Dear Campus Community,

As we enter our 2012 holiday season, it seems natural for us to “pause” to reflect and assess our actions and the effects they may have had on others within our university community. In some instances, these reflections call for celebration and in other instances, they may elicit re-examination of how we as individuals or as an institution can work together to be a better “we.”

In my public addresses, I often refer to the University of La Verne as having a remarkable “campus culture.” My phrase “campus culture” infers that we at La Verne seek to maintain an institutional environment that embraces our founding values; exhibits respect and civility in all of our interactions; provides student-focused, high quality academic and co-curricular programs; and supports professional and personal development for staff, faculty and administrators.

As I look back on this year, there are many highly successful campus-wide initiatives that are aligned with the inclusive, respectful, forward-thinking campus culture I described. I am proud that we are able to point to these achievements, just a few of which include:

1. A highly laudable WASC review that refers to the University of La Verne today as an “institution on the move” and doing all the “right things” to become a leading institution in the 21st Century. This is supported by the awarding of eight years before we welcome another site review. It is important to note that in our own self-study WASC report (supported by the recommendations contained in their letter to us in July 2012), we have designed our own roadmap for self-identified strengths, challenges, and actions. This summary (with annual assessments included) can be found at [http://laverne.edu/2020vision/files/2012/11/Aligning-our-2020-Vision-with-WASC-11-28-121.pdf](http://laverne.edu/2020vision/files/2012/11/Aligning-our-2020-Vision-with-WASC-11-28-121.pdf). The July letter can be found here: [https://www.wascsenior.org/apps/institutions/university-la-verne#zoom=15&lat=34.10094&lon=-117.77285&layers=FT0BT](https://www.wascsenior.org/apps/institutions/university-la-verne#zoom=15&lat=34.10094&lon=-117.77285&layers=FT0BT).

2. A Board of Trustees and campus-wide focus on our 2020 Strategic Vision. The completed 2020 Strategic Vision, grounded in educational excellence, will provide a vision- and mission-focused blueprint aligned with educational excellence (both
curricular and co-curricular) supported by human and financial resources, facilities and technology, and increased reputation and visibility. Strategic visioning is never an easy process; however, for a “strategic vision” to be sustainable and successful, it must have opportunity for input over a time period that includes voices from across all constituent groups. It is truly a re-iterative process.

When I introduced the 2020 Strategic Visioning process in September 2011, I announced that the strategic vision would reflect our founding values, meaning that diverse voices, beliefs, thoughts, opinions, backgrounds, expertise, and experience were all “invited to the table.” The 2020 Strategic Visioning process was also intended to incorporate additional layers from each college and major unit, leading us to a final document (passed by our Board of Trustees) that would guide us forward as four colleges, multiple campuses, one university, with one mission and one vision.

Last Thursday, November 29, 2012, Professor Simpson, Provost Dewey and I facilitated a 2020 Vision Open Forum. I was pleased that the La Fetra Auditorium was nearly at capacity with faculty, staff and administrators, and that the session was live streamed across all campuses. Following this Open Forum, I received multiple emails from those who watched from RCA campuses or offices all commenting positively on the process and expressed a desire to actively contribute to the outcome. You can review the current draft of the 2020 Strategic Vision on our web site http://laverne.edu/2020vision. There is also a place for you to make a suggestion, comment or contribution to the draft here: http://laverne.edu/2020vision/leave-a-comment/

3. The La Verne Experience - Everyone at the university should feel proud of the progress we have made and continue to make on The La Verne Experience. Every FLEX student I meet expresses how they feel fully connected to their fellow students and to their faculty. Those that have a community engagement component associated with their FLEX talk about the connections they are experiencing between the content of the course and the impact they are having on the community.

I look forward to continuous development of The La Verne Experience phases across the TUGs, CAPA, graduate programs, e-portfolios, co-curricular, and graduate programs. We are doing this right; it reflects who we are and will graduate students who will speak positively about their La Verne Experience for the rest of their lives. For more information about The La Verne Experience and the process, go to http://sites.laverne.edu/experience/ and/or http://flex.laverne.edu.

Reflections and “Resolutions” for 2013:

Resolution 1: Improved Communication
As with any organization, whether within our own families or our university, communication is, in my opinion, the variable that can **improve** or **diminish** the **joy** and effectiveness of the group. There are many instances where I hear individuals or groups acting on a rumor or assumption as though it is fact. Acting without verification can be dangerous to the health of the organization. I recommend that one of our campus resolutions for 2013 be to communicate respectfully with an individual or group (preferably face-to-face) when hearing something that does not align with what we espouse as an institution. This communication will most likely lead to greater understanding and collaboration. For example, a small group of individuals came to me last week concerned about something they heard we were implementing. Once they told me what they thought was a “fact,” I shared more information. What could have been a significant misunderstanding, grounded in misinformation, was thoroughly clarified and the issue was not only resolved, but also improved.

**Resolution 2: Greater Collaboration Between Units**

As with any organization, evolution and growth easily leads to “siloes,” or in some instances, “foxholes.” I would recommend that we meet with other units as much and as often as possible to see where collaboration between and among units can benefit the whole, reduce some of our workload, and enhance what we are doing or producing. For example, I have recently found that the discussions around The La Verne Experience and E-portfolios have resulted in the following areas working together: Student Life, Academic Affairs, Career Development, Writing, The Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning and Assessment. By working together as units, we are able to be more effective, creative, and strategic in our efforts to serve our students well and to function more efficiently as a university. I commend all units who are making an effort to work together more and encourage others to do so as well.

This has been a remarkable semester for me as president, professor, student mentor, wife and mother. La Verne, as any university, is faced with opportunities and challenges. As the president, I am proud to work with the Board of Trustees and the entire university as together we problem solve and address the challenges that arise, and take advantage and embrace the tremendous opportunities before us. As a professor, I was honored to co-teach a leadership course this semester with Professor Terry Deal and Professor Jack Meek. During every class session, I learned something significant from our students and was constantly reminded of the unique qualities our students bring to campus that enhance our university. I was also very pleased to participate in Daniel Loera’s first generation mentoring program as a mentor to one of our first generation freshman. Each time I met with my mentee, I learned more about her ambitions, her challenges, her perspectives, and her tremendous appreciation for the University of La Verne. As a wife and mother, I find tremendous joy in being with Roger, Allie and Emery. All are healthy, finding joy in each other, their professions and their own individual ambitions.
As we reach the close of 2012 and welcome 2013, I wish you all the very best of holidays and enthusiasm as we begin our new year together.

Happy Holidays to each of you and to your families.

Sincerely,

Devorah Lieberman, Ph.D.
President