



A Word from Bob Richburg

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Okaloosa-Walton College has organized a new chapter of an established honor society to recognize outstanding academic achievement on the part of our Collegiate High School students. Many of us will remember the National Honor Society from our own high school days. Twenty-seven students were invited to become the first members of the 84-year-old society at our college's charter high school.

As I spoke to the students and parents at the induction ceremony, I recalled my National Honor Society chapter at Baker High School in Columbus, Georgia, and reflected on the wonderful contributions that our Collegiate High School is making in the lives of students.

At Baker High School we did our best to meet the four goals of the National Honor Society: scholarship, leadership, service, and character. It was tough, for our school was extremely large and was coping with issues of integration and a lack of adequate educational resources. Today, in our Collegiate High School, scholarship is the expectation for all our students—a far cry from my high school days.

During their first year at this innovative school,

Collegiate tenth-grade students are challenged with rigorous high school courses and with some college classes through which they simultaneously earn both high school and college credit. As juniors and seniors, most Collegiate High School students enroll in a full schedule of college classes in which they must meet the same academic expectations as regular OWC college students. By the time these motivated young students finish their third year at the school, they have achieved both a high school diploma and a two-year college degree.

At Baker, we had some advanced classes, but here our students take *nothing but* advanced classes. Thus, scholarship is central to the program at the Collegiate High School. All 27 of our inductees had earned at least a 3.7 grade point average after at least one year of study in the Collegiate High School. If grades are a measure of scholastic achievement, these young people certainly rank at the top of their class.

Leadership is the second hallmark of the National Honor Society. Collegiate High School students make their presence felt at OWC as they participate in Student Government Association and other student organizations and activities. Just last year, a

Collegiate High School student served as president of the college's Student Government Association – a first in Florida!

In addition to leadership, the National Honor Society expects continued service of its members. The Collegiate High School provides service opportunities both in the college and in the community for all its students, but members of the National Honor Society will add to their busy schedules a group service project each semester as part of their responsibilities.

The last hallmark of the society is character. I look back to my high school experience as a major contributing factor to the person I am today and the personal philosophy and character I have developed. Integrity and reputation are key points in character, and we will not serve our students well if we fail to help them develop strong character traits founded in scholarship, leadership, and service.

I welcome the National Honor Society to OWC. It joins Phi Theta Kappa, our community college honor society, as a means to recognize student achievement and to give these high-achieving students further opportunities for service and for growth.



Someone is ... Listening

By Jim Chitwood, OWC Foundation Executive Director. Chitwood is President of the National Council for Resource Development and wrote this article for the CRD "Dispatch Magazine".

The word suddenly rang out through every Middlesex village and farm.

No, the British weren't coming.

Something worse?

It was not "one if by land, two if by sea." Rather, the bright exclamation mark on the computer screen signaled the urgent message from the national office in Washington. It was Perfect Polly telling me, almost giddily, about the confession in the *Washington Post*.

I thought such acts were a daily occurrence in D.C. Which senator this time? Nope. The Veep? Sorry. "W" himself? C'mon, get real! The ex-FBI guy had not come out of the closet as "Deep Throat" of Watergate, so it couldn't have been him.

Okay, I give up. Who?

Jay Mathews. Who? You mean Jay Leno? By now, Perfect Polly was on the phone.

No, the *Washington Post* columnist, exclaimed Perfect Polly, for this uninformed infidel far away in the hinterlands of the Florida Panhandle. Alright, I could have easily said Bismarck, Coos Bay or Tucson and it still wouldn't have made a difference. Nobody would have known who the heck Jay Mathews was—unless you live on the D.C. Beltway. Nothing from such a liberal newspaper would find its way into our local gazette in the next week, the next year or ever.

Before I would say more, Perfect Polly and her sidekick Super Sarah had emailed Jay Mathews' "shameful confession." With one click of the mouse I was instantly enthralled. I mean, the headline was a grabber: "Why I Ignore Community Colleges." Wait a minute, Buddy! Those are fighting words. "Never touch" them, wrote the columnist. "The other newspapers and magazines I read rarely write about them." Hold on now! "Television? Forget about it." Well...

Then the fellow bore his soul:

"Why then have I ignored these schools of which there are nearly 1,200 in the United States? There are many reasons, most of them not very good ones. The most important is that my editors and I know that the students and parents most likely to read the *Washington Post* are the least likely to want anything to do with community colleges. They share the middle class dream of getting into four-year schools and don't think much about the hard work being done in community colleges to move low-income

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and immigrant Americans into the middle class."

There it was in black and white. It was a matter of class. The uppity *Post* did not care. And in these days of CNN sound bites, *USA Today* quick reads, and other instantly digestible microwaveable news, community colleges may be off somebody's radar. However, Mathews admits his "isn't much of an excuse, and my failure is particularly embarrassing because I have many personal connections to community colleges." Like his brother, who graduated from San Mateo and worked there for the past two decades.

What had shaken the timbers or at least tweaked our columnist's interest enough to come forth was a

U.S. Department of Education Report, "Moving Into Town—and Moving On: the Community College in the Lives of Traditional Age Students." Written by Clifford Adelman, the report merits more review than I have space for here. But something in it triggered our newly found columnist buddy to opine:

"...Let me make a pathetic appeal for help.

There is a lot of interest data in the report, but I'm a journalist and need to write about living, breathing people." Okay, Jay we've got those. Then the rest of his plea, which I ask each of you to note: "If you are attending a community college, or have attended one recently, please give me your thoughts. What do you like about your college? What don't you like? ...Tell me how these interesting if undercover institutions fit into your life. My email address is mathewsj@waspost.com, and I would like to do another column about what I learn from you."

True to his word, our columnist buddy has come through again with a second column about community colleges. It's an anecdotal testimony from 600 folks who took Mathews' offer and emailed him stories about their community college experience. I only wish it had been 6,000 emails, but our columnist friend's journey has begun with a step into our world. He mused that the emails "revealed something that I think is worth front page treatment. Community colleges are having an extraordinary effect on American lives, rescuing people...from difficult personal and financial situations again and again." Then he began to share the stories "while I try to figure out why such important stories are so unlikely to make the news simply because there are so many of them."

And there are so many of you, development officers and foundation directors who keep building the bridges and raising the dollars for "so many of them." Good work. Someone is listening.