

The Bulldog Bulletin

September 16, 2013

Student Success

Let's meet the challenge

I mentioned in last week's *Bulldog Bulletin* that I plan to use the next few issues to discuss three broad goals that I would like the college to focus on over the next several years: improving student success, making better connections to the community, and pursuing new programs and opportunities. In this issue I want to share some general thoughts on student success.

I need to start by acknowledging that student success is a complex topic and that making major headway on student success is an elusive goal for any college. I do not claim to be an expert on student success, nor do I have a magic solution. However, I spent many years in the classroom both as a teacher and as an academic advisor. While there is a great body of research on student success, my views come from those first-hand experiences.

What I do know is that we have about 1,350 new students this fall and none of them selected "drop out" or "failure" as a goal when they applied to CSM. Yes, some students are in a better position for success than others, but every student comes to our College with the hope that they will be successful. For some students it has taken extraordinary sacrifice and courage to just to get to our front door.

While I don't have a magic solution, I do have a simple philosophical approach when it comes to improving student success: *we need to create an environment where students have to work hard to fail.* In fact, that's a common theme among student responses from the community colleges that were 2013 Aspen Prize finalists. The Aspen Prize is a prestigious award which recognizes community colleges that excel at student success.

Creating an environment that makes it hard for students to fail does not mean that we lower standards. We must maintain

high standards, but we also must do everything within reason to help students achieve their goals. In short, we need to meet students where they are at academically, and help them get to where they need to go.

I know that this is easier said than done. I recognize that our students bring a more complex set of life circumstances to the College than when I was in the classroom. All of us have experienced the disappointment of seeing a student fail a class or leave the College despite a near heroic effort on the part of a particular individual or the College as a whole. Some of those students come back to us, some find their way at another college, but many never make it back.

There are a number of campus groups that are tackling the issue of student success and the results have been impressive. While I applaud all of our efforts, I feel that until we develop a comprehensive approach and look at the entire College, student achievement will be limited and fragmented, and many students will continue to fall through cracks. I am not suggesting that we discontinue existing programs--these programs are very successful and they work because of great faculty and classified staff, and supportive administrators. However, we need to develop a comprehensive response that meets the needs of all students.

This year I want to work with all of you to lay the foundation to create that special environment which makes it hard for students to fail. I think we have most of the key ingredients. It's just a matter being very mindful and deliberate about not letting a single student fall through cracks. Other colleges have created such an environment and they are seeing real results.

Finally, you will note some minor format changes to the *Bulldog Bulletin*. I want to thank our own Dave McLain for his helpful advice in improving the layout of the *Bulldog Bulletin*.



Please do not be shy in submitting your “question of the week” to me. Since nobody sent a question for this issue, this week’s free coffee goes to Dave McLain for his help. Thanks Dave!

Get to Know: Joyce Griswold

Joyce started at CSM in 2001 and worked in the Career Center. Dean Chowenhill, a counselor at CSM, encouraged Joyce to apply for her current position as an office assistant II in the Counseling Center. Joyce has enjoyed her move to the Counseling Center: every day is very busy and Joyce loves helping students and working with counselors, as well as her co-workers.



Joyce has a way of being a calming influence on students who sometimes come to the Counseling Center to resolve a stressful issue. Joyce feels that it is important for all of us to listen to students with empathy and to go out of our way to help students. She gets her greatest satisfaction from students who come back to the Counseling Center to thank her for her help.

It’s no wonder that Joyce understands our students so well. Joyce was a CSM student herself! In fact, Joyce earned an A.A . in business administration just a few years ago. When she is not at CSM, Joyce loves spending time with her son, her two daughters, and her three grandchildren. Joyce has a special talent for baking and her grandchildren expect a “special cake” from grandma, complete with decorations, for their each of their birthdays. Joyce loves to travel and has a real interest in visiting amusement parks, which I’m sure her grandchildren appreciate!

Meetings and Events:

Date	Meeting/Event
9/16	Transfer Day College Center 10:00-1:00
9/16	Student Senate Meeting College Heights (10-468) 2:15-4:15
9/17	CSM Makerspace Workshop Library 1:00-3:00
9/18	CSM High School Counselor Conference College Center 7:30-3:30
9/18	College Council City View (10-401) 2:15-4:00
9/20	Institutional Planning Committee College Heights 1:00-3:00
9/20	Accreditation Oversight Committee College Heights 3:00-4:00
9/23	Student Senate Meeting College Heights 2:15-4:15
9/24	Academic Senate Gov Council North Hall (18-206) 2:30-4:30
9/24	ASCSM Leads! College Center Plaza 11:00-1:00
9/24,9/25	ASCSM Club Fair College Center Plaza 11:00-1:00

Meetings are open to all. For a listing of all college events, please refer to the CSM Event Calendar:
www.collegeofsanmateo.edu/calendar/events/