Dear Colleagues:

This past week was particularly interesting and inspiring. The high point of the week was my introduction to an uplifting group of young Black men who are members of the African American Scholars Club and my introduction to an accomplished SCC graduate who attended the annual MESA banquet.

**African American Male Scholars:**
Under the leadership of Professor Thom Watkins and Professor Kevin Anderson, a group of over 20 African American young men formed the African American Male Scholars Club. The members intend to support one another to earn an education and are already supported by many in the community. These young men represent hope for the problems that many African American males face in education; their focus is to contribute to the solutions necessary to confront educational failure.

The African American Male Scholars are interested in establishing a legacy for those who will come behind them and desire to serve as role models who can mentor those students who need extra help. They held an event on Tuesday, April 17th and intend to meet weekly on Thursdays, from 3:30 to 5:00. They are seeking support from our faculty and staff who wish to serve as mentors: qualifications are “anyone” who wishes to share expertise and knowledge.

**MESA Awards:**
In addition to meeting the African American Male Scholars, I was delighted to be introduced to a young woman named Dinah Arumainayagam, a former MESA student who recently completed her medical training as a family practice physician. The annual MESA Awards Ceremony is a gala that was attended this year by fifty MESA members, alumni, faculty and staff. Student Trustee Eljack was one of two Masters of Ceremony.

When asked if she wanted to say a few words and how she wished to be introduced, Dinah proudly stated: “Dinah, a former community college student!” An immigrant from Sri Lanka, Dinah came to SCC after spending a few years studying ESL at the Adult School in Fairfield. Less than eight years after learning how to speak English, she completed her medical studies and has now started her residency in Family Practice. Going from Sri Lanka to Solano Community College and on to Stanford Medical School is quite an accomplishment to say the least!
CSEA Members Approved Contract:
The members of the CSEA unit approved the Tentative Agreement (TA) with the District. While there must have been disagreements and discussions about the TA, CSEA members voted to support not only the College in these difficult times, but to ensure job security for the most vulnerable employees among them. I want to thank these classified employees not only for the work they do, but for their commitment to the College and their commitment to the newest employees among them. The new contract is centered on protecting those with less seniority. At the same time, this contract will help to provide financial and personnel stability for the College.

Blue Ribbon Committee:
As part of the advocacy effort that the College is undertaking to educate and inform the community about Solano Community College, a group of prominent citizens--representing a wide segment of the community--came together to learn of the College’s accomplishments, its needs, and its future plans. Among the attendees were Supervisor John Vasquez, Winters’ City Councilman Mike Martin, Foundation Board member Dave Fleming, and Benicia Mayor Elizabeth Patterson. The group pledged to continue support of our College.

Academic Senate:
When I met with the Academic Senate last week, we considered the movement of private colleges to seek partnerships with SCC. Currently, SCC has transfer agreements with Brandman University and the American Public University System (APUS).

This issue—the rise of private for-profit colleges and their effect on public higher education-- is a most serious development that could use leadership from the Academic Senate. My preference, of course, is to work with public institutions such as Sonoma State, Sacramento State University, or CSU California Maritime Academy. However, our State institutions are experiencing caps as we have and, like us, have been forced to curtail their course offerings.

In an effort to thoroughly debate the place of private institutions in public colleges, I appeal to the SCC academic community to examine with the utmost scrutiny the growing presence of for-profit private institutions in American higher education. In our deliberations, we need to ensure that our students are exposed to the best and most affordable educational opportunities possible.

We need to consider the following regarding future partnership agreements:
- Regional accreditation status of the institution
- Cost and benefits of implementing educational partnerships
- Quality of education
- Some private institutions offer programs that the State universities cannot provide for or for which student enrollment opportunities are limited.

You are welcome and called upon to contribute to this discussion through your Academic Senate or by writing directly to me or your Senators.
Have a wonderful rest of the week and a good weekend… and….a reminder that today is Administrative Professionals’ Day. Thanks to all!

Jowel C. Laguerre, Ph.D.  
Superintendent/President