Diversity & Inclusion = Innovation & Success

Contra Costa Community College District Presentation

Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT)
Leadership Congress
October 15, 2015
San Diego, CA

Presenters:
Vicki Gordon, Trustee
John E. Márquez, Trustee
Helen Benjamin, Ph.D., Chancellor
Tammeil Y. Gilkerson, Diversity, Inclusion & Innovation Officer
Refining our Focus
The Contra Costa Community College Board of Trustees has consistently demonstrated its commitment to closing the achievement gap and fostering a diverse work environment through the organization’s adopted mission, vision and Board goals; however, beginning in 2012-2013 there was a renewed focus in both plan and action.

**2012-2013:** Set Board goals to ensure policies exist to support the achievement of at risk students who perform below college level and the hiring of diverse administrative, faculty and classified employees; and consistent reporting on student learning and success with focus on closing the achievement gap and efforts to create and maintain a diverse workforce.
  - Created Board ad hoc committee focused on workforce diversity
  - Engaged law firm of Garcia, Hernández, Sawhney and Bermudez, LLP to assist with facilitation
  - Held three ad hoc committee meetings with employee and community participation focused on recruitment policies, procedures and approaches.

**2013-2014:**
  - Reaffirmation of Board goals on monitoring the achievement gap and human resources issues that have an impact on workforce diversity
  - Implementation of ad hoc committee recommendations
  - Adoption of new Board policies on Equity in Student Achievement and Diversity
  - Commencement of strategic planning process and adoption of refined mission, vision and values

**2014-2015:**
  - Supported Districtwide Convocation on Innovation focused on professional development around innovation, growth mindset and creative confidence

**2015-2016:**
  - Created diversity, inclusion and innovation office to ensure diversity, equity, inclusion & innovation are central to Districtwide strategies and operations
  - Funded Districtwide innovation proposals; colleges also engaging in funding campus-specific innovations

The Importance of Mission, Vision & Values as Guiding Principles.
In 2014, the District went through a strategic planning process that sharpened the focus directly on equity, diversity and innovation.

**Mission:** To transform lives by providing outstanding learning opportunities, nurturing and empowering all students to achieve their educational goals.

**Vision:** To be a beacon of excellence in learning and equitable student success.

**Values:** Equity through diversity; Learning culture; Open communication at every level; Collaborative partnerships; Thoughtful reflection; Academic freedom; Integrity; Innovative experimentation; and Respect for all members of the District.
EMPLOYEE DEMOGRAPHICS: 4CD

The percentage of each employee group compared to that group's representation in the adult population within the community served and among student population.

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<th>Number in Employee Population</th>
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<th>Difference Between Population Groups</th>
<th>Proportionality Index</th>
<th>Number in Student Population</th>
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Proportionality Index:
- <1.0-0.9 moderately disproportionate
- <0.9-0.8 highly disproportionate
- <0.8 highly disproportionate

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White Other
African American Asian/Pacific Is. Hispanic Students

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Fall 2014 Population Employee Groups: Classified, Full-Time Faculty, Part-Time Faculty, Managers/Sups/Conf, Students

Proportionality Index:
- <1.0-0.9 moderately disproportionate
- <0.9-0.8 highly disproportionate
- <0.8 highly disproportionate
DIVERSITY

The Contra Costa Community College District (District) recognizes that diversity in the academic environment:

- promotes academic excellence;
- fosters cultural, racial and human understanding;
- provides positive role models for all students; and
- creates an inclusive and supportive educational and work environment for its students, employees, and the community it serves.

Diversity includes, but is not limited to ethnic group identification, race, color, ancestry, religion, marital status, sex, national origin, gender, gender identification, gender expression, age, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, medical condition, genetic information, veteran status, parental status, citizenship, or because an individual is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics or based on association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics.

The District is committed to the integration of diversity into its recruitment, hiring, curriculum development, course offerings, teaching methods, employee/student retention, contracting, supervision, programs, services, evaluations, policies and procedures, staff development activities, workforce and student population. It is the District’s belief that an educational experience grounded in this approach will better prepare our students to work and live in an increasingly global society.

The chancellor, college presidents, and the District chief human resources officer shall ensure the following:

- modification of current and inclusion of new policies and procedures that ensure implementation of this policy;
- systematic training for all employees on the value of diversity, educational equity, equal opportunity, and how to infuse the principles of diversity in their daily work in accordance with state law and collective bargaining agreements; and
- annual reporting to the Board on 1) training programs offered for employees; 2) student, employee, and service area ethnic demographics; and 3) modifications of and updates to policies and procedures on diversity.

It is the goal of the District that all employees promote and support diversity in our academic environment.
EQUITY IN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The Contra Costa Community College District is strongly committed to eliminating persistent disparities in achievement and performance among students and maintaining high expectations for all.

Policies and practices should reflect the goal of equitable outcomes and proficiency, explicitly and emphatically. By purpose and design, the District will advance these goals by:

- providing training for employees in interacting effectively with students from different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds;
- ensuring uniformly high expectations;
- promoting rigorous curricula;
- providing equitable services; and
- maximizing access and success for all students.

The District is committed to developing a diverse cadre of educators, administrators and staff, ensuring proper emphasis on culturally responsive service delivery, and rigorously examining and monitoring policies, programs, and practices to ensure that this goal is implemented.

Employees should understand and contribute to this goal, develop the knowledge and skills needed in their areas of influence to serve diverse students, and be accountable for implementing practices that will create equitable outcomes. It is expected that District and the colleges will engage students, staff, and the community to work in concert to support all students in achieving academic proficiency.

A report shall be provided annually to the Governing Board on the progress made by each college in closing the achievement gap.
Van Phillips asked three questions that changed the world. You can ask them too.
STARTING LINE
Van Phillips launched a journey of invention by asking, "Why?"
What if you found that creative genius does not lie in knowing all of the answers?

Chasing Beautiful Questions

By Warren Berger
Photography by Dave Lauridsen
I first came upon Van Phillips and his desperate, beautiful question when I saw a small news item about how people who had lost one or both legs were using advanced prosthetic limbs that enabled them to run and jump normally. Who created such an amazing device?, I wondered. This question, and the ones that followed, would change the direction of my life.

In the summer of 1976, Phillips was a young broadcast major in college. A handsome and athletic 21-year-old, he was water-skiing on a lake in Arizona when a fire broke out on the boat pulling him. In the confusion, the boat’s driver failed to see another motorboat rounding a curve in the lake, headed straight at Phillips.

He awoke the next morning in a hospital. As he recalls, “I did the proverbial ‘I don’t want to look, but let’s see.’” Lifting the blanket, he saw an empty place where his left foot should have been. The other boat’s propeller had severed his leg 6 inches below the knee. Hospital staff fitted him with a standard prosthetic: Phillips describes it as “a pink foot attached to an aluminum tube.” He left the hospital with instructions: Walk on it twice a day to toughen up the stump. One of the first times he tried to walk on the foot, he tripped on a pebble the size of a pea. And he knew, right then, this was not going to work for him.

“Van, you’re just going to have to learn to accept this,” his girlfriend’s father told him.

“I bit my tongue,” Phillips recalls. “I knew he was right, in a way. I did have to accept that I was an amputee—but I would not accept the fact that I had to wear this foot.”

And then he asked a question that would change the world of prosthetics: If they can put a man on the moon, why can’t they make a better foot?

It was a good question. But it did not become a beautiful question—one that leads to invention and profound change—until Phillips changed a pronoun. Gradually, he found himself taking ownership of the question. Instead of saying, Why can’t they make a better foot, he asked, Why can’t I?

Abandoning his broadcasting career plans, he transferred to Chicago’s Northwestern University, which offers one of the top programs in prosthetics engineering. His journey of inquiry would extract lessons from the animal kingdom, the local swimming pool, and the battlefields of ancient China. And along the way, he would face the skepticism of experts—the ones who already had all the answers.

All Phillips had was questions: Why are they using wood when other, more promising materials are available? Why do they seem to be more concerned with aesthetics (trying, unsuccessfully, to mimic the look of a human foot) than with performance? His lack of answers proved to be a blessing. Experts tend to be disinclined to question things—after all, if you already “know,” why ask? But as Phillips immersed himself in technical training, he continued to question the prevailing assumptions of that field.

He also began to look outside the world of prosthetics for fresh ideas and influences. The spring-force power of a swimming-pool diving board made him think there might be something in its physics for him. Studying animal leg movements, he saw that the powerful tendons in the hind legs of a cheetah exhibited interesting spring-force dynamics, too. An antique Chinese sword of his father’s also drew his attention; its curved blade was stronger and more flexible than a straight one.

Over the years, these findings took him from Why? to What if? He eventually asked, What if a prosthetic limb could borrow some of the dynamic qualities of a cheetah’s leg? What if it had no heel and no right angles—just a curved, C-shaped blade?

Those What if’s quickly led to How? Using carbon graphite, he created rudimentary models of a prosthetic limb—a couple hundred over the course of a decade. He tested each one by attaching it to his own stump, standing on it, and then attempting to run. Inevitably, the prototype would collapse and send Phillips tumbling to the ground. But instead of giving up, he responded with more inquiry: What did I do wrong this time? How can I make it better next time?

One day, Phillips got the answer he was seeking. He put on the newest version of the foot.
AHEAD OF THE CURVE
Prosthetics were rigid until...
He stood. He ran. And he found himself still standing. Phillips' Flex-Foot limb—which paved the way for the later development of the famous “Cheetah” blade—revolutionized prosthetics. A person with an artificial leg and foot could now run, jump, and even compete on an Olympic level, as double-amputee runner Oscar Pistorius did in 2012. For Phillips, the impact hit closer to home. Using his own creation, he was able to return to one of his great passions in life, running—which he does every morning to this day.

An Phillips' story—and in particular, his indomitable spirit of inquiry—changed the way I think about questions. I've learned that they can do more than make conversation interesting. Questions can transform the world as we know it—if they're the kinds of ambitious and "beautiful" questions that Phillips asked.

What is a beautiful question? It's one that challenges assumptions, considers new possibilities, and has potential to serve as a catalyst for action and change. It's not easy to pose such queries in a world of facile answers and hard realities. But as I began to look beyond Phillips' story and combed through some of the breakthrough ideas and innovations that have reworked the way we live in recent years, I found that many of them originated with someone questioning the existing, accepted way of doing things.

Through questioning, "we can organize our thinking around what we don't know," says Steve Quatrano of the Right Question Institute, a Cambridge, Massachusetts-based nonprofit dedicated to studying and teaching effective questioning. A question is like a flashlight that we shine into the darkness, allowing us to move forward into the unknown and uncertain. And as the philosopher Bertrand Russell once remarked, "In all affairs it's a healthy thing now and then to hang a question mark on the things you have long taken for granted."

Yet one of the things we take for granted is questioning itself, perhaps because it's so apparently easy that a young child can do it—profusely, in fact. One study found that 4-year-old girls ask more than 300 questions a day; another discovered that, on average, a child asks 40,000 questions between the ages of 2 and 5.

For various reasons, we tend to ask fewer and fewer questions as we mature; a kindergartner's hundreds of queries have all but stopped by high school. Schools tend to discourage them, and students get graded more for their answers than for their questions. Bosses get impatient when their workers ask too many questions, especially ones that challenge their assumptions. We stop asking out of fear of looking foolish. Or we simply want to get things done in our lives—who has time to pause and question? But after I spoke with Phillips, I wondered, What if we didn't stop questioning? What if we kept asking why and what if?

So I decided to ask some of the most creative and successful people in the U.S. what they knew, but what questions they asked themselves. My three years of inquiring into inquiry began in Silicon Valley, where the startup mentality sees questioning as a key to innovation rather
than as a threat to corporate hierarchy. I talked to scientists, inventors, and basement tinkerers as well as artists whose work pursues big questions. I found teachers and education groups trying to encourage more questioning in schools and social activists trying to reframe the questions at the core of our biggest global problems.

While every “master questioner” I met had a unique approach to inquiry, I discovered common threads—the basics of Questioning 101, if you will. To question well and productively requires stepping back from habits, assumptions, and familiar thoughts; listening to and closely observing the world around you; being unafraid to ask naïve or fundamental questions; and being willing to stay with the questions as you endeavor to understand and act on them.

Master questioners like Van Phillips ask questions like Why isn’t this situation working as well as it might? What if (or we) were to change it in some way? How might we begin to do that? And they often do so in a sort of progression. They tend to move from curious Why questions to speculative What if ones, eventually working their way to more practical, action-oriented How questions.

As I studied the ways Phillips and others applied rigorous, step-by-step inquiry to the challenges they faced, I couldn’t help doing likewise. At the time, I was dealing with uncomfortable changes and uncertainties in my own life and work. The recent death of my father had left a void. My work—writing articles and occasional of-the-moment books—didn’t seem to be leading to anything larger. I wanted to work on something more meaningful, with more of an impact on people’s lives. But I wasn’t sure how to find that new path.

The answer, I found, lies in questions—beautiful questions. As a journalist, I had been asking questions of other people for years. But asking
It Started with a Question
Some of the world's coolest (or just plain indispensable) inventions began with a bold inquiry.

"Why is it that when we want to call a person, we have to call a place?"

**QUESTIONER** Martin Cooper, general manager of Motorola's communications systems division

**THE STORY** Inspired by a Star Trek scene where Captain Kirk uses a mobile "communicator" to speak with a crew member, Cooper worked with a team to develop the DynaTAC 8000X, a hand-held phone weighing 28 ounces. On April 3, 1973, Cooper made the first public call from a mobile phone.

"Why did my candy bar melt?"

**QUESTIONER** Percy Spencer, self-taught inventor and engineer

**THE STORY** Spencer, an employee of defense contractor Raytheon Company during WWII, worked with magnetron tubes, which were used in radar. One day, he noticed a chocolate bar in his pocket had melted while he stood next to an active set. With popcorn kernels, he confirmed a hunch that the microwave-emitting magnetron had heated the candy. In October 1945, Raytheon patented the microwave oven. It was nearly 6 feet tall and weighed 750 pounds.

"Why can't windshields be cleared without opening the window?"

**QUESTIONER** Mary Anderson, businesswoman

**THE STORY** One winter, while visiting NYC, Anderson saw a trolley operator keeping his windshield open so he could see through the rain and snow. Back home in Alabama, she created a manually powered contraption that a driver could control from within the vehicle to move a rubber blade across the window. Anderson was granted a patent for her windshield wiper in late 1943.

"Why do we have to wait for the photo?"

**QUESTIONER** Jennifer Land, 3-year-old daughter of inventor Edwin Land

**THE STORY** Edwin Land was on vacation in Santa Fe, New Mexico, when his impatient child piped up with this question. Land, a self-taught physicist and a Harvard dropout, didn't have an answer, so he went on a walk through town to ponder her query. Within an hour, he'd conceived of the basic mechanics of an instant camera. The Polaroid Land Camera went on the market in 1948.

them of myself? Not so much. I think this is true for many of us: We aren't comfortable asking ourselves questions for which we may not have easy answers. Yet Phillips taught me that when faced with disruption and uncertainty, we need to be willing to question. I began to ask, Why am I feeling dissatisfied with my work? What if I could shift toward something more meaningful and long-term, on an issue that seems relevant in these changing times? How might I find something like that? Of course, it was right under my nose. The questions themselves were the answer.

Gradually, through subsequent inquiry, I began to figure out how I might explore and pursue the subject of questioning in a manner that went beyond my usual modus operandi of writing about something and then quickly moving on to the next story. I came up with a beautiful question that I was willing to commit to and spend time with: How might I encourage others to question more?

Already, it has led me out of my comfort zone and into new areas. I began to change the way I worked, becoming more collaborative. I enlisted a group of volunteer researchers to help track down stories of beautiful questions. I also joined forces with the Right Question Institute—the small group of fellow pioneers on the frontier of exploring questioning—and together we asked, How might we find ways to bring more and better questioning into schools, businesses, and government organizations? In the grandest sense, we're endeavoring to promote more curiosity and questions in a world that seems to need it more than ever.

That's a daunting mission; at times I feel terrifyingly and gloriously in over my head. But the questions I asked myself keep beckoning, and I'll follow where they take me. Meanwhile, my
A beautiful question may involve something right in front of you—you may need to step back mentally to try to see the familiar from a different angle and in a new light.

If you find something crying out for improvement, innovation, and fresh thinking, start exploring with why questions, and then work your way to what and how questions. How is usually the hard part; ultimately, that’s where your beautiful question may lie. When phrasing how questions, here’s a helpful tip I learned from master questioners at companies such as Google and the design firm IDEO: Try using the words How might I (instead of How can I or How should I). The “might” offers a great way to phrase a question that is open and expansive yet still practical.

When you find your beautiful question, be prepared to own it and to live with it. We are used to getting quick answers on Google, but a beautiful question calls for a very different kind of search. You may have to follow it into unfamiliar places, grapple with it, and change it over time. You’ll be imitating Einstein, who said, “It’s not that I’m so smart. But I stay with the questions much longer.”

Van Phillips certainly has. Today, almost 40 years after he first began to inquire about creating a better prosthetic foot, he still pursues the same question—in a revised, updated form. Now in his late 50s, Phillips works at his home in a coastal village near Mendocino, California. He keeps his tools in an armoire and often toils near a large window overlooking the ocean. His latest work began with the realization that, after all the accolades, his creation had provided an answer for some but not others. So he cycled through the questions once more:

Why does the foot have to cost so much to make?
What if it could be made so that land mines victims in poorer nations could afford it?
How might I tweak the design to allow for this, without compromising performance?

He has developed a new answer and hopes to soon solve the puzzle of distributing it worldwideting. Still, as Phillips can tell you, answers have a way of becoming insufficient or obsolete over time. Only the question endures.

2015-16 Diversity, Inclusion and Innovation Office Work Plan

Background

The Contra Costa Community College District (District) is committed to diversity and equity in student achievement as evidenced by the adopted mission, vision, values, strategic plan, and associated policies that govern the institution. Serving nearly fifty thousand students annually, and with well over three thousand employees, the District community is powerfully diverse with students, classified professionals, faculty, and administrators hailing from a wide range of ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, and geographic backgrounds. Beyond just a demographic indicator, the District recognizes the power of diversity in the academic environment for promoting academic excellence; fostering cultural, racial, and human understanding; and providing positive role models for all students. Moreover, diversity creates an inclusive and supportive educational and work environment for students, employees, and the community. At the same time, the District also recognizes the persistent disparities in achievement and performance among students and is committed to hiring and developing a diverse cadre of excellent employees committed to culturally responsive service and learning environments, and the rigorous examination and implementation of policies, procedures, and practices that drive equity in student achievement.

Beginning in 2012-13, the Governing Board directed staff to review and discuss workplace diversity. A subcommittee co-chaired by Board members John Márquez and Vicki Gordon was formed and meetings were held on March 27, 2013, May 9, 2013, June 18, 2013, and October 4, 2013. The law firm of Garcia, Hernández, Sawhney and Bermudez, LLP, was also engaged to assist with facilitation. Work was completed at each meeting, including focus on recruitment policies, procedures, and approaches. Furthermore, the District convened a task force of college, district office, and community representatives in 2014 to review and make recommendations on hiring policies and procedures. On July 23, 2014, the Governing Board held a study session on student equity and the guidelines for developing college-specific Student Equity Plans as mandated by California Education Code Section 66010.2c and Title 5, Section 54220 Student Equity Plans. The study session was followed by presentations from the District’s three colleges at the September 2014 Board meeting on their campus-specific equity plan and goals.

As clearly detailed in the District’s 2014-2019 Strategic Plan, excellence in learning and equitable student success is the guiding vision. To further codify the vision and values, on May 28, 2014, the Governing Board adopted two key policies, Board Policy 2059 Diversity and Board Policy 1023 Equity in Student Achievement. As evidenced by the adopted policies, the District understands that merely valuing diversity and eliminating disparities in student achievement are not enough. “Diversity” is a process toward better learning, rather than just an outcome, and inclusion inspires innovative experimentation which creates opportunities for the District to generate new responses to our student learning and achievement challenges. In fall 2014, a committee was convened with a focus on professional development around innovation, with the goal of promoting an educational community that supports a growth mindset, fosters creative confidence and innovation, and recognizes the interdependence of our collective contributions and commitment to student success. The committee successfully coordinated a Districtwide Convocation on Innovation on January 9, 2015, with over 700 employees in attendance. The day served as a catalyst for encouraging and directly supporting both college and Districtwide innovation projects in 2015-2016.
Analysis: Next Level Opportunities

In order to actualize the District’s vision and the principles adopted in both policy and plan, the next level commitment is to integrate diversity, equity, inclusion, innovation, and action as central to Districtwide strategies and operations. In response to this commitment, in August the District established a new Diversity, Inclusion and Innovation Office, reporting directly to the Chancellor, with primary leadership responsibilities for activities related to the creation, implementation and sustainability of diversity, inclusion and innovative activities to create an environment of inclusive excellence throughout the District. To this end, the 2015-16 goals for the office include:

- complete and/or continue the work of the task force on hiring policies and procedures;
- lead and collaborate with the District Equal Employment Opportunity Advisory Council (DEEOAC) to draft an updated Equal Employment Opportunity Plan;
- enhance the membership of the DEEOAC with three community members, appointed by the Governing Board, to help advise the District on diversity and inclusion initiatives;
- explore the development of a direct partnership with local four-year universities to establish a formal internship and outreach program for graduate students;
- research rebranding communication and portals into the District framed on diversity, inclusion and innovation;
- develop a catalog of District resources for diversity and inclusion;
- implement two inclusion related programs;
- support the funded Districtwide innovation proposals; and
- research the development of a Districtwide publishing company.

Conclusion

Effecting transformational change requires systematic and enduring work that digs deep into the core values and norms of the institution. The commitment to creating a culture of inclusive excellence is evidenced by the District’s goals and consistent activities to cultivate and nurture innovation, rigorously evaluate and thoughtfully reflect on our progress, and dedicate resources towards these ends. The development of the District’s Diversity, Inclusion and Innovation Office, reinforces this commitment. In the spring, the District will evaluate the effectiveness of the Diversity, Inclusion and Innovation Office and make recommendations to the Board regarding longer-term plans. In the meantime, the Board needs to appoint three community members for the District’s Equal Employment Opportunity Advisory Council by September 15th.