

With the transition from a Covid-19 impacted Spring 2020 semester to “Maymester” and now our first summer session, it still feels like one of the most challenging times in one’s career. My guess is that I’m not alone in this sentiment. In many ways, and for most of us, it’s been a long six months. Our hearts continue to break for those affected in a myriad of ways by the novel coronavirus and we hope our current social unrest yields a more egalitarian society.

While grappling with headlines and its often anguishing implications, faculty have valiantly confronted the challenges of remote instruction. The blurring of boundaries between work and home, with its inevitable bouncing back and forth between zoom meetings and household members and chores, has meant quite a bit of stress. Many faculty are also impacted by a sense of isolation and struggle with the lack of face-to-face, shared experiences and the uncertainty over how long all of this will last compounds a general sense of uncertainty, a world somewhat undone.

But, at the same time, faculty do not wish to complain. We remain deeply aware of our privilege to still be able to serve students in new ways; we are fortunate for the stability of our jobs. Faculty, already familiar with the ambiguities and long work days that teaching in a community college always involves, have worked even harder, and demonstrated professional dedication and selflessness.

So, hope springs eternal, along with the Academic Senate’s wishes for a second half of the year with plenty of Water, Wealth, Health and Contentment for everyone in our MJC community. Our Academic Senate will prioritize two themes for the rest of the year: **(1) Equity, broadly understood as fairness,** and **(2) Active, Contextualized and Student-Centered Pedagogy and Practice.**

Over summer we have over 50 faculty participating in collegial book discussions around issues of both equity and pedagogy. The Academic Senate will convene a special summer meeting on June 18th at 3pm to review the return to campus plan for faculty input as well as consider two draft resolutions, the first addressing anti-racism and inclusivity while condemning hate crimes and the second resolution considers non-resident students enrolled in six or fewer units.

These Senate efforts focused on equity and pedagogy are rooted in one simple idea: what makes things better in society is teaching. Education itself is the key to a brighter future and we have much collaborative work to do. We also will be pursuing additional virtual activities related to our nascent Institute for Applied Creativity and Community Transformation (ACCT); we are recommending changes to our participatory governance model to assure agile and efficient decision-making; we forge ahead with a workgroup that will offer recommendations on course and calendar compression and other ways we might increase student momentum towards completion; and we are focused on the Guided Pathways Schools rollout and a Zero Textbook Cost (ZTC) plan.

I wanted to share a few things which have stood out lately, even at a time when weeks blur and most days, for some reason, seem like a Wednesday to me. It has been a pleasure working with Dr. Jennifer Zellet to co-host the Grading During Covid-19 Townhall and Dr. Florida Arias led a collaborative, multi-constituency group which worked assiduously to assure the student portion of CARES relief funding is being directed quickly to the students most in need. The arrival of Dr. Sarah Schreider, and her active engagement in a wide-variety of faculty meetings, has put instructors at ease despite the complexity of fiscal conversations. Such collaboration assures decisions are well thought out and enjoy wide acceptance with faculty. It is the leadership style of Dr. Houpis which has made such invigorating teamwork possible and so the Academic Senate especially thanks our college president for his approach to participatory governance and his faith in the power of working together in difficult times.

I'd also like to thank every Academic Senator at MJC as well as Shelley Akiona and the YFA and Pam Guerra-Schmidt and the Columbia College Academic Senate for making this not just a challenging year at the Academic Senate but a fulfilling one. Thanks to the many leaders I've had the privilege of working with this year, including our YCCD Board of Trustees, Chancellor Yong and district office, our college deans, and especially our student leaders and now look forward to working with Jenni and a new ASMJC Executive. Finally, I'd like to end by recognizing just a few of our faculty retirees, in particular Academic Senator Cheryl Mulder as well as professors Lee Kooler and Becky Ganes. I enjoyed reading more about the psychology "dynamic duo" on our college website. As marshals for this year's graduation, Lee and Becky offered a video message which included a *#MJCStrong* message appreciated by all.

We are, indeed, in complex times, so I'd like to close with a quote from something I've been watching a bit more of these days, television. The character of Sam Seaborn from *The West Wing* declares a slightly hyperbolic idea about the importance of teaching and learning. He says: "Education is the silver bullet. Education is everything. We don't need little changes, we need gigantic, monumental changes....That's my position. I just haven't figured out how to do it yet." I join this television persona in his enthusiasm for the transformative potentials of education, and I'll let you know if I "figure out how" to go about such work. With things the way they are these days, I'm anticipating some insight on a Wednesday.