On Tuesday, one leg of my trip home from a conference in Cleveland brought me into the Denver International Airport from the east. The airplane approach provided a close up, bird’s eye view of the devastation wrought by the flood water. I am fortunate never to have experienced a flood first hand and had imagined that the pattern of destruction would mirror that of a hurricane. I expected that everything in the area would be wiped out. Instead, the damage in the rural flood area looked more like what one expects of a tornado. Homes and ranches in the path of the water are gone, destroyed, but neighboring homes are still standing. My assumption of floods was based on what I knew from media coverage and it changed when I was able to have a first-hand experience.

Yesterday, we celebrated the 92nd anniversary of Modesto Junior College with a birthday party for our mascot, Petey the Pirate. Hundreds of students, faculty members, staff, and community members joined the celebration enjoying hotdogs, cake, and the opportunity to talk like a pirate! I chatted with several preschoolers in attendance with parents and grandparents including one little girl that plans to come to MJC and will someday be a doctor! We were hoping to have media coverage of our birthday event and appreciate the Modesto Bee helping to spread the word about our birthday bash.

I was totally unprepared for the national media coverage of a college incident on Constitution Day. The coverage does not include any mention of the Constitution Day activity presented by the MJC Civic Engagement Project. The coverage does not reflect the campus culture or college mission. The coverage does not depict the commitment to students demonstrated by our faculty, staff, and administration each day. The coverage provides a very limited glimpse of Modesto Junior College that has motivated a vast number of individuals across our country to voice their concern through email and phone calls. The coverage creates a misunderstanding of MJC that is similar to my misunderstanding of river floods.

It is encouraging to know first-hand that so many are willing to stand in defense of our Constitution. It is unfortunate that so many of the communications in response to the video are personal attacks aimed at our staff and administrators. So what does MJC do now? We are engaged in our ongoing practice of assessing, evaluating, and making changes to increase our institutional effectiveness. We are in engaged in a comprehensive review of the matter and are poised to enact changes deemed appropriate. This is the process we use for improving student learning, student services, and the effectiveness of decision making. In fact, this afternoon, the college will engage in a large-scale functional exercise as part of our preparation for managing emergencies on campus. Several of our regional partners in law enforcement and emergency services are participating and will provide feedback that will assist us in improving our preparedness in the event of an emergency. MJC remains committed to excellence in educational programs, service to students, and
institutional effectiveness. As MJC moves into its 93rd year, my vision remains focused on an institution that is century strong!

The improvement of understanding is for two ends: first, our own increase of knowledge; secondly, to enable us to deliver that knowledge to others.  
John Locke