

4 June 2020

Colleagues~

Memorial Day is behind us; finals are next week; summer and fall lie ahead.

I know many of us have had an additional urgent question intrude since last week's murder of George Floyd. I have read expressions of frustration from many of you on Facebook and elsewhere in light of America's long history of cruel treatment of its less favored members. I trust you have read "United Against Racism," posted to the Mt. SAC community yesterday evening. I hope those words resonated for all of us.

As you are wondering what you can do—what *more* you can do—to make a better world, do not forget we are already working toward that goal. Mt. SAC is not unusual in serving high numbers of first-generation and underserved students, but we are exceptional in the breadth and depth of services we provide to our students. The Equity Report that will go to the June Board Meeting will show that we still have a lot of work to do to realize equitable outcomes for all of our students. In what follows I focus on good work happening on campus because it is the work we share that does make a difference in the lives of many of our students.



*The peaceful demonstration in Walnut on Tuesday provided an opportunity for solidarity with social distancing. We truly find ourselves in extraordinary times, and yet many of you continue to find ways to prepare students—men and women, young and old, **all** races & ethnicities—for the world around us. You do so in your classrooms **and** you do so in the exercise of your Constitutional rights on the streets of Walnut, Pasadena, and Riverside, and other communities in the Los Angeles basin where you live.*

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This semester we did what was necessary to maintain instruction and services to students. We began with very few of us intending to teach or counsel online, via “temporary remote instruction.”

For summer and fall—and perhaps longer—we know we will be teaching courses online we would prefer to teach on campus. We do not want our teaching to be good *enough*, but as good as it can be—our students need that. How can we learn from what has gone well this semester—under very challenging circumstances—and use that knowledge to do better in future terms?



All of us have been improvising, but only a Dance student could stay ‘on point’ and stay fit at the same time. For more on the multiple successes of the Dance faculty and their students, please see below.

Many faculty members have been doing extraordinary work to rise to the challenges we’ve faced this semester and I want to share several examples (all with permission).

I attended the final New Faculty Seminar gathering and asked what had gone *well* this semester; Danielle Dervishian observed that converting biology labs has been *very* hard—but she also described new collegiality and efforts at collaboration with her colleagues in Biology, a department that already has a strong social streak. Danielle celebrated the mutual support between her colleagues—and she did so with a small child in the background who Danielle is *also* teaching.

Surely a positive outcome of this semester’s challenges is that most faculty will be much more able to use online tools to support on-ground instruction when we do return to campus. In Chemistry, Dhaval Doshi is the primary investigator for a collaborative grant that includes multiple community colleges (American River, Hartnell, Shasta) plus 4-year partners (CSU LA and UC Davis)—focused on developing better online tools to support teaching chemistry. Chemistry labs will be back on campus as soon as we can make that possible. When that day comes, online support in Canvas might make the crucial difference for many struggling Chemistry students. The results of Dhaval’s work with his

colleagues will improve the teaching of Chemistry through California public higher education. *And*, like Danielle, Dhaval has also been doing some juggling at home thanks to the arrival of a first child in early May—*Congratulations!*



I've reminded us before how dependent we all are on the dedication and professionalism of Mt. SAC staff, but if there is one group of colleagues who have gone above, beyond, and into the next dimension of support this semester, it has been the small but mighty Faculty Center for Learning Technology (FCLT). I got to spend time with Michelle on Saturday and Hugo on Sunday as I worked my way through FOMAR and was reminded again about how much so few have done so quickly. I hope you'll take a moment and send them special thanks for all they have done for us.

And ever devoted to improved service, Michelle asks that instead of thanks, you provide feedback via this [Link](#).

Many faculty members like bringing guest speakers to campus—though driving in LA and parking on campus can both be dis-incentives for visitors. But if *everybody* is online, guest speakers are easier to integrate, and first-year Business faculty Derek Dokter has used Zoom to bring more guest speakers “to campus”—and in the process Derek was able to develop a \$500 industry-partner scholarship. I was able to visit one of Derek's classes in the fall (by invitation) and was delighted to see both Cal Poly Pomona faculty and industry representatives talking to students about opportunities that await them.

Danielle described the collaboration of her colleagues in the Biology department, but I have also been impressed with the very quick move toward collaboration among Dance faculty. Dance Chair Amy Nakamura writes, “This Spring, the dance faculty turned their homes into dance studios and have been teaching both LIVE Zoom classes and/or creating dance instructional videos to transition all but one dance course online. Faculty joined a Dance Professors Online Transition Group on Facebook in March with almost 3,000 members from around the world. Department Chair Amy Nakamura held Zoom meetings on unifying positions regarding dance in a COVID world with other California Community colleges including San Jose City College, MiraCosta College, San Diego City College, El Camino College, Santa Ana College, Irvine Valley College, Cerritos College and Moorpark College.” In fact, the work of the Dance faculty has been so terrific that I share Amy's whole report [here](#).

For some faculty, their own challenge adapting has been much easier than that of their students. Respiratory Therapy faculty member Kelly Coreas wrote me about her use of Maxient Reports—I had to write back and confess my ignorance about “Maxient,” and Kelly wrote back, “So many of my students are having trouble with motivation during this time that I have utilized this service to obtain information

for myself that I can share with them via Canvas, office hours, or one-on-one interactions. I feel that I have a good rapport with my Respiratory Therapy students and we can talk about a lot of the things that are affecting their success. However, there comes a point where their issues need more help or direction than I can provide and that is when I utilize the Behavior and Wellness Team Referral Form.”



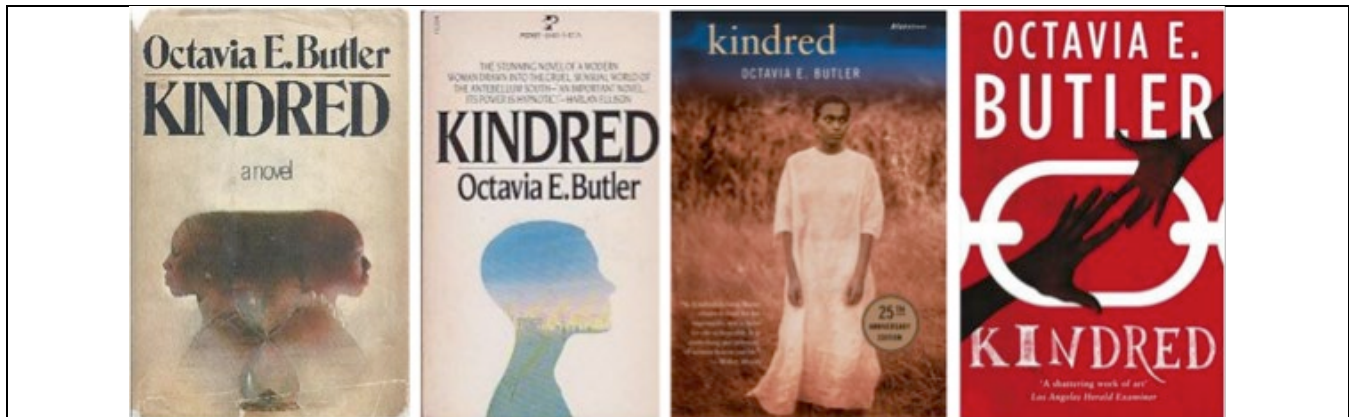
Kelly Coreas with her students (all of whom appear by permission). Kelly wrote me. “Maxient reports are created when someone submits a Behavior and Wellness Team Referral Form online at:

<https://www.mtsac.edu/behavior-and-wellness/>

It is a great way to get students connected with Behavior and Wellness services that may improve their success.”

Mt. SAC faculty have also been helping students process and reflect on their own challenges, and award-winning Mt. SAC Journalism Professor Toni Albertson has been working with Radio Broadcasting Professor Jason Shiff to develop podcasts in which students reflect on their experiences with the pandemic, their Canvas and Zoom experiences at Mt. SAC, and their transfer hopes and dreams for the fall. You can listen to the voices of those students at [Apple Podcasts](#) and [Spotify](#). You might be inspired by the hope each of these students brings to an uncertain future.

As community college faculty, we teach. Promotion is not based on research or publications, but we do have colleagues who continue to be active in scholarship in their fields, and Art History Professor Ellen Caldwell is one of 26 community college scholars *nationally* to be awarded a Mellon Fellowship to continue work at the Huntington Library on book covers designed by artists for the work of Octavia Butler. Ellen’s scholarship connects her own discipline of art history and visual culture and the depiction of bodies of color for the work of Octavia Butler, native daughter in the San Gabriel Valley and multiple recipient of the Hugo and Nebula awards as well as a MacArthur “genius” grant. You can learn more about Ellen’s work at the Mellon—[American Council of Learned Societies website](#).



Ellen's biggest challenge now will be waiting for the Huntington to re-open so she can get to work. If you are not familiar with Octavia Butler's writing, now would be an especially apt time to read Kindred. Many writers have called slavery and its offspring America's original sin. Kindred reflects on that sin and its consequences with exceptional subtlety and power.

Mt. SAC provides exceptionally rich professional development activities to faculty, as well as staff and managers—PD is a crucial tool in meeting the needs of the students *we* serve. One Mt. SAC faculty member I have always found excited about teaching and learning is Counseling Professor Emily Versace. Some of you may have taken advantage of Emily's past flex workshops, and especially her "Training from the Back of the Room" sessions on the "flipped" classroom. In this environment, faculty morph from being presenters of information to leading students through a process taking ownership of knowledge and skills through their interpretation and manipulation of course-specific content. Emily has adapted her work to fit into a six-hour online module and will be offering the training over the summer. After FOMA and SPOT training, it might be the most useful investment of time faculty could make in imagining how they will teach for the duration of the pandemic, and the lessons learned will still be applicable when we return to campus. The workshop will be called "Creating Dynamic Lectures" and should be available next week. Please watch POD's weekly updates for day and time.

What will the fall hold? A few of you have sent me links to an article in *the Atlantic* which anticipates that many students admitted to 4-year colleges will choose community college instead. Paying UC fees to be taught by teaching assistants at your kitchen table is a tough sell—and we anticipate continued high demand for Mt. SAC courses, from new, continuing, and staying-a-little-longer Mounties. Some divisions (Humanities & Social Science) where online offerings were always broad will expand to support the needs of students temporarily blocked from continuing in areas that require on-campus instruction (choir & welding). First year Kinesiology faculty member Lani Ruh reports that recruiting for athletics programs has been surprisingly easier. If planning has been hard for us, imagine trying to plan for the fall on a four-year campus where many students live in dorms—how are you going to socially distance that? Lani reports many students are choosing Mt. SAC to continue to develop their skills and competitiveness, especially considering the uncertainty about life at four-year colleges.

In a semester with much quiet heroism, one of the most moving things I've read was emailed to me last week by Bob Stuard. Many of you will know Bob, since he was a long-time faculty member in the Sign Language Interpreting Department, but I've never met him. Though retired, Bob is learning Spanish, and in fact is enrolled in Spanish 4 with Lízbet Sánchez. Bob had a memorable experience in class shortly after the Mt. SAC townhall two weeks ago. For those of us still struggling—and that's all of us some of

the time—I leave you with this tribute from [Bob to a treasured colleague](#). If you read nothing else today, read this.

