



August 28, 2015

Welcome back to West's Fall 2015. Darrick Smith's featured presentation on our opening day, the 27th of August, and Trustee Kamlager's remarks after him, seem to fit our times and our institution's responsibility for enhancing our students' successes that will provide opportunity to change their social and economic strata. He talked about generating hope for ourselves to greet and meet our students who come to West full of hope already. His message was that we are meant to send them off with that success. His comments connect with national events: the solemn 60th anniversary of Emmett Till's death in 1955 and the 10th anniversary of Katrina, to name two. He mentioned the string of social protests this year over brutality of citizens and political verbal attacks on immigrants. Despite these, he enjoined us to fulfill our mission. West will continue to find its way to serve students.

I do not recall a starting day when we had more energy and were so engaged. This start of the semester is a harbinger for what we need to do and sustain, mindful of our history and heritage, purposeful in contributing to our successes—adding more students with more enrollments, increased retention, persistence, certificates, degrees, transfers, and jobs. Growing our students' success and increasing the numbers of students we are serving. Congratulations to the AFT Chapter President Olga Shewfelt and her support team for an excellent faculty meeting Wednesday. Congratulations to the Senate President Adrienne Foster and the many faculty who contributed to the success of last week's Professional Learning sessions including West's opening day Thursday. We have a [New Faculty Handbook](#) and a [Tech Fair schedule](#) of sessions this Fall. Westside Extension is celebrating its 20th anniversary.

This past week has been a time of creative energy and committed unity, the most auspicious start of an academic year that I can remember. Compared to just a few years ago, West is a year-round college with students, classes, athletics, projects, and new developments every month. Academic Divisions and administrators were reorganized. The Accreditation Steering Committee and its chairperson, Alice Taylor, immediately switched from mid-term report to a comprehensive self-study, preparing for our accreditation visit this Spring 2016. We added a number of assignments to faculty and staff to help with the self-study. Although we were able to hire many in the Spring 2015, faculty hiring ran right through summer to get to West's commitment for 15. Faculty and staff devoted weeks of work to the effort. Planning for our first week of the semester took more days of work by many. Special projects, partnerships, and grants took time and imagination, not to omit our work on Expressway, SLOs, syllabi, online supplemental delivery, co-enrolled non-credit classes, and smart technology. Gone are the days of a long winter intersession and later, perhaps, some summer classes. For those who were able to use the summer for recreation, travel, and relaxation, good! For those who used the time for work, also good. Thank you all, and I hope to catch up with each of you to learn how you are faring.

A collaborative spirit that stems from a unity among us, faculty and staff, our leaders in our labor organizations (collaborate is rooted in the word labor), ASO, Academic Senate, community, and administration blesses West with good fortune. I deeply appreciate our creative confederation.

Two important developments to share:

Students. This is the year of the student (see [flyers](#)). I hope it is a window to West's consideration of how it can dedicate our energy to a student-centered learning institution, to enlist the support of the Senate, ASO, College Council, and our organized labor leaders to focus on how we can make West the center of learning that we envisage.

One step has been for the [Digital Design Studio \(DDS\)](#) to start recording students' experiences and stories at West. DDS started with [LEARN](#) and [Puente](#). The ASO leadership is outstanding, and they too will do some recordings to document their own story and their impact this year. Connected to our focus on students is the [Student Success Committee's](#) reviewing essential student outcomes and identifying quantitative goals with clear steps to improve retention, persistence, completion, degrees, certificates, transfers, and jobs. West is posting a dashboard online to communicate our essential vital signs for students' success.

In July, 2015, West received a commitment of over \$150K to open student support services for veterans, and we submitted a federal grant proposal for veterans. West received another \$150K commitment to offer entrepreneurial studies. West was awarded a \$1.25M TRIO Student Support Services 5-year grant this summer to support underrepresented students' success in their transitions to college. We have an approved \$1M partnership to offer courses that lead to jobs in the hospitality and tourism industry. In accordance with our [Board of Trustee's policy](#) that calls for One-Stop Job Centers on campus, West started in July a series of programming meetings with [JVS](#), West's partner, and the [Employment Development Department \(EDD\)](#), to create one of "America's Job Centers of California" that will be a set of services for job exploration, preparation, development, and placement. EDD's return to campus will bring employment services back to West.


Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics ([STEM](#)) activities continue to increase with new opportunities made possible by the divisional leadership in Aviation Maintenance Technology, Computer Science, Mathematics, and Sciences. To support STEM developments, West has two Upward Bound (STEM) grants, one NSF grant, and a First in the World grant proposal (pending). Our LEARN program that is transforming into a Black Scholars program is very focused on tutoring to make math and science success stories for our students. [Base 11](#) is a partner that has made possible paid internships this summer at Cal Tech, and it is assisting West to explore programs in Unmanned Air Systems, Fab Lab, entrepreneurship, and aerospace manufacturing. Two students just completed their paid summer internships at Cal Tech along side MIT and Cal Tech students all of whom were

working on science projects with professors. Another grant has helped the Computer Science division develop a VMware IT Academy at West. West has added staffing to Financial Aid and has reviewed its steps to deliver services to make it a one-day turn around for service. Full-time counseling is back in Athletics. Counseling is back in the Financial Aid process. Faculty Advisor training is slated to start this year. Co-enrolled non-credit classes that are designed to support students' success are available this fall. A new full-time counselor is in DSPS. Adjunct counseling assignments as part of Expressway have dramatically increased, with increased summer coverage year-to-year. We are looking to set up a Student Welcome Center this semester. Faculty advising and information have increased in CalWorks. Two full-time faculty are restored to the Learning Center.

There are so many best practices and innovations at West; this is only an indication of what is going on. As you read this letter and think of other things, I apologize in advance, but please send them to me. I'll have an excuse to write another letter sometime this Fall 2015.

Growth. This is a year for West to grow, strategically and fundamentally. The state/district for 2015-2016 can fund West at a seven percent increase although our District-West planning session in late Spring allotted West 3% for 2015-16. West has met its growth targets each year over the past six. And it has balanced its budget. West has stayed within its guidelines and it has managed effectively within limits. 2015-16, however, opens the door to colleges that have high functionality and a vision to transform from where they are to the opportunity of a quantum leap: a careful, aggressive plan for a series of growth increments over the next five years that goes through West's shared governance process for ample review and input. The leap will be a transition from "small college" of about 7,000+ FTES to "middle-sized college" of about 12,000+. A leap like this changes West's challenges to serve its students by an economy of scale. Every college has fixed costs for security, utilities, maintenance, administration, support services, facilities, to name a few. For a "small college" of 7,000 FTES these fixed costs consume a significantly larger amount of resources proportionally than they do for a "middle-sized college" of about 12,000 FTES. True, nothing is actually easier with more resources—there is the steady effort to grow and the continuing need to fit West's growth strategy into its budget in any year. But opportunities are enhanced to increase access and to improve what West does for students. For examples, an improved economy of scale will enable West to invest in increased professional development, more classes, faculty, and staff, research, outreach and student services for students' success. But West will need to be mindful of the factor of diseconomy of scale over a five-year strategic growth plan. Herzberg is cited in The Economist, "numbers numb our feelings for what is being counted and lead to adoration of the economies of scale. Passion is in feeling the quality of experience, not in trying to measure it." As we grow, West needs to be mindful of its passion to serve its students.

What is compelling today is this opportunity to grow, which does not come often. State funding is frequently restrictive (during the recession West saw its allocations and students even reduced), and the District can have competing priorities. Sometimes too a



college is not ready to grow. But in this case West is in the right place at the right time. Successfully implemented, this plan should start the college on a path of realizing new and increased opportunities for access and service, for learning and student success.

West closed its planning sessions with the District staff estimating that the balance carried forward from 2014-15 to 2015-16 was \$35K. After intensive review by staff in Administrative Services and Academic Affairs, West ended the 2014-15 year with a \$1M balance carried forward. To achieve this balance, West combined state funding with alternative funding source ([Revenue Enhancement Initiative REI](#)). About 13% of the operating budget is from alternative funding sources such as grants primarily but also significant and growing sources from the international students who are a part of [All Things Global](#), and enterprise management that rents college facilities for example. West will be setting new growth goals for the REI especially in foundation fund raising activities and grants, enterprise rentals to studios in particular, and All Things Global's international student enrollments. Combined with state-funded growth, alternative funding sources will increase their percentage of the operating budget, and sustain West's plans for growth over the five-year plan.

West has started reviewing with District senior staff a plan for sustained growth over five years to transform the college from a model of about 7250 FTES to a model of about 12000+ FTES. This fall will start the college's own review of a plan to grow.

Facilities. West's construction projects are starting this academic year. You will be seeing start-ups and completions of signs, Plant Facilities Center, Dance Studio upgrades, Amphitheater, Technology Learning Center in Lot 5, Sound Stage in Lot 2, among many improvements in infrastructure.

In closing, West should have a great year, a year with two thematic elements: a renewed focus on students and a determination to grow the college. Our creativity, innovation, and collaboration have given West a distinctive tradition that will serve us all well in these times of new opportunities.

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