

MAC Report
6-22-2016

I was impressed by many events lately. I would like to highlight and share some with you, in vignette style.

We just celebrated the great successes of our students, and were blessed with their individual stirring testimonies as they received their diplomas, a tradition that makes MPC stand out as a very special institution that deeply cares about each and every student. Graduates gave thanksgiving for MPC's uplifting recognition, for their professors, for their families, for their communities. While all the graduation celebrations that I attended were wonderful, I found the Veterans Recognition and the Kente "Rites of Passage" ceremonies uniquely inspirational because VP Larry Walker, speaking from his loving heart and passion for his mission, imparted such sage, edifying counsel. More important than making money, Larry advised, is focusing on developing a virtuous character. Inculcating values such as honesty, integrity, generosity of spirit, accountability, and self-discipline, builds strength of character, a treasure more valuable than gold. It is this kind of Larry Walker leadership that permeates MPC, that inspires MPC students to tell us decades later when they return for induction into the Lobos Hall of Fame, that MPC was the highlight of their careers, their best experience in life. What a tribute to instilling what is most important: an honorable character. This is one of the reasons, I believe, MPC student service is first-class.

Quality leadership exists at every level at MPC. This quality leadership is characteristic of our campus student club associations. Last year, during the Latino graduation ceremony art exhibit, one artist portrayed the diversity of the human race: he depicted a series of skeletons, demonstrating all humans are fundamentally constructed the same. During this year's Kente "Rites of Passage" ceremony, our own trustee Charles Brown, inspired the African-American graduates, as they begin their new lives, to be "color blind", giving this expression a much higher meaning, a new dimension. We thrive on, and delight in, these insights, this wise instruction. Thank you all.

The CDC graduation ceremony was extra special this year because the adorable, precious, precocious five year old graduates wore caps and gowns. When questioned about their future plans, these little graduates blurted out their goals, some wanting to be a vet, others a policeman, or a teacher, a nurse, a doctor, an engineer, even an ocean space scientist. There were squeals of delight as they tossed their caps into the air. Proud parents taking photos made the student center look like a night at the Oscars. Is there hope for the future? There is no doubt about it. These little graduates are the future, and the CDC provides them a solid well-rounded foundation for that future. The CDC's enthusiastic, committed staff make sure of it.

When I was walking back to my car after the marvelous bilingual 15th Annual Latino Recognition Ceremony and enlightening talk by CSUMB President, Dr. Ochoa, one of our custodians invited me to pass through the student center so I wouldn't have to walk around the outside of the building. He was busy cleaning and polishing the floors. He was beaming with pride in his work, smiling cheerfully, even though it was after 9 p.m. I was so touched by his work ethic, his attitude, his dedication. It reminded me how much we take for granted our clean classrooms, our well maintained and supplied restrooms and facilities. MPC security exhibits a similar pride and joy in their work. Our custodians and our security personnel, like all our staff and faculty, invest their talents and devotion in our students. I am so thankful for every person on this campus, because every one of you contributes immensely to creating an environment that makes our students want to keep coming back. You are MPC, and we are very grateful indeed to all of you. As the French artist, August Pierre Renoir believed, "Work lovingly done is the secret to all order and happiness".

At the board's recent study session with the CBT consultants, our board chair, trustee Rick Johnson, wisely commented that we need to remain positive, but we also must be realistic. The CBT report was daunting and illuminating. The voluminous report revealed much that we knew, much that we didn't know, and much that we need to focus on, such as clarification of roles and responsibilities. One of our roles as trustees is to represent our constituents, the tax payers. The taxpayers support and sustain our college. They voted for the bond measure that provided funding for all our new and remodeled facilities. They voted for Proposition 30 to prop us up financially during difficult times, but that support is ending. We hope the taxpayers will again support us in the future.

As trustees, we have a fiduciary responsibility to ensure MPC is solvent and can maintain quality education far into the future, so that these five year old CDC graduates can realize their dreams, their educational goals. According to the CBT three-year budget modeling process, MPC will be bankrupt, its reserves exhausted, if it does not act responsibly and quickly.

We must work together for the good of the whole. We do not want to find ourselves unable to pay salaries, fund pensions, or provide promised healthcare. MPC has faced a budget crisis in the past, but the situation is far worse this time around.

We as trustees have to make the tough decisions going forward, not because we enjoy cutting back where necessary to ensure survival, but because we have a mandate to protect and preserve our college. We dislike the challenges we all have inherited from a series of serious situations from different sectors, but, like war, we have an enemy facing us, and we cannot afford to lose. My plea to everyone is that we make the concerted effort to work together harmoniously with love and consideration for each other, looking for the good in each other, and brainstorming creatively, with a positive, yet realistic, approach, so that good ideas come forward.

While some may disbelieve the facts, we cannot change the facts, or the truth, to fit wishes or creations of the imagination. We have to be like the little boy in the children's fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen, "The Emperor's New Clothes"; it was the little boy who cried out the truth, exposing the collective denial of the courtiers and others, with one message of the tale being the importance of speaking the truth no matter how distasteful it may be to the recipient. As trustees, we are required to work with the facts, no matter how unpleasant it may be. We pay the consequences if we do otherwise.

If we work together, with dignity and respect, the college will survive and prosper. If not, tough decisions will be forthcoming to save our magnificent institution. We have a moral imperative to conserve resources and not spend funds we do not have. Our chair, trustee Rick Johnson also wisely pointed this out during the CBT study session. We cannot rely on one time funds to sustain ongoing operations of the college. We want the CDC graduates to have an opportunity to attend MPC in the future to continue their education, to make their aspirations come true. This is our mandate, our role, our responsibility. If we do not honor this obligation, we will have failed in our duty to MPC, to our constituents, to the future well-being of all.

The graduation ceremonies remind us how important it is that we judiciously follow through with positive, corrective action now. It is the prudent way to invest in our children. The current situation is not your fault. It is not our fault. We have been handed a critical challenge, but we believe in you, and we trust you to assist us in moving forward to answer these challenges, to solve problems, to create a bright future. In Dr. Walt Tribley, we have been truly blessed with an honorable leader who is a highly talented, dedicated, fabulous Superintendent/president. Support him, work with him and his cabinet, continue to be inspirational role models, as he has been, and is, to all of us. Together we can do it, we must do it. It is the noble thing to do. Thank you and God bless you, God bless MPC.