President’s Message

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the President’s Update! I created this newsletter to provide the campus community with an in-depth look at many of the activities and programs taking place at Fullerton College.

This spring semester, we have seen a record number of students attempting to register for classes at the college. Our faculty and student services personnel have worked tirelessly to accomodate as many of these students as possible.

Staff are also busy preparing for the grand opening and dedication of the Field House, and looking forward to work beginning on the Technology and Engineering Complex this summer.

Work continues on the college’s Centennial, scheduled for the 2013-2014 academic year. The Steering Committee is planning a series of events, designed to showcase the college’s excellent programs and students. I hope you will take advantage of this special occasion and volunteer to serve on one of the five Steering Committee sub-committees by contacting co-chairs Bob Jensen or Andrea Hanstein.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the continuing state budget crisis. As we receive more information, our governance process will do whatever is necessary to offer a full array of courses to help our students fulfill their goals for attending Fullerton College.

I look forward to a successful semester with all of us working together!

Sincerely,
Dr. Rajen Vurdien
In mid-March 2011, an accreditation team representing the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) visited Fullerton College. The purpose of the visit was to determine if the college meets accreditation standards and to make a recommendation on the college’s accreditation status. The team chair reported that all team members found the campus to be beautiful and the campus community an academic environment focused on student learning and remarked that Fullerton College is a wonderful institution with a college community which pulls together instead of pulling apart.

The team reviewed the college’s Self-Study for the Reaffirmation of Accreditation and found it to be comprehensive. The quality of the writing was excellent, but in many cases they reported that they wanted to see more depth of supporting documents for the claims made and plans described in the self-study.

During the team’s exit report, the college was commended for (1) the Library, Academic Support Center, Veterans Center, Cadena Cultural Center, Transfer Center, EOPS, for the services they provide to Fullerton College students; (2) the tradition of outstanding collegial discourse at the college despite disagreement among members and (3) the stability and sound guidance and leadership provided by the senior management of Student Services during the transition period.

The college also received five recommendations from the team dealing with (1) employee diversity, (2) identification and assessment of SLOs at the course and program levels and the use of assessment to improve courses and programs, (3) completion of a full cycle of the college planning process, (4) improvement in the evaluation of the planning process and ensuring transparency in the process, and (5) consider the total cost of ownership of the college’s new facilities so that maintenance and operation costs are planned for. The recommendations regarding planning and SLOs have become fairly standard recommendations made to nearly every college undergoing accreditation.

The team also made three recommendations that pertained to the district. They recommended that the district (1) align planning, governance and the decision-making process to provide clarity to constituents, (2) develop a method of evaluation of the planning, governance and decision-making process to assess its efficacy and that evaluation should be broadly communicated, and (3) provide a budget allocation model that provides clarity regarding the relationship between planning and budget.

Over the next several weeks the team chair will prepare a draft of the accreditation visit report and send it to the Chancellor and President for review of matters of fact. The ACCJC will review the report and recommendations at its June 2011 meeting and communicate its decision regarding the college’s accreditation to the President and Chancellor approximately one month after the meeting.
Fullerton College is proud to announce that Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient Sylvia Mendez will serve as the 2011 Commencement speaker. Mendez was just 8 years old when her parents, Gonzalo and Felicitas Mendez, sued Westminster School District for turning their children away from an all-white school. The children were sent instead to the “Mexican” school, a two-room wooden shack with worn, wobbly desks and chairs, and tattered textbooks, hand-me-downs from other campuses.

In 1947, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, in deciding the case, ordered an end to segregation in California schools. *Mendez v. Westminster* was later cited in the historic 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* case by Thurgood Marshall, lawyer for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, who would later join the Supreme Court. The ruling meant that Mendez could attend the formerly segregated white campus, and she endured taunts from white classmates after enrolling. With her parents behind her, she stuck it out, and eventually began to educate others about the need for racial tolerance.

“She has made it her mission to spread her message of tolerance and opportunity to children of all backgrounds and all walks of life,” President Barack Obama said during the annual Presidential Medal of Freedom ceremony, held at the White House in February 2011.

Mendez travels the country, speaking to students about the history and importance of the Mendez case. Mendez said she hopes her story will serve to inspire students to continue their education into college and beyond. “I’m going to show students that no matter your race or background, anything is possible,” she said.

**INCITE Program prepares student-athletes for life beyond the field**

Many college athletes are poorly prepared for life after graduation. Some experts have gone as far as saying that most college stars are unprepared for anything but a professional sports career that only two to three percent of them will ever achieve. With the help of a state-funded grant, Fullerton College is working hard to change these statistics.

The INCITE program provides over 350 Fullerton College student-athletes with a structured program involving group study time, tutoring, educational planning, and academic accountability. With the help of coaches, the program has been working well. Each athlete is required to complete four hours of tutoring each week, and complete an academic checklist. The program has also enlisted the help of athletes themselves, by recruiting them to tutor. Many more students have come forward asking for help, knowing that they will be learning from someone they feel comfortable with.

Data indicates that the INCITE program is successful and student athlete success rates have improved. The program is funded by a Basic Skills Grant, a grant-funded initiative from the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO) which helps under-prepared students succeed in college.
On Thursday, January 13, 2011, Fullerton College hosted a meeting of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, a national advocacy organization focused on integrating 21st century learning into core subjects. The Partnership is comprised of local and nationwide education leaders, as well as business leaders.

Last year, the Partnership released a report suggesting that current education systems have not been evaluated since the Industrial Age, a time in which schools were designed to mimic structured and inflexible factory work environments. However, in order to compete in today’s 21st century, technology-driven workforce, students need to learn in 21st century schools, focusing on career skills and an integration with technology. The movement expands the No Child Left Behind Act which primarily focused on math and reading.

Bringing career preparedness to the top of students’ minds has two primary benefits. First, it teaches valuable life skills that will help them later in life, and second, it may help keep kids from dropping out of school. Research has shown that students who have a goal and see a direct correlation between employment and school complete their education at a higher rate than those who do not – school becomes relevant to their life and their future.

The group of individuals who met at Fullerton College hopes to bring the Partnership model to southern California, which is in desperate need of a prepared workforce.