Senate President Message, Fall 2016

Welcome back, Foothill faculty! I truly hope your summer was restorative and energizing. Although letting go of summer is always hard for me, I am also very much looking forward to seeing everyone and getting back into the groove at Foothill. With just a few days until Fall quarter begins, I want to take a moment to ask your attention to three key issues:

1. If you're not sure what the heck the academic senate is or what we do, there's a great opportunity coming up on *October 3 at 2PM in the Toyon Room*. This is our first meeting of the quarter and will include a general orientation to senate. If you're interested but unable to attend, ask your official division senate representative to give you the low-down.

2. We need volunteers to serve! Your contributions are important and truly valued. Our most immediate needs are:

    *   Tenured faculty willing to serve as at-large members on tenure review committees (need to have completed tenure review training and/or do it at Opening Day)
    *   A second faculty member to represent us on the district's Professional Development Leave (PDL) Committee. This is the shared governance group that reviews PDL applications and reports, and strong faculty representation is critical. Philosophy instructor Brian Tapia has stepped up to take one of our seats at the table, but we very much need a second.
    *   One faculty to serve on the Program Review Committee
    *   Please contact me if you're interested in serving in either of the above capacities, and thank you in advance for considering!

3. The third "issue" is somewhat of an individual call to action…

    Over the past several years our campus has been increasingly engaged in planning and implementing student success initiatives. From the Student Equity or Basic Skills workgroups, to helping plan programs like Umoja and First Year Experience, to myriad other groups and approaches, there is a LOT going on! At times, it may seem impossible to participate or even to keep track of everything. It is also true that there are many factors involved in student success that we cannot control. As such, it would be easy for individual faculty to feel lost or powerless to affect real change. I believe the good news is, there *is* something we can do as individuals, without having to fill out paperwork, or attend more professional development, or collaborate with anyone else, etc. etc... It's this: learn our students' names! And, if their names are not familiar, we can express our willingness to learn – to learn their real names, not their nicknames, or the Americanized names some students adopt to let us off the hook because they feel sorry for us. We know that creating classroom environments that intentionally recognize and value different cultural identities can greatly improve outcomes for students. Our names are often a strong and powerful tie to our individual identity. Taking a sincere interest in learning others' names and making the effort to pronounce them correctly is one way to signal that we respect and value them. If a student ultimately prefers to be called by a nickname, I believe we should respect that wish. Even if this is the case, though, making an honest attempt is viewed is usually as positive validation of them as an individual learner.

    But you're bad at names? Me too. I have been happy to realize that the more I practice, the easier it has become. There are lots of techniques to help. My favorite is asking students to write their name on a nametag and then go around and meet them individually during an icebreaker exercise on the first day. Another idea is to greet them at our classroom door, shake their hand, and ask their name and their help in learning to say it if needed. I bet you have many other great techniques, too.

    This one action is well within individual faculty means, and can send a strong message that we respect and value our students as individuals. Even this small action could make a tremendous difference for our students.

    In service,

    Carolyn Holcroft, Academic Senate President