October 5, 2009

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

California community colleges are thrust into the spotlight this year for the first time in a generation. With the troubled economy, many unemployed or underemployed Bay Area residents are opting to pursue college degrees or workforce training. At the same time, the state budget storm has struck higher education, forcing many schools — including those in the UC and CSU systems — to hike student fees and cut programs. As a result, many prospective university students are looking to community colleges to meet their higher education needs. Unfortunately, California budget cuts have forced many community colleges to eliminate classes even though demand is at an all-time high.

The good news for Marin residents is that College of Marin stands out as one of the few Bay Area community colleges not cutting core courses. In fact, we recently added two new associate degree programs in liberal arts and physical sciences. We’ve also expanded our workforce training programs to meet rising demand, tailoring them to regional growth professions such as green technologies and sustainability.

Fully accredited College of Marin offers high-quality educational opportunities for students pursuing undergraduate degrees, developing careers, improving basic skills, and enjoying lifelong learning. We offer an exciting range of courses that students need in order to transfer to four-year universities or train for new careers. Outstanding faculty and staff provide individual attention and support to help students succeed.

Marin students have noticed. Enrollment — steadily rising over the past three years — skyrocketed this fall.

Along with our broad schedule of programs, our Measure C building projects continue to create excitement. Students returned to campus in August to find a new College of Marin rising from the ground up. Following green building guidelines, we are building facilities that will save precious natural resources and money.

Thanks to our community of neighbors, faculty, staff, students, and Board of Trustees, much has been accomplished. In the past few years, College of Marin has revitalized programs, curricula, facilities, and enrollment. The spotlight is on us, and we are ready. Come see for yourself why now is our time to shine!

**Enrollment Soaring: New Programs Growing**

Why do thousands of students enroll each semester?

Students come to College of Marin because we help them unlock the door to their educational curiosity and success. With our intimate setting, we know our students by name. We know how to help and encourage them.

Increasingly, students are realizing that College of Marin is a place to dream, learn, and achieve. Continuing a three-year trend, the fall semester enrollment is up 883 students, or 13 percent, compared to last year, our largest increase in almost
two decades. At the Indian Valley campus, enrollment has doubled in just four years to about 1,500 students. The number of local high school students who chose College of Marin more than doubled last year. The 2008 incoming class included 50 students from San Rafael High — about the same number of Bulldogs who enrolled during the previous five years combined. Redwood sent 26 graduates, the most since 2001.

Students come to College of Marin to jump-start their higher education. The majority of our courses are transferable to four-year colleges and universities. Many of our graduates go on to earn their baccalaureate and higher degrees at prestigious universities such as UC Berkeley, San Francisco State University, UCLA, and others. College of Marin remains one of the community colleges with the highest transfer rate to UC Berkeley.

Students come to College of Marin to save money. By completing the requirements for transfer as a junior to four-year universities, College of Marin students save thousands of dollars on the cost of their baccalaureate degrees.

Students of all ages and from diverse backgrounds come here to learn. We offer hundreds of courses. Each semester we add new courses to keep our curriculum fresh and exciting. This fall, for example, students can learn about major political developments in the Middle East or explore the latest technology in computer programming. The 2009/2010 year marks our first academic year offering our new liberal arts degree, which will allow more students to complete an associate degree. It’s an ideal choice for students planning on transferring into the CSU or UC school systems. We also have added an associate of science degree in physical sciences, for students who wish to have a broad foundation in the physical sciences and mathematics. To meet rising student demand, we have added new full-time faculty positions in the critical academic areas of physics and astronomy.

To guide our future success, we have adopted a new Educational Master Plan and a multi-year Strategic Plan. The plans will direct college planning and decision making—including strategy, resource allocation, evaluation, and outcome assessment — for the next 10 years.

In addition to preparing students for transferring, College of Marin also nurtures students seeking to build basic skills and pursue lifelong learning. Responding to local community needs, this year we are launching a new College Skills Department. The department combines credit and noncredit English as a Second Language (ESL) with basic skills English.

You are never too old to reap the rewards of learning and, as many attest, our lifelong learning programs offer a wealth of opportunities to explore new interests and ideas.

Whatever their reasons for coming to College of Marin, we make sure students thrive. With dedicated faculty and staff support and a broad range of excellent student services, our students receive the help they need to succeed. Last year alone, our tutoring program provided nearly 10,000 hours of learning support to more than 1,000 College of Marin students.

**Award-Winning and Innovative**

Every year, a number of college faculty, staff, and administrators receive honors for excellence from local, statewide, and national organizations. Recently, Professor and Academic Senate President Yolanda Bellisimo and Professor Robert Kennedy were awarded the California 2009 POWER Awards (Promising Outcomes Work and Exemplary Research) for their work creating a new way to look at institutional outcomes. The California Community College Chancellor’s Office recognized our Extended Opportunities Program and Services staff for their program stewardship. Steve Berringer was named Bay Valley Conference Baseball Coach of the Year. Nationally, Kay Ryan, a 30-year basic skills English professor at the college, began her second term as the U.S. Poet Laureate.
Training Workers for Today…and Tomorrow

Our workforce training programs help students begin new careers, retool for their current professions, and increase their earning potential — all of which support the county’s long-term economic vitality. We offer occupational training and workforce preparation in a variety of areas, including nursing, business, multimedia, court reporting, medical assisting, accounting, and more.

In the past few years, we have responded to the changing needs of the Marin economy by adding new offerings to our strong foundation of existing programs. Many Marinites saw firsthand our cutting edge career and vocational program during our spring 2009 Innovations Conference held at IVC. We have worked closely with business partners and the community to meet the needs of local industries.

Students in traditional trade courses such as Auto Technology and Auto Collision Repair Technology now work with students in Machine Metals Technology and Environmental Landscaping to design and build alternative-powered vehicles. The new Transportation Technology Facility at IVC, to be completed this winter, will feature green technology to help students learn the intricacies of electric power, hybrid fuel cells, compressed natural gas, synthetic fuel, and bio fuels.

The college’s flagship organic farm and teaching garden, launched in spring of 2009, has blossomed into a place to grow both food and farmers. At the organic farm, students learn soil and water management, agriculture practices, and complementary business methods.

Additionally, we recently received the green light for our farm-based Sustainable Food Systems Program. The program is designed to train an entrepreneurial workforce in the emerging fields of organic agriculture and sustainable local food systems. It is the first industry-driven workforce development program of its kind within the California community college system and will be a model for other colleges and communities throughout the state.

Grand Openings and Groundbreakings

Along with program changes, our campuses are abuzz with Measure C improvements. On October 1, we celebrated the grand reopening of the Diamond Physical Education Center.

In September, we broke ground on the Science/Math/Central Plant Complex, the largest green construction project on campus. It will eventually house our science, mathematics, and nursing programs, as well as the IT department and a central power plant. The three-story, 70,000-square-foot building to be located on the Kentfield campus is designed to reflect the beauty of the college landscape.

Construction continues on three other major projects: a new Main Building, a Transportation Technology Complex at IVC, and the Fine Arts Building on the Kentfield campus. All told, we are undertaking nearly 25 infrastructure projects. From Ignacio Creek erosion mitigation and the Corte Madera Creek Bridge to the photovoltaic system at the Diamond PE Center and rerouting of utilities, improvements continue above and below ground and are well within budget.

The college has applied for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification, an internationally recognized green building rating system developed by the U.S. Green Building Council. The system recognizes performance, sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection, and indoor environmental quality.

These projects have all been funded by the $249.5 million Measure C bond, passed by Marin voters in 2004. We remain grateful to the Marin community for their generous support. Together, we continue building today for a brighter tomorrow.
College of Marin Gears Up for Next Accreditation Visit

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACCJC/WASC) requires colleges to follow a six-year cycle involving continuous institutional review. The next accreditation visit is on the horizon. The college is undergoing an accreditation self-study in preparation for a team visit scheduled for fall 2010. In recent years, the Board of Trustees has made accreditation a top priority. Faculty and staff have worked tirelessly to ensure that the college is fully accredited, providing the highest quality learning experience for students.

Now is Our Time to Shine!

Thriving during the current economic upheaval has not been easy. We are experiencing the effect of state budget cuts of more than $1 million this year. College of Marin is fortunate to have a team of faculty and staff who are eminently capable and committed to the college mission to serve students. Guided by sound institutional planning and business practices and with a commitment to students at our core, we have made College of Marin a safe haven from the economic storm for many in our community.

Our community needs College of Marin more now than it has in decades. We provide a place where students can prepare to attend four-year colleges and universities, develop basic skills, train for a new career, and pursue lifelong learning — without breaking the bank.

I invite you to come to our campuses. Look into the eyes of our students and see the glowing spark of knowledge. Watch your neighbors and friends shine with the excitement of professional and personal advancement. Enroll in classes and ignite your own passion for learning. Come see for yourself why College of Marin is the place to dream, learn, and achieve.

The spotlight is upon us, and we are here to serve.

Sincerely,

Frances L. White
Superintendent/President