

1. We've just concluded a very successful commencement season. This year, the college served approximately 7,700 students. We awarded 266 degrees and certificates on our two campuses and conferred 447 degrees and certificates to our Rising Scholars students at Correctional Facilities throughout the State including Chuckwalla and Ironwood State Prisons. This year, we served over 6,000 Rising Scholars students at the seven correctional facilities we support.

Our graduation celebrations were spectacular, led by Staci Lee, our Director of Student Services and Equity. Supported by our facilities, information technology, and so many other staff members, the Needles Education Center Phlebotomy Pinning Ceremony and Commencement welcomed a crowd of over 125 and did our District proud. Special thanks to Dean Jaclyn Randall and Associate Dean Becker for the efforts they and their faculty and staff put forth to make the event so successful. Many thanks to our Board as well for your attendance and show of support for the Needles community and their graduates and families. It really was a special day.

Our Blythe Campus also shined brightly. With over 1125 guests, nearly 125 students in attendance who walked, and a wonderful turnout by faculty, staff, and our Board, the importance of our college to the community was on bright display. Our college is alive and well, serving our students and the communities we serve.

In closing this section of my report, I want to express my sincere thanks to our faculty and staff who contributed mightily to the success of the students who graduated this year. From those who get the students "in the door" – Admissions and Records, Financial Aid, and Counseling – to those who serve, support and provide sustaining and nurturing wrap-around services to help keep students in college and to succeed – and to our Maintenance and Operations and Information Technology teams who make sure the foundation and core of our facilities and technology is safe, secure, and provides the access to the educational resources and tools so urgently needed in today's world – I am grateful.

I have had the honor of learning, collaborating, and growing with Palo Verde College team over the last ten months. I know firsthand the quality of character and professionalism our faculty and staff possess. I assure you the education and support our students receive is among the best I have experienced in my 40 plus years of service in higher education. Our faculty and staff are second to none, and they deserve our collective gratitude for the passion and excellence they bring every day. On to 2024/25!

2. Vice President Slagan once again led a successful budget development process and will be presenting the college's 2024/25 Tentative Budget to the Board for approval this evening. As she will state, our college is in good financial health with a reserve of just over 40%. Healthy reserves are very important for all colleges, but perhaps even more so for smaller colleges.

Our state's economy is fragile based on a boom or bust model. In recent years under Governor's Brown and Newsom, the importance of rainy day funds have been emphasized and thankfully supported by the state legislature. The Proposition 98 rainy day fund will defer the K-14 budget pain for the next year providing colleges the opportunity to reduce expenses and prepare for the challenging fiscal and cash flow issues the next few years will bring.

I am happy to report that due to our healthy reserve, the Supplemental Retirement Plan the Board enacted, and our-ongoing prudent fiscal management, not only are we able to balance our 24/25 budget with an on-going healthy reserve, this year we were also able to focus on critical needs within our instruction and student services areas, add faculty and staff in key areas, and invest in our Comprehensive Educational Plan development as well as our Institutional Research and Effectiveness which was in urgent need of a reboot and support.

Over the next few years, there will be deficit factors that reduce our income and there will be payment deferrals that delay our state funding payments. That is the community college system's reality due to the difficult fiscal

times the state is experiencing. However, we are well prepared to manage these financial hurdles.

As a reminder, K-14 emerged from the 24/25 budget process in a decidedly better place than most other state agencies and services. By a long shot.

Accounting maneuvers that kick the ball down the road and draconian cuts in state hiring, social services, mental health services, public safety, homeless initiatives, and climate initiatives look to be a certainty. All this to deal with the state's nearly \$56 billion deficit over the next two years. Serious pain will result. But not in K-14. At least not this coming year.

K-14 has temporarily been spared due to Proposition 98 which guarantees roughly 40% of every tax dollar be provided to these two educational segments. The Governor and state legislature continue in their support knowing the importance of education and workforce training – which underpins state and local economies throughout California.

In addition, we should recall the importance of the Prop 98 rainy day fund -- which will be exhausted this coming year to defer the 2024/25 budget pain – and has significantly come to K-14's rescue.

But the piper will need to be paid at some point, so we must stay vigilant, and invest wisely to continue our growth and services to the communities we serve. Because of our on-going fiscal discipline and investment, we will be able to weather the storm while at the same time planning and investing in the future of the college. That is an accomplishment.

- 3. I'll end by reporting some very good news. Palo Verde College was identified as one of a very small group of finalists for the annual Dr. John W. Rice Award for Advancing Diversity, Equity and Student Success. This is due to the college's accomplishments in advancing diversity and equity for students within the California Community Colleges system.**

**This year, in support of the goals of Vision 2030, the Chancellor's Office identified finalists for the John W. Rice Student Success award.**

**Chancellor's office staff scoured system colleges data to uncover the greatest improvements in all students completing gateway transfer-level English and math within one year of the students' first attempt – particularly as it relates to students of color in contrast to white students - over the course of the last three years.**

**After analyzing our own data, we concluded the Chancellor's office was referring to the success we have had with our Rising Scholars program.**

**Led by our Academic Senate President Sarah Frid, Clint Cowden, our Vice President of Instruction and Student Services, and ably supported by Dr. Alma Correa, our Dean of Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness, we tasked a team with developing what turned out to be a very compelling presentation outlining our data and success. We further shared the college-wide support of our faculty and staff that led to the success of our Rising Scholars students overall, and specifically our students of color.**

**I am happy to report that our Rising Scholars efforts as well as the excellent presentation resulted in our being awarded this year's John W. Rice Award for Advancing Diversity, Equity and Student Success in the category of Student Success. Well done all. An auspicious honor.**

**You have at your seats an information piece which includes a description of the award and the man it honors as well as a listing of our colleague colleges who have received the award since inception. I am very proud**

**that Palo Verde College will join this prestigious group that have excelled in support of diversity, equity, and student success.**

**Dr. Moses and Vice President Cowden will be traveling to Sacramento on behalf of the college faculty, staff, and the Board on July 22<sup>nd</sup> to present a Rising Scholar student video and accept the award from Chancellor Christian.**

**All in all – again -- this month very positive news as the college continues its laser focus on improving student completion and success. Again, many thanks to our faculty and staff for their relentless efforts to improve all that we do. The state of the college is indeed strong as we close out this academic year and head to a new one commencing July 1, 2024.**

**Thank you for your attention.**