

SOLANO COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT
GOVERNING BOARD

UNADOPTED MINUTES
April 21, 2010

APPENDIX A

9. REPORTS (NO ACTION REQUIRED):

(d) Superintendent

- *Student and Faculty Member Fairfield Campus Experience Presentations*

April Nelson

Ms. April Nelson began by stating, “The day I met Dr. Cabrera changed my college experience. I had been struggling in college and had many setbacks before, feeling like a loser. Most of my previous experiences had not been fun, pretty, or easy. I had to learn the hard way! Determined to start over, I enrolled in a Human Service class taught by Dr. Cabrera. Little did I know my first day would begin as a disaster but would then have a profound impact on my life. I met a woman on the first day in the parking lot struggling to get out of her car with her wheelchair. I asked if she wanted help. She said forcefully, ‘I got it. I got it.’ When I later walked into my classroom, I saw the teacher was the lady whom I had just met moments earlier in the parking lot. I said to the lady, who I later found out was Dr. Cabrera, ‘Hi, my name is April Nelson, and I have a disability and here is my accommodation sheet.’ I felt awkward and stupid because I was asking for help from someone who was obviously self-sufficient despite her mobility impairment. I made an appointment to see her after class to go over my accommodations.

Her office is where my college education started to change and my real learning process began. As I sat across from Dr. Cabrera in her office, I wanted to cry, I wanted to run, and I wanted not to have the feelings I was feeling. Tears started to well up in my eyes. The first words she used in the parking lot still echoed in my mind. She looked at me, cocked her head, and gently smiled in a way only Dr. Cabrera could, and asked, ‘Do you know how you came across today?’ I replied sheepishly, ‘How would I if no one has ever told me?’ I tried to breathe as I started to choke up with my emotions. Dr. Cabrera waited for me to breathe before she began to speak. That moment has changed my college experience, and since then I have learned when the student is ready the teacher will appear. Dr. Cabrera was the teacher, and I was the student who listened.

I have learned so many things from Dr. Cabrera, and continue to do so. I have learned to actively listen; I have learned that learning is a continuing process that can change a life in a single moment. I have learned that with Dr. Cabrera every moment with her is a teaching moment. I have learned how to apply her universal teaching strategies to my own life. I have learned how to talk to faculty and staff more effectively. Out of respect for Dr. Cabrera, I refer to her as my teacher. When the student is ready the teacher appears.”

Dr. Saki Cabrera

Dr. Cabrera stated that she came to Solano College three years ago from the east coast. Dr. Cabrera has been in many different countries and was serving at the California Medical Facility when the District teaching position became available. Dr. Cabrera commented that going through the hiring process is a bit like going through grad school again.

Dr. Cabrera stated that there are gems at the college and if you hold people accountable, they rise to the occasion, and that her students eventually learn to know this. When you blend competence with real world experiences, there is no better power or channel to educate. Instructors often talk to their students instead of engaging their students. We forget to listen and forget to take the kernels and mediate conversation which is not conflict. There are no topics in my classroom that we cannot touch. "There is no 'you disclosed too much.' If they disclosed, they connected, and if they connected, it is my job to make that connection to the learning experience." Dr. Cabrera stated she tells her students they have the gift and privilege of being in her learning environment and if they don't want it, she will drop them "now." Dr. Cabrera encourages her students to take learning seriously when she teaches. If not, both she and the student are wasting their time together. Contrary to what might otherwise be believed, her students respond. Dr. Cabrera stated that we all should expect excellence in all that we do.

Dr. Cabrera concluding by reading an inspiring letter sent to her by Ms. Nelson.