

**Subject: From the President's Desk****Date:** Wed, 20 Sep 2006 15:50:29 -0700**From:** "Raul Rodriguez" <rrodriguez@deltacollege.edu>**To:** "Campus Wide Business" <campusbusiness@sjdccd.cc.ca.us>

*Good afternoon everyone!* Once again I am not sending this message out on a Friday as I will be off campus that day. The National Community College Hispanic Council (NCCHC) is holding their annual Symposium in San Jose this weekend. As I am an officer of the NCCHC Board, I will be attending the symposium on Friday and Saturday. The NCCHC is a non-profit organization that was founded in 1985 and it is an affiliate council of the American Association of Community Colleges. Today's edition will be brief.

**Health Benefits Update**

Many negative statements have been made about the board decision last year to cover the cost of health benefits for trustees. Some of the comments demonstrate a lack of understanding of the situation of the board. In my view, it is inappropriate to compare the board with any employee group or collective bargaining group. The trustees are elected public officials and do not receive salary. They receive a stipend that, after taxes and other deductions, amounts to approximately \$290 or so per month. They do not receive COLA or step and column increases as do employee groups. If the board did not cover the costs of their health benefits, they would be in a deficit mode. That is, their stipend would, depending on which health plan they chose, probably not be sufficient to cover their cost of benefits. I don't think any trustee is on this board solely for health benefits or to make money, but they sure don't want to be penalized financially for their board involvement and they shouldn't be. The trustees put in a lot of time and effort in preparing for and attending board meetings as well as for other college activities. The little they are provided hardly compensates them for that time.

In 1985, the board raised the eligibility for lifetime health benefits for trustees to 20 years of service. In 1995, they further voted to eliminate lifetime benefits for trustees who came on the board after 1995. This action was ahead of its time and the board should be commended for taking it. Last year, we ended the eligibility for lifetime benefits for new employees among the Management, Confidentials, and POA. Last month, we greatly restricted eligibility for lifetime benefits for new CSEA members. The cost of lifetime retiree benefits for employees is the monster issue in terms of cost and long-term liability. The cost of the trustee benefits is microscopic by comparison. When people talk about issues of fairness, they need to consider all of the facts and not make inappropriate comparisons.

**A Week of Mourning**

Bad news seems to come in bunches and we have had a bunch of bad news over the past week or so. First, we lost **Patrick Stapelberg** from the Publications Center. Patrick's official position was Graphic Artist, but he did much more than that. I saw him on numerous occasions working on printers in computer labs and offices and doing many other technology-related tasks. He was diligent in his duties and always got the job done. From all appearances, Patrick was a quiet and unassuming person. He was the kind of person that you can't help but like. He was generous to others and exemplified caring and kindness. At his funeral last Saturday, **Greg Greenwood** made some touching and insightful remarks about Patrick. In fact, he told a humorous story about Patrick that demonstrated his mischievous sense of humor (maybe he wasn't as quiet as I thought he was) and I

doubt that I will ever be able to remember Patrick without thinking about that story. It's hard to make sense of Patrick's loss as it was so unexpected. It just doesn't seem fair that he left us at such a relatively youthful age. Still, we can all be thankful that we knew Patrick and we can honor him by celebrating all that was good in his life.

On Monday I attended another funeral. This time it was for a friend of mine, **Tim Spencer**. Tim was the founder and owner (along with his wife Barbara) of the St. Amant Winery in Lodi. Tim was one of the best winemakers in the Lodi region and I was a frequent visitor to his winery (not just for the wine, but also for the great conversation). Tim won numerous awards for his winemaking skills and he was also a generous supporter of the Delta College Ag program. I will certainly miss Tim.

On Tuesday, I spoke with **Della Condon**. She informed me of the sad news that her husband, Jordan, passed away Monday evening. As you can imagine, Della was distraught over his loss. The only good news to report is that Della's recovery appears to be at the point where she may be able to return to work soon. She is tentatively looking at November as her target date for returning. In a time of grief work can be a source of solace and I suspect that Della will need such solace.

Let's hope that we get a reprieve from the bad news for a while.