Happy April Fools Day! I hope that each of you had a restful and fun Spring Break. We are beginning the rush time that marks the end of the academic year. I want to take this opportunity to communicate to you about several important matters.

Congratulations!

Congratulations are in order for Tracy Jacomo who was awarded tenure at the March meeting of the Board of Regents. Ms. Jacomo began as an Academic Counselor at SSC in 1989 and is currently a Sociology and Criminal Justice Instructor. She is actively involved in campus committees and organizations, as well as community and civic affairs. Tracy is a truly exceptional instructor who is most deserving of this important status.

Spring Events

As they always seem to do, the final weeks of the semester promise to be among the busiest of the year on campus. Among the upcoming activities will be a dedication ceremony for the park area surrounding the campus pond on Tuesday, April 28, 2009. The SSC Board of Regents approved the official naming of the area as “Henderson Park” during their March meeting held last week. The naming honors the tremendous amount of time, money and energy that Kenneth and Rose Henderson have given to beautify the park. The Hendersons have provided partial funding to rebuild the pond dam, purchase a 40-foot walking bridge, build sidewalks, construct a small foot bridge, and purchase nine bronze statues and a flagpole for the area. They have also traveled the state purchasing over 200 trees and shrubs which they personally helped plant on campus. In addition to the naming of Henderson Park, the President told the board that recognition will also be made of gifts by the J. Smart Family Foundation and the Dennis and Leilani Roesler family. Employees, students and community supporters will be invited to join in this afternoon celebration.

The SSC Educational Foundation selections for inductions into Alumni Hall of Fame were announced last week. OG+E Director of Construction Services Rick Berg, Oklahoma State Senator Harry Coates and Native American artist Tony Tiger will be the 2009 honorees. They will be inducted during our annual Spring Banquet on Tuesday, May 5, 2009. This event, sponsored by the Foundation, also provides us the opportunity to recognize employees who are reaching milestones in their careers – including longevity of service and retirements. The support of this event by the campus community will be greatly appreciated.

- See Back -
The final weeks of the term will be a time for us to formally say farewell to several long-time employees who will be retiring. Social sciences instructor Dr. Richard Wood, math and science instructor Larry Birdwell and nursing and health sciences divisional secretary Jo Ann DeArmond have all announced their plans to retire.

A reception for Dr. Wood will be held April 29th. Mr. Birdwell will be honored during a May 4th event, and Ms. DeArmond on May 12th. All of the receptions will be held at 2:30 p.m. in the E.T. Dunlap Student Union Meeting Room. Each of these individuals has been a vital part of this institution for many years. We appreciate their service and wish them well in their retirements. Although our Coordinator of Assessment and Student Learning Larry Vickers was officially honored at a reception when he retired from full-time teaching several years ago, we do wish to acknowledge his second retirement – of sorts. Since 2001, Mr. Vickers has provided great leadership in our assessment efforts and with the preparations for our upcoming Higher Learning Commission accreditation visit. Larry has announced that he will be leaving that position at the end of the current term for a much deserved full-time retirement.

Of course, Spring activities culminate with graduation on Friday, May 15, 2009 at 10:30 a.m. We are pleased that Oklahoma City attorney Reggie Whitten has agreed to serve as the speaker for our Commencement Exercises. Mr. Whitten is an outstanding individual – successful in business, interested in young people, politically active and extremely benevolent. He and his wife, Rachelle, and brother-in-law Robert Newman, created the Whitten-Newman Foundation to support programs which enhance education and health of young people. He also served as a Super-Delegate for the Democratic National Convention last summer. He has been on campus several times speaking to students and will be a great motivational speaker for graduation.

Higher Learning Commission Self-Study
We continue to be impressed with the tremendous campus-wide efforts that have occurred in preparation for our upcoming accreditation process and site visit from the Higher Learning Commission next fall. The writing team is heavily involved in preparing the self-study document. While everyone involved deserves “high fives,” I do not think that we can say “thank you” enough to Pam Koenig. I hope you will join me in trying. In continuing preparation for our visit, a delegation of faculty, staff and administrators will be attending the annual national conference of the Higher Learning Commission later this month in Chicago.

Retirement Policy
I am pleased to announce that the Board of Regents approved the addition of an employee retirement incentive program as a college policy. Instead of reviewing and seeking approval to offer the retirement incentive each Spring, the process will now be policy. The program has proven to help the College prepare for the retirement of employees in key positions and stabilize institutional finances through potential net savings in personnel costs. This is a great program, a great service and a great benefit for our employees.

Best wishes to everyone during the final weeks of the Spring 2009 term. Let us hear your two cents on our website. I want to thank the faculty senate welfare committee for the idea – and Cindy Guinn for the catchy title.