

Friday, February 6, 2009

January is Behind us and Spring is Straight Ahead

Does anyone remember 2008? So much has happened in our Country, and our State since the New Year that it seems that time has compressed and elongated at the same time (it's possible right?).

Inauguration Day, January 20, is now an Important marker in our lives. Many of you were on campus that day and took advantage of the special screen set up in the LRC to permit the viewing of the inauguration ceremony especially the swearing in of our new President. By the way, I heard an amazing estimate from the National Parks Service indicating that approximately 1.8 million persons attended President Obama's Inauguration, but even better yet; not one single arrest was recorded.

Spring Semester Starts with Hope and Determination

As we geared up for the series of introductory events leading to the Spring Semester, including the President's Spring Forum for Faculty, Managers and Supervisors meeting, department orientations, Student's Welcome Back Week and the like, the single most overriding concern in all of our minds has been the economy, and in particular, the impact of the California Budget impasse. Unfortunately as of this writing, we still have no budget. As our colleagues in State service prepare and brace for mandatory furloughs and the issuance of pay warrants, it is difficult and almost surreal for us within the San Diego Community College District to know that our fiscal problems, while severe, still permit us to go on with teaching and learning without immediate concerns regarding layoffs or rollbacks. Most important of all, the District has been able to meet our commitment to students who are financial aid recipients despite the problems we have faced with the receipt of CalGrant allocations.

The Power of Words

During the past several weeks, I have been fortunate to attend a number of important events. The first was the Martin Luther King Jr. All People's Breakfast, and the second was the California Community College League of California's (CCLC) Annual Legislative Conference. Many things are said at events like these, and invariably, something that somebody said or did makes an indelible impression. In my case, I felt compelled to write down two statements:

"It is not what we've got to do; it's what we get to do."

This statement was offered as an alternative to our view of the budget crisis facing us. It made great sense to me. Up until that point, the attitude permeating most of our planning discussion about how to handle budget cuts began or ended with "we've got to do this, or we've got to do that." It seemed to us that this urgent frame of mind was most appropriate until my eyes were opened to another possibility. In fact, is it not the case that we should consider ourselves privileged to be in a position where **"we get to do"** something about our present crisis? Think about it. We have the opportunity, given our privileged roles as faculty and staff members, to

"get to" make a difference. We get to provide new skills to someone who has lost his or her job and is seeking a new lease on life; we get to determine which areas of our budget to cut and which to protect so we can serve students better; we get to be creative about every aspect of our teaching and learning in the area of scheduling, streamlining, linking or podcasting a course if need be. We get to reinforce the importance of tutoring and basic skills so students can succeed, not just in our classes, but in all of their academic endeavors. As President, I get to find as many opportunities to listen, to learn and to make sure that budget decisions are based on the most comprehensive set of inputs possible. I get to work with an executive team that is extremely creative and never gives up, knowing instead that we are all up to the task of facilitating decisions that will always be student-centered. We get to look for every possible efficiency and for ways of doing business in a different way if it means we can save money and offer needed courses. As a college, we "get to" never lose sight of our mission and vision and the most important reason for being at Mesa College--our students and our community. Words are, in fact, magnificent, and in this case, a three letter word provides innumerable possibilities for viewing our current circumstances in a more positive light.

"A crisis is a terrible thing to waste."

This is another statement I heard at the CCLC Legislative Conference. In much the same way as the message in the first quote shared above, this statement also had the effect of turning a negative experience (the state's budget crisis) into a positive. At one time or another, every one of us has studied and attempted to understand the dynamics of change. The one thing we have learned is that in general, human beings do not welcome change. We like our comfort zone of that which we know and are familiar with. We often say, "I want no surprises." Most of us view any new proposal with suspicion and immediately get our "guard up" when the *status quo* is threatened. The irony of it all is that we know life thrives on change, and, paradoxically, the evolution of all things depends on the process of change. This brings us to consider the fact that a "crisis is a terrible thing to waste." Emerging from this economic crisis will require change. We will need to learn how to do things differently, and the crisis climate provides the extra motivation to consider alternatives more readily than we might otherwise. We find ourselves in a difficult position, and because of it, we find ourselves in the best position to consider all of what we do in a new light.

The Work Ahead: Budget Saga Part VI

We still have no budget. The new budget gap now stands at \$41 billion (yes, with a "B"), and the Democrats and Republicans in the legislature, despite lock downs, special sessions, extraordinary sessions, emergency sessions (should we recommend therapy sessions?) and other political maneuverings, still cannot agree on a budget. The new date to look for now is next Friday, February 13. It appears that all legislators are now clear that the budget must contain a mix of cuts, new revenue sources (taxes) and loans. There is no way to bridge the budget gap without any one of these factors in place. Another fact that everyone agrees on is that the budget crisis will not be short lived. Most projections by the Department of Finance and the Legislative Analyst's Office indicate that the budget shortfall will extend between three and five years into the future, with an expected shortfall each year of \$20 billion dollars. Last night Senator Denise Ducheny-Moreno, Chair of the Joint Legislative Budget Committee and the Budget Fiscal

Review Committee, addressed a gathering of the members of SDICCCA (San Diego and Imperial Counties Community College Association). Senator Ducheny was just as frustrated as those of us in the room about the inability of the legislature to pass a budget, and she indicated that the impasse was not purely along partisan "lines in the sand," but rather around the seriousness of the trade-offs being considered. The major constraint has to do with how little "wiggle room" is available for consideration as part of the budget discussions because the difficult dilemma facing legislators is that approximately 57% of the state's budget is dedicated to education, 10% to prisons, and 30% to health and human services. The other telling factor is that the impact of cuts to any one area does not limit the impact to that particular category. If education is cut, prison population goes up; if health and welfare is cut, children under-perform in schools; if prisons are cut, some argue that our health and safety are compromised. Yes, it is all one person affected in multiple ways.

The Mesa College Budget

By now you know that we are through with mid-year budget cut reductions as we gear up for the development of the 2009-2010 budget, and it too continues with reductions at the center of discussion. Each day some slight nuance emerges, and we think and rethink our positions and our strategies. In light of this state of uncertainty, constant procrastination on the part of the State Legislature and a worsening economy, I would like to share Rita's Budget Survival Kit suggestions: [Click here](#)

Next Steps

At the next weekly meeting of Chancellor's Cabinet (February 10), we will review two options to address the remaining \$500,000 budget reduction goal. Reductions are expected to be made in four general areas.

- Management and Classified Vacancies: keep vacancies open and look for other ways to reassign, reduce, or eliminate workload.
- Unfunded Reassigned Time: Reduce the amount of the college's budget that now is allocated to faculty reassigned time.
- Hourly Funding: Reduce hourly staff budgets where possible, while protecting instructional services.
- Discretionary Funding: Look for efficiencies and other ways to maximize discretionary program funding.

The Beat Goes On – "It is not what we've got to do; it is what we *get* to do!"

In times of uncertainty, being able to immerse ourselves in the vibrant life of our campus is truly a blessing. The distinguished work of faculty, students and staff serves to remind us of the reason we are here.

Through 3/3 – Mesa College Art Gallery Exhibit. SHADOWS AND LIGHT IN THE NIGER DELTA: Photographs by Ed Kashi. Images in this exhibit are from the book *Curse of the Black Gold: 50 Years of Oil in the Niger Delta*. Mesa College Art Gallery, D101. Gallery

Hours: Tue., Wed., Fri., 12- 5 p.m.; Thu. 12-8 p.m. Free admission. Visitors, please use metered spaces adjacent to the A East Parking Lot. Information: 619-388-2829. Reception: Thu., February 12, 4:30 - 7:00 pm.

2/2-3/2 – ROSA PARKS DISPLAY, LRC Lobby This artistic display in the LRC Lobby will commemorate the birthday of civil rights activist Rosa Park on February 4th and introduce the campus community to the Rosa Parks Memorial Project. (See campus forum on *February 26.*)

2/3 -2/28– Mesa Celebrates Black History Month: How to Achieve Success as an African American Woman. Lecture and discussion led by faculty, staff and guest speakers. Speakers: Ashanti Hands, Dean of Student Affairs, Mesa College; Judy Sundayo, Professor/Counselor, Mesa College; Sheryl Gee, Vice President, Neighborhood House Association; Wendy Stewart, Transfer Center Director, Miramar College; Zoneice Jones, Founder of PAZZAZ.

2/4, 11, 18, and 25 – Volunteer Opportunity: Mesa College Organic Garden. Volunteers are welcome to work the Mesa College organic garden and learn from gardening expert Paul Maschka. Wed. 2/4, 11, 18, 25. 3:00 – 5:00 p.m., P100 Building, corner of Marlesta and Genessee. Contact: Prof. Don Barrie at (619) 388-2942.

2/9 – Human Rights Awareness Films and Lectures: Screening of "The Rape of Nanking," a film about Japan's mass slaughter of Chinese citizens in 1937. 11:15 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., LRC 435

2/10 – Human Rights Awareness Films and Lectures: "Survivors of Torture," a half-hour documentary on treatment and support programs for immigrant torture survivors in the United States. 11:15 a.m. - 12:30 PM, LRC 435.

2/9-11 – Hermes' Great Adventure Fundraiser/Club Rush. Student clubs sign up new members and host fundraising efforts to send fellow student Hermes Castro on the 2041 Antarctic expedition in March. See: www.sdmesa.edu/campus-life. 8:00 a.m. – 5 p.m., Cafeteria Quad.

2/11 – Music Recital Hour featuring the Mesa College Music Professors, Featuring Tom Griesgraber performing solo on the Chapman stick, an electric musical instrument devised by Emmett Chapman in the early 1970s. Sponsored by Bumble Bee Foods. Wed., Feb. 11, 12:45 p.m., Room C-119.

2/11 – Mesa College Art Gallery Lecture: SHADOWS AND LIGHT IN THE NIGER DELTA. Ed Kashi talks about his photographs from Nigeria, on display through 3/3. 1:30 p.m., Mesa College Art Gallery, D101. Information: 619-388-2829.

2/11 – Mesa Celebrates Black History Month Film Series – "Black Students Union Presents: Spoken Word -- Artistic Expressions of the African Experience." Tue., Feb. 11, 11:10 a.m. - 12:35 p.m., Associated Students free speech area.

President's Cabinet Update

At its meeting of February 3, the President's Cabinet acted on the following items:

1. Major Events Approved for Publication

- Festival of colors, March 25, 2009 – Administrator responsible: Anthony Reuss, Interim EOPS Director.
- Black History Month February 1-28, 2009 – Administrator responsible: Jonathan Fohrman, Dean of Arts and Languages.

2. Budget Reduction and Revenue Generating Strategies – President Cepeda presented a summary of the state's budget crisis and its impact on the District and the college in particular. She reviewed a series of suggestions gathered from campus wide meetings regarding principles, priorities and suggestions for consideration in the development of future budget reductions plans. It is expected that specific budget reduction proposals will be brought to the next meeting of president's cabinet for review and adoption.

3. Catalog Review Sub-committee – The proposed function and purpose of this committee was approved in principle pending the incorporation of suggested changes to be made by Articulation Officer, Juliette Parker.

4. Proposed Reduction in Hours of Service - As part of collegewide strategies to reduce costs, two proposals for reduction in hours of service to the LRC and Student Services were reviewed and approved. This information will be shared at the next meeting of Chancellor's Cabinet.