



Board of Trustees Report

December 9, 2025

Dr. David M. Johnson, President



I want to begin by expressing my appreciation for the career and ongoing efforts of Ms. Margaret Dixon, who was recently featured in a KQED story on the challenges that women face in pursuing careers in law enforcement.

<https://www.kqed.org/news/12064143/oakland-struggles-to-boost-number-of-women-officers-amid-worsening-staff-shortage>

As a retired veteran of the Oakland Police Department (OPD), Ms. Dixon served 25 years in law enforcement. But she is also well-known and well-loved for her contributions to our campus and her pivotal role in strengthening the Administration of Justice program. She continues to make a difference at Merritt—working with our safety aides, advising ADJUS students, and mentoring young women who are considering careers in policing, corrections, and related justice fields. Her presence and encouragement help break down the persistent barriers young women face in entering a profession still dominated by men. As the article above noted, recent data show that despite agency efforts under the *30×30 Initiative* (which aims for 30% of police recruits nationwide to be women by 2030) the proportion of women in OPD has not risen about 15%. By championing visibility, representation, and support — through mentoring, advocacy, and direct outreach — Ms. Dixon is helping to rebuild a crucial recruitment pipeline from Merritt to Oakland's police force.



As we get into Finals Week, we are proud to celebrate the accomplishments of two of our most impactful learning communities: Puente and Sankofa. These programs embody the best of what community colleges can provide—intentional spaces where students feel seen, supported, and connected.

By fostering a strong sense of belonging through culturally grounded curriculum, mentorship, and community-building, Puente and Sankofa help students form relationships that sustain them both academically and personally. Their end-of-year celebrations are more than ceremonies; they are affirmations of identity, resilience, and shared achievement. And we are

especially grateful that Chancellor Gilkerson, former Merritt President Norma Ambriz-Galaviz, and Puente Founder Felix Galaviz came out to show love to our students.



The success of our Puente and Sankofa scholars reflects the deep value these programs bring to Merritt College and the district as a whole. Through high-quality instruction, intrusive counseling, and committed faculty mentorship, students in these learning communities demonstrate higher persistence, stronger academic performance, and greater confidence in their educational journey. As we honor their accomplishments, we also reaffirm our commitment to expanding and strengthening these culturally responsive programs that open doors, uplift voices, and help our students realize their fullest potential. So a special shout out to Tauheeda Anderson, Margie Rubio, Judit Trinidad, Isela Santana, and many others who lead these communities and nourish our students.



In closing, I want to express my appreciation for my colleagues who exhibited such hope, commitment, and professionalism throughout one of the most challenging semesters in recent memory. I will not recount here all that we have had to contend with, but please know that better days are ahead so long as we stay together and focus on what is most important—helping our students navigate their educational journeys and attain their academic, professional, and personal goals.

With that said, I want to wish everyone good luck on their final exams and projects, and please have a safe and enjoyable holiday break!

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.