

Sept. 4, 2014

## Board Censure of Trustee Hamilton

The Board of Trustees censure of Trustee Kathy Hamilton was a significant event. Censuring a trustee does not occur very often. It is the strongest action a Board can take relative to one of its members.

From the beginning of her tenure on the Board, Trustee Hamilton has communicated to me that she intends to uncover wrongdoing at our College. She has also made known to me her interest in running for statewide office. When I connect the dots, it seems to me that Trustee Hamilton wants to use our College to augment her visibility in the political arena.

A prominent national educator recently authored a publication entitled "The Rogue Trustee: The Elephant in the Room." According to *Inside Higher Education*, in it he discusses the observation of 59 community college presidents from 16 states who experienced significant conflicts largely due to the influence of one troubling trustee.

The author writes, "Rogue trustees run rough shod over the norms and standards of behavior expected of public officials. They place their own interests over the interest of the college." Often rogue trustees align themselves with unions or other employee organizations.

Presidents participating in the survey underlining the study observe the number one motivation of the rogue trustee was to act in ways that would help them politically. Most believed that these troublemaking trustees were only on the board to leapfrog to higher political offices. These same presidents bemoaned the fact these rogue trustees incapacitated other well-meaning trustees and did damage to the institution's reputation. The rogue trustee often costs the college time and money.

Had I been among the presidents interviewed, I would have joined the majority who observed that a trustee's political motivation all too often creates problems for

the college they say they are committed to serving. These "rogue" trustees would, of course, argue they are doing what the electorate expects of them.

Trustee Hamilton has aligned herself with a political action group, "For the Good of Illinois" and apparently the Tea Party. For the past several months, about two dozen supporters have attended Board meetings and severely criticized the College, members of the Board and the administration. Their emotional, inflammatory rhetoric is often laden with misrepresentations of the facts, a distortion of the truth, and uncivil. Their agenda seems to be one of slash and burn. As one of our student leaders observed publicly at our most recent Board meeting, these people do not have the best interests of students or the College at heart. They are here to further their organizations and/or personal agendas. I was very proud of that student's insight and courage. In the months ahead, I hope more students and employees will come forward and talk about our exceptional College.

When leaving the College one evening last week, another student leader came over to me and wanted to compliment me on how I remained silent during our last Board meeting when the orchestrated group berated the College, Chair Birt, myself and the senior management team. He asked how I could exercise such restraint. My response was simple: Sometimes saying nothing is saying something. And, given the abundance of misinformation and misrepresentation of the facts, I wouldn't know where to begin with an intelligent response. Earlier in the day, I observed to three Courier reporters that when people, individually or collectively, have a destructive agenda, they spew out everything and anything in the hopes something sticks and uninformed people by way of the media are influenced by what they say. Their desired outcome is: inflict discomfort and create a negative view of COD. They also want to remind voters they are the vehicle for reform at College of DuPage and they should keep April 2015 in mind. In the long run, people and organizations whose agenda is not honorable will be discovered. They may enjoy some near-term success; however, the longer it continues, the more it becomes evident to people who

care that the negative picture they paint of COD is not reality.

I will share with you six examples (there are many others) of unfounded criticisms that have been directed at the College:

1. The College spent more than \$500 million transforming the physical plant. Those who criticize us say we have squandered taxpayer funds. There was no need to renovate/demolish old buildings and build new teaching/learning facilities.

May I remind those who allege we wasted taxpayer dollars, that those very taxpayers in 2002 and 2010 approved two capital referenda by a wide margin (in 2010 when our economy was tanking). The critics need only read the ballot questions to see taxpayers knew exactly what they were voting for. These two referenda provided about 80 percent of the dollars we spent providing current and future residents/taxpayers with state-of-the-art teaching and learning facilities. Their overwhelming positive response to our efforts to improve our campus is evident to any who care to listen.

2. These same critics say we are responsible for a total property tax increase of 59% since 2008. Not true. It increased 23%. What they do not say is our Board of Trustees approved an operating tax levy increase of \$10.3 million or 14% for this five-year period (2008-2014). The operating tax levy is the levy we control (subject to the tax cap) and 14% over five years is minimal. In 2010, District 502 residents approved a \$168 million capital referendum. The referendum requires that our debt levy increase by \$10.3 million (2008-2014) or 66%. The total tax levy (operating and capital) increased 23%.

Because DuPage County has financial obligations and property values declined during these years due to the recession, DuPage County increased the tax rate base on the equalized assessed value (EAV) of real estate which they also set. DuPage County sets the tax rate at a level necessary to generate the revenue it needs to pay their debt/operating obligations. COD has no control over setting the EAV or the tax rate.

Misrepresenting the facts is one way they hope to advance their cause. Factual accuracy is not their ally.

3. We have known for more than two years we need more classroom space during prime-time hours. That was reaffirmed by the Deans last fall. Our RAMP application (capital request to the state the past two years) requests \$25 million to construct instructional space. The need didn't come out of the air as our critics observe. Our PUD (campus development) application to DuPage County in 2012 shows a 70,000 sq. ft. Teaching and Learning Center programmed for where Building M once stood. Fact is, we have been a line item in the state's budget going back to 2010. We were promised \$25 million for building replacement on the west end of our campus as far back as 2002. Three presidents prior to me tried in vain to get the money released. All were unsuccessful. All of our efforts are documented. As I have said on multiple occasions, the state will release the limited capital dollars it has when and where it benefits the person(s) releasing the money. That should not be a surprise to anyone who knows how government operates, particularly in Illinois. And the money has been flowing.
4. Our critics take credit for the Board adopting a two-year tuition freeze. Really. No two-year tuition freeze has been adopted by the Board. I made the recommendation to reduce Spring 2015 tuition by \$2/credit hour. No one influenced me that I can recall. At the Board meeting, Trustee Savage recommended the reduction be \$4/credit hour. If she was influenced by Open the Books, she did not communicate that to me or the Chair.
5. Open the Books says: "Trustee Hamilton spearheaded our (meaning theirs) policy to 'open the books' on the millions of hidden 'petty cash' payments. Up to \$30 million in non-transparent payments..." How can this be? We do not have \$30 million in a petty cash account. The funds being referenced are monthly bills paid which are reported in the monthly Board agenda which the Board is asked to affirm payment.

Imprest fund payments are not separately delineated in the Board reports. Totals are shown for each of the three categories: employee, student refunds and vendor payments. Payments shown in the imprest fund are for invoices less than \$15,000. Any invoice greater than

\$15,000 is shown as an operating payment and reflected as a separate line item on the Board report. This practice precedes this administration.

6. One citizen alleges "...your office space (she references executive offices) now exceeds the classroom space of every single community college in Illinois." We "built more office space for the executives than classrooms for the students!" Truth is COD has 502,416 sq. ft. of instructional space (next is Harper at 384,728) and 224,988 sq. ft. of total office space. Of the 224,988 sq. ft., 2,887 sq. ft. (or 1.3%) is to house the College's Senior Management Team (N = 11). The ratio of general office space to instructional space ranges from a high of 0.64:1 to a low of 0.17:1, with a mean of 0.42:1. COD is at 0.45:1. COD along with 31 other Illinois community colleges are within one standard deviation of the mean. Open the Books say "COD now has more office space than any other Illinois community college has in classrooms!" Oh my. Fact is COD's 224,988 sq. ft. of office space is below the instructional space of ten (10) other community colleges. Enough said.

Trustee Hamilton maintains we didn't make the case for a \$30 million or \$50 million Teaching and Learning Center. And yet she sent me an email on May 21 supporting the project. At the June 26, 2014 Board meeting she flip flopped saying she did not have enough information to support the project. At no time did she ever request more information to justify the recommended construction prior to the June 26 Board meeting. Even then, the staff through Joe Collins, in particular, provided justification for the need for the Teaching and Learning Center. Although Trustee Hamilton's only response was simply that the Board should have had that information before the June 26 Board meeting. At one Board meeting, Faculty Senate President Glenn Hansen remarked that we should have had this a priority years ago. (May I point out to Mr. Hansen the new Early Childhood Center, Technical Education Center, Homeland Security Education Center, Health and Science Center, and Culinary and Hospitality Center are all teaching and learning focused. Same is true for the renovated Berg Instructional Center, McAninch Arts Center, Physical Education Center and Student Resource Center.)

Since classes began this fall, both students and staff have told me most class sections are full during prime time. No surprise. We have recognized the current need for more general purpose classrooms for some time. The Teaching and Learning Center will not be available until FY17 at the earliest. Also, it is important that we have more general instruction space on the rapidly developing west end of the campus to help address the perennial concern of travel time between classes.

These critics do not care about our capacity to serve more students or better serving students. The \$30 million the Board approved to construct a Teaching and Learning Center would come from money we have saved over the years. And while saving this money, we didn't sacrifice our commitments in any other critical area (e.g., salaries, benefits, equipment, professional development, IT, etc.). We have performed at the highest financial level (so say Moody's and S&P) during a deep recession and when the state fails to shoulder its financial obligation.

I will not defend to these critics the impressive achievement of an operating fund balance of \$177.1 million in the recent soft economy to ensure control over our destiny, to "ward off evil spirits" that are always present. A strong fund balance helps ensure continued employment for all our treasured employees. It also helps us maintain our growth agenda and avail ourselves of future opportunities like community colleges offering the baccalaureate degree in applied technology.

These critics should redirect their attention to the budget deficits existent at the national (\$17.5 trillion), state (over \$100 billion) and city of Chicago (over \$9 billion). Here is where public performance is suspect. Why attack COD for running a successful business which generates a surplus unless you have an ulterior motive? And they do.

There is much more I could comment on: my compensation and that of our talented, driven senior management team, my keeping in touch with the College while on vacation (perhaps I should be less responsible), purchase of holiday greeting cards, or Waterleaf Restaurant, which last year served 16,000 guests. If I address these and other issues with the facts, they simply move on to something else. They want their inflammatory accusations to wear down good people at the College. They go on radio talk shows that have a known bias, file dozens of costly-to-produce FOIA responses, and orchestrate divisive presentations and other communication: all tactics intended to discredit good

people and a great organization. These are not new and/or novel tools used by dissenters.

Try as they will, they will not discourage us from staying the course. We operate College of DuPage like a successful business; our audited financial records and our recent accreditation report verify that fact. Our work culture is as good as it has ever been and more people are setting foot on this campus than at any other time in our history. In Illinois, we are leading the next major expansion of community colleges. Many say we are the gold standard throughout the state. Others want to emulate us. We are watched carefully – we are studied and examined. Students tell me we don't look and act like a traditional community college. We are a “real” college and we prove it every day. Each year, we draw more and more students from outside the district willing to pay double our tuition rate. We raised more money this past year through philanthropy and grants than at any time in our history. People and organizations don't give money to organizations they don't support. More and more academically enriched students choose COD. Why all this success? Because we are what our critics say we are? I think not.

There will always be naysayers. There will always be people from within and external to the College who find fault with what we do and how we do it. This is to be expected. We are not perfect. No person or organization gets through their life cycle unscathed. What I find reprehensible are those who tear apart good people and organizations to promote their cause, their agenda. People who seek personal gain and have no vision of their own. Those who want to advance their cause at the expense of others.

Be assured, I will not concede to these divisive tactics. I believe in the people who work at COD and our mission. I will not sacrifice and lower my professional standards and integrity in reacting in a similar manner as these uncivil people who would diminish who we are and what we have accomplished. We are here to serve students – to give them the best possible learning experience, to help them achieve their goals and dreams. We will continue to ensure the health and welfare of District 502 by way of our Vision: *“College of DuPage will be the primary college district residents choose for high quality education.”*

To those who wish to harm COD: We will not abandon our principles, our values, our commitment to excellence to the community we serve, our priorities, and our fiduciary responsibility to the taxpayer. Our many successes demonstrate we are good at what we do and you will not dismember us by way of your uncivilized and underhanded tactics which attempt to tarnish our good deeds and a great institution. In 2017, we will celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. We will have much to celebrate having educated thousands of community members throughout our distinguished history. After that celebration, we will continue our work for another 50 years. People like you come and go because your values and motivation are not shared by many, and your unorthodox principles have never stood the test of time. Good people will see your agenda for what it really is: getting attention to promote your cause.

Just as I finished writing this piece, an envelope with only my name on it was delivered to my office. In it were the words of Brendon Burchard: *“Their hateful and uninformed opinions are insignificant, and you are better than to let your dreams die just because someone takes aim at you as you march to the mountain top. Do not falter and do not fear, for their dark criticism will quickly fade in the bright sunlight of your contribution.”*

I smiled and thought to myself, this is just what the doctor ordered.

### **Vote of No Confidence**

I learned yesterday that CODFA will call for a vote of no confidence in my leadership as President.

On Sept. 2, Senate President Glenn Hansen [sent an email](#) to all full time faculty asking the membership to consider a Vote of No Confidence question on Sept. 10. Mr. Hansen's email is replete with the usual factual inaccuracies, incomplete information and lacks substance. His email is congruent with both his approach and messaging at monthly Board of Trustees meetings. The College never seems to do anything right and according to Mr. Hansen and others, management disrespects the faculty. Factual accuracy has never been the hallmark of CODFA leadership presentations.

In light of Mr. Hansen's published comments, I will hold a college-wide meeting on Sept. 24 at 3 p.m. in Belushi Performance Hall (MAC). At that time I will offer another view of the items enumerated in Mr. Hansen's email.

I am deeply troubled by one particular observation reported by Mr. Hansen: "We will appear to be aligned with the Board of Trustees meeting adversaries (the Tea Party of DuPage County)." It's quite clear from this statement the Senate's strategy is to consort with our adversaries if it serves the Senate's ultimate purpose which is to rid the College of President Breuder. This has been the Senate leadership's ultimate goal since my arrival.

If you are unfamiliar with the ideology of the Tea Party, you may want to become better educated. Should Tea Party candidates prevail in next year's Board election, many of you will not like the emerging COD. Ask employees in the Hinsdale School District and at McHenry County College.

In closing, I am very comfortable and proud of all that we have accomplished at our College these past five years. Enrollment growth at a time when most colleges have declined, Higher Learning Commission and program focused accreditation results, transformation of the campus, all new facilities, an average annual salary pool increase of 3.3% for six years, more than 60 new programs of study, 3+1 degree opportunities, lecturer positions for adjunct faculty, introduced comprehensive planning, strengthened financial position, millions of dollars in new equipment, statewide and national recognition, record fundraising success through grants and gifts, resolution of a 20-year Glen Ellyn issue, top tier spending for professional development, new initiatives like the IDEA Center, COD Cares, Centers of Excellence, Teaching and Learning Center, Enhance COD, Resources for Excellence, strengthened the Honors Program including initiating Presidential Scholars program, dozens of new technology tools to benefit instruction and student services, creation of a shared governance system inclusive of all employee groups, ReSET-ESEIP and Centers for Student Diversity, employee satisfaction survey results that ties our all-time high and reflects a positive work environment, and much more. The accomplishments speak for themselves.

I look forward to visiting with you on September 24.

### **Inaugural Distinguished Alumni Award**

Nominations are now open for the inaugural College of DuPage Distinguished Alumni Award, a new program

that recognizes individuals whose COD experience has led to notable career and life achievements.

To qualify for this special honor, the candidate must have completed a degree, certificate or 30 or more credits at COD prior to the year 2000 and meet other criteria. Selected awardees will be contacted in early October and will be recognized at the inaugural induction ceremony to be held on campus in November.

College of DuPage welcomes the submission of nominee resumes and up to three references if available. Candidates can self-nominate or be nominated by someone else. Please submit the [completed form](#) by noon on **Wednesday, Sept. 10**. For more information, visit [www.cod.edu/alumniaward](http://www.cod.edu/alumniaward) or call ext. 2462.

### **Waterleaf Food and Wine Festival**

Waterleaf restaurant will host its third annual Food and Wine Festival, presented by Suburban Life, from 3 to 6 p.m. this coming Saturday, Sept. 6.

Located in the outdoor areas adjacent to Waterleaf, the Food and Wine Festival will feature more than 100 unique and uncommon boutique wines from around the world selected by the family-owned Heritage Wine Company. In addition, the Festival will include live music, a wide range of food stations presented by Waterleaf Executive Chef **Nadia Tilkian**, pastries and specialty pizzas provided by COD culinary students, and exclusive gifts for guests.

The [Waterleaf Food and Wine Festival](#) is open to patrons 21 and older. The price is \$40 per person (online fees apply). **A \$25 designated driver ticket is also available.** For more information and to purchase tickets, visit [www.waterleafrestaurant.com](http://www.waterleafrestaurant.com).

By the way, Waterleaf is one of just 11 restaurants in DuPage County to receive a prestigious "[2014 Award of Excellence](#)" from Wine Spectator magazine. This is the third consecutive year the restaurant has earned this prestigious award, which is rare for a newly established restaurant.

### **Laps With the Chaps 5K Run/Walk**

College of DuPage will host its fourth annual Laps With the Chaps 5K Run/Walk and 100-Yard Dash on Saturday, Oct. 18, at 4 p.m. All proceeds will benefit the College of DuPage Student Emergency Fund, which was established



to alleviate day-to-day expenses for COD students who are at risk of dropping out.

Anyone who registers before the end of Friday, Sept. 5, will be automatically entered into a drawing for a Fall Premium Parking Pass. [Click here](#) to register online. Participants can register individually or as a team for the 5K. Advance registration is \$25 for individuals, \$5 for currently-enrolled COD students (limitations apply), and \$5 for the 100-Yard Chaps Dash for kids 12 and under. A \$5 discount for the 5K is available for Chicago Area Runners Association members.

New at the 5K this year is the College of DuPage Food Truck Rally, which will feature popular Chicago and DuPage mobile eateries from noon to 6 p.m. For more information, email [COD5K@cod.edu](mailto:COD5K@cod.edu), call Community Relations Coordinator **Ami Chambers** at ext. 3823 or visit [www.cod.edu/5K](http://www.cod.edu/5K). You can also [click here](#) to watch a video promoting this year's event.

## Enhance COD

Keep the ideas coming! Put "Enhance COD" in the subject line and email me your idea – what it is, how it can be implemented, what the timeframe is, how and why it benefits the College, and any other pertinent information. Submissions will be evaluated each month, and the winning idea will appear in the first COD This Week of every month.

## COD in the News

- The [Daily Illini](#) writes about the effort to allow community colleges in the state of Illinois to offer select baccalaureate degrees in applied technology and science fields.
- The [Huffington Post](#) ran an article from myself with some of the information about the free tuition initiative that appeared in this newsletter a few weeks back.
- The [Daily Herald](#) profiles student and Pride Alliance member (and former president) **Bradley Setter**, who continues his work to make sure the suburbs are a safe place for teens and young adults regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or HIV status.
- The [Daily Herald](#) runs a story on the new concealed carry class offered at the College.

- The [Naperville Sun](#) and [Suburban Life](#) both write about the Board's decision to lower tuition by \$4 for the spring semester.

## Excuse Us for Bragging

- Former COD football player **Matt Finnin** is playing for the University of Nebraska. [Click here](#) to see the Cornhuskers' schedule and a photo of Matt.
- Garments designed by our fashion design students have been selected for the 630 Fashion show on Sept. 26 at the Arista Hotel in Naperville. All of the garments are from last spring's COD fashion show. The students, some of whom have graduated, are **Taylor Armstrong, Liz Rynex, Daniele Pantazi, Traniece Mason, Lexi Traczyk, Monica Kennedy, Thaira Kartoum, Tomiah Oates** and **Valeria Baker**.
- For the 32<sup>nd</sup> consecutive year, College of DuPage is welcoming two German students through the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange for Young Professionals (CBYX) program. Students **Lucas Adler** and **Simon Schaarschmidt** will live with two host families in Naperville and Wheaton, respectively, during the 2014-2015 academic year and attend classes full time at the College through the reciprocal scholarship program funded by the German Parliament and the U.S. Congress.
- More than 500 employees participated in this year's Chap-a-palooza events, which included food, games, a 3-on-3 basketball tourney, won by the **COD Police Department**, and the "Minute-to-Win-It" contest, with three team winners: The HR Polar Bears, consisting of **Bill Rathe, Maria McClain, Kara McKeown** and **Teresa Norris**; the IT Super Friends, with **Sue Burdick, Craig Heavens, Nicole Gattone** and **Marty Vlcek**; and the Nursing RN't Losing, with **Theresa Bucy, Sarah Born, Karen Batke** and **Kim Crosby**. This year's inaugural Fantastic Photo Booth and group shot were also a big hit. [Click here](#) for more photos.

## Rumor

If you've heard a rumor or have a question, please send it to [Brian Kleemann](#).

Finally, it's always heartening to hear positive comments from our community, and I like sharing them with you

because the comments are due to all of our work here. The following is part of a note that comes from a former student and DuPage County resident who also praised **Jenny Dunbar**, Library Assistant and archivist, for some help she provided recently.

"I want to thank you for all you have done for the residents of Glen Ellyn, the community all of the students – past, present and future – and even the state of Illinois for building and creating (and I give credit to the past presidents also) one of the finest community colleges that exists today. ... I thought it was important to take the time to let you know how one former student (and I may be attending again next spring) feels about this beautiful community college. I am passionate about it because I love the College and what you did."

Have a nice and productive rest of the week.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert L. Breuder". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Robert" and last name "Breuder" clearly distinguishable.

**Dr. Robert L. Breuder, President**