

**Solano Community College**  
August 12, 2014  
**Sixth Fall 2014 President's Address**

*“SOLANO COMMUNITY COLLEGE: AT THE CROSSROADS:  
A Commitment to  
Multiply Our Accomplishments and to Reduce Our Challenges”*

Welcome ALL: Governing Board members, introduction of new faculty, administrators, and staff hired since July 1:

- Governing Board Members
- New Faculty
- New Administrators/ALG members
- New Classified

I am proud to stand here today—my sixth year in service to you as Solano Community College's President---and I thank you for working with me to put forward the best education for our students.

I am compelled, of course, to reflect briefly on the past five years. Today I will: (1.) Touch on some of our accomplishments. (2.) Touch on (and elaborate) some of today's challenges. (3.) Share with you what I view as *fundamental elements* of our commitment to a community college education. (4.) Present two examples (one in person) of what I consider to be student exemplars of our established Institutional Learning Objectives (what we refer to as ILOs). (5.) Conclude my remarks.

1. **A few Highlights of our Past Five Years of Accomplishments (and we have had many):**

- **Finance:** We overcame bad economic times with some lay-offs we were able to call back.
- **Institutional Planning:** We have transformed our Institutional Planning and continue to do so. Peter Cammish, Dean of Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness, demonstrated the power that one person (and a new employee at that) can have on transforming our institutional planning.
- **Measure G Implementation:** We finished Measure G implementation and succeeded at what we were set to do or adjusted to what we needed to do--so much so we were able to get another Bond.
- **Measure Q success:** Who would have think it? Thanks to the dedication of a few good women and men at SCC, and the overwhelming support of our community, we were able

to bring into the College \$348M (interest and matching funds could get us to close to half a billion dollars!).

- The establishment of good Board Stewardship: 2009-2014 saw us with a Governing Board that was the envy of other community colleges. Here is a Board that performs its fiduciary and policy role seriously. In fact, our Governing Board was commended by ACCJC for effectively serving the College. SCC's Governing Board is respected.
- The ability to "carry on" despite administrative turn over: We lost some administrators to higher-level positions; we lost one to death; we worked with a few to simply move on because it was in their best interest and ours. However, we retained our President for five years (a number that exceeds the average tenure of a CCC President). By the way, I intend to break all records by staying even longer if you and the Governing Board agree.
- Our mutual interest in establishing excellent relationships with all three unions: Though we have had some scuffles with the unions, overall our relationship with them has been excellent for five years. We even changed our healthcare programs, providing much needed relief to our budget. I have no doubt that we can continue to accomplish mutual goals.
- Opened the Adjunct Support Center. Here is a place where our adjuncts can do their work (their own space) and collaborate with one another.
- Established a Sustainability Model: We signed the Presidents' Climate Control Commitment. The Governing Board then adopted a progressive program of sustainability leading to the establishment of Solar Farms at our three sites and retrofits and other programs saving us half a million dollars a year.
- We had great influence on the ICON Aircraft project.....(this one is exciting).
- Our Biotech Program—a model in the nation!
- We graduated the first CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant) class.
- We received our first National Science Foundation Grant for \$199,960.
- Accreditation--in my tenure here, our track record:
  - **Show cause**
  - Probation
  - Reaffirmation
  - Warning (TWO YEARS IN A ROW)
  - **Reaffirmation today (WE ARE SANCTION FREE!)**

AGAIN, THESE ARE JUST A FEW HIGHLIGHTS.

**2. Some of today's challenges:**

In spite of all of our accomplishments; however, we are not a perfect place. I meet people sometimes in the community who say to me, "You have turned the place around," and I explain that, YES, WE have turned SCC around. Nevertheless, I know that "we still have a long way to go." With this in mind, here are some challenges that we must address:

**Finance:**

Our budget for this year has a structural imbalance of \$2.6M or 6.5%. A structural deficit is different from being below the reserve level and it is different from not having enough funds. If you have a structural deficit and you still have a reserve, it means that you must pay attention to your budget, but one does not necessarily have a budgetary problem. The real problem arises when the deficit grows every year and threatens our reserve. Here is where we are:

- (1) We lack ongoing sources of revenue to deal with a structural deficit. However, two potent sources of funding that can help us are: Contract training and grants. We are making strides in both these areas. It may take five years for us to be fully capable of relying on these sources IF we tend to them carefully, but progress is ongoing.
- (2) Some costs continue to rise out of control. Any organization will tell you that the greatest cost is healthcare (and yes, our costs have risen).
- (3) Our personnel cost percentage is above 85%. This figure makes it difficult to address a structural deficit. We have less flexibility (less money that is truly available to spend). Our intention is to fix our problems the best we can without affecting personnel. We intend to involve all constituents--through their representatives who serve our various governance committees and unions--in the decisions we will make and the proposals we will bring forth.

**Enrollment:**

Many factors affect enrollment, to include:

- (1) The state has greatly reduced repeatability for our students.
- (2) The availability of financial aid has been reduced either by the federal government or by our institution. Why did SCC reduce financial aid you ask? "If we did not do it, we would be in danger of losing the whole financial aid program."
- (3) The economy has taken away many students it had sent us previously to train for new jobs.

- (4) Our curriculum--in some areas--is structured such that students don't complete a course of study and move on. Here, for example, we could restructure some career programs to provide incentives for more individuals to enroll.
- (5) Like it or not, our College has a bad image with some high school audiences and some members of our community. It seems, at times, that the public cannot ever forget that we were on Show Cause. We must rebuild our image—now is the right time.
- (6) That there are fewer students to go around is probably a central concern. But, I will add that we have often failed to capture thousands of students who are interested in us. In addition to the efforts Student Services personnel must make, we must rely more on our faculty to help us respond to students. In reflecting on our enrollment, I offer that if we can retain 10% more of our students, we would not have any enrollment problem. This 10% increase could take us from losing 30 or 40% of our students to lose no more than 20% or 30%. College retention is a difficult nut to crack—we are not alone here—but we must work to increase our student body.

### **SLOs:**

First, let me thank you for the attention you have paid to SLOs over the past few years. But I will acknowledge that although we have made progress, we still have challenges that we must address.

Here I must apologize to many of you to whom we have said you did not turn in your SLOs assessments while in reality you have. With all the advances in technology, entering our SLOs into a database should not be a problem, but we have had a variety of problems. We will make this right.

### **Student Success:**

It appears that for the past 32 years I have been in America, every year we come up with something new having to do with education and changes that are intended to improve student success. Our K-12 friends suffer a lot from ever changing core curricula demands, yet I am still living *A NATION AT RISK*, published in 1983 (almost 31 years ago)—an important educational document that has guided my view of education, a document that stands the test of time for student success. Here I must quote:

"A high level of shared education is essential to a free, democratic society and to the fostering of a common culture, especially in a country that prides itself on pluralism and individual freedom....."

My point is that at times we burden our teachers and faculty with new “solutions” for student success and insist on implementing the latest fads in education. On the other hand, when educational change is legislated (mandated), we have no choice but to comply (even if we sometimes disagree with changes).

- Student Completion rate: Student Success Model, the Default Rate, and the Completion Agenda all came at about the same time, and now we must face these mandates. And, ever since the Microsoft Certification and other IT certifications came into being, the nation is crazy about certification. Part of the Completion Agenda is challenging the many things we do--in particular in our career programs; we are now directed to certify the students. We must “certify” that they have completed certain skills so they may go to work by showing their certification to an employer. The idea again is not new, but it is being emphasized nationwide and we, too, must alter our curricula and offer more certificates.
- Student Equity: While it might be easy to get a few more students to make our statistics look good, it is more difficult to say that we have made serious efforts to ensure that all segments of our population have the same opportunity to succeed. Today the state of California is putting an even greater emphasis on Student Equity. Student Support and Success Models are now tying some funding to particular success metrics. Dean Shirley Lewis is spearheading that effort on our behalf, and you will undoubtedly hear from her throughout the year.
- Staff equity: Here I want to emphasize that SCC is committed to Staff Equity. We do not need legislation to do what is right. Support the Equity and Inclusion Council (EIAC) efforts (this group wants your ideas). All of us must be committed to Staff Equity and make serious efforts to enhance our diversity.

**Our Commitment to a Community College Education:**

Despite challenges that are ahead of us, I wanted to take a few minutes and share with you two slides that I shared with faculty in the New Hire Orientation: (1) The Community College’s manifesto, and (2) Parker Palmer’s statement of “ownership” of student learning. Here I am again reminded of what I view as “timeless” advice for higher education—advice that is not tied to funding, and I hope that you will consider as we impart an education to our students.

- The Community College's Manifesto:

**The Higher Education Dream**  
**George Vaughn**

- Give us your young, and your not so young;
- Give us your capable, and your not so capable;
- Give us your minorities, and your homemakers;
- Give us your employed, your underemployed, and your unemployed;
- Give us those in society who have too long lingered on the periphery of the American Dream,
- And we will help them to become better students,
- Better workers, better citizens, better people.

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- Courage to teach quote by Parker Palmer.

**Active learning**

- "My students must feed themselves-that is called active learning. If they are to do so, I must take them to a place where food is available: a good text, a well-planned exercise, a generative question, a disciplined conversation."
- I must hold the group within those places, paying special attention to individuals who get lost or run away-and all the while I must protect the group from deadly predators, like fear."

(Parker Palmer: The Courage to Teach)

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Today, I also want to remind you that we have had many overwhelming successes in educating our students. We have many written learning outcomes, i.e., SLOS, PLOs, and ILOs, and as we reflect on our accomplishments and our challenges, we must continue to engage in dialogue about how we can best assist our students to achieve their educational goals (that is what quality outcome assessment is all about).

Rarely do we stop to think of a student *per se* as an exemplar of an Institutional Learning Outcome, but believe me, our ILOs have transformed many lives.....we are not merely examining “outcomes on paper.” As we collaborate on analyzing our various educational outcomes, I think we must recognize how education truly transforms everyday lives.

Let me illustrate with the example of Sarah who was sent to Boston College (B.C.) by her parents. Her father was a Colonel in the U.S. Air Force at Travis. He and Sarah’s mother said to me that they yanked her out of B.C. because her academic record did not match what they were paying for. She was sent to SCC to see if she was capable of earning a college education and they had confidence in our College. She was supposed to be here for a semester and ended up staying two years and more. Recently, her father said that she had the best college career possible at SCC and was now transferring to U.C. Riverside. Sarah is a living ILO. I asked him what made the difference for her. He said she talks all the time about a certain Political Science Professor, Thomas Bundenthal. No doubt other SCC educators contributed to Sarah’s SCC education as well.

I want to introduce you now to a student who joins as another living exemplar of our goal to include Institutional Learning Objectives (yes, ILOs) in a student’s education at SCC. Let me introduce you to one who cannot stop talking about what SCC did for him--Mr. Earl Taylor.

I must also quote Lindsay Padilla, our new Sociology Professor, who said last Friday that “Often our students come to us when they hit a bump on the road.” Both Sarah and Earl were students who hit bumps on the road. They came to us with bruises, a little banged up, but we took them in and assisted them to earn an education. As we now enroll new students, we need to continue to assure that our students feel welcome (no matter how bruised) and know that they have landed in a safe zone.

### **Conclusion:**

We are at a Crossroads at SCC and whatever our challenges, we must to continue to educate our students in the best way possible. To that end:

- (1) We are working on our financial issues and will bring them under control.
- (2) We will continue to address our enrollment deficiencies through image repair, better marketing, better scheduling, and, especially, better retention of our existing students.
- (3) We must acknowledge that the success of our students is the tape measure that is being used in this state, so let’s comply with what we need to do....comply without compromising our academic integrity.

- (4) We must continue to work on a common understanding of Equity and put into practice what it means to embrace genuine diversity at SCC.
- (5) We must expand our education to include a more global learning experience.
- (6) We must use technology to connect our sites. Using technology can allow us to offer more of our low-enrollment courses by making them available to all of our sites at the same time. It might even reduce the time students are using to travel from site to site for a variety of courses, e.g., foreign languages, mathematics. Let's make courses more accessible.
- (7) We must assist our students to take full advantage of all Student Support services that we have in place. i.e., assessment, admissions, registration, advising; financial aid, UMOJA, PUENTE, MESA, First-Year Experience; Writing Labs, Reading Labs, Math Activity Center; the Tutoring Center, Career Placement Office, Financial Aid, and more.
- (8) We must continually evaluate what we do and use our findings to improve students' education. We have begun to do this with SLOs in the classroom, but we must establish worthy objectives and assessments for all that we undertake at the College.
- (9) We have built some strategic relationships with our community, especially our neighbor School Districts. We must continue to build these alliances.
- (10) We must continue to reaffirm our good standard with ACCJC and concentrate on exceeding Standards. Please get involved in our Midterm Report (Dr. Annette Dambrosio, Accreditation Coordinator, welcomes your critique of the draft Report.)

In passing, I ask that you take the high road and not be intimidated and not let vicious gossip interfere with your good work. In fact, be bold and stop those who gossip. Believe me, I too have been hit with some of these ills. Stand tall and do not be distracted. We are all here to educate students.

Finally, keep your eye on the Ideal College that I have presented to you in years past. I believe that all of us are truly motivated by a deep sense of responsibility to Solano Community College. If our aim is to mutually support one another with dignity and respect and to hold the highest expectations for all students, the students will come.

**May the 2014-2015 year be a great year for you in health and in your professional calling, and may you continue to touch, change, and transform many lives. I THANK YOU!**