

# **October 2, 2009**

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## **Mesa's the Place**

Many of you saw the movie "The Bucket List," don't worry, this is not the morbid start of a strange conversation. However, it had never occurred to me to place the "coin toss" to start a football game on my "bucket list," which goes to show you that sometimes great things happen that are totally unexpected. What am I talking about is just the fact that last Saturday at the grand Re-opening of the Merrill Douglas Stadium, I had the honor along with many of our colleagues (see photos below) to cut the proverbial ribbon and to take control of the coin toss to start the game between our Mesa Olympians and the Mt. San Jacinto Eagles. This game opened the Mountain Conference play and our team went on to victory 38 to 27.

## **The AIDS Walk, Sunday**

I finished, that's what counts!

All levity aside, the event was magnificent with record crowds and a large contingency from Mesa College. There was a tremendous feeling of community and I realized that Balboa Park and San Diego looks rather differently when one is on foot. Real people, real lives, real places. My favorite walking partners, my husband, age?, Dillon, age six (Robin Watkins' stepson) and Gabriel, age 10, Suzanne Khambata's son.

## **Student Activism at Its Best**

This week many of you received an e-mail from Tyller Williamson, ASG Vice President and Mason Walker, ASG President announcing the official start of the Mesa ASG Textbook Rental Program. I have decided to include their original message because I thought that their leadership approach and sense of social commitment is definitely self-evident. I also noted the importance of mentorship and the critical relationship between faculty and staff as students move along their journey. Great job!

"On behalf of the 2009 -10 Associated Student Government, we would like to thank you for supporting our efforts in creating the ASG Textbook Rental Program.

Thanks to the efforts of last years ASG President, Sebastian Law and his work with the Textbook Affordability Committee we have successfully launched a program that will help alleviate some of the financial burdens placed on our students. This is the first year that this program has been offered by our campus and already we are seeing positive results.

Our efforts would not have become a reality without Professor Nathan Betschart, the lead faculty that helped make this possible and the support of faculty members Denise Rogers, Beate Berman-Enn and Barbara Blackmun. Once we had instructors on board and the approval to use

their course textbooks as a pilot, the ASG worked tirelessly with Carol Rohe, Nancy Wichman and our advisory Ashanti Hands to invest in 40 Art Textbooks totaling \$4,545.75.

The books were delivered to the Mesa College Bookstore, and their wonderful staff managed the rental process. The books were rented for \$40 each and we are proud to say that all of our books are in the hands of Mesa students! The most exciting part of this whole program is that we were able to provide a 60% savings to our peers.

We are currently monitoring the programs success. The information we gain from this initial pilot will be valuable in the expansion of our Textbook Rental Program.

We appreciate your continued efforts to empower the student voice, enrich our minds and make access to education affordable. We value this partnership and look forward to what this semester has to offer.

Thank You,

Mason Walker, ASG President; Tyler Williamson, ASG Vice President

### **Brown Bag Lunch**

September 30 was the date of our first “Brown Bag Lunch.” Over the past month, I have been involved in a number of meetings which in one way or another had to do with the aftermath of budget cuts and their impacts on programs and services on our campus. At one of these meetings, Professor Fremland offered the suggestion that “informal” no agenda, Brown Bags might be useful in helping to dispel rumors, fears and general anxiety about our future. I thought it was an excellent idea and thus scheduled the first meeting.

Three issues were discussed: Faculty Restrooms in new facilities, the outcome of the Student and Employee Survey Results conducted in preparation for our Accreditation Self-study, and finally, general discontent with the role and function of the Western Accrediting Commission.

- I agreed to follow up on the faculty restroom issues directly with Vice Chancellor Umstot and to provide him with additional input regarding the need for at least one restroom that can have multiple uses including disabled access. The notion is to have at least one facility that permits users to lock the door behind them to address issues of safety.
- On the topic of the survey results, I offered a summary of the highlights that most impressed me in the presentation of the findings including the fact that students offered the highest rankings in the area of satisfaction with the quality of instruction at our college. In addition, students reported a great deal of personal comfort with our campus climate. The employee survey reflected concerns with facilities, equipment and supplies (it is important to remember that the survey predated the real start up of our new construction program.) Some concern was expressed about the context within which the summary of findings would be presented to the Commission. I responded to the group that we would have ample time to present and interpret the data.

• WASC—this conversation was very spirited and centered on the growing dissatisfaction with the increasing punitive role of the Commission. Those present however were quick to differentiate between our responsibility to do all we need to do to secure accreditation for our college, while initiating an organized campaign to address the Commission and its apparent lack of responsiveness and accountability to those they purport to serve.

Next Brown Bags—October 14 and 28 from 12:00-1:00 p.m.—H117/118—Bring your own lunch - water will be provided. See you then.

### **Relax, Take a Deep Breath and Go On**

From my vantage point, the last three to four weeks have been rather difficult, particularly when placed in the perspective of the last four years. As I watch the unfolding dynamics of our great school, I see a great deal of stress and anxiety around the real and the imagined. E-mail messages asserting program closures, class cancellations, cessation of services and the like seem to be cropping up regularly.

I understand that in times of difficulty it is easy for us to fear the worst, and that includes me. We are in fact dealing with multiple layers of difficulty – any one of which on a stress scale would be sufficient to create distress. We have construction, the H1N1 Pandemic, and underlying all of this, a worsening state budget picture changing by the day.

### **What to do?**

Let's continue to look on the positive, keep up with the information presented by our Chancellor on the budget picture, flash forward to the build-out of a beautiful campus and most important of all seek accurate information when you fear the worst. In fact, I would like to request an enormous favor and that is to provide me, your VP, Dean or Chair with the opportunity to provide you with the facts. I welcome questions and my office staff know that I endeavor to be as accessible as possible.

Finally, let's rely on each other and let's support one another—

Thanks.

## **OCTOBER MULTI-CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS**

### **OCTOBER**

**Disabled Employees Awareness Month**

**Breast Cancer Awareness Month**

3-9th Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles) Jewish

8th Vijaya Dasami (Last Day of Navarati) Hindu

9th Dassehra (Dasera) 10 day Celebration for Durga Hindu, Jain

10th Shemini Atzeret (Eighth Day of Assembly) Jewish

11th Simchat Torah (Rejoicing of the Torah) Jewish

12th Columbus Day Observance United States

17th Diwali (Deepavali) Festival of Light Hindu, Jain

20th Birth of the Bab (Birth of Siyyid Al-Muhammad) Baha'i

24th United Nations Day National Holiday

31st Reformation Day/All Hallows Eve Protestant, Lutheran

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