

MCC Spring Convocation
Remarks by Dr. Shouan Pan

January 4, 2008

(The MCCCDD Governing Board approved Dr. Pan as MCC's sixth president on January 8, 2008).

Good morning and Happy New Year! Thank you for inviting me to today's faculty convocation.

Mesa Community College's (MCC) search for the sixth president has been a long journey for both you and me. As your next recommended president, I have many people to thank for this day, but the list is rather long. Permit me to say thank you to the MCC community, to Chancellor Glasper, to the members of the Presidential Search Committee, to the Site Visiting Team, and to the Cizek Executive Search Firm! Finally, let me thank the District Board of Trustees who I hope will endorse the recommendation.

From the bottom of my heart, I thank you for your warm greetings and gracious support!

Many people from both MCC and BCC where I have worked for the last five years have asked me why I desire to be a college president at this juncture in the history of higher education. Why did I choose to go through the search twice? Community colleges across the country are confronted by an extraordinary host of pressures, both internal and external, that make leading MCC, in the wake of a long-time president, a challenge at best. Former Yale President and baseball commissioner, the late Bart Giamatti, once remarked, "Being a president of a university is no way for an adult to make a living." Well, let me give you my answer: I am here because I believe in MCC. I am here because I have found a special character, an innovative spirit, and inspiring mission in MCC. I've seen MCC's awesome achievements, and I believe that MCC is capable of making the same or greater accomplishments in the future.

You are about to entrust me with the leadership of a wonderful college as its sixth president. I accept this trust with much humility. With a great sense of honor, I plan to assume the presidency in mid-February and to continue the stewardship of MCC in the spirit of shared governance.

Arthur Levine, a distinguished scholar in higher education, the former president of Columbia Teachers College, drew two powerful conclusions about college presidency in his departing speech. He concluded that first, “powerful ideas and people who formulate them provide leadership for higher education.” He further concluded that “campus leadership and successful presidencies require people with the capacity to champion the best ideas and translate them into practice.” As your next president, I will work closely with MCC faculty, staff, administration, and community partners to formulate powerful ideas and to move MCC forward.

This morning, we are fortunate to have Dr. Mark Milliron with us who in a minute will paint for us a changing landscape of American higher education. His powerful ideas will undoubtedly guide our work in the months and years ahead. In the midst of major external changes, however, I believe that we must remain true and steadfast to those core values and commitments that define MCC. In my judgment, focusing on these essentialities will serve us well in the short and long run. Today, I want to accentuate three of which I believe are of vital importance to the future of MCC.

- 1) Continue to support student success—as a leading community college in America, we must at all times put students’ needs and interests above all things; providing them with the best possible learning experiences must be at the center of all institutional dialogues. Student learning and success constitute the reason for our existence. Student success ought to be defined and measured by the degree to which we change and improve students’ lives. We need to ask ourselves these questions: “Have we strayed from the intense focus on student success that made MCC a national leader? If yes, how do we quickly restore that focus?”
- 2) Continue to contribute to community success--MCC must honor its roots and recognize its symbiotic relations with the communities we serve. MCC has unique roles to play in the future of education and the economic development of our constituent communities. We must strengthen existing partnerships and forge new ones at multiple levels. I would like to see MCC deeply and closely connected to the communities we serve and to the greater Maricopa region. We need to ask ourselves these questions, “How do we reconnect with our supporters, partners, or donors who are perhaps in a ‘wait-and-see’

mode? How do we dispel the public doubt about our ability to serve? How do we regain the trust that we may have lost?”

- 3) Continue to promote employee success--what I mean here is to create conditions where all employees can do their best work. This has to do with issues of diversity, communication, trust, professional development opportunities, faculty learning communities, collegiality, and shared governance. I want to see MCC becoming a satisfying and exciting place for everyone to work. In the face of intense competition, we need to strengthen internal collaboration; we must tear down divisional barriers we often create for ourselves; we must get rid of defensive turfs. We need to ask ourselves these questions, “Are there individual or group behaviors that engender mistrust and divisions among us? Are there institutional practices that may pit us against each other? If yes, will you commit to modify and stop that behavior or practice?”

Without mincing the words, we all know that we have challenges ahead of us; we will have a few tough decisions to make in the next few months. Whether it is about reversing the slide in student enrollment, or addressing the budget shortfall, or moving forward with the downtown development project, or deepening the integration of technology in the teaching and learning process, or regaining public trust, we will have to address them head on, with collective wisdom and unfettered determination. I believe we have the people capacity and the collective will to meet the challenges and make the tough decisions.

Over the course of 2008, I plan to lead the college forward toward a vision for the future. It will come as a result of a strategic planning process or a SWOT analysis process that will engage the entire college community. As I begin my new role, you will most likely see me devoting a significant amount of time during the first two months to educating myself about MCC and to engaging in fact-finding activities. You will see me walking around, listening, observing, asking questions, engaging the leadership of the faculty, the professional association, the administrators, and the students in conversations about urgent matters that we need to address and about long-term strategic issues. I will need to quickly open channels of communications with Chancellor Glasper, the CEC, board members, community leaders and elected officials. You will see me allocating time to

visit with faculty, staff, and students at the Red Mountain and Downtown campuses as well.

As we begin our work in the new spring of MCC's institutional life, we enter into a time of renewal for MCC. Together, we will open a new chapter in the evolution of MCC. We are poised to make history in achieving greater student success, greater community success, greater employee success, and ultimately greater institutional success. President John F. Kennedy summed up our charge most eloquently: "Hold fast to the best of the past and move fast to the best of the future."

Unequivocally, MCC has been a leading community college in the nation, and it is capable of achieving greater distinction and prominence. Its future is very bright. I, as your new president, however, cannot move MCC to that future by myself. I need everyone here and in the college to be with me and to lend me your advice and support. I ask you to join me in the most exciting task of building a premier community college right here in the city of Mesa, Arizona. I cannot think of a task that is more important or more worthy of our collective efforts. Let's pledge to make this our New Year's resolution: we will all think, speak, and act in the best interest of our students and our college.

I am thrilled to join the MCC and Maricopa family. Thank you for the privilege of serving Mesa Community College!