



# THE CLASSIFIED VOICE

The Newsletter for Merritt College Classified Employees  
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## Appreciating From Within: The Award, The Concept, The Motivation



We've all heard this lately- "Don't you wish you could hit the 'RESET' button?" Let's do it! If you missed the call to send appreciations for this issue, there's actually no deadline on appreciation! Keep sending your appreciations, and we'll keep posting them- to the Classified Senate webpages on the Merritt College site (see below) Now read on- the rest of this issue is in your words, word-for-word. Everything you sent in the last couple of days is here. With the response we got, and in the interest of space, you'll find excerpts from the lengthier here, but you'll find these in their entirety (soon), published to our webpages.

These last few months, the binding theme of our Classified Senate discussions has been the state of classified morale, and we've been looking for how we can help, what we can do to inspire the boost in our collective spirit we so need.

When MCCS VP Margie Rubio brought us the idea of an **Appreciating from Within** award, we saw it as a great reminder of how it's really up to us to take charge of our own spirit, and of our own responses under pressure. If our morale falters, so does our sense of unity, and if we're not feeling the unity, we must be losing sight of who we are, because we all know what a great job of serving our students we do when we all work together. If we're not seeing that greatness so well, it's time to get acquainted with ourselves, each other, all we offer and give.

That's the intention of the **Appreciating from Within** Award. To shine the light on the under-illuminated, and to recognize the excellence that we know is in everyone. We'll probably surprise ourselves with just how strong we are, and we'll see we have a lot more to celebrate than has been on our minds.

Who gets awarded, and how frequently will we award? Our idea is 2 awards monthly, one hourly, one permanent. How do we select? It involves some paper, and a hat. This isn't about making sure everyone gets a chance at a prize, we launch today with the above principles in mind: We know that there's excellence in every one of us, and we know everyone has someone who's seen that. As this PIO understands it, if your name is drawn, we'll be asking you, and then those around you, to tell us about your excellence.

Find the Classified Senate webpages at: [www.merritt.edu/wp/classifiedsenate](http://www.merritt.edu/wp/classifiedsenate)

## AND NOW... APPRECIATING FROM WITHIN:

"Everyone at Merritt has stepped up at one time or another and I feel kinship with each and every one.

I can't imagine Merritt functioning like a normal workplace because the overwhelming sense of Merritt is that of family.

I care deeply about the health and welfare of all my Merritt Family members and understand the burden of overwork we struggle with every day.

If it weren't for the comradery I would have thrown in the towel years ago and I believe most of us feel the same way.

All that being said I can't single out anyone without feeling I'm leaving out so many others.

"As a department I would like to say that Special Programs and Grants is moving and growing to change lives at Merritt. I would prefer to be nameless."

"Carmen Johnson [CalWORKS] is amazing. She has completely transformed the CalWORKS office in her tenure as coordinator and constantly goes above and beyond for her students!"

"I'd like to appreciate Walter Johnson [Learning Center]. I think he is a great asset to any team/group he is a part of, a little grumpy sometimes, but that is also what makes him joyful. He is always helpful and has plenty of good stories. I could continue but I don't want to take up too much of your time."

"I appreciate Patricia Rom and Tony Hampton [IT] for they are always ready to assist me each time I have problems with my computers."

"Jamila Saleh [VPSS office] She once went the extra mile for me to get the Interim VPSS's signature on some document. It may have been a travel document and I was up against a hard deadline.

I am very grateful."

"I would like to give a few words of appreciation to Waaduda Karim. She is the face of Allied Health, and a huge asset to our school.

Waaduda not only does all of the ordering for us, and many other departments, she also sits in the front office and directs students in their quest to become radiologists, nurses, nutritionists and medical assistants. Frustrated, hostile students often confront her, and she efficiently handles these situations for the Allied Health departments. She leads students down the right path, and gives them the advice they need.

Waaduda has also taken the initiative to organize professional development opportunities for classified staff, which were very informative and motivating.

Waaduda always has other people's best interest at heart, and is selfless in her work for the Classified Senate. I personally know that the Allied Health departments would be lost without Waaduda staffing the front desk, and I really appreciate all the time and dedication she gives her work."

"There are a number of classified people that I appreciate. But here are two for you:

- Judy Adams, EOPS Coordinator – I appreciate that she has quietly led the EOPS Program for the last 18 years and has continued to help that program be successful in providing over and above services to students on a consistent basis. Whether it was during times of full funding from the state or when they experienced massive cuts during the recession of 2009. EOPS has been a consistent light through it all under her quiet leadership.
- Susanna De La Torre, A & R - Susanna is another leader who works under the radar. Under her leadership, her staff has had to meet the enrollment needs of student and faculty. Her staff is instrumental in processing student petitions for degrees and certificates so that students can participate in the commencement ceremonies EVERY year. She is one of those people who deserves recognition for her hard work, leadership and dedication."

"Thank you for taking the time to bring appreciation to our classified staff. I personally would like to acknowledge a few classified colleagues.

- Jane Fong for her dedication and consistency in meeting scheduling deadlines.
- Sheiba Boissiere for her passion for helping our Calworks students in their educational pursuits.
- Kathleen Olbekson for her compassion and dedication to our EOPS students."

I greatly appreciate the character these women exemplify daily on campus and towards our students. Their caring spirit shines and their passion to put forth their best is truly a grand example of what makes classified staff a special part of Merritt!"

"I appreciate each classified staff member for their dedication to student success outside of the classroom. Specifically classified who work in Sankofa, CalWorks, EOPS/CARE, FYE, the Library and Learning Center, the Street Scholars Program, Veterans Affairs, and the Welcome Center. As a lifelong resident of Oakland and graduate of Merritt, staff in the programs mentioned above that have showed continuous support to me helped me change not just my life, but... (I have several family members that have graduated from Merritt). Classified staff in those programs have also helped change the legacy of many others that look like me and were raised in the same or similar neighborhoods as me. I also want to thank each staff assistant in every department for all their behind the scenes work that keep the college operations running smoothly. I would like to thank each classified staff that positively represents a marginalized community and advocates for equity in education on behalf of those who cannot."

"I appreciate Maril. From the moment we met, I appreciated their tenacity for classified workers. Maril has been instrumental (and one of the only few) to progress efforts in publicizing the works of the classified staff here at Merritt. Maril always greets me with a smile and warm embrace and for that, I am grateful."

"I appreciate Carmen [Johnson, CalWORKS] for her efforts in sustaining one of our important programs on campus, CalWORKS. Aside from employment efforts, Carmen is an amazing encourager of her colleagues and a diligent employee of Merritt College.

"I appreciate Sheiba's [Sheiba Boisseire, CalWORKS] positive energy and spirit when interacting with students and co-workers.

“Program Manager [CAFYES], Daraja Wagner, has showcased meticulous detail to the successful growth and progression of the CAFYES/NEXTUP program. Ms. Wagner has maintained a dedication so profound that it has shown itself in the success rate of her students. Working with a vulnerable population within our community at Merritt College, Ms. Wagner's position is no small feat, and she carries herself with the utmost grace and precision when executing her goals and vision.”

“I appreciate Sylver's [Sylver Daniel, Counseling] dedication to our students. Sylver has comforted students on so many occasions Her loving spirit and tenacity to support student success makes her an invaluable staff member of the Merritt Community, Being one of the first faces our students see, Sylver is the beaming light we all should model after when engaging with our students and with each other.”

“I appreciate Margie Rubio [Welcome Center]. Her efforts to support students through all steps of matriculation is an important function to the success of our institution. Margie is dedicated to the work that she does on behalf of the veteran community here at Merritt as is one of the few with the responsibility to ensure that services are catered to them. As she juggles the functionality of the Welcome Center, veterans' certifications, and graduation committee efforts, Margie never falls short to commit her full energy and efforts to any and every student.”

“I appreciate Ms. Antonia Andrews [financial aid] for her commitment to student success. Navigating the financial aid process in college can be daunting and discouraging and Ms. Antonia never falls short to devote all of her resources to helping students make the best-informed decisions and commitments regarding their success.”

“I appreciate Ms. Susana De La Torre [A&R] more than she knows! Thank you Ms. Susana!”

“Carmen Johnson is a strong and kind person. She has so much passion for the work she does and always elevates others around her. I am grateful to be able to work and learn from her.

Daraja Wagner is absolutely wonderful to work with every day! She is a strong leader, great co-worker, and amazing friend. She is one person I know that I can count on whenever I need. As Maya Angelou said, “Sometimes the people whom we’ve known only a short amount of time have a bigger impact on us than those we’ve known forever.” Daraja has truly impacted my life in the most positive way. For that I can never tell her how much I appreciate her.

Daraja, You are always there for me when my spirits need a little lift. I cannot thank you enough for that. You are truly an extraordinary gift.”

**And: Classified appreciate not only fellow classified:**

“I appreciate Ms. Lesley's [Scurry, Counseling] gentleness and encouragement when counseling students. I have not only heard of but also witnessed Ms. Lesley's engagement with students, and appreciate her approach and execution.”

“Dr. Lilia Chavez continues to be a powerhouse innovator at Merritt College. With the inception of her leadership at Merritt beginning with her advisement of the Associated Students of Merritt College, and directing the department of Student Activities and Campus Life, to her interim assignment of Vice President of Student Support Services, to her current matriculation as the Dean of Special Programs and Grants, Dr. Chavez has committed her energy and spirit to the students of Merritt College. Dr. Chavez is a true leader- encouraging the natural born leader to shine within”

“I would like to appreciate Dean Jason Holloway for his help and for encouraging me to create an international study abroad class at Merritt. Finally, we can take students who want to study in Japan in May

I appreciate Steve Pantell who is working at great effort to promote OER, Open Educational Resource, for students to save a lot of money on textbook expense. Steve and his committee helped me to establish 4 courses with OER resource in this Semester. He helped and solved my problems and difficulties on this new approach in my classes

I appreciate Dettie Del Rosario who not only helped me get requisitions approved, but taught me how to complete budget transfers in detail. I learned much from her – very beneficial to have a shorter process for ordering.

I appreciate and give special thanks for Maria Spencer who helps me to create the non-credit courses proposal and programs which is our objective goal for Merritt course development. She also works hard with me in the Super Saturday Open house for enrollment that I'm appreciated for her support and encouragement.”

## And: A few appreciations of classified from faculty, admin...

"I appreciate Margie Rubio and the students she oversees in the welcome center. It is a wonderful blessing to have a place to send students who need help with the online orientation, registering for classes, printing transcripts from other colleges, etc. Margie is a beautiful woman, inside and out, and all of the student's I have sent her way have been grateful and treated with respect and kindness. Margie is patient, giving, and a dream team player! I sincerely appreciate Margie.

I appreciate Tara Marrero. Tara is very responsive to emails and is so friendly. She even drops knowledge when needed with very few words. She has had to sweetly remind me, "FYI, worry less." A new counselor raved about her last semester. Tara walked her all over campus to familiarize her with the grounds and she even walked her to the classroom where she would be teaching. Tara made sure the counselor had a parking pass and keys. The new counselor had never had all of that happen before and was made to feel so welcomed. Thanks to Tara for this great first impression of Merritt. Those are just two of the people who I would like to appreciate but there are many more..."

"I'd like to appreciate Aby, Helena and Molly who work for SEIU 1021 with an eye toward solidarity, fairness, and support with grace, wisdom, intelligence, and a fierce fighting spirit!"

[Below a few excerpts, find the full appreciation on our webpage!] Merritt's (enrollment) is holding steady...One big reason for this is the Merritt Welcome Center, which Margie Rubio manages single-handedly with a small, dedicated crew of student workers.

- [Prior to Margie's presence], students had to figure out how to add classes in Passport on their own...Margie and her team patiently explain and troubleshoot the various obstacles that can arise...
  - Thanks to Margie and her team, students now experience a friendly "onboarding" process that turns prospective students into actual students. We in Counseling are incredibly grateful to Margie and her team for providing the "warm hand-off" that students need to finalize their enrollment and be ready for class on Day 1.
- {{hugs}}"

"When I started at Merritt last Fall... [I] found myself in a charmed land of botanical intrigue. I bumped my way into the main office, where I was greeted energetically and with a broad smile by Maril M Bull. While many people in our society are suspicious of meeting strangers, Maril was the exact opposite--without having any idea who I was, he invited me in and offered to help in any way he could. He has since been a steadfast and tireless advocate for the LANHT and ENVMT programs, always ready to assist."

"Around the same time, I was introduced to our biology department technician Kinga Sidzinska, who in addition to keeping everything running in top condition and on schedule, has a keen passion and intellect for plants and natural history. I was thrilled to hear that she will be offering a course on the natural history of Hawaii and look forward to having her work on Merritt's natural history program. It was immediately obvious to me the Kinga cares deeply for the mission of what we do here at Merritt, and that she is very good at what she does. I look forward to seeing her every time I am on campus."

"I appreciate Doris Hankins for always taking the time to smile and ask me how my family is, even when she is extremely busy working on a project deadline. And she gives great hugs. Doris is one of the most accomplished people I know, in so many different arenas. Not only does she have multiple degrees in different academic and business areas, she is also an incredible mother of three beautiful children, and a strong advocate for classified staff.

- I appreciate Jane Fong for being always answering my emails, no matter how annoying. She is so incredibly on top of her work and I love that she can be both so fantastically capable of all things technical, and yet is able to put that aside to say hello and have a lovely conversation with me, when I happen to pass by her office. Jane's organization skills are second to none. She is smart, quick, and responds to my emails with helpful details.
- I cannot say enough about how much I appreciate Denise Woodward. There have been multiple times she has gone out of her way for a student who is desperately trying to add or drop a class or to reach an instructor. I appreciate Denise's pure intelligence, and her ability to prioritize, get through an immense amount of material in a day, communicate clearly and respectfully with everyone both within her office space and outside.
- I appreciate ALL of the classified staff for working tirelessly towards ensuring our students get everything they need to be successful. Many times, our amazing classified staff are not seen or heard from enough by faculty and students, yet their contributions make our campus function.
- I appreciate Tara Marrero for being the unofficial "Triage Nurse" for Merritt College's facilities. Each day Tara has a plan of what will get done, and my bet is that 4 out of 5 days a week, those plans are upended by some emergency, such as a broken heater, employee badges that don't work, or flooded bathrooms. On top of that, she manages to communicate clearly and respectfully with everyone she encounters."

"I appreciate Maril M Bull as one I appreciate most. It was early on that he made an impression on me when I was confused and he brought me the documents I needed to resolve my issue. I also appreciate all who have front desk responsibilities and perform with patience and professionalism. There is never a dull moment there!"

**Okay, gang! Let's keep it going!**