January 8, 2013

Dear Colleagues,

I write the first President’s Pause of 2013 on the plane as I fly home, having spent the last two and a half days with 350 other university presidents from across the country. Each year, the Council for Independent Colleges (CIC) hosts a conference with the goal of bringing independent college presidents together to address current issues in higher education, to learn from one another, and to share insights on best practices from their own campuses. I was eager to represent the University of La Verne, our mission and values, and the successes and challenges we are currently experiencing. I anticipate that many who attended the conference will be checking our website and contacting us to learn more about what we are doing, especially regarding The La Verne Experience and its focus on connections: connecting disciplines, connecting students with students, connecting students with faculty, connecting students to community, connecting course content to writing, and connecting theory to practice.

During the conference, I was particularly intrigued by two of the plenary speakers—Dr. Andrew Delbanco, Chair of American Studies and Professor in the Humanities at Columbia University, and Dr. Claude Steele, Dean of the School of Education at Stanford. Both spoke about their own scholarly works emphasizing and reinforcing the importance of higher education, with a focus on student success in college accompanying preparation for living purposeful personal and professional lives after graduating. Throughout both addresses, I thought about what we do at La Verne, what we could consider doing better, and what we are all dedicated to doing well on a daily basis.

In particular, Dr. Delbanco’s address focused on the price/value of higher education today. As public criticism and suspicion of higher education’s worth and purpose increases, he reminded us that it is institutions like ours that justify the cost. The educational elements in the 21st Century that we must remember and emphasize are: our professors and staff are dedicated to our students; students are learning from each other, not just from the professor; diversity within our university community makes us better and the absence of diversity diminishes our quality; the space for learning matters, it is the best rehearsal place for democracy—it is where our students learn respect, civility, debate, and where they can, without retribution, shift their opinions; a
place where our students can become more than they ever imagined or expected; the Humanities are important and art, literature, history, and science can transcend time; and we bring together secular and religious values as complementary and not as oppositional.

As we prepare for our spring 2013 semester, I look forward to participating in this week’s all-faculty retreat. I attended my first retreat January 2010, before I assumed the presidency. It was at that Mt. Baldy retreat that I first witnessed our faculty and staff wrestling respectfully with difficult dialogues while also sharing moments of joy and celebration. I saw the same last year in Temecula and anticipate that our discussions will be even richer and deeper at the upcoming 2013 retreat. I thank those organizers and attendants for recognizing the importance of dedicating their time and efforts to these important gatherings with colleagues and friends.

In other news, there are several colleges, unit and institution-wide searches underway this month. One of the searches, in its final stages, is the search for the Vice President for Advancement. The committee is co-chaired by Public Administration Professor and faculty representative to the Board of Trustees, Dr. Jack Meek and myself, and includes faculty and staff from each college, representatives from major units on campus, and members of the Board of Trustees. This search has been a “confidential search,” a trend of most Advancement searches nationally. Attracting qualified candidates who are current Vice Presidents at other institutions is only possible if a search is confidential. Our candidate pool is strong, and I hope that the search will be completed by the end of February with the new Vice President for Advancement assuming his or her position within the months following.

Spring term will bring renewed energy and enthusiasm across our campus. A few of the continuing campus-wide efforts are:

- **The 2020 Strategic Vision** - This will be one of the main topics addressed at the February Board of Trustees retreat. The President’s Executive Cabinet and the Deans will be joining the Board to bring the 2020 Strategic Vision draft to its final stages. These are exciting times as this vision will help guide our campus for the next seven years.

- **The La Verne Experience** - It will continue to develop with increased implementation across the undergraduate programs, the CAPA program, the graduate programs, and all four colleges and 11 campuses.

- **Space and Parking** - The Provost and appropriate offices continue to work on scheduling classes at times and locations that meet the educational needs of students, faculty, and departments.
Additionally, we continue to explore and to renovate new spaces that will help us meet our increased needs. As these spaces become ready, they will be fully available for classes and co-curricular activities. The university will continue to announce and monitor strategies that accommodate and address parking needs by faculty, staff and students this semester.

I trust that over the winter break you were able to rest, re-energize, and most importantly, spend uninterrupted time with your family and friends. I welcome you back, renewed and refreshed for what I anticipate will be a wonderfully exciting, energetic, and successful spring term. If I do not see you sooner, I look forward to seeing you at the Martin Luther King Service Day on January 21, at our Winter Commencement on February 2, at the State of the University Address on February 6 (announcement forthcoming), at a spring athletic event, or just walking on the La Verne campus or at one of our regional campuses.

Sincerely,

Devorah Lieberman, Ph.D.
President