

Good evening and thank you to our Board of Trustees, Chancellor Yong, District Office and MJC interim President, Dr. Bandyopadhyay for the opportunity to address you all virtually again this evening. As we near the dash to the end of an unusual, remote year of operations, I'll begin to share highlights of the MJC Academic Senate at the next few board meetings, ending in July with the new Academic Senate President, Aishah Saleh, taking over as the leader of academic and professional matters on our campus.

But, tonight I'd like to pause and focus instead on recognizing the accomplishment of several colleagues in leadership this year. The Academic Senate at MJC wishes to thank them for their outstanding service to the college.

Firstly, having the opportunity to share many meetings and discussions with the Academic Senate President of Columbia College, Pam Guerra-Schmidt, has been one of the real joys of the last two years. I think we all have been struck by Pam's calm, thoughtful approach to participatory governance, and the way she intrinsically values each and every person at any gathering, whether it's on zoom or not. Working on a variety of shared projects, from board policy recommendations to shared resolutions and consultations on equivalencies, Pam has been an excellent example of faculty leadership which is inclusive, pro-active and continually involved.

The last two years have also demonstrated both the courage and authenticity of Shelley Akiona, YFA's outgoing president. Faculty wish to thank her for working collaboratively with the Academic Senates at both colleges to ensure the concerns and interests of faculty are represented in the best possible light. Shelley has demonstrated genuine concern for the common good and her willingness to lead by example has encouraged a new generation of faculty leaders.

Speaking of new generations, the MJC Academic Senate would also like to thank the student leaders of ASMJC for their dedication to the college and their student association president, Jennifer Novoa. Student leaders are exceptional in that not only do they study and work, they also volunteer to enrich our campus life and engage continually in participatory governance. I have been amazed by the long hours of hard work students give to enrich our recent virtual campus life.

All of these leaders are examples of the most cherished values of our institution, mutual respect, fairness, civility and hard work in service of others and it has been an honor working with each of them.

One of the things I've come to appreciate all the more during Covid-19 is the undeniable fact that shared activity is the key to much of the connection we feel to our colleagues, our community and college. Sure, our common experiences may be a bit different than expected. While we thought we'd be leading retreats and workshops, events and celebrations, instead we learned the new skill of zooming with our pets.

Over the last year, we've all struggled at times with our new normal, not unlike the mathematics professor at the National University of Singapore who delivered his entire two-hour online math lecture recently while on mute. We now all also relate to the Minnesota congressman who entered an online meeting of the House Financial Services Committee upside down. And during Covid-19, we've all worried about doing what a Texas prosecutor did when he joined a Zoom legal hearing while equipped with a filter that made him appear to be a cat.

So, yes, it's been a bit different to be a college leader during Covid-19, but it has also been an opportunity to work with some amazing people like Pam Guerra-Schmidt and the Columbia College Academic Senate, Shelley Akiona and the YFA and the students of ASMJC. While it's been strange forgetting the day of the week at meetings and not wearing socks to work, having the opportunity to work with such a great group of people has been a true gift. These leaders only reaffirm an idea from Margaret Mead I've long admired. Mead, a cultural anthropologist, said: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." And I have no doubt that she was talking about my colleagues.