



# The Merritt Connection

April 30, 2021

Dr. David M. Johnson, President



Every year, over 10,000 students from colleges and universities across the United States participate in the National Cyber League Spring Games. Merritt College's Cybersecurity Team came into this year's competition with heavy hearts, as they dedicated their play in these games to the late Professor Anita Black. The Merritt Cybersecurity Team comprises the following students:

Calvin Hsieh	Sean Dixon	Sean Noriega	Oscar Lara
Aaron Chanthavong	Justin Phillips	Chi Nguyen	

I am proud to report that out of 922 participating teams (sponsored by more than 300 institutions), Merritt College placed 31<sup>st</sup> overall (top 3.4%). That impressive result attests to the talents of our students. It also speaks to the dedication of our instructors/program leaders: Mark Egan, Jim Cates, Beverly Brooks, Art Scott, Diego Kennedy, Sandy Keh, Mary Nakahara, and Courtney Brown. Great job everyone!

Taking as its theme, "Writing Merritt's Next Chapter of Success," the Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) Task Force met to review the college's last SEM plan, and begin charting the direction forward. We understand that faculty, classified staff, and student involvement is critical to ensuring a well-informed and panoptic approach to improving our enrollment, so the task force will be adding more members to its ranks in the weeks to come. The other priority is to create a SEM Plan that is a roadmap for maximizing access to the courses, programs, and services that students need to realize their transfer and career goals. In response to the challenges of enrollment decline (largely influenced by the Pandemic) the plan must also be conceived in a way that enables the College to adapt and thrive within the online learning environment. To that end, Nathan Pellegrin (Director of Research and Planning) launched a student survey last week to help us assess the prevailing challenges and opportunities. We need to know what learning modalities our students prefer, what elements factor into their decision to enroll at a particular institution, and what impediments they may face in terms of pursuing their education in general. Data-driven decision making must be the standard. Finally, the SEM task force identified three strategic priorities to consider as we move forward:

- Identify the processes and procedures that need to be revised to improve the student experience in the classroom and in Student Services.
- Technology (in terms of resources and support) must be central as a means of enhancing operational efficiency and the student experience at our institution.
- Support a culture of ongoing and relevant professional development and training by allocating resources to incentivize instructional innovation.

Finally, I want to take a moment to commend Merritt College students Briana Wing and Freddie Ika for organizing the Merritt College Town Hall event: *A Call to Action Against AAPI Hate*. The purpose of the forum was to discuss the ongoing racism and violence directed at Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and what we can do as individuals and community members to stop the hate. Briana and Freddie successfully enlisted as panelists: Dr. Russell Jeung, who is the co-founder of *Stop AAPI Hate*, and a professor of Asian American Studies at San Francisco State; Larry Larioso, who is a psychotherapist, LMFT, and a former mental health counselor at Merritt College; and Dr. Michael Omi, who is a professor of Ethnic Studies at U.C. Berkeley, and author of the book *Racial Formation in the United States*. We are humbled by the opportunity to support the efforts of our students in this way, and stand in solidarity with every community committed to combatting acts of discrimination, the persistence of institutional racism, and cases of racial violence at every turn.



*The mission of Merritt College is to enhance the quality of life in the communities we serve by helping students to attain knowledge, master skills, and develop the appreciation, attitudes and values needed to succeed and participate responsibly in a democratic society and a global economy.*