

Remarks by Chancellor Martha Kanter
EOPS/CARE CONSORTIUM CONFERENCE
Mills College, Oakland, CA
March 28, 2009

On March 10th I was fortunate to hear our new president Barack Obama share his vision of education with the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce business leaders. He said a couple of things that I'd like to share with you as we acknowledge the hard work that each of you have put forth to have come this far in your life's journey, to bring you to our community colleges and be where you are today.

President Obama said that "education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity and success, it is a prerequisite." Then, he went on to say that "of the 30 fastest growing occupations in America, half require a Bachelor's degree" and that in the next seven years, four out of every ten new jobs will require education beyond high school.

Toward the end of his speech, he talked about his own life growing up as a child. Because, you see, he was raised by his mother. So he has a lot in common with your own children being raised only by his mother.

He said, "When I was a child, living in Indonesia with my mother, she didn't have the money to send me where all the American kids went

to school so she supplemented my schooling with lessons from a correspondence course. I can still picture her, waking me up at 4:30 in the morning five days a week to go over some lessons before I left for school. And whenever I'd complain or find some excuse for getting more sleep, she'd patiently repeat her most powerful defense – ‘This is no picnic for me either, buster.’ And it is because she did this day after day, week after week, and because of all the other opportunities and breaks I had along the way, that I can stand here today as President of the United States. And I want every child in this country to have the same chance that my mother gave me, that my teachers gave me, that my college professors gave me, that America gave me.”

Reflecting on his experience, he said: “Teachers, no matter how dedicated or effective, cannot make sure your children leave for school on time and do their homework when they get back at night. These are things only a parent can do. These are things that our parents must do.”

I know you are here as college students and as parents. So you have a double responsibility: to educate yourself and educate your children at the same time. You are here because you have already taken a big step forward in your life. You want a better life for yourself and your children. Part of the purpose of this day is for us

to tell you that you are not alone in this courageous step you have taken to get a college education for yourself.

I'd like the EOPS and CARE program counselors and staff to stand up right now and be recognized for supporting you in your journey forward. I want you to take a hard look at the people who are standing. They care about you and they believe in you. They know that no matter how hard college might seem to you, you are capable, you are smart and you have the ability to succeed in college and in life!

I've always mentored a few students no matter what job I've had, whether I was a college professor, a high school teacher or a college president. I always ask my students what makes the biggest difference to them in their success and they say the same thing, again and again: "someone who believed in me – really believed in me, that I was smart and that I could do it!" Not all of us have two parents or even one parent, but everyone here today has someone who believes in them, and that will make all the difference! When it gets tough, I hope you'll remember that you are not alone and that you will reach out to your counselors and staff in EOPS and CARE and they will be there for you.

Let's now thank them for the work that they do, for caring about you and for being there for you to support your success in college. Please join me. Thank you!

You are not going to let them down and you will not let yourself down! We know you can succeed in college and we expect that you will. We have high expectations for you. We know and expect that you will put forth the hard work to study and get good grades, and earn that college certificate or degree, no matter how far away it might seem right now. You can do it!

We are confident that you will follow your educational plan and reach your goal which will lead you to a good paying job and a great future for you and your children.

We not only expect but we demand of you that you do a couple of things that will make all of this possible.

First, for every college class you take, you absolutely positively must study two to three hours for every hour you are in class. This is the kind of time and effort that makes the difference. One good idea is to write down every hour you are in class, and then block out the time when you'll take care of your kids, study, eat, travel and have some fun and then keep your schedule with you and, above all, stick

to it each and every day. This takes a lot of personal discipline, but it works!

So already you have someone who believes in you and you have the discipline to be a good student. Part of the discipline is to sit in the front of the class and participate. Don't sit back. Jump in even if it seems hard to do. Students who participate do better and this is what we want for you.

Next you have to get connected to your support system. The EOPS/CARE program is essential. But you also need to get connected to other parts of the college, like getting into a study group with other students in your classes, getting to the library and the tutoring center, exploring the university transfer center, visiting the college job placement center to see what's available, and taking time to see your instructors and your counselors in their office hours. These are examples of how to involve yourself and get your support system in place. Involvement is a key to success.

The final key to success is believing in yourself. That might be very hard for some of you, but we know you'll get there because you already took the first step to get into college and come here today. Confidence in yourself helps you get what you need to succeed.

So when you are back home with your family tonight or in class on Monday, remember that your success in college depends on four things:

B – for someone who believes in you (you already have that!)

D – for the discipline you have to study and do well as a student and as a parent

C – for getting connected to what you need as a student by getting involved as much as you can

And a second C

C – for having confidence, for believing in yourself!

You belong in college and you are here. We congratulate you for enrolling in college and being our students. We think of ourselves as a family because we know that the feeling that comes from being part of a family is what allows us to feel confident in our ability to succeed in college and in life. We know that you can succeed in college and that the “can-do” attitude makes the difference between success and failure.

The fact that you are here today and the fact that each one of you has overcome so much to get to this point needs to be celebrated by all of us in this room. President Obama did it and so can you.

Work hard, believe in yourself, be motivated and involved, get what you need, tell us how we can support you, help each other get through, dream big dreams, and reach for them every day! We're here for you! Thank you for inviting me to talk with you this afternoon. We wish you every success!

NOTE: This invitation came from Foothill College EOPS/CARE director Matais Pouncil to provide the keynote speech for the EOPS/CARE consortium, representing 13 Northern California EOPS programs. Attending the conference were 20 professional staff and 120 community college students, predominantly Latinas and three men who participate in the CARE program: a program for single parents who receive TANF benefits as they pursue their educational goals.