InterCom
July 2012 Newsletter

Alton D. Scales found his passion in higher education, but not before battling racial intolerance and a learning disability along the way

The summer heat of Amarillo, Texas, was reason enough to force a junior-high aged Alton D. Scales to slow his pace. Trying to keep up running the blacktop with a brother eight years his senior, and a professional athlete playing in the National Football League no less, was another built-in excuse.

The distance between them could be measured not in steps but car lengths. One. Two. Many. A deficit of a few steps quickly turned into a half-block swathe of failure.

Accepting the inevitable would have been understandable; a pat on the head for effort's sake enough of a consolation to finish. But by the following June, with the sun no less brutal, and his brother in no less peak physical condition, the gap had disappeared. Hurles, Jr., had the youngest of five Scales siblings suddenly on his hip. He would invite friends older than even he was to train. The teenager went full blast by many of them.

“This kind of activity went on for years and years,” Alton Scales recalled.

And not just while wearing sneakers. It wasn’t that Alton Scales had managed to sprint from Point A to Point B but what it had taken to get there that revealed his character.

It’s been a consistent axis of evolution throughout his life: from racism to justice; from dyslexia to rabid reader; from engineering to higher education; and from Amarillo to Aurora, where he takes over in a few weeks as the college’s new president.

There was even a life-altering pit stop at a Cracker Barrel restaurant, but that’s a whole different tale.

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National Clinical and Safety Championships

WHEN: July 15
WHERE: Lowry
WHAT: The best two-man emergency response team in the United States will be selected. Four duos from regional competitions will vie for the title.

That measuring stick will be written by Patrick Schooler, department chair of CCA’s Emergency Medical Training and Fire Science Technology program.

CCA already has hosted the largest full-scale terrorist exercise ever done in the U.S.

Now, it’s showcasing its talent and structures for the largest private ambulance company in the nation -- again.

“They really have a full nation’s worth of places to do this,” Schooler said. “It’s a huge compliment to us.”

The kicker this year is that the largest and best-known EMS worldwide conference, Pinnacle 2012, will be held beginning the following day in Colorado Springs. A slew of influential EMS industry executives are expected to make the pre-conference detour to CCA to witness the competition. It will not only allow visibility for the school’s leading-edge simulation spaces but potentially expand the scope of CCA’s reputation to important, powerful execs from multiple companies.

The hope is that CCA can open the minds of these influential people to the benefits of educating their employees and improving quality control with the use of simulation.

It also should tangentially elevate CCA’s position in the Denver metro market.

“It gives us a bully pulpit, in a sense, for the profession as we develop this,” Schooler maintained.

The school has a state-of-the-art facility, vast experience in creating realities, and talent that will allow these EMT/paramedic teams to do their craft as if they’re working in the field.

“That can’t hurt in terms of word of mouth.”

“You’ve got people coming from all over the country. They’re going to go back and talk about our facility and it’s going to make prospective students want to come to this program,” Anderson said. “It helps set us up as a world-class facility or national asset.”

The timed exercise will begin with a call on the radio to a team unfamiliar with the details to come, just like the real world. The response then will begin with ambulances riding through a serpentine course, while being measured for driving skills and scored for safety points. They’ll then arrive at the scenario site, armed with equipment necessary based on the nature of the call.

They’ll either stay and play – treat the patient – or load and go, going through the cone drill yet again on the way to the hospital. The exercise ends when the report is handed off to Dr. Edward M. Racht, chief medical officer of AMR.

“This gives them a way to grade in an objective way the quality of their various teams,” Schooler said.

AMR’s reach encompasses professionals from 38 states, Washington D.C. and Trinidad and Tobago. The company spans 2,100 communities with nearly 7,000 caregivers. So the four remaining competitive teams truly represent the best the company has to offer.

Each pair will run a medical and trauma call, taking 45-60 minutes apiece. Risk management and quality assurance personal will sit in the control room of the Disaster Management Institute watching live feeds of their people going through the simulation rooms and scoring them.

Spoiler alert: One of the scenarios that could be in play this year is a faux hoarder house set up at CCA Building 900, better known as the Katrina Building.

The sights of stacked newspapers and sounds of injured trauma victims may greet the responders. There may be olfactory evidence, as well.

“They may smell baby poo,” Anderson said with a laugh. “That’s a game-changer.”
Scales: Father’s wisdom helped him get through tough times

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a spread of 18 years between his oldest sibling, Mozell, and Hurles Jr. eight years his senior, Alton spent most of his formative years as an only child in execution if not reality.

Where his three sisters inherited clothing, Alton didn’t. Where money used to be divided in a socialist manner among several mouths to feed, Alton reaped the spoils of having his brother and sisters move out of the house to live their lives.

And, even though neither of his parents attended college, their sacrifices ensured all of the next generation of Scales children would further their education.

Early on, the exposure to white America that Alton experienced was indirect, brought to the home, in part, from the upper-crust existence his mother ensured daily in her job.

Books filled the shelves. Poor grammar was picked apart.

“When my mom died, one of the things the pastor talked about was he would visit my house as a teenager and he always saw on the table a tablecloth, and when we had dinner the table was set up like you were at a restaurant,” Scales said. “Those are things I grew up with.”

A less welcome companion was intolerance. His school closed in the third grade in ‘68 and he was forced to switch schools. Scales was bussed to Emerson Elementary School in Amarillo, and if he hadn’t noticed that he was different than his classmates, where he was now in the minority, the message was hammered home anyway.

“I remember not understanding racism, having no idea what it was, and having to deal with it, thinking individuals were just mean."

Soon after switching schools, Scales’ own behavior was called into question. His father listened to the great works of Shakespeare and memorization to his advantage.

“I do believe in things being fair and equitable. And I do believe if you ever watch children in the classroom or on the playground, they look for fair treatment. ‘You didn’t do that when Johnny did. ...’ So we all want it.’"

When it came to his own education, Alton Scales didn’t do things in a manner much like anyone else that he knew.

His mind processed information like a carbon copy of the spoken word and used that knack for memorization to his advantage.

He listened to the great works of Shakespeare and Homer’s “The Iliad” on tape instead of poring through the printed word. Scales stood outside of lecture halls -- and queried exiting students -- to get a sense of whether college faculty used the material they taught aloud on tests. He even went so far as to match the number of students reading aloud to the paragraphs in books so he could figure out his

The Alton D. Scales file

- Age: 54
- Married: Wife, Jacquelyn, educator and former engineer.
- Children: Two daughters, Jordan, sophomore at Xavier University of Louisiana in New Orleans; Crystal, high school junior. Two sons, Avery, high school sophomore, Jaden, kindergarden.
- Family background: Youngest of five children to Hurles and Frankie. Father worked 42 years for Santa Fe Railroad, mainly in claims; mother was a personal cook for both oil tycoon T. Boone Pickens and Charles T. Ware, who at one time was chairman of the board of the largest privately-owned bank in the U.S.; Hurles Scales, Sr., died in October 2000; Frankie passed in June 2010. Brother Hurles, Jr., played in the NFL in 1973-74 with the Cincinnati Bengals, St. Louis Cardinals, Chicago Bears and Green Bay Packers. Has three sisters: Mozell, retired; Eulore, a nurse; and Eulis, an employee of the Department of Energy.
- Education: University of North Texas in Denton, Texas. Earned a master’s of science in manufacturing engineering with minors in HR management and organizational communication. Bachelor of science degree in industrial technology with a minor in interpersonal communication.

Scales would later as an employee of the college confront that professor’s supervisor to share his experiences and was told that there had been inklings of racist treatment for years but never tangible proof. His presentation of evidence truncated the teacher’s remaining days at the school.

“I do believe it shapes you,” Scales said of his childhood experiences. “The question is, does it make you bitter? ... My father aided me in helping me move beyond those things. And part of the wisdom he imparted was that it was less about me and more about them and that those individuals suffered from an illness that I can’t take ownership of.”

Scales admits that the anger he experienced from racial bias and the fear he later felt as a teenager of seeing a policeman in his rear-view mirror could have dragged him down. But instead it served to shape his views on justice, which he tries to incorporate into his dealings today.

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much broader way throughout his lifetime but didn’t hoist that burden upon his children. He instead helped set the family’s moral compass.

Later on in life, when a professor at the University of North Texas consistently gave the younger Scales substandard grades for top-tier work, he helped prove that he was being treated unfairly by surreptitiously turning in the own professor’s welding job and receiving a grade of 70.
Scales: New CCA post considered ‘next step’

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jumping-off point when called upon by the teacher and review the passage he’d be asked to recite prior to his oral delivery.

Scales just wasn’t aware that there was a tangible reason behind his distinct methodology until a name was affixed to it, while attending graduate school at North Texas.

Dyslexia.

A segment on the newsmagazine “60 Minutes” was the breakthrough alerting him that there was a sort of madness behind his method.

“They were talking about me,” recalled Scales, who confirmed the link in a phone conversation with his brother shortly after the broadcast.

“The things that I took for granted were unusual.”

But in this case, knowledge wasn’t exactly power. Scales considered the diagnosis internally but kept it quiet. He continued to get lesson plans on tape mailed to him from his sister as he’d done before because she knew he learned so well from the auditory.

“I was silent about it. I didn’t talk about it,” Scales remembered. “I was thinking on the front end like, ‘This isn’t good. I didn’t want to be labeled.”

But one day, Scales watched a fellow student struggling and witnessed the telltale signs of masking the problem that he’d executed so completely over the years.

“I knew we were alike,” Scales related. “So one day I asked him, ‘Are you dyslexic?’ He went immediately into a defensive posture. I said, ‘Look, I am, too;” and then he opened up. That was the first time I admitted it to anyone other than my brother.”

It cracked the door to his eventually spreading the word about what occurs when the brain does not propel the telling signs of masking the problem that he’d executed so completely over the years.

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But some things occur less intentionally.

Scales wanted to play trumpet but never learned. He instead chose athletics, ended up running the 4x100 sprint relay and 110-meter hurdles in college, and, at age 47, took up the drums at the behest of a local jazz great in Pennsylvania after representing Edinboro University at a music performance.

He still plays behind his kit at local haunts and special celebrations.

Scales used to read slam poetry alongside the likes of future Grammy winner Erykah Badu at the Black Cultural Center in Dallas. Never did he imagine that he’d eventually take the medium to Colorado Mountain College, where Scales most recently served as chief executive officer in Dillon and Breckenridge.

Even his career in higher education came as an offshoot of a totally different plan. Angling for a job connection in the engineering field, he grudgingly accepted a position at North Texas’ intercultural learning center, only to find himself enamored with teaching. The presidency of CCA, which begins July 23, comes nearly 30 years after his intentions changed. That library in which he had his very first job in the field now bears his name at North Texas.

“Years later my father said he always knew I was an educator,” Scales said. “I guess you know your kids.”

But never was the randomness of the universe so gleefully played out than, of all places, that Cracker Barrel restaurant in Pueblo, Colo., about five years ago.

Scales simply wanted a meal to offset the long trek he was taking to Texas. He came away with much more, thanks to a like-minded family exchange of cell numbers, since the family was, remarkably, traveling almost to an identical destination just outside Dallas and needed directional assistance.

“I thought that was it,” Scales recalled, “until he started playing matchmaker.”

A follow-up phone call from his dinner host occurred shortly thereafter, while on the way to a football game. Ernie Lawton put Scales on hold, making an excuse as he put his daughter, Jackie, on the phone.

“It was a total set up.”

Four years later, Jackie and Alton were married.

She’s a former engineer and -- just so the stars were in perfect alignment, ensconced in higher education.

Alton D. Scales laughs as he vows to make no Cracker Barrel stops while disembarking from the mountain community he’s called home since 2007.

Coming to CCA, where he’d visited even before the presidential interview process and two on-campus forums the last several months, instead is an attempt to feed his desire to consistently evolve professionally and personally.

“I felt it was the next step,” he said.

He’s spent the last several weeks kicking around in his mind his approach, and what to examine immediately after taking over. He knows there’s opportunities for growth, but can’t yet pin down the specifics.

But if his life’s journey has demonstrated anything, it’s that he’ll put everything he can into getting up to speed with exceptional effort and creative thought.

After all, a new ‘Point A’ awaits.
Recent graduates give thumbs up to CCA experience

More than 90 percent surveyed say expectations met ‘well’

A spring 2012 survey of recent Community College of Aurora graduates revealed the institution earned lofty marks in the enhancement of job skills and career preparation within a tight employment market and scored highly overall in satisfaction with services provided.

The college’s Office of Institutional Research, in conducting state-mandated follow-up interviews, polled 294 respondents who had completed their certificates or degrees within the last six to 12 months about their employment and continued education since graduation.

Of that group, 90.9 percent of career/technical (CTE) graduates that concluded coursework designed to lead to a job in varied fields such as computers, film/media, police academy and emergency medical services stated that their CCA programs met their educational goals well or very well.

That figure was elevated to 94.2 percent among those students receiving degrees designed to lead to a four-year institution for bachelor’s degree completion.

Nearly 72 percent of all graduates were working between nine months and one year after completion. Of those employed, 91.2 percent of CTE graduates and 88.5 percent of transfer graduates said CCA enhanced their ability to get or keep a job well or very well.

“It’s not just a one-time trend this year but something we’ve seen over several years,” said Catherine Trouth, director of assessment and institutional effectiveness. “CCA continues to satisfy our students by providing them with the hands-on experience they need and the connection to instructors they covet.”

Going deeper inside the numbers culled from graduates:

• 65.8 percent of transfers and 27.0 percent of CTE graduates are continuing their education. Among them, 98.7 percent of transfers and 87.2 percent of CTE graduates stated that their CCA program prepared them well or very well.

• The average hourly pay for CTE graduates was $20.27 per hour; $13.85/hr for transfers.

• 39.1 percent of CTE graduates took a licensing or certification test upon completion of their studies and 94.1 percent passed.

Overall comments about the students’ CCA experience frequently cited positive experiences with instructors; the flexibility the college afforded them; career preparation; small class sizes and personal attention.

Students recommended improvements to areas such as advising and job placement assistance, which lends support to initiatives in these areas instituted by Student Services over the past year.

SOAKING UP HISTORY

Fountain’s eyes, mind opened through unique educational opportunity

James Fountain only spoke English and never had traveled outside American borders when he was suddenly plunked down in Spain for an immersive learning experience abroad.

Unfamiliarity with foreign cultures initially bred fear upon his arrival overseas, a trip made possible by a scholarship for Trio students he was awarded along with 19 other recipients nationwide. The Trio program serves underrepresented students experiencing barriers in obtaining a college education.

“I didn’t have a meal for a day and a half because I was too embarrassed to order anything,” the CCA student related.

Flash forward, and Fountain was taking finals in four courses, all of which didn’t involve a peep of his native tongue throughout June.

He was schooled in the basics, like the names of body parts, all the way to being able to order a multi-course meal in an elegant restaurant. He learned culture from visiting famous aqueducts and cathedrals as well as in a classroom setting.

“The first thing I’m going to do, especially since I’m so active in my community with football and things like that is I’m going to encourage kids to put their fears aside and learn that second language,” said Fountain, who’s studying accounting and finance at the college in hopes of one day becoming a chief financial officer and owning a CPA firm.

“I’m also not going to be apprehensive about applying for jobs where a second language is necessary because I’m going to continue learning this language. I’ve got a great head start.”

Fountain’s scholarship is part of an accredited study tour within the Keith Sherin Global Leaders program.

Fountain was based in Salamanca.

“As a community, as a society and as a government, we should look at how these cultural experiences not only help that specific student but bring something back to the United States to show and understand the differences that we have’ with other cultures, he said.

Fountain called his experience, especially initially, as one of “sink or swim,” since he’s been only able to use English with the other American students as part of the tour.

He observed others as part of the learning process. At the same time the program, tour guides and Spanish people helped smooth the rough early transition.

“If you look at this situation as a vacation, I think you have the wrong idea. If you look at it as a cultural experience, something that you can learn from, you’ll have fun in the learning. And that’s what I’ve had the opportunity to do.”

Fountain now labels himself as conversationally comfortable in Spanish.

“I never thought as a non-traditional student that I’d have an opportunity to take part in something wonderful like this.”
Plaudits and accomplishments at CCA

**Colorado Film School**
Won a pair of bronze Telly Awards, which honor the finest film and video productions, groundbreaking web commercials, videos and films, and outstanding local, regional and cable TV commercials and programs. The Department of Motor Vehicles public service announcement starring Gov. John Hickenlooper titled “Guy Vroom,” and the “Choices” video for the Center for Workforce Development were the winning submissions. The PSA was part of the local TV and cable public service category. It was produced and directed by Frederic Lahey, Nevelyn Black, Laffrey Witbrod and Scott VanOrdstrand with an all-CFS crew and casting of 70 extras by Galina Boulgakova. “Choices” was written by Will Hicks, directed by Black and produced by Lahey with cinematography by Witbrod, casting by Boulgakova and an all-CFS crew. It won in the non-broadcast productions/recruitment category.

**Elizabeth Hirsh and Gary Scott**
Were part of a group of volunteers aiding the Commerce City Police Department during search operations that ultimately unearthed the remains of a baby at the Denver Arapahoe Disposal Site. The police conducted a search for nearly eight weeks over the 2 1/2 acre site. About 500 people from 26 agencies and community organizations across the state and nation participated in the search, working 12-hour shifts.

**Ryan Manzanares**
CCA student was selected as vice chairman of the 2012-13 State Student Advisory Council, which represents the collective views and interest of all CCCS students and serves as an advisory body to the Colorado State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education. Manzanares’ new role includes performing the duties of the student chair in event of an absence; acting as a college representative, with all the rights and duties, from the institution; serving as Student Board Representative in an advisory capacity; and performing other duties delegated by the chair.

**Carla Hoskins**
Accepted a position as Disability Services Specialist at the University of Colorado. Hoskins has been with CCA’s Accessibility Services Office for four years as an advisor, charged with approving students for accommodations; working with students who are blind to ensure technology accessibility and brainstorming with instructors on alternative means to improve the learning experience; working with faculty that have students with disabilities in their classes and with human resources on employee accommodations; and enhancing the ASO website.

**Sitting pretty**
City of Aurora councilwoman Molly Markert raises a bottle to the sky in celebration of her late mother, Verna, during a CentreTech ceremony June 5. A bench abutting the Highline Canal was dedicated to Verna Markert on the one-year anniversary of her passing at age 91. Friends and family shared their memories and wrote loving messages on balloons before they were sent skyward. Verna S. Markert was a strong proponent of education and frequently walked the trails that cut behind the campus. The stone- trimmed bench sits under a tree adjacent to the Classroom Building bearing an inscribed plaque.