

AFTERWORD

EASTFIELD’S ENDURING VALUES

If, as T. S. Eliot contends, the past is always present, one could also say that at Eastfield College so is the future. Awareness of the future needs of the College and plans to meet those needs are embedded in the collective psyche of the faculty and staff in the same way that the tradition of the “person-centered” tradition is. Descriptions of immediate internal challenges facing the College and the College’s responses to them abound in the present study. Those areas in which committees have found the College’s programs and resources inadequate are summarized in the lists of recommendations and suggestions. The Self-Study Report, however, would not be complete without a discussion of the external forces that will impact the College in the decade to come. The two major external forces the College must grapple with are demographic factors and external factors.

Demographic Factors

District demographers predict an overall increase in DCCCD enrollment in the next decade, from today’s 52,000 to about 85,000. This enormous growth is caused by the “baby boomlet,” the bulge of 18-22 year-old children of the baby boomers who will be entering college. The District predicts that the area universities will reach maximum enrollment, and that DCCCD colleges will enroll students who might otherwise attend four-year institutions their first and second years.

A more significant long-term demographic trend that embraces the entire state focuses on the participation rate of Texans in education, and of special interest to the Eastfield community, in higher education. State demographer Steve Murdock has identified “unacceptable gaps” within Texas and between Texas and other states that will have

grave consequences for Texans by 2030 if these gaps are not closed. Statisticians estimate that the average income in Texas has dropped \$3,000-\$4,000 per year for the past several years because of these gaps. The nature of the gap within Texas is even more disturbing because of its nature. Although Anglo participation in higher education declined between 1990 and 2000 and minority participation increased, the gap between the two groups actually widened. If this trend continues unabated, Texas colleges and universities will be in the paradoxical position of having an increase in enrollment (because of the general population increase) but a decrease in the participation rates of all ethnic populations, but especially of minorities. To stop this undesirable trend, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, in response to state legislation, has launched Closing the Gap, a program designed to close the two gaps in Texas education and to provide equity of educational opportunity for all Texans.

The demographic factors that prompted the Closing the Gap initiative will impact Eastfield’s future heavily. State demographers predict that by 2030 the state will be 60% Hispanic. Eastfield’s service area, like much of Dallas County, already has a significant Hispanic population and will become increasingly Hispanic in ethnicity. Other populations whose first language is not English are expected to grow also. The challenge is to plan and offer programs appropriate to the needs of this ever-changing student population. Finally, the changing population also means changing workforce needs resulting in a continued search for new programs to meet the needs of students and area businesses. DCCCD, and thus Eastfield, are participants in the Closing the Gap program, which will be an important agent in “closing the gaps” within the Eastfield service area.

External Factors

A second major external force impacting Eastfield’s future is the allocation of external funding. Like all community colleges, DCCCD must compete for state funding against both powerful university systems and public schools. At the time of writing, the outlook for state funding did not look hopeful. Whatever visions Eastfield faculty and staff have

for the future must be fiscally feasible within the resources allotted by state and local funding. Locally, the District has a Capital Improvement Plan in place that covers all seven colleges. Eastfield’s needs are assessed and allocated funds and a time frame based on the needs of the District as a whole. This is another external factor limiting the immediacy of response to some of the problems identified in this response.

Eastfield also shares in the District’s goals and ties its own mission and goals to those of the District. The major emphases of the District at this time are remediation, retention, and diversity. Eastfield’s future directions will be built around those major themes.

An Internal Force: the Changing Faculty

Finally, an internal force that cannot be changed by a policy manual or a task force will also influence the nature of the College in the years to come: the graying of the faculty and the imminent retirement of a significant percentage of the full-time faculty. Of the 86 full-time faculty members, 28 are “original hires,” and more were added in the early years of Eastfield’s history. Because some faculty have not been replaced as they retired, the College lacks a significant “mid-level” layer of faculty to provide the continuity of service and the institutional memory usually associated with that group. Transitioning from a faculty composed of mostly “early hires” with deep ties to the College to a faculty composed of mostly “new hires” just developing those ties will be a challenge. Scheduling the hiring of new faculty is difficult for two reasons: the uncertainty of the actual retirement dates of the senior faculty and the limitations of the budget.

Meeting the Challenges Seeds of Future Solutions in Present Programs

The two external forces and the internal force discussed above are largely beyond the College’s control, but they must be addressed if the College is to continue to serve its purpose within the community. The committees chose not to add a “Future Directions” section to each of their reports, but to summarize the “Future Directions” of the College

in the context of the findings of the self-study as a whole. The text below brings together the threads from each section that demonstrate a response to the challenges posed by the forces discussed above and indicates some of the plans already at work. Reports on areas of the College needing improvement are included in the Addendum.

Section II Institutional Purpose: This section chronicles the development of Eastfield’s current “Expanded Mission and Goals” and notes at the end that this document is reviewed annually by the Institutional Effectiveness and Planning Committee. This review is important for the future of Eastfield because it keeps the College focused on its purpose and sensitive to the coming changes in student population.

Section III Institutional Effectiveness: The development and implementation of the Eastfield Planning Process Model is crucial to the College’s effective response to the challenges of the future. Without an organized method to plan and evaluate programs and systems to meet the demographic and budgetary challenges of the coming years, Eastfield would be simply “putting out fires.” Introduced in this section, the Eastfield Planning and Process Model is also cited in Sections IV and V. The research efforts discussed in 3.3 are likely to become more significant to the College as the new demographic forces come into play. The projects cited in that section serve as models, but other types of research may be conducted also. With the increased emphasis on multiple delivery systems, especially distance learning and its variations, research into the comparative effectiveness of these methods with Eastfield students may be desirable. Continued research to support retention efforts and efforts to “close the gap” will certainly be part of the research effort.

Section IV Educational Program: The demographic and budgetary forces collide in their possible effects on Eastfield’s educational program. The challenge is to meet the needs of the increased enrollment while maintaining a high quality educational program. As noted earlier, the student population is expected to grow exponentially in the next decade. At the same time, the College will be losing its most experienced faculty

members to retirement. Planning for this eventuality has already begun at the District level: half-price tuition is offered to students who enroll in classes meeting between 1:30 and 4:15 in the afternoon and on weekends. Eastfield has participated in this program since it became operational in Spring 2002. As expected, the program is drawing a significant number of students. Another option for students who may not be accommodated in traditional classroom settings will be in increased distance learning options, especially online courses. Dallas TeleCollege requires stringent standards for the online courses it offers, but stipends are available to faculty developing these courses for the first time. “Hybrid” courses, in which the class meets half the time on campus and half the time online, may also be considered.

The College is also looking toward the future by adding new programs, Teacher Preparation for example, and strengthening others: home school, dual credit, senior citizens, continuing education and workforce training. Partnerships between area school districts and universities are also actively sought and should provide ways to “close the gap” for students from high school to community college to a four-year institution. A relatively new program is the presence of Texas A & M Commerce on the Eastfield campus, with a counselor and some classes meeting on the campus. These seeds of future directions discussed in Section IV demonstrate that Eastfield is already putting programs in place to meet the needs of new students and of the underrepresented groups most in need of encouragement to attend college. The scope of the offerings depends, of course, on the availability of funds.

Reaching out to families in the service area who have not previously participated in higher education will be more important than ever if the gaps within Texas and between Texas and other states are not to be widened in the future. Eastfield is already preparing for this future with a newly formed Strategic Enrollment Management Task Force. The College will continue to host “college nights” for the service area high schools and to maintain relationships with them through various activities, but the formation of the new task force acknowledges the increasing impetus for community outreach.

Issues relevant to the “graying of the faculty” are brought up in 4.8, the section on faculty. The committee is concerned about the issue of “faculty identity” and is looking ahead to the time when a number of retirements occur almost simultaneously. Questions brought up in the report concerning faculty identity are integrally related to the imminent retirement of a significant segment of the senior faculty. The College is looking to the future simply by asking them before the inevitable chain of events begins to occur. Working within the limitations of the budget, the College has recently funded five faculty positions and continues to fund Visiting Scholar positions.

Section V Educational Support: The future of these services depends largely on the funding they receive and the amount of space allocated to them when the science department vacates its current space in the C-Building. The seeds of directions for the future of these services lie in the discussions of the need for space by the art and math labs, the Learning Assistance Center, the Assessment Center, and Media and Production Services and in the need for additional staff and supply budget by the Library. Their needs will only multiply as enrollment increases, whether the additional students are traditional campus students or distance learners.

Technology issues are also discussed in this section. Eastfield’s investments in technology are part of the District’s master plan for technology. Eastfield faculty use technology heavily and creatively in their courses, but the challenge will be to make sure that the technological resources of the College are readily available to students who do not have access to computers at home or at work.

Section VI Administration and Organization: The most obvious challenge in the administrative and organization area is the recently announced imminent retirement of the current Chancellor. Creating and maintaining a cordial and productive relationship with a new Chancellor will be the challenge for the President. The policies and

procedures discussed in Section VI provide the framework for the relationship, but the transition falls in the category of “future directions.”

Safety and security promise to be new areas of concern in the future. When the original buildings were designed, the intention was to create an “educational village” with open space that would foster a sense of community. Three decades later, the new buildings must be designed to be more secure, with fewer expanses of glass and large windows. Another aspect of safety and security concerns student behavior and the dilemma facing the College in dealing with disruptive students. The issue is how to control violent or inappropriate behavior while remaining “student friendly.”

As the student population grows, these safety and security concerns may well become problems of major proportions. Section VI details the procedures in place for dealing with safety issues; since September 11, the College has placed an increased emphasis on the safety and security of the staff and students. Section V discusses the use of the Student Code of Conduct and suggests that it be better publicized than it is now. The syllabi collected to document various **must** statements in Section IV also include statements on “civility” or appropriate classroom behavior. The Social Science Division adopted a standard statement on classroom behavior. These “seeds” of awareness suggest that the College is anticipating this somewhat unpleasant aspect of the future.

French historian/philosopher/social theorist Michel Foucault contends that history is really made, not with “battles and treaties,” but with the everyday, seemingly insignificant documents that shape our lives. In his studies of three major social institutions, the mental hospital, the prison, and the clinic, Foucault examines each institution in a time of transition, using documents internal to the institution to tell the story of institutional change. In Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, for instance, he cites a schedule of daily activities for prisoners in an obscure provincial prison. In this schedule, the guards were ordered to allow the prisoners time for prayer and to house them in individual cells rather than in the communal rooms common in that

era. Beginning with this ephemeral document issued in 1792, prisoners came to be treated as “penitents” rather than tortured as evil doers. Thus came about the contemporary penitentiary and the notion that its occupants should be “penitents.”

Foucault used what he called an “archaeological” approach to social and political history, sifting through such documents in search of knowledge, which he equated with power. For Foucault, knowledge brings power automatically, and power without knowledge is unthinkable. To use the resources of an institution powerfully, then, one must first possess extensive knowledge of it. Such knowledge is acquired by an “archaeological dig” into the documents that reflect the decisions and values of those who make up the institution.

In a sense, this Self-Study Report is the record of such an “archaeological dig.” Eastfield College is an institution in transition from a proud past to a challenging future. In this report, the researchers and writers have captured the present, as Foucault would, in the internal documents of the College itself. The documents cited here will never be mentioned in a “battles and treaties” history of higher education. The DCCCD Board Policy Manual will not be awarded the space the Morrill Act claims in such histories; the syllabus for History 1301 lacks the panache of the Charter of the University of Virginia. Nevertheless, Foucault would point out that these documents and others like them have shaped the lives of thousands of Eastfield students. The articulation agreements discussed in Section IV have provided for Eastfield students a smooth transition to universities. The Workforce contracts discussed in the same section have created jobs and expanded the business community. The safety manuals cited in Section VI are instrumental in assuring a safe environment for students and staff alike. Finally, the lowly History 1301 syllabus, ephemeral as it is, stands as a silent record of a class that broadened the mind and enriched the lives of the students who took the course. This report chronicles the specific ways in which these documents and all the other supporting documents cited here and collected in the resource room allow Eastfield to fulfill its mission.

Foucault thought that knowledge and power are so intimately connected as to be in reality one and the same. The self-study process inherently entails a high level of knowledge by a broad constituency about the current state of the College. This knowledge brings with it the power to change the College to meet both the internal and external challenges the future holds.