

HCC's Trio Program's First Induction Ceremony

Never Stop Dreaming about the Possibilities that Will Come to You Through Education

Remarks by HCC President Dr. Guy Altieri

I'm pleased to point out to all in attendance that HCC was founded 65 years ago with the overarching purpose of providing accessible and affordable post-secondary educational opportunities for all the citizens of Washington County. The world history of higher education tells us that great universities were first born in Western Europe and came to the British American Colonies in 1636 with the founding of Harvard University. However, community colleges were invented around 1901 in the United States as a uniquely American way to make college learning accessible for common people within their local communities. The mission of community colleges in general, and HCC, in particular, has always been to provide college level learning in an atmosphere that champions the intrinsic values of the American Constitution and the Bill of Rights. In fact, it is accurate to say that HCC and its sister colleges are based on the American Dream:

- the belief that all men and women are created equal.
- the belief that, in America, all men and women should have equal opportunity.
- the belief that access to education and employment be based on individual potential and accomplishment, and not be denied because of skin color, gender, culture, sexual orientation, or religious belief.

Let's never forget that America's strength, and its greatness, has been its ability to continually provide better and better educational opportunities to more and more people from all income levels. Education remains the single most important factor in a person having a successful life, regardless of how you choose to define "success." The American dream is essentially the golden rule - which is simple and straight forward -- *Treat other people the way you wish to be treated.*

All of you TRIO students are very fortunate to be living the American dream by using the educational opportunity you have found at HCC to help you be all you want to become. To help you fully take advantage of this opportunity, I have some advice for each of you to consider. In particular, my central message is to urge every TRIO student to never stop dreaming about the possibilities and to also prompt you to set a plan, perhaps with the help of Rachel, Buck, and

others, to realize your preferred dream through the very special opportunity you have here at HCC.

Also, as part of this message, I must caution you that dreaming without a commitment to HARD WORK and demonstrating a POSITIVE ATTITUDE will lead to much disappointment. But dreams that are fueled by ARDUOUS WORK and a GOOD ATTITUDE almost always come true.

When I started college way back in 1968, I remember the Dean of Students telling us freshmen students that although we were a select group, we were to look to the student to our right , and then look to the student to our left, and know that one of us was not going to succeed in college. When I entered my doctoral program in the 1980's, after earning three masters' degrees in the 1970's, the Dean of the Graduate School at Columbia University also told me and my fellow students to look around and select four others admitted to Columbia's doctoral program and know that only one in five of us would earn a terminal degree from this ivory league university.

These techniques of motivating students to recognize that high level educational attainment required hard work and just the right attitude have, thank goodness, not been a part of the community college movement. Here we ask students to look around at their fellow students and to commit to succeeding together, to become a community of learners helping one-another to meet the high standards the faculty and staff set for each student to grow to their personal potential, well beyond the high minimum standards established by the faculty.

I'm both pleased and compelled to tell each of you that I have grand expectations for the College's TRIO program. In particular, my vision for the program is that it will be known for: -- high standards, students pursuing challenging courses and diverse extracurricular activities, and a true learning community of students, all growing and developing together, under the able guidance of a very dedicated staff.

Study after study shows those who succeed most in life are not those who happen to score highest on intelligence and aptitude tests, rather it is those who work hard, stay focused and remain passionate about what they want to accomplish. Successful persons also possess a wonderful attitude that makes them great learners and very happy people, regardless of what life obstacles are thrown their way.

Here I'm reminded that, while knowledge is important, wisdom is essential. Let me suggest that the ultimate wisdom is not to be found in the tidal wave of data that saturates our airwaves, our computers and other smart devices. The poet Robert Frost, I think, put it best many years ago when he said, "What we do in education is help people get over their little mindedness." It is in this same spirit that I want to publicly praise the work that all successful TRIO programs do, at all levels, in helping students purge their little mindedness.

One of the more valuable things I learned during my time at Columbia University is that it is helpful to view society as a partnership between the dead, the living, and those yet to come. Consider the nation into which my parents, and many of your grandparents, were born. At the start of the 20th century, the average life expectancy for an American man was 46 years; for a woman, 48 years. The telegraph system, the "Internet" of its day, strained to carry 63 million messages a year. The Dow Jones Industrial Average passed the 100 mark in January 1906. Foreign immigrants streamed through Ellis Island, which was America's front door, at a rate of 100 per hour. Yet at that time the U.S. Census Bureau didn't even keep statistics on the number of Hispanics or Asian Americans living in the country.

The 1950s are encapsulated in popular memory as a time of "I Love Lucy," hula hoops and widespread political indifference. For me and many other 50 and 60 year olds, we have distinct recollections of an era of precise role expectations when men wore the pants and women wore the earrings. When surfing was an activity pursued on a board in the ocean, not with a mouse in a home or library. When Microsoft was a laundry detergent and the internet was a little known basketball league. When I went off to college my generation was urged by author Rachel Carson (Silent Spring 1962) to worry about pollution of the air and water, not the airwaves. The world has turned over many times since the HJC class of 1958 drank Coke at the Richardson's Carhop, partied at Jim's Always, and exerted leadership on and off the HJC campus.

Well, it's easy to look back and laugh at that culture. Yet if a great teacher teaches nothing else, they should make their students cautious to generalizations and sweeping value judgments.

One of public education's greatest success stories in the last 65 years has been in the area of race relations. Too rapidly for some, much too slowly for others, through the work of educators at all levels, our nation has at last begun to honor promises we made to one another in the founding documents of our country. We have demolished legal and cultural barriers that formerly contradicted our democratic aspirations. Indeed, today we rejoice in the rich diversity of our country. How diverse have we become? Consider this: today's Americans buy more salsa than ketchup. We consume more pizza than hamburger, and taco and rice sales now exceed French fries.

Although diversity is a good thing, we as humans are much more alike than different. In fact many contemporary philosophers agree that there are "three great mysteries" in the lives of human beings that are found in all cultures: the mystery of birth at the beginning; the mystery of death at the end; and, most important, the mystery of love. Frankly, I would contend that everything that is most precious in life is a form of love. For example, scholars tell us that "Art is a form of love, if it be noble; labor is a form of love, if it be worthy; thought is a form of love, if it is inspirational."

Your being part of this TRIO program will have the most value if you view it as an inspirational learning experience that will create in you a passion for the possible and the preferred, and not just the probable. You don't have to be a missionary to have a sense of mission as a learner. *All you need is to realize that what is most important in life is to both learn and love.* These are the qualities that produce extremely fulfilling lives.

As you commit to being a lifelong learner, don't fall victim to cynicism as you compare what is with what should be. Remember that life is not meant to be endured, but to be enjoyed.

Retain your curiosity, and though you may get wrinkles, you will never grow old. Commit to a life of being intellectually brave. Take risks and stretch for the stars. And as you become more and more educated, remember your HCC roots and those who helped you along the way, and don't forget to help others as you become successful, for therein lies a special way for you to give back.

I'm so pleased HCC finally has a TRIO program and each of you should be excited to know this program will make a big difference in your life, if and only if, you WORK HARD and have a GREAT ATTITUDE.

Best wishes and do stay committed to fulfilling your educational dreams!