

**Article: “Faculty Careers in Community Colleges: Placement and Professional Gratification”**

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# "Faculty Careers in Community Colleges: Placement and Professional Gratification"

## Kent Brudney

*Cuesta College, San Luis Obispo, CA*

[A member of APSA's Committee on Education and Professional Development (1998-2001).]

Brudney introduced the panelists:

Richard Reitano, Dutchess Community College, Poughkeepsie, New York.; Connie Mixon, Richard J. Daley College, Chicago, Illinois; John Queen, Glendale Community College, California; Sharon Alter, William Rainey Harper College, Palatine, Illinois.

You will hear from the panelists that there are both pluses and minuses to community college teaching careers. Whether or not a community college teaching career is right for you largely depends on your own objectives, and particularly on how you see yourself within the political science profession. The panelists are affiliated with community colleges in different states or districts to illustrate the impact of state and local governing systems.

The community college job market is promising, at least more so than in four-year colleges and in universities. About 30 percent of the 100,000 community college faculty will be retiring within the next three years. Most of the community college districts are replacing retiring faculty with full-time, tenure-track positions. They are not downsizing by using more part-time adjunct faculty or temporary faculty.

This is especially true in California. Since 1989, California has had a goal that full-time faculty will eventually carry 75 percent of the instructional load with 25 percent assigned to part-time or adjunct faculty. In the last few years the 75 percent goal has been funded by the state government. For example, at my community college we have 9,000 students and we hired 27 full-time, tenure-track faculty last year.

There is currently a consensus among managers and some faculty that new hires should be people with strong technology skills. Community colleges are interested in the distance education and the telecourse business. Candidates are also expected to

be familiar with current instructional strategies and have some teaching experience indicating a commitment to teaching.

Having said that, we have a fairly informal panel. We decided on a format in which each panelist will answer a series of questions about community college teaching and community college professional development, followed by questions from the audience.

*The first question asks why and how each panelist sought and prepared for community college employment and what hiring process was encountered?*

## Richard Reitano

*Dutchess Community College, State University of New York*

[The first Endowed Chair for Excellence in Teaching at Dutchess Community College. The chair carried a stipend which facilitated his research in Vietnam.]

I am Dick Reitano. I teach at Dutchess Community College which is part of the State University of New York. We have about 6,000 students. I sought a community college position way back in the 1960s. I had completed a Master's degree in International Relations at the Maxwell School at Syracuse University and had been accepted in the Ph.D. program. But, I wanted to teach and not stay in graduate school. I remained in community college teaching initially because of the war in Vietnam—my draft board deferred teachers—and because I grew to love the students. I have never regretted becoming a teacher or teaching in the community college.

I do have a point of comparison in this regard. I have taught a course or two per academic year at neighboring Vassar College for about a dozen years. I enjoy teaching students there very much. But my job at Dutchess Community College is in fact harder, more challenging and ultimately more rewarding.

I can offer some advice to prospective community college teachers

## Editor's Note

This feature is a copy edited transcript of the 2001 Annual Meeting "Roundtable on Employment and Teaching in a Community College." The session was organized and chaired by Kent M. Brudney, Cuesta Community College. The other participants were fellow session organizer, Sharon Z. Alter, William Rainey Harper College, and discussants Constance A. Mixon, Richard J. Daley College, John Queen, Glendale Community College, and Richard Reitano, Dutchess Community College

having been one for a long time and having served as department chair and as a member of many search committees. First, be flexible. Be prepared to teach a wide variety of courses. All of my graduate work at the Maxwell School and at the City University of New York was in International Relations. Still, I regularly teach a course in American government.

Two, be willing to accept a position in areas of the country that may be remote in location, lacking in cultural and social amenities and conservative in political and societal beliefs. I am very lucky. Poughkeepsie, New York, is 75 miles north of Manhattan. Other colleges in the area include Vassar, Marist College, Bard College and the State University of New York at New Paltz. Dutchess County has a reasonably vibrant cultural life and there are good opportunities to interact with the community on boards and committees. Dutchess County is also a very, very conservative community. The county voted against FDR four times and has not changed very much politically since then.

Third, have some teaching experience other than having worked as a teaching assistant in a university. Regardless of what you read or hear, the number of applicants is always larger than the number of jobs available. We always look for teaching experience in every applica-

tion, preferably in a community college.

Four, do not submit a bad application. Respond to the questions and do not send copies of student evaluations from a TA job with the application. Include recommendations from people who really know your work. If you are asked to make a presentation before the search

committee, take it seriously and respond to what they have asked you to do. If the process includes an interview with the academic dean and/or the college president, don't be weird, cute or morose. Administrators like normal, well adjusted people who will not cause problems.

Fifth, be prepared to teach in an alien environment, especially if you were not educated in a community college. Many community college students have different problems involving inadequate preparation in high schools, lack of self esteem and the need to be paid attention to. They require your time, your energy and your commitment in ways that differ in degree and emphasis from those attending four year schools.

And lastly, don't be dismayed because some community college administrators and some colleagues do not value scholarship highly. Make the best of it. And don't be discouraged because you will eventually find a place that is a better fit.

### **Constance Mixon**

*Richard J. Daley College*

[Mixon was the "Illinois Professor of the Year" in 2001. This award is part of the U.S. Professors of the Year Award Program sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). ]

I teach at Richard J. Daley College which is one of seven campuses in the City Colleges of Chicago system, with faculty assigned to one of those seven campuses.

Why did I seek a position in community colleges? Well, I just happened upon it. I finished my Master's at the University of Illinois at Chicago in 1995 and have since been working on my Ph.D. in public policy analysis/political science. To finance my graduate education, I taught part-time at various colleges and universities in the Chicago area,

## **Whether or not a community college teaching career is right for you largely depends on your own objectives, and particularly on how you see yourself within the political science profession.**

including working for Sharon Alter at Harper College. I was a typical adjunct instructor traveling from school to school with my office in my car. Three years ago, I happened to see an ad in *The Chicago Tribune* that City Colleges of Chicago were hiring full-time political scientists. I decided to go ahead and apply.

My thinking at the time was that I was essentially already teaching a full academic load—just at different institutions. During my interview at Daley, one of the faculty members asked, "We require our full-time faculty to teach five courses per semester. Do you think you can handle that?" My response was, "Gee, all at one place?" At the time, I thought that being a full-time faculty member would not be all that different from my experiences as an adjunct. Plus, I would have the added convenience of being at one location. However, I was not prepared for the administrative and service responsibilities that go along with a full-time faculty position. As an adjunct, I essentially taught my classes, had a few office hours and left. As full-time faculty we are required to keep longer office hours and assume many committee and administrative responsibilities. One thing that I hope that you all will keep in mind and talk to others about is their committee work and adminis-

trative responsibilities and especially those requirements as they relate to the tenure process. Although I wasn't nearly as prepared as I'd hoped when I began my community college career, things have worked out exceptionally well. I am extremely happy with the decision that I made. When I first applied for my current position, I really thought that it would simply serve as a way to support myself while I finished my doctorate. At the time, I thought I would move on to the "ivory towers" of a four-year liberal arts college or Research I university as soon as my Ph.D. was finished. But now, having served at a community college, I have no intention of leaving. I am supported by my administration and I have the opportunity to teach and do research. I really love teaching. I work with faculty who are committed to student learning. If you like teaching, a career in community colleges should seriously be considered.

While the topic will be addressed later by this panel, it is worth noting that not all community colleges are alike. They are diverse in terms of their missions, their faculty, their governing structure, and the student populations they serve. Daley College serves the southwest side of Chicago. We have an urban mission with an extremely diverse student population, most from low-income families.

Regarding the interview process, you may be asked to give a teaching demonstration, usually around 15-20 minutes. The demonstration should be on a topic related to the position for which you are applying. It is very important that you are well prepared for the teaching demonstration. We have had candidates that appeared promising on paper, aced the interview, and then bombed the teaching demonstration. Needless to say, they were not hired. At most community colleges, there is usually not a separate "Department of Political Science." Rather several disciplines are combined to make one department. I serve in the Social Sciences Department with psychologists, sociologists, historians, economists, and geographers. When applying for a position at a community college, keep this in mind. Although you may be interviewing with one or two political scientists, you could also be interviewing with those outside your discipline who know very little about political science.

## John Queen

*Glendale Community College*

My name is John Queen. I have been teaching at Glendale Community College in California since 1992. Why did I decide to teach at a community college? Maybe the short answer is that I never had a jolly time at a conference actually until yesterday. I went to the Perestroika panel and had a great time, but it's taken over 25 years to have a good time at a conference. The more serious answer is that I really had no "fire in the belly" for research. I did get my Ph.D. in 1986, but I gradually came to the realization that what I was interested in was teaching. I first became interested in teaching in high school. I wanted to be a high school teacher. I went on to college. I wanted to be a college professor. I understood you had to go to graduate school in order to do that. But the image that I always had in my head was of a teacher in a classroom interacting with students. It wasn't the image of a researcher. It certainly wasn't the image of someone on a panel defending their far-fetched ideas.

The community colleges turned out to be the perfect answer to what I was looking for. They were in fact right there at the border of high school and college. They are all about teaching, and I have been very happy at Glendale for these past nine years. I turned to the community colleges also because I felt I had an enhanced market position. I felt that I would be more able to determine where I worked by applying at the community colleges. In fact, I wound up in Los Angeles County where I lived and where my family lived. A third reason was the tremendous burden of being an adjunct. The semester before I was hired, I was teaching four courses at three places, two community colleges and UCLA. Two courses at UCLA were new. I woke up in the middle of the night sweating. I kept a baseball there to grip in the middle of the night. I knew I probably would never teach those courses again. I was tired of that so I turned to the community colleges.

In 1991-1992, I was an adjunct at UCLA. I had also taught in the Cal State system. I had taught at Occidental College and at several community colleges over an eight year period. In the fall of 1991, the recession hit

California. I was unemployed and I began my systematic search for a community college position. I sent letters to all the social science divisions in Los Angeles County. Next, I called the chair of each division and tried to meet with them. A lot of them were willing to meet with me. Many said that nobody here would retire for 15 or 20 years. At Glendale, they were looking for somebody to teach California politics, and I taught there in the spring of 1992.

I talked to colleagues. A discussion with Kent Brudney was very useful. I did the normal things to locate a job. I monitored the advertisements. I submitted applications to the Los Angeles community college district. I was invited to five interviews. I went to four. The fourth one hired me. I was teaching at two out of the five places. Glendale College hired me, so it helps to be teaching at a place where a job comes open. I researched the colleges before the interviews. I went to the colleges, an hour or two before the interview, walked around the campus, looked at the library, talked to people in the student services section so I'd have a more concrete sense of the school.

People who are used to interviewing at four year schools will find community college interviewing to be more structured. First you meet with the committee. In my experience, I was

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asked ten standard questions asked of all the candidates for, among other reasons, affirmative action purposes. Most of the questions are not about political science. Three of the candidates were selected to be interviewed by the administrators. This varies from place to place. In my case, the administrative interview was really pro forma. The decision had been made in the committee, but I know that at other schools there is an aggressive interview in the second stage. So be prepared for this.

They asked for a teaching demonstration and it is likely I was hired

because of mine. Kent advised me years ago not to lecture and I took that advice very seriously. I presented an interactive demonstration and it wowed the committee. Another reason I got the job is before the interview the division chair told me I didn't have a chance; and so I was completely and utterly relaxed, had a good time, and was hired.

I teach American Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations, California Politics and Humanities. I do not teach Political Theory, which is my major field. I think many community college professors will tell you that American politics is mostly what they teach. It is more varied at Glendale College, and I have good news. There is a job at Glendale College. We will be hiring this fall, so feel free to talk to me after the session.

## Sharon Alter

*William Rainey Harper College*

[1999 Illinois Community College Trustees Association (ICCTA) statewide Outstanding Faculty Member Award and the 1998 Harper College Distinguished Faculty Award]

Hi, I am Sharon Alter. I teach at William Rainey Harper College, a community college in a suburb outside of Chicago. I was hired decades ago at a point in time when community colleges were increasing in the state of Illinois and there were a lot of job opportunities. I am emphasizing this

because within the next five years there will be many vacancies and many more people are going to want to teach in community colleges. To a certain extent, it will be more competitive. But the plus is that there are job openings including a full-time position in political science next fall at Harper College. When I was in the process of being hired, for reasons that I didn't understand at the time and I sort of don't now, no teaching demonstration was required. But it wasn't just that no teaching demonstration was required at Harper. No teaching

demonstration was required at that point in time at most other schools. In essence, over the years the hiring process has really become more diligent. This is good because teaching is a very important part of the academic process and community colleges emphasize teaching rather than research.

Like my colleagues on the panel, I wanted to teach in a community college because my priority was teaching rather than research. I want to be able to influence the molding of people's minds regarding politics and government to hopefully give students a love and, if not a love, an avid interest.

To find a job I did some of the same things John did. I sent letters to different community colleges. I didn't just wait for ads but was attempting to be proactive. I knew a lot of people were looking for jobs. I then followed up those letters by asking, "Are there any openings?" All of the schools wanted teaching experience, which I initially didn't have. So for a year, I ended up teaching part-time at a community college and I taught simultaneously full-time at a high school. Looking back, I don't know how I did it as a first year teacher. But I knew that if I really wanted to teach at a community college, then I needed some sort of actual classroom teaching experience, not as a research TA, not as a grader of papers, but actual classroom experience. I think that in part made a difference.

During my job interview members of the selection committee asked me a number of questions and then at the end of the interview, they asked me if I had questions for the interviewers. During the interview, I began to wonder about academic freedom on this campus. I asked, "Is there academic freedom here?" And that was the first time during the whole interview the dean laughed, and he

said, "Well, yes," because I directed the question at him. And he said, "Yes, there's academic freedom." One of the things you have to realize is that Harper is in what was then a much more conservative area than today, but it is still somewhat conservative. I knew I was never going to necessarily give my own

**As college instructors . . . we must assess the knowledge base of our students and adapt our courses to meet those needs. That does not mean "teaching down," it means providing students with the knowledge they need, not only to successfully complete our courses, but to participate in society as an effective citizen.**

partisan or ideological point of view in class, but I wanted to feel assured that there was going to be a fit. While you are interviewing you are being bombarded with questions, figuring out the answers, and trying to think of what questions you want to ask. When you do so, realize that the interviewers could become your colleagues and you must decide is this the place for you. Do you want to be with these colleagues for the next 20 years? It may turn out to be for the next 20 years.

### **Kent Brudney**

Cuesta College hired a full-time political scientist last year. Well over half of the applicants had their doctorates in hand or were ABD. Where I work the younger faculty are really forming a kind of bond with other young faculty because they have similar experiences in graduate school. Many more have gone through all of graduate school and, in some cases, haven't written the dissertation. It is creating a more intellectually vibrant atmosphere. I

am very hopeful that an academic, collegial culture is emerging in community colleges.

I would also add that it is essential that the person who is writing your letter of recommendation knows you well and understands that teaching will be your primary responsibility. A two-page letter about the scholarly potential of your dissertation is not at the heart of the community college hiring process.

*The second question, is what are the positives and negatives of community college teaching?* Connie will begin.

### **Connie Mixon**

I will start with the negatives because these are fewer than the positives. At community colleges you will find many students are under prepared academically. As an adjunct, I taught at four-year liberal arts colleges, comprehensive masters universities, Research I universities and other mainly suburban community colleges. Although I served as a teaching assistant, I was not fully aware of the challenges that I would face when I taught my first independent course at UIC. I assumed that my students had basic knowledge about our government they did not. During one of my first lectures on the U.S. Constitution, I asked my students to name the three branches of American Government. I thought this would be a good, easy, opening question to get the ball rolling. They did not know the basic foundations of our government. Had I not asked that simple question, I would have gone on to discuss theories of limited government and the philosophy of John Locke. That would have meant nothing to my students, and I would have lost them for the entire semester. As college instructors, we cannot assume too much about the knowledge students bring to the classroom. We must assess the knowledge base of our students and adapt our courses to meet those needs. That does not mean "teaching down," it means providing students with the knowledge they need, not only to successfully complete our courses, but to participate in society as an effective citizen. And this is especially noteworthy to new professors at all types of institutions, particularly those right out of graduate school with limited teaching experience.

# Political Scientists Selected as State Winners, 2001 U.S. Professors of the Year

Five political scientists were designated state winners in the "2001 U.S. Professors of the Year" program by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). These political scientists, along with the other faculty state winners and the four faculty selected as national U.S. Professors of the Year were honored in Washington, November 13, 2001. The political scientists named, in alphabetical order by state are:

## Idaho

**John Freemuth**, *Boise State University*

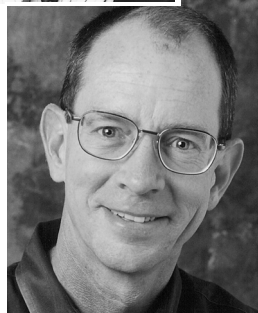
A professor in the department of political science, with a joint appointment in the department of public policy and administration, Freemuth has been teaching at Boise State since 1986. Freemuth was praised by students, colleagues and community leaders for his involvement in environmental issues and passion for teaching. Jim Weatherby, chair of the department of public policy and administration, noted that Freemuth's classes "are typically marked by lively interaction between students and professor. Students are impressed by the considerable experience Freemuth has outside the classroom."



## Michigan

**Bernie O'Connor**, *Eastern Michigan University*

Bernie O'Connor's innovative teaching style is well known on the Eastern Michigan campus and beyond. As a professor in the political science department, O'Connor has been recognized with several teaching awards, including this, his second CASE Michigan Teacher of the Year Award. He has also won the Rowman & Littlefield Award, presented at the APSA Annual Meeting. O'Connor, who joined EMU in 1994, teaches diplomacy, mediation, international relations and law. He also has a national reputation in the areas of mediation and dispute resolution.



While the national winners are selected from four specific institutional categories: Doctoral and Research Universities, Master's Universities and Colleges, Baccalaureate Colleges and Community colleges, these state winners are selected from among faculty in all fields and disciplines at all types of community colleges, colleges and universities in their state.

For more information on these prizes visit [www.case.org](http://www.case.org)

## Illinois

**Connie Mixon**, *Richard Daley College*

Since joining Richard J. Daley College three years ago, Connie Mixon has transformed political science into one of the most popular subjects at the Chicago school, said interim president Mark Warden. Mixon has a record of outstanding achievements, including participation in the "Preparing Future Faculty" Program in Political Science. She teaches a graduate course about faculty responsibilities and strategies for teaching undergraduates at the University of Illinois, Chicago and makes presentations about teaching and community college faculty careers in addition to her professional work at Daley College.



## South Dakota

**Michael Roche**, *University of South Dakota*

A member of the USD faculty since 1981, Michael Roche teaches courses in criminal justice, criminal law, justice and compassion, and law and society. He has been recognized with several campus-wide teaching awards. Offcampus, Roche has done extensive work in the South Dakota penal system presenting personal growth and nonviolence workshops to inmates.

He is widely sought after as a speaker on a wide range of topics concerning justice and education.



## Texas

**Robert Webking**, *University of Texas, El Paso*

Among the most popular and respected faculty members on the UTEP campus, Robert Webking has raised the bar for student achievement. Webking's commitment to undergraduate education is coupled with his drive to see that students are well prepared to compete successfully for admission to law school. Since its founding three years ago, the UTEP Law School Preparation Institute, of which he is a cofounder, has tripled the number of UTEP students attending top 50 law schools. Webking has taught at UTEP since 1978.

Pictured clockwise from top: John Freemuth, Connie Mixon, Michael Roche, Robert Webking, and Bernie O'Connor.

They may be too eager to impart all their scholarly knowledge upon students, without considering students may not have the basic knowledge to fully comprehend this information.

Another potential negative might be language barriers. At my college, many students are immigrants and almost all are first generation college students. Very often I am faced with language difficulties since for many of my students, English is not their first language.

Additionally, if you are planning to teach at a community college, you should be prepared to teach several sections of Introductory American National Government each semester. For example, in a typical semester I teach four or five sections of this introductory course. Every other semester, I teach a course on Urban Politics. If you do not enjoy teaching American National Government, you might want to think twice before applying for a full-time position at a community college. This may not hold at every college, but it certainly does apply at the City Colleges of Chicago.

You may also be the only political scientist in the department and you may be required to teach some courses outside political science. Prior to my joining the faculty in 1999, Daley College had been without a full-time political scientist for over five years, during which all political science courses were taught by adjuncts. The political science program dwindled to nearly nothing and the three sections of American National Government had very low enrollments. During my first semester, I taught the three scheduled sections of National Government. Because faculty at Daley are required to teach a five/four load (i.e. nine courses per year, five one semester, four in the next semester), I was assigned an additional two courses in social science, not political science. Of the two introductory social science courses, one covered political science, economics, geography and history. It seemed that I was best suited to teach this course. But since those sections were already assigned, I was required to teach the other introductory course that covered psychology, sociology, and anthro-

pology. As an undergraduate, I had taken introductory courses in psychology and sociology. I had never taken a course in anthropology. Nonetheless, I still had to teach the course and was informed of this only two weeks prior to the beginning of the semester. As a community college professor, one must be

## The experiential and learning strategies and one-on-one interaction that you have with community college students impacts these students lives.

flexible and willing to expand and go outside of their traditional disciplinary boundaries.

Shortly after starting at Daley, it was readily apparent that I would have to find a way to expand political science course offerings, or resign myself to teaching outside of my main discipline. Within two years, the political science program at Daley College did grow. We are now offering at least six or seven political science courses each semester. Consequently, we must hire adjunct instructors to cover the sections that I do not cover. What started out as a negative has turned in to a positive. For me, being the only political scientist was a bit overwhelming at first; but, I really have enjoyed the independence and the resulting opportunities. I have been able to shape and design the entire political science program at Daley College. This has not been an easy task, but it has been very rewarding both personally and professionally.

Another positive aspect of community college teaching is that community colleges are seeking new faculty who are energetic and willing to work with students outside of the classroom. At Daley, our political science program has been designed to place a focus on learning opportunities that can and do occur outside of the traditional curriculum. My success in these areas, may be due in part to where I am and the support that I have received from other

faculty and administrators. For example, one accomplishment I'm very proud of is a program that we began participating in at Daley called Model Illinois Government. This is a statewide legislative simulation program in which students from over 26 colleges and universities have the opportunity to participate in a mock legislative session. Students assume the roles of state legislators and for four days in Springfield they run the government. Our first year of participation occurred during my second semester at Daley. I had no experience with the program, but decided that it would provide an excellent hands-on learning experience for my students. In both our first and second years of participation, our students earned the overall "outstanding small delegation" award. This experience has literally been life changing for my students and has served to demonstrate that a teacher's impact on students can and should extend beyond the classroom. Most of Daley college students participating in Model Illinois program come from the inner city of Chicago and seldom have had opportunities to travel to other parts of the city, much less the state capital. Many had never stayed at a hotel until this program and were awe-struck by the capital buildings and legislative chambers. The experiential and learning strategies and one-on-one interaction that you have with community college students impacts these students lives. Most students haven't experienced this type of personal attention and support and satisfaction of being rewarded for their work. They need personal attention and to be told that they have the ability to accomplish goals. The relationships that I have established with my students have been very fulfilling and rewarding. While we may only have the opportunity to work with our students for two years, the differences that can be made are substantial. For example, one of the students that I worked with in my first year participated in the Model Illinois Program. He was quite shy—but very, very bright. The next year, I encouraged him to apply for an internship in Washington DC, and he spent the next summer working for the Department of Education. He is now at University of Chicago on a full scholarship.

Another positive factor is a diverse student body. Daley students are 52

percent Hispanic and 28 percent African American. I find that very stimulating compared to the other schools that I had been as well.

I also have support for research. While teaching is the primary responsibility, my administration does support my research. They fund my participation in conferences and I'm allowed to get involved in new projects. In addition, I am active now in the Preparing Future Faculty (PFF) Program, a national program conducted through disciplinary associations, including the American Political Science Association. In a collaborative project, APSA awarded grants to four political science departments, including the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), Daley College and Harper College along with other colleges in the Chicago area form a cluster of institutions offering teaching and professional development to UIC Ph.D. candidates. My administration has been very, very supportive of that program as well and has approved release time for me to teach a graduate course at UIC.

## John Queen

I am going to talk about the positives and negatives of community college teaching from the perspective of somebody with a Ph.D. and then talk about it in general. I'll begin with the positives from the Ph.D. perspective. As a Ph.D. teaching at community college, I earn an extra \$166 per month, which works out to \$1.38 an hour which made all that pain writing a dissertation worth it. More seriously, training for the Ph.D. was very helpful. At UCLA I was required to prove competency in four fields. Since I teach many fields, this preparation was very helpful. While generally doctoral programs require broader preparation than do Master's, I did notice that Cal State LA will require three fields for the Master's whereas UCLA now only requires two fields for the doctorate. So, in an interview do mention your broad training whether it was from M.A. or Ph.D. program. Writing a dissertation developed the organizational writing and research skills I use in preparing my courses, several of which were new courses for me. I received considerable support as a teaching assistant at UCLA, where Kent was my teaching assistant coordinator. I

had a rich teaching experience as an adjunct, which I probably would not have had without the Ph.D. Another positive is that I don't think there is generally hostility to Ph.D.s at community colleges. I talked with several chairs before this meeting. While they did not see the doctorate as a tremendous boost, they did not see it as a problem. In fact, the prestige that goes with a Ph.D. is acknowledged at community colleges.

More generally, another positive about teaching at community colleges is the exclusive focus on teaching that matches my orientation. This great democratic project in higher education inspires me every day. It resonates with me ideologically. It costs 11 bucks a unit at Glendale Community College with a ceiling of \$150 a semester. The joke among the faculty is all you need to get into Glendale College is to be 18 and have a heartbeat. But that's not really true because you don't need to be 18.

There is a great degree of collegiality at Glendale, an institutional commitment to improving teaching, and pretty good pay. The introductory salary for a new hire at Glendale College ranges between \$35,000 and \$54,000. The average salary for full-timers at Glendale College is \$70,000. The working conditions are good. It's a 30 hour work week. It's hard to beat that in contemporary America. As Kent has mentioned, AB1725, the legislation passed in the late 1980s, has increasingly professionalized the community college. We now have a four year tenure-track system.

The negatives for a Ph.D. would result if someone was clueless about community college careers. Because a distance from students may be fostered by graduate student culture, faculty who don't appreciate the struggling student and who cannot think themselves back to the freshman year of college will have difficulties. A primary focus on research can be a problem for people who see teaching as secondary to their other professional occupations. People addicted to jargon or advanced vocabulary without explaining terms in normal words will have difficulty. The assumption that you are training political scientists will not go over well in a community college setting. If you think of yourself as training citizens or

potential citizens or simply training them to read the newspaper, I think you've got a better sense of your students.

Maybe the biggest problem for community college careers is that these schools have second or even third class funding status. The California community colleges have the lowest funding per student in the entire California educational system compared to other higher education institutions as well as K-12. This gives me an opportunity to vent my anger at Gray Davis who just cut the community college — well, cut the state budget by \$550 million, 23 percent of those cuts came from the community colleges. The administrative apparatus of community colleges has grown over the years in order to administer expanding programs and that creates competition for money and offices. The increasing expenditures on computers have taken away money from other possible uses.

The multiple missions of the community colleges can create problems. There is the transfer mission, of sending our students on to four year schools. There is also the remediation mission of teaching basic skills that students don't have when they arrive. There is the job training mission. There is the community service mission. There are mandates that come from state and federal programs. We are all things to all people and we fight about that. The transfer oriented people are unhappy with rededication. The rededication people see the desperate need for their services and so on. So we squabble over where the funds are going to go.

## Sharon Alter

My positives and negatives focus the instructor in the classroom. Let me begin with the negatives because I really want to end with the positives. Among the negatives are the lack of TAs to grade papers or exams. That can really be grueling. Another negative, one that occurs at any college or university, is that students may come to class unprepared, not having read the assignment, or skimmed the assignment.

Another negative that does occur at Harper and a lot of other community colleges is that many of our students do not know how to study. So you have to teach study habits, with the idea that students will grow

from the beginning of the semester to the end both in terms of knowledge and study skills transferrable to their other courses and future semesters.

Another negative that hopefully can be turned to a positive is that, more at community colleges than universities, students may not want to participate in class discussions on various topics or issues. My own students at Harper say they don't want to be embarrassed by their lack of knowledge. In working with them, you say, "Okay, think out loud. Just think of discussion as thinking out loud and during the course of the semester your knowledge base will improve." And students find that this is in fact the case.

The positives really outweigh the negatives. If you are in a classroom, many times you know immediately that you're having an impact. Whether it's a small group of students or a large group of students, they have this "aha" experience and you see your immediate impact as a teacher. Let me give you one example. This past week was the first week of classes. I have a Monday night class which met for the first time. My first impression was that this is a really potentially dynamo class with lots of age, ethnic and racial diversity. I was talking about federalism and connecting it to George W. Bush. Previously that evening somebody had said something about how they had just gotten their tax refund check for \$300 or \$600. I said that George W. Bush believes in a strict interpretation of the implied powers clause and as such an emphasis on state's rights. A real reason for the tax cut was to cut the role of the federal government especially in social welfare programs. If the government doesn't have money to spend, it can't spend it and it could then be used as an excuse or reason to cut social welfare program funding. And I saw most of the 35 students' jaws drop down. There was a silence. Not just the silence of listening or note taking but the silence of an "oh my gosh, that's it" realization. Most students said they had voted for George W. Bush. Many

students also said that they didn't realize that Bush had campaigned for a smaller federal government role. Students then said they now understood federalism more than they had originally.

In addition to an immediate impact is a long term impact in many cases you're not aware of until later. I had a student last year who ended up being an A student. She learned how

**Because a distance from students may be fostered by graduate student culture, faculty who don't appreciate the struggling student and who cannot think themselves back to the freshman year of college will have difficulties.**

to write outstanding essays and gained a fantastic knowledge base by the end of the semester. The following semester she took another class with another teacher. The student shared with me that after her first exam, the teacher asked, "Where did you learn to write such great essays?" And the student shared with me her reply, "Well, in Sharon Alter's class." And I said, "I don't take credit for it. You learned it."

I cannot approach teaching as though I am going to be teaching future political scientists. However, I have had students who have gone on to law school and Ph.D. programs in political science. When I started teaching, Northwestern University and the University of Chicago would not accept community college students as transfer students under any conditions. Well, in the last ten years or so, they began to accept these students. I have had students who have gone to both schools.

I also have had the first Harper student that ended up transferring to Georgetown University, stayed at Georgetown University and earned a law degree there. That is wonderful in the sense that for most community college students, they are first generation college students in their

families. In many cases, their parents are immigrants or their parents were born in the United States but their parents are not themselves college graduates. For many of my students, the community college experience is a means of upward economic mobility.

Community colleges are funded depending on their state in a number of ways. In the state of Illinois, one-third is from the local property taxes, one-third is from state funding and one-third is from tuition. The current tuition at Harper College is \$58 a semester hour and community college is thus becoming extremely expensive. The original reason for community colleges was to make higher education more affordable. That is in the process of being significantly diminished. Therefore, many of our students are supported by financial aid including Pell Grants and loans. Overwhelmingly they work and do so full-time or in some cases have multiple part-time jobs. Their time for studying is very limited.

### **Richard Reitano**

I'll begin with the positives. First of all, the teaching. You can really change people's lives. You can make them aware of possibilities and opportunities they never dreamed were possible. You can introduce them to ideas that they never thought of. You can recommend transfer to four year schools that they never thought were possible for them. My Vassar students are often focused, know what they want to do and have some sense of where they will go after college. My Dutchess students are often unfocused and in much greater need of mentoring and reinforcement. The challenges for me then as their teacher are much greater.

Second, there are opportunities for community college students. My students have become diplomats, lawyers, teachers, bankers, officials in local, state and the federal governments, college professors and administrators. Others work in non-profits, advertising and brokerage firms. One young man has started a clean streets company in Seattle that employs the homeless and ex-convicts at a living wage. Another former student was the executive producer of the television series The Wonder Years and Party of Five. In great measure they all owe their current successes to their

experiences in the community college.

Third, if the community college works well, it is involved in the community. My colleague Joel Diamond, who is here with me this morning, and I have used the National Issues Forums developed by the Kettering Foundation in cooperation with our local newspaper to sponsor significant community discussions annually on issues such as race relations, the quality of public education and campaign finance reform. The forums are a refreshing and important alternative to what passes for public discourse in American society today.

Fourth, my students are always interesting because they come from diverse backgrounds in terms of class, race and age. Some of the best students in my teaching career, for example, have been non-traditional learners who bring their experience as well as their baggage to the classroom. My students do not feel that they are part of a privileged class. They rarely exhibit the sense of entitlement that my Vassar students so often do. Many of Dutchess students return to their cities, towns and villages in the county after they obtain a four year degree, and they become productive members of their communities. My college's motto is "Education for a democracy of excellence." We are proof that you can democratize education by making it available to more people and maintain high standards at the same time, although this is an ongoing problem.

Fifth, the community college is non-hierarchical. I have been able to serve as department chair, assistant to the president of the college, president of professional staff union, chair of the governance organization and chair of major college committees. In short, community colleges are often more inclusive and more welcoming especially to younger faculty than older and more traditional colleges and universities.

Six, there are opportunities to teach courses that interest you. Admittedly there are restrictions because courses in community colleges are enrollment driven and course registration suffers if you acquire a reputation as a hard teacher. Nevertheless I have taught a course on the war in Vietnam and a course on the National Model United Nations annually. The Model U.N.

course is offered jointly with Vassar College and sends a student delegation to the week long National Model United Nations Conference in New York City. Also, I have co-taught a course with a Vassar colleague for several summers in the College's nationally recognized Exploring Transfer summer program for community college students.

The last positive thing is the challenge. It's a tough job. It is a much more difficult job to teach community college students who are often unprepared or under prepared, lack motivation and distracted by too many outside interests, but when the teaching goes well and you reach your students, it is absolutely worth the hard work and effort for you and for them.

Now, the negatives. First, the workload is heavy. My normal workload is five courses a semester as compared to three courses a semester for my colleagues at Vassar. The major problem is reading the writing assignments and tests that my department requires, a requirement that I wholeheartedly support. Other academic departments rely, however, almost exclusively on multiple choice, true/false and fill in the blank tests and give no writing assignments. Their defense is they have too many students. They do but the damage to students is enormous.

Second, students work too many hours. When I first began teaching at Dutchess Community College, my students were working at jobs an average of ten hours a week. They are now working an average of about 30 hours a week with all of the attendant problems. We are in fact a very low priority in their lives. Many of my colleagues have adjusted by dumbing down their courses and by radically reducing course requirements. Community college students often live a lifestyle that is inconsistent with maintaining good grades and the rather foolish notion that they do not have to do much academic work until they get to a four year school.

The last negative is the heavy use of adjunct faculty. My college, unlike California, officially maintains a 60/40 ratio regarding full and part-time faculty. Although the quality of teaching by adjuncts is reasonably high, they are not at the college nearly enough, their commitments to students are less and the evaluation of their work is haphazard at best. In their own defense, we do

not pay adjuncts enough and they feel and are exploited.

My college is allowed, for example, by contract to waive the 9 credit hour rule. That is if an adjunct teaches more than 9 credit hours he or she must be given temporary full-time status unless an emergency occurs. This semester a number of my adjunct colleagues are part of this emergency because of an unanticipated high enrollment. They teach more than 9 credit hours and they receive about \$2,200 per course or under \$10,000 for the semester and no health or other college benefits. If they were given full-time temporary status, which they deserve for exceeding the nine credit hours teaching load, they would receive a salary in the high \$30,000 range with full college benefits.

## Kent Brudney

A quick addition: At Cuesta Community College, faculty do have money to hire readers. I use it in my Introduction to American Government courses. I usually hire older students with very good writing skills and who will be in the community for a while after leaving Cuesta so they get used to working with me and they come to know my expectations. In grading the exam essays, I'll grade one section and then I'll have the reader grade the rest of the sections.

The last question is, *what is the most important advice you can offer an ABD or Ph.D. considering a community college job search?*

## John Queen

My first comment is know your college. You need to get the catalog which is usually very easy to do so now because you can get it on the web. I also recommend that you visit beforehand and scope the community college out.

The next thing is know the students you are going to teach. At Glendale College, for example, two-thirds of our students tend to be older, i.e. over 21. Sixty percent of Glendale College students are women. Half of Glendale Community College students are European population, half of those are Armenian. Many of the Armenian students are recent immigrants and have language difficulties. Another 26

percent of Glendale College students are Latino, and 18 percent are Asian Pacific Islander. Sixty-one percent of our students are foreign born. Forty percent of our students are non-citizens. In the mid-90s, when Congress was considering cutting Pell grants to non-citizens, *The New York Times* cited Glendale as the college that would be most impacted by that proposed legislation, which fortunately didn't come to pass. Sixty-eight percent of our students are part-time, so less than a third are there as the classic full-time students. And as other panelists have pointed out, many students are under prepared.

In the introductory American Politics course, only about 50 to 55 percent of the students will be successful. That is to say get C or above. I have had classes, in fact, I had one class last spring where the success rate went down to 40 percent.

You should also know the community college faculty. At Glendale College 31 percent of the faculty are full-time. They are responsible for 62 percent of instruction, so we fall short of that 75/25 goal that Kent mentioned before. Of the full-time faculty at Glendale College, 17.5 percent have doctorates. Of the 25 new faculty hired for the coming academic year, 16 percent have doctorates. The good news there is the 25, and we should probably have another bumper crop this year in hirings.

You should understand the hiring process and be sensitive to the fact that the non-political science part of the interview is extremely important. Questions about political science are about one-third of those you will be asked. Subject area competence is one of four areas of evaluation. The others are about motivational skills and range. Can you excite your students? Are you versatile? What else can you do? Scholarship is relevant, but campus leadership or being a role model are also relevant. Communication skills are also considered in hiring. This includes sensitivity to diverse populations. Of the nine oral questions that were asked by Glendale's last hiring committee, only three were

subject area questions. The other questions were on grading policy, sensitivity to cultural diversity, and dealing with problem students.

You will be asked for a teaching demonstration, and as I have already indicated, this can be decisive. You should consider this your opportunity to wow the committee. The best advice I can give you is do not lecture. Now, of course, if you're God's gift to lecturing, completely ignore what I have just said. But if you are like me, doing a more interactive presentation will be fruitful. There is a desire to hire younger faculty. We look for younger faculty to work as role models and to relate to our students.

You should also understand the importance of teaching experience. When I am on a hiring committee, the first thing I look at in an application is the number of years of college teaching. The next thing I look at is the number of years of community college teaching. And then, and only then, do I get to the question of what the degrees are and what institutions those degrees came from. If you have little teaching experience, then you need to get part-time work at community colleges. The good news is the situation of part-timers in California is getting better. The state is now providing money for health benefits if the districts agree to also contribute to that fund. There is now money for office hours, on a district by district basis negotiated with unions. So part timing is not quite the exploitation that it used to be. It still is, of course, horribly exploited in terms of the pay.

Your letters, as other panelists have suggested, should emphasize your teaching experience. Student evaluations are only moderately useful. But letters attesting to your teaching ability are incredibly important. Peer evaluations might also be helpful. If you have teaching awards, you should highlight them. Take the application seriously. I realize it's not what you're maybe used to at a four year school, but it's the name of the game at the community colleges.

### **Sharon Alter**

All of us have talked about the importance of teaching experience. In the new position at Harper College that is going to be available next year, community college experience is really very important. But what is

also important is that you have thought about your teaching experience and have a teaching/learning philosophy in addition to having these as part of your vitae. We require applicants to submit a statement of their teaching/learning philosophy before we even interview.

I must emphasize that your enthusiasm in phone or in person interview is extremely important. Enthusiasm about yourself, about the content, about the teaching experience and about the school to which you are applying. Your teaching demonstration is also important. A few years ago we had an opening at Harper and the committee was inclined to hire someone based on the telephone interview and the in person interview. He wasn't hired because he totally bombed the teaching demonstration during which he *read* his entire presentation. An important thing to keep in mind during the interview is maintain eye contact during both your interview and presentation. My suggestion is to videotape yourself and critique it, especially if you're beginning the job interview process.

You are also going to be asked about how you would approach an increasingly multicultural student population. One, regarding how you would deal with diverse students one-on-one in the classroom in terms of mutual respect and two, the course content you might include in the course. Still another aspect that you're going to be asked is how you would use technology in the classroom. Not everything has to be in PowerPoint demonstrations or distance learning and web-based. But you must have some idea of how you would actually incorporate technology.

One last point, in the interview don't give the impression that you know it all. It is important that you see yourself as both a teacher and a student and that the student part of you is going to be engaged in your own lifelong learning whether you're pursuing new ideas, updated content, or new teaching/learning strategies.

### **Connie Mixon**

The first thing that I would recommend is to get community college teaching experience. Apply for adjunct positions wherever you can. If you are not able to get an adjunct or a part-time position, get to know the political scientists at local

community colleges. Ask them if you can sit in on a class. Get your CVs out. Try to find experience wherever you can. Look at your own university and the kind of teacher training programs that are offered at your university and take advantage of them. Go to the many short courses that are offered on learning styles and various pedagogies. If you or your department does not offer a Preparing Future Faculty program, organize to start one.

Second, pay attention to technology. At City Colleges, technology is very, very important. We will not hire someone without technological skills at this point. Does that mean that you have to walk in with a PowerPoint presentation? Not necessarily. PowerPoint does impress them. It is more useful for you to know a little bit about distance learning since many community colleges are moving towards distance learning. Know something about it. Know what you would do. Talk about the possibility of preparing distance learning courses, if these interest you. Talk about how you would use technology in the classroom by, for example, integrating the Internet into class exercises.

Third, create a "Teaching Portfolio." It may be small at this point, but start one. Keep your course evaluations and your student exercises. Put them in the portfolio. When I walked in for my interviews, even for the adjunct positions that I applied for and received, I did so with my teaching portfolio in hand. It made a difference. However, in many instances you don't want to send the portfolio with an application unless it is requested. With your application you should send a few samples of your portfolio and indicate that your entire portfolio is available for review. When you have an interview, bring your teaching portfolio then.

### **Richard Reitano**

First be convinced that you want to teach in a community college. I really can't emphasize that enough. My unhappiest colleagues have been those who regretted not teaching in a "real college" and ended up hating their jobs and their students. Remember that you will be teaching more courses. You will be teaching more students per course. And the opportunities for professional development may not be as widely available as

they would be at a four year college or university.

Second, be familiar with the community colleges you are applying to. Ask for all the available information in advance of completing your application and in advance of any interview. Obtain information about the curriculum, the population served by the college and the department where you may teach.

**It is a much more difficult job to teach community college students who are often unprepared or under prepared, lack motivation and distracted by too many outside interests, but when the teaching goes well and you reach your students, it is absolutely worth the hard work and effort for you and for them.**

Third, be prepared to ask about the role of political science in the college's curriculum. There are no "majors" in a community college, but your department, for example, publishes a brochure for students interested in political science that suggests courses that they should take at the college. Make sure that political science courses are part of any general liberal arts requirements, otherwise you may never teach anything in your field. If you can find out without offending anyone who is close to retirement in political science, that may have an impact on who teaches what courses.

Fourth, be prepared to ask questions of the search committee if you get an interview. The questions should reflect knowledge of the college and its mission, its academic programs and the students who are served at the college.

Fifth, be sure that you understand the college's tenure policy. How long does it take for consideration? What is involved in the tenure process? Who is involved? Find out if there are published rules and procedures. Don't be afraid to ask questions.

Sixth, be willing to negotiate your salary if it is possible to do so. Most schools will advertise a rank. What they often fail to describe is the salary range. Is there any possibility of increasing your initial salary offer? The initial salary you receive may determine where you are financially for your entire career at the college. In many states you can be given a full-time teaching job without benefits. Unless you are included on somebody else's health insurance plan, be very careful.

Seventh, visit a community college and talk to people to see what it's like. If you have an opportunity, do some adjunct work. That's not the best perspective because of the second class status afforded to adjuncts, but you will gain some important insights about community college teaching.

Eighth, be conscious of the college's reputation when you're making a decision whether or not to accept a job offer. Is the college financially secure? Is the college and its president stable? How many presidents has the college had in the past five years? What about the dean? How does the board of trustees relate to the faculty? What is the relationship between the college and its sponsor? Is there sufficient financial support from the sponsor? Is there a history of political interference by the sponsor and the college and its curriculum and activities? You can find these things out by talking with professors or with someone at the college by attending professional conferences like this one and asking questions, by using the Internet to visit the college's website, and by checking the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and the AAUP to determine if there are any serious problems or academic violations.

Ninth, be aware that some universities and colleges may not be im-

pressed by our community college experience. It is decidedly a mixed bag. My friend and colleague, Bob Brigham, a Vietnam scholar, came to Vassar College from a community college. He was embraced by Vassar's history department and is teaching and is very popular on campus with students, and his scholarship is nationally recognized. He recently completed a book with Robert McNamara and fellow historian Jim Blight. But I don't know if Bob's case is typical and you may have to demonstrate to a four year college's or university's political science department that your prior record of community college is relevant to what it offers and that your scholarship is first rate and you can teach their kind of students.

Lastly, be patient and persistent. There is a job out there for you. All the demographics are working your favor. We recently hired two young Ph.D.s who are excellent teachers, who value scholarship and who are superb colleagues. The times are definitely on your side.

## Kent Brudney

I am going to add a comment. I recommend looking at on the community college's website for a master plan that can indicate where community college is heading and what are its values and priorities. Think whether these fit with yours.

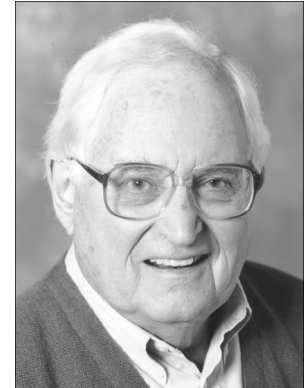
If you compare the teaching load at community colleges with that of many comprehensive public universities, you'll find that it's not really quite as bad as many people believe. For example, at the CSU campus near me, most faculty teach four courses for three quarters for a total of 12 courses. I'm teaching 10 courses an academic year. So they are actually teaching more courses than I am. Still, there is a heavy teaching load.

## Announcing the Donald R. Matthews Endowment for Excellence in Political Science

The University of Washington in Seattle has created the Donald R. Matthews Endowment for Excellence in Political Science. The Matthews Endowment will fund graduate students specializing in American politics and it will create the Donald R. Matthews Distinguished Professorship in American Politics to recruit and retain outstanding faculty.

Don Matthews joined the University of Washington's political science department in 1976, as Professor and Chair, after previously serving on the faculties of the University of Michigan, the University of North Carolina, and Smith College. While formally retiring from active teaching in 1996, Matthews has since maintained a strong presence in the department. Best known for his pioneering 1960 book *U.S. Senators and Their World*, Matthews' scholarship spanned the fields of congressional studies, racial politics, representation and legislative politics in Norway.

The Matthews Endowment received initial funding through an \$800,000 donation from Don Matthews. In making the donation, and additional contributions from friends, colleagues, and former students. It remains open for contributions.



But community college faculty don't have publishing requirements so there are no cross pressures.

Since I valued teaching, community college teaching ended up being a good fit for me. But I also wanted to continue doing some work within the profession. All community college faculty need to keep up with their discipline. Professional growth shouldn't and in most cases doesn't become irrelevant in a community college. My college has been very supportive of my efforts to continue professional development and has found extra money or time for me when I've needed it. Most important, Cuesta does have a sabbatical program. Most community colleges

have competitive sabbatical programs requiring the submission of a proposal. I had a sabbatical six years ago, and I will be eligible for another one. Most of the time they are awarded.

After the presentations, members of the audience asked specific questions about applying for a community college faculty position.

**PS will continue reports on careers in different types of academic institutions and about opportunities to teach specific political science courses.**