

September 18, 2009

The Dance of Accreditation: AKA Integrated Planning

A few days ago, I received a letter from the Accreditation Commission for Community and Junior Colleges narrowing the time of our accreditation to between October 4 and October 21, 2010. The letter asked that we provide them with the best date for the start of our visit indicating that they would “try to accommodate” us. Because we are part of a multi-college district, the “ideal” date for the visit needs to be determined in conjunction with our sister colleges and Continuing Education. I will place this item on Chancellor’s Cabinet Agenda next week so that we can begin the discussion to agree on the preferable date(s).

In the meantime, the college’s preparation process continues on schedule. I am constantly gratified by the large number of individuals in our faculty, staff and student ranks who are deeply involved in the completion of our self-study. This week, I attended a series of debriefing presentations on the two Accreditation Surveys conducted last spring semester. The first survey focused on students, and the second on faculty and staff. The survey process, findings, and recommendations presented were extremely helpful. There were a few surprises but most important was the great affirmation of the work we are undertaking to improve our planning processes. I don’t know about the rest of you, but these presentations stirred my old “educational and policy researcher” passions (yes, I did say passions,) particularly when I saw the close nexus between the work we are undertaking regarding the integration between planning and resource allocation and the comments provided by those who responded to the surveys.

I found the briefings so informative, that I plan to schedule a summary presentation at an upcoming meeting of President’s Cabinet. These meetings, as you know, are always open but I will endeavor to provide you with the specific date of this presentation if any of you wish to attend.

The Chancellor vs. Godzilla

Yesterday, September 17, Chancellor Carroll scheduled a forum on “Progress & Plans 2009-2010” detailing the status of our district and providing a great deal of specificity on the budget “battle” and our struggles to manage the situation. It has been said that a picture speaks a thousand words and everyone “got it” when Chancellor Carroll pulled out a very powerful prop from her Mesa tote bag, none other than Godzilla itself to represent our battle with the State Budget. A powerful monster, yes, a recurring monster, yes, and, in this instance, a real monster - one we are managing to keep under control. What is our secret weapon? Planning, constant communication, and transparency. Of course, we also have a great advantage because monsters are not good at planning (replace this line with State Legislature) and we “humans” are. We are also good at finding opportunities during challenging times, and it was obvious yesterday, as it has been obvious to me during our college discussions, that creativity and goodwill abound.

Can We Talk?

During the past two weeks, I have met with various members of the faculty, attended a meeting of the Academic Senate, and consulted with members of President's Cabinet on ways in which we could improve communication and boost our morale. In particular, the feedback I have received focuses on the importance of budget facts, but, more specifically, the impact of budget reductions on the operations of the college. In addition, the advice received was that ongoing conversations that are simple and straightforward would be most helpful. A bright idea emerged—Brown Bag Lunches!

A great idea, and one that I will implement right away. The format is as follows:

- You bring your own “brown bag” lunch (preferably in a recyclable or reusable container)
- I provide the location and act as MC
- We identify no more than two topics at the beginning of the meeting (no prepared agendas or PowerPoints)
- And we have a conversation for one hour.

The First “Brown Bag” has been scheduled for Wednesday, September 30 from 12 to 1 p.m. in H 117/118. Beth Cain will schedule all subsequent meetings for the remainder of the semester. Our goal is to schedule a meeting every two weeks in the same location as much as possible. My office will issue reminders regularly to facilitate participation. See you then.

Student Leadership: A Renaissance

The accolades continue, and the e-mails requesting information haven't stopped since our students organized and led the first “Community College Budget Rally” event in California. Those of you who attended know first-hand that it was a “thing of beauty.” The well-known chants and protest slogans came back to me just like the memory of an old tune that is never forgotten. The cries for social justice and the deep conviction that one person can make a difference reappeared, dispelling the fog of apathy and helplessness. It was the best example of teaching and learning, and in this case, our students took the lead while faculty and staff mentors fulfilled the role of guide and supporter. To me this was the ultimate example of an SLO fully attained.

While all of our student leaders were magnificent, my face shone brighter and I smiled wider when I saw our own Mason Walker, ASG President take the stage and carry off a difficult task with aplomb, charisma and most of all conviction. Go ASG.

Si Se Puede!

Yes, We Can!

H1N1

There is so much to say, so much to share and so much to do personally, that the best thing I can do is to refer you to the Mesa and District Website respectively where you will find everything you wanted to know but were afraid to ask about H1N1, so here goes:

District: http://www.sdccd.edu/public/events/h1n1_flu/h1n1fluupdate5.shtml

College <http://sdmesa.edu/health-services/notices.cfm>

Other Great Sources

www.Flu.gov

<http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/Portal/News/swineflu.html>

In the meantime a few simple tips worth repeating

- Stay informed (see the websites above)
- Practice good personal hygiene by washing your hands often, covering coughs and sneezes
- Stay home if you are sick
- Avoid close contact with sick people
- Get Vaccinated

Good news on this front—a plan is ready to be rolled out to begin providing the vaccine for all students through our Student Health Centers. These will be offered free and we have already ordered 16,000 vaccines at Mesa with more to be received weekly. Students will be inoculated in order of priority and a schedule will be issued in priority order as follows:**

? Tier 1

- Pregnant women
- Caregivers for children younger than 6 months
- Persons 6 months to 24 years of age
- Persons 25 through 64 years who have medical conditions with a high risk of influenza complications

? Tier 2

- Persons aged 25 through 64 years of who DO NOT have medical conditions with a high risk of influenza complications.

? Tier 3

- Persons 65 years and older

**These priority cohorts have been established by the Centers for Disease Control because H1N1 is an opportunistic virus affecting younger populations in greater degree. The theory is that younger groups are more vulnerable because they have not developed any resistance to the flu virus through prior recurrences of the flu.

The second piece of good news follows an announcement at the District's Governance Council (DGC) meeting last Wednesday. Chancellor Carroll informed the group of plans made in partnership with the AFT Guild to co-sponsor H1N1 free flu vaccination clinics for all faculty and staff to be conveniently scheduled throughout our District. More to come on this!

In the meantime, the exercise of common sense and personal responsibility is our best weapon to curtail the spread of H1N1. If you haven't had your regular flu shot for Influenza Type A, go get it. And as soon as the H1N1 vaccines roll out to our area (on our about 10/1/09) be on the alert for the "free vaccination clinics" to be scheduled throughout the District.

Community Colleges Prime Time Debut

How many of you saw the debut of the prime time sitcom? The NBC comedy Community premiered last night and the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) has set up a website to track the show where you may submit blog comments and even ideas for future episodes regarding this series. The Website is:

<http://www.aacc.nche.edu/AboutCC/community/Pages/default.aspx>.

In any case, I made it a point to watch the first episode and I give it high marks for acting and directing. There were one or two somewhat derisive comments about community colleges but they did get the diversity and access part right except for one thing I will definitely blog about, no Latinos. Why is this a problem? Simply because nearly 80% of all Latinos who go on to public postsecondary education in California alone go to a community college. This percentage nationwide is around 50%. I'd like to suggest any of the following for a lead role with a guarantee to boost their ratings: America Ferrera (Ugly Betty) Jorge Garcia (Lost), Eva Longoria (Desperate Housewives), Jessica Alba (if they can get her), Edward James Olmos (Battlestar Galactica—great for the role of professor), Amaury Nolasco (Prison Break) Adam Rodriguez (CSI Miami) and yes, our very own San Diegan Mario Lopez!

By the way, I have started thinking about story lines based on our own Mesa experience and I came to the realization that truth can be stranger than fiction (just kidding.)

Note:

President Updates - are posted on the Mesa Website at: <http://sdmesa.edu/president/updates.cfm>

College Governance – All President's Cabinet Minutes are posted at:

<http://sdmesa.edu/president/cabinet.cfm>