

Subject: From the President's Desk**Date:** Tue, 28 Mar 2006 13:38:34 -0800**From:** "Raul Rodriguez" <rrodriguez@deltacollege.edu>**To:** "Campus Wide Business" <campusbusiness@sjdccd.cc.ca.us>

Good afternoon! I hope everyone is staying warm and dry given this tempestuous weather that we are experiencing. The bad news is the forecast calls for more rain for at least the next week. The good news is that it has to get warmer sometime soon (please say that it will). It can't happen soon enough for me. I'm definitely a hot weather person and have had my fill of cool weather and rain for this year (if I would have wanted a steady diet of this kind of weather I would have moved to Portland or Seattle)!

Profusion of Placas

Last summer I visited the state of Michoacan, Mexico. I had not been there in more than twenty years since my days as a graduate student when I received a Fulbright Fellowship to study in Mexico. The most noticeable difference, which saddened me immensely, on my return to Morelia, was the explosion in gang-style graffiti (placas) that was present in virtually every neighborhood in the city, except for the city center, which is the tourist area. When I resided there as a graduate student, the city had little, if any, graffiti. It was one of the most beautiful colonial cities in all of Mexico and it is disheartening to see how it has been desecrated. To try and understand what had happened, I spoke with cab drivers, hotel employees, civil servants, and just about anyone else who I could strike up a conversation with about this issue. The response was the same across the board. That is, they acknowledged and lamented the problem and indicated that the police had attempted to crack down on this issue, but that since most of the violators were minors, there was not much they could do about it.

The response of the people I spoke with alarmed me as much as the actual graffiti. It seemed that the people who lived there recognized the problem but had become habituated to seeing it to the point that they barely noticed it any longer. It just became a part of the landscape. What is worse, they felt powerless to do anything about it.

I bring up this issue because anyone who is paying attention to their surroundings on this campus can't help but notice the precipitous rise in the amount of graffiti. There are multiple examples to point out, but the worst so far is the defacement of the statue of FDR. The fact is, though, that it is not limited to the Delta campus. I drive up and down Pacific Avenue every day and see the destructive scribbles that deface local businesses all along that thoroughfare. Obviously, it is evident in other parts of the city as well. However, I am most concerned with the increase in such activities on this campus. I have seen exhibits of the work of graffiti artists and there is something of merit in such exhibitions. At the same time, precious little of the local graffiti that I see could ever be labeled as or confused with art. Worse, in the case of the swastika that was placed on the cheek of the statue of FDR, it could be considered a hate crime.

My main concern is not to debate whether or not graffiti is art; it is to eradicate the trend of graffiti occurring on our campus before it gets out of control. Cities and merchants in California and other states spend millions of dollars each year to repair the damage caused by graffiti. We are in danger of doing the same and spending our

precious resources on graffiti abatement when it should be spent on the basic maintenance needs of the campus that are already strapped for insufficient funds.

I have always believed that one of the best ways to combat graffiti is to remove it as quickly as possible. The people who paint the graffiti want to see their work and, if discouraged by quick removal, will move on to areas of less resistance and better results. That is why I can't understand why people let graffiti stay on their buildings for long periods of time. Graffiti is such an irritant that I have fantasized about carrying my own spray cans to do my own eradication (which would mean that I would never get anywhere as I would be constantly stopping to spray graffiti).

I am pleased with the quick response of our maintenance staff to this problem, but they are at the point of being overwhelmed by it if it gets any worse. For that reason, I hope that everyone on campus will be more cognizant of the graffiti problem. It is hard to catch someone in the act of doing graffiti, but please report any suspicious activity. At the very least, please report any graffiti that you notice around the campus so that our maintenance crew can remove it as quickly as possible. We are planning to make major improvements to our campus surveillance system in the near future and one of our aims is to use that system to better combat this upsurge in graffiti. Delta is an urban campus, however, that does not mean we have to resign ourselves to a campus littered with urban graffiti. We can and will do everything possible to stop this disturbing trend in its tracks.

Brown Act Training

At the manager's meeting this morning, Dr. Kim Myers presented a training module on the Brown Act to the managers in attendance. Previously, the Board of Trustees went through a similar training activity at their retreat last February. We hope that these two training sessions are the first of several more training sessions that will be open for members of all constituent groups to attend. Further, I hope that this will not be a one-shot deal as we need to do this type of training on a periodic basis to keep up with changes in or more refined interpretations of the Brown Act.

There is a great need for training in the Brown Act. Because of what we learned in the retreat, we have already changed some of our practices for board meetings. None of us are experts in this law and there is a certain level of interpretation that occurs with any law. As a result, we want to make sure that we have the best understanding possible to improve our practice in regard to the conduct of board meetings. Similarly, I believe that other governing bodies on campus, who are also subject to the requirements of the Brown Act, will improve their practice by attending a training session.

Look for an announcement in the near future for the date of the next training session.

Kudos

In my last message, I inadvertently omitted an important recognition. Specifically, I forgot to mention that **Dr. Hazel Hill** received the Economic Development Person of the Year award from the Association of Community

and Continuing Education (ACCE). The ACCE presented this award to Dr. Hill for her "development of innovative programs, contribution to myriad statewide and regional committees, and her leadership role in Economic Development." This is certainly a well deserved award and I want to congratulate Dr. Hill on the award and commend her for her tireless efforts on behalf of Delta College.

Leslie Wang, who is a Senior Multi-Media Technician at Delta and a distinguished member of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges, received a special recognition. The California Community Colleges Classified Senate (4CS) honored Trustee Wang with their highest award, the 4CS Leadership Award. Every year, an individual is selected for this award who has "made a positive impact on the community college system and supported the role of classified employees in the participatory governance process." Leslie will receive this award at the 4CS Classified Leadership Institute at the Granlibakken Conference Center at Lake Tahoe in June. Leslie is an outstanding employee in every way and she has maintained a great attitude and a high level of service during her 25 years of employment at Delta College. I am proud of Leslie's accomplishments and join with the 4CS in recognizing her many contributions on behalf of the California Community Colleges.

A job well done to both **Leslie Asfour** and the Fashion Program and **Dr. Jose Michel** and the EOPS Program on the publication of impressive newsletters for their respective programs. The *Fashion Profile*, which is hot off the presses, is a visually striking newsletter that is chock full of program news, fashion trend information, and brief profiles of prominent designers and their collections. The *EOPS Nickel and Nail* (I have no idea where that somewhat odd title came from) is also highly informative and has an attractive layout. I especially enjoyed the story of EOPS student Steven Lopez. Kudos to both Leslie and Jose on their successful publications!

Dr. Jane Dominik was once again nominated for inclusion in *Who's Who Among America's Teachers* by several of her students. Also, Dr. Jane, who is currently Vice President of the Arthur Miller Society, will soon begin serving a two-year term as president of that society. Additionally, Jane has written over a dozen articles for the Arthur Miller Society Newsletter, serves on its editorial board, and is responsible for founding the newsletter. Whew! That's a lot of stuff!

If you haven't donated to the fund for **Tamika Williams**, there is still time. Tamika made the front page of the Record, but not in the manner that most people would desire. As most of you probably know, Tamika is a Delta student who lost her townhouse to a fire last week. She lost all of her possessions in the fire. The Office of Vice President Williams has created an account for donations to Tamika and her son and a list of items that she needs to restock her home and that could be donated as well. The Delta Family is always generous and I know that Tamika will appreciate whatever is donated.
