

CIO NEWS AND VIEWS

The Newsletter of the CCCCIO
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March 2008

Volume III, Number 3

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VETERAN CIO AND STATE LEADER REFLECTS ON CAREER



John Spevak was educated in the Midwest (he received his M.A. and Ph.D. in English at the University of Chicago), and taught English for fourteen years at the Los Banos campus of Merced College prior to becoming an instructional administrator.

He fondly recalls that when he was the CCCCIO President, the executive director position was created (and Carter Doran selected), the CIO Web Page was created—and we began to have free wine at our conference receptions! However, that was also the year that Governor Davis vetoed instructional equipment funds—and John will never forget first hearing at a BOG meeting of the terrorist attacks on 9/11.

He and his wife Sandy are proud of their “blended” family of seven kids and eleven grandkids. He plans to teach part-time, do some volunteer work, and pursue his main interests: reading, sleeping, and jogging. He has long been a tireless advocate for our colleges’ students and the instructional programs that serve them and a wonderfully diplomatic champion and ambassador for chief instructional officers.

CIO newsletter editor Ed Buckley asked me to write an article for News and Views. I think he asked me because I’ve been a CIO for 16 years and I’m about to retire in June. I agreed. After all, Ed is a good friend of mine, and like many CIOs I have a hard time turning down a friend’s request. He said I could use any format,

so I chose a combination of personal experience and reflection.

Back in 1992 I was happy being a dean, specifically the dean of Merced College’s satellite center, the Los Banos Campus. Going back further, I hadn’t planned on being an administrator at all. Teaching English in Los Banos since 1971 was both enjoyable and satisfying. But in 1985 Tom Harris, who was then the college president, asked if I’d be willing to be the interim dean in Los Banos for a year. I said yes, and seven years later I was still the dean.

I remember the day in August 1992 when President Jan Moser called me into her office and asked me if I would take the job of vice president of instruction for a year. She said that the current VP, with whom I had worked closely for two years, had to take a medical leave of absence. The stress in the job was affecting her so much she had to be hospitalized. I said yes. That showed how smart I was: taking a job that put my predecessor in the hospital, the same position that had seen two other CIOs come and go in five years at Merced College. Taking the job, however, was one way I could give back to the college that had done much for me over the previous 21 years.

My first year as CIO was overwhelming. Serving as an off-campus dean for seven years, I thought I knew a lot about Merced College. But I soon realized I knew about 10% of what a CIO had to know. In addition, I

INSIDE

Spring Conference	4
President Gaskin’s Message	5
Dates and Deadlines	6

was working with three deans who were wonderful individuals but who had all just started their deanships that year. By 1 p.m. each day, I was so shaken from the challenges in the job, I had to get in my car, drive a half mile to the local Carl's Jr.'s, find a table for myself, and breathe deeply. I didn't order much because my stomach was churning.

I received a tremendous boost when I went to my first CIO conference that fall. There I met remarkable individuals—intelligent, wise, and amazingly congenial. They welcomed me like a long-lost brother. And I found that fellow CIOs are lifelines not just to survival but to success. Early on I received cordial encouragement, as well as help and advice, from people like Phil Laughlin, Julie Hatoff, and Ron Manzoni, whom I considered then and still view as “Hall of Fame” CIOs. I found then, as I still do, that CIOs are some of the best people I'd ever meet.

I finally worked out a plan of survival that first year, which included the following:

- Make decisions. Faculty came to me confidentially and said they didn't care whether the answer was yes or no but they wanted a decision. (The previous CIO, who was a good person, thought about problems deeply, but put off decisions indefinitely.)
- Seek help and advice. There were many people—faculty, managers, and classified staff (especially my secretary), who knew a lot more about a lot of things than I did. I sought out as many as I could, especially in business services and maintenance, two areas that were thorny for Instruction for many years. I also talked with my predecessor, after she returned home from the hospital.
- Recognize limitations. Being something of a type A personality (actually type A minus), I had to tell myself I couldn't solve everyone's problems. So I developed a mantra I repeated to myself and to anyone who expected quasi-perfection from me: “I'm an imperfect person in an imperfect world trying to do the best job I can.”
- Be myself. This would mean being different from most of the administrators I had known, who, when I had come to them as a faculty member,

generally said, “No,” regardless of the request. I thought an administrator should be a problem-solver, so my first response would be, if not “Yes,” then “Let's see if you and I can find a way to get this done.” It would also mean incorporating my vision of an administrator as a servant leader into the job, as well as incorporating my sense of humor. I like to laugh, especially at the absurdity of life, and there is much to laugh about in a CIO's job. I took the job seriously, but I didn't take myself seriously. And overall, when all else failed, I relied on my intuition (a.k.a. trusted my gut).

Those survival techniques seem to work. I made it through the first year and later applied for the permanent job. Here I am 15 years later, still a CIO. Of course, I've been blessed to work the last ten years for an extraordinary CEO, Ben Duran, and I've had excellent colleagues for deans and fellow vice presidents and a superb secretary. Without their help, I would have been out on the streets panhandling years ago.

So what have I learned in 16 years? Here are a few conclusions I've reached.

- Selecting and evaluating full-time instructors is the most important job a CIO does. (I've been fortunate because both presidents I worked for let me make the selections.) Hire a rising star and you've helped the college for years to come. Make a mistake and you have a multi-million dollar liability. Fortunately, working closely and candidly with hiring committees, I've made some good selections. My proudest accomplishment is the hundred or so top-notch instructors I've hired over the years, individuals who (using my yardstick for selection) care passionately about teaching and learning.
- Keeping an eye on the budget is critical, especially in a state where budgets oscillate wildly. This has not been easy for me. I'm not a numbers person (I'm an English major). But I've forced myself to know enough about budgets to try to use the finite number of dollars available wisely.
- Keeping an eye on regulations is also crucial, especially the two favorite literary works for CIO nighttime reading, the Education Code and Title

5 of the California Code of Regulations. Keeping track of them is a little like watching out for mines in a field. A wrong step and you're blown sky high.

- The only real power a CIO has is the power of persuasion. As one faculty member once told me, "Any idea you have of control is an illusion." She was right. We are not part of a military hierarchy. Seldom can a CIO give commands or even "direct." Generally CIOs have to use their rhetorical talents, and more importantly, the trust they've built with their colleagues to persuade others of the value of their ideas.
- A CIO needs to work closely with faculty, to get to know by name each full-timer and as many part-timers as possible. I have often said that I'm a teacher at heart. In many ways a CIO is an advocate for the faculty. That can be difficult since a CIO also represents the district. Finding that balance is one of the toughest, but most important, aspects of the job.
- The longer the CIO is on the job, the more she or he needs to find a new spark every now and then, something that raises the energy level in a job that can grind you down. For me it was working the last few years through Carnegie and Irvine grants with energetic, caring faculty who were trying to find new ways to help students succeed.
- Wise CIOs recognize that their job is impossible and getting harder all the time. I believe that, except for my first year on the job, the last three years have been the hardest, and increasingly so. I think the addition of student learning outcomes, on top of all that we're expected to keep up with—program reviews, changes in Title 5, the Student Success (nee Basic Skills) Initiative, budgetary fluctuations (especially in instructional equipment allocations), increasing technology demands (of which email is no small part), and increased accreditation pressures—has driven us to the point of exhaustion.
- Wise CIOs also recognize that their job is increasingly important. It cannot be left to just anyone, but to those who care deeply enough to encourage and empower faculty and students in teaching and learning. I once told my daughter

that I put up with 67% of my job—the tasks I don't relish—to do the 33% of my job that that keeps me going, interacting with my colleagues at my college and throughout the state who share my ideals. With a little luck, and with much patience, a good CIO will be able to move her or his college—ever so slowly—in the direction it ought to go. Besides, what other job can stimulate such rushes of adrenalin?

- To survive and in some sense thrive, a CIO needs to be connected as closely as possible with fellow CIOs and the CCCCIO organization. My advice to other CIOs is this: "If you can make only two events a year, come to the CIO statewide conferences. And connect with your regional CIO group. Call individual CIOs when you're stumped. I can't tell you how many times I've been revived or saved by calling people like Randy Lawson, John Nixon, Dona Boatright, Lori Gaskin, Pam Deegan, and Ed Buckley. Only a fellow CIO really knows what you're going through. Also, think about being a CIO officer—a member of the executive board and even president of the organization. One of the best years of my career was 2001-02, when I was CCCCIO president.

By now I'm sure Ed Buckley is thinking, "Why did I ask this guy to write this article? He's gone on forever." I'm sure he's glad I'm at the end of my reflections. But one last word to each of my fellow CIOs: I thank you for choosing to become a CIO. As you know, it's not a job, it's a calling, to serve your college and its students and to help keep alive and strong the California community college system, which I believe is the best example, maybe the best remaining hope, of the American dream, where anyone from any background has the opportunity to become anything he or she desires.

~John



Bridging Borders



Spring 2008 Joint CIO & CSSO Conference

March 26-28, 2008

Holiday Inn on the Bay

1355 North Harbor Drive

San Diego

WEDNESDAY

- Luncheon speaker **Gary Pavela**, noted expert on Disruptive Students in the Classroom
- Lessons learned from Virginia Tech, including several case studies
- Breakouts on I-Stream and UMOJA
- Presidents' Reception
- Lower Division Transfer Program issues with CSU

THURSDAY

- Business meetings
- Breakouts: Assessment Update; Textbooks Task Force Update; Collaborative Basic Skills Models
- Luncheon speaker **Dr. Constance Carroll**, Chancellor San Diego CCD
- Breakouts: Financial Aid "Green Lights and Red Tape: Improving Access to Financial Aid; SACC Role and Update/ AA Degree changes
- Joint sessions: Title 5 Part II: Update and Implementation Issues and System Office Updates: Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and Finance
- Dinner: Honoring **Senator Jack Scott**

FRIDAY

- Academic Senate Update
- Legal Issues with **Mary Dowell** and **Michael Blacher**

A MESSAGE FROM CCCCIO PRESIDENT LORI GASKIN

Gratitude to Old Teachers

Given everything that's on our plates as CIOs, it's understandable that we might momentarily lose sight of the meaning and purpose of our role as chief academic leaders. Recently, during one of those temporary moments of not being able to "see the forest through the trees," I stumbled upon this poem by Robert Bly. I found it very grounding as it reminded me of why I do what I do. Just like you, I am called to this profession as I believe in the mystery and beauty of teaching and learning and the immeasurable impact that teachers and education have on our students. As CIOs we dedicate our professional lives to our teachers, our students, and our college! We are here to help make what Bly describes become real. Enjoy!



Gratitude to Old Teachers

*When we stride or stroll across the frozen lake,
We place our feet where they have never been.
We walk upon the unwalked. But we are uneasy.
Who is down there but our old teachers?*

*Water that once could take no human weight –
We were students then – holds up our feet,
And goes on ahead of us for a mile.
Beneath us the teachers, and around us the stillness.*

—Robert Bly

DATES AND DEADLINES THAT CIOs SHOULD KNOW

Our thanks to the office of Vice Chancellor Carole Bogue-Feinour for providing all the dates under "Instructional Programs and Services," below. The dates for "Fiscal Services" came from the Fiscal Services web site. If there are other dates and deadlines from other sources that CIOs need to know, or if you believe any of the dates here are not accurate, please notify me at ebuckley@sonic.net. We aim to please—and improve. —Ed)

CALENDAR DATE

EVENT

Instructional Programs and Services

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| 60 Days prior to the start of an Academic Term | • SB 361 Certificate Applications for Noncredit Enhanced Funding for a term |
| August 31, 2008 | • Deadline for submission of 2007-08 Distance Education Institutional Surveys |
| May 1, 2008 | • Deadline for submission of 2007-08 Basic Skills/ESL College Action and Expenditure Plans |
| June 30, 2008 | • Deadline for submission of 2008-09 Flex Calendar Program Annual Certification |
| July 1, 2008 | • Deadline for submission of CCC 520 "Request to Convert Non-Compliant Degree to Compliant Degree or Certificate of Achievement" |
| September 30, 2008 | • Deadline for submission of 2008 Certification for Local Approval of Stand-alone Credit Courses |

Fiscal Services

(deadline dates are the same each year)

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| July 15 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apportionment Attendance Report (CCFS-320) • Faculty Contact Hour Adjustment to FTES (CCFS-320F) (Flex Calendar Districts) • Apprenticeship Attendance Report (CCFS-321) |
| August 1 | • Maintenance Allowance (Reimbursement Claim, CCFS-355) |
| August 31 | • Quarterly Financial Status Report (CCFS-311Q) |
| September 15 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% Law, Application for Exemption (CCFS-350A) • Prior Year Enrollment Fee Revenue (CCFS-323) |
| October 1 | • Amended Apportionment Attendance Reports [(CCFS-320) (For Lottery Purposes)] |

CALENDAR DATE**EVENT**

CALENDAR DATE	EVENT
October 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Financial & Budget Report (CCFS-311) • Gann Limit (CCFS-311) • Lottery (CCFS-311) • Part-Time Faculty Compensation (CCFS-367)
October 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation Report [Contracts Awarded to Disabled Veteran, Minority, and Women Business Enterprise]
November 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Amendments— Apportionment Attendance Report (CCFS-320) (For Recalculation Purposes) • (CCFS-321 and CCFS-320F) • Part-Time Faculty Health Benefits Final Reimbursement Claim (CCFS-360) • Part-Time Faculty Office Hours Final Reimbursement Claim (CCFS-365)
November 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-Time Faculty Obligation Report (110/FFO) • Quarterly Fiscal Status Report (CCFS-311Q) • Financial Statements and Audit Report for Auxiliary Organizations
December 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% Law: Findings of the Local Governing Board Regarding Provisions of EC §84362(CCFS-350B). The Due Date can be extended to 12/15, if an extension is granted by the Chancellor. This form is a follow-up to Form CCFS-350A Due 9/15.
December 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part-Time Faculty Compensation Allocation Request (CCFS-367)
December 31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contracted District Audit Report
January 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apportionment Attendance Report (CCFS-320) • Apprenticeship Attendance Report (CCFS-321) • Enrollment Fee Revenue (CCFS-323) • Faculty Contact Hour Adjustments to FTES (CCFS-320F) (Flex Calendar Districts)
February 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-Resident Tuition Fee Worksheet • Quarterly Financial Status Report (CCFS-311Q)
April 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrollment Fee Revenue (CCFS-323)
April 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apportionment Attendance Report (CCFS-320) • Faculty Contact Hour Adjust. to FTES (CCFS-320F) (Flex Calendar Districts) • Apprenticeship Attendance Report (CCFS-321)
May 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly Financial Status Report (CCFS-311Q)
June 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part-Time Faculty Health Benefits (CCFS-360) • Part-Time Faculty Office Hours Estimated Reimbursements (CCFS-365) • Upon Request “Emergency Condition Adjustment to Apportionment” (CCFS-313)