



Dallas County Community College District

December 12, 2011

Bill Hammond
Texas Association of Business
1209 Nueces Street
Austin, TX 78701-1719

Dear Mr. Hammond,

We are disappointed that the Texas Association of Business would attack the workhorse and largest sector of the Texas higher education system through a billboard campaign rather than support the state's investment in community colleges.

TAB's campaign demonstrates a fundamental lack of understanding about the mission of community colleges and who our students are. You may not consider many of them successful because they do not graduate within three years, but we believe they all deserve the opportunity to choose the educational services that meet their needs. While we are committed to improving completion rates, we also recognize that many of our students' accomplishments apparently don't fit within your definition of "success."

Although we could exchange data sets to make our points, let me move beyond the numbers and educate you about our students. The average age of DCCCD students is 27 years old. Here's a shocker: many of our students don't graduate in three years – a fact that is their choice because they do not or cannot attend classes full time. They must balance work with family responsibilities and attending college. Yes, it seems they have lives that might interfere with TAB's limited timeline.

DCCCD gives our students an avenue – often the *only* one – to improve their lives. That's one of the benefits of attending community colleges; students can progress within a timeframe that fits their busy lives. Here's another shocker: many community college students never graduate from a community college. They take a class or two and then transfer to a university. Some do, however, finish the requirements for an associate's degree but don't receive one because they use those credits to earn a bachelor's degree at a four-year school.

Workforce readiness is a key component in higher education at community colleges. Many businesses don't require an associate's degree or a bachelor's degree. In fact, in addition to courses that lead to a degree, DCCCD also provides classes which update workers' skills -- like the training that many are receiving through a number of recent grants from the Texas Workforce Commission. We also offer certificate and short-term

programs that put students to work with the skills that area employers tell us meet their needs, based on feedback we receive from them.

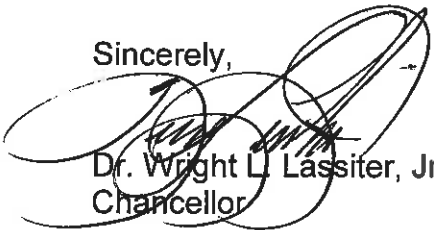
Clearly, one size does not fit all, and we strive to help our students accomplish their goals as we provide workforce readiness in the state and support the Texas economy.

We listen closely to area businesses to provide relevant workforce training. Based on our interactions and work with local businesses, chambers of commerce, donors and friends, we believe we are on the right track – and so are our students, even if their timeline for success differs from yours.

Your billboard asks whether we provide an education that is fair to students. Instead, you should ask our *students* if they think our cost, convenience, flexibility and quality of classes are fair and whether we make higher education accessible. In fact, I personally would like to invite you to meet with me, some of our current and former students, and area business owners and leaders at a time which is convenient for you. I believe that their stories and experiences working with us will provide you with a better understanding of DCCCD's students, our part in the national completion agenda, and our role in educating and training the Texas workforce.

I welcome a dialogue with you on these important issues, rather than using gimmicks like one-day billboard messages. I look forward to your response and our discussions to come.

Sincerely,



Dr. Wright L. Lassiter, Jr.
Chancellor