

Thoughts Concerning a Culture of Respect at East Georgia State College as of 09-10-2015

By: Bob Boehmer

On several occasions in the recent past, I have said that enhancing a “culture of respect” at East Georgia State College is of great importance. A task force chaired by Dean Lee Cheek has been formed to recommend policies and practices designed to promote a culture of respect at the college. .

This brief reflection is not a formal policy of the college. Instead, it is intended to answer the question often addressed to me: “What do you mean by a culture of respect?”

First let’s focus on “culture.” The culture of the college is derived in large part from a shared set of core values. One of those core values, I believe, is respect by all for the important role played by each member of the college community-students, faculty and staff.

Next, let’s consider what this core value of respect means every day at the college.

Although this is just a brief list of examples, the following are some ways I believe that this culture of respect should be exhibited each day at EGSC:

- Each individual, regardless of title or position, plays a key role as the college strives to accomplish its mission. The professional manner in which an administrative assistant speaks to a student on the phone, the thoughtful manner in which a financial aid counselor listens and responds to a student’s questions, the skilled manner in which custodians maintain our buildings and a respectful response by the president to a student’s feedback all contribute equally. Accordingly, members of the college should be treated with no more or less respect than another strictly because of their formal title or position.
- Each individual is entitled to a working and academic environment free of physical violence and verbal abuse.
- Each individual has a unique role at the college. Some roles require adherence to a structured schedule while others require the flexibility to be available virtually 24/7. Each member of the community should strive to understand the unique roles of their college and the challenges and stresses they face. Each of us should express appreciation regularly when we observe others carrying out their role in an excellent manner.
- One of the great joys of working in an academic environment is the debate and discussion that is encouraged and celebrated. Each member of the community should be encouraged to express their opinion as the college strives to find even better ways to carry out the mission. This, of course, carries with it a very high level of responsibility to express opinions in a responsible and respectful manner and at appropriate times and places. For example, I have an open door designed to encourage this culture and to demonstrate my respect for the openness of all my colleagues. I ask that all my colleagues understand that this creates a responsibility to first seek to resolve issues within their home unit.

- Each member of the university community deserves the respect which is demonstrated by being kept informed by their supervisor of what is taking place at the college. This regular sharing of information helps everyone to understand that they are a part of the team. Also, it encourages feedback. If we fail to encourage this feedback, we will lose the benefit of creative thinking by members of our community.

Articulating these broad concepts is, frankly, far easier than implementing the action steps necessary to achieve a true culture of respect. However, the goal will not be achieved if we do not articulate it clearly and often. Thanks for listening.

Bob Boehmer