Last week, I had the opportunity to visit Washington, DC to carry on some important business that I would like you to know about. A number of colleagues and I attended the Community College National Legislative Seminar (NLS) and hosted a faculty recruiting reception at Howard University. Several Maricopa family members participated at the NLS, including Board members Dr. Don Campbell and Mrs. Linda B. Rosenthal, Director of Government Relations and External Affairs, Jack Lunsford, and student advisors Richard Shortridge (GCC) and Johnice Wilkins (MCC) along with their students.

The purpose of the annual National Legislative Seminar is to share the federal legislative priorities for each congressional year with the community college family, prepare them for advocacy, and have them carry the message to Capitol Hill. Having community college trustees, students, and staff discuss the issues and convey the agenda is a very effective way of augmenting the efforts of our Government Relations and External Affairs staff in convincing members of Congress of the merits of our proposals.

Although we will continue to pursue issues important solely to Maricopa, national community college federal legislative priorities important to the District include:

- increasing the Pell Grant maximum by $600, to $4,350;
- streamlining reporting requirements in the Workforce Investment Act;
- eliminating onerous institutional reporting requirements associated with Hope and Lifetime Learning tax credits;
- enacting a corporate tax credit for the donation of equipment and instructors to community colleges;
- enacting digital distance copyright legislation;
- making the Employee Educational Assistance Act permanent in the IRS code;
- bolstering NSP funding.

The community college Pell Grant proposal is a little different than that of President Bush. The President in his campaign, and now in office, proposes to front load the Pell increase, raising the first-year maximum grant to $5,300. It appears the second year amount would remain at $3,750, the maximum grant that was raised by $450 in FY2001. The theory behind the President's proposal is that students tend to continue their education if they are successful in their first year. The President hopes to ease the first-year burden with the added funding. However, if the President is successful in moving his proposal forward, the "tuition sensitivity" threshold in current law would definitely have to be increased by $1000 in order for Maricopa and other Arizona students to realize the maximum Pell Grant benefit.

Speakers at NLS included NPR's Juan Williams, Chairman of the National Governor's Association Governor Parris Glendening from Maryland, and Congressman David Obey (D-WI), Ranking Member on the House Committee on Appropriations. Various congressional staff members along with the federal relations team of the American Association of Community Colleges
and Association of Community College Trustees also provided in depth commentary and explanation.

During our Arizona group visits to Capitol Hill, we discussed the community college federal priorities with Congressmen Hayworth, Pastor, and Stump, while we shared the same with staff in the other offices of the Arizona delegation. Our priorities were well received. I also had the opportunity to introduce Linda Rosenthal and Jack Lunsford to one of my former congressional representatives from my California days, Steve Horn. Congressman Horn is President Emeritus of Cal State - Long Beach and a true friend of community colleges.

The highlight of NLC was surely the brief visit Board Members Campbell and Rosenthal and Jack Lunsford and I had with the new U.S. Secretary of Education, Rod Paige. Although Secretary Paige is new, he has a real grasp on education issues facing our country, including the impending teacher shortage. THE NEW SECRETARY URGED COMMUNITY COLLEGES TO TAKE THE LEAD IN REFORMING K-12 TEACHER EDUCATION. I took the opportunity to share with him Maricopa's initiatives on teacher preparation/education, and he was encouraged enough that he wanted to continue the dialogue. We are working to create that opportunity.

I encourage more of our colleges to send student representatives to Washington, DC to participate in the legislative seminar. This is a tremendous learning opportunity for our students. And there is a great pay-off when our federal legislators respond to the needs voiced by our students.

We took advantage of our time in Washington, DC to do some faculty recruiting at Howard University, too. Governing Board members Dr. Don Campbell and Mrs. Linda B. Rosenthal joined me and three faculty members and two administrators in a first ever recruiting effort at Howard University.

The faculty members and administrators who participated were Dr. Carnella Hardin of GCC, Mr. Wilbert Nelson of PC and Dr. Vanessa Wilson-Ford of MCC along with Dr. Jose Leyba, Executive Assistant to the Vice Chancellor of Human Resources, and Donna Schober, Executive Assistant to the Chancellor. They staffed an information table at the Howard University Student Center for several hours during the day and then we hosted a reception in the early evening.

Our purpose was to introduce the Maricopa Community Colleges to the students, faculty and administration of Howard University. We provided information about our colleges and the advantages of working at the colleges and living in the Greater Phoenix area.

The students were very impressive; bright and eager to learn about the opportunities we have to offer in the way of faculty employment. We established some relationships that will assist us in future recruiting efforts. I am deeply committed to doing whatever we can to recruit and retain the best and brightest faculty members. In addition, we are hoping to see even greater diversity among our faculty applicants in the coming years.

My thanks to the Governing Board members, faculty and administrators for helping us with this recruiting effort.