

## April 28, 2010

### April/Abril/Oster-month/Eostur-monath/Eostre

As you think about April, the month and the word, what comes to mind? In my case, I think immediately of spring, rebirth, blooming flowers and verdant fields. And because I have a particular interest in the origin of words, I dig as far as I can into their etymology. This most recent dig yielded a few facts noting that the Anglo–Saxons called April Oster-monath or Eostur-monath and that the Venerable Saint Bede said that this month is the root of the word Easter. He further speculated that the month was named after a goddess Eostre (although some folks wonder if this was just an invention on his part). The Goddess Eostre flew through the heavens surrounded by Roman-inspired beams of light, and animals (do you see the rabbit on the right—hence bunnies and eggs).

Don't think however that this introduction is a flight of fancy on my part; I was actually inspired by the report from the Campus Diversity Committee presented yesterday to President's Cabinet. Professor Donna Duchow, our Site Compliance Officer, made the report and unveiled the College's Diversity Website (<http://sdmesa/diversity/index.cfm>) and encouraged all to contribute to resources for our cross-cultural repository. This invitation led me to ponder on the cultural values and beliefs associated with April. In my case, when I think of April, I think of Abril, which is the word in Spanish. Invariable Abril conjures up lines from a poem I memorized when I was ten years old in my native country of Nicaragua (the educational system in Nicaragua requires children to memorize everything. We are not just required to read, but must recite from memory a particular paragraph when asked to do so (what a pain!). In any case, here I am, many years later, calling upon memorized lines from a poem by the famous Colombian poet, Porfirio Barba Jacob titled, "Canción de la Vida Profunda" which translates to Song of Deep Life. Here goes:

Spanish. Rita's best attempt at Translation:

Y hay días en que somos tan fértiles, tan fértiles,  
como en Abril el campo, que tiembla de pasión;  
bajo el influjo pródigo de espirituales lluvias,  
el alma está brotando florestas de ilusión.

And there are days on which we are so fertile, so fertile,  
as the fields in April, that tremble with passion;  
under the providential influence of spiritual rains  
the soul is sprouting forests of illusion.

Yes, I was a bit of a strange “nerdy” kid.

...AND NOW FOR REAL LIFE AT THE END OF APRIL 2010.

### **State Budget/District Budget/Mesa’s Budget**

Chancellor Carroll provided an excellent update regarding the status of the 2010-2011 budget process, noting that we are now waiting for the “May Revise,” known as the major milestone in determining what remains in place from the Governor’s budget proposal we saw in January and what has been amended/revised through the unceasing reviews by the Senate, Assembly, Legislative Analyst’s Office (LAO), Department of Finance (DOF) etc., etc., etc.

One bit of good news arrived this Wednesday morning in a communication from the Community College of California (CCLC) in which Scott Lay, the League’s Chief Executive Officer, indicated that Governor Schwarzenegger has pledged to veto a state budget that “tinkers” with his January budget for higher education. This is significant because, despite our concerns with reduced resources, it is indeed the fact that higher education and community colleges in particular have fared better than other state agencies.

### **District**

Our District has sustained a strong focus on budget oversight, keeping within budget and identifying any possible areas where we are able to reduce expenses while continuing to meet core educational needs of students. It has not been easy. We all know this because each of us has contributed, supported and done our very best to continue to serve students despite disheartening reduction in resources. We have also known that our budget strategy is one that has been designed to take effect over three to five years. This is an important principle because it allows us to identify strategies that are less draconian in nature.

Our current struggle continues to be how to bridge a budget gap of approximately \$5 million dollars in next year’s budget. This goal is particularly difficult because, as we all know, we have already made reductions in nearly all possible areas available to us. And, in particular, we know that we cannot make any further reductions to instructional services without impacting the 50% Law (a requirement that at least 50% of the general fund budget must be allocated to instruction). Nevertheless, we need to continue to identify efficiencies and any possible strategy to find the funds to bridge this gap.

### **College**

Mesa’s budget has been managed extremely well. Great thanks and kudos to Mesa’s Executive Team, Vice Presidents McGrath and Kavalier, and, in particular, to Vice President Perez for his diligence and transparency. The challenge next year is the same as listed above, namely, how to do what we can as a college to contribute to bridging the \$5M gap in next year’s budget. The other bit of important news in the home front is that we have already done what we need to do in terms of the scope of courses to be offered next year; in other words, there are no more course reductions to be considered.

On the positive side, Mesa is making significant strides in seeking grant funds to support innovative instructional and student support services. In this year alone, we have obtained approximately \$3,844,521 in grants. We are continuing to work to make the grant writing and grant management process much more streamlined, and I expect to share a revised process with the entire college soon after it has been approved by President's Cabinet. Go Mesa!

National Initiatives

**Who can say that they are conversant with the following?**

AGI, SAFRA, The Completion Pledge and the Voluntary Accountability Framework

AGI – The American Graduation Initiative. President Obama's rallying cry urging all Americans to gain at least one year of postsecondary education to "raise all boats" and place America on a more competitive footing with other developed countries whose citizens have attained higher levels of education and training. The AGI is of particular significance for community colleges because the success of the President's call to action rests almost entirely with us. In particular, the goal is five million more persons with degrees and certificates by 2020.

MATH CHALLENGE: If Mesa College were to identify a number to meet our fair share in reaching the President's goal, what would that figure be?

Here are some factors based on 2009-2010 data that might help you with the answer:

- There are 1,177 community colleges in the nation
- There are 112 community colleges in California
- Total enrollment nationwide is 11.7 million
- Total enrollment in California is 2.7 million
- Total enrollment at Mesa is 23,000

QUESTION: What should be Mesa's fair share if we were to contribute to the President's goal of 5 million more individuals with degrees and certificates by the year 2020?

SAFRA – Student Aid Fiscal Responsibility Act. SAFRA is a student loan reform bill that will end the Federal Family Education Loan program, which uses intermediary banks as lenders, and move all institutions to the Direct Loan program by July 1 of this year. Removing the "middle man" will save the federal government an estimated \$61 billion over the next 10 years, which will then be used to provide additional resources for the Pell Grant program and fund other priorities. In particular, these savings will be used to fund:

- New Training Grants to Community Colleges: \$2 billion is provided for the Community College and Career Training Grant Program. These funds would be made available between

2011 and 2014 at \$500 million per year. Although these grants will be awarded competitively, the commitment is to fund one or more institutions in each state. California is assured of receiving at least .5% of the grant funds, or \$2.5 million.

- Pell Grants: The legislation ensures a continued maximum grant of \$5,550, and it is scheduled to take effect this July 1. For award years 2013-14 through 2017-18, the bill provides annual mandatory increases in the maximum award that are equal to the Consumer Price Index.
- Institutional Aid: \$2.55 billion of additional funding is provided for Minority-Serving Institutions over the next 10 years. This includes \$100 million to Hispanic Serving Institutions, \$85 million to Historically Black Colleges and Universities, \$15 million to Predominantly Black Institutions, \$30 million to Tribal Colleges and Universities, \$15 million to Alaska and Hawaiian Native Institutions, \$5 million to Asian American and Pacific Islander Institutions, and \$5 million to Native American Non-tribal Serving Institutions each year.
- College Access Challenge Grants: The legislation also provides \$750 million for continuation of the College Access Challenge Grants, at \$150 million per year through FY2014.

The Completion Pledge: Democracy's Colleges Call to Action: On Tuesday, April 20, at the closing of the American Association of Community Annual Conference, AACC, along with the Association of Community College Trustees, the Center for Community College Student Engagement, the League for Innovation in the Community Colleges, the National Institute for Staff and Organization Development, and the Phi Theta Kappa Honors Society, all signed a commitment to boost student completion rates by 50% over the next decade.

These six leaders have asked community college leaders, faculty and staff “to “identify ways to help students understand the added value of degrees and certifications, and to help them progress toward their goals.” It also calls on elected officials to “create the policy conditions that engage, support and reward community colleges in their work to strengthen student success.”

This pledge is significant in more ways than one, especially because it changes the mindset and the vocabulary about what it means to succeed as an institution of postsecondary education. The focus is not just clearly on access, but success, namely, course, certificate and degree completion. This critical and nuanced shift in philosophy will impact all that we do, and, in particular, the ways in which we measure institutional effectiveness, which leads us to the next point of discussion.

The Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA) is a system being developed by AACC in partnership with ACCT and the College Board that is designed to measure outcomes and processes that are specific to community colleges. The Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA) will provide opportunities for colleges to benchmark their student progress and completion data against peers and to provide stakeholders with critical information on the colleges.

Simply said, the VFA was initiated to respond to requests and, at times, criticism about the ability of community colleges to demonstrated effectiveness in terms of completion.

While everyone noted we were “Democracy’s College” with unparalleled access, our critics, most often using accountability measures that lack validity within the context of community colleges, continue to be skeptical about our success in ensuring that students meet their educational goals. Taking matters into our hands, the VFA will identify those valid measures and will ensure the development of an accountability tool that clearly encompasses the mission and function of community colleges and the realities of the students we serve.

Phase one of the VFA project will begin with a pilot including the colleges listed below:

- Cuyahoga Community College, OH
- Dallas Community College District, TX
- Greenville Technical College, SC
- Ivy Tech Community College, IN
- Laney College, CA
- Louisiana Community and Technical College System, LA
- Oklahoma City Community College, OK
- Pima Community College District, AZ

## **COLLEGE LIFE**

### **Scholarship Gala**

Mesa’s Scholarship Gala is quite a celebration, as many of you know. It is an evening when students are rewarded for scholarship and for perseverance. It is also a night when we partake in the many triumphs of students who have “made it” despite all odds, and when it becomes very clear that mentorship and support from faculty, staff and family make all the difference.

The night is also very entertaining, and every year, something unexpected happens that takes our breath away. I promise you, this time it will be no different. If you haven’t bought a ticket, you are still in time to do so. Just to make it easier for you, I have listed the information below.

Friday, May 7th, at the Doubletree Hotel, Hazard Center.

5:30 p.m. No Host Social Hour

6:30 p.m. Dinner

7:30 p.m. Scholarship Awards Program

9:30 p.m. Dancing until Midnight

Contact the Student Affairs Office at 388-2699 for more information.

Ticket Costs:

\$12 Mesa College students (ID Required)

\$35 General Public

\$35 Student Sponsor

\$1000 Golden Circle (table for 10)

\$750 Patrons Circle (table for 10)

\$500 Friends Circle (table for 10)

### **Commencement – The Culmination and the Beginning**

As you know, The Commencement Ceremony is one of my favorites. I literally look forward to the time when each student marches onto that stage to receive his or her diploma, and I find myself fortunate enough to look into their eyes, shake their hands and share the reaffirmation and excitement that comes with attaining a personal goal.

I know that the experience is just as fulfilling and rejuvenating for everyone in the auditorium. The air is electrified, and one has only to hear the shouts of joy and encouragement coming from families, faculty and staff in the audience as they recognize students filing on to the stage. How can you miss it! This clip is being used as part of our Commencement Participation Campaign, and it is being aired on monitors located strategically throughout the campus. I invite you to click on the link below to get a taste of what it is like to be part of this important event in the life of our college.

- Commencement Video

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1kC0YJ8tTCU&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1kC0YJ8tTCU&feature=player_embedded)

- Commencement website - <http://www.sdmesa.edu/commencement/index.cfm> (the video is premiered on this website)

### **MESA COLLEGE AND COMMUNITY**

#### **Stuff the Bus Campaign**

What: United Way's 3rd Annual "Stuff the Bus!" is a sports equipment drive with the goal of collecting 10,000 pieces of new equipment for children in need, many of them living in foster

care. United Way and Promises2Kids have partnered to ask San Diegans for help stuffing a big yellow school bus full of new equipment for these worthy kids.

Why: New sports equipment is often out of reach for children living in foster care. Their own football, baseball glove, or sturdy pair of sneakers is the ticket to having the same health and fitness experiences as other kids. Participating in sports also teaches them the social and team-building skills so critical to future success.

Who: Professional athletes, including San Diego Chargers Steve Gregory (#28) and Eric Weddle (#32)! There will also be many community organizations, including Mesa College, spearheaded by our own Bryan Daniels, Assistant Coach for Men's Basketball and our entire men's basketball team.

As a board member of the United Way of San Diego and someone who has seen first-hand what summer experiences mean to these, the most fragile members of our community, I want to urge you to do what you can to help us collect sports equipment. You will see collection boxes throughout campus—two are in front of the Administration building (balls, bats, gloves, shoes, and caps, anything you may have wanted as a child when you wanted to go out and play).

### **Sleepless in San Diego**

On April 24-25, 2010, the San Diego Rescue Mission hosted the 4th Annual Sleepless San Diego in LIBERTY STATION. Persons from all over San Diego spent the night under the stars and learned about strategies to make a difference regarding the mounting problem of homelessness in San Diego County. Student leaders from Mesa have been very involved as participants by focusing and addressing issues of social justice. I learned more about student involvement advocating on behalf of the homeless from my conversations with Mason Walker, Mesa's ASG President.

I am pleased therefore to share good news regarding the plight of the homeless in our City. At yesterday's board meeting of the United Way of San Diego, I learned that the San Diego City Council has taken a very important step in addressing the needs of the homeless, specifically, the selection of a possible site to build a Homeless Shelter that would include 1,600 to 1,800 units for homeless persons and would provide services 365 days per year. The site selected is the World Trade Center located at 1255 5th Avenue in downtown San Diego. The project will cost about \$34M, but \$10M is already available through the Centre City Development Corporation (CCDC).

Note: All updates are posted on the San Diego Mesa College Website at:  
<http://sdmesa.edu/president/updates.cfm>

Rita M. Cepeda, Ed.D.

President

San Diego Mesa College