

SOLANO COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT
GOVERNING BOARD

UNADOPTED MINUTES
December 2, 2009

APPENDIX B

Presentation by Instructor Diane White

“I would like to begin by thanking Dr. Laguerre and our Center Director Teresa McLeod for the opportunity to address you this evening, and I am also very pleased that you extended an invitation to one of our fabulous students to also speak to you as well. I will formally introduce her to you momentarily.

As some of you know, I teach in the History department, and have been here at the Vacaville Center almost from the beginning of its operation. I make it a practice to request assignments here because of the truly supportive environment that our Director and staff have created for all of us. The staff here at the Center is the very best. They all go out of their way to take very good care of our students, and extremely good care of us. In fact, they are so good at knowing what we need that that they can now anticipate what I need before I ask! A few weeks ago I woke up one morning and realized I forgot to ask Sam Maher, our computer tech, to set up a laptop cart for me, but when I arrived it was already in my room! Sam was sick, and Dolores and Teresa told me when I arrived that Sam was out that day, but they thought I might need it! Dolores, Jenny, Teresa, Sam—they are always so professional, but also so personable. They let us know that they appreciate us in a thousand ways, and make us feel welcome.

While this building almost feels like home now, I am also very excited about moving to the new building across the street, and can't wait to have the classroom technology available that does not require carts and wires and old laptops. Having that equipment at the main campus has rather spoiled me, so it's going to be wonderful to have that same technology at the new facility. I just hope that as we grow we will be able to maintain the warm, personal environment that has developed here at the Center; we are in the “people” business, and I hope we won't forget that as we mature.

I see great things on the horizon for Vacaville. I am hoping that many of the opportunities we have on the main campus will be brought to life here. For example, Learning Communities can and should be embedded here. These are paired courses that are team taught, and the goal is to not only combine curriculum, but also create a community of learners that are committed to helping each other develop academically and personally. The practical value of Learning Communities is that these paired course configurations also help colleges grow—as students are on campus for more than one course and for more than an hour or two. In other words, it builds FTES while building student and community relationships with our campus. I also hope that we can make the Vacaville campus a cultural center of the community.

I have a gift for each of you to help prompt your thinking about the possibilities here. Fern Henry is a local author and historian who this summer came to the Vacaville Center to present to my California History students her book, *My Checkered Life, Luzena Stanley Wilson in Early California*. She was originally scheduled to present for one hour, but students were so intrigued by her research on this local Vacaville family that her presentation went on for hours. It

might have been a ruse—they wouldn't have to listen to me all night—but students asked her to stay and sign copies of the book for them. She was pretty pleased, and my students were able to meet someone who is actually “doing” history. Fern Henry also brought them information about the historical and cultural events that take place at the Vacaville Museum, so students were able to learn more about local community resources too. I hope that we will be able to make these kinds of presentations routine.

The new center also has the potential of being a place to host a whole variety of integrated academic endeavors that connect our faculty with those from the K-12 system and the four-year schools. For example, our department is currently working in conjunction with the U.C. Davis History Department on a three-year grant aimed at helping middle school and high school teachers in Solano county gain access to the most recent historical scholarship and develop ways to integrate that scholarship into their own curriculum. Our faculty and the UCD faculty offer lectures and workshops that Solano has hosted mostly at the main campus, but we will be holding workshop sessions this spring at Dixon High School. I'd like to see the those sessions held at Vacaville too, and to find ways to allow our students here to also gain access to programs by world class scholars that are part of programs like these.

Now, I have saved the best for last. I am truly pleased to introduce to you a very special student that I first met here at the Vacaville Center last year. Fabronia White enrolled in my Women in American History course last spring. I could tell from the very beginning that she was a very motivated student. She sat in the front row and was ready to “go.” By that I mean she was always ready to dive into the material, and then do the back stroke in it! Ask questions, talk about the readings, and talk about the connections she saw between what we were learning and what she had already learned in other classes, like Michelle Arce's African-American History class.

But by mid-semester I could tell that Fabronia was struggling. Life's responsibilities were making it hard for her. She ended up dropping the class, and when she dropped she told me she'd be back. I hoped so, but lots of students tell me that; then I never see them again.

Fortunately, that wasn't the case with Fabronia. On the first day of class this August, I came down the hall, and there she was—right by the front counter asking the staff what room we were in and greeting me. She reminded me of what she'd said, ‘I'll be back!’ She has since had to transfer to my section that meets on the main campus, but the most important thing is that she is back!

I have come to appreciate how special Fabronia is. She is still as eager as ever. But in chatting with her, I have come to appreciate how far she has come, and how much drive and determination she has. She's had a lot of challenges, but she told me recently she isn't going to let anything or anyone stand in her way. In short, she is the embodiment of dedication and persistence.

No teacher could ask for more. On the very few times she has had to miss class, she e-mails me right away, and asks what she needs to do to get caught up. A few weeks ago Fabronia was sick and e-mailed me, and then asked me to forgive her! Other students will come up to me in class a few days later and ask if they missed anything or if we talked about anything important—an opening I can run a truck through. She is a teacher's dream.

So, I wanted very much for you to meet her. And I wanted you and Fabronia to know that she is an important reminder as to why we are all here, and more importantly, what we owe our students. She intends to excel, to be excellent. That means I owe her excellence. Because of Fabronia and students like her, I am compelled to be a better teacher—to hold her to the high

standards she is capable of reaching, and then helping her find the ways to meet those standards. We all owe her and every other student the opportunity to experience excellence. We have to live it, not just talk about it, and then we have to help them achieve it. So, Fabronia, thank you for the gift of inspiration and helping me remember to me to continue my own quest toward academic excellence.”

Presentation by Student Fabronia White

Ms. White began by stating how grateful and honored she felt to be asked to speak on her personal experiences at the Vacaville Center.

Ms. White stated how wonderful her daughter and mother have been to her over the years—her biggest inspiration as she worked to put herself through college as a single mother. Ms. White dropped out of school as a single teen mother; therefore, her daughter’s education was always important to her, and her mother was influential in making sure that occurred. Ms. White always said she would return to school, and relayed how difficult that pathway was for her; having missed passing the GED test by one point, yet her daughter was eventually able to see her pass. Ms. White is interested in the medical field and relayed her experiences in working in a privately-owned business. This opportunity gave Ms. White the confidence and initiative to do what she needs to do in order to continue to move on with her life. When Ms. White moved from Cincinnati, Ohio, and transferred to Solano College, she learned she needed to take a History class, which was part of the curriculum for her A.A. Degree. Instructor White became her teacher, who helped her, supported her, encouraged her, listened to her, and always had time for her. Ms. White stated that Solano College is her family now, and she loves being able to call her Mom “back home” to tell her all about her accomplishments. Ms. White continues to be grateful to her Mother and daughter, and especially Instructor White, and all of her teachers at Solano College for inspiration and encouragement. Through determination, she believes she will successfully complete her goals, graduate in 2011, and go on to eventually owning her own business, as well as one day being a motivational speaker. Ms. White concluded that she, herself, is living proof that it can be done.

Presentation by Student Jenny Gonzalez

“My name is Jenny Gonzalez, and I am currently a student and an employee of Solano Community College. My adventure into college started here at the Vacaville Center in 2000. I was introduced into the Disability Services Program that gave me hope to continue my education after being in a severe car accident. The DSP programmed helped me to see that the word disabled is not the disability but the ability to still move forward with my personal goal. The counselors provided me the road map and plan to achieve my Associate’s Degree in Banking and Financing. I began taking Computer, History and English courses my first semester here at the Vacaville Center. The Vacaville Center has been a blessing and convenient to me because I live only ten minutes away. Being in a wheelchair at the time, it helped me to have a college close to home for transportation and other situations. I have been able to accomplish many of my classes that were toward my degree here at the Center.

The environment here at the Center is very welcoming and a peaceful one. The staff and faculty have always been open and willing to work with me with any accommodation that I have

needed due to my disability. I met Ms. Teresa McLeod when I first began here at the Center and she helped my mother and I with the many questions we needed answered. Who would know that later on she would give me the great opportunity to become a student worker in the office at the Vacaville Center? I was able to attend work and school at the same time and plan my courses for each semester around my work schedule. Attending classes and work at the same location has been a blessing. I have saved commuting and reduced the cost of gas. I then had to leave my position as a student worker due to a family emergency. A few months later, I was then aware of a substitute position for the Travis Center and Vacaville Center. I jumped on that opportunity because of remembering what a great environment both places were to work in. I quickly applied and the rest is history. I am currently employed as the Extended Campus Assistant for the Vacaville Center.

I am now in the process of completing my Associate's Degree in General Business. I have now completed all but one class to transfer to Sacramento State to accomplish my Bachelor's Degree in Business.

I appreciate your time and thank you very much for the great opportunity you have given me to share my student and working experience."