December 11, 2012

1. Good evening. On behalf of the Academic Senate, I would like to thank Trustee Range for providing professional leadership of the Board of Trustees. I would also like to congratulate John Pinkerton and Trustee Brady. I hope that in the next few years, our Board of Trustees will work together to address the needs of students, faculty and staff here at VVC.

2. I am pleased to announce that a VVC student, Natalie Bonello, applied for the prestigious Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Undergraduate Scholarship, worth $30,000, on December 5, 2012. Natalie has a GPA of 4.0, and received glowing letters of recommendation from her instructors. The eldest of nine children, she is a great example of the benefits of a community college education as a means to transfer and fulfill her educational goals. Her transfer destinations of choice are CSUSB and CalPoly Pomona. 740 students nationwide applied for these scholarship funds, and it’s fantastic that one of our own met all the qualifications to be considered for this prestigious honor.

3. Accreditation: November 7, 2012, I was asked to speak with the ACCJC visiting team on Academic Senate-related issues. I responded to inquiries regarding the increased participation of both full- and part-time faculty on Senate and Shared Governance committees (a 35% increase from last semester), the revival of the Academic Senate newsletter Faculty Forum, and the organizational mindset change faculty have demonstrated in their commitment to VVC via completing and continuing SLO Assessments and contributing to Program Review and the Educational Master Plan. In the last month, faculty continue to contribute to this institution by completing Annual Updates for Program Review, due this month; according to the information on SharePoint, 80% of academic programs have already posted their AU’s with more to be posted soon; in addition, academic related programs, such as Model United Nations, Honors, and Study Abroad have also completed the required paperwork. Once again, VVC faculty have more than answered the call to fulfill their academic and professional
responsibilities. I can tell you it is a personal pleasure to work with faculty – both full and part-time – who uphold high academic standards, and whose combined experience in the classroom would be the envy of any university. When professionals are hired and valued, it’s amazing what can be achieved. I hope that VVC administration and the B of T share this positive view of faculty in public, as faculty have heard quite the opposite recently in social media forums, and are very concerned that they are not valued as the professionals they are.

4. I am also pleased to report that Senate Past President Lisa Harvey, Secretary Leslie Huiner and I attended the Fall Plenary Session in Irvine from November 8-10, 2012. We attended sessions focused on curriculum, basic skills, the Student Success Initiative and changes to Title V. The focus in the general sessions was on the benefits of Proposition 30 passing, which will ideally increase section offerings at VVC, especially for Summer 2013. There were several resolutions passed in the Saturday session involving how we can better serve our students, and how Prop 30 funds will enable the CCC’s to continue to provide excellent education and assist us in serving our students better. I have shared the presentations and information to all full- and part-time faculty via e-mail, so faculty can be informed on the latest issues affecting our institution and our state.

5. In terms of the benefits of Prop 30 passing, the Chancellor’s Office has some interesting information. According to this website, Spring 2013 will see an increase of 3300 sections statewide due to Prop 30. An extra $210 million will be spread across all the CCC’s. Whatever proportion of that coming VVC’s way should certainly help bolster the already robust funds we currently have. Certainly, as we prepare for Summer 2013, VVC needs to ensure that students are able to take the courses necessary for transfer, courses that enable them to enter transfer-level courses in the Fall semester, complete career and technical courses for better job opportunities, and complete general education requirements in a timely manner. Based on the information sent out late this afternoon, it seems that VVC administration is taking the Senate’s recommendations to heart,
as it appears many more students will be able to fulfill their educational goals than previously thought. This is potentially very good news for our students; as I noted in my last report, October 9, 2012, VVC is, comparatively, in great financial shape compared to other community colleges; this fact was made manifest by talking with other community colleges at the Fall Plenary Session in November, who do not have the reserves we possess. Since Prop 30 will assist VVC in budgetary areas, it is the recommendation of the VVC Academic Senate that every effort is made by the B of T and the administration to support students, faculty and staff by ensuring that courses are offered to assist our students in their educational goals not only this summer, but all year. At the Fall Plenary, emphasis was placed on providing our students with the courses they need to succeed: transfer, complete a certificate, general education requirements and preparation for transfer-level coursework. In the past, essential courses were not offered in a timely manner, forcing students to look elsewhere – such as private institutions – to achieve their goals. At VVC, with our substantial reserves and GIC (plus the passing of Prop 30) it is more than possible to maintain financial stability here, while not neglecting the most important reason why VVC exists: student and community service.

It is the Senate’s understanding that we are sitting on $20 million in our general reserve account, $27 million in our GIC, which happens to be earning 12% annually, and $11.5 million in our “bridge reserve”. These are monies we carry over from year to year to help balance our annual budget. The total seems to be approximately $59.5 million. Although it is acknowledged that we are ‘over cap’, we can certainly afford to fulfill our mission statement. Since VVC is not a ‘for profit’ institution, students desperately need the funds VVC holds in reserve ‘for a rainy day’. Although we can see a little sun peeking through the storm clouds that have covered us for far too long, it’s still pouring. If we don’t provide students and the community with shelter from this educational hurricane, they will seek it elsewhere.
Thank you.