

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

I'd like to begin by congratulating organizers and participants in the 4 X 4 X 48 challenge (<https://mjc.edu/runforstudents>). MJC Professors of English Sam Pierstorff and Optimism One as well as MJC alumni Daniel Cornejo led the effort, which began last Friday, March 5<sup>th</sup> and ended on Sunday. George Boodrookas, our Executive Director of the MJC Foundation, joined in for a leg of the fundraising run as well. With 12 runs of 4 miles each over a 48-hour period, Sam, Op and Daniel helped to raise over \$20,000 for students; this will assist no less than 70 students with Pirates' Micro-Grants in the coming weeks and months. The event even received positive local media coverage from a CBS affiliate: <https://sacramento.cbslocal.com/2021/03/06/modesto-professor-runs-for-struggling-students/>.

Faculty are also excited to help begin plans to celebrate MJC's 100th birthday. Festivities are being led by our MJC Foundation. One of the many projects to mark the occasion of the upcoming centennial is a collaborative, interdisciplinary project aimed at giving students the opportunity—in a variety of social science, literature and language, arts, philosophy and humanities courses—to study the college itself. Students will study our college's history, conduct social science research and fieldwork, and explore works of literature, art, film and music related to our college and community. The project includes plans for a virtual, college timeline and an archive for resources such as photography and other primary documents from MJC's history.

Ultimately, these “place-based” curricular and co-curricular activities hope to promote a local approach to the study of arts and literature, the social sciences and the humanities through MJC-centric lectures, learning projects, discussions, field experiences and research opportunities to improve teaching and foster student retention, success and graduation.

This 100th Birthday Academic Project demonstrates that a college's centennial is more than just a celebration, it's also an opportunity to learn more about MJC, the place we've called our higher education home for the last one-hundred years.

Also, as a response to 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, the Academic Senate Executive has invited Dr. David Dees to offer a virtual talk in April.

Dr. Dees is the dean and chief administrative officer of the Kent State University Columbiana County campuses. He also served as director of Kent State's Center for Teaching and Learning and has a strong record of service, including membership in the Faculty Senate. Dees led the steering committee that redesigned the university's Faculty Professional Development Center, and his research interests focus on the aesthetic dimensions of teaching and learning, how the human brain works and the impact that rural culture has on learning in higher education.

Finally, it seems necessary to recognize the year anniversary of remote operations. I was just reading an article in the Atlantic by Ellen Cushing entitled, "Late-Stage Pandemic Is Messing With Your Brain." Cushing argues that we've been now doing this for so long, that we're forgetting how to be normal. She writes: "I can't stop noticing all the things I'm forgetting. Sometimes I grasp at a word or a name....Other times, the forgetting feels like someone is taking a chisel to the bedrock of my brain, prying everything loose. I've started keeping a list of questions, remnants of a past life that I now need a beat or two to remember, if I can remember at all: What time do parties end? How tall is my boss? What does a bar smell like? Are babies heavy? Does my dentist have a mustache? On what street was the good sandwich place near work, the one that toasted its bread? How much does a movie popcorn cost? What do people talk about when they don't have a global disaster to talk about all the time? You have to wear high heels the whole night? It's more baffling than distressing, most of the time."

"We're all walking around with some mild cognitive impairment," said Mike Yassa, a neuroscientist at UC Irvine. "Based on everything we know about the brain, two of the things that are really good for it are physical activity and novelty. A thing that's very bad for it is chronic and perpetual stress."

Indeed, by this time in the pandemic, it's pretty obvious that sedentary, remote life is bad for our happiness and our brain. That's why the student fundraising campaign, inspiring run, planning a big college birthday party and reaching out to other post-secondary colleagues is so crucial. Soon enough, we'll be back and thriving on campus, relearning our social ways and remembering what a wedding is like, how to hold a baby or which key goes to your office door.

Thank you and have a nice evening.