

Good evening and thank you to our Board of Trustees and to Chancellor Yong for the opportunity to address you all virtually this evening.

This semester, I'm reading and discussing with students Jared Diamond's book Upheaval: Turning Points for Nations in Crisis. One of the contentions of the book is that just as individuals endure times of crisis in their personal lives, nations also experience serious challenges that threaten to turn everything topsy-turvy. And so, just as in our own lives, nations of people must come to recognize crisis, develop new coping mechanisms, use previous experience to seek solutions and rely on core values to see us all to brighter days.

Derived from the Greek noun "krisis," a crisis is, even in the etymological sense, a challenge, a "turning point," and, of course, also an opportunity to demonstrate both pragmatism and creativity as well as the resolve to overcome.

We are, undoubtedly, living through a time of upheaval. In terms of our "crisis work" at the MJC Academic Senate, we've been reminded of new challenges again and again. As example, after the passage of our first resolution last academic year, which hopes to foster teaching and supporting the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated, Covid-19 arrived and made our efforts much more complex, especially given the fact that no one from the college has been allowed into the REACT facility, the site of our incarcerated pilot project, since March of last year.

But in this, and many other faculty endeavors, it's been inspiring to watch how crisis brings out the best in people and somehow takes us forward. Take, for instance, the work of one of our Leading from the Middle (LFM) cohorts of faculty, students, classified professionals and administrative leadership. The group was tasked with "Redesigning the Student Experience" in our new Pathways model. Not only were most of the work retreats, which were meant to facilitate getting the work done, cancelled, but we know that the student experience has not been ideal over the last year. Less of a redesign project, the cohort recognized it would need a revitalization project, and a virtual one at that.

So, despite the challenges, the collaborative group planned, organized and held a Virtual Student Success Event, "Where Can I Get Help?" on January 6th, featuring instructional and counseling faculty, administrative leaders, and—most importantly—student leaders from ASMJC, offering a warm, virtual welcome to the semester, helpful information and even a raffle of prizes thanks to the donations of ASMJC and our ever-generous MJC Foundation.

It was a stellar example of that old saying—"when the going get's tough, the tough turn out to work at MJC."

So, at the end of the day, crisis can certainly highlight the worst and exacerbate inequity, but it also can, and does, bring out the best in us. This is likely because turmoil and uncertainty inevitably take us back to our shared values. Take, for instance, the Academic Senate's first resolution of the semester, [SP21A](#) reaffirming civic rights and responsibilities, and calling for more civic and social engagement and professional development as well as more exploration of academic freedom, free speech and hate speech.

It makes sense, then, that crisis is also an opportunity to firmly state and live our shared principles. I've seen it time and again over the last year, colleagues go that extra mile and sit for hours of daily Zoom, answer a deluge of emails, reach out to students in need, offer help, service and guidance. It's just what needs to be done. If I were to summarize why, as a college, we've doubled down on our purpose despite so much upheaval, perhaps the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) put it best in 1957: "The main purpose of the American school is to provide for the fullest possible development of each learner for living morally, creatively, and productively in a democratic society." It's a big task, a never-ending purpose, and an ideal we all share in common, despite difficult days.

Over the last year we've all become learners from crisis, we've been pushed and pulled and remade and undone again and again. And yet, we still hear the call. Perhaps the American novelist Elizabeth Berg puts it best when she offers this: "There is incredible value in being of service to others."

Good evening, thank you for your time and thanks to each of you for your public service.