



Board of Trustees Report



May 10, 2022

Dr. David M. Johnson, President

I am pleased to report that Merritt S.O.U.L. has returned to campus. What is S.O.U.L. you may ask? Well, the acronym stands for *Sustaining Oakland Urban Lives*, and represents an effort on the part of the college to engage and support our students and the greater community. Led by Doris Hankins, the Director of Student Activities and Campus Life, and working in concert with the Alameda County Community Food Bank, our Natural History and Sustainability Department, our EOPS Program, and the Associated Students of Merritt College, we did a “soft launch” on Thursday, April 28. Working out of the ASMC Student Council Chambers, we were able to provide over 100 meals to families in need. Going forward, we will distribute food from Building R, Room 124 (with May 19 being the next date), so I encourage everyone to avail themselves of the opportunity to either pick up or help pass out meals to our students and community members!



I am very excited to share that late last month, the United States Congress designated the Peralta Community College District to receive Congressionally directed Community Project Funds (earmarks) as part of the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2022. Specifically, the Appropriations Act designated \$500,000 in support of Merritt College’s cybersecurity program (including the purchase of equipment and the expansion of career education efforts). I want to formally thank Chancellor Jackson and Trustee Linda Handy for all of their work and advocacy to make this happen. We formally accepted the grant by the May 2, 2022 deadline, and Dr. Denise Richardson (VP of Instruction) will serve as the point person going forward.

Finally, I would like to recognize Sabrina Sablan, Merritt College’s 2022 President’s Medallion Award Winner. Ms. Sablan maintains a 3.82 GPA, will be graduate this month with a degree in Business (and this after earning a psychology degree from Merritt last year). In her application for this award, she shared that she has had to support herself since she was thirteen years old—the age she was when her mother passed away. Subsequent to that, she became a single-mother, lived in various homeless shelters, and had to confront other personal issues. But education was became her lifeline. “I overcame my self-doubt, my anxiety, as well as my fears and I decided to sign up,” she wrote. “It was the best thing I have ever done...College literally saved my life. I found my purpose and passion in school.” After graduation, Ms. Sablan plans to transfer but also continue her entrepreneurial pursuits, as she currently runs two small businesses that she founded. Please join me in congratulating her on receiving this award, and wishing her success going forward!!



Merritt College puts students first. Through our rich educational programs, we foster a culture of equity and inclusion that empowers students to achieve their greatest potential and make meaningful contributions to their respective communities and our global society.