New Direction for Art

Art professor Alana Perlin's Digital Media classes are inspiring a new generation of artists, including Elise Torres whose work appears here. For more information, see the story on page 3.
A few days ago, one of our faculty initiated a friendly competition to raise funds for our AGS honors students, and as the competition unfolded, I was really impressed. The positive response from various departments, from various areas of the college, was overwhelming. At the time I was out of town representing the college at a conference, so the elation for me was quiet. I said to myself, “Look at how really strong is the support for students at Merced College.”

We are grappling with several controversial issues now—HigherOne financial services comes to mind—but in the midst of it all, this spontaneous outpouring of generosity spoke volumes to me.

The amount and pace of our work is dizzying. We are engaged in many projects at the moment, and I understand the stress many of us are under. Our classified employees continue to perform their duties very well, despite the fact that many areas have positions that have not been filled due to our budget shortfall. Faculty members continue to step up to accept work outside of the classroom. And our management ranks are completing work in epic proportions.

We’ve all been under enormous pressure, much of it forced upon us from outside the College. The accreditation process brings much anxiety, and though we’ve completed our Midterm Report (and I congratulate those who’ve worked so hard on getting this accomplished) the cycle will begin again in the near future as we work toward completing our institutional self-study in 2016. Although the general economy shows signs of improving and the state budget for community college is much better than it has been in years, our own financial situation is still problematic. We will have to make very difficult decisions to reduce our budget gap.

We have pressure from without and from within. It’s true that some things are beyond our control, but those things that we can control to reduce our stress, we ought to.

We’re all struggling. We bring our stress home with us and it affects our family life, and that further affects how we perform at work. Unless we take care of ourselves, we won’t be able to work well here or take care of our responsibilities at home. Exercising and eating well reduces stress. But it’s important for all of us to find those stress reducers that will keep us healthy and happy.

It’s also important for us to find reasons to be healthy and happy. Despite the many problems we’re facing as an institution, I believe (and I know that you do too) that Merced College is a great place to work. We are tasked with improving lives, with preparing students for their future. Every student is an investment that we make. It should be great cause for happiness knowing how much we are positively affecting every person who comes to Merced College.

We’re all struggling, I know that. I also know that we need to bring some joy into our lives.

I don’t have all the answers, and I’m open to suggestions on how we might do this at Merced College. My sense is that we have lost our feeling of community. It’s been said to me many times that the College used to feel like a family. These days it may feel more dysfunctional than we’d like.

In the midst of this kind of swirl, it is very important that we preserve a sense of community—that we work together for the sake of the College and our students. To that end, I am considering some ideas for building community, and I’ll be discussing these with College Council. One of them which we are already moving on, is the “celebration of talent” that is being planned for September. I hope you will consider auditioning for this in early April if you have a performing talent to share (see Robin Shepard or John Albano for details). And if you have ideas for additional ways to improve morale, build our community, and bring us together as a family, please contact me. I want to hear from you.

Part of building our community is having some traditions that are unique to us. This may mean adopting new traditions, or it may mean bringing back some old ones. With 50 years behind us, we may very well be ready to rally around a new institutional identity or a new cultural character, something that is immediately recognizable as belonging to us and us alone.

I’ve also heard that we should have events that bring us all together such as the old “back to school barbecues.” Perhaps we ought to create opportunities to honor our former employees, to bring them back into the family, so to speak.

The possibilities are tremendous and the stakes are large. We must simply do right by each other, for each other.

As we begin to talk together about these things I want to make a plea for unity. We’re all in this together. We need to treat each other with kindness and understanding. I have seen the “big heart” with which Merced College serves its students. I want us to continue to show that warm heart to each other.

“Our fellow employees deserve our empathy as they work so very hard during times of change; they can benefit from words of encouragement. I’m asking that you give encouragement to others, and I’ll make an effort to do the same.”

By Dr. Ron Taylor
Superintendent/President

MC Digital Arts Program is Growing and Thriving

Combining 21st Century technology and age-old notions of artistic expression, Merced College's Digital Media classes are becoming more popular among students familiar with visual technologies.

Digital art, the term for a wide range of artistic works and practices, uses digital technology as the key element in the creative process. Digital art is becoming widely used in mainstream media such as advertising and filmmaking.

“This is a burgeoning field in the arts,” notes Digital Media art professor Alana Perlin. “We expect growth in positions related to multimedia and other industries that are increasingly using digital technology to produce a wide range of products.”

The College is expanding its Digital Media offerings this year with three new classes. Digital Art 40B features creative approaches to digital image manipulation and interactivity. Art 45A and Digital Art 42A both emphasize media artwork for webpages and animation.

“We're finding that our students enjoy studying the visual technologies that permeate our lives,” Perlin said. “Much of our classroom activities revolve around learning these new technologies, as well as exploring critical thinking and other artistic practices.”

For more information about the College's Digital Media classes, contact Alana Perlin at Ext. 6592 or alana.perlin@mccd.edu.

MC Hosts High School Math Competition

The First annual Merced College High School Math Competition will take place at Merced College on Saturday, March 15. The competition, open to teams from local high schools, will consist of a two-hour multiple choice test in which students from around the county will have a chance to shine, according to Merced College math professor Kristen Rieg.

“The test is designed to challenge students with a profound knowledge of algebra and geometry,” Rieg said. “No knowledge of trigonometry or calculus is necessary and calculators are allowed.”

Each high school is invited to bring a team with no limit to the number of students. The top five student scores from each school will be combined to form the overall team score. In addition to team prizes, there will also be individual prizes awarded.

The test will begin at 10 a.m., Rieg notes, so all competing students will have to arrive at Merced College between 9:15 and 9:45 a.m. on March 15. The deadline to register for the competition is March 5.

After the test, lunch will be provided and then all students will be invited to watch the First annual Merced College Integration Bee. Awards will be handed out after the Integration Bee. A map and a schedule will be sent to participants prior to the event.

For more information, or to register, contact Kristen Rieg at 209.384.6353 or at kristen.rieg@mccd.edu.

Send your news and information to Robin Shepard at shepard.r@mccd.edu.
Community

Continued from page 2.

We’re all struggling. We’re all working under enormous pressure. Our fellow employees deserve our empathy as they work so very hard during times of change; they can benefit from words of encouragement. I’m asking that you give encouragement to others, and I’ll make an effort to do the same. Offer words of support. Be positive. Be affirmative. Find reasons to be optimistic.

The fact is, our individual attitudes can affect how others feel. Optimism is infectious, but so is pessimism, anger and frustration. These negative feelings are normal and completely understandable, especially in a changing environment, but negative statements tend to contribute further to the erosion of community.

Let’s reinforce the wonderful sense of devotion that we all bring to our jobs. I hope you’ll work with me as I strive to find ways to build stronger community in the college. I can only do this with your help. I promise to listen to your concerns and suggestions.

We’re all in this together.

Area 1 Schedules March Events

**Major Moments in Chemistry.** Wednesday, March 5, 1-2 p.m., VOC-141. Dr. Shane Phillips, professor of Chemistry at CSU Stanislaus, will be discussing transfer requirements and career options for chemistry majors.

**Rocket Launching by Physics Students.** Wednesday, March 12, 8-11 a.m., Soccer Field #1. Physics Professor Lana Jordan’s students will be launching rockets as part of their class projects.

**Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Student Social at the Los Banos Campus.** Thursday, March 13, 2-4 p.m., Room LB B-135. Pizza and refreshments for Los Banos STEM majors. Sponsored by the Hispanic Serving Institutions Grant.

**First Annual Mathematics Competition for High School Students.** Saturday, March 15, SCI-202. Registration starts at 9:15 a.m. Competition begins at 10 a.m.

Foundation Hosts State of the College Address

2nd annual State of the College Address & Luncheon with the Presentation of the 2014 President’s Medallion Award to Hanimireddy Lakireddy, M.D.

**Friday, April 11, 2014**

11:30 am to 1:00 pm

President Ronald C. Taylor, Ph.D. 2014 President’s Medallion Award

Hanimireddy Lakireddy, M.D.

Merced College Allied Health Center
3600 M Street, Merced, CA 95348

President Ron Taylor will deliver the 2nd annual State of the College Address on Friday, April 11 at 11:30 a.m. A highlight of the luncheon event is the presentation of the 2014 President’s Medallion Award, given this year to Merced cardiologist Dr. Hanimireddy Lakireddy. For more information, call the Merced College Foundation at 209.381.6470.