

## MIDYEAR ADDRESS

### “SHARED GOVERNANCE AND OUR ORGANIZATION: GOLDEN OR GILDED AGE?”

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This is the sixth address I have given on Flex Day during the month of January. Each time, not surprisingly, our opening has been reflective of the old and anticipating the new. In the year 1999, there was the apprehension of Y2K and the potential collapse of technology systems – remember that one? In 2000 it was the speculative beginning of a new century and millennium fever. And who could forget the debate among mathematicians about whether to begin the millennium in 2000 or in 2001. But those New Years were not cataclysmic events. Rather, it would be a quiet day in September 2001 when a demonic disaster shook our nation and another quiet day in December 2004 when an earthquake and tsunamis would produce the worst natural calamity in recent human history.

So – it is a somber New Year in 2005 when a terrifying event has made us keenly aware that we are one world in misfortune as well as fortune. Surely, we must all be struck by the enormity of this disaster, referenced by William Safire as a Leviathanic force of nature, but also by the outpouring of help and surge of generosity worldwide for the people of southern Asia, which may be the greatest humanitarian effort the world has ever known. Yet, we must all be reminded that while disaster may bring out the best in us, it shouldn't take misfortune to stir humankind to its best. The cynical old Voltaire knew this when he wrote “Individual misfortunes give rise to the general good; so the more individual misfortunes exist, the more all is fine.” Perhaps, if there is any good to all of this – for those caught in the wake, for our country, for ourselves, for the world we live in – it is that by acting magnificently when catastrophe strikes we are restored to a higher moral order. As we extend our sorrow and our help to the victims of southern Asia, it is a saddened world that moves toward the second half of the millennium's first decade, hopefully wiser and surely more reflective. [a moment for reflection here.]

#### Introduction

It isn't easy to make the transition, but I now ask you to think with me about the subject of my address: “**Shared Governance and Our Organization: Golden or Gilded Age?**” I will begin with a discussion of shared governance but as you shall see the topic is broader than the governance system. It embraces all that we do to make our institution an effective and enjoyable place to work, that achieves positive results for others. On this point, I would call your attention to a major priority in our *Strategic Plan*. Now, I can almost hear you saying, “There he goes again with his strategic plan.” Some of you may even perceive planning in the manner of the person who has compared it to the sex life of an elephant. There is much bellowing and trumpeting, it all takes place

high in the air, and nothing happens for two years. I do believe in planning because it keeps our priorities before us and gives us objectives to strive for. And this is the priority that I want you to consider today. It is priority number eight: **“To continue to promote a dynamic and supportive organizational climate including improved communications among students, faculty, and staff; development of the talents of faculty and staff; and the promotion of diversity at all levels of the College.”** This priority or goal embraces how we organize ourselves within the institution, how we govern ourselves, how we communicate and collaborate, how we build trust and working relationships, how we serve, and how we develop new programs. It’s about creating an effective organizational climate in which morale is high and results are achieved.

### **Participatory Governance**

In the summer of 1998, I learned that a former president of a community college in California, a former colleague of mine in Florida, had asked, “Why is Phil Day going to California where innovation and progress are nearly impossible due to shared governance?” I have no idea of the cause for such a position and I certainly was not dissuaded by the warning. But it did make me curious about shared governance. Now, six and one half years later, I can say that I’ve clearly found shared governance to be an ally for progress. I have also found it to require enormous effort and patience. You would be correct in imagining that the progress it produces is slower than I might otherwise want. But you can certainly say that the system adopted in 1993 at City College is a highly participatory process and probably one of the most elaborately developed anywhere in higher education.

### **A Model from the Past**

Before commenting further on shared-governance, let me take you back in time to one of the most remarkable periods of development that has led to modern systems of democracy and governance. I speak of Athens in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the age of Pericles, considered to be the birth period of democracy as we know it. Prior to Pericles, Athens had been led by the noble and rich who served for life on the Council of Areopagus. But over time, as Athenian power depended more and more on all of its people including the lower classes, a more egalitarian system began to emerge. It was to be the golden age of democracy, a nearly unbroken and orderly regime that lasted 140 years, comparable only to the 200 plus years of democracy in the United States. But like our form of government, it was to require sacrifice and extraordinary assiduousness – something that others were not inclined to do and were even opposed to doing.

Admittedly, before I praise the system and its processes that ultimately changed the world in so many dramatic and positive ways, I should point out to my audience of listeners that I do recognize its immediate failure in excluding women from full participation...However, be that as it may, in Athens, all adult males were citizens without regard to wealth or class and were granted full and active participation in every decision of the state. They attended the assemblies, served on juries, and held administrative posts that rotated annually. The assembly, or *ekklesia*, took place in the open air on a hill called Pnyx, not far from the Acropolis. The citizens, five to six

thousand in number, sat on the sloping hill while the speakers stood on a low platform (...the first soapbox!!?). They held four such meetings in each of the ten periods of the year, a minimum of forty meetings plus special meetings. It began with the herald, "Move up! Move up within the consecrated area!" And then came the call, "who wishes to speak?"

Anyone could speak and many did, but often it was the most articulate orators who engaged in debate. Some meetings would be devoted to fixed topics on serious issues: approvals of treaties; assigning generals to campaigns and determining troop composition; confirming or removing officials from offices; deciding questions of religion or inheritance. At other meetings, anyone could speak on any subject and the matter would be voted upon. Some issues required a quorum of 6,000. A Council of 500 prepared legislative recommendations, with a different person chairing each day's meeting as the servant of the assembly.

At any time, a citizen could challenge the constitutionality of a decision. It was a procedure that had the effect of making the citizens in the assembly guardians of the constitution. Anyone could object to a proposal, even if it had already been passed, by asserting that it contradicted an existing law. Action was stopped and the citizen was taken before a popular court. If, however, the jury decided against him, his challenge was disallowed and he was fined. Three fines of this sort and he was deprived of his rights as a citizen. Now, in case you're thinking of a potential application to our governance system, well...?! Let's leave it at that!

Executive roles were severely limited. There was no president or prime minister. Nor were there elected officials or a cabinet responsible for the management of the state. Ten generals were chosen for one year terms and often they were re-elected (one of whom was Pericles), but they were evaluated at the end of the year of service under an audit called the *euthym*. Further, they were evaluated collectively ten times a year by the assembly "to determine whether the generals' conduct of military affairs appeared satisfactory." If so, they continued in office. If not, they were fined or punished. All other positions were filled by lottery and any citizen could serve in any office. These offices included treasurers, accountants, examiners, market inspectors, weight measurers, and vendors.

The judicial system was also highly democratized. Six thousand jurors were selected each year. The average size of a jury for a single trial was 501 but could range from 51 to 1501. There were no prosecutors. Plaintiffs and defendants argued their cases in a single day and the jury voted. Penalties were also voted by juries, after hearing the defendant propose a penalty and the plaintiff propose a penalty.

Before leaving this excursion into history and what might be considered the root of our shared governance system, I would like to acquaint you with two conventions that contributed to the functioning of ancient Athens – one designed to prevent extreme political strife and the other to ensure prompt meetings. There was a process called *ostracism*. It was intended to deter factions from forming. Each year, probably in January, the assembly voted on the question of whether there should be an ostracism. If the majority voted no, there was none. If they voted yes, it took place on a single day in March. On that day, each citizen could write the name of the man he wanted

removed from the city on a piece of broken pottery, an *ostrakon*, and bring it to the Agora. At the end of the day, the votes were counted to see if there were 6,000. If so, the one who had received the most ballots was compelled to leave Athens for a period of ten years. It was a harsh penalty that we would not likely inflict on the troublesome today, though the Quaker practice of shunning does come to mind.

The other convention I thought you might find interesting and perhaps slightly more applicable was the Athenian technique for starting meetings of the assembly on time, especially when the crowds were large and the citizens talkative. At the appointed time, all the exits were closed except the one leading to the Pnyx. Then, as an encouragement for citizens to enter the assembly and take their seats on time, a rope dripping with red dye was carried forward toward that exit, and anyone whose cloak was marked by the dye was fined. I might comment at this point that I have read the multitudinous procedures for the governance system at City College and have at last discovered something the framers neglected to define – a policy and procedure for starting meetings on time and with everyone in the room!

### **The California System for Shared Governance**

Now, let's talk for a moment about the shared governance system at City College. It grows out of California state legislation in 1988 called AB1725, "Shared Governance and Local Governing Boards." The intent of the legislation was to "provide for participation of faculty, staff, and students" in the governance of the institution, encouraging collegiality within the community college system similar to other segments of higher education. And in some respects, it went beyond a "minimalist" interpretation of collegiality. This legislation required modes of participation that formalized opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to express their opinions; that defined how their opinions would be given reasonable consideration; that empowered academic senates in areas of curriculum and academic standards; and that in certain policy areas ensured that governing boards would not act independently of the local senate. The point of it all was to encourage and foster participatory structures and to require the public community colleges statewide to develop and adhere to meaningful shared governance procedures.

### **Shared Governance at City College**

And that is exactly what City College did. Over a four-year period, since the passing of the legislation, the College redesigned and updated its governance system, adopting the current system in 1993. The College created a unified system. It defined the roles of the Board of Trustees, the Chancellor, the Academic Senate, the College Advisory Council, the Council of Academic Deans, the Classified Employees, the Associated Students, and the faculty union for specific areas of interest such as health and safety. All in all, 42 committees were formed to make sure every area was covered, including the definitions of committees, subcommittees, task forces, working groups, and meeting groups. Comprehensive guidelines were created, a new office of shared governance was established, and periodic reviews were promised. You can see why I thought of 5<sup>th</sup> century Athens in contemplating the City College shared governance system.

The system, I have to say, is quite extraordinary. It is inclusive and progressive. It has functioned now for over a decade. And it has been generally praised as a model throughout the state and sometimes nationally. Perhaps this is a good time for you to congratulate yourselves on a job well done, and perhaps I can take this moment to recognize all of you who worked to make the system a reality, particularly the person whom I dubbed upon arrival, the Queen of Shared Governance – Professor Madeline Mueller.

Since 1993, there have been three reviews or evaluations of the shared governance system at City College, in 1994, 1997, and 2004, plus one statewide review in 1999. I won't say much about the statewide study except to observe that the task force in July of 1999 confirmed the importance and accomplishments of the system, identified potential improvements consistent with those that City College had identified, and urged stronger guidelines for some colleges where frustration and misunderstanding about the system was producing a negative campus environment. Fortunately, City College has transcended many of the pitfalls inherent in any system of governance, and while I know that you experienced a period of discord in the mid-nineties I do believe that we have worked successfully together over the past 6½ years to strengthen the shared governance system and to treat it with the respect and integrity that it deserves.

The internal reviews of the College's shared governance system have decisively confirmed its value while also calling for refinements. The reviews of 1994 and 1997 were concerned with issues that would pertain to any new system in its infancy: encouraging groups to follow proper procedures, making sure all committees held meetings, and broadening the distribution of membership. The review of 2004 appears to be the most comprehensive, and if you haven't seen it, I would encourage you to review it on the college's website. It is entitled simply, *Evaluation of Shared Governance*, and it was produced by the Office of Research, Planning, and Grants with the assistance of the College Advisory Council and representatives of constituent groups.

The evaluation was based upon survey data, listening sessions, and the program review process. The findings affirm strong satisfaction with the system, the need for refinements in committee compositions and conformities, and the continuing challenge associated with promoting student engagement and participation. Recommendations include the following: make the system better understood, strengthen participation, especially among students; and reorganize or combine the Deans' Council and Administrators' Council. Let me take this opportunity to thank everyone who participated in this study, including its leader, Robert Gabriner, Attila Gabor our Shared Governance Coordinator who coordinated all aspects of the review process, and the members of the College Advisory Council. Thank you very much for your leadership and commitment to make our governance system the best it can be. Again, I urge you all to read it and for all our Councils and Committees to examine the specific recommendations for improvement.

Now, I would like to offer my own comments on the shared governance system. I will only make two points, but I believe they are important points. First, the system is important to us as an institution. We can't do without it, as it is the means by which we

engage many persons in the process of consultation and decision making. And there is no doubt in my mind but that our decisions are better when the community is engaged in them. In a few moments, I will say more about participatory management. But at this point, I simply want to reinforce the importance of participatory governance – which is the term I understand we are supposed to use – and ask everyone to become engaged with the system at some time or another, making it better, making the institution better, and thereby enhancing the success of our students.

Second, I want to encourage the shared governance system to make a bold leap forward – yes, a bold leap – by which I mean to say that the shared governance system can do more than it is doing and that the way of doing it is within reach. In the absence of a better word, I am talking about the system becoming more “proactive” and “problem-solving oriented.” I believe that participatory governance committees can accomplish more if they focus not just on reaction to proposals brought before them but also devote time to matters not brought before them but need addressing. Sometime this happens, but it can happen more consistently and helpfully if it is built into the system. On more than one occasion, we have created new structures for “proactive” accomplishment, for example the Enhanced Self-Study Committee and the Extended Strategic Planning Committee. In one case, (i.e., the Enhanced Self-Study) we wanted to foster new initiatives to support student success but maintain the important connections to the existing system. So with the full participation, guidance and consent of the Academic Senate, we formed new groups with relationships to their standing committees. There was nothing new in this, of course, since we have always had the equivalent of special task forces, work groups or ad hoc committees to accomplish short-term assignments. In the other case, the development of a new Strategic Plan and its Plan for Implementation, we worked within the framework of one of our important shared governance committees, the Planning and Budgeting Council, which was expanded to encourage a broader level of participation from both within and outside the college.

When I evaluate the results of both efforts in terms of moving the institution forward I see mixed results. The Strategic Plan activity, which identifies a number of critical priorities for the institution to pursue over the next half decade, went as smoothly and effectively as anything we have done together in recent memory. On the other hand, the Enhanced Self-Study and the recommendations that were forthcoming, formulated after very serious and lengthy discussions by over 120 faculty and administration, staff and students, has had mixed results. The Enhanced Self-Study produced 38 recommendations on how this institution could be improved systematically and programmatically to enhance student success. The recommendations were handed over to the Academic Senate and assigned to the appropriate standing committee for review and consideration. After nearly two years, two-thirds of the recommendations have been acted upon while the balance (12 or so recommendations) have been languishing within the Committee Structure of the Academic Senate. Ironically, most all of these recommendations, if acted upon, would allow us to implement specific activity that is called for within the framework of the strategic planning document that we have all accepted and endorsed.

I point this disconnect out...not to be unfairly critical, but to suggest – by way of example – that I believe the system ought to work better than that. To the extent to which, thru its actions or inaction, our shared governance system gives the perception that its primary role is to maintain or be a guardian of the status quo rather than a proactive force for responsive change, then I would submit that we can do better and need to be better. Doing so will allow ourselves the opportunity to meet our own expectations of being the very best example of participatory governance and at the same time respond to critical areas requiring improvement.

On the matter of being proactive, I would respectfully suggest that our shared governance councils and committees survey their domains of responsibility for what needs improving, what new directions are called for, and that they undertake on a systematic basis the sponsorship of activity that falls under the rubric of “development” and “enhancement,” as well as monitoring and responding. I see this as an extension of what we all do naturally for ourselves as individuals – we devote time to self-improvement. So, collectively why can’t we do more of the same thing through the venue of shared governance? Perhaps some of you feel we already do this. I would simply suggest that we continually examine our system to see if this is the case and whether there might be some things we can do to enhance and improve what we are now doing.

### **Effective Management and Leadership**

The shared governance system, important as it is, is not the only way by which we plan, develop and manage ourselves institutionally. The administrative structure serves as the system by which are organized pragmatically and authorized legally. It is by nature and tradition a hierarchical system, led by a chancellor reporting to a board of trustees, divided into domains under vice chancellors, and sub-divided into schools, departments, offices, and programs under deans, chairs, directors, and coordinators. It is this structure or system, enabled by managers and leaders, that is charged with the responsibility for operations and institutional performance and success, encompassing the functions of planning, managing, and evaluating. The two systems, of course, should work hand-in-glove in a partnership in order for the organization to succeed.

I want to speak now about the administrative system and its importance to the organization and to our success. City College currently functions, by my count, with less than 40 administrators, 60 department chairs, and 20 others in similar positions of responsibility such as our department coordinators...(people like Andrea Speraw, Janet Willett, Kitty Moriwaki, John Carrese and our Articulation Officer Deanna Abma). To these numbers we should also add the many whose roles, even if their job titles do not suggest it, that require decision making and leadership performance, a group we refer to as classified supervisory management personnel. Some of these people are represented by SEIU and others are underrepresented. This would include people like Doug Re, John Bilmont, Jim Keenan, Kim Wilson, Virginia Jew, Leti Santana Sazo, Ann Zinn, David Liggett, Steve Hale, Joe Kelleher, Mia Rusali, and David Gallarani, just to name a few. To all of you who serve in these capacities, I want to express appreciation for your accomplishments, encouragement for your continued commitment, and some thoughts about growth and development.

I would be remiss if I left the impression that management is a class unto itself, however. In hundreds of ways, we are all managers. We are managers of ourselves, hopefully, but we are also managers of tasks and activities and sometimes people – even without the title. Faculty members are managers of the classrooms and the teaching and learning experience. Departmental Chairs are managers of important processes such as class schedule development, teaching assignments and many more operations of the college. Public Safety Officers are managers of behavior and traffic, as well as safety and security. Therefore, I don't want you to think I am speaking solely to administrators in this part of my address. What I want to say applies to all of us. It's about taking responsibility for the effective management of our institution – at all levels, in all areas, and by all of us.

In reflecting on my personal aspirations for internal college management, I recall a book which impressed me some years ago as a guide for good management. The title is, *The Competent Manager*, by Richard Boyatzis. Deeply influenced by the work of the psychologist, David McClelland, and based upon extensive research across organizations, especially successful corporations, the book identifies attributes of superior managers, in other words traits which differentiate superior from average performance. We don't have time to discuss the rationale and impressive methodology of the study, but I do want to share with you a few of the traits that strike me as opportunities for us. One cluster of these attributes is the "leadership" category. Two traits stand out: (1) proactivity, which means a disposition toward taking action to accomplish something; and (2) efficiency orientation, which refers to a concern with doing something better. Please don't confuse this with "cost-efficiency"...something may be more "cost-effective or efficient" but it doesn't necessarily follow that it is qualitatively better. I think all of you know without my saying it that these two traits represent for me a standard, a standard which I push so much that it can be said and often is said to be intrusive. The times when I feel most intrusive are those occasions when something fails to happen in the manner it should, when something falls between the cracks, when a crisis occurs that didn't have to happen. I'm not issuing blame, here, and I hope you won't see it as such.

For example, when we found ourselves in a high-level meeting in December, called to decide whether to shut down the computer system over the semester break in order to upgrade the Banner system to version six, it immediately became clear that despite many parties having been involved in the earlier decision to proceed with the upgrade (and this was not just Information Technology Services personnel but a host of key Banner users), a rather significant issue had been missed – namely how faculty members would turn in grades electronically on-line during the period of the shutdown. While we decided not to proceed with this upgrade during the semester break, we also took the opportunity to try to learn from the incident (I'll have more to say in a moment about the virtues of being a "learning" organization). I came away from the incident with three lessons, you might say: First, we need to devote even more attention to systematic planning, collaboration and *most importantly...effective communications*, especially for major undertakings that affect the college's core operations. As an aside related to communications, I am not talking just about a high level of communications among those responsible for or managing an upcoming event or activity....we do a lot of that quite well. What we don't do enough of is communicating and engaging in two-way

discussions with those on the “firing line” or those who are impacted by the outcome of said event. In that area, we have much work to be done.

Secondly, we need to appreciate and value individuals who care about how we do things and sound alarm bells, even when we might not like to hear them. I realize that when we all receive one of those infamous email messages from my colleague and friend, Darlene Alioto, Chairperson of the Department Chairs Council, the entire institution “holds its breath...and asks what’s wrong now??” Over the last several years and on at least four occasions this past year, Darlene has, correctly and appropriately advised us all that, “we have a problem!” I refer to her as my last safety net because I know, given her knowledge of the organization, and its operations; her dedication and loyalty; her commitment to advocating for those that she represents and the institution itself; that when she says “we have a problem,”...we usually do. Most importantly, Darlene never identifies a problem without also suggesting an appropriate solution. She is a terrific ally and dedicated to the mission of the College and I know when my email is clear and the phone calls from her are not there, that all is well at City College.

Thirdly, we still need to appreciate the complexity of what we do organizationally and never lose our appreciation and respect for the hard work, competence, and dedication of those who make it possible to accomplish as much as we do. At the same time, we must also keep ourselves oriented to the ideal of being a genuinely effective organization, doing things superbly, and achieving excellence. I’m not attempting any prescriptions at this point. I feel that expressing an aspiration is sufficient – namely the aspiration for an even higher level of proactivity and an elevated concern for doing things better.

Another cluster of attributes in the Boyatzis study is the category of “directing others.” Several traits are identified: (1) managing group process, which means stimulating others to work effectively and in teams; (2) developing others, in other words helping others to do their jobs; and (3) positive regard, or a basic belief in people and their abilities and knowledge. These traits point to the goal of working together and working supportively. They suggest also working across lines and divisions in a coordinated manner. And they imply professional development – undertaking a conscious effort to grow and develop, devoting time to personal and professional improvement. I sometimes think that we are seriously remiss by not devoting more effort and more resources to helping our administrators, our faculty, and our classified staff to develop professionally. We tend to appoint leaders based upon their specialized qualifications and personal traits, but we leave them to develop managerial attributes on their own. I can think of very few things more important than enhancing our professional development efforts, for all our people, encouraging mentoring and workshops, emphasizing professional growth as a priority of our institution. Again, I’m not prescribing specific solutions but encouraging the aspirations of all who manage – and as I said before, that includes just about everyone.

The subject is not addressed directly in the Boyatzis study, but another important area for development was identified by our Board of Trustees in a retreat last fall and it is one we have talked about for some time. It is the subject of communication. The trustees were interested in better external communication, in other words marketing the college more aggressively and extending its message more widely. But they were also

interested in better internal communications, sharing information more completely and competently within the institution. We all know that improvements could be made in this area, and indeed we are taking steps to upgrade the web site, to improve email support, to offer better telephone and video conferencing capabilities. None of these initiatives, however, are substitutes for interpersonal forms of communication, direct contact and collaboration, listening to one another, and taking extra measures to ensure that one's colleagues and subordinates are informed and engaged. One of the most useful concepts attributed to Rensis Likert is the idea of "linking pins." We are all linking pins of information flow. When we attend a meeting, we are perhaps the sole link for communicating results to and getting additional input from those whom we supervise or work with. When we lead a meeting or work group, we are the agents of communication upward, downward and laterally within the organization – but only if we consciously and consistently practice it. If we do not, there is a break in the established structure for information flow. I suggest that this happens when a regular member of the Chancellor's Cabinet does not attend, misses important information, and is not in a position to share information with those who are supposed to be represented. Being a linking pin and serving as an agent of communication requires extraordinary persistence, patience, and practice – things we can all do for and within our work groups throughout the institution. And in speaking about attending to communications among ourselves, I don't mean to leave out effective communication with our students (our customers) which is at the heart of our mission.

One other attribute which I consider to be an essential quality in leaders and managers, is a commitment to diversity. This was also identified as a priority by our board of trustees and it is prominent among our strategic planning priorities, as I indicated earlier. I'll be brief on the matter, since I spoke on the issue last August at flex day, but I'll make the central point again. *Commitment to inclusion and fostering a welcoming and supportive environment for those that we serve and work with belongs at the pinnacle of our human responsibilities and rights.* And in the case of leaders and managers, there is an extra measure of expectation that we will exemplify that commitment to diversity and that we will devote ourselves persistently to recruiting, building, and empowering teams that reflect and model the ideals of cultural diversity. That commitment should manifest itself not only through our words and deeds but at every level of our educational enterprise – classrooms, pedagogy, faculty/staff development, hiring and staffing, programs, curriculum, courses...I hope you're getting the message and I recognize that on this point, I may be preaching to the choir.

Before I leave the subject of leadership and management, I want to say a word about participatory management. Just as shared governance is participatory, management of the organization should also be participatory. Autocratic leaders or managers do not produce good results. Participatory leaders do. Rensis Likert developed a model organizing the range of management styles: System 1 was autocratic, System 2 was benevolent-autocratic, System 3 was consultative, and System 4 was participatory. Likert's research at the University of Michigan has shown that organizations led by CEOs with the style of System 3 or System 4, that is participatory, are more productive and more positive places to work. It takes more time and effort to engage staff members in problem-solving and decision-making. But it pays off eventually. Leaders must ultimately make decisions, but engaging staff members

and impacted parties in the process of deliberations increases the quality of those decisions and the collective ownership that correspondingly produces positive results.

In summary, you can see that I value and have a special interest, like that of the Board of Trustees, and I hope most of you, in a well managed and functioning institution. And toward that end, I recommend that we look individually for opportunities to acquire and practice the traits of superior management – proactivity, efficiency orientation, managing group process, developing others, becoming linking pins of effective communications, actualizing the commitment to diversity at every level of our wonderful organization, and practicing participatory management. I would suggest also that we look to each other for guidance and support along this path, and that we encourage “best practices” wherever they may be found.

### **A dynamic organizational culture**

So far, we've addressed two complementary components or sections of a dynamic organization: shared governance and administrative or managerial effectiveness. Now, I'd like to talk about the organization itself. And I'd like you to consider the college as an organization in terms of the language of that strategic priority I cited in the beginning: “organizational climate” or perhaps we could say “organizational culture.” The terms culture and climate provide an interesting interplay. The term culture is a sociological concept referring to patterns of organizational behavior; it has to do with shared beliefs and ideologies that organizational members have and characterize their work place. Climate refers to the perceptions that members have about their organization, their attitudes toward their culture. City college is not the same culture or climate that it was forty years ago. Nor for that matter is the great city we serve. Over time, culture and climate change. But one thing that does not change is the choking sensation when things are about to change. We get comfortable with things as they are, even the things we may not like. And we all (at varying levels) resist change because of a concern about where we might fit in the new scheme of things; concerns of the unknown; fears that we won't be supported in the new venue; or, any number of totally understandable reasons. My contention is that the closer and more collaboratively we work together; develop positive and trusting relationships, the more likely we will be more comfortable with the changing environment and the changing context of our work.

I've chosen to address the topic of change in the context of organizational culture for a purpose. I trust it is reasonably well known by now that I am dedicated to organizational change...but pragmatist that I am, I would suggest that **I AM NOT A FAN OF CHANGE FOR THE SAKE OF CHANGE ITSELF**. What might be less well known is what the desired change is. It isn't about a specific vision of how the college should be structured, or what programs and services it should offer, or even what policies and methods it should employ. I think I can state the nature of the desired change in a rather uncomplicated, straightforward way. *It is about City College becoming a learning organization – an organization where being proactive, taking risk, and continually seeking improvement are prized as norms for excellence.* That is the culture which I would like to instill within the context of our core mission; with adherence to our core

values; and with the highest level of recognition of the needs of those we serve....our students and our community. It's as simple as that!

Occasionally, I feel the need to cite the experts on this subject. One, whom you may have read, is Rosabeth Moss Kanter, author of the book, *The Change Masters*. Among my favorite recollections is her description of the "roast pig" problem. She attributes the story to Charles Lamb's 1822 essay, "A Dissertation on Roast Pig," a satirical account of how the art of roasting was discovered in an ancient village that did not cook its food. A mischievous child accidentally set fire to a house with a pig inside, and the villagers poking around in the embers discovered a new delicacy. For years thereafter, a rash of house fires ensured an abundance of roast-pig, but at the expense of burning down whole houses to serve the dinner. Kanter applies the point to organizations fearful of changing anything because it would unravel everything. She mentions examples of mindless repetition of unnecessary work in the false belief that a new practice will not work apart from old practices. I suspect some of you have seen "roast pig" problems but just didn't know the name for them!

I mention this story because I think there is a message here for City College. At some point, that village quit burning down houses and cooked roast-pork more efficiently and effectively. A new writer on the scene, Malcolm Gladwell, calls this the "tipping point." I feel that City College is at such a "tipping point" now. In the short period of 6½ years that we have spent together, we have witnessed significant changes and positive developments. And I believe that the college community is appreciative of those changes and recognizes that we have reached a "tipping point." That is why I wanted to take the time in this address to speak of our culture and climate and how it is changing and that it has many marks of a developing organization. But I'm not done yet. I believe that the most exciting and positive changes lie ahead. And I will not be satisfied until we can say that we have done our personal best. When I reach the end of my tenure here, I'd like for us to be able to say (and this is not an epitaph, mind you): **"We have all the marks of a learning organization; our future is golden, and we have made it happen...working together!"**

### **Golden or Gilded?**

I began this address with a question. Is our organization in a period that is golden or gilded? As is the norm in academia, we offered no assurance of an absolute answer. The terms are rather ostentatious anyway, and at best they serve as referent points. The term, Gilded Age, seems to have been coined by the novelist, Mark Twain, to illustrate the outwardly showy but inwardly corrupt nature of American society during the industrialization of the late 1800's. Great fortunes created during this period produced huge wealth and a way of life that gilded everything. Well, I cannot suggest and do not believe that we can characterize our organizational achievements at City College as gilded or a Gilded Age. But what about the other term, Golden Age? In Roman mythology, when Saturn ruled Latium, it was a period of perfect harmony and prosperity. War and battle were unknown, as were crime and injustice. Laws were redundant. The earth was paradise and even among animals there was peace. Since then, nearly everyone has appropriated the term: the golden age of Greece, the Mayan Golden Age, the Sung golden age in china, the Golden Age of Jazz, the Golden Age of

Radio, the Golden Age of Aviation. And, if you can tolerate it, there are more: the Golden Age of Iron Men (are you listening Arnold...quick message....the honeymoon is over!!) And the Golden Age of Comic Books. And, of course, there is merely the Golden Age – the coming Golden Age or the Golden Years.

To tell you the truth, now that we've reached the end of this address, I don't think the question posed in the beginning sufficiently applies to our organization. It's neither a gilded nor a golden era. So, I would like to change the metaphor slightly by drawing on a term originating in mathematics: the Golden Mean. Sometimes it is called the Golden Section or the Golden Ratio. Also, it is referred to as the Fibonacci Sequence. It is the division of a line where the smaller segment is to the larger segment as the larger segment is to the whole (about 382:618). Imagine a straight line called A, divided about 2/3 of the way into segments B and C. The ratio of A to B or B to C is the Golden Ratio. This ratio, called Phi, the 21<sup>st</sup> letter of the Greek alphabet which is different than Pi, the 16<sup>th</sup> letter of the same alphabet, has fascinated humankind for centuries. It has influenced the Egyptian Pyramids, the Greek Parthenon, Notre Dame in Paris, Renaissance art, Mozart's music and other compositions, mathematics, geometry, literature, theology, and so on. Studies have been published suggesting that the ratio is the most pleasing proportion to the eye, that the human body is proportioned this way from foot to navel and navel to the top of the head (or similarly the ratio of the arm-span to human height), and that the Golden Mean phenomenon is exceedingly meaningful to the world of mind and matter.

Now, I want to draw something useful from this concept. What I like about the mean is that it's not the center point or the topmost point. It's a point established in relation to the parts. It's about the way in which the segments work together. To me, it's a useful way to describe an institution or organization that is working in harmony. When our respective roles are functioning well and in balance, the institution functions well and in balance. Let line C represent the culture of the institution. Let segment A represent participatory governance and segment B represent leadership and management. When we are doing our best in these areas and are in harmony, there is something satisfying about it and our culture knows it. So, if there is a single message today, it is this. May each and every one of us aspire to the Golden Mean. That's my message, and if it sounds like fanciful imaginings or ruminations, so be it!

### **Conclusion**

As a grandfather still basking in the glow of our now six month old and very healthy baby boy, I want to close with a children's story, one which perhaps most of you know from years ago: Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax*. It's a story about environmentalism, and it movingly shows us that we are responsible for the environment... just as we are responsible for our college, our climate, our success, and our future. The story begins this way:

At the far end of town  
Where the Grickle-grass grows  
And the wind smells slow-and-sour when it blows  
And no birds ever sing excepting old crows...  
Is the street of the Lifted Lorax.

And deep in the Grickle-grass, some people say,  
If you look deep enough you can still see, today,  
Where the Lorax once stood  
Just as long as it could  
Before somebody lifted the Lorax away.

Who was the Lorax? He was a furry, person-like creature who lived once-upon-a-time in the trees called Truffula Trees. The Truffula Trees were magnificent – brightly colored, sweet smelling fruit, tufts softer than silk, and prolific. The Lorax lived happily among them. But along came the Once-ler in his wagon and in no time at all chopped down a Truffula Tree and knitted a Thneed, “a fine-something-that-all-people-need.” Soon, there was a factory and the Once-ler family were all knitting Thneeds and chopping down Truffula Trees. Then came the super-ax hackers and the “biggered” factories. But the Brown Bar-ba-loots no longer played in the shade, the Swans flew off with a cough, and the Humming-Fish no longer swam in the ponds filled with Gluppity-Glupp. And despite the final call of the Lorax, “I’m the Lorax who speaks for the trees,” the last Truffula Tree was heard to fall, and the Lorax took leave of his place “without leaving a trace” – except for one word written on a rock, “UNLESS.” Years later, the only remaining once-ler explained that word to a little boy who chanced upon the devastating scene: “The word of the Lorax seems perfectly clear,” he said. “UNLESS someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.” And with that, he gave the boy a present:

It’s a Truffula Seed.  
It’s the last one of all!  
You’re in charge of the last of the Truffula Seeds.  
And Truffula Trees are what everyone needs.  
Plant a new Truffula. Treat it with care.

To all of you, I would say in closing: Listen to the Lorax. You’re in charge of the Truffula Seeds. Plant a new Truffula. Treat it with care. And grow a forest in which we can live in harmony and health, and others will enjoy.

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