DATE: April 23, 2007

TO: Eloise Crippens, Academic Senate President
    Members, Academic Senate, West Los Angeles College

CC: Faculty, Classified Staff and Students

FROM: Mark W. Rocha, President, West Los Angeles College

SUBJECT: College President’s Report

Dear President Crippens:

I thank you for the opportunity to provide this report and update on a number of issues as we work together in our participatory decision-making process to achieve student success:

Enrollment and Budget Turnaround

I am very pleased to report that at the District Budget Committee meeting of last April 18th, that the Chancellors Office projected that West’s budget will end the 2006-07 fiscal year with a positive balance of $576,775, thanks to our projected increase in enrollment this year of nearly 13% to over 6600 FTES up from last year’s 5885 FTES.

✓ Working together, we have ended our four-year decline in enrollment and therefore balanced the college budget in a single year. Congratulations to all!
✓ This turnaround has enabled me to approve seven full time faculty positions for next year from the Senate’s FPIP list.
✓ For next year’s budget I will also work with the faculty leadership to restore administrative and classified staff positions according to a mutually agreed upon plan.

This kind of success cannot be achieved without making some changes and decisions. I am well aware of the questions that some very fairly posed with respect to changes in class scheduling, Weekend College, distance education, the academic calendar and the like. I asked the administration to forge ahead because I considered the risk of business as usual to be a much greater one than forging ahead to grow the enrollment. Enrollment growth must be the college’s number one goal since it is a prerequisite for our two major mission goals: academic excellence and student success.

Consultation with the Divisions

Vigorous, respectful discussion always makes for better policy. Last month I reported I would meet with each division so we could have a direct and full discussion with all of the available context and information. I am happy to report that I have completed these meetings and here is some of what I have learned:

1. Class scheduling. There are indeed some problems and tensions that arise between the departments and the extra-lateral programs such as ACT, distance education, and Weekend College. Chairs and faculty are not opposed to these programs as much as what seems like the
ad-hoc administration of these programs. They seek a clearer process by which to manage their programs so that “everybody plays by one set of rules.”

2. Distance education. Most chairs and faculty participate and support distance education but with some reservations. They want to be sure that academic integrity and honesty are observed, that distance ed courses do not reduce budget for on-campus courses and they want to see clear, consistent research that guides policy.

3. Curriculum and new program development. Every division has wonderful ideas for new curricula and programs but many feel stifled and unsupported in these efforts. There has not been clear budget and staff support for these crucially important areas.

4. Pre-collegiate students. Many dedicated and hard-working faculty report the continuing difficulty of receiving and teaching students who are not ready academically for college-level coursework. Faculty call for a closer relationship between the matriculation and counseling process and the academic programs, as well as for a pre-collegiate track to success. Many would support a “three year to degree” program with a revamped “year zero” that would better prepare most of our entering students for success.

5. Restructuring of academic affairs and divisional realignment. There is no administration proposal to realign the divisions. We do, however, generally agree that the current academic affairs structure and divisional alignment is not ideal for moving forward with academic policy, program development and general accountability. I have agreed to let the current divisional realignment stand pending a review by the divisional chairs themselves, the goal of which is to make their own recommendations for improvement. Meanwhile the administration will continue to work with the faculty leadership on a college-wide outline for updating the accountability structure of administrative services, student services, academic affairs and the president’s office.

6. Participatory decision-making. While the Accreditation Progress Report exit interview confirmed that West has made great strides in improving its formal shared governance, many faculty report that there is still a communication gap between the shared governance leadership and committees and the rank and file faculty. I therefore have taken these two further actions to reduce this gap in the short term:
   a. I have called upon the College Council to perform the biannual performance review called for in its original charter. The goal is to strengthen the Planning, Budget and Facilities committees and support them in developing real policy and action recommendations.
   b. I have called the divisional chairs to join the Administrative Council on Monday, April 30th, and for every meeting through the end of the academic year so that we can get on the same page and stay there as well as to provide chairs with real information they can carry back to faculty immediately.

**Athletic Program**

The state Commission on Athletics visited West on March 21st for its program accreditation. The result was a severe warning and a list of specific recommendations that the college is obligated to implement in order to remain in good standing for all of its sports teams and student-athletes.

One of the recommendations concerns the expansion of the athletic program to include new women’s and men’s sports. The athletic program and the Vice President of Student Services have brought forward a recommendation to add teams next year in baseball, women’s soccer and women’s volleyball. Such an expansion also meets our obligation under Title IX to expand opportunities in women’s sports. The goal of this plan is to bring in 100 new full-time student athletes next year; 50 in baseball and 50 in women’s soccer and volleyball.

All sports teams are revenue-producing enhancements to our budget. One hundred new full-time students produces approximately $430,000 in incremental revenue, not including the revenue from friends of these student-athletes. Thus much of the cost of these programs is paid for by the increased full-time enrollment of the athletes and their extended network. I am also happy to report that Supervisor Yvonne
Brathwaite Burke, the Los Angeles Dodgers and RBI (Reviving Baseball in the Inner City) have pledged financial assistance so that all three sports will be able to start up without claiming funds from our current budget. Moreover, we will be developing new funds from the rental of some fields and facilities, so that these funds can be pledged to upgrade tutoring and counseling support for our student-athletes. All of these revenues and expenses will of course be part of Vice President Oester’s open budget presentations. We are also moving through the formal participatory decision-making process so that I can receive helpful input from the faculty leadership and so the Senate can ultimately express its support for our athletic program and our student-athletes by moving ahead with a search for the coaches who will recruit and train these student-athletes.

**Budget Committee Update**

We will continue our policy of “open books” for all unrestricted and restricted funds that compose our revenue and expense budget. Vice President Oester will continue to consult with the faculty leadership and the Budget Committee as we wend our way to a final budget on July 1st.

**Facilities Update**

Good news:

- Library is renovated and will be dedicated on May 10th.
- The permit for the second access road will soon be granted and major construction begins this summer.
- The “Big Four” projects will begin by the end of this calendar year: Parking Structure, Science and Math, Student Services Center and General Classroom Building.

We’re working to improve:

I do apologize for communication gaps as we move along with projects and relocations. That is why I want to have the divisional chairs at our administrative meetings. We will also be inviting facilities committee members to our weekly Thursday building program meetings so that everyone is in the loop.

**Celebration Day**

Please email Marie if you are able to attend the May 10th ceremony: montourm@wlac.edu.

The ceremony is at 11am. If you wish to attend with your class, please contact Marie and she will put you on a first-come, first-served list for available seats.

**As Always, Thanks**

I thank you for your consideration and look forward to continuing our work together for the good of West Los Angeles College.

Sincerely yours,

Mark Rocha
President