

Colleagues,

Welcome back to the second week of the new academic year. It is always exciting to see the activity at the college and to realize the significant impact we make on individual lives and on the economic and social viability of the community. I think we often get caught up in our daily activity and fail to celebrate the important work we do as employees of an excellent community college.

This year promises to be one of challenges and opportunities. The challenges are those that we have experienced before with a few new ones thrown in. There are budget restraints, increased expectations for improved performance, confusion over the meaning of various suggestions for consolidation, and the distractions inevitably created by change. As I have said to you on numerous occasions, some centralization of functions can improve efficiencies and ease budget pressure. Agreement on some curricular issues can be beneficial to students. The challenge for your leadership, both at the college and the district, is to have the wisdom to know what to change and what to leave as is.

As your president it is my responsibility to be responsive to the needs of the community and to ensure that all of us do everything we can to help students meet our standards of excellence. I am also cognizant of the importance of operating within the context of the many positive aspects of our institutional culture. These are not easy times. However, easy times seldom bring innovation and creativity. We are committed to our work and we are resilient. I am convinced we will meet the various challenges just as we have done for almost 85 years.

The good news is that San Antonio College is poised to do even greater things over the next several years. Our new buildings and the renovations currently under way will enable us to expand high growth technical programs, which in turn will increase demand for general education courses. We are continuing to expand the First Responders Academy, which has the potential to become a major regional training center. Our programs in the fine arts are excellent, and plans are underway to further enhance our reputation and our ability to serve students in these important areas. The college has created a new degree in convergent media and is ensuring that our broadcast and journalism programs are changing to meet the needs of the industry. We also have model programs in dropout recovery and "early college." In fact, San Antonio College has a national reputation among those who work in these fields. Our counseling department is implementing strategies to improve student success and the student life office is providing even more opportunities for students to become involved in campus activities. Customer service surveys indicate high levels of satisfaction. We are also developing a master plan which will create a strategic facilities growth plan for the next decade.

Indicators of student success and satisfaction are positive. Productive grade rates are improving and course completion and retention are trending upward. Graduation numbers have increased, and we have made gains in several benchmark areas on the Community College Survey of Student Engagement. We continue to enjoy an excellent reputation with four year colleges and universities, many of whom seek out our students. Indeed, San Antonio College students who transfer perform better than students from peer institutions.

San Antonio College has a proud tradition and a reputation for excellence. Students who attend the college have opportunities and gain experiences available at only a few other community colleges. Our record enrollment this semester (over 24,000) indicates to me that many in the community recognize SAC as a college of choice. Everywhere you go, people you meet say, "I went to SAC." I have served the institution since 1971 and was also a student here. I am proud of the school and its solid reputation. I am also proud of you. This is a great place to work and learn and I thank you for your service and dedication. I hope you have a productive year.