I. Introduction:

- Recognition of Members of the Board
- Recognize the Presidential awardees (All stand at once)
- Recognize the Flex Cal Committee members (All stand at once) and thank them for their work.
- Recognize the members of the Nursing Department for their work to earn Board of Registered Nursing approval.
- Thank A&R folks for their work with late grades. I expect that late grades will no longer be a part of SCC’s culture. Like SLOs, “on time” grades must be a top priority of all Deans, Supervisors, and faculty.

II. Let me first turn to what I see as the College’s most pressing issues for the New Year:

1. Accreditation needs to be part of what we routinely and naturally do at SCC and not a task that we perform merely for ACCJC. After all, continuous, critical self-study is inherent to any genuine academic institution. We have invested in a coordinator to continually work with all of us on Accreditation and lead us into the next self-study.

2. Faculty peer evaluation is clearly a feature of continuous, self-improvement. This requirement was set in place over 25 years ago in AB 1725. It is time for SCC to turn to the task of setting in place a formal, negotiated peer review process.

3. Much Hiring is occurring this semester and we need to be more rigorous in the selection of qualified candidates and more vigilant in mentoring and evaluating new hires. Based on our own Equity and Diversity Plan as well as our Student Equity Plan, we need to do our best to upgrade the diversity of faculty and staff. I would like to come back to this point later.

4. Management and Staff have had many interim positions. I share the concern of many of us that we must move away from interims to the re-establishment of permanent hires. But, let me share with you that having had interims that are internal employees gives us an opportunity to evaluate the talent pool we have and give our own internal employees an opportunity to showcase their potential as well as to gain experiences to be competitive in a broad search.

5. Refinement of our SCC Organizational structure. Currently, we are restructuring the Human Performance and Development School and expect to integrate that School more effectively in the administrative structure of the College. More details will be shared with you via SPDirect.

6. SCC’s Middle College Program has been firmly established and we will continue to expand this worthwhile initiative. The Fairfield Suisun School District will establish this program this coming Fall.

7. Communication between Committee Representatives and Constituents needs more responsible performances: more timely, reliable, and informative communications between leaders and constituents will produce greater collegial trust at SCC. In the absence of such regular reporting, many of us are not fully informed of the developments throughout the College.

8. The Educational Master Plan (EMP) and Educational Facility Plan (EFP) are now more focused on clearly aligning our Mission and Values with student equity and student success. Facilities implications that faculty raised in their program entries will be incorporated into our MFP and
we have edited Program entries to provide a uniform voice to the EMP, as well as to move programs forward over the next 3-5 years. We need all of you to stay involved in our planning.

9. **SCC’s Default Situation** is improving. In fact, you need to know that SCC was the first college in the state to submit a solid plan to ensure that we will give our students the help they need in repaying loans.

10. **Student and Staff Equity** need to be at the center of what SCC values. Yesterday our Student Equity Committee and our Equity and Inclusion Advisory Council held an intensive workshop lead by Dr. Karen McCord. The E.I.A.C. has recently completed a survey of student equity conditions and will soon be sharing their results. EQUITY at SCC is up to each and every one of us and is simply an ethical and moral imperative for us all.

11. **Security:** We have an interim agreement with the County Sheriff to provide security support for the College. Our long-term goal is to have an agreement that will turn security over to experts in the field. We have negotiations going on now with Local 39 and we hope to wrap them up in short order and move forward. Your safety and security are of the greatest importance to SCC.

### III. My Personal Education Journey from Haiti to SCC

This past semester I was invited to share my personal story with Dr. Karen McCord’s class. As I proceeded, it occurred to me that McCord’s students ended up knowing more of what motivates me than many of you. The McCord presentation also coincided with my reading of the book *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us* by Daniel Pink. I want to thank Professor DeKloe for introducing me to *Drive* and also several colleagues including Melissa Reeve, Sandra Rotenburg, Ruth Fuller, Erin Farmer, and Greg Poff who have tolerated my sharing with them comments about the book.

Pink’s argument I find most compelling is his basic claim that personal motivation or “drive” is a key element in all individual accomplishments. Such a fundamental “drive,” or inherent desire to perform good work transcends individual rank, pay grade, or privilege statuses. Today, then, I wish to begin with a brief synopsis of my own personal history from Haiti to Solano Community College and to share with you what has driven me and to accentuate the role faculty members played in motivating me and helping me to develop my drive.

I like to brag about my village, Saint-Georges, as much as I brag about the University of Kansas. But, Saint-Georges had little to offer me as a boy in terms of education; in fact, it was the benevolence of a city Pentecostal pastor that got me to school at the age of 7 and a half. With two loving parents and a myriad of benevolent strangers, I eventually found myself educated and with a couple of Master’s degrees and a Ph.D. You will hear about some these benevolent strangers shortly, which may explain to some of you why I like mentoring and advising people. I benefitted so much from those who worked to inspire and to mentor me.

- I recall when Dad first asked me to enroll at the Haitian American Institute to learn how to speak English. I told Dad “no” at first and protested “Dad, what will I ever do with English?” But, I quickly realized that I should listen to my parents, and, as a consequence, I learned to speak English!

Later, the following individuals were instrumental in igniting my drive to make something “big” in myself:
Frances Sweet, a former US Attaché Culturel at the US Embassy in Haiti, asked me to come to the US: Following my studies as a Math and Physics teacher at the University of Haiti École Normale Supérieure, and as I was teaching at the U.S. Embassy in Haiti, Ms. Sweet asked if I was interested in pursuing my Master’s degree in the U.S. I quickly said “no” and explained that I was saving money to study in France. She astutely explained to me that the U.S. was closer and that I could do the same studies there. The opportunity I eventually found was to study French Literature. So I did just that and much more.

Now in the US, one Mary Kay Corbett, the advisor for students in Mathematics in the School of Education at the University of Kansas, asked me to consider becoming a US credentialed teacher as it became politically dangerous for me to return to Haiti. At first I said “no way” because 18 credits was too much. But, she persisted in advising me and a year later, I was not only certified, but became a Mathematics and French teacher in Kansas City, Kansas.

While at Kansas, Bryant Freeman, Professor Emeritus of French and Haitian Creole at the University of Kansas, suggested that I become an administrator: He said to me that I was Black, good with numbers and great with people…. and I should become an administrator. Again, I said “no way” as I believed that I had no interest in this “administrative stuff.” Nevertheless, Freeman made an appointment for me with the Dean of the School of Education at KU. I did not intend to go, but the day before the appointment Freeman said he would go with me to make sure that I actually went!

Now! Professor Freeman was a White Professor speaking to one who would become his Black protégé about his future. And, Yes! We want to hire faculty who represent the diversity of our students, but sometimes it might not be possible. What matters most is hiring those who are cognizant and sensitive to the needs of our diverse students regardless of their ethnicity or the diversity they bring to the College --those who make diversity, equity, and inclusion a part of their modus operandi. I would challenge all of us of any ethnicity to reach out to our students; especially those you suspect may need the outreach. Be a Bryant Freeman; don’t be afraid to say, “Hey! We need more Latino engineers or Asian teachers!” If anyone has a problem with it, let him or her know you made the observation because you care.

My next big step in my education career came when one Dr. James Boyer asked me to pursue a Ph.D. I was in Dr. Boyer’s class at K-State and one day he said to me “Son, what are you doing here?” I responded that pursuing my third Master’s degree was what I wanted and that I thought it was so cool. Dr. Boyer responded that he did not think that it was cool at all and told me to enroll in a Ph.D. program! At first, I resisted. He then had a second conversation with me that made me head straight to Lawrence to apply for the doctoral program.

Eventually, a certain Dr. Pam Fisher (former Chancellor of Yosemite Community College District) told me to apply for the Presidency at SCC in 2009. After I examined this College, I said to Dr. Fisher that this place was not for a first time college president with all the challenges it presented. She persisted and to get her off my back, I applied. Needless to say, my decision was one of the best decisions I have ever made. In fact, I have found a great place here to call home and to further my educational interests. As I head toward my fifth year being with you, I could not be more pleased to have you as colleagues and to help support your efforts.
So what was my wake up call to get involved in education leadership? Though Dr. Freeman had made it clear that I was going to become an administrator, I continued to struggle with the decision. I was insulted that he appeared to think that my teaching was not a good enough calling. But I also knew that as a teacher, I saw a great need to sponsor Teachers of Tomorrow (an organization to recruit and assist future teachers) and I did so. At this time, I faced what I saw as an obligation to expand my role as a teacher and to eventually become an administrator (here I should add that in designing and developing the Teachers of Tomorrow program, there were no financial incentives and no accolades from my school or from most of my fellow faculty members).

I suppose it was some kind of epiphany that drove me to the realization that I should become an administrator TO FACILITATE the work of teachers. I would be an administrator who would support the work of teachers! I knew that for teachers to get to their best level of performance without administrative SUPPORT was difficult. At the same time, I was reminded that my ultimate commitment had always been to student success. I realized, further, that while we can provide all the tutoring possible, that we can admit as many bright minds as possible, that we can provide students with advising and counseling and financial aid, that we can help students to excel in sports; however, without competent and caring teaching, we will not likely achieve student success. I realized that without enlightened administrators, success in teaching was most unlikely also. I realized that my role as a teacher could be enhanced by my own drive to become an administrator.

In sum, I want you all to know that as your Chief Administrator at SCC, I see my role idealistically, as that of a mere means to the accomplishment of the grand end of each student’s acquisition of knowledge, an end which is the immediate aim of dedicated teachers.

IV. My Desire to Help You to Strengthen your “drive” at SCC:

Over the past few years at SCC, I have chronicled in the SPD and in my Presidential awards, that SCC has many faculty, staff and administrators who have a drive that is not based on rank, privilege, or pay grade. Like me, they have a burning desire to do something for education—for their students. In other words, they are not motivated by external rewards.

It is worth recognizing some names here and briefly mentioning what these individuals have done beyond their job description. I want to be clear, however, that these are NOT the only motivated staff and faculty, but just a sample:

- Greg Poff with his broadcasting outfit;
- Laurie Cheatam with international students;
- Jim and Ed DeKloe with Biotechnology;
- Jennifer Lowe with the Biotechnology lab;
- Jeff Lehfelt for OSHA;
- Lisa Romero and Glen Burgess and the entire Nursing faculty and staff who just got their accreditation renewed, despite the mountain they had to climb to get there;
- Evette Nichols with IT;
- Ruth Fuller, Erin Duane, Quent Carter, and Sandra Rotenberg with LR10;
- Carlos Esteve with helping students with the cost of textbooks;
- The entire Psychology Department (DaPrato, Gotch, Jaimez, Bolz, etc.) and their work with adjunct faculty;
Maria Santiago and her colleagues (John, Christine, and Kiran) in Chemistry for diligently tracking their students and their attention to their SLOs;
Kathleen Conrad with her zeal to support students in labs.
Kheck Segmany and her work with her students in Mathematics;
Jeff Kissinger and Dan Ulrich for cleaning up their Welding and Auto Labs;
Hai-Yen Scoccia for all she does to make sure we are all well taken care of;
Mark Berrett who maintains his involvement with the alternative energy industry;

In fact, there exists a number of our faculty, staff and administrators who are self-motivated and driven to great accomplishments. I know that there are MANY of you that I have not yet gotten to know and many that I did not list today.

But I also know that sometimes SCC lacks the administrative infrastructure to help you, and I want to make sure we do not frustrate the self-determination and self-empowerment of our people who are driven to enlarge their current job descriptions.

Erin Farmer, Emily Blair, Marc Pandone, Ferdinanda Florence, Kimo Calilan, for example, are good teachers, or administrators. But, how can we help them find the time or the opportunity to perfect their craft? How can the Institution help them to publish, or create a masterpiece in Art or a fabulous new website or pioneer additional avenues for SCC students to achieve success?

We have, as you know, distinguished ourselves in many areas. Our revamped Fire program is an example (and note that Vacaville’s Firefighter of the Year is an SCC graduate!); our Biotechnology is praised around the world and our Science Programs have been heralded as some of the best. We have Mathematics faculty who are outstanding and those like Darryl Allen, whose students win awards at State competitions. Our sports teams and coaches and athletic trainers have been regarded as among the best also. Again, I am listing just a few of SCC’s accomplishments.

Given the accomplishments that we have already seen, I have often mused:

- What if, as part of our focus on being an Ideal College, we could transform SCC into a bastion of inventors, writers, excellent student athletes, social activists, environmentalists, outstanding engineering students all in great numbers and performers? Accomplishments that would begin with our faculty and staff and then be realized in the students that we serve........?

- How can we transform SCC into the place where diversity and equity are not just words or “plans” to satisfy accreditation, but meaningful concepts for us to embrace and to transform educational lives?

- How can I help each of you to ignite your personal “drive?”

My position is simple: I want to make sure that I have the best faculty for my students. Furthermore, I want a staff that is willing and able to support the faculty. I want to support those serious, well-intended “drive” in each of you that will, in turn, vitalize the College as a whole. I have chronicled for you my journey and how, along the way, I was helped. I hope this answers any question you may have on why President Laguerre wants to “give back” and help you to ignite your drive.
To that end, I am hopeful that we will continue to engage in critical, constructive dialogue to examine how each and every one of us can get the most out of our daily work—for ourselves and for our students.

V. In Conclusion: Five Beliefs From My Heart and Mind:
   1. Seize those tipping points or defining moments of your career that are most productive and truly meaningful for education.
   2. Stand for something that will make a difference, not for those mere minutiae. As Mariam Williamson said: “Your playing small does not help any one.”
   3. Do not allow anyone to extinguish the flame that is in you. Courageously pursue your goals for yourself and for your students.
   4. Don’t kill a fly with a hammer.
   5. Do not let false bonhomie substitute for genuine collegiality.

Today I am encouraging each and every one of you to not let go of your inner “drive” to accomplish what you truly seek at SCC.

You know that you are already engaged in society’s most meaningful work - education. Strive to make your work make a difference and do not ignore the fire that drives you.

Happy New Year and my best to all of you as we begin our Spring semester!