your time and your patience.

Thank you.
To two people who always give me good advice and effective feedback
Irene Menegas and Bruce Reeves

To those individuals who were willing to spend their time with me being interviewed, thank you for the gift of your time and patience:

Jeanie Dewhurst	Linda Robbins
Laury Fischer	Barbara Sawyer
Keith Mikolavich	David Vela
Elane Rehr	Rachel Westlake
	Ted Wieden

You helped make developing this project more enjoyable and enlightening.

Thank all of you for coming. I hope that by the end of this talk, you will have found some connection to yourself and your feelings about being at DVC or where ever you are working or studying.

Do you feel it in the air? When you are sitting at your desk, can you feel the stress washing over you? Here we are, more than half way through the semester, almost at the end in fact, and our “to do” list seems to be growing instead of shrinking. We have about four weeks to go—how will we ever get done? Everybody seems to want something from us and that something was either due yesterday or will

Like almost everybody else, I got my first job because I wanted a paycheck. I was happy when I got the job and even happier when I got the paycheck. But I think the happiest part of this job experience occurred when I was doing the job. The job itself was not the reason for the feelings I had; the happiness evolved over the two years I was there from the relationships I developed while on the job. I was 15, and one of a few high school students in the office. The majority of the workforce in this office were middle-aged women who were also there to earn a paycheck; but when the phones were not busy, we shared stories about the classified advertising customers we had just spoken to, and what they were advertising for sale. We shared stories about the funeral directors who would call just before deadline, with 10 long obituaries that had to be in the paper that day. Every day I worked, at 5 to 10 minutes before deadline, we would all wait to see who would get the call. We could tell by the melted smile and the sagging shoulders who the “lucky” recipient was; then we would all pitch in to make sure that all of the notices were correct and got in by deadline. I really earned that \$1.25 an hour.

By the time I was ready to graduate from high school, ready to move on to a higher paying job and college, I was sorry to go. I knew I wouldn't miss the nasty customers who expected the impossible—I couldn't “unprint” a wrong phone number in their ad—nor would I miss the supervisor who would listen in on calls to make sure the phone was only used for business—but I would miss the people with whom I shared the stress, pressure and deadline dilemmas, like the woman who introduced me to mysteries and popular fiction and loaned me her precious books to read and enjoy; up to this point, I had only been reading what some might call “serious literature.” I would miss the woman whose children were already in college and the great stories she told me about their trials with college applications and bureaucracy. I would miss all of the people I worked with at the Sun Newspapers in Baltimore, and I would especially miss the breaks and lunches when we shared our frustrations, our problems and the laughter at some joke or silly story; I would miss being part of this group. At 15, I didn't realize that a job could provide more than just a paycheck: friends, support, being part of something larger—that had always come from other, personal environments.

What started out as just another part-time job to help pay for the private school I was attending, turned in to something that became quite a big part of my high school

life. Was Tolstoy right when he said,

“The happiness of men consists in life. And life is in labor.”

*What is to be done? Chap. xxxviii
Leo, Count Tolstoy Collection.*

We do wind up working for a very large part of our lives, but how are happiness and life and labor connected?

As a child and young adult, I watched my father go to work every day. I knew he had a tough job, and while I didn't see him telling happy stories about his job, he never complained either. He just went, every day, no matter what.

My Dad



This is a picture of a very young Alfred D'Alberto, my father, dressed for the rough Maryland winters. My father was a steel worker who labored in the “Open Hearth” at Bethlehem Steel in Maryland; the open hearth is that part of the steel plant where the molten steel is poured.

Bethlehem Steel Open Hearth



The work he did was difficult, dangerous, and only occasionally intrinsically satisfying. Yet, he worked for 43 years in this plant, never missing a single day of work. He worked his full shift regardless of whether or not he was sick, exhausted, challenged, or feeling anything else that was negative. He even worked his entire shift when he was injured on the job. A forklift rolled up onto his foot, and even though he was wearing steel-toed shoes, the bones in his foot were broken. He went to the infirmary, got his foot put in a cast, and then he went back to work. This was a

dangerous choice since he was often required to outrun the molten steel that arced when the steel was poured; no easy task when one foot and lower leg are in a cast. In those days, any time off the job resulted in docked pay; so, he finished his shift; he had a wife and four small children to support. I think I can attribute my dogged determination to arrive every day, ready to work, to my father.

Why did he go into work every day to this job? Initially, he went for the pay check, but during those 43 years he could have gone elsewhere, to a safer and less strenuous job. He stayed, though, maybe because he was loyal to the company; after all, they had given a recently arrived Italian immigrant of 16 a job. But the larger reasons, I think, were the connections to the other men on his crew. They depended on each other during the shift. They established a rhythm to ensure the furnaces stayed hot and they did their best to support and protect each other so each man could stay on the job. After the shift, they socialized together; on weekends they would gather at the Union Hall or arrange outings with entire families.

My father found a degree of happiness every day he went into his job—I am not entirely sure how far he had to reach down in order to find this happiness, but he did it. Whenever anyone asked him about his job, he talked about it with pride, the pride that comes with doing his job well, giving 100% each day and getting the job done.

A man's happiness,—to do the things proper to man.

Marcus Aurelius
Meditations. viii. 26.

Perhaps Marcus Aurelius captures the reason for his commitment: “A man's happiness,—to do the things proper to man.”

I am beginning to see a pattern here.

My friend, Barbara Sawyer, sent me an article recently, one that was published on April 8, 2001, in the *New York Times*. The article was a book review by Kate Zernike, titled, “The Harvard Guide to Happiness.” Initially, I thought, someone at Harvard had discovered a secret pathway to happiness and had decided to share it with all of the rest of us. When I read the article—surprise, surprise—I found that that was not exactly the point of the research.

In 1986, Dr. Richard J. Light began a research project that focused on identifying why “some students [had] a great experience [in college] while others did not.” The article was interesting because what Zernike provided in her review of Dr. Light's book were some suggestions she had gleaned from the book, suggestions on how students

could get that “great experience” out of college—kind of a “how to” for college students. I was intrigued by the article, so I bought the book to see what else Dr. Light had to suggest. The book, *Making the Most Out of College: Students Speak Their Minds*, provides specifics on how individuals had achieved happiness in a new environment.

For 10 years Richard J. Light, a Harvard professor and statistician, researched one topic, one that would enlighten the Harvard administration and faculty on what they could do to make students get the most out of their college experience. To find answers, Dr. Light questioned, interviewed, and surveyed students not only at Harvard but also at 90 other colleges and universities. Over 1600 undergraduates were interviewed—Dr. Light interviewed over 400 undergraduates himself. What does make college a memorable experience, one that enriches students' lives, regardless of whether or not the college is a four year or a two year?

Responses from these 1600 students were remarkably the same:

“A key theme in students' interviews is the strong interplay of different features of campus life. Course choices, advising, and decisions about [living environments] do not stand in isolation. They are part of a connected system” (3).

I could begin to see connections to my own life, not only as a student but also as an employee. What made me the happiest while I worked at that first job at the Sun Papers? The answer was easy—the people who made me feel that I was connected to something larger than myself.

I looked at what Dr. Light identified as consistent for those students who felt “they were making the most of their years at college,” who felt college “enhanced their lives” and positively impacted their choices for their future careers. They were:

Getting started:

- join activities that are of interest—not necessarily academic but ones that might connect “what goes on inside and outside the classroom” (Light 14).
- join work groups that enable them to feel a part of the community;
- question in order to get additional perspectives;
- discover they share core values and skills in their diversity.

Each of these enabled students to build strong relationships with

their peers as well as others on campus, to challenge themselves so they could continue to grow and evolve as thinkers and learners, and to discover and experience the diversity that is inherent on a college campus.

Right now, you might be wondering what students and their connection to a college or university has to do with the work place and why I am happy in this one. What do the academic and personal lives of students have to do with me and my evaluation of my happiness of working at DVC? As I read the book, I could see how Dr. Light's research could impact students and the environment they work in. But I could also see how his book could provide a blueprint for identifying ways the employees of this institution could be positively impacted, that we could have the DVC Guide to Happiness.

In this talk, I will use Dr. Light's model to help me explain how I have found happiness in working at DVC; I will also share some of the thoughts and stories from others who work here: some classified, some faculty and some administrators. As I spoke with each individual, I found we shared many of the same feelings about what we do and why this particular environment makes us happy. How do we take advantage of the "strong interplay of different features of campus life" and how do we become a part of "this connected system" (3)?

Reach Out--



For many of us, we came into an educational environment because we felt we had something to offer, something to contribute, and we chose a variety of paths through which to make that contribution: faculty, classified or administration. We looked for and found ways to give something back. Dr. Light indicates that students who have gotten the most out of their college experience want to do the same thing. When students first come onto the campus,

"Nearly all are enthusiastic and productive, and nearly all quickly become overcommitted. The best part is, nearly all students also have suggestions for improving both academic and non academic aspects of college. They constantly question what we do, what they do, how to do it better, what they are getting and giving in this demanding community" (Light 7).

Dr. Light is observing the energy that is generated when people start something new; starting fresh, with a clean slate can be invigorating. Nothing is impossible, and the options seem limitless. And, of course, once they understand the culture of this new environment and become a part of that culture, they will find that pathway to make those contributions which are so necessary to sustaining the vitality of this institution. Those of us who experienced the sixties would say that we came wearing rose colored glasses. But, Dr. Light would contend, and so would I, that those students who were able to sustain that enthusiasm, to pursue their interests inside and outside of the classroom, and continue to question all parts of the system, those students would find that they did indeed get the most they could out of college.

When I came onto this campus in 1986, I had the same feelings Dr. Light describes, and, as each semester passed, I found myself more and more involved both in English department activities and other interests on campus. I came to know more people, interesting, passionate individuals who were committed to the college, the students and to each other. On such person was Manuel Gonzales. Dr. Gonzales teaches in the history department, is a scholar and published author, an individual who has generously shared his considerable knowledge and expertise in his field. He is also an individual who is committed to supporting students' success not only at DVC but in their personal and professional lives as well. In fall of 1987, a student approached Dr. Gonzales and asked if he would be an advisor for a club on campus, for Alpha Gamma Sigma, the California State Community College Honor Society. The student told Dr. Gonzales that DVC had had a chapter on the campus, but the charter had lapsed. In order for the club to be reinstated, students needed an advisor who was willing to apply to the state organization to have the charter re-established and then to commit to being the faculty advisor for the club. Dr. Gonzales said yes. Not too long after, Manuel put a brief notice in *The Forum*, our Faculty Senate bulletin, asking for faculty who would be interested in sharing the advisor's duties to contact him.

I was in my second year as a part-time faculty member, but in my first year on the DVC campus. During the 1986-87 academic year, I had been on the San Ramon

campus. But DVC was closer to my home, and with young children, I wanted to be closer to home. I loved the teaching, but I felt somewhat isolated from the rest of the community. Just coming to campus, teaching my classes and going home limited my understanding the environment in which I was working. Education does not happen in a vacuum, not for the students and not for the teachers. And, the classroom is not the only place on campus where students can learn and evolve. A college campus provides a number of opportunities for both students and teachers, as Linda Robbins our go to person in HR says, to enrich our lives both physically and mentally. I wanted to understand about the culture I was working in to ensure both my students and I could make the best use of all of the pieces that round out one's educational experience. I was looking for a way to learn about and become involved at DVC.

When I read the notice, I thought the description of the club and its goals sounded interesting; so I contacted Dr. Gonzales. For the next 10 years we worked to re-establish the charter, to develop the club, to support our students at DVC and in the state arena, and to support the organization. For me, this experience was transforming. I learned about a whole new option that my students could use to develop their abilities to work effectively with people, to gain leadership skills and positions, to network with other students and faculty throughout the state of California, to obtain scholarships and to pursue their interests in a supportive and encouraging environment.

For myself, I found another way to connect to my students, to mentor and support them, to encourage them to challenge themselves and strive to achieve their goals. But I also found a new way to connect to my colleagues. We were talking about more than academic concepts; we were talking about students and student lives and identifying ways we could enable those students to be as successful as possible not only in their classrooms, but outside of them as well. AGS has more than 70 participating California community colleges, colleges spanning the entire state. The student, faculty and classified participants are diverse, ethnically, economically, culturally and pedagogically. Being a part of this community of volunteers who dedicate a substantial amount of their time was not only intellectually stimulating for me but it was also spiritually uplifting. These volunteers were passionate about what they were doing for students, for the positive impact they were having on their students' lives; seeing this every day was nothing short of inspirational. When I was elected to the Board of Trustees and then President of the State Advisory board, I was honored to serve, to support the organization, the volunteer advisors and the thousands of students who were members of the organization.

After 10 years, Keri Dulaney-Greger and Patrick Leong, English faculty, joined me as advisors for the club. Now, I was connecting with more faculty on the DVC campus, sharing what I had learned and hearing new voices about alternatives and additional options. I remained an active club advisor until 2001 when three more people

stepped up to replace me and my co-advisors and take over—Milagros Ojermark, foreign language, Gary Pieroni, business, and Obed Vazquez, sociology. During the transition, I gained new friends, people who became close to me, people who brighten my spirits each time I see and talk to them and who remind me, just by their presence, why I am still happy to be here.

Obed tells me that other faculty have joined him now in advising the Gamma Psi chapter of Alpha Gamma Sigma: Patricia Herrera, Disabled Students Services, Raymond Gilmore, business, and Janet Mason, Early Childhood Education. The club has continued to thrive and students are still benefitting from the experience of being in a community at their college, one that allows them to explore a wider range of options and opportunities.

Obed has been keeping me updated about the organization and our students in the club. But lately, I have seen for myself the tangible reality of this dynamic and vital group. On April 18, I attended the awards banquet during the Alpha Gamma Sigma state wide convention. I was reintroduced to the state and local organization in a way that made me feel I had come back to a family I had not seen for a while. There was the same welcoming embrace from old friends as well as new acquaintances. There was the same feeling of support generated for everyone who was a part of the group. When advisors were singled out for recognition, even though their chapters screamed support, everyone else cheered as well. While applause was particularly exuberant for those scholarships given to members within a particular chapter, the applause was also genuine and congratulatory for those individuals from other chapters who received awards.

I was introduced to the members of the DVC Gamma Psi chapter who attended the conference. They are an impressive group: intelligent, genuine, fun and kind. The conversation was easy, interesting and entertaining; I felt again like I was part of something important. I was reminded about how good something can be when so many individuals work together to achieve a positive goal. These students and these advisors were making a positive impact in each other's lives; they knew it and understood it and the positive energy charged the room.



Classified staff and managers in the DVC student center also worked hard with these students; they saw the value of such

an organization and wanted to be a part of keeping it viable and supported. They went to extraordinary measures to ensure that students received the recognition they deserved on their transcripts and at graduation. This collaboration, this willing and positive support of Alpha Gamma Sigma and the people associated with it made me grateful I was at DVC and contributed to my being happy at DVC. It still does.

I am not the only person who found a positive connection outside of the classroom. For Barbara Sawyer, retired full time English faculty, her association with the Faculty Senate at DVC and on the state level, was, she said, “the most profound experience” she has had in her life. The work, the collaboration, and the connections within this community have kept Barbara coming back to the DVC campus. She is still on campus teaching, mentoring, advising—her connection to the institution is still intact and still making her happy.

Keith Mikolavich, English faculty and current Faculty Senate Vice President, immersed in the work of the reorganization of the college, sees how he is part of something larger than himself. He is seeing the college emerge from some pretty traumatic times. He recognizes the potential this reorganization has for “transforming the college,” and “reshaping” the way people work and think about what they do. He is inspired by these smart, selfless and dedicated people committed to making a difference for this college—he is happy to be a part of this process and contribute to its success.

I could go on with examples of others who have found that being a part of something larger, something with a broad positive impact, has supported an individual’s happiness in working at DVC. Think of individuals you know who have engaged or re-engaged in activities outside of the classroom and how that connection has enabled them to feel integrated into the fabric of the community, gaining the feeling that their contribution is an investment into the vitality and strength of this environment. Think of yourself and how you are contributing; has your personal commitment at the college, to something beyond your job, added to your feeling of being a valued part of this community? Obviously, every day will not be sunshine and flowers.

Oh, happy day--



We will still have those days when we are wondering just

what we are doing and why we are doing it.

Just one of those days



What happened?!?



Perhaps thinking about those other connections might lessen the degree of frustration, aggravation and anxiety.

Dr. Light then introduces the notion that students should join groups and accomplish “substantive academic work” (10). He extols the use of collaborative work groups, groups where students must pool their resources, talents, and expertise to address complicated problems or issues. He suggests that students who work effectively in these groups, who have an open mind about options and alternatives, who feel they have an integral part in developing the final process and possible solution, are more likely to be happy about being in that group and with the outcomes that result from that work. Not only do students feel this when they are part of a project or a process that is successful, but so do I and so do others who have worked hard to achieve a far-reaching goal.

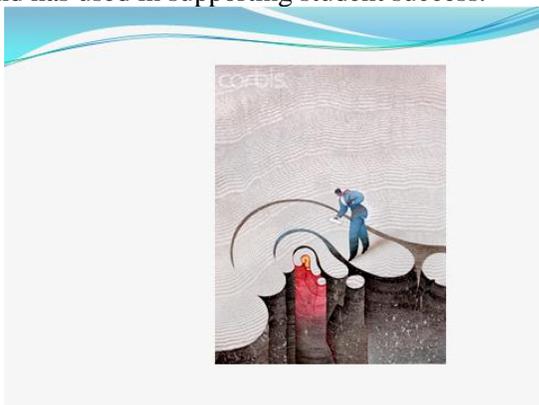
I remember chairing the Developmental Education Committee for six years; one of the charges of this group was to develop options for our At-Risk students; these are students who come to college without the skills they need to be successful. The committee was comprised of classified staff, faculty and administration and we brought our best ideas and our research on best practices to the committee meetings. One individual had visited another college and saw the Gateway program; he brought it to the committee. Rachel Westlake, at the time a math teacher, now the Dean of Math and Computer Science, remembers the Gateway program because she and Lisa Orta, an English faculty member, created a learning community that would pilot this program at DVC. She and Lisa developed curriculum for their respective math and English courses and included a piece they hoped would enable the students to bond to each other and to college; they wanted to give the students more ways to feel connected and become invested in their coursework so they could be successful, be retained and

persist to the next level. This extra piece involved taking students on field trips to various places on campus and in inviting speakers into the classroom. Among the activities, they went as a group to see the play “Angels in America” put on by the drama department, they invited Computer Technology Education staff to speak to the students, and they went to the museum. In the museum the class saw an abstract painting—half black and half white with a dot in each of the opposite colors.

As Rachel and I talked about her experience in this pilot, she remembered one student in particular. As she, Lisa and the students were all looking at the picture, questioning in their minds what the abstract painting was supposed to be saying, some thinking “whatever” or “that’s interesting,” this student from the class stepped up. Rachel said he started talking about how the painting was about isolation and a world that was different. For her, she said, “it was mind boggling to hear him talk about this piece in such a sophisticated and thoughtful way that none of us had gotten.” She indicated that his work in both the English and math classes was marginal, that neither she nor Lisa had seen this side of the student before. She could only guess that this was a student whose basic skills were so low that he couldn’t express himself in his writing. Seeing this student open up like this was a wonderful experience for Rachel and it changed her view of at-risk students. All of the work and effort in developing the curriculum that could support these students, unique and creative ways to give them voice and confidence, worked for this student in an unexpected way.

Rachel said that after, he brought in some things he had made—quite a few costumes for Mardi Gras festivals. He also brought in newspaper articles about these costumes, articles that would show some of his recognized successes.

How does something like this contribute to our happiness in being at DVC? These kinds of successes, even if they are not constant, provide a tangible way to see that even against significant odds, we can make a difference in someone’s life. Perhaps this student went away with a little more confidence, feeling respected and admired for his accomplishments. Rachel came away with insights she could and has used in supporting student success.



When we have successes, we share them. But we don’t only share our successes; we share our failures too. We “constantly question what we do, what [students] do, how

[we can do our jobs] better....”(Light 7). Doing this keeps us from becoming stagnant, rigid and closed minded. It keeps us interested and engaged.

Another part of this engagement is working as a college to develop systems and policies that ensure and promote student success. Ted Wieden, interim Senior Dean of Curriculum and Instruction and a physical science professor, has seen some lively meetings, ones that involve groups of people who are questioning, sometimes with little veins popping out on their necks and temples. I have been at some of those meetings. Anyone who attends can see that the people there are passionate about what they do and they want students to benefit from that work. Ted sees the frustration and anxiety, but he needs to be honest about the problems we are facing. He knows the people of this community are deeply committed and that can inflame emotions.

People who know their input has been heard and valued are encouraged to participate further, to identify concerns and find ways to address those concerns. Part of what makes Ted happy to be at DVC is that he is seeing this community pulling together to deal with our state mandates and other needs. Pulling together doesn’t mean people have stopped questioning, or have stopped requiring thoughtful, constructive answers to their questions. It doesn’t mean that people are giving up on trying to identify and make effective changes. What it does mean is that more people are becoming part of the process, and when the process works, people are enriched and they continue to work, to collaborate, to fight, to ensure that the result is the best and most useful for achieving our goals.

Hang on!



We learn about ourselves at these meetings; we learn that while we may differ on ways to achieve goals, that we have shared values about what is important. I want to share some stories that were told to me, stories that might dishearten but also stories that might inspire.

David Vela, English professor and Puente co-coordinator, told me about a professor he had in college. The man was a noted scholar of Romantic literature who had published many books on authors identified with this movement. He was an acknowledged expert in his field, a man whose knowledge had significant depth and breadth. David went into this man’s classroom, excited by the possibilities of what he would learn and how this teacher

would share his expertise with his students. David was surprised to see that the man sitting in the front of the classroom had set up his chair so that his back would be to the class. Throughout the semester, this scholar never conducted class facing his students. “He didn’t teach,” David said, “he pontificated.”

Seeing anything?



David felt he was the worst “teacher” he had ever had. The semester could not end too soon and when it ended, David never considered contacting him again.

Seeing this model and discarding it, David became another kind of teacher. He chose to face his students, to mentor them and to enable them to benefit from his knowledge. His students do keep in touch, sharing their successes, asking for letters of recommendation to graduate schools, and reminding him of the positive impact he had on their learning and their lives. David told me about a particular student he had 10 years ago. The student had hurt his back on his job and returned to school. Being a builder, he came back to take more classes in an environment where he was comfortable, the building and trades area; plus he needed to be in school to continue to get his disability checks.

This student did decide to branch out, though, and took David’s English 122. When he came into David’s class, he didn’t have much confidence in his writing. His previous education had not been strong and his own life had been very rough—in gangs in his Washington DC community and later in motorcycle gangs. The first thing he said to David after David made a positive remark about his writing was, “Don’t shit me, Vela. You’re just saying this; I know I am not a good writer.” David encouraged him, telling him that one of the essays he had turned in was publishable; still questioning, the student did submit it and to his surprise it was published. Soon after this student got the academic bug and took four classes from David, just for the pleasure the classes gave him. The student got out of the building trade, and even though he was still in constant pain, wrote every day. At 61, he will be publishing his book, an autobiographical novel in three volumes. The student found his place at DVC and through this connection to this instructor, his life took a turn in a different direction. Like most of us, when we are feeling respected and our thoughts are valued, we feel connected to something and that

connection may support the confidence we need to stretch beyond what we thought our limitations might be.

Keith Mikolavich told me quite a different story about a teacher he had in 10th grade, one he got because the class he wanted with Mr. Hubbard was full. He was sent to Mr. Nacorato’s philosophy class. When he walked in to the classroom and headed for a seat near his friends, Mr. Nacorato said, “Mr. Mikolavich, you will sit behind Renee.” So far, not a good start. After class started, the teacher asked students to form a circle and informed them about what they would be doing in class. He told them, “You will come out of this classroom drunk with knowledge. You’re lucky this class is before lunch; you’ll have an hour to calm down. You will come out of class with your brain buzzing.” At first, Keith was skeptical, but he very quickly discovered that Mr. Nacorato had not exaggerated. Keith’s head was buzzing after class, so he and his classmates continued to talk about philosophy and philosophers throughout lunch, excited by what they were learning and focused on deciphering the implications of this knowledge. Keith said that the feeling Mr. Nacorato created was so pleasurable that he wanted to sustain it in his own classes, something he works hard to accomplish.

Laury Fischer talks about how teachers can learn to create that intellectual “buzz” Keith talks about. One of the reasons Laury is happy at DVC is because he sees that faculty do focus on their craft and work to develop their skills to be more effective in supporting the teaching and learning process. Laury believes

...“teachers teach teachers and they need to have time to talk to each other and learn from each other. At DVC, we give tips to each other, we have casual conversations in the hall, we share assignments, we have [meetings about] best practices; this is a very professional place for the most part. It’s the rare teacher who is not dedicated.”

Laury Fischer, English professor

He appreciates the independence and freedom he feels here: academic freedom as well as personal freedom. And working with people he respects and connects with makes him happy.

Jeanie Dewhurst, Sr. Executive Assistant to the president of DVC, has been working at DVC for 20 years. During that time, she has been able to work in various departments, having different degrees of connection to students. Recently she went to the Academic Senate’s Accreditation Institute 2010.

"It was awe inspiring how much you can learn."

Jeanie Dewhurst, Sr. Executive Assistant

She saw the passion the people at the conference showed and how involved they were in their various colleges. Everyone had the same primary goal: student learning; that is why everyone was there; that was why she was there; that was what they all cared about.

This freedom to become involved in other parts of the campus, to be involved in the processes that enable the college to function is how we find our common interests and work together to achieve them.

Elane Rehr, psychology professor, has been at DVC since 1973. She reminded me of another outcome of the close relationships we develop through our interactions with each other. "Recently," she said, "one of my colleagues and close friends was diagnosed with cancer. The outpouring of support and care from the DVC community has been immeasurable. Students, faculty, management and classified have come forward with kindness and compassion."

I have often seen this reaction to sickness, hardship and tragedy since I have been at DVC, this reaction that draws us together to support someone in whatever way possible. We have donated money to buy "take-out taxi" meals, donated sick leave, developed networks to support people with long term illnesses, and have offered help when tragic accidents or deaths occurred. DVC is a community of people who care for and about each other.

At the end of the day, I am tired, many times physically tired, but even more often emotionally exhausted. The days are filled with too much to do, too many meetings and too many very short deadlines. But each morning, I take my shower, get dressed, eat my breakfast and drive to the campus, ready to start another day. My dad is still there in my head, I guess.

When I get here, I will see a colleague who asks me how I am, and he or she will stop and wait to hear the answer. Or I'll get a call from someone like Ann Patton or Terri Cassidy and before long, we will be laughing about something silly or shocking; the day will begin to brighten and I go into my class with a smile. My smile often generates smiles on my students' faces, faces I am always glad to see; they are after all why I became a teacher.

On those rare days when I don't see my colleagues or my students, I conjure a positive memory and use it to energize my day. I am happy to be here and I know it. I wish the same for you.

Thank you.

If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands (clap clap)
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands (clap clap)
If you're happy and you know it, then your face will surely show it
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands. (clap clap)
If you're happy and you know it, stomp your feet (stomp stomp)
If you're happy and you know it, stomp your feet (stomp stomp)
If you're happy and you know it, then your face will surely show it
If you're happy and you know it, stomp your feet. (stomp stomp)
If you're happy and you know it, shout "Hurray!" (hoo-ray!)
If you're happy and you know it, shout "Hurray!" (hoo-ray!)
If you're happy and you know it, then your face will surely show it
If you're happy and you know it, shout "Hurray!" (hoo-ray!)
If you're happy and you know it, do all three (clap-clap, stomp-stomp, hoo-ray!)
If you're happy and you know it, do all three (clap-clap, stomp-stomp, hoo-ray!)
If you're happy and you know it, then your face will surely show it
If you're happy and you know it, do all three. (clap-clap, stomp-stomp, hoo-ray!)

**NICOLE HESS-DIESTLER: CANDIDATE
STATEMENT FOR THE OFFICE OF FACULTY
SENATE REPRESENTATIVE-AT-LARGE**

Nicole is a newly tenured faculty member and joined the Diablo Valley College family in 2006; relocating from Los Angeles where she had been working regularly on stage, film and television. Nicole began her academic teaching career in 2003, as an adjunct faculty member at Grossmont College and San Diego State University. She also led several workshops and Master's Classes in advanced theatrical stylings and execution. Nicole holds several theatrical degrees and certificates, among them a BA in Theatre Performance (SDSU), and an MFA in Acting (FSU/Asolo Conservatory). Nicole currently co-advises the DVC Dramatic Society and has served on several campus committees; The Outreach Committee, Faculty Development, The 60th Anniversary Celebration and The Campus Wide Staff Development Committees. Nicole is a columnist for The Pleasant Hill Community Focus Newspaper. She is also an active and current member of FACCC and Actor's Equity Association. Nicole newest accomplishment involves the expansion of her family. Hand in hand with husband, Zach, she recently adopted a nine-year old boy, named "Semaje." They reside in Moraga with their mini aquatic frog, two cats and "Axel" the Beagle-

most recently seen in the 2009 production of DVC's, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

**JOHN FREYTAG: CANDIDATE STATEMENT FOR
THE OFFICE OF FACULTY SENATE
CORRESPONDING SECRETARY**

Hello, DVC Faculty,

My name is John Freytag and I am completing my fifth year at DVC. I teach Oceanography and Marine Biology and also coordinate the DVC Oceanography Program. I have been involved with the Faculty Senate for nine semesters first serving for three years as the Rep for the Biological and Health Sciences Division and more recently as the Senate's Corresponding Secretary. I look forward to serving for another term as Corresponding Secretary and encourage you to contact me with anything you would like brought to the Senate's attention.

Thank you,
John Freytag

DEAR BRUCE

George Turner, Geology Instructor, Retired

Thank you for your informative response to my rant. I suspected the situation was as you documented, but was too heated up to do the legwork.

In the April 6, 1990 issue of the DVC Forum, I published the following article, which I am re-typing here to bring it across the Digital Divide, into the post-Modern world.

“Technical Fix”

Occasionally, some technical fix comes along that solves some complex, real problem. Take, for example, the problems that concern many of us about grades, specifically uneven grading standards, grade inflation, and so forth.

Here is one possible solution. When grade rosters are filed, for each grade roster a grade-point average can be computed. That number can then travel along with each student's grade to transcripts, statistical print-outs, etc.

Tallied as a separate item on the student's transcript, the class GPA for all courses taken by each student can easily be averaged and compared to the student's individual GPA. It would be clear then which students were above, below, or at the average of all students who she or he took classes with, regardless of the student's own GPA.

Transfer institutions, scholarship committees, etc. would soon make use of this information in making their decisions. Other colleges would quickly adopt the plan. Soon, aspiring students, rather than seeking out classes that frequently assign many A grades, would shun these classes, for in them, their efforts would be rewarded with only average grades.

To complete the picture, we need only compile teaching GPAs for instructors, averaged over three semesters perhaps, and have these numbers printed in the schedule of classes after the instructor's name.

All we need to do this is to have all this data stored in some huge computer and somebody (who?) to decide to do it.”

Thus I wrote 20 years ago, writing out a personal pique because as a teacher of general education required science courses, I was sharply aware of the daily clash between what effort was required of my students to learn the subject and what their work effort expectations were. I was not so aware of the long-term corrosive effects of grade inflation: the consistent dishonesty of telling students they were excellent when they were not, the intense focusing on the importance of small differences in GPA when the range of competition is reduced from C to A to A to A+, certainly a factor in the grade scandal.

George D Turner, Retired Curmudgeon March 20, 2010

A BRILLIANT IDEA

Rick Gelin, Biology

When I first heard George Turner's idea regarding grade inflation many years ago, I thought to myself, “That's brilliant”. Here was an idea that did not infringe upon a faculty member's academic freedom, yet it did provide an incentive to limit grade inflation. (Please refer to the article by George in this issue of the FORUM.)

And as a faculty member serving on the hiring committee for new faculty, I saw first hand the benefits of George's idea. The transcripts of some of the potential candidates included the data George proposed. When I saw a course in which the candidate had earned a 'B', but the average GPA for that course was 3.8, it was obvious this grade represented a below average performance. A grade of 'B' when the average is 2.3, however, would represent an admirable performance. When I saw a grade of 'A' and the average GPA for the course was 3.8, I was left wondering. Did this reflect a truly outstanding performance in the course, or was it merely just above the lowest level attained? There was no way to tell. The real disservice here is to the student who actually did perform at an outstanding level.

In the years since, I, and many others, have spent many hours developing and assessing Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). Recently, I read DVC's “College Guide for Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes.” This policy says, “Assessment methods can be indirect, using criteria that assume learning has taken place, or they can be direct, that is using criteria that measure student learning directly. Examples of indirect measures include grades, success rates, retention rates, enrollment patterns, degree and certificates awarded, placement, outcomes in special programs, and student equity data. Direct student learning outcomes are measures of competencies or attainment levels reached by

students, i.e. skills, abilities, knowledge.” (Emphasis is in the original.)

If grades are an indirect measure of student learning that assumes learning has taken place, I wondered – “Under what circumstances would this assumption be erroneous?” I can think of very few. The first is that the student already knew the material specified in the course outline. An ‘A’ grade would signify that the student has mastered the knowledge and skills specified in the course outline but not necessarily that the student learned them while taking the course. But very rarely do our current SLO assessment methods assay for learning during the course as opposed to learning that occurred prior to the course. So in this case, our current SLO assessment methods are no better than grades at measuring student learning.

It is also possible that a student’s grade does not reflect learning if the grade is earned by means that can’t be verified. For example, if a student’s grade is determined in large part by homework, it would be almost impossible to tell if the student had learned anything. Perhaps the student had his friend do the homework for him. If a student’s grade was determined solely by essays written at home, there is no way tell if the work was that of the student or that of her sister. I think at least some measure of performance ought to occur while in class to minimize potential abuse. But the same is true of our SLO assessments. If the SLO assessment

is done on-line, for example, how do we ensure we are measuring the learning achieved by the student and not that of her friend?

The last possibility I can think of is the most insidious. If faculty dole out an ‘A’ to virtually every student regardless of whether the student has mastered the knowledge and skills specified in the course outline, then we cannot tell which students have learned and which have not. If this last circumstance becomes prevalent, an accreditation body will need more direct evidence to assure that student learning is actually taking place. Grades will have less and less meaning and will no longer suffice as a measure of student learning. And faculty will be required to spend more and more time on Student Learning Outcomes.

The more time I spend on SLOs, the more I am convinced that my initial assessment of George’s idea was correct. His idea is even more brilliant now than it was many years ago.

PUBLISHERS NOTE The Forum is a biweekly publication of the Diablo Valley College Faculty Senate. Its pages are open to any faculty member, manager, classified staff member, or student who wishes to communicate something of concern and interest to the campus community.

**DVC FACULTY SENATE
VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS**

The DVC Faculty Senate Voluntary Fund has traditionally help support the Annual Faculty Lecture, the Faculty Senate Dinner Theater, the DVC Retirement Dinner, scholarships and other events as approved by the Faculty Senate Council. The Faculty Senate Legal Defense Fund has been paying on the debts incurred in the lawsuit over Division Deans. You can help by donating through a payroll deduction or a quarterly, annual, or lump sum donation. You can use the form below to submit your pledge of support. Thank you!

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Check for lump sum

Send written check to Faculty Senate Office

Contribution amount _____

***Fill out only one payroll deduction authorization card and include your total monthly contribution. The Faculty Senate Office will use this pledge form to allocate the funds to legal defense and/or the voluntary senate sponsored activities.**