

INTERNAL REVIEW DOCUMENT  
FOR  
THE WELDING PROGRAM  
THE RIVERSIDE CAMPUS  
OF  
AUSTIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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**INTRODUCTION TO WELDING AT ACC**

The welding department at Austin Community College houses one of the most diverse programs in the State of Texas, and, perhaps, the nation. Under the apt leadership of Dr. Warren Donworth, who was hired as Department Head in 1989 and charged with the task of 'building' the program, the welding department has added many pragmatic and exciting degree and certificate plans and options.

In the summer of 1989, the enrollment in all of the welding courses was 29 students, and the department was on the decline. In the fall semester of 2002, after Warren's resignation as Program Coordinator, the enrollment was 471 before short semester enrollments were complete. The entire departmental overview, administrative guidance, and vision for the future of the program has been Warren's. He established a cooperative, unstratified, team-like environment in which the visions and talents of the faculty and staff were all safely harbored and free to find their own expression, with full support and sanction.

This has not been an easy time. And, with budgetary limitations continually imposed on the department, despite the ever-rising cost of consumable goods and maintenance fees, and schedule screw ups in every semesters' course schedule coming at us like clockwork, despite impeccable "50's", Warren Donworth fostered a blossoming program that is virtually busting at the seams with both happy students (i.e. satisfied customers) and a doggedly determined faculty. That faculty will forever be beholden to the man because of the hope he gave them, and the nurturing necessary to believe in oneself which he single-handedly provided.

Warren developed a following of fiercely loyal cohorts ever prepared for the onslaught of seemingly mindless tasks that move(d) us away from our intended course as instructors of disciplines within the framework of institutional America, ever searching for a "Yes" answer when only "No" was to be found, and ever ready to respond to the charge, "Onward and Upward" that graced so many of his departmental memos. For many of us with an artistic bent, he gave us a life, offering professional trust and collegiality, acceptance of our visions, and a cooperative spirit of accompaniment, care, and facilitation.

In short, Warren Donworth is masterful at helping people realize and build their own dreams. Even shorter, through its quite borderline abusive treatment of the task force chair/program coordinator level of administration, the college has deprived itself of one of the finest leaders imaginable.

I could not begin writing this document without recognizing this man for the work he has done. He is responsible for the favorable statistics entered herein. And, to be sure, he was working on improving the unfavorable ones. In a very real sense for me, this preparation and documentation is a dedication and a gift from one of those "fiercely loyal cohorts" of Warren's. Unfortunately, the likely few readers of this document will never get to know him, even in our "One College." Pity. Often in our reflections we begin to consider, "What is really important in life?"

## **RELEVANCE OF THE PROGRAM TO THE COLLEGE MISSION (and desired ENDS as stated by policy)**

The welding program at Austin Community College complies with the Mission statement of the college in many ways and surpasses it in others. Phrases like “challenging the human mind to explore new ideas and seek new opportunities” , and “educational services that meet the needs of our willing partners in learning”, “access to quality post-secondary educational experience”, “educational opportunities to all people”, and “actively seeks to eliminate barriers in the educational process” very definitely apply to the program.

Amongst other program types, it provides “vocational and technical programs of varying lengths leading to certificates or degrees”, while at the same time “serving as the base of a baccalaureate degree”, particularly for Vocational Education and Industrial Arts related degree seekers. We provide “continuing adult education for academic, occupational, professional, and (yes!) cultural enhancement”. We have provided “special assistance” in order for students to achieve their “educational and occupational goals”. We do the best we can with “technology, library, media.... to support instruction” on a very limited budget. And I have my doubts that “testing services”... “support” instruction in the first place. And we bridge the gap between students and area employers through our industry driven advisory board and an overall awareness that our students come to our programs to train for employment.

Our “Intended Results” concur with yielding to students the “education they need and can use for productive lives.” I believe that the next batch of verbiage should more ideally relate to the satisfaction of the students within the program and their willingness to recommend it to others and return to it, or continue involvement in it themselves. This affects the community at large. “Program review, admission, and (Dear, God! certainly not) the budget processes” will get any of us closer to the community we serve. In our case, “resource allocation” HAS NEVER BEEN CONTINGENT ON OUR SUCCESSFUL SERVICE OF STUDENTS OR ANY APPROPRIATE OR PROPORTIONATE MEASURE OF OUR SUCCESS RATE WITH THEM. There seems to be no reward in Mudville.

We hope to train our students for “family wage” careers. This is pretty much a societal/political matter, however, and much beyond the scope of this humble professor who questions (usually by the middle of the month) his own capabilities for providing his own family with same. Should the children grow to college age themselves, they best seek alternative means of assistance. Pray tell!

Mastery of “specific subject-area skills needed to meet their educational goals” is a statement essential to our department. We teach quality craftsmanship. And the quest for discovery of the roots of “quality” is an internal one. And the resultant discovery of our quality Self yields “dependability, effective communication, etc.” It is an

inside-out process, and SHOULD BE central to ANY educational setting. Unfortunately, it is NOT.

In almost 15 years of service to the college and the community that it serves, I have to say that I would have been embarrassed to write #'s 4. and 5. of "intended results." Affirmations of any desire to curb or "avoid procedures that waste the money or time of the students or STAFF" belong to some other reality. (Example: planning for, execution, and resulting lack of benefit(s) of the hugely expensive band-aid ventilation system in our department. And, YES! The roof still leaks(!) on electrical conduit and electric welding machines, and we still have no cooling system, whatsoever! OSHA would NOT approve!)

Therefore, "the College" might consider getting it together and BEGIN TAKING STEPS TO CREATE a good place to WORK (try teaching 2- 5 1/2 hour classes in summer, back to back, with no lunch break into July in a room full of 3000 degree torches or a forge when all you have is a couple of area fans to blow the hot, dusty, fume laden air around!!!! And you teach to feed and clothe children!!!), TO LEARN (yes, students are subjected to this), AND TO OTHERWISE EXPERIENCE THE HIGHER EDUCATION PROCESS? How did the "higher educational process" become so unprofessional?

### **STATEMENT OF VALUES AND IDEALS**

With the Statement of Values and Ideals, I would like to begin talking about some of the finer attributes of our program expanding on the root definitions given here. I believe strongly that the welding department, in all of its programs is wholly dedicated to quality, which translates to student success. In a very real sense, their success is a measure of our success as teachers. And quality is actually a lecture topic that I go into depth about, and hope to pursue in an even more meaningful way in the new Applied Metals Design course. When you are instructing about the basic tenants of craftsmanship, quality is not a topic left out. And, furthermore, if you, the instructor, are skilled at your craft (no exceptions, please) you can't help but exhibit quality even if it isn't discussed.

Amongst our particular student learning types, example is often good enough, and bringing confidence in that quality to the craft elevates understanding to yet another level. Consequently, we don't spend too much time attempting to ID "at-risk" students. More often than not they have survived the ravages (and the labels) of the public school system, and found their way(s) to our door only after much soul searching. For them, it is often a huge act of courage just to show up. If we can manage to create an atmosphere of trust, harmony, and caring, they will generally hang with us in order to get what they came here for - new skills, a better understanding of welding and metal manipulation, a confident skill level, and the surprise factor, often times, a better understanding of themselves. The heart is the seat of quality. Confuse that with "learning outcomes" or "intelligence" and the game is lost. And the victim, once again, is the student with low self-esteem. The prison system is full with them. But the retention rate soars.

## **FLEXIBILITY**

Flexibility goes with the territory, in our department. Combined sections, limited equipment, tight quarters, tight budgets, and undisciplined eagerness can all contribute to a greater need for flexibility. And yet, a swarm of bees can still make it to the honey. Over the years, our students have exhibited huge amounts of tolerance and forbearance, and often the results are closer bonds and sharing/caring. And probably no one in the department is more aware of the need for greater flexibility than the instructor. The proof's in the puddin' when you attempt to demonstrate the use of a piece of equipment, and it doesn't work. Composure is the first requirement. Flexibility is a very close second.

## **ACCESSIBILITY**

We have had a policy of open accessibility for years. That's simply the way Warren Donworth does business. It was, therefore, a good example for the rest of us to model. We often make the first contact with students, and do the best we can to counsel them. Our greatest effect, unfortunately in the new system, is only with certificate majors and returning students. And now it seems that the more regimented the counseling centers become, the more regimented the obstacle course becomes for our students. We hear some nightmarish stories that sound more like people trying to keep people out of school rather than attempting to get them in. The more difficult it becomes for our students, the more accessible and flexible we must become.

## **DIVERSITY**

Diversity is widespread in our program, and intolerance is so rare that I can't recall many instances of it in our department. We are not, however, free from jokes and the insidiousness of discrimination. I have done a good amount of work in the area myself, having been raised in a household that was so bigoted, that jokes even about our own race treated us as "other", like "white" was a class beyond "race". Wrong. And white male dominance is a systemic illness that colors even our goody-two-shoes educational system, so that people who are going to survive in it have to pass the tests with flying colors in order to become just a little whiter. And when that happens, something of the authenticity of all of it, goes down the drain. Preaching diversity is one thing. Living your introspection close enough to the truth to stop bigotry in its tracks, is another. I had to apologize for a transgression just the other day.....Team -building is gracefully tolerant of mistake-making.

In addition to these issues, it is important to present the fact at the outset of this report that we are housing welders, blacksmiths, jewelers and metal artists all under the same roof. One might think the atmosphere volatile. I was the first "art guy".

Amazingly, the spirit of cooperation that exists in our little world is fascinating. And the students are the flux that keeps everything working smoothly. Many of them want to know something about all of it. Many of them allow their curiosity to substantiate itself as coursework. Some students explore as many as three or four aspects of the department. Trent Temple, our lab tech for art metals, is within striking range of FOUR degrees within the department, and he is already a certified welding inspector.

Common to all of our degree options and disciplines are metals, of course, and some form of joining, or fusion. So commonalities exist, let's say, between a T Joint in a Shielded Metal Arc Welding class, and the process of soldering a bezel in a jewelry Stone setting class. Generally, we consider the only difference between the technical welding classes and the art metals classes is that art metals students learn to manipulate and shape the metals. Welding students are learning about weld junction design and the strengths of those unions for various purposes. Ideally, students would have skills in both areas.

### **FOR THE RECORD OPINIONS AND OBSERVATIONS ( heretofore FROO)**

So, what is the glue in the mix that unifies such a diverse department serving the needs of such a diverse student group? My first response is to want to honor Dr. Donworth, but I don't believe that he would claim it. So, as we peel the layers from the onion and begin to analyze, "What is it that makes this an onion?" We begin to find that there are many factors in the mix. I will mention a few:

#### **THE STUDENTS**

~Often the first thing a student says is, "I have always wanted to learn to weld." Automatically, our students are receptive to whatever the faculty has to offer, and as their skills develop, they begin to discover that they may have a means to a new career within their reach.

~We have a lot of equipment. To many of our new students, this can be overwhelming. But, the spark of humility encourages them to pay attention during lectures and demonstrations, and before long they are confidently operating much of that same equipment.

~Most often the students in our program are adventurers. They have a goal in mind, and they are generally diverse and talented people who are not afraid of discomfort or hard work. And they know, for instance that when they sign up for a Metalsmithing course with William Bastas or Larry Crawford, that they will have to work hard. It is the very nature of blacksmithing.

~The students that stay with us begin to gather confidences in the simpler tasks first, but they have realized that the work is theirs to do, and no one will be there to do it for them. Your welds are unique to your welding methods and understanding of the process. Your weld is called your "signature". This individuation is empowering.

#### **THE FACULTY AND STAFF**

~I believe, too, that the students find in the faculty a multitalented group of people dedicated to the successes of the students. Our new program coordinator, Tim Strouse is often in, or around the department from 7:00 in the morning until 10:10 at night at least four days a week. The man can weld anything that can be welded, so he also manages to operate a very successful welding business, on the side. The full time faculty member who heads our Metalsmithing program, William Bastas, made every tool

on the metalsmithing cart including a hammer, three sets of tongs, punches, drifts, and slitting tools, etc. for each student in his class in order to give them the experience of working with high quality, hand-crafted tools. Then, the students are given the opportunity to make their own tools. Warren Donworth is a very well-educated musicologist, and plays flute, recorders, as well as a mean upright bass. And even though a student may come to a faculty member for a set course of instruction, he can't leave without having a greater cultural experience.

~ It has also been my experience to note that there is a surprising level of receptivity to the student needs based on the understanding that nobody knows everything. Therefore, it is understood that if I don't know a technical answer to a technical question, there are people in the department that I can go to for those answers, with no shame. There are likely things that I know that others don't.

~So, amongst the faculty you will find a unified sense of responsibility that has come from years of experience working in your craft. That responsibility translates to student support and student success.

~ I would say that there is a high level of pragmatism in our department that supports both a "can do" and a "make do" modus operandi. This has been key to our survival, despite cut backs and a lack of support. This is also key to our flourishing.

~And, finally, there is a deep sense of caring for the students and the hope that they will get it right in life and make successes of themselves in their sojourn here.

## **RESPONSIVENESS TO COMMUNITY NEEDS AND SATISFACTION OF COMMUNITY DEMANDS**

According to the Preliminary Enrollment Report for Fall 2002, the Welding Department accounted for 144 sections with 393 students enrolled, producing 37,728 contact hours. It ranked 31st out of 81 programs. In the Fall of 2001, we offered 116 sections, with 333 enrolled and 31,968 contact hours. A noteworthy fact is that all of the welding sections are taught at the Riverside campus in a space which permits NO growth. The Jewelry Program is presently offering an entire degree program out of **a single 400 square foot classroom**. Requests have been made in the past to offer Jewelry and Art Metals classes at other campuses, but startup costs, appropriate available space, 2 1/2 hour course scheduling, program management, and faculty availability have all been factors preventing these courses from leaving the nest. I have no doubt that they would attract students in any Austin location.

Meanwhile, we have cramped quarters. We offer no 8:00 classes in the Art Metals area due to instructor/student preferences, although there are 8:00 jewelry classes available. Many of our students work at night. Consequently, there is only one poorly ventilated

space that remains under utilized. Otherwise, the Metal Sculpture and the Metalsmithing areas are active, with only one time slot in the Metal Sculpture area available on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, and a single 10:40-1:10 time slot on Mondays and Wednesdays in the metalsmithing lab. The lab is presently utilized by students who require additional work time when no classes are scheduled. The Metal Sculpture area has only 8 welding stations to serve sometimes as many as 14 students creating an oftentimes exciting if not **downright dangerous** situation to put beginning welders in when course limits are opened up at registration. Luckily there are usually enough advanced students that are willing to work in other areas of the shop. At other times, we are not so lucky. And, because there is no money to available, I never have a lab assistant during the day for beginning classes. I cannot possibly attend to the needs and the safety of each new student learning to light a welding torch. As stated before, we make due.

It is also interesting to note that when comparing our department to others in terms of the number of sections we run out of one location (144), when departments like Accounting or Biology which offer classes in every or nearly every location, offer fewer sections, and yet serve larger student populations and generate huge numbers of contact hours.

Also, an apparent iniquity that we often note, is the one-time Semiconductor program, which I assume has fallen under the Electronics umbrella. If all of the enrollments listed in the fact book from RVS belong to that department, then an entire building with three times the space that we are forced to operate in, is being utilized to house 23 sections, with 198 enrolled, and 16,848 contact hours. We are obviously desperate for more space, or we wouldn't be watching.

## **FROO**

Running a program of this nature with no realistic budgetary increases since 1995 and no additional space allotment might put one in a query as to the stuff that makes this program tick. We have grown regardless of all conditions. Some factors that may play into the continued growth might be:

~The fact that the other area schools either prefer not to teach Welding, Art Metals, or Jewelry, or they can't offer the quality of instruction with the quality of equipment that ACC's Welding program has available.

~ The local four-year institutions of size have very old programs and either don't wish to change to reflect the desires of a changing student population, or consider that which we do in Welding, Art Metals, and Jewelry "craft", which is apparently substandard to theoretical/intellectual ART. That's okay. We get their students, including graduated graduate students, regularly. ( By the way, our faculty doesn't buy into the idea of being less than anyone arrogant enough to assume superiority. We expect an authentically

soulful, quality product from our students, regardless of their degrees or where they're from, and regardless of the discipline they're engaged in studying.)

~Students are encouraged, and in many cases, allowed to work hard at mastering their "craft". They want to be with us either making or learning to make stuff. "Perfection" gives way to "human" and "mistakes" are acknowledged as a natural part of the process arriving at "understanding." ( I intentionally encourage (nudge)my students toward "understanding" rather than robotically spitting back a state imposed list of "desired learning outcomes".)

~Creativity is harbored, encouraged, nurtured, and manifested wherever possible. It puts people in touch with a sense of empowerment about who they are, where they've been, what they're doing, and where they want to go. It opens up possibilities for people who otherwise thought that the ransacking of Self by public schools was all there was to "education".

~Confidence is a byproduct of taking on a craft working with very hot fire, very hard earth, highly pressurized air, and a need for lot's of drinking water. Victories are small but steady. Self-image grows readily. It's a wonder to watch!

~Students are getting a "real world" education with "marketable skills". It is efficient education, particularly if they find out something about themselves along the way (like what they want to do with their lives).

~Encouraging people, acknowledging their victories, coaxing them beyond failures, and pointing out pathways to possibilities requires good communication. Sometimes even savants have to learn to listen. Oftentimes students are very wise.

~Give students a place to go in life, a realistic sense of who they are, and something challenging but fun to do and you will be doing some good marketing. They'll be back to your door, and, they'll bring a friend.

~The "needs of the community" have a way of shifting with technologies, but there are constants like houses and buildings having to be built, and cars having to be repaired, and air-conditioners going on the fritz. And, there is the constant....hope. People naturally want to understand, and they naturally want to improve. And some desire to express the longings of their souls. Most of us don't want to do any of it alone. We seek out and join community. Participation enriches.

~In an oversimplified nutshell, this has been the story of the Welding Department.

Author's Note: I don't know by this time in the game if I'm even on target with my task of Internal Review. If the reader(s) find this format wholly unacceptable (perhaps because I'm not glued to the fact sheets) then I must beg forbearance. This is the way I do my most honest reporting. So far, amongst those I've talked with on the subject, honest reporting is what is called for, and the format takes the back seat. Accountants

will be accountants. Biologists will be biologists. And Welder/artists will be welder/artists. C'est la vie!

## **ACCESSIBILITY TO STUDENTS, with IDENTIFICATION OF UNNECESSARY BARRIERS**

By having only one campus location, students obviously have limited access from other parts of the city. Those driving in from the Cedar Park area have voiced concern. Other students, however, drive willingly from Georgetown and Round Rock, West Lake and Oak Hill. Some come by bicycle, and some by bus. We've had students drive from Lulling and Burnet, and I believe next semester we will be getting 2 new students from Beaumont, and possibly, one from Rockford, Illinois. When the Ben White - I-35 interchange is finished, Riverside will be much more easily accessible from the South and Southwest. I-35 through town from the North will likely never be fun. I think of RVS as being easily accessible.

Parking, however.....!!!!

This is becoming another matter for concern. It used to be that at least Faculty and staff could find parking after the first three weeks, or so, of class. This is no longer true. And ever since the bus lines began using our campus as their night termination point, the city has required an overt number of handicapped spaces wrought from the already sparse faculty slots. I would hope that eventually, rather than buying unusable real estate, ACC's board would begin to recognize this problem and build parking garages. They don't need roofs or heating and ac. I consider this an unnecessary barrier, because who doesn't know that PARKING IS A PROBLEM AT EVERY ACC CAMPUS! EVERYONE KNOWS.....Who wants to take steps to fix it? Those without reserved parking.....

Another unnecessary barrier that I see broadening is the role that counselors are playing almost in opposition to faculty advising, as though getting a student into the class of her/his choice is not a matter of teamwork. It think it is certainly not a matter of turf war. And according to student stories I've heard, sometimes the savants aren't listening. Our jewelry program is 10 years old and we've had a student in a recent semester tell us that a counselor told her that ACC doesn't offer Jewelry courses. (?!L)

Yet another barrier to student accessibility (and this one really gets my craw!) is that ever since the Coordinating Board force fed us WEEM, ART STUDENTS HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO TAKE ART METALS AND JEWELRY COURSES. THOSE STUDENTS WERE THE ONES THAT THOSE CLASSES WERE DESIGNED FOR....I WAS THERE WITH MOSES DONWORTH.

The Art Metals degree was designed as efficient education for Artist/welder types who might want to work in a field related to their major field of interest, without having to waste their time with degrees that would never yield them any how-to instruction, and

which would certainly NEVER provide them with any marketable skills. It is true. I have two! And, the unfortunate irony is that the only profession that those two degrees prepared me for was teaching (at the college level). Now isn't that just a bit frightening? That would imply that people who don't know how to do anything in the real world teach.....Who is the Coordinating Board populated with? Highly educated....(you guessed it!) ... teachers. Let's say there are probably better places to have a dead battery or a flat tire.

So, once WECM-ized, Art Metals was the only course that remained out of four courses we had had approved by them, and the Co-Board team that we met with thought that it was an Art course. (Well it is..... but it isn't.....) And the poor old Jewelry courses didn't make it that far to rationality. They were listed under HOROLOGY, and, by God, I challenge anyone who reads this to tell me what that means without looking it up. Catch this.....Watch making and watch repairer. Suddenly, the meanings of things as we knew them were changed, forever. And, thank God! Moses was there to step up to the plate for all of us in order to redo reams of paperwork that had already been done at least once. And the blood was turned back into water (the untold part of the story).

And, now, after having learned a little about the new system we have gotten back to a place of being able to keep up with the needs and satisfaction of this changing community. These are not the students of 1950. The calendar has flipped to a whole new millennium, and 9/11 went down. Education can no longer be of service to who we once were. We have to get back to answering the big three: Who am I? From whence do I come? And wither do I goest? If we don't, we're gonna let a lot of people down because they entrusted us with financial and temporal investments that won't amount to anything. And still, learning outcomes are not the same as understanding. And, from this preparer's point of view, the community college is the perfect place to deal with REAL EDUCATION FOR REAL PEOPLE. ( I love the President's Awards at graduation. Those are people with pluck!)

So, yes! I see the Coordinating board imposing unnecessary barriers. We will deal more with this issue in our SWAT discussion.

## **STUDENT OUTCOMES, INCLUDING PARTICIPATION AND SUCCESSFUL-COMPLETION RATES**

### **FROO**

I become somewhat baffled by assignments that require me to spit back facts that you (whoever YOU are) provided me with as though either you didn't look at them before, and now you want to look at them. Or maybe there's a chance that I could write this whole damn report without ever looking at one of the those facts, but we just can't have that.....Perhaps this is a reflection of our AMERICAN educational system which seems to be so hip on "guided learning experiences" and "learning outcomes" that the

methodology actually chokes down the informational intake and therefore, limits the understanding/comprehension levels of the students (and report writers). And, it apparently does so in measurable levels. Thus, the militaristic, outdated and archaic A,B,C grading system [ and notebooks so full of how-to-do-it charts that the minds of the reporters become dazed, and torn between the urge to do one's duty impeccably and the ulcer that that creates, and the impulse to TELL IT LIKE IT IS IN A MEANINGFUL WAY AS A THINKING HUMAN BEING ( WHO LIKES TO WRITE ) THAT UNDERSTANDS THE NATURE OF HIS DEPARTMENT. Absolute control is based in absolute fear. Fear of what? Perhaps people telling it like they see it because there is an image (a golden calf ) to protect!]

When will we grow beyond this dehumanistic yard stick ( the grading system) that has little real relationship to the student's preparedness for life. I have two degrees with "F's" in classes that deserved to be flunked, regardless of the crusty credentials of the docents teaching them. They were crumby teachers, in my opinion, and my "F's" were measures of their performance. Perhaps, I'm exhibiting that same spirit in this writing.

### **BACK TO IT (heretofore, BTI)**

So, we want to talk student outcomes.....

I assumed that the logical place to start with the numeric assessment of the "student outcomes" which address the numbers of students finishing classes, would be to first of all address the numbers of students that started. For the Summer of 2001, we offered 39 sections, enrolling 92 students for a total of 8832 contact hours. Combining the counts for students turned away from our HRGY (horology/jewelry) courses and our WLDG (welding courses), showed 23 students total. As a direct comparison, which would indicate the growth in the program and the demand for classes therein, Summer 2002, in which our sections were cut back, showed 46 sections ( more than 12% of the Riverside campus' total offerings), with 135 students enrolled for a total of 12,960 contact hours. This time the combined counts from the number of HRGY and WLDG students turned away greater than doubled with 48.

Spring and Fall semesters generally represent the bulk of the yearly enrollment, with greater emphasis placed on the Fall for statistical predominance. Our Spring 2002 enrollment, however reached 386 students in 124 sections. The section count represents 15% of the total RVS offerings. In this semester, however, the number of students turned away soared to 450 with 399 refused in welding seats and 51 seats refused in HRGY/jewelry. THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS TURNED AWAY FROM OUR CLASSES WAS GREATER THAN OUR ACTUAL ENROLLMENT BY 64 STUDENTS!!! IS ANYONE WATCHING!!!!

Comparing Fall 2001 to Fall 2002, I found that, in the fall of 2001, of RVS's 848 total sections, The Welding Department offered 116 sections (13.7%), with 333 WLDG students and 43 HRGY students, totaling 376. This number generated 31,968 contact hours, seeing the program seated at the 32nd slot for total number of contact hours noted.

In the Fall of 2002, there were 144 welding sections offered of the campus' 868 (16.6%), with 393 students enrolled, with a total of 384 students turned away - 288 in WLDG courses and 96 in HRGY courses. This number is just 9 students short of our total enrollment. The department also generated 37,728 contact hours moving it up to 31st position for RVS contact hours.

Although this is the official 12th day class count, the truth of the matter is that our total enrollments for this fall were 503 students, including short semester classes and CEU, which offers no additional money to our budget on a per student basis, though it should. These classes, therefore, end up being budget suckers that have no official impact on our yearly moneys, though they nonetheless create a hefty budgetary draw. I dropped CEU slots from my course roles because the "rules" for expenses were never made clear, assistance was difficult to get from that office (things kept getting dumped back in my lap as my responsibility, and beginning students were sent to my class in mid-semester as "intermediate" level students. They had never welded before in their life and the whole situation represented a total lack of consideration for the progress of my college credit students, and I felt as though it was a lack of respect for me as a college credit level instructor). Until some changes are made in communication and boundaries, I won't be putting CEU slots in my classes again.

## **FROO**

For clarity sake, I have to mention here again that our program consists of three basic areas of potential student development. With the three different aspects of metal fusion noted - namely Technical Welding and Inspection, Horology or Jewelry Production, and Art metals and Metalsmithing, students are free to enter our department through any aspect or interest. Prerequisites are NOT imposed as progress limiters, but as guideposts, so a student can gather knowledge in a particular area of interest, while being exposed to other students in other parts of the program, and discovering other technologies and interests. And the mystique is often lifted from those less familiar aspects of fusion and the student begins to see possibilities in them. "Hey! I could do that," is often the accompanying comment upon the delightful moment of discovery. And a new door is open.

By and large, our students have entered the program through the vehicle of hope. They are there because they want to learn the desired craft and how that craft applies to real life in the real world of employment, self-employment, or semi-employment. Many of them have realized that degrees in many other disciplines (i.e. Philosophy, English, Mathematics, and even Fine Arts) will likely NOT equip you for employment. And that even areas like Computer Science, Biology, Physics, and Chemistry hold no particular magnetism toward hireability. So the question becomes, "Well, what do you like (love) to do?" In our department they can easily view the different possibilities for a life with metals and fusion technologies, and they can garner many useful "tools" with which to build their futures. They don't receive any real guarantees that life as a craftsman won't be difficult, but at least they will look forward to the work of the day. And, they begin to believe a little more that they might have the opportunity to pilot the ship of their own destiny, and to create a life according to their liking. Yes, many work the restaurant

job, or high tech, or even as novice welders, but they begin to build the confidences that help them begin to believe in their strengths and abilities which stoke the fires of human hope.

## **BTI**

Generally, our average student is not able to be a full-time student. Most have a job of some kind beyond school, and many are paying their own way. I would say that the majority work a full-time job and feel fortunate if they can take two classes. These students are definitely the most goal oriented, and therefore, finish up the degree plan. Our degrees are set up so that every student completing the necessary coursework receives a degree in Welding Technology. They then have areas of specialization in Code Welding, Code Welding U. S. Navy/ Tech Prep, Jewelry Fabrication (I'm pretty sure we were able to shed the horrid Horology label for the degree), and Art Metals. Fortunately, our certificates offer a wider range of diversity with technical welding offering certificates in Inspection, Plate Welding, Pipe Welding, and Ultrahigh Purity Piping, Jewelry Fabrication, Art Metals, and Metal Sculpture. We also have a Marketable Skills Award in Inert Gas Welding, and a Certificate in Metalsmithing in the wings that has received our advisory board approval, but WECM has limited the number of certificates offerable. Unfortunately, to date, there are no figures in any of the data that break out all of these different areas.

According to the 2001-2002 Fact Book, we had 2 AAS degree recipients in 1996-7, 8 in 1997-8, 3 in 1998-9, 7 in 1999-00, and 10 in 2000-01. For the same years, our certificate majors numbered 5,17,21, 28, and 23. And, from the fall of 1997 until summer of 2000, we had a total of 83 students earn awards. From 1996 until 1999, we showed a 93.33% placement rate for students that earned awards. Our uniquely successful Blocktime Certificate Program, under the very able guidance of David "Leroy" Humphreys was eliminated in the fall of 1998, and Leroy was converted to Full-time status until his retirement. That program was dearly missed by the maintenance staff at ACC and the community at large because students were assigned project work (a.k. the Zilker Park Trail of Lights for the City of Austin) which brought interesting learning experiences to their welding work. Leroy's dedication to the success of his students and to hard work won him popularity among his students and brought about the success of his program. He was also very incidental in contributing to the early beginnings of the Art Metals Program by creating work tables and shop space for the benefit of those students. He embraced willingly, the new concept, when others were much less willing to do so, and he was greatly responsible for space, supply, and equipment allotments in order to see the infant program through the physical needs of it's early growth. Mr. Humphreys built all of the booths, tables, and tool cabinets for his blocktime lab. When he was told that the program he had built was going to be dissolved, he disassembled and redistributed the equipment by his own labor, in what I thought to be a tremendous act of selfless courage. He basically built the Art Metals area and a CEU area out of the parts.

Leroy has continued to model for us a spirit of cooperation, that is perceivable by the students. We have an open door policy that exists between classrooms and labs. If a student has a question that goes beyond the knowledge of her instructor, then she is introduced to the instructor that has the knowledge and may choose to set up a convenient appointment time or have the question or demonstration given at that time. This practice runs throughout the department, and is agreeable to all of the faculty. We attempt to eliminate physical, mental, and emotional barriers from the student experience, and we attempt to nurture and support the student with the tools of encouragement, respect, and dignity. Since 1996, we have an 80.4% completion rate.

## **MEASURES OF PROGRAM QUALITY AND EDUCATIONAL VALUE**

There may be a page of statistics somewhere to give some valuable insights into our program quality and educational value, but I can't imagine that, and, I can't find it. Therefore, I'll likely have to proceed in the way that I'm accustomed to doing it.

### **FROO**

From a pure business standpoint, any number of people have said that if ACC was a real business, it would have gone belly up a long time ago. One of my retired students remarked one day, "State Jobs! Haven't those people realized yet that having meetings still isn't doing anything, or getting anything done!" In my experience in the welding department, meetings have been eliminated whenever possible. Each faculty member is treated with respect for the abilities that he or she brings to the program, and is never treated as an underling or in anyway less than anyone else. And the product that the student receives is authenticity. The instructors are products of their professional involvement in either industry or the arts, and they bring their experiences to the students.

Rudolph Steiner, the early 20th century German philosopher and educational reformer suggested that the instructor should bring 100 times more information to the classroom than he is prepared to impart to the students. In this method, the bank of available information is always far greater than the students' level of comprehension, and understanding can be in part achieved through association. Although I am tempted to site specific examples from the faculty within the department, there might be other times and places for that type of information (retirement parties are often the unfortunate finale to laud the yet unlauded for a job well done when it's too late to mean too much).

Suffice it to say, that good craftsmanship is meted out of hours and hours and hours of work, and that quality consciousness is the flower that blooms out of that fertile soil. When a person is capable of creating out of a deep sense of quality and has dedicated many years of his or her life to that quest for quality craftsmanship and expression, there will likely be no way to avoid expressing related information. This inspires seekers after quality to more enthusiastically pursue the quest. Working in this kind of presence inspires people to do their best. When the students discover that there are others who

understand the quest, they relax into their learning process readily, and give themselves more wholeheartedly to the task. They become empowered with a stronger sense of self and a greater sense of belonging within the framework of a community.

I have to say here that for “show-me” learners, which comprise the majority of the welding department’s general population, they are not used to being accepted into a learning community. “Fact-gatherers” inhabit learning communities (and flourish there), and “show-me” learners have often failed there, or they have been labeled “weird”, or “ADD”, or “ADHD”, or “slow”, or, yes, even “stupid”. Show-me types are not typically fact-gatherers in the way that fact-gatherers think fact gathering should be done, so therefore, these people don’t fit. So what we have is yet another form of systematic abuse and systemic segregationism under the guise of educationalism, when in fact THE ENTIRE EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY IS FAILING TO FIND POSITIVE WAYS TO EDUCATE A CHANGING POPULATION OF STUDENTS, AND IT’S TRYING TO MAKE THE STUDENTS THE ONES WHO ARE WRONG (so give them drugs!). And these folks get the message, loud and clear, that if they can’t measure up to this narrow set of damn high standards, then they will NEVER fit. Guilty until you prove yourself innocent.... (WRITE ON!)

So, a part of me becomes horrifically irate at the fact-gathering community questioning “measures of program quality,” when, in my mind, the fact-gathering community needs to bone up on its own comprehension of the core human concept of quality, and read a book that matters. People come to school to better understand themselves and their preferences and interests in the world, as long as public high school hasn’t killed off any innate desire to improve oneself. People come to us because they want to “learn to weld” or to “work with metal”. It is a faculty member’s duty to bring those same people to a point of understanding more about those things and how they relate to their lives. They come willingly and openly, in the spirit of small children, though some exhibit a severe sense of well founded skepticism.

So, the question presents itself to the instructor, “should I abuse them with the facts that I have gathered before them, or simply fool them into feeling stupid with the facts that they are trying to get?” This is how I was educated. Pass it on.....

**NO! I WILL NOT PARTICIPATE!**

If you care to explore the success of the welding/jewelry/art metals programs, begin there. If you wish to better measure program quality, take any kind of course that challenges you to dig into the core of your own humanity to discover and maybe even revel in your own innate sense of quality. Quality is about quintessential humanity. Quality is about expression (pressing out from) through artistry and craftsmanship. Quality is about sitting in that quiescence of yourself and allowing IT to speak. And quality is about understanding from a deep space and sharing what you know to be true for yourself without judging others for expressing a different truth. Quality is where Hope lives. Students are the hopeful ones. Why does “the system” abuse that childlikeness?

Quality is something that I had hoped “The Teaching Excellence” weekend would be about. Quality is something that I had hoped “Professional Development” would be about. Sadly, quality seems only to be a concern only insofar as we can throw verbiage at it, and measure it by the resounding echoes of our hollow scholasticism.

When operating a business, a quality product brings satisfaction to the customer and it creates loyal, repeat customers. We have outgrown the space that we have been allotted, and likewise, our budget. We have continued to grow against all odds. We have offered our students a quality product that only they can measure appropriately. We have more “completers” than the state requires. Many students are “repeaters” and, we turn away almost as many students as we educate. If you were running a real business, would you promote this exciting, growing part of your company? Or, if you planted a seed in the ground, would you cover it with a brick in order to encourage a healthy, strong plant?

The board and the administration are apparently encouraging everybody in this “grin-and-bear-it” mentality to bring human goodness of spirit and quality to bear against the underside of a brick. The overall morale at the college sucks, though no one seems to be acknowledging it or looking at why, and we seem to still manage to hope against hope. And, yet when a student gets turned on to a new level of confidence, the morale of the college ceases to make any difference when compared to the quality of the human experience. And those experiences also make things such that I’m not too concerned about speaking as I am, now. As one colleague has said, “Administrations come and go, but we’re still here, still doing what we love to do.” How does one measure magic?

## **ADEQUACY OF PROGRAM RESOURCES AND EFFICIENCY OF RESOURCE USE**

I believe the answer to this dilemma lies behind the topic of discussion. The topic would not be posed as discussion were our resources not obviously inadequate. We have not had a budget increase since 1995, and yet, our program, which is a consumables based program, is bursting at the seams with student activity. And, you can be certain that every year, in January, the cost of materials and supplies will go up. You may ask how we have survived all of this. Through effective and efficient use of resources, sacrifice, and contributions by faculty, staff, and students.

One of our instructors builds or crafts tools for students to use, some bring stuff from home shops or studios. Some buy what they need when the department can’t get it, and our staff members have been known to use their own resources as “petty cash” when something is needed and they happen to be at the supplier. One of our more pragmatic female students donated 2 new 25’ extension cords. Many of us are small business owners/artists on the side (God knows, most of us have to be!), and the long and the short of it is that we’re used to making do. And many still don’t get it that IT IS THE COLLEGE’S RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE THE PHYSICAL SPACE,

SUPPLIES, AND EQUIPMENT THAT THE STUDENTS NEED, not ours. I'm relatively sure that the reason for this is that they (we) have never been shown a good example of an adequate budget.

## **FROO**

WE HAVE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS WORTH OF TOOLS AND ANTIQUES AND WE HAVE A \$90.00 REPAIR BUDGET!!!!!!! Our lab techs know what they're doing. Their value is incalculable. Their abilities are many and varied. They should be honored. They are not. They work for the state.

We have extension cords and welding ground cables that are taped with electrical tape. We have ever-shortening oxy-acetylene hoses on many of our torches, many of which are older than Moses and me, put together. We have 8 welding stations in classes with course limits of 10 which are often bumped to 12 or even 14 for pity of the students who can't get into classes and beg well. We have a strange assortment of coffee cans and any other type of operable bucket-like entity we could locate to catch the multitude of aforementioned leaks that find their way over the electrical conduit to our Art Metals MIG (electric) welding area and all the way down that side of the building past 2 drill presses (electric), a pedestal grinder (electric) that could tear your arm off if you didn't think about what you were doing while you're doing it, an ancient hydraulic sheer (with an electric switch), and ironically, a fire shower and eyewash station that flood the floor with rusty water because of their lack of maintenance. "Wash your eyes in THAT if you're a real welder!" Warren and others of us have taught in the program since 1989. Some were here before that. THERE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN WATER LEAKS OF ONE KIND OR ANOTHER IN THE BUILDING The faculty and staff deal with it. Does that represent efficient resource use? Faculty member are supposed to teach.

We have grinders and drills with short cords, taped cords, and hulks of them with no cords and parts that have been used to restore others to life when these had no hope of revival. We sometimes struggle amongst ourselves for retention in our areas of decent welding hoods and clear safety face shields that you can actually see through. Flint strikers for lighting oxy-acetylene torches are like gold, as are their refills, and tip cleaners, wire brushes and slag hammers often require a walk to another area of the shop. I don't have enough welding hoods in my area to provide each of my students with one in order to do a demo on electric welding methods. I have to send them scurrying. We use predominantly oxy-acetylene in part because of that reason. If I skip demos at the end of the semester, they are electric welding methods. I would like 10 good, operational, lightweight (modern, like even 10 years old) hoods in my area (that would stay in my area because there are enough in all of the other areas, like the technical welding side and CEU), but I would settle for 4 grinders that always work and always stay in our cabinet (even when the metalsmithing students need 4 grinders for their projects). It's a good thing communication between the faculty and communication between the students is good.

Our booths need new firebricks, our walls have splttle on them from a student of the blocktime program (the program was disassembled in 1998?) who couldn't quite

manage to hit the trashcans with 100% accuracy from 6 feet. Some of the walls have been painted. Some have not. All of them have soot on them. Two years ago I took a wand blower to my area during break. I started at the top and worked my way down. When I left I was completely covered in black death. Regardless of what anyone says, we have no janitorial that ever sweeps a single square foot of our shop area, EVER! You might find in the morning, however, that your computer has been messed with, or that that Hershey's bar that you were saving for tomorrow was taken from your fridge. BUT THE FLOOR IS NEVER SWEEPED BY THE JANITORIAL SERVICES AT NIGHT. NEVER. NEVER. NEVER.....

So the resource of faculty and staff is required to make up for the inadequacies and the irresponsibilities of others. Luckily, we span many generations and have many levels of strength and work-related experience, and luckily, Leroy taught most of us one important phrase. "If you're gonna get anything done around here, you're gonna have to do it yourself!" Faculty members are supposed to be professionals. They are supposed to teach. Administrations come and go. "ACC", through continued poor management practices and financial chicanery, continues to abuse its most vital resource - it's people.

#### **COMPARISON OF PROGRAM PERFORMANCE, PRICE, AND ENROLLMENT WITH THAT OF ALTERNATE LOCAL SUPPLIERS.**

From rumors I have heard, TSTI is dead. They were unGodly expensive. In terms of technical welding programs, with them went the "alternate local suppliers". Outside of industries training their own employees, I believe that we're the only act in town serving the numbers of students that we do. We had even begun teaching welding classes in Fredericksburg, until the instructor quit. I've heard nothing about that program since that incident took place. He had been the high school welding instructor. He showed up at 6:00AM to greet his eager students. After 2 ACC classes at night, he was leaving at 10:10 PM. He was young and he was a great teacher. He knew how to inspire his students. He also knew something about quality of life. Any wonder?

So, as far as I know, our technical welding program is the only program of any consequence in Austin. No one can match the quality of instruction, the depth of information offered, or the breadth and diversity of the course offerings. We have recently been selected by the U. S. Navy as a training facility for their welders and inspectors. We have also been approved as a training facility for ICAR, should that program be adopted by the Automotive Department. Mike Shoebroek, Program Coordinator of Automotive, has made great efforts to form that association.

As far as the price per course is concerned, it's higher than other welding programs in the state, and therefore, inappropriately burdensome for our students, at this time. From a business point of view (remembering, of course that we are not a business, nor are we run like one), the market is proving that it will bear the expense in order to get

the information. At present, we are turning large numbers of students away, so we have a surplus of students with enough money to put it where their interest lies.

The dilemma that this creates is that education begins to appear to be an option only for this certain strata of the population largely comprised of white people from middle class backgrounds. And the gap between racial groups shows in the demographics of the Riverside Campus, which was politically intended as a college campus serving the "Eastside populations" in place of the vacated Ridgeview campus in 1986.

Fall 1997 shows 4059 "white" students, 1852 "Hispanic" students, 538 "black" students, 349 "Asian/ Pacific Islander" students, 47 "American Indian (?)/ Alaskan Native" students, and 105 students who are "Other or / Unknown (or who chose not to be classified as any of those labels)". Fall 2001, shows an overall increase in the total numbers of students, with 3800 "white" students ( a decrease), 2005 "Hispanic" students (an Increase), 556 "Black" students (an increase), 401 "Asian/Pacific Islander" (an increase) , 74 "Am. Indian?Alaskan Native" students (an Increase), and 235 "Other/Unknown" students (an increase) or those otherwise refusing the labels.

These numbers bear out that there is a gap between white students and "the rest". However, the population of white students is declining. One might venture to ask, are these students finding their needs better met at other campuses, are they attending 4-year colleges in greater numbers than before, or is something else happening. Even though the total population of "white" students has declined and others have increased across the board, the total number of "male" students has remained relatively the same, but the female population has increased.

This would lead us to conclude that there is an increase in the numbers of women of all races who are beginning to challenge their previous cultural dogmatic beliefs and/or to become more confident in their desire to improve their conditions. "White" males, if they are not finding their educational goals met at other institutions, joining the work force or the military, or living in financial independence/co-dependence might be adopting a greater complacency toward educational goals of any kind. Unfortunately, I sense an inclination toward the latter, and a resounding apathy.

Having too much leads to greater expectations for less expenditure of effort. So who populates the work force and works to create success oriented goals? Those who are willing to work.

The Art Metals part of the welding program has been a phenomenon to behold. With our growth we have begun to see greater diversity with the presence of more freethinkers who are beginning to risk considerations outside of previous cultural/political boundaries. There has always been a sizable female population.

I tell my students, "This is the cheapest studio rental in town." And nowhere else will you have your supplies provided or have access to thousands of dollars worth of machines, or have a mentor available during your entire time there to answer any question you might desire to ask, all included in the fee.

What's more, I've been to UT, and St. Edward's, and Southwest Texas, and Southwestern, North Texas, Corpus Christi and Del Mar, and most recently North Harris College in Houston where I've been serving on the advisory board to the Art Metals Program which they are attempting to get off the ground. And none of these programs are doing what we do. Of these programs, I believe that North Texas has the most mature. It has very sophisticated equipment in the sculpture program for both bronze casting and welding. The facility is large with a huge outdoor covered area, and a very large, well-lit metalsmithing/jewelry/metals lab with a separate ventilated kiln room with ventilated buffing and grinding areas. I don't know about Lamar University and UT Houston, yet, but I have met faculty members from both.

Still, pound for pound, inch for inch, nobody is offering the wide range of courses that we offer, and none of the "art school" format folks can even begin to offer their students the significant technical training and experience that our welding faculty can give, nor do they afford their programs the amount of equipment we have. Because employability is not a consideration these other schools, code welding with the American Welding Society and certification to that high level standard is not understood as a possibility. And, I'm relatively sure that no jewelry/metals program in the state, or even the region, has 2 full-time faculty members that hold Master Bench Jeweler Certifications from the American Bench Jewelers Association. The test for this certification is extensive, grueling, and expensive. Both Bill Evans and James Lynn proved themselves worthy of this status while qualifying for their full-time positions. But it raises the bar for the quality of instruction that we can offer our students, and takes it beyond whatever they can offer.

And, wholly unique to our program, though a definite consideration for the folks at North Harris, is the Metalsmithing aspect of our department. William Bastas has not only built this discipline from a single course to certificate status, at ACC, but through his own skills and abilities as a blacksmith, he has become a national demonstrator for the Artist-Blacksmith Association of North America (ABANA). He holds a bachelor's degree from UTA in languages and the arts, he is a certified pipe welder (on 1" thick pipe), and Certified Welding inspector, and a Certified Welding Educator. He is also fluent in Spanish. This combination of talents is rare, but most particularly among blacksmiths. Bill has brought our program to the attention of the national and international metalsmithing communities, and the students are appearing as a result.

Not only are our faculty members (in both technical welding and art metals) highly skilled in their particular master craft, but they are versatile in their welding and artistic abilities, even beyond metals and the visual arts. Decidedly, most do not hold doctoral degrees. Decidedly, those that don't have transcended the need for that particular measure.

And, perhaps most significantly, these talented people have survived the professional aspects of their crafts and maintain operating shops and studios beyond ACC where they produce commission and speculative work for the contemporary client. This is a

benefit that the college might begin to recognize as equivalent to publishing or public speaking. It would be wise to encourage it's faculty to work and credit the same. (Like valid faculty development credits for finishing a job in your discipline!)

The advantage here goes to the student. None of the other programs that I have visited can offer the average student the opportunity to take a jewelry course from a professional jeweler [with 25 years of experience (or with Stanley Young, who has 50 years as a stonemaker with Tiffany's)], and go down the hall to spend time practicing for a TIG welding certification from professional welders like Tim Strouse, Ted Lyles, Keith Wojik, Theo Davis, Lee Domel, or Warren Donworth. And then, finish off the day with a Power Hammer class with William Bastas, and make your own hammer or tongs.

I don't know why, or even how, this phenomenon has come about here at ACC. But, it obviously has much to do with student receptivity, student goals, and student "demands". As we begin to attract students from Washington state, and California, and Illinois, and even Beaumont, I realize all the more fully that this is a program that they, the students, have built.

## **DIRECT AND INDIRECT PROGRAM RELATED REVENUES AND COSTS TO THE COLLEGE**

As far as I know, our department is completely tethered to the ACC budgetary process. I may have mentioned that this very material and supply oriented department has not had a budget increase since 1995. Yet every year we can expect rising costs or increases. Some suppliers raise their prices several times a year, and products like gold, and silver, and copper, and even steel occasionally, may have prices that fluctuate considerably, considering that their suppliers here are most often relying on stability in international markets (we don't supply silver and gold to our students).

New equipment, replacement parts, welding gases (which are necessary for all inert gas processes with some being more exotic than others and, therefore, more expensive), safety equipment from face shields to fire extinguishers, jewelry casting investment ( a plaster like substance used in mold making ), and virtually everything that we need to instruct our students and operate our program, goes up in cost at the beginning of the year. And our budget stays pitifully constant. Laughably, a couple of years ago our repair budget went from \$100.00 to \$90.00.

## **FROO**

Pray tell, how can ANY master administrator with doctoral degrees in anything related to education or finance even begin to propose that ANYBODY could keep hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of specialized equipment operational with that kind of money. And still, as has traditionally been the case at ACC, NOBODY EVER ASKS THE PEOPLE THAT KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING WHAT THEY NEED OR WHAT THEY THINK ABOUT ANYTHING. God bless Gary Hampton for his superhuman efforts to

attempt to change this inane condition. Education is all about communication. Why do educational administrators, who were allegedly one-time teachers, communicate so poorly?

And still, after countless memos, communications, contractors, and other contractors, the roof still leaks. "How often does this happen?" you might ask. Once a year? Once every 6 weeks? Perhaps, worst case scenario, once a month? How about once every blessed time that it rains. I have been in the welding department since 1990. **We have dealt with leaks in the building every time a serious rain has fallen for 12 (going on 13) years now, my time.** Otherwise, its been the whole time since the program moved from Ridgeview.! Squeegees are used almost as frequently as brooms.

What does wasting resources have to do with revenues? It seems to me that it has a lot to do with it (them). Because if you have lots of revenue but no one is really responsible, then you have lots of waste and/or lots of corruption. Take AISD for instance.....Oh. Never mind. If you buy a mold infested Albertson's store to make a political statement that will hopefully get the support of the "community" at large for a sum approximately equal to the sum that is owed to the full-time faculty to bring them up to **FRIGGING AVERAGE**. Mistake! In seeking the support of the outside "community", you have lost the support of the inside "community". Bad mistake.....

Somebody should talk to Frank Barak.

Who is Frank Barak, you say? Frank is the lab tech in the welding department. Frank knows how to take parts from parted-out old grinders, and make "new" grinders out of them. He takes a cord from this one, and brushes from that one, and the gear housing from that one to make one good working grinder. He does a whole lot more than just that, but that's one thing he does. Because he has to keep at least a dozen grinders happenin' every day, 6 days a week, for at least 39.3 weeks out of the year. Often, it is cheaper to buy a new grinder than it is to send one off for repair....And remember that \$90.00 repair budget, down from 100.

So Mr. Barak manages miraculously to fix stuff that breaks. He also teaches CEU Welding classes. He doesn't have a Doctoral degree, either. But he has a very deep understanding about efficiency and economy, and how to get along in scarcity. He knows how to get things done without making demands, and he does it all very quietly, without pretense, or a need for approval, or even a particular level of appreciation. (Some of this wisdom he no doubt gathered in fatherhood.) He does his job very, very well. HE'S VERY, VERY GOOD AT HIS JOB. He deeply understands how NOT to waste ANY resource, INCLUDING CONGENIALITY. That is the essence of attracting revenue. Somebody should talk to Frank Barak, before it's too late. Somebody should finally admit that they don't understand how economy works, and talk to Frank.

**BTI**

The only revenue source that I know of beyond our tie to the budget, and perhaps the new training agreement with the U.S. Navy,[ and some old programs where we trained welders for the city of Austin, and Rohr Aircraft, before the last (televised) Middle East Conflict] is an Art Metals Foundation account, with the ACC Foundation. I have a story to tell...

Warren Donworth and I had talked on a number of occasions about the possibilities of finding our own funding and breaking away from the hold that the budget has on the department, and how that hold stifles creativity. I told him at the time that I had taken a series of workshops on foundations and funding for nonprofit entities. We enjoyed the oftentimes light-heated commiserations.

When a two Granadan students came to Warren seeking advising, particularly concerning foreign tuition rates, it gave us an excuse to explore the possibilities. We started at the UT Foundation where some very helpful people helped us find our way to the Hogg Foundation. I made an appointment with the director there and she guided me through an explanation of the process with encouraging remarks about the Art Metals part of the program being a natural for foundation funding because it was taking into account both the aspects of workforce training and art. She assured me that because of the uniqueness of the program, it was likely to be received very favorably in the eyes of gifting foundations. I had learned from my workshops that back in the late 1980's there was \$54 billion available to programs just within the state boundaries of Texas. I was intrigued by the concept and excited by the possibilities. I was, however, advised by the director to take everything through the newly established ACC foundation.

I was well received there but soon became discouraged because of the immensity of the workload that I was suddenly going to be expected to do became obvious, in spite of the fact that the ACC foundation had at least 3 full-time employees. I was single-parenting 3 children at the time and doing everything possible to feed and clothe them, and to be as much a part of their lives as teaching overloads will permit. I had also done all of the work designing degree and certificate plans, writing course descriptions, and everything necessary to develop the curriculum for the Art Metals program FOR FREE. No curriculum development money comes to you after the fact. I didn't know anything about it before the fact. Too bad!

So, I could see another situation developing where these 3 full-time foundation ladies would love for me to work this Art Metals foundation for them out of the goodness of my heart. The packet remains in storage as it did the day I decided to abandon the project, and not one red cent has been generated by the ACC foundation for the Art Metals/Welding program even though they know that it is a natural for funding. The only moneys to come to an Art Metals foundation account came through student donations, the first of which was an accountant in town whom I had discussed foundations with, and had basically told him my story in order to garner his advice. Fortunately, his financial wisdom prevailed and he gifted the Art Metals program with a donation of \$200.00, knowing that the college foundation would be forced to open an Art Metals

account. He believed strongly in the program and felt as though it had given him a great gift by re-enlivening his one-time interest in art and creativity that had been smothered under 25 years of child-rearing and corporate accounting.

I'm pleased to report that the Art Metals foundation account contains 4 donations from various senior students, each amounting to \$200.00. Had I been able to do the work, or had anybody in the ACC foundation been motivated to pursue the project, there is no telling how much money might be in that account by now. I have no problem sharing. The temptation to do the work remains. The time does not, and the inclination for some self-aggrandizing motive is on the wane. There is a figure of \$800.00 available in the Art Metals foundation account. It likely will remain.

## **THE SELF- IDENTIFIED STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS (SWOT)**

### **FROO**

At the outset of this writing adventure, this reporter had grander expectations of the role of the SWOT in the whole scheme of things regarding relevant information issued by real people who are vested in the life of the Welding/Jewelry/Art Metals Program (how about that rubric: WEJAM?). The initial work for me, particularly during the real semester was involved in creating a framework in which the SWOT committee participants could organize their own thoughts about the program PRIOR TO the SWOT meeting so that the feedback could have some deeper thought and human attention powering it. I included a section requesting their vision for the future of the program with no limitation on time.

I have never taken this assignment lightly. It may be my last ditch effort at reporting conditions as they truly are with at least a grain of hope that this wee small voice (or these wee small voices) will be, at last, heard. If the voices are not heard and some action is not taken to correct and/or improve the conditions in this department, not another lick of "volunteer" work with the sincerity of effort that I've (we've) put into this report will ever be undertaken by me, again, for the sake of this college.

One could point the gnarly finger of accusation and cry apathy, or complacency, or internal rage and unresolved childhood issues. I would rather consider this a point of real-I-zation which is reached after years of repeating patterns. It remains part of the considerations and deep soul searching which must have passed through the mind and heart of the sage Warren Donworth before his resignation as Program Coordinator. I believe that he served on this committee knowing that it would not require huge effort on his part, that I would be doing the bulk of the work, and that out of respect for the work that we have done together, so far, and plain old fashioned collegiality, he was willing to

step up to the plate one more time. That's all. No pretense. No false hopes about reward, or acknowledgment, or recognition, or even results. Just a little insight after 13 years as Department Head /Program Coordinator and a lot of pure collegiality. It's been the magic in the brew that has taken a lock of muskrat hair, toad claws, and salamander eyes, brought them to a boil and created a beautiful human experience for a whole lot of people out of simply passing on information about fire and dried mud.

## **BTI**

There were many significant points mentioned in the SWOT meeting which was attended by primarily faculty and students. Because a discussion of each point would require huge amounts of time, I would like to address and highlight some points from each category which may not have been mentioned previously, in order to better describe the Welding Department and the services it provides to it's student community.

## **STRENGTHS**

~The "versatility and variety", and the fact of "cross-pollination", allowing students a wide range of experiences in a number of different disciplines.

~ Student camaraderie as "close bonds in a common interest" promote. Also, "age, race, and cultural diversity" among students is mentioned along with "easy entrance" for them. There is also a unique "quality of students"

~ "Safety-mindedness" expresses the adaptive measure that much be achieved in order for safe students to become safe employees. It is an awareness and a level of confidence that must be achieved.

~Location, ease of access, proximity to other trades (i.e. Automotive, Air Conditioning, and Building Trades), and long lab hours make for a more favorable experience.

~Faculty is noted as "diverse", "talented", and "extremely knowledgeable", offering "personal encouragement", good "student-teacher relations", and "quality instruction." Also, a "pioneering spirit" is said to prevail.

~The staff is noted for its "resourcefulness" and its "make-due attitude". One student mentioned "cleanliness".

~ A "multitude of degree plans and certificates are available" with "curriculum flexibility".

The Five most significant strengths are:

- \*Quality/diverse/talented faculty
- \*Diversity of courses
- \*Quality of students-mature students
- \*Pioneer spirit - whatever it takes attitude

\*Diversity of degree plans

## **WEAKNESSES**

~Space is mentioned in diverse ways. “Facilities and accommodations” [only one toilet in the ladies room, no student lounge area or vending machines (our student lounge area became the Dean’s office years ago)], and “cramped lab space”. A “better layout for fabrication, i.e. streamlining...requiring more space.”

~ “Budget issues” prompting “always scrounging for materials.” “Popular equipment could be multiplied”.

~The “ventilation system”, (which is still not air conditioning) cost the college approximately \$200,000.00, and is noted as a liability band aide and an otherwise miserable failure. Recommendations were not solicited.

~”Aspects of the internal structure of the department are not supportive.”

~”Outdated equipment” and “lighting is inadequate,” but the electrical power to the department is maxed.

~ “Internal tension due to depravity. Rapid growth is causing depravity”

~”Slow reactions to demand”.

~”Administration’s recognition of the difference between “Academic” and “Workforce”.

~ “Lack of public support.”

~”Leaks in the roof” (I thought this bears mentioning again).

The three most significant weaknesses we were assigned (out of a very long list)are:

\* Space [class(/lab), faculty offices]

\*Internal structure of the department - not supportive (only one secretary)

\* No A/C, heat not working properly, ventilation system (is loud and inefficient) - affects summer course enrollments

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

~ “Expansion of the facilities to allow refinement of individual programs.”

~”Promotion drawing national interest”. We have a phenomenal opportunity here with little support from the college.

~ “More quality ed, by attracting quality instructors.” Quality instructors with noted backgrounds would require more pay.....This should be an opportunity and a challenge for the administration.

~”Faculty development geared for our trade.”

~”Modernizing instruction in preparation for current trends in industry.” We need to be purchasing some equipment that is being used commonly in industry, and train our students on those machines.

~”To instill creative problem solving, reestablish quality craftsmanship, and to enhance the quality of life for students and faculty.”

The four most significant opportunities we were assigned are:

- \* Teach creative problem solving/critical thinking
- \* Opportunity to gain national reputation as the number 1 program in the country
- \* Modernization of equipment and course offerings
- \* Gather grants/foundation money - with release time

## **THREATS**

~”Tax base”

~”Budget cuts”

~”Department not able to do what’s best for the students.”

~”WECM (viz. a viz. the Coordinating Board of Higher Education) restrictions on curriculum.

~”Litigiousness, over emphasis of the college on technology, not enough on skill”

~ “Status Quo”

~”Restrictions on expansion and development.”

~”No appeal to code welding”

~”Ignorance of the ACC administration regarding what we do, how we do it, and what we need to get things done.”

~ “Bad Mo-Jo”

The five most significant threats we were assigned are:

- \* College administration - ineffective
- \* Restrictions on curriculum development and innovation) because of WECM, Coordinating Board
- \* Budget issues will continue to require the number of classes to be cut - affects (the morale of ) students, (staff,) and full-time faculty and adjunct faculty
- \* ignorant and narrow-minded administration

The Items bulleted with "~" are quote that were lifted from actual questionnaires filled out by committee members. Some may appear on the whole SWOT sheet submitted, some may have altered form, and thus, possibly translation, and some may never have been mentioned by shy personalities. I wanted this presentation to be complete, and as truthful and accurate as I could manage to make it.

I will include the SWOT report as it was sent to me by Ziv Shakir, whose aid in gathering information, running the SWOT, and accurately recording the information received from the committee members at that time, have all been very helpful, and, one would hope, fruitful. I very much appreciate his efforts, along with those of Christopher Vinger and any staff assistants they have employed.

## **VISION SUMMARY**

I believe that I have done some things out of order, taking into account, in a fairly thorough way, the past and the present, considering a sizable amount of confusion as to exactly how does one really earnestly write an internal review, even though the book is there and the answers are there. Really, how do you talk about a place you've come to love, in spite of the leaks and the dirty walls, and people that you've come to admire and care about through any number of experiences where it could have gone either way. And, even though I had requested that the committee members fill out a form that included an "out-of-the-box vision" of the department. I got 3 back - one referring to the "strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities" portions of the SWOT, and the other 2 from the 2 students on the committee that took their assignments seriously. They both suggested a move to a larger facility. One suggested adding a second floor to our present facility, as a possible solution, "with offices, student lounge, and Metallurgy and jewelry labs upstairs. Art metals and code welding will spread out and occupy the entire ground floor.....More funding will bring us more teachers and newer equipment. Our welding department will no longer be viewed as a trade school, but one of, if not the top welding school(s) in the nation. With top notch instructors, we could turn out the cutting edge in welding technology and the brightest minds in the art world. Both technical (welding) and art metals would benefit the community in countless ways."

All things are possible.... And I believe this.

## **FROO**

Depravity is a state of mind before it becomes a physical reality. It is created with mind power and attitude and words and actions. Possibility is created in the same way, but righteousness, self-discipline, and higher purpose have to be accompanying factors. Austin Community College doesn't need a facelift in the community, or a bigger budget, or a newer president, or a this, or a that to fix it, as much as it needs a new attitude. ACC., including the welding department, needs a shift in consciousness that gives rise to a flood of wholesome beneficence and a move beyond the victimization/abuse patterns of the past. The negative drama is a fixation that has to be transformed. We have to quit enjoying our daily gritching so much and to be willing to move into a new course of action.

In the same way that the artist works, we have to envision the collective future that we all want, gather the necessary tools and supplies to do the work, and begin to paint that picture, or design that building or program, or new course, or new initiative without burdening each other with the weight of our dramas.

The educational system of this country needs to be reformed, and ACC has both a responsibility and an opportunity to make a collective choice as to whether or not it wishes to remain entrenched in the old order of business that will inevitably need to be replaced, or it can choose collectively to move into a bright new future as a model community college with model students, faculty, staff, and administration building as a team, model programs, housed in model facilities, to create model environments which promote ever-deepening levels of human possibility. If we are willing to collectively create such wholesomeness out of sheer human goodness, then supply will never again be a problem. Anything is possible....

When Warren and I were planning and building and composing the art metals program, it was a joy to come to work. And I would go home and write dry course descriptions until 2:00 in the morning for courses that had never before been taught, and still sail to work the next morning. I'm pleased and honored to have had that experience and to have shared it with him. It can be done again over and over and over until ACC is an exciting vision of what an ideal community college is all about.

Dr. Segura understood this process. Perhaps, Dr. Fonte` does, too. It is potentially what I see the purpose for this internal review process being, albeit cluttered (in my opinion) with an over-copious supply of irrelevant facts that are "required" by format to be spit back. I'm not doing that. I can't. It is not a part of my mechanism. I am unable to do things that way. It is not my nature. But, I'll gladly vision with you guys. And, I'll gladly support you in your desire to gather data.

## **BTI**

I feel as though the welding program will have dusted itself off from the change of command (and my huge time commitment to this process), in very short order, and will put together very solid programs which will allow students to attain very flexible

pathways to an even wider assortment of degrees and certificates, some of which will be cross-disciplinary like the ICAR certificate that is planned with Automotive, and some of which will be broadening our offerings with discipline specific and potentially popular new initiatives.

We will be adding a Furniture Design and Fabrication class next year which may have the potential to become its own certificate. This could become cross-disciplinary with BCT. We are adding a Powerhammer for Sculpture class this spring and an Applied Metals Design class in the summer. These courses will not only broaden our offerings, and create a more solid foundation under the Metalsmithing program, but we will be, for the first time, taking a course under our own wing from another discipline (Art) and recreating it to be discipline specific with artistic and industrial aspects combined. At this time, the design course fits into the degree as a required course.

We are growing and expanding. We are repositioning classes in order to more effectively use the space that we have been provided with until more space is created. Ultimately, we would like to see a space that would be large enough to include instructor office/studios, and, at the students' request, a break area for them.

The Welding Program, given enough space could easily begin a Machining program which is powerfully supported by a large consortium of businesses that are crying out for skilled machinists. They are willing to provide the machines and update them every 2 years, if ACC will provide the space and the faculty (the cheaper of the two).

Jewelry Fabrication is actively seeking new space, as well may Metallurgy and Orbital Tube Welding, although no one really wants to break up the continuity that we presently have in the same department, under the same roof. Yet, we are continuing to grow and to add more sections and more faculty members. If we suddenly find that we are going to be limited by the brick and it's placement over our seedlings, I'm not sure what the results might be.

## **INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS MEASURES**

That which we are doing now that works, we will continue to do. That which we are not doing now, that works, we will begin to do. And, that which we are doing now that doesn't work, we will either alter so that it does work, or we will discard it.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

We have never stopped trying to improve the quality of our program or our course/content offerings, so we're not needing to begin a new activity in that regard. Instructors are always attempting to improve their courses and to give their students a deeper level of information. I do a lot of that work one-on-one, as does Bill Evans. Bill

Bastas, Warren Donworth , and James Lynn tend toward the lecture/demo format. Each approach has its personality and its strengths. Each instructor attempts to express quality. Recommendation: Do the work and let it be.

Tim Strouse has performed brilliantly in his new role as Program Coordinator. He has shown a great deal of leadership strength in simply allowing people to continue to do their jobs without imposing any classic reorganization tactics or forced controls. The Furniture Design and Fabrication initiative belongs to him, and Bill Bastas and I will willingly do the work to see that it is implemented, hopefully by fall of 2003. It is a great idea and we are all sure that it will be very well received by the community. He has also managed to procure a new plasma cutter, which we needed desperately, and a new casting machine for jewelry. His guidance, coupled with the resourcefulness and experience of Frank Barak, keep the supplies available and the shop working smoothly. Each instructor's strengths come to the forefront in the administration of the department. This management method is based on contribution rather than control. Apparently, people who understand work understand the concept of working together. And contribution feels good. Recommendation: Do the work and let it be.

We would like to be adding more technologically advanced machinery to our program, and to create new initiatives based in those disciplines (i.e. robotics, and computer-aided equipment). We would like to be able to duplicate some pieces of equipment that see heavy use (like the square -wheel grinder), and we could always use more leg vices and anvils in the Art Metals area. This is a topic for improvement this spring. Recommendation: Do the work, but let it be.

We have also sought, and now, hopefully landed a cover over the outside deck area. This will create a much needed, pleasant outdoor work and materials storage area. We may even have the BCT students build us a brick coal forge. Not only can we imagine continued improvements to our facilities and department. We can see and feel it happening. Recommendation: Do the work and let it be.

## **ACTION PLAN**

Builders build in their heads and hearts first, and then surf the timing of things. Somedays are good days to work and offer favorable signs and conditions. Those are the days you bust it to get stuff done. Other days lead to other tasks, and frustration leads to new adventures on the learning curve.

You set a goal, gather what you need to accomplish it, and follow the action plan rather than force it. It will usually end up better than you thought it could be in the beginning if you allow expression to be organic and human rather than static, controlled, and machinelike. That's the action plan we plan to follow. Do the work and let it be.  
(less than a page)

## **CONCLUDING COMMENTS/REMARKS**

Considerable effort has now been invested in this report. The value of it is yet to be seen, beyond checking off yet another department of our “one college” as it marches valiantly toward yet another SACS accreditation. Somehow, some aspects of this process represent the dehumanization of the educational system, whereby departments, and students, and student outcomes, and faculty, and staff are all reduced to numbers on a page for the sake of keeping data current in order to serve some list of state generated requirements. It is certainly NOT why this reporter joined the faculty at Austin Community College, and it has never become a reason since.

Yet, I am intrigued by a fascination therein, and I was inspired by the opportunity to express in a grander format than any given day in the welding lab allows, what this department and my involvement in this amazing experience really means to me. I feel as though there have been things said here that have sought expression for a long, long time. I’m glad to have been part of a process that is hopefully designed to inform those who occupy positions in the college with the capacity to enact change.

I told Martha Oburn at the beginning of this project that I would not accept the task if I could not do it honestly. Her response was, “That is just what we want.” To the best of my ability, that is what I am submitting.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Gingras, Instructor  
January 6, 2003