

**President Frank Chong**  
**Welcoming Remarks, Fall Semester 2009**

August 19, 2009

Welcome back to Laney College for the Fall Semester, 2009.

I am looking forward to hearing about your summer vacations and how you rejuvenated your hearts and minds. For me, I was able to get away to Lake Tahoe for a short vacation, where the fresh air, pristine blue waters and dancing aspen trees awakened my senses and gave me an even deeper appreciation for everything that is possible.

I also escorted my 13 year old daughter Sophia to Washington DC to participate in the Kirov Academy of Ballet Summer Dance Program. It reminded me of how fast our children grow up and how quickly they leave the nest.

I am pleased to report that Sophia did well enough to earn a partial scholarship to attend the year round program this fall. My younger daughter, Mia participated in Alonzo King's Lines Summer Dance Program in SF and flourished. She received a scholarship from the Lines Ballet Company.

Most of you are wondering where my daughters got their dance talent...you only needed to have been at Yvonne

Lewis retirement party to see yours truly line dancing with KK and a bunch other lovely ladies!

This summer, business has been anything but “usual,” as the budget crisis loomed over California like an east coast thunderstorm. Each Wednesday was spent on an early-morning conference call with the State Chancellor, **Senator Jack Scott and other college presidents**, where we considered the looming budget ax.

The worst part was the uncertainty . . . not knowing what would be cut, or the magnitude of those cuts. It was frustrating, unsettling and demoralizing.

When lightning at long last struck, and a budget finally passed, California community colleges, like many in our society, took a significant hit:

- General fund budgets were reduced; for Laney this means a 4%, across the board, cut.
- Categorical programs were sharply reduced, between 16% – 30%.
- Growth dollars were capped.
- Student Fees were increased from \$20 to \$26 a unit.

In the face of this bad news, we are striving to keep the impact of budget cuts as far from the classroom as possible.

This presents additional challenges to Student Services **Vice President Donald Moore** and his team – **Dr. Tina Vasconcellos** and the newest member of the Laney

family, **Newin Orante**, who joins us as Dean of Student Support Services.

However, thanks to the efforts of **Dr. Elnora Webb**, the instructional deans and department chairs, our fall schedule will remain largely in-tact.

But against this backdrop, there is increased and growing pressure to enroll *more* students -- at the very time that our resources to serve those students are being slashed. It's long been a fact of life in community colleges: "when the economy heads south, enrollment heads north." At Laney, we are in "north to Alaska" mode, with an incredible 34% growth in enrollment this fall!

To many, it seems that the "pie is shrinking" when, in fact, it remains approximately the same size. The brutal truth that we must confront is that there are a lot more people who want a slice of pie!

Consider just a few of the external factors pushing enrollment up:

- Increased fees and admission standards at the University of California and California State Universities has increased demand among freshman students.
- High unemployment rates are driving students to community college for new job opportunities and re-training programs.
- A large influx of non-violent offenders, in dire need of increased educational opportunities, are being released from prisons into our communities.

- A large immigrant population looks to community colleges as an affordable vehicle for ESL instruction.
- The devastating impact of cuts in adult education will push many more adult learners our way as many programs have been drastically reduced or eliminated.

Not all the news is dire however, and at the outset it is important to dispel a couple of myths:

1. Our classes have NOT been decimated. While there have been reductions, and classes will be more crowded, as mentioned earlier our instructional offerings remain largely in-tact.
2. There have been NO layoffs of full-time staff.

In the midst of a hard time, there is nevertheless good news.

This summer, Laney College was officially given full accreditation by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges. For this magnificent accomplishment, you should give yourselves a round of (sustained, foot-stompin', whistle-blowin', whoopin' and hollerin') applause!!

Laney was one of only five community colleges -- out of 27 reviewed this year -- to receive a clean bill of health from the accrediting team.

Look around this room: All of you contributed to this marvelous achievement -- and affirmation by the commission is really an affirmation of our work together for the past several years.

Thank you for your participation! Your commitment and dedication comprise the long-term educational quality that is at the core of a successful accreditation.

The success of the accreditation effort, so ably led by **Dr. Karolyn van Putten** and **Dr. Matt Goldstein**, provides the model for another important piece of work we have undertaken – completion of the Educational Facility Master Plan.

We are committed to complete the process by the end of the fall semester and, toward that end, had a marvelous planning session at the end of the spring semester and a productive off-campus retreat last week.

I firmly believe that the success of the accreditation process was due to inclusion and a broad range of participation and representation. I am committed to an equally transparent and participatory process to complete the Educational Facilities Master Plan. As your president, I invite you to participate in shaping the future of Laney College.

As we begin the 2009-10 academic year, it's time for a "gut check." What kind of college do we want to be? More importantly, what kind of leaders do we want to be?

This summer, I was captivated by a best-selling book on organizational transformation, "*Good to Great*," by Jim Collins. It provides an appropriate analogy for Laney: Our successful accreditation means we're a good organization.

Our task now is to create a culture where we can become a great organization.

Listen to the words of Jim Collins:

*“Yes, leadership is about vision, but leadership is equally about creating a climate where the truth is heard and the brutal facts confronted.*

*There’s a huge difference between the opportunity to ‘have your say” and the opportunity to be heard. Good to Great leaders understand this distinction, creating a culture wherein people have a tremendous opportunity to be heard and, ultimately, for the truth to be heard.*

*Part of what makes a good college become great a great college is our ability to consistently and systematically assess how we are doing! Whether it is through program reviews, implementing Student learning outcomes or town hall meetings, Dr Karolyn Van Putten, Our Academic Senate President or Chelli Folsom our evangelist on SLO and Assesment have continued to make assessment a priority at Laney College.*

*I am convinced that without their emphasis on Assessment and student Learning Outcomes, we would not have received our full accreditation.*

*Rather than rest on our laurels, I am imploring you to continue to assess and strive to be a learner centered college as reflected in our new mission statement. How do we accomplish these goals? Simply put we need to roll up*

*our sleeves and get to work on Assessment and Student Learning Objectives.*

Our challenge is to lead – to innovate, create and do things differently. Our attitude -- and the positive energy we summon to serve our students in a challenging environment -- are what will make the difference.

While the budget is especially problematic right now, there are never enough dollars to fully address the multitude of needs we face. We can't just complain about funding!

We are energized by robust new programs that have already been created through collaborative efforts among **Jeanette Dong**, Director of Development for Peralta, Dean **William Hanson**, and Dean **Peter Crabtree**.

The East Bay Career Advancement Academy, a partnership among Laney and six other community colleges will enroll **600 students** this year in a cutting-edge demonstration program that links workforce development to basic skills instruction.

- Gateway to College, a partnership among Laney, the Oakland Unified School District and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, officially gets underway this fall. Gateway provides a second chance for **60 students** not only to finish high school, but to get a head-start on college. Gateway at Laney will be led by its able and talented director **Lilia Celhay**.

- Green Jobs, a partnership among Laney, the Cypress Mandela Project and the City of Oakland is training over 60 entry-level workers for the sustainable jobs and careers of the future.

One common denominator of these programs is that each is independently grant-funded, not dependent on state general fund dollars. Programs like these are the wave of the future, and it is critical that the administration, faculty and staff pro-actively work together to expand such external funding efforts.

We don't have the luxury of waiting for the economy to turn around -- it's time to start hustling and expand the pie. For too long, our attitude has been to try to "do more with less." And while we definitely need to work smarter in the future, it's also important to develop ways we can "do more with more" by generating additional revenue. New revenues not only provide new programs, they also relieve pressure on general fund dollars.

The new Laney Bistro Restaurant, formerly The Beginner's Inn, is a primary example of fee-based revenue generation.

We recently brought in an experienced professional, **Scott Strong**, to lead this effort as our Food Services Manager. Harnessing the income potential of the Bistro, along with our cafeteria and catering services, will provide additional, and much needed, revenue.

We also intend to work with faculty and other affected parties to develop fee-for-service classes and contract education opportunities in areas such as P.E., Music and Art. Similar opportunities also exist in career technical education fields such as Machine Technology and others.

We must serve our students with a new model. Our students, increasingly, are not transfer students, they are life-long learners. Rather than relying solely on the for-credit model that has been the dominant force in the past, we must adapt accordingly.

This summer, President Obama outlined his approach to the new paradigm: “We will offer competitive grants, challenging community colleges to pursue innovative, results-oriented strategies in exchange for federal funding.”

In this area, as in so many others, the president is right: The time for change has come.

In the end, Laney College will be successful because of our greatest strength – our people. We are blessed with winners and leaders. A few examples of what “our folks” have been up to:

- Financial Aid Specialist **Lawrence Chan** was recognized as the Classified Employee of the Year. Congratulations, Lawrence.
- Community based soccer programs organized by Dean **Marco Menendez** have been an overwhelming

success, building bridges to an under-served, Spanish-speaking community.

- Theater Arts Chair **Mike Torres** played the role of Chief Bromden in the San Francisco Playhouse production of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* this summer, while Theater Manager **Jim Cave** headlined as King Lear in Bristol, Vermont.
- Laney Alum **Charonda Williams** was named Pac-10 Female Track Athlete of the Year. Charonda developed her world-class sprint skills here at Laney before earning a scholarship to Arizona State.
- Former Laney football star **Frank Summers** was drafted by the Pittsburgh Steelers, continuing a long tradition of academic excellence and athletic achievement under coach **Jay Uchiumi** and Athletic Director **John Beam**.
- We also saw Laney in the news when Oakland's own **Rickey Henderson** was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in July. As reported in the Oakland Tribune, Rickey crafted his well-received acceptance speech at Laney in Earl Robinson's speech class this summer. Using an appropriate metaphor, USA Today reported that Rickey's speech "stole the show" in Cooperstown. And it all began at Laney!

We continue to work together to improve the physical environment of our campus, and build a culture of collaboration. Laney College continues to successfully transform itself. In the past year, we:

- Revised the college's vision, mission and values statements. Thanks to **Dean Linda Sanford** for facilitating this effort.
- Launched Laney Day, an open house and showcase that attracted more than 1,000 participants, under the direction of interim Dean of Student Services, **Dr. Inger Stark** and **Eliza Chan**.
- Hosted an informative transfer day with UCLA Chancellor Gene Block.
- Completed hiring of a permanent administrative team and 13 new faculty members.
- Launched Laney's first inter-collegiate women's basketball program under the direction of Coach **Ron Williams**.
- Built state-of-the-art Culinary facilities and planted an organic herb garden.
- Installed flat screen television information monitors in the Admissions Office, Administration Tower Lobby and Student Center, with generous support from the Associated Students of Laney College.
- Improved student access to online records, enrollment and computer labs.
- Brought student support services and instruction together through special programs such as Ubaka, (**Terrance Greene**), Puente (**Loretta Hernandez**) and others.
- Began migration of an out-moded website to a new open-source, user-friendly platform, under the leadership of **Dr. Mike Orkin**.

**It is the little things like new signage on the interior and exterior of our buildings. Newly**

**Renovated mens and womens bathrooms.**

We have only begun to tap our potential. Laney College in particular, and the Peralta Colleges collectively, are a beacon of hope for our East Bay community, and it is incumbent on us to step up. We must meet our obligation to our students in the face of *whatever* obstacles confront us. This is a time to think **big**.

In a troubled time, as we struggle to create a just, humane and equitable society, each of us needs inspiration. This summer I came across a piece by the beloved American humorist, the late George Carlin. It touched me, and I share it with you in the hope that it gives you inspiration, too.

### ***Inspiration***

#### ***A Message by George Carlin:***

*“The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings but shorter tempers; wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints. We spend more, but have less; we buy more, but enjoy less.*

*We have bigger houses and smaller families; more conveniences, but less time. We have more degrees but less sense; more knowledge, but less judgment; more experts, yet more problems; more medicine, but less wellness.*

*We drink too much, smoke too much, spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry, stay up too late, get up too tired, read too little, watch TV too much, and pray too seldom.*

*We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values. We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often.*

*We've learned how to make a living, but not a life. We've added years to life, not life to years. We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet a new neighbor. We conquered outer space, but not inner space. We've done larger things, but not better things.*

*We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul. We've conquered the atom, but not our prejudice. We write more, but learn less.*

*We plan more, but accomplish less. We've learned to rush, but not to wait. We build more computers to hold more information, to produce more copies than ever, but we communicate less and less.*

*These are the times of fast foods and slow digestion, big men and small character, steep profits and shallow relationships. These are the days of two incomes but more divorce, fancier houses, but broken homes. These are days of quick trips, disposable diapers, throwaway morality, one night stands, overweight bodies, and pills that do everything from cheer, to quiet, to kill.*

*It is a time when there is much in the showroom window and nothing in the stockroom. A time when technology can bring this letter to you, and a time when you can choose either to share this insight, or to just hit delete.*

*Remember; spend some time with your loved ones, because they are not going to be around forever.*

*Remember, say a kind word to someone who looks up to you in awe, because that little person soon will grow up and leave your side.*

*Remember, to give a warm hug to the one next to you, because that is the only treasure you can give with your heart and it doesn't cost a cent.*

*Remember, to say, 'I love you' to your partner and your loved ones, but most of all mean it. A kiss and an embrace will mend hurt when it comes from deep inside of you.*

*Remember to hold hands and cherish the moment for someday that person will not be there again.*

*Give time to love, give time to speak! And give time to share the precious thoughts in your mind.*

**AND ALWAYS REMEMBER:**

*Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away."*

It is these moments – moments that take our breath away – that provide a reason to come to work each day. They

are what we love about Laney College. Thank you very much for listening and have a great semester!

Here is a short video presentation about the college, produced by Public Information Officer **Eliza Chan** with support from **Chi Au** and Peralta Television.

I wish each of you a happy and productive academic year

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