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Lacey Phillips/*The Collegian*  
NE astronomy instructor Daniel Mashburn stands with his pet owl on his apartment balcony.

NORTHEAST

## Bizarre lecture leads to suspension

By Jamil Oakford  
managing editor

During the first class of the semester, some NE Campus students already faced an important topic. The Solar System class should have started at 8 p.m. Jan. 16, but as 8:15 drew closer, students began to wonder if the unspoken “15-minute rule” still applied.

Then the room went dark. In walked a man with his face hidden, wearing gloves, a thick

coat and a hat. Students became uncomfortable as he fidgeted with his pocket, began his lecture and spoke about Islam and astronomy.

Instructor Daniel Mashburn arrived, ready to start another semester of Solar System in his own way, but fearful students called the police, setting off a chain of events that led to his suspension and national media attention.

A NE student who called himself Torey and declined to give his last name said he was on high alert

when Mashburn seemed to be sifting through his pockets. Thinking he had a weapon, Torey said he was prepared to talk Mashburn down if the need arose because he has a psychology degree.

“I was trying to figure out what I could do if he did have a weapon,” he said. “I was in the back row, so there was nothing.”

Many students didn’t realize he was the teacher for the Solar System class. Another NE student, Alexander, who also wouldn’t

give his last name, said Mashburn didn’t look like a teacher.

“I thought it was a joke,” he said. “He kind of looked like a student with the way he presented himself.”

Mashburn was asked twice if he could remove the scarf around his face, so the class could hear him better. Both times, students said, he explained that he couldn’t and cited passages from the Quran to explain why.

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DISTRICT

## ‘The future is female’



Photos by Kathryn Kelman/*The Collegian*

People from various walks of life and across varying genders attend the Women’s March Jan. 20 in downtown Fort Worth. Organizers estimated 5,000 supporters took to the streets to show their support for women’s rights.

### Women’s March focuses on getting supporters to polls, ballots

By Jamil Oakford  
and Kathryn Kelman

As the sun rose one year after President Donald Trump’s inauguration, the nation’s women’s rights activists rose with it once again to rally and march for equality, with TCC students, faculty and staff among them.

Fort Worth held its second Women’s March Jan. 20, where people from all walks of life, genders and sexual orientations gathered to make their voices heard. It was one of many cities around the country where Women’s Marches took place, including Dallas, New York and Washington, D.C. Calling for equal pay for equal work and electing more women to political office, marchers took to the streets in solidarity.

“I feel like everybody marches for a different reason,” NW student Jessica Bailey said, adding that she was marching in opposition to “inequality in the workplace.”

She said she wants to see that change for the future. She said she has also experienced harassment and assault, which also motivated her to march.

The demonstration kicked off at 10 a.m. with marchers bundled in sweaters and “pink p---y” hats car-



Demonstrators express their disdain for the Republican-controlled Congress during the Women’s March, which took place hours after the federal government shutdown Jan. 20.

rying signs that ranged from “Good science doesn’t lie, bad presidents do,” to “Shed walls, don’t build walls,” and “My granddaughter wants to be the third woman president.”

Organizers estimated 5,000 people participated in the demonstration. Among them was South

student Quillan Yeager who said it was cool to see how many attended.

“It was a lot more people than I thought,” he said. “It feels powerful.”

Erin Blythe, TR visual arts instructor, helped organize last year’s march but attended this year’s march in a different capacity.

“This year, I was able to be a participant,” she said, adding that it was still a powerful experience.

Blythe said the large number of people who joined political groups or assembled new ones during the past year is a testament to the first march.

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DISTRICT

## College devises change in direction

By Kathryn Kelman  
editor-in-chief

Following a yearlong planning process, Tarrant County College’s leaders identified three goals and eight principles that will lay the foundation for the college to better serve students.

The new goals will serve as the college’s overarching direction moving forward, and the principles will serve as the strategies for achieving those goals, said Chancellor Eugene Giovannini.

The three goals are for TCC to function as one college, be student-ready and serve the community.

“The big marker on all of this is that we will function as one college, meaning that students in the community will have a similar experience no matter which campus that they are on,” he said.

As for being a student-ready college, Giovannini said TCC will look to meet students where they are with what they have and work from there rather than expect students to be college-ready.

The third goal means TCC will continue to partner with groups to serve the needs of the community, he said.

“Those three goals should give to the individual, to the campus and to the overall college a direction in which to move as it relates to doing our work every day,” he said. “Now the eight principles, those were defined as kind of the ‘what’ things.”

The eight principles are: the integrated student success model, student experience, integrated instructional/learning environments, learning commons, high schools, scheduling and facility utilization, campus character and quality and workspace environments, according to the college’s website.

The goals and principles were not identified by Giovannini, he said, but by the college after the completion of the year-long visioning process.

“They didn’t come personally from me,” he said.

During that process, TCC worked with a national consulting firm last year to hold 25 “visioning” sessions across all of the campuses and district offices. Input from over 450 college participants was then compiled, and the three goals and eight principles were identified.

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Mashburn (continued from page 1)

**“I wanted to show them [the stars] to the class in my own way. I wanted to read from the book in my own way. I just got a little lost. I just needed someone else to hear and follow along.”**

DANIEL MASHBURN  
NE adjunct instructor

More than half of his students left before the lecture really started, Alexander said. At least one of them called police. Before Mashburn could get deeper into his lesson, officers arrived.

NE student Adrian Vasquez said when officers asked for Mashburn to step outside and speak with them, Mashburn asked them to leave so he could continue with his lecture. Eventually, he submitted to a search outside class.

“We were all deciding whether we wanted to leave while he [Mashburn] was in the hallway with police,” Alexander said.

After being searched, police told Mashburn he couldn’t continue inside the classroom, so he announced he would continue class outside at about 8:45 p.m. All but two of the remaining students left.

Vasquez said he didn’t want to leave because Mashburn identified himself as the teacher to police and he was satisfied with that.

“If he’s gonna teach, let him teach,” he said.

NE student Rebekkah Cavazos, who also decided not to leave, said she and Vasquez stayed with Mashburn and participated in the lab portion of their class outside until 10:45 p.m.

“I wasn’t going to leave. It felt kind of rude,” she said. “I paid for this sh--.”

Two days later, Mashburn, speaking to *The Collegian* in his North Richland Hills apartment, was still reeling and unsure why students felt threatened by his appearance and behavior.

By this point, the story was broadcast on local TV news and gaining attention.

“I was trying to charge my phone so I can see the stars,” he said, in response to students’ reports that he was fidgeting with his pocket. “The stars are always watching.”

As for the lights being out, Mashburn said he informed students about protecting their night vision for stargazing during the scheduled lab.

“I like to keep it dark because I wanted to go out and see the stars,” he said. “I said I wanted to see the stars later, and unnatural light wouldn’t work.”

Vasquez, though, said Mashburn didn’t explain why he turned off the lights.

Still, Mashburn defended his actions and said students should not have felt threatened.

“They pay a measly fee, \$56 to, at most, \$129 — a miserable sum for the knowledge and wisdom that I can pass onto them,” he said. “Why would they walk out on me? Why would they protest me?”

NE chemistry student Natalie Clemens met Mashburn last year and was her Math Lab tutor that spring and well into the fall semester. She was surprised to hear about his behavior during the Solar System class.

“We spoke about a lot of things during tutoring sessions, sometimes more controversial things like politics,” she said.

But neither spoke about religion.

“If anything, I thought he was more an atheist than anything,” Clemens said.

While shy, Clemens said Mashburn was always a helpful and unique tutor. He was patient, which she was grateful for, she said.

“Some tutors you can tell get frustrated,” she said. “But he never made me feel stupid for not knowing or for asking.”

Mashburn said he came into the class with his face and hands completely covered because he washes several times a day as instructed by the Quran, and his face and hands are very dry. He typically tries to cover them to protect his skin, he said.

In response to his teaching style, Mashburn said he wanted the freedom to teach astronomy the way he saw it.

“I’m tired of lab after lab with grading and testing and Scantrons,” he said. “I’m tired of these rankings and demandings and homework assignments.”

Mashburn was suspended indefinitely, pending the findings of a college investigation, said Reginald Gates, communications and external affairs vice chancellor.



Photos courtesy Facebook

NE astronomy instructor Daniel Mashburn sits in his office on campus. Mashburn was suspended after his strange behavior caused students to leave class and call police.

“Students and faculty safety is paramount,” he said. “We’re looking at what happened, how it happened and what we can do differently going forward.”

Mashburn wants his students to read the textbook and the Quran, he said. Interested in astronomy since he was a child, Mashburn said when he saw footage of a solar eclipse in 2015, he began to see a connection between Islam and astronomy.

In March 2015, he worked for the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee as a teaching assistant while he earned his master’s degree. Mashburn said he also tried to work Islam into his classes there.

“I tried so hard,” he said. “They took me away. Two men shined a gun into my home, and I flew away into the night.”

He said the experience Jan. 16 was similar to that in Milwaukee, saying that he “flew away” then, too.

Despite the backlash and the suspension, Mashburn said he believes this was a misun-



Mashburn covered his face in a photo he posted on Facebook after his suspension.

derstanding of his intentions.

“I wanted to show them [the stars] to the class in my own way,” he said. “I wanted to read from the book in my own way. I just got a little lost. I just needed someone else to hear and follow along.”



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