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Just don't give up what you're trying to do. Where there is love and inspiration, I don't think that you can go wrong. - Ella Fitzgerald

Dear Monarchs,

Happy first day of the spring semester! I have a few updates for you about Black History Month, COVID funding, the District security assessment, outreach and marketing, our IEPi PRT request, virtual graduation planning, Valley College face masks, re-engagement plans, and lighting standards.

February is Black History Month. While I miss the opportunity to come together in celebration of Black history like last year, I would like to challenge all Monarchs to not let the pandemic deter us. Please continue to engage in activities that help expand our understanding and celebrate Black history. Check out [the list of events from our Umoja and Black Scholars program](#). Also, please let me know of any additional events or activities you can recommend.

COVID Funding. In previous updates, I've shared information about various COVID-related funding sources. Last year, we received CARES Act Funding that totaled \$6,154,62. Most of these resources were used for awards to students, including direct awards, emergency grants, and technology needs. In addition to the CARES Act, we received resources from CARES MSI in the amount of \$399,161. A committee solicited ideas on how to use these funds and those projects are well underway. The third source of funding is the state COVID-19 Block Grant in the amount of \$676,681. We're still working on ideas on how to use this funding, which is a bit more restrictive. Lastly and most significantly, we received \$14,883,877 from the new Federal relief act: Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund II (HEERF II) authorized by the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriation Act, 2021 (CRRSAA). From this award, \$3,077,312 will go directly to students. For the remainder, we will be working with the Budget Committee to develop plans. If your department has needs related to COVID-19, possibly related to software or equipment, please let your dean know so we can include it in the planning process. There are restrictions on how we can use the money, but we will do our best to meet the campus's needs. Our goal is to have a plan in place by early March.

District Security Assessment. Last week, the District approved a contract with Hillard Heintze to conduct a security assessment for the nine campuses and district office. Having served on the selection committee, I'm optimistic that they will do a great job and will include contemporary thinking on campus safety. They do have extensive experience nationally. In the spring, they will be conducting interviews, focus groups, and/or town halls at the campuses. From this information, as well as trends with safety issues at the campuses, they will develop recommendations to help inform an RFP that is expected to be issued later in 2021.

Outreach and Marketing. We are beginning to shift marketing and outreach to focus on students in Summer and Fall 2021. Our recent meetings with Local District North East (LDNE) and Burbank Unified have been very positive. It still an exceptional challenge to connect with high school students in this environment, but the outreach team is working diligently. Also, we are working on plans to deploy a major marketing campaign using a variety of funding sources. We will have to move quickly to have a major impact, but I think that there is quite a bit of opportunity.

IEPI PRT Request. As you may recall, we received an Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative (IEPI) Partnership Resource Team (PRT) in the fall to help on a few areas, including marketing, organizational change, and anti-racism. As a result of two visits, we developed an Innovation and Effectiveness Plan and submitted a grant request for \$200,000 this week. We expect to receive funds within the next 4 to 6 weeks to help expedite the implementation of the plan.

Virtual Graduation Planning. Liz Negrete and the Graduation Committee are working on plans for this year's celebration. We have more time than last year and will be including lots of new ideas to honor our students' achievements during these historic times. The District also is selecting a contractor to help support the efforts for the nine colleges. More details will be coming soon.

Valley College Face Masks. We mailed a face mask to all Valley College employees last fall. Additionally, we provided masks to thousands of students, including any students coming to campus for essential infrastructure courses. While we don't have too many left, if you still need a mask, please email Tanya Sirkin at sirkinta@lavc.edu.

Re-engagement Plan. During the fall semester, the District developed a re-engagement grid working with many important constituents. This provides some guidance to what type of activity could be allowed as we move from the current purple tier to the red, orange, and yellow tiers. Over the next few weeks, we will form a workgroup to discuss this more and identify areas needing further development, as well as have some larger, town hall-style conversations. Look for more announcements soon.

Lighting Standards. The District currently has a lighting standard that includes using lights with 4000K color. Although these lights were installed in the Library, as indicated in the Library's program review, the color choice was not ideal. Given the upcoming construction projects, WEC will have some additional conversations about what the lighting standard should be for various types of spaces at Valley, including classrooms, labs, and common areas. While the timeline is short, we'll do our best to incorporate the changes into our new buildings.

Thank you for all of your hard work. As we start the spring semester having now been in the pandemic for eleven months, I know that everyone continues to be sensitive to students' high levels of stress and look for ways of gracefully providing support. At the same time, we know that our colleagues need support as well. Please don't hesitate to let me know if there is something I can do.

Thank you again and be well!

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