



# The Sentinel

Voice of the ECC Faculty Association  
Local 3791/IFT [www.eccfaculty.org](http://www.eccfaculty.org)  
November 2005

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## From the President (and Friend)

### The Bridge (Over Troubled Waters)

In late October, Dr. Shirley sent the following comment and an article entitled "The Divide" from *The Chronicle of Higher Education* to the officers of SSECCA and ECCFA. A copy of the article is included below.

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"I think this divide does exist between administration and all three unions. As we go through the employee survey and look for opportunities for improvement we should keep it in mind."

Mike Shirley

.....

"The Divide"  
Ben Tryon  
October 21, 2005

"I spent nearly 25 years in higher education, first as a faculty member and then, for 17 years, as

an academic administrator. During the last three years of my academic career, I was vice president for academic affairs at Upstart College, a small college in a rural area of the Northeast.

At Upstart College, I was finally making good money (the kind that junior executives in the Real World make before they turn 30). I also enjoyed the modest perks and social cachet associated with a vice-presidential title. As a member of the president's senior staff, I was positioned to influence the direction of the college in significant ways. And as the president who had hired me often told me, with another year or two of senior-level experience, I'd be a shoo-in for a college presidency.

Instead, I decided to resign my position, knowing full well that I was, in all likelihood, ending my academic career.

I had spent eight penurious years in graduate school preparing for a career in higher education. Why would I risk throwing that effort away when the payoff was just around the corner? No decision that momentous is made for a single reason. Looking back, however, I realize that a major reason was that I had simply grown tired of The Divide.

The Divide is that almost unbridgeable, us-versus-them gulf between faculty members and those who would lead them. I discovered it on the day my first administrative appointment was announced. I stopped in the hallway to say hello to a faculty colleague with whom I'd been on friendly terms for seven years. He responded with a suggestion that I attempt an anatomical impossibility.

As a faculty member, I had earned a reputation as a hard-working idealist and a person of intelligence and integrity. As soon as I assumed an administrative position, however,

my reputation crumbled. I was simply one of Them.

The Divide became more pronounced as I accepted higher-level administrative appointments and moved from one institution to another. Because I had given up my role as a faculty member to become an administrator, many of my faculty colleagues automatically distrusted my motives. From their point of view, I could not possibly propose an initiative because I believed it would be good for our students. I had to be doing it either because someone higher up had told me to, or because I was a careerist fattening my résumé for my next move up the ladder. If I made an unpopular decision -- and every decision is unpopular with someone -- I was on a power trip.

My attempts to bridge The Divide were at best half-successes. For years, my wife and I held an annual party in our home, providing food and drink for 60 or 70 faculty members and their spouses. (No expense account paid for that party, mind you; the money came out of our pockets.)

Some of my faculty colleagues genuinely appreciated our hospitality and enjoyed the opportunity to mingle with their colleagues. Others couldn't shake their preconceptions. At a meeting with department heads a few weeks after one such party, the discussion turned to the (always fresh) topic of declining faculty morale. One chairman opined that I didn't do enough to bring faculty members together. In my mind's eye, I saw him standing in my living room a few short weeks before, a plate full of food in one hand, a microbrew in the other.

(It goes without saying that I had never been invited to his home. Morale-building is an administrative responsibility.)

Over time, I thought I'd adjusted to the reality of The Divide. I tried to

accept it as a regrettable but unavoidable fact of administrative life. At Upstart College, though, I found an institution where The Divide had reached its apotheosis, codified in a 300-page collective-bargaining agreement.

Communication across The Divide was by grievance. Faculty members with a complaint -- or even just a concern or question -- didn't e-mail, call, or stop by my office. Instead, they filed a grievance alleging a violation of the collective-bargaining agreement.

As the designated step-one hearing officer, I reviewed two dozen grievances in my first year alone. With one or two exceptions, those grievances were trivial or frivolous. Nevertheless, I devoted hundreds of hours to conducting hearings, reviewing evidence, and writing opinions -- followed almost inevitably by step-two appeals, more hearings, threats of arbitration, conferences with the college lawyer, mediation meetings, and all the attendant paraphernalia of a quasilegal process run amuck.

If the only harm done to Upstart College by the collective-bargaining version of The Divide was the diversion of attention and energy from the real work of improving the quality of teaching and learning, it would have been bad enough. But the effect on the culture of the campus was far more insidious.

To be sure, some true believers were convinced that codifying The Divide leveled the playing field for faculty members who would otherwise be powerless before an indifferent or downright evil administration. More often, though, the faculty union served not the collective interests of the faculty -- still less the interests of the college -- but the selfish interests of disaffected, lazy, and incompetent faculty members.

Lest anyone think I'm exaggerating, consider this: In the decade before I joined Upstart College, and in the three years of my tenure as academic vice president, only one faculty member had been denied reappointment or tenure. And he, a junior faculty member universally regarded by his peers as a terrible teacher and a worse colleague, walked away from the college with a six-figure settlement and the full support of the faculty union.

Under the distorting pressure of The Divide, voting against a colleague's application for retention, tenure, or promotion was viewed not as an act of independent academic judgment in the best interest of the institution, but as anti-union and pro-administration.

It's perhaps not surprising, then, that of all the faculty members who served on committees constituted to review candidates for reappointment, tenure, and promotion during my years at Upstart College, only one had the temerity to vote against a candidate. Others who had doubts about a candidate but didn't want to endure the abuse that would inevitably follow a no vote simply declined to serve on personnel committees.

As the chief academic officer, I submitted personnel recommendations that, on occasion, were at odds with favorable recommendations from the personnel committees. Invariably, the union responded with grievances.

For all the Sturm und Drang that followed, my efforts were quixotic at best. At Upstart College, The Divide had fatally undermined the very foundation of academic quality: faculty self-governance.

In the end, I came to realize that when good faculty members aren't allowed to live up to their

professional responsibilities, it matters little who holds the nominal leadership position. No matter how fancy the title or how good the compensation, I didn't sign on to warm a chair or tilt at windmills. The Divide had won. I resigned.

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The article evoked a variety of e-mail responses, some of which are included below.

From Linda Hefferin:

"I don't see a natural divide among any of our constituent groups. Any 'divide' that may exist among employee groups occurs because we let it. I don't tolerate that mindset.

I think divides are a reality because of individual personalities, not as a result of the employee group we represent. Each of us has good relationships with individuals outside of our employee groups and perhaps we may experience less than desirable relationships with colleagues within our work groups. Why? Simply because of our own personality style or because of trust we have earned (or burned) with individuals.

I think Mr. Ben Tryon has it all wrong. It's like saying there's a natural divide among races 'just because of one's race'. What a sad thought. I can see why he quit his job with this mindset."

From Lisa Wiehle:

"I agree with Linda in that these rigid categories do not completely define individuals as employees and how they contribute to the organization and its culture.

However, examining results by group will still be an important step in moving forward with the Employee Survey data, and the task is not meant

to further any 'divides.' Each group will have their own concerns and viewpoints, just as there will be issues we all share. We need to keep in mind too that any remedies may be universal, or they may be specific to a group, we'll have to see. What will be important is that we all take responsibility to work together as members of the ECC community to make this a better place to work, teach and learn for everyone."

Looking forward to the challenge.

Diane Petersen expressed a different, but valid, position—one that does echo some of the "divide" which "Tryon" identifies:

"I've been in a couple of different roles here at the college, and I did experience what Mr. Tryon experienced when I moved over to administration. I have experienced a divide in some ways that have been difficult. Individuals looked at me as the traitor not one who had a sincere interest in making this a better place for the students and staff. I also got reaction from administrators and comments behind my back that I still cannot be trusted and that I am still on "SSECCA's side".

My reaction to the comments has been that I am the same person with the same values and same the interests but in a different role. There isn't one side or another. I believe that the problem is that we don't have a respect for each [other's] roles. We also place blame instead of looking at [ourselves] to see if indeed [we are] the cause. We need to be accountable for our actions and be willing to admit when we are wrong. We also do not get all of the facts straight before we react. We rely on rumors and continue those rumors instead of trying to dispel them.

Our interactions with each other are often not nice, and personal

attacks are made on individuals without justification or cause. I recently have been the target of some those attacks which have been unjustified. When that happens to an individual, she becomes guarded and distrusting."

But while "Tryon" gave up and resigned his position, "ending [his] academic career," fortunately, Diane is not going to quit her job and take a fictitious name. Rather she suggests that we . . .

"... look at what we as individuals can do to make a difference towards improving the morale and culture of our institution and not put all the responsibility on one particular department or group. If we all changed just one way that we handle or react to situations in a positive way, I believe we would see a change instantly.

We truly have the makings to be the number one community college in the world, as Mike puts it; however, we need to begin to work together as one not as separate factions. I understand the unions' role and respect that. I only ask that administration be given the same respect. We don't always make the right decisions, and we have a lot of things that we need to be more consistent on, but we are individuals who have a true caring for this institution."

Sue Ford wrote the following:

"What a sad and cynical man "Mr. Tryon" seems to be! I am glad he has left academia; we don't need people with fatalistic attitudes. We are in the business of building the future--optimists.

Overall I see ECC as a collection of experts--people who see what needs

to be done and know how to make it happen. This became most apparent to me when I was assigned to set up The Write Place in the summer of 2004. I did not work alone! I met and worked with and relied upon the "experts" in nearly every area of the college from the most capable O&M crew to IT to Marketing, to name just a few. I enjoyed the work and the myriad of people with whom I became acquainted. It was a busy but delightful summer! The "divide" "Mr. Tryon" identifies did not seem to exist at all.

I don't know what went on at "Mr. Tryon's" college, (and my gut tells me he is exaggerating), but at ECC, the various employee groups are not whining jerks who file frivolous grievances for the sake of filing grievances. I have been a member of the ECCFA's Grievance committee for about 3 years. I have learned much from my colleagues and the administrators with whom we work to carefully interpret and implement the terms of our contract. There is nothing frivolous about the work. Possible grievances are thoughtfully investigated, examined, researched and given serious consideration before they are filed--and only then if the parties involved cannot reach a resolution in another way. Such work is meant to clarify our interpretations and various responsibilities, not to divide us.

I thank Dr. Shirley for sharing this article with us. I hope it will help us begin to think and work more thoughtfully and creatively, so we can avoid the abysmal scenario presented by 'Mr. Tryon.'

I am very proud to be a member of the ECC faculty, the ECCFA, and this college community. I trust that all of my colleagues—in both sides of the house—do try to give their best every day. I know our best can be better. And we should **talk** about it."

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Realistically, as evidenced by many of the comments in the employee survey, we do have some of the "divide" syndrome working here at ECC. But our problems are neither insurmountable nor fatal. Indeed, we should be **TALKING** about what we can do to make sure people feel more accepted within their workplace. More to the point, there are many things that **EACH** of us can do to improve the college climate that will lead to a better environment for our students.

"Mr. Tryon's" reference to employee group contracts as the "divide codified" is provincial. Rather, collective bargaining agreements are the written expression of our individual and collective responsibilities and expectations, meant to keep us all "on track." The contracts are the mutually agreed to "rules" by which we can function well. When we all respect and abide by collective bargaining agreements, problems, misunderstandings, and confusion can be reduced, and many times avoided.

From time to time, some individuals may have used our contracts to divide us. When various provisions of the contract are cited to exclude people from fully participating in the College's work, that is an unfortunate misuse of the agreements. If contract provisions are ignored or perverted because that seems to lend the easier route to some end, such actions will certainly divide our community. And it is equal misuse

when members believe and behave as if the contracts are written to serve only their interests or that the unions exist to protect them whether they abide by the contracts or not.

In any case, it is people, not the words on a page, creating the problems—the divides. And once divided, each side will, ironically, cling to the contracts to justify "bad" decisions and actions (creating the proverbial "vicious circle"). Although these things do happen, we do not have to tolerate nor allow them to become the prevailing way the various groups on our campus interact.

A divide, as noted by "Mr. Tryon," can and will and does happen only if and when we allow it. Awareness of a problem is half of its solution. The other half is thoughtful, creative and clear action. We are capable of going either way—to division or solution.

Mr. Ben Tryon, thank goodness you have changed jobs. Now you might consider changing your name as well. Why not consider William (Willie) Fiendit?

As for me, I prefer staying in academia, in an environment I prefer to characterize as "The Bridge Over Troubled Water." Yes, there is usually trouble, but I find the rewards worth the effort.

"When you're weary  
Feeling small  
When tears are in your eyes  
I will dry them all  
I'm on your side  
When times get rough

And friends just can't be found  
Like a bridge over troubled water  
I will lay me down  
Like a bridge over troubled water  
I will lay me down."

Simon & Garfunkel, 1969.

In unity,

Linda

## **Community College Constituency Council (CCCC)**

**Linda Hefferin**

Rick Bailey, Sue Ford, Rick Green, and I attended the CCCC meeting held at the Robert Healy Center in Oakbrook on November 11-12. This council meets semi-annually and includes IFT college locals from within the state.

Illinois Senator Edward Maloney, Chair of the Senate Higher Education Committee; and Illinois Representative Kevin McCarthy, Chair of the House Higher Education Committee, spoke regarding the financial needs of community college and universities.

Locals provided information on their adjunct organizing efforts, as well as any contract negotiations and grievances. The ECCFA has been contacted by Waubensee adjuncts for help in their adjunct organizing efforts. Information was provided on HB 4166 SURS/TRS 6% Exemption, which is a house bill amending the State Universities Article and the Downstate Teacher Article of the Illinois Pension Code of the Illinois Pension Code concerning some restrictions on the employer's

contribution for earning increases in excess of 6 percent. The IFT supports passage of this bill.

Related to this topic, Jennifer Marsh, our IFT representative, will be attending the Faculty Senate meeting on November 30, to speak the new pension rules regarding the 6 percent caps in the final years of employment. The TRS rules have been finalized, and SURS will likely adopt something similar. This law will impact our ability to negotiate enhancements in our next contract negotiations. Plan on attending the Faculty Senate meeting on Wednesday, November 30, at 3 p.m., in ICT 201, if you are interested in learning more about this topic.

## **New Policy Specifies New Minimum Competencies for ECC Students**

**Pat Parks**

**English Department**

Pending approval of the Curriculum Committee, a new policy requiring incoming students to demonstrate minimum competencies in reading, writing, and math before enrolling in general education transfer classes will be implemented in the fall of 2006. While this policy has not met with unanimous approval among faculty, it is, nonetheless, an important and necessary change, one that was first proposed here in 1989 and one that is in place at a number of colleges and is being considered at several

more. (The policy, as it will appear in the college catalog, is included at the end of this article.)

The policy itself was written by a subcommittee of the Academic Policy Committee, a group made up of representatives from the faculty, staff, and administration and given the charge: “to review, research, and make recommendations to the Vice President of Instruction and Student Services on policies that deal with instructional related issues.”

The policies we have reviewed and are still reviewing have been suggested to the committee by faculty as well as administrators and staff. In some cases, such as changing the letter grade of E to F, the process is simple; in other cases, such as the Minimum Competencies Policy, much more is involved before a decision is reached to recommend the policy to the vice president.

To make sure our decisions are carefully and wisely made, subcommittees undertake a study of current policy and compare it with best practices at other institutions. Based on the research and conversations with individuals on our campus directly affected by a change in policy, drafts are created and then brought to the committee for review. These committee meetings are open to the college community, and any individual interested in joining in the discussion is encouraged to attend. At our last meeting, for example, there was a spirited exchange about the mandatory reading placement policy,

and we expect other issues to result in similar debate.

From my perspective, such debate is a necessary part of the academic life of this institution, and, though we may not agree, the opportunity to address issues of concern in civil and well-reasoned argument should be welcomed by all of us. Academic Policy Committee meetings provide that kind of opportunity, but because the committee’s charge is relatively narrow, there are many other important issues that we cannot address during those gatherings. The fact that we had to move last month’s meeting to a larger room to accommodate all of the people interested in the policies under discussion suggests to me that the time is right for more discussion and more widespread faculty involvement in academic decision-making. The challenge is creating the opportunities for that to happen.

<b>Minimum Competencies Policy</b>
<p>All IAI general education courses have required competencies that students must meet prior to matriculating into these courses. These competencies may be demonstrated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Completion of a designated developmental course with a grade of “C” or better</li><li>b. An appropriate placement or other college-recognized assessment score</li><li>c. Completion of an appropriate IAI general education course with a grade of “C” or better</li><li>d. Completion of an AA, AS, AES, or AFA degree or higher</li></ul>



Students affected by this policy may select non-IAI general education classes while enrolling in one or more developmental classes in order to be enrolled as full time (12 credit hours) students.

**Mandatory Reading Placement Policy:**  
The prerequisite for all IAI general education classes should be a grade of C or better in RDG 091, an ACT Reading score of 18 or above or an appropriate placement score.

**Mandatory Writing Placement Policy:**  
The prerequisite for IAI general education courses with a writing competency should be a grade of C or better in ENG 098, an ACT Writing score of 20 or better, or an appropriate placement score.

**Mandatory Mathematics Placement Policy:** The prerequisite for IAI general education courses with a quantitative literacy competency should be a C or better in MTH 096 or MTH 098, as appropriate, an ACT Math score of 23, or an appropriate placement score.

There may be other competency prerequisites for classes beyond the ones listed above. Check the catalog, talk to your advisor, or contact individual departments for additional requirements.

## **Carpenter Publishes "Misconduct" Article**



Congratulations to Jessica Carpenter of the Psychology Department for publishing an article, "Zero Tolerance for Academic Misconduct," in an upcoming issue of *Community College Weekly*.

## **Congratulations Armando!**

**Linda McEwan**  
Librarian

Armando Trejo has been invited to attend the Feria Internacional del Libro (International Book Fair) 2005 ([http://www.fil.com.mx/ingles/i\\_info/i\\_info\\_int.asp](http://www.fil.com.mx/ingles/i_info/i_info_int.asp)) in Guadalajara, Mexico later this month. This is a major publishing event in the Spanish-speaking world, and many librarians travel to the fair to select materials for their libraries.

Armando was invited as co-chair of the International Relations Committee of Reforma: the National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking. While there, Armando will coordinate, organize

and help American librarians at the fair. He will also spend some time at the American Library Association/Reforma booth to promote the visions of both organizations and attending workshops.

These experiences will give him a wonderful opportunity to interact with librarians and publishers from around the world.

In addition, Armando will be selecting materials for our library. The ECC library is participating in the second year of a grant to collect world literature materials with a number of other academic libraries in Illinois (<http://library.uis.edu/iccmp/worldlit/>). Our focus is on the literature of Mexico. While at the fair, Armando will be looking for materials to add to our collection as part of this grant. Besides getting exceptional prices on materials, we will be getting materials not always easy to find locally.

## **The Death of the Father of Listening**

Susan Timm

Co-Instructional Coordinator & Instructor  
Office Administration Technology

As we look to infuse the teaching of listening skills throughout our ECC curriculum, we are saddened to hear of the death of the "Father of Listening." On Thursday, November 3, 2005, Dr. Ralph G. Nichols quietly and peacefully

passed away in his sleep in Fargo, North Dakota. Dr. Nichols' work in the field of listening earned him the honor of a place in the Listening Hall of Fame.

According to a dear friend and former student, Dr. Lyman K. (Manny) Steil, Chairman & CEO, International Listening Leadership Institute in St. Paul, Minnesota, "All who knew 'Nick' were blessed by knowing a quiet giant who served the world by mentoring many and by advancing listening research, teaching, and training."

Listening became recognized as a field of academic study in 1940, lifted to that status by Dr. Nichols. In 1957, Dr. Nichols and L.A. Stevens published *Are You Listening?*, one of the first books of its kind -- an entire book devoted to listening skills!

In 1979, Dr. Nichols and some of his protégés (including Manny Steil) founded "The International Listening Association" (ILA), which is a professional organization whose members are dedicated to learning more about the impact that listening has on all human activity. ILA was formed to advance what Dr. Nichols had started in relation to the study, development, and teaching of effective listening in all settings.

Dr. Ralph Nichols was a true pioneer; and with the stilling of his voice, listeners everywhere will be saddened. Nichols once said, "The most basic of all human needs is the need to understand and be understood. The best way to understand people is to listen to

them." In his memory, the ECC Listening Taskforce asks that you spend special time listening to those whom you love! Indeed, let's all keep listening!

## **Research Guides for Student Assignments**

**Connie James-Jenkin**

**Reference Librarian**

Are your students researching a particular topic? Or would you like your students to be familiar with resources (print and web) in a particular field? If so, you might be interested in the [Library's Research Guides](#).

Research Guides are created by the ECC librarians to help students navigate print and online resources. Working with you, the classroom faculty members, we will identify key reference and circulating books, magazines/journals, and websites geared toward specific subjects or research questions. Our experience has shown that research guides help point students to types of materials that they may not have found otherwise; students may also realize there is more available to them than websites! These guides also help teach students who are unfamiliar with the research process the appropriate steps to follow.

Research Guides may be particularly helpful in an online class where the class does not have the opportunity to come to the library for more traditional library instruction.

The ECC librarians have already collaborated with several faculty members to develop these guides. Some topics include [Affirmative Action](#), [Title IX](#), [Art Appreciation](#), and [Gender in Advertising](#).

We have also worked with faculty to develop general guides to sources in a field. [Chemistry Help](#) and [Math Websites](#) are two examples.

We would love to work with you to develop these guides to support your curriculum and to help your students. Please feel free to call the Reference Desk (x7354), email us ([Libref@elgin.edu](mailto:Libref@elgin.edu)), or IM us (screen name: ecclibref). We hope to hear from you soon!