

EDUCATION

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Mull alternatives before complaining, exhibiting anger

We are a culture of complainers. Perhaps we have always been this way. No evidence exists to say that Anglo Saxon warriors weren't constantly complaining about the cold English winters. However, social media has allowed us to escalate our complaining to an entirely new level. Now, instead of complaining to our neighbors or our friends, we can post our complaints for the world to see and comment on. We can pick fights with total strangers on the complaints of our friends. Essentially, we can be Veruca Salt in "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory": don't care how, we want it now.

As an administrator, I am the first line in the chain of command for grade appeals and complaints, which makes me

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the trouble office. Students come to see me because they don't like something or they want something changed. Faculty come to see me because they are unhappy. Many of the complaints are legitimate, things that need to be addressed for the sake of equity and integrity. That being said, often we (and I say "we" because I am guilty, too) complain about things that

are irrelevant. I could blame this on a lack of grit or say it is this entitled generation, but it spans diverse populations. If I had to diagnose the problem, I would say we have a Tigger syndrome — we think we are the only special one and when that is challenged, we start to complain.

There is value in venting our frustrations. It keeps us from stewing and blowing up down the road. It also allows us to work through our concerns to discern which are actually issues and which are mere annoyances. Unfortunately, I often see venting in place of legitimate complaints. One unanswered email and a student demands an instructor be fired. One slip-up in grades and an instructor wants a student removed from the course. These are extremes, of course, and not

necessarily specific to my institution, but they do represent an extreme absolutism that I see more often — it should be my way and if it isn't, I demand swift and dramatic action.

How can we address this? Of course, we can't fix the societal issue aside from stopping the use of social media for our own personal dumping ground. As parents and teachers, I think there is something we can teach and model that would help the younger generations (and maybe even the older ones) move beyond the Tigger syndrome. We need to remember empathy.

Empathy is one of those things you know about because you learned it for a

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MC HOLIDAY EVENING



Photos by James Durbin/Reporter-Telegram

Midland College's annual Holiday Evening event was Thursday.



MIDLAND COLLEGE PROFILES

By Stacey Hewitt

Soon-to-be-grad wants to help others

When Gracie Favela came back to school at Midland College, she never thought she would be graduating with a degree in alcohol and drug abuse counseling.

"At first, I was intimidated because substance abuse is a very big word," said Favela. "A lot of people told me, 'Gracie, that group of people is a scary population of people to work with.' At first, I believed them on some level, but I searched within myself and I realized all I wanted to do was help others, and the ADAC program was going to be a perfect fit."

"I love Gracie's attitude about wanting to help people," said Stephanie Shelton, department chair. "When I first met her, I could clearly see her potential. She is bilingual and fiercely determined to succeed. All these traits make her a great addition to this program."

Counseling has the ability to change individuals' lives. Pursuing a career in the ADAC program can be rewarding and challenging. Favela said many people have asked her if it is becoming a counselor because she personally has gone through some type of substance abuse. She has not. Favela wants everyone to know that personal experience is not a requirement. "You learn as you go," said Favela.

"Your history, my history has nothing to do with becoming a good, empathetic counselor. You have to be yourself, while learning evidence-based approaches, theories and the reality of substances' effects on individuals, families and friends."

Favela is a counseling intern at Clover House, a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center in Odessa. She facilitates education groups and runs one-on-one counseling sessions.

"I have learned so much from working with these individuals," said Favela. "I see beyond their imperfections. Their substance-abuse problem has clouded a lot of their life and relationships, but they want help to get better. Once you see that progress, it is easy to counsel them."

Favela credits MC with providing her with a solid foundation for her work in the field.

"The teachers in the ADAC program are amazing," said Favela. "They will work with you. If you talk, they listen. Every professor has been through many different scenarios in the professional world, so they are able to build up the students in all the necessary ways. They prepared us a lot mentally as well as academically. Everyday, I go to work and say, 'I learned that lesson in class!' 'Yes, my professors told me about this theory!' The ADAC program at MC is amazing. It is a small degree, but it gets you far."

One unique feature about the ADAC program is Cross Campus Connections, a mentorship program in which ADAC majors in their second year are assigned a mentee to meet with throughout the semester. The mentors offer support and receive a \$400 scholarship. Favela was a mentee and a mentor during her time at MC.

"You are not alone in the ADAC program," said Favela. "It is scary to come back to school. Coming back at my age was very difficult. I had doubts of not being able to do it. I was a stay-at-home mom till I decided to go to MC. My mentor helped me fit in. I do not think I would have been able to succeed if I did not have that support. Here I am now about to graduate. I took six classes every semester. I have two kids, and I did it. I have no doubt anyone can go back to school to fulfill his or her dreams."

Favela plans on continuing her education working toward a social work degree. She hopes to work with children in foster care.

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More university presidents rake in millions

By Krista Gmelich
Bloomberg

As tuition continues to rise and the U.S. student debt crisis intensifies, some private college presidents are bringing home more money than ever. Sixty-one of them, to be exact, are being paid more than \$1 million.

That figure, from the Chronicle of Higher Education's ranking of compensation for the heads of U.S. colleges, is up from the previous year's total of 58 million-dollar winners. Former Baylor University president Kenneth Starr, the independent counsel who pursued President Bill Clinton, led the pack for 2016, the latest year for which data are available, but there should be a big asterisk next to his name.

The former Baylor University president saw his compensation more than

triple to \$4.9 million because of his severance agreement with the school, according to the report, published Sunday. Starr left after an investigation found that the university mishandled sexual assault allegations against football players. In 2015, he was 29th on the list.

The terms of Starr's severance agreement remain confidential, according to Lori Fogleman, a Baylor spokeswoman. She declined to comment further on the report.

"Were Baylor not to have undergone the controversies that arose from the football scandal there, I think there's a good case to be made that Columbia would have been the highest," said Dan Bauman, one of the authors of the Chronicle report.

Coming in second was Columbia University's Lee Bollinger, who made \$3.9 million—far greater than the approximate-

ly \$560,000 average total compensation for school heads serving the full year.

"Columbia's trustees conduct an independent and thorough annual review of President Bollinger's performance," Lisa Carnoy and Jonathan Lavine, co-chairs of the Trustees of Columbia University, said Monday in an emailed statement. "His experienced leadership of Columbia for 16 years has been vital to the university's continuing progress."

The data for the annual survey were drawn from federal tax filings for 500 private, nonprofit schools. Total compensation for university leaders includes base pay, bonus pay, nontaxable benefits (for example, health benefits, life insurance and dependent care) and other pay (such as severance payments, spending accounts and club dues). Such perks as housing and travel may also be included.

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