

FCCCC President's Address
CCC Board of Trustee's Meeting
Thursday, November 3rd, 2011

312
RECEIVED AND P
BOARD OF TRUSTEES C
DISTRICT
NOVEMBE

Chairman Cabrera, Chancellor Hyman, members of the Board, Officers of the District, faculty, staff and all others present, good morning.

For this board report, I had prepared a nuanced and thoughtful discussion of remediation, of the City College's various attempts to address remediation and of a comparison with Mayor Bloomberg's Start program in New York City, but that will be another time. Instead, I want to discuss the corrosive campaign initiated by the Inspector General's Office and, in particular, the new posters that are displayed around the colleges.

This poster has in large red letters the word **Report** and then lists the words *Waste, Fraud, and Misconduct*. It then lists all the ways an individual can submit this report to the Inspector General's Office and reminds the audience that this report can be confidential and anonymous. Moreover, the webpage associated with the office says nothing about specifics of waste, fraud, or misconduct, just more verbiage about reporting incidents.

Please note a couple of things. The language is vague and legalistic; it doesn't tell the reader what constitutes waste, fraud or misconduct. Note, too, that the linguistic vagary allows anything to be reported, particularly under the cloak of anonymity: any rumor, any salacious story, any anger-driven narrative. Moreover, the language seems to be purposefully accusatory and assumes an adversarial position; it seemingly targets behavior that the accuser can claim as wasteful or fraudulent, but who can assess that? Only the Inspector General's Office and only in secret: the Office can interrogate anyone it deems appropriate without revealing who made the report or about what activity is being investigated. It's intentionally secret, because, as the head of the department said to us in his presentation, "you wouldn't tell the truth if you knew the reason why." This is a slippery slope, and one we've seen before.

The House Un-American Activities Committee and its Senate counterpart began just this way, by asking for information about activities, initially in a special committee on pro-German influence on the liquor distribution, and it bloomed into the fiasco of the 1950s in which fear and uncertainty ruled. It's the same language and the same techniques, and it's divisive, destructive and detrimental to what, I believe, we're trying to build at the City Colleges: colleges that encourage and support our students in their academic journey. And reporting on each other is not the way to do this.

In contrast, for example, the University of Illinois on its webpage for the University's Ethics Office, says, "The University's Code of Conduct establishes guidelines for professional conduct and indicates those acting on behalf of the University have a general duty to conduct themselves

in a manner that will maintain and strengthen the public's trust and confidence in the integrity of the University and take no actions incompatible with their obligations to the University."

Moreover, the University makes it clear what that process is: "Management employees [and it lists exactly who those individuals are later in the text] are responsible for detecting fraudulent activities or misconduct in their areas of responsibility. Each manager should be familiar with the types of improprieties that might occur in his/her area and be alert for any indication that improper or dishonest activity is or was in existence in his/her area. When dishonest or improper activity is detected or suspected, management should determine whether *an error or misunderstanding* has occurred or whether possible fraud exists. Management is responsible for taking appropriate corrective actions to ensure adequate controls exist to prevent the recurrence of fraud." It then goes on to list the rules and authority of the Inspector General's Office, and it lists definitions and examples of fraud, which, and again I'm quoting, "Fraud generally involves *intentional* misuse or conversion of University property or resources for personal non-University uses."

This site assumes that there are areas of possible misconduct associated with particular positions, which one's supervisor can detect and correct, and that part of the supervision is the recognition of the difference between intentional and unintentional activity. Finally, the assumption is that the apparent fraud may have been perpetrated through error or misunderstanding, not that misconduct is rampant at the University. It is also noteworthy that there is nothing on this page about waste. (See <http://www.ethics.uillinois.edu/policies/fraud.cfm> for the full report. Accessed November 2, 2011)

When we look at the Federal Government's Office of the Inspector General under the auspices of the Department of Health and Human Resources, it deals primarily with health care fraud, such as improper billing for closed or nonexistent health care or nursing home facilities, and it is clear about what does not fall under its purview. It does not investigate, for instance, discrimination (race, sexual orientation, disability and so on) at the workplace; that is handled by the EEO officer. This webpage, similarly to the University of Illinois webpage, is a very explicit and detailed site that includes various compliance training resources and lists of examples of fraud and misconduct. Moreover, similar to the University of Illinois site, it assumes that no one wants to commit fraud or mishandle resources. The Office trusts its employees and assumes compliance. (See <http://oig.hhs.gov/fraud/> for the full page. Accessed November 2, 2011)

Let me be clear. No one supports waste, fraud and misconduct. No one wants a whistle blower to be punished.

But this poster is different: This encourages an atmosphere of distrust among us all; it divides departments and colleges; and it focuses on absolutely the wrong thing, not on what *we're* doing, how we should act to strengthen our mission and uphold the integrity of our institution, but on reporting what someone else is doing.

This is make-work, and it's particularly pernicious make-work. Indeed, if the Inspector General's Office needs to advertise for work, then we have too many individuals in that office.

We are unequivocal about this. This kind of campaign is absolutely reprehensible – and wasteful and smacks of overweening arrogance and misconduct. The posters need to be removed NOW.

Respectfully submitted,

Polly Hoover

President of FC4