

Faculty View

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ECCFA's New VP Stresses Communication & Growth

by Mike Pekarofski

He just celebrated his twentieth anniversary at ECC and recently earned a promotion to the rank of Full Professor. However, Dr. Jeffrey Lee never seems to take a moment to rest on his laurels.

In September, he accepted the position of Acting Vice President of the ECCFA before being officially elected to the post in October. Jeff Lee will serve the remainder of the term left vacant by Professor Alvin Williams when he moved on to Academic Affairs in September. "They've got a great guy," Dean Williams observed. "He has the right disposition, the right balance to be a good leader."

Hitting the ground running, Dr. Lee has been busy addressing faculty concerns, resolving minor issues, and making arrangements for faculty to attend the NJEA Conference in Atlantic City in November. Earlier in the semester, he helped initiate, organize and facilitate two workshops on the faculty promotion process, something he hopes will become an annual event, most likely offered in the spring.

However, these promotions workshops are just the beginning of several new initiatives Vice President Lee envisions, and he feels strongly that the ECCFA, in conjunction with PDAC, can play a more hands-on role in developing and mentoring faculty members. "When we are better at doing our jobs," he argues, "we'll make students better. Leadership is about giving people the things they need and then giving them the opportunity to do what they do."



Dr. Jeffrey Lee, ECCFA's New VP

Professor Lynn Wilson, Chairperson of PDAC, shares Dr. Lee's vision of collaboration when it comes to mentoring faculty and encouraging their development. She especially appreciates Dr. Lee's vision and determination when it comes to enhancing teaching and learning at ECC. "Jeff is always thinking ahead," she explains, "about what could be done and what we need to get there."

A future workshop, for example, might focus on enhancing classroom pedagogy and presentation skills. In particular, such training would benefit new faculty who, despite being experts in their fields, may need more instruction in pedagogy. Supportive of this idea, Dr. Williams, who served as VP of the ECCFA for five years, noted, "Many of us come to the academy having strong knowledge about content, but maybe relatively little knowledge about how to present

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BOOK REVIEW: *The Story of American Freedom* by Eric Foner - reviewed by Jeff Lee

I knew before I cracked this book that it was a great one; Alan Brinkley had praised the book on the back cover. When I was an undergraduate at MIT, Alan Brinkley, son of the late newscaster David Brinkley, taught a class called (I think) American History since World War II. I sat in on a presentation in his class on the McCarthy era that spread more knowledge and information in 90 minutes than a dozen books could. So when I saw that Prof. Brinkley had praised Eric Foner's book, I figured it had to be good. And I was right.

"The Story of American Freedom" weighs in at a little over 400 pages. However, the actual text is about 334 pages. His copious notes, about 60 pages total, are a perfect example of how

citations should be done. Since my copy was on loan from the Newark Library, I had four weeks to finish it. In my on-again, off-again reading style I was able to finish it in about 2 weeks.

I had two main thoughts while reading this book. The first was about how the perception of freedom, through the decades, was always a social question. The social climates of the period always determined what freedom was or wasn't. The other thought was that the song "Freedom" from the musical *Shenandoah* kept playing in my head, particularly the line "Freedom is a state of mind."

This, also, seemed to hold true through the decades, right up to the present. (Remember "Iraqi Freedom"?) My favorite line was in the section on the 1830s-1850s: "The equating of the

country's national interests with the liberation of mankind and of its antagonists with hostility to freedom has infused the rhetoric of American statecraft to the present day, often to the bemusement or annoyance of other nations." This was true in 1998 when it was written and is still true today.

Finally, if you choose to read this book, be sure that your copies of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and the Declaration of Independence are nearby. You will need them for reference. Happy reading!



The Gioconda Smile - Language Immersion At its Best by Viral Bhatt

On Monday November 11, 2013 a group of over thirty excited students and four equally excited professors, made their way to New York to see *The Gioconda Smile*, a play presented by the Educational Theater of New York, adapted and directed by Barbara Bregstein, specifically for non-native English speakers. The trip was organized through the Bilingual Studies Division by Professors Pekarofski and Millán and additionally attended by Professors Bhatt and Barroero.

The Gioconda Smile was a charming adaptation that truly focused upon audience interaction, comprehension and appreciation of not only theater but the arts. The venue was small and the setting very intimate, so that the divide that conventionally exists between the actors and the spectators was all but nonexistent.



It's all smiles at the *Gioconda Smile*, a play for ESL learners

At the very beginning of the play a cast member came on stage to encourage the audience to participate in the proceedings that would take place on the stage. This meant that after each scene, the actors would pause and the commentator would come back and ask questions of the audience to ensure that there was adequate comprehension. If there were questions, the spectators could ask the actors to "repeat" the scene, and if there was adequate comprehension then they could ask the actors to "continue."

This process ensured a truly immersive environment where the audience really became part of a virtual classroom, and as the length of the scenes increased, so did the comprehension level of the audience members so that by the very end of the play there were all but a few echoes of "repeat please." The majority of the audience really appreciated the final question and answer portion during which the actors took questions from the (student) audience, but re-

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ECCFA's New VP —continued

that knowledge effectively to students, particularly our population.”

An accomplished faculty member and former administrator, Professor Jeff Lee sees this additional support for faculty having an immediate impact in the classroom and on students' overall success. “When students are more engaged,” he contends, “they learn more, and if you lower the withdrawal rate, you will increase graduation rates.”

Professor Lee is also very interested in promoting communication among disciplines and across divisional lines, something which does not seem so foreign to a person who holds a Ph. D. in biology but who is also known for his astute book reviews on literature and history. “I'd like to try to get the college to work together better,” observes Lee, who sees himself as a liaison between divisions. “You've got to go to different areas, see what's going on, and encourage new ideas.”

To encourage better communication and a sharing of expertise, Jeff would like to see more workshops geared towards student advisement. As he points out, good advisement involves looking at the bigger picture and getting a sense of what students are capable of. “The machine can tell us that a student needs to take Math 092 or English 096,” he suggests, “but it does not tell us what this means in terms of what they can do in other courses.”

Raising a family, being active in his church, and teaching full-time, Jeff Lee is always in great demand. At the same time, serving in this new leadership role as ECCFA VP is a challenge he felt compelled to accept. “I'm sitting on the fence between some of my colleagues who may be moving on and new faculty coming on board,” he reflects. “History is important, but you need to think about where we're going. I'd like to be a part of setting up the school for the future.”

Professor Lee will serve the remainder of a three-year term which Professor Williams began in 2011. Professor Lee will be up for reelection in 2015.



Dr. Lee challenges students in his Monday morning biology lab.

The Gioconda Smile

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maintained as their characters and answered from their point of view.

This really allowed the spectators to have an understanding of the character's psyche and in many ways was a form of textual analysis that gave a more profound understanding of the performance itself. For many students, for whom this may have been a first time theater experience in New York City, it was also the perfect introduction to the performing arts and how they can positively enrich and contribute to language learning.



ECC Students and Professors at the Richard Shepard Theater



Professor Mike Pekarofski & Students Headed for the Theater

Counselor's Corner: Financial Aid Probation???

By Linda Sallee

We all know that a student will be placed on Academic Probation if his grade point average (GPA) is less than a 2.0. Did you also know that now students may be placed on Financial Aid Probation as well? Yes, Financial Aid is tightening their belts!

At the end of each spring semester or summer I, if applicable, the Financial Aid Office reviews the academic record of each student applying for aid. This review is to verify that the student is maintaining satisfactory academic progress toward completion of college-level credits and making progress towards her degree. To be considered as being of *good* financial aid status, a student must successfully complete 67% of the total number of college credits for which she has ever registered (Yes, CSS 101 is a college-level course). Additionally, students must have at least a 2.0 college GPA. If they do not, they are denied financial aid. However, the student is entitled to appeal this decision.

OK... So far, so good? Now comes the paperwork.

If a student is denied financial aid, he will find out his status through his ECC email. The student must print out the appeal forms, complete them, and bring them to an academic counselor, along with any supporting documentation verifying the reasons for academic underperformance. The counselor will review the supporting documentation with the student for consistency and authentication. The counselor will also review the student's academic record as part of this process. A student remains on FA Probation until she completes 67% of the total number of college credits for which she has registered and has attained a 2.0 college GPA or better. Counseling, including strategies for academic success, are discussed and then a contractual agreement (academic plan) is reviewed and signed by the student and the counselor.



Two major stipulations must be met by students while they are on FA Probation: 1. Students must pass 100% of all courses they register for with a GPA of 2.0 or higher. 2. Students may *not* receive a grade of *Incomplete*, may not *withdraw* from any course, and may not be listed as a *No Show*.

If any of the above happens, that student will no longer receive financial aid at Essex County College. Students are awarded for one semester only and their academic status is reviewed at the end of each semester/session to determine if they would continue to be eligible for aid. Tough stipulations indeed!

And, by the way, these are *federal* regulations which ECC is required to follow. Yes, Financial Aid is tightening their belts, but they're not totally unreasonable. If a student on Financial Aid Probation has a documented extenuating situation, she can withdraw, and a revised probation appeal can be completed with a counselor, so the student would continue to receive financial aid for the following semester. However, this is a one-time exception.

Belt tightening indeed!

20 Years at ECC, A Glance Back to the Beginning by Mike Pekarofski

It was my second week of classes. I was late and in my third parking lot, desperately looking for a space. Frustrated once again, I put the car into reverse, hit the gas, and then hit another car. As I got out to speak to the other driver, my stomach sank and perspiration began to spritz like a fountain. It was Dr. Luis J. Salgado, Special Assistant to the President. He did not look particularly happy that a new hire, fresh out of grad school, had just hit his car. At that point, I didn't think I would last another twenty minutes, let alone another twenty years.

To my surprise, Dr. Salgado just laughed, looked at his undented bumper, and told me not to worry. As the years went by, he would look past my blunders and careless driving and see some untapped potential in a determined twenty-eight-year-old "kid." Luis would become a trusted colleague, mentor and friend. He would never miss an opportunity to challenge me, encourage me, and congratulate me. And, at least in the early days, he would never miss an opportunity to give me the business about our first awkward encounter.

Just a few weeks earlier, I had walked into Room 1107 of the Bilingual Education Department for the first of several interviews at the College. Angel Millán and Evelyn Marquez were among those who sat across from me. "*Muy encantado*," I remember Angel saying, as he shook my hand and I found my way out of the Red Area for the first time. Little did I know that the pleasure would be all mine, as I would soon get the privilege of working, laughing, and dreaming with Angel and Evelyn for the better part of my career.



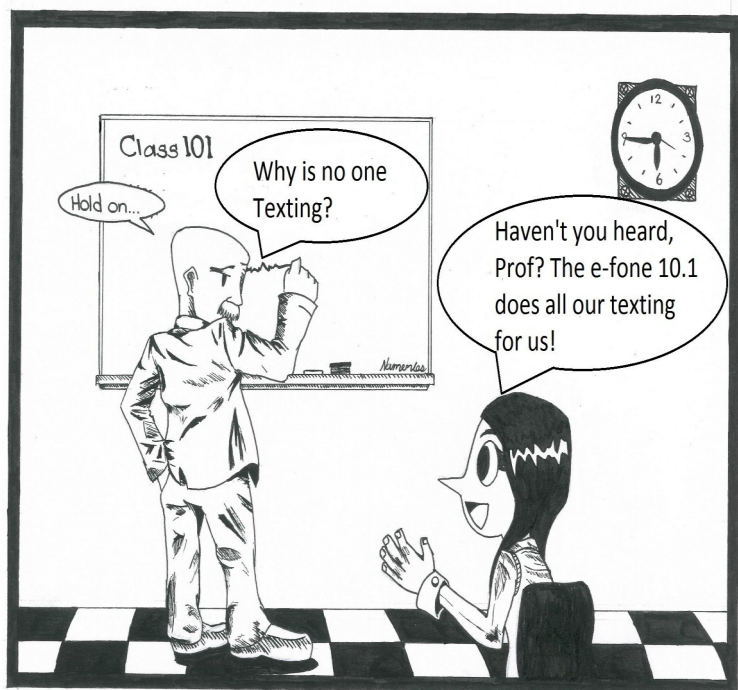
A few weeks later, I would come to my first ECC Convocation. Nervous and overwhelmed, I could barely stand as my name was announced as a new employee. As the Mary Burch emptied out, a forty-something man with curly hair and glasses came up to me, patted me on the back, shook my hand, and said, "Welcome aboard, old timer." I don't know whether Harry Bernstein and I have ever had more than a three-minute conversation, but I will never forget that one. His four-word introduction was wry, witty, to-the-point, and utterly sincere.

Later that day, I sat in an orientation meeting for new employees. Among the new recruits were Paulette Longmore, Ron Bannon, Richard Alston and Jeff Lee. Looking back, it really seems like an All-Star rookie class. Somehow, I began to feel part of something special, something bigger than a college and at the same time, something smaller and more intimate than an institution.

It was 1993. The CFT, Clara Dasher, and Center for Health Sciences did not yet exist. No one had a computer on his/her desk, and "on-line registration" meant that students stood *on a line*, and then stood some more. Of course, you could still smoke in your office, and many did, even in cubicles.

I was lucky to have a cube on the other side of David Berry, a non-smoker, but one of the hardest working people I had ever heard. Yes, *heard*. I worked next to Dave for about three years before I actually saw or met him. And, since there was no email in those days, people did a lot more by phone. As I couldn't help but overhear Dave's conversations, I just remember thinking, "Wow, does everyone work this hard around here?" Pretty soon I needed a cigarette, and I didn't even smoke.

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Cartoon by Jimmy Buitrago

Concept by M. Pekarofski

20 Years at ECC— *Continued*

Little did he know, his work ethic would rub off as I struggled to keep pace. But, who can keep up with Dave after all? In my own naive puppy-dog way, I guess I've tried. Maybe all new people should be required to shadow Dave for a few months.

And of course there were the students. Coming on and off of planes at Newark Airport or eating in the cafeteria, I still run into some of my very first. Often, though not always, I manage to put names to the faces. About a year ago, I spotted a familiar one in the lunch room. She was just 17 when I first read her name off of an attendance roster in a beginning-level ESL course. She was now a self-confident woman with a master's degree from NJIT, a full-time teacher at a Newark public school and an ECC adjunct in mathematics.

She reminded me of how I had talked her out of joining the military back in those early days and thanked me for it. There were a lot of recruiters on campus at the time, and although it can be a great choice for some, I just remember telling this young and very impressionable teen of other options and opportunities, one of which was graduating from ECC. Apparently, she made the right choice and never looked back.

And the families! I've often heard the term "family" used to describe ECC, but usually it's meant in a quasi-metaphorical way. However, I am always amazed at how many people come to the College and then bring their family members back – it may be our best endorsement! I have had sons and mothers, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives. In one of my first semesters, I had a couple meet in my class and later get married. Though ecstatic that my freshman comp course brought them together, I always joked that I could not be held responsible.

I have had the good fortune of building lasting personal and professional relationships with many great people from almost every place, near and far. From Montclair to Morocco and from Irvington to Iran, there are just way too many to name here. When I've really needed it, I've also gotten a lot of good advice, just some of which I will recycle here. One of my first supervisors, Larry Knapp told me, "Always do what you think is right." It's deceptively brilliant in its linguistic simplicity and even more so in its morality and practicality.

Lenny Gunther told me to do things on my terms – though he was probably a lot more eloquent than that. At times, these two maxims have been the paddles that have helped me navigate rough waters, sometimes against the current, but always upward and onward. Perhaps the most salient advice came from my old friend Harry during that first convocation of '93: "Enjoy the ride, my friend, enjoy the ride!"

Fortunately, I have more than survived the last twenty years. I have grown up and grown personally and professionally at ECC. I have gotten to watch parents turn into grandparents and their children become adults. Together, we have laughed, argued, mourned and celebrated. In the end, what keeps us together is this labor of love, a love for each other, our students, and the undefined but always tangible promise that only a community college and a college community can offer. So, don't worry, Harry! I am still enjoying the ride!



"Somehow, I began to feel part of something special, something bigger than a college and at the same time, something smaller and more intimate than an institution."

ECCFA Scholarship Honor Roll

The Association would like to acknowledge the following members for their exemplary support of the ECCFA Scholarship Fund:

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Through the generous contributions of these faculty members we have enabled many students, representing each department and division as both graduating and returning scholars, to pursue their future endeavors with a scholarship in the name of the faculty at large. Please consider joining our ranks by contacting Prof. Linda Sallee in the Counseling area Room 4122, by calling 973-877-3539, or emailing her at sallee@essex.edu. You can also contact Prof. Chengwen Wang in Room 2207, by phone at 973-877-4349, or by email at wang@essex.edu.