Hello again.

This is my first opportunity to speak to you since the College celebrated its Commencement Ceremony. I am pleased to tell you that more than 750 graduates participated in the ceremony. In total, more than 2,500 students graduated this academic year, our largest class ever! I want to thank everyone involved for making it a special day for our graduates and our honorary degree recipients.

The celebrations continued this week when I spoke at the Gateway to College graduation ceremony. The Gateway program is a special partnership between the College and Montgomery County Public Schools to serve students who are at risk or have stopped attending high school. Instead, these students enroll at the College to earn both high school and college credits while working toward their high school diplomas. It was an honor to see those students succeed.

At commencement, I shared some good budget news – the County Council voted to restore $4.4 million to our operating budget for next year. This restored funding will allow us to open the new Rockville Science Center on time for Fall 2011. It will also allow us to meet current and projected enrollment growth by being able to hire more full-and-part-time faculty to teach high-demand courses. We were also pleased that the County Council approved capital funding for the Science Center and approved the renovation schedule for Science East and Science West.

That’s the good news.

The “less than good news” is that the College still must make sacrifices to close a nearly $10 million budget gap for next year. We have tapped our fund balance, provided no salary increases for employees, eliminated some vacant positions, and asked that all departments reduce their budgets.

Additionally, the Board of Trustees made a difficult decision to increase tuition by at least $5 per credit hour for all students, and the College will institute a multi-day furlough plan for next year. As I have mentioned before, it was a tough decision to implement furloughs. I can’t express enough how grateful I am for your patience and understanding.

Additionally, the College’s Budget Review Advisory Committee produced 63 cost savings recommendations. The President’s Executive Council approved over half of these recommendations and they will be implemented immediately. I encourage all of you to log on to your MyMC account to see the full report, which details every idea, including those that have been tabled for future review, or that were not approved.

In spite of these budgetary challenges, I remain thankful that we continue to be a place of academic excellence.

For example, Germantown Chemistry professor Susan Bontems was recently selected as a “Nifty Fifty” scientist. She will join 49 other high-profile professors and scientific researchers at area middle and high schools this October to talk about science. More than 500 scientists were nominated for this honor – and Montgomery College is the only community college represented. The Nifty Fifty is among the many activities planned in the days leading up to the USA Science and Engineering Festival on the National Mall.
Faculty and staff like Susan help make this college special and make me grateful for the leadership experiences I’ve gained over the years. Next week, I will receive the 2010 Sandy Spring Bank Outstanding Leader Award from Leadership Montgomery. When I accept the award, I will be thinking of all of you. Again, it is because of you that they even thought to recognize me. Thank you for serving as my inspiration.

Finally, the remainder of the summer, I will be doing something slightly different with my weekly video messages. Longer messages, much like this one, will be available the first Friday of the month, but during the other weeks, I will highlight special videos that showcase the College. You don’t want to miss them.

I wish everyone a safe and relaxing summer. Until next time, stay cool.