Recognition of Distinguished Guests:

- President of the Board: Trustee Denis Honeychurch
- VP of the Board: Trustee A. Marie Young
- Trustee Rosemary Thurston
- Other Trustees
- The President of the Educational Foundation Board, Former Solano County Education Superintendent, Mrs. Dee Alarcón; and, a great supporter of the College and executive at AT&T, Ms. Rhunette Alum.
- Want to recognize also the members of the press who are with us. Often I have no idea who they are here, but they always seem to be here.
- Also want to recognize the wind beneath my wings, Mrs. Marie-Claude Laguerre, my wonderful friend for over thirty years.
- I want to recognize and thank our facilities crew for their work in making the preparation for this event. Our thanks go to the Theater staff and their director Chris Guptill for their support of our program.
- While we do not have time to recognize everyone who should be acknowledged, lest we forget that many of you work quietly, whether it is in Admissions and Records, Counseling, Services for Students with Disabilities; Financial Aid, Student Development, Assessment and Placement testing, the offices of the deans (you ladies are wonderful); the Bookstore, the Centers, the Finance Office, IT, Reprographics, the Library, etc., and I cannot say enough to honor our colleagues in Human Resources. They all have been extremely positive despite many challenges and they have been supportive of the District needs and they care about your welfare as employees.

One person I am going to signal out is last year’s Classified Employee of the Year, Kathryn Kearns. When I asked for tips of people we or I need to recognize, I got help with this one. I could not make it shorter, but this is courtesy of Marc Lancet: “Oh one more item. I am sure you have already prepared your list of thanks to faculty and staff for your Flex Cal presentation. I wanted to put in a word for Kathy Kearns. This move from 1300 to temporary quarters has been very difficult due to conflicting schedules and policies of all the parties involved. As you know, I had commitments in Estonia and could not stay longer to help than June 20. Other faculty had similar commitments. When I returned from my travels I find that the temporary quarters are very close to ready for the new semester. All summer this difficult task has fallen on Kathy's shoulders and she performed as usual above and beyond the call of duty. And she did much of it on her
own. We in the Art department are grateful, so if there is room on your list, please add her name. Thanks so much. Either way, I think your capacity for recognition goes a long way towards building morale.”

**General Greetings:** My dear colleagues, greetings and welcome back to those of you who are now returning and those who have been around all summer, welcome.

**Announcement:** As per a compromise with the Flex Cal Committee leaders, the presidential awards will take place in the Cafeteria just before lunch at exactly noon. We will introduce our new employees and recognize a dozen of your colleagues for great service to the college. Please come help us honor them. I also want to share with you that the Budget forum scheduled for tomorrow is canceled as it conflicted with the FOCUSED attention the Basic Skills Committee is putting on the issues of Basic Skills. Please join us for the keynote speech and participate in other activities on Tuesday.

**Accreditation:** Thanks for the hard work of all our faculty, classified, administrators, trustees and students as we declare that Solano Community College has successfully completed the 2011 Accreditation Self-Study Report. Not only have we finished the document on time, but the report is a true reflection of our ability to work collaboratively, transparently, and in the spirit of “living the standards of accreditation”. We know that all of you have in some way contributed to the brainstorming, writing, editing, evidence gathering, copying or by doing the good work that IS the content of the report itself… for that we thank you. In particular, we would like to thank your faculty Accreditation Coordinator, Ms. Tracy Schneider, who has spent many, many hours on the Self-Study. The faculty and staff can be very proud of her and her hard work.

The accreditation visiting team will be paying us a visit from October 24th to 27th. When the team arrives, please be here and extend its members every courtesy. They are, after all, our peers and our colleagues from across the state. We know that as they come to confirm what we say in the report that they will discover what we already know… Solano Community College is an institution of higher learning that is dedicated to “transforming students’ lives”.

**The advancement of an institution:** There are multiple acts, actions, gestures, gives and takes, diplomacy, and good will at the base of an institution such as ours that help it make progress. I want to share with you a few of the positive steps we have taken over the past few years as a celebration of our successes:

- No ACCJC sanctions because of your work: It lasted five years. You can say “free at last!”
- The Educational Foundation has made an impressive beginning on our first bona fide fund development program and has some development funds already raised for scholarships, programs and general college enhancement. A report on our foundation and the accomplishments of Mr. Bostic is being developed to be shared with the college community and the Board of Trustees.
• The scholarship Foundation, a faculty based organization, involving faculty and staff, has continued to be of great support to our students and we thank the faculty and staff who have contributed to the fund.

• The committee has a program called SHARES where if you purchase something and 3% of your expenses come back to the scholarship fund. Rick Green will be out in the lobby giving you cards if you want to support the activity.

• The community has been impressed with the college. There have been many things that have come about since I arrived that the community has continued to embrace and is impressed with. The community is truly connected to its college, just as it was when I was interviewing here. We need to continue to capitalize on that strong positive sentiment. As Peter Bostic and I visited with the County Administrator on Friday, the sentiment of being connected to the community was alive and well as she discussed with us so many ways the county and the college can cooperate.

• Even though we are still working to balance the budget, we at least are aware and with some level of certainty know what the bottom line is. Though I made a misstep in the College’s approach in Labor Negotiations with the SCFA, we are now talking with our unions… and as President Snow said to the board about me “…Even an e-mail message to both of us stating clearly and directly that the district wanted to meet to discuss the possibility of mutual openers would have likewise served the purpose. We could have then set a time to meet with the District and decide together if we had articles that we both wanted to open.” We have asked to speak with SCFA, we have spoken a little, and we will speak again.

• Our classes are full despite the economic challenges.

• We are offering our first class in the city of Winters. This is a major accomplishment as the college started to reach out to Winters in recent months and we are being successful of making Winters an integral part of the college.

• We inaugurated some traditions: Honorary degrees to community leaders and granted Faculty, Staff and Trustees Emeritus status.

• We know what we can do to increase our revenue. We need to increase our number of students paying out of state tuition. These students paying more will come from out of state and foreign countries as we organize ourselves and put greater emphasis on them. We will never be in the same position as the UCs when it comes to the imbalance of American and foreign students because we know we are a community college. But, we have the ability to add international students without paying more for them. I look forward to partnering with many of you to move in that direction. While the financial outcomes are positive, there are equally important reasons of diversity, global understanding and humanity that make recruiting and enrolling international students a good endeavor.

• We threw a party for the sixty-fifth anniversary that was awesome. It started with activities on the Fairfield Campus and culminated into a gala that took place at the Ulatis Center. Thank you Peter and supporters of the program. There were a lot of staff volunteers at the preparation leading to the event and at the event. I want to thank them as well. We are still receiving positive comments from community members who attended the event.
Among Top 100 Best

Each year the Community College Week publishes “Top 100 Associate Degree Producers,” the list of community colleges and universities that rank in the top 100 for the number of associate degrees and certificates they award in a variety of disciplines. For the 2011 edition, Solano Community College ranks in the following categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Percentage Change</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minorities</td>
<td>97/100</td>
<td>+17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian-Americans</td>
<td>32/100</td>
<td>+10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary</td>
<td>21/50</td>
<td>+13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The change in the graduation rate of minority students in all categories is positive for the college as the enrollment of the ethnic minority population is the largest percentage of the student body. We are also pleased with the leadership role SCC plays in graduating Asian-American students. We need to continue to increase our graduation rate among Whites, African-Americans and Hispanics. With a growing percentage of Hispanic population in the county, it is important that our graduation rate for Hispanics be stronger, as well as our enrollment rate.

Just think about it: There are 112 community colleges in California and 1217 community colleges in America, in addition to many universities warding the Associate Degree. We are among the best in these categories.

Ability to Respond: Being Response-Able

Last year was a year when we were tested, but we showed that we had the unique ability to respond. Stephen Covey in the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People talked about when you are a responsible person, you are able to respond; you have the ability to respond and to quote him: You are “response-able”.

• When in June of 2010 we lost both leaders of our Finance Office, some thought we were doomed. Au contraire, we came back even stronger and were able to hire Yulian Ligioso and Susan Foft.
• When we decided to hire a new director of Financial Aid, we had high hopes of attracting a great candidate… and we did. Today I am pleased to share that we hired a dynamic individual with all the requisites to make an outstanding director of financial aid -- Robin Darcangelo.
• When we lost our grant coordinator, we were fortunate to lure a fantastic grant writer, Lynette Gray. Ms. Gray is a delight to speak with about resources. She simply makes sense.

These are just a few examples of what we were able to do and how we have met and will continue to meet challenges.

Character of Solano Community College: Our character is tested when we run into difficulties and often the difficulties themselves make us aware what our character is. While we have many
examples, the two I am going to share with you simply tell us what and who we are as an institution. I want to briefly mention Phong Le and Robby Rodgers.

The way you respond to students in need is fantastic. The disappearance and the eventual burial of Phong Le brought the Nursing staff, faculty and students together.

The need to support Robby Rodgers, our student and baseball player, brought over one hundred people to run and raise funds for his medical expenses. Among the participants were faculty members like Carlos Esteve and so many other faculty and staff. Thank you, Coach Stover, for supporting the young man! By the way, if anyone wants to contribute, please see Coach Stover. It is not too late.

You as a group of employees care deeply and show it everyday. This college could have already been in ruins and treading the same path as some institutions that were on Show Cause and that ended up being closed. But, you would not let it happen. You have brought us back. As our difficulties and challenges continue, we will need to strengthen our character and not give up on one another. We are not perfect and we have plenty of room for improvement; nevertheless, we are pretty darn good.

Where Challenges remain
Instead of sharing a list of our challenges with you, I simply want to address three important issues. There are times as someone who is empowered to lead a group you have to have a sincere conversation with the group. What I say here is an invitation to further dialog. I am taking the opportunity as we closed our offices and we have the majority of you here to address these issues as a way to start our year with good information and to move forward knowing our expectations. My mentor, Chancellor of Contra Costa Community College District, Dr. Helen Benjamin, terms these courageous conversations. I want to address quickly the issues of discrimination, achievement gap and sexual harassment.

- **Discrimination**: I can safely say that 99.999% of our faculty and staff have not had either validated complaints or any complaints against them in the area of discrimination. I will say unequivocally that Solano County and Solano Community College are both two places where racism and racial discrimination have not found a comfortable seat. But, it is important for us to be vigilant and to watch as we interact with different groups who are ethnically, socially and financially challenged; that we not let down our guard and that we ensure that we are treating all students, fellow employees and supervisees without prejudice and without discrimination and with respect. This may not be comfortable. I know that this line of conversation may not sit well with many of us because we do not perceive ourselves as discriminating against anyone; but I still say to be careful and be mindful of others. Sometimes, how people discriminate or prejudge is not a conscious act, and often only the victim knows how she/he is affected.

- **Achievement Gap**: President Barack Obama threw a challenge to the colleges and universities in America that by the year 2020, we need to graduate an additional 5 million college students to meet the workforce demand that is projected and to make sure we have a higher percentage of college graduates than most other countries. This is a tall order, but as Vincent Tinto said, “Nobody rises to low expectations.” For Solano
Community College to contribute to this success, we need to graduate an additional 8000 students or about 800 additional students per year.

- Our national organizations, such as AACC, ACCT, Phi Theta Kappa, and NCBA have all embraced the challenge and signed onto what they call “The Completion Agenda.” To have an indication of the potential to achieve greater success, many community colleges take inventory of the students’ achievements in what they call “Gateway Courses.” For Solano Community College we have identified 17 “Gateway Courses” in conversations with the Academic Deans.

- As I reviewed the achievement gap in all these areas, there are some disciplines where across racial lines our students perform exceptionally well. There are others where it is hard to even speak of achievement gap because every ethnic group’s performance is so low. Dr. Christopher Myers has the data for each of these courses and would be delighted to share them with you.

As we examine the achievement of all ethnic groups, African-American students experiences by far the largest gap and the most consistent gap. Of all the categories, in fact, there were two where African-Americans did not have the largest gap in both success and retention. African Americans were lower in achievement in 15 out of 17 categories. Latinos were second with four categories.

**So what? Well!** (A) No blame! Simply that is what the fact is saying. Blaming has never taken us anywhere. (B) Are there some of us across all the disciplines and Basic Skills and Counseling who can step forward and examine these issues even further? Can we look further at those who are having success and those who are not and determine what intervention may work to narrow the achievement gap? This is not something that is the responsibility of the faculty alone; despite the fact that this would be a good area for the faculty to lead us in discovering. Support services for students play an important role in students’ achievement or at least it is a strong partnership between instruction and all other support services. What are we doing in scheduling, in admission, in financial aid, in the grounds and cleaning the restrooms and in allocating our dollars in form of budgeting? There is a future to gain. How can we assure that enough African-Americans who come to us will successfully participate in it? One of the surest ways to meaningfully and responsibly participate in democracy and prosperity is through education. That is the great equalizer. Many of us are clear examples of it.

The challenge belongs to all of us. It starts as we work with our elementary schools to provide tutors from our classes like professor Saki Cabrera is doing or like Christian Fortier from MESA has done. It continues when we recruit students to come to the college, their attendance to class and how we help them navigate our systems and continues when we are serving them as alumni. It is the responsibility of every single one of us. Therefore, I encourage all of us to think about these students and determine how you will ensure that they perform at par with either the Asian students or their White counterparts. It may not be easy, we may fail, but at least we will know that while employed at Solano Community College we did our best to bring about the success of underrepresented students.
- **Sexual Harassment**: The third topic is one that I am addressing because I have you all here in one location and because it’s important to have you hear a strong consistent message from me, and our Board of Trustees… on Sexual Harassment: I want to take a few minutes to share with you the college’s expectations in regard to Sexual Harassment. We have a policy (4270). Please read it and become familiar with it as it helps protect everyone’s interest. It protects you as an employee and it protects our students and it ensures that the learning process and the learning environment are free of unnecessary distractions.
  
  - “The Board of Trustees hereby declares that it is the policy of the district to prohibit sexual harassment in the workplace and in all programs and activities of the district.”
  - “The Board further declares that it intends to act promptly, visibly, and vigorously in demonstrating a strong disapproval of sexual harassment.”
  - “The Board, therefore, directs the Superintendent/President to develop appropriate procedures to ensure that students and employees are free from sexual harassment and to provide a mechanism for resolution of complaints of sexual harassment which are consistent with applicable state and federal laws and regulations.”
  - “The Director of Human Resources is the person responsible to receive complaints of Sexual Harassment”
  - “The District has an obligation to respond to any report of conduct which may constitute sexual harassment as it deems appropriate including but not limited to an internal investigation of reported conduct and will take appropriate disciplinary action up to and including discharge, expulsion, or termination of contract if such is justified.”

It is not my intention to report to you any specific sexual harassment issues we have had. I just want to share with you and reiterate what the district’s and the board’s position is on this issue. We will not tolerate, we will investigate and we will act to the extent allowed by law.

We have to set a strong example as an institution of higher learning, over and above what our colleagues in business or industry may do in regard to discrimination and sexual harassment. These issues negatively affect and destroy lives and have the potential to derail careers of people who have worked hard for them whether you are a perpetrator who is caught or a victim of sexual harassment. For students, it may be devastating to the educational opportunities they are seeking. In their case, it may destroy their lives and aspirations before they begin them. Let’s be mindful that our employees are here to transform lives and our students and their loved ones have entrusted their future to us. It is a sacred trust worth preserving.

So in closing words on our three primary challenges, as intelligent and highly-educated people, we must continue our record of non-discrimination, non-sexual harassment and focused and renewed attention to how we are supporting underserved and low-income White, Filipino, African-American, Asian, and Latino students. All students who linger on the periphery of the American dream need our support, our love and our understanding.
• Conclusion
The debates over the past few months in Sacramento and in Washington, D.C. among our leaders have shown us how at times we miss the mission. When we sacrifice our education systems and want to lead our country to the brink of financial disaster; it shows that something is missing. While we may each think it is something different, we all know too well that a willingness to speak to one another civilly has a great potential to lead us to conclusions that may transform our society and definitely our institutions. At Solano Community College we got ourselves off of Show Cause partly because we decided to talk and by talking we have resolved a lot of problems. We are leading the college in the right direction. We are making inroads in areas heretofore we had not. May we continue our productive dialogs and be an example to others.

We have another visit coming; another accreditation site visit. We have it within ourselves to continue the great progress we have made or to regress. I will do my utmost best to continue the progress and I urge you to do the same. I want you to know by their actions the Board of Trustees is committed to supporting the continued advancement of Solano Community College.

As Stephen Covey asserted, you can buy a man’s back, but you cannot buy his heart… His heart is where creativity lies, where innovation lies. It is not your contract as members of Local 39, CSEA, ALG or CTA/SCFA that determines how much you will care for SCC, its community and its treasured faculty, staff and students. It is not the title of President, Executive VP, Dean, Faculty, Director, or Classified that makes a difference. You have it within you independent of your contract or your title; you have what it takes to transform lives and to have one of the best colleges in America.

May this year be one of our best, despite our economic challenges. As some of us looked at Haitians we visited and treated over the summer, we saw very little sign of a people who are still recovering from a killer earthquake. May some of that human spirit embrace us as we deal with the difficulties we have, as colleagues bonded to teach, learn, and help those we are fortunate to call our students build a brighter future for themselves and their families.

Have a wonderful academic year 2011-2012! And accept our gratitude for the work you do that goes unrewarded, unrecognized and unsung.

Thank you!