Greetings from our nation’s capitol! I am in Washington, D.C. attending the National Leaders Meeting for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in my role as board member of the Oklahoma Educational Television Authority (OETA). I want to formally wish each of you a great Spring Break and update you on several matters.

Busy Spring

SOFTWARE COMPLEX -- As they always seem to do, the final weeks of the semester promise to be among the busiest of the year on campus. Upcoming activities will include a Grand Opening ceremony for the new softball complex on Thursday, March 27th. I hope you will make plans to come out that evening for all the celebratory festivities – including free admission, free hot dogs and a fireworks display. It is so great to be able to report the long-awaited completion of some of our campus construction projects. In addition to the softball complex, you are probably aware that students moved into the Seminole Nation Residential Learning Center last month. The students living there are thrilled with their new home. While we are “in” and “operational” – we have decided to wait until early fall to have the official Grand Opening of that facility. That will give us time to deal with signage and landscaping.

SPRING BANQUET -- The SSC Educational Foundation met this week and affirmed selections for inductions into Alumni Hall of Fame. Former Trojan basketball stand-out Ray Alford, who is now a supervisor with the Fort Worth Air Traffic Control Center; Mike Langley, owner of Langley Management Company in Shawnee; and Wewoka Civic Leader Paige Sheffield will be the 2008 honorees. They will be inducted during our annual Spring Banquet on Thursday, May 1st. This fundraising event, sponsored by the Foundation, also provides us the opportunity to recognize employees who are reaching milestones in their careers. Among those honored this year will be Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Rebecca Kennedy and Groundskeeper Ernie Conatser, both of whom have announced their plans to retire. Additionally, Cynthia Yerby will be recognized for 30 years of service to the College, and recognitions for 20 years of service will be presented to Kelly Chastain, JoAnn DeArmond, Carol Hartman, Ted Hurt, Nina Kirk, Gerhard Laule and Lana Reynolds. Your support of these individuals and this event will be greatly appreciated.

COMMENCEMENT -- Of course, Spring activities culminate with graduation on Friday, May 9th at 10 a.m. We are pleased that Senator Harry Coates has agreed to serve as the speaker for our Commencement Exercises. He will also be participating in the ceremony as a graduate this year – after completing his degree in December. Senator Coates is a long-time friend and supporter of Seminole State College.

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Higher Learning Commission Self-Study
I continue to be impressed with the tremendous campus-wide efforts to prepare for our upcoming accreditation process and site visit from the Higher Learning Commission of North Central. Campus committees are meeting and working diligently on all aspects of this project. I was particularly proud of the faculty delegation who attended an HLC workshop in Chicago in early February. They were highly commended for the work being done at SSC and were deemed “stars” of the conference. Dr. Kennedy and HLC Steering Committee Chair Pam Koenig are doing a great job in keeping us on-tract in this effort. We owe them our gratitude for taking this effort to-heart and creating a congenial and productive working environment for the self-study process. In continuing preparation for our visit, a delegation of faculty and administrators will be attending the annual national conference of the Higher Learning Commission next month in Chicago.

Student Organizations Travel
Several of our student organizations have been, or will soon be, on major school-sponsored trips. Student Government Association sponsor Cynthia Yerby recently took a group of SGA students to New York City for a leadership conference. The baseball team is heading to Arizona and the softball team to Florida for tournaments and games during Spring Break. I will be traveling with the President’s Leadership Class to Tennessee and Alabama on a Spring Break trip to visit Civil Rights landmarks and other historic sites. A brief International Studies trip will also take students to Ireland and England. We are fortunate to be able to provide such great experiences and opportunities to our students.

New Scholarships
Several special scholarship funds have been established through the SSC Educational Foundation over the past several months – some as memorials for good friends and past employees of the College. It is very touching to see the legacy of people who loved Seminole State College live on through monetary gifts that will benefit students for years to come. In addition to these memorial scholarships, I am proud to announce the establishment of a trust scholarship provided by Ben and Bonnie Walkingstick of Chandler. Ben is a former Regent of the College and now serves as a Trustee for the Foundation. His gift will perpetually provide $3,000 annually in student scholarship funds. This is a tremendous gift to the institution which will positively affect generations of Seminole State College students.

Wayne Day
Finally, I would like to pay my personal respects to a long-time friend and pioneer administrator of the College, Wayne Day, who passed away on February 19th. Wayne was a beloved member of the Seminole State College family and the Seminole community. His passing brought to mind his tremendous dedication to students and their educational pursuits. In looking back over a public relations file documenting his time as an employee here, I read the following from a story written at the time of his retirement in 1996.

“Day said students have to be considered as the foremost reason for being involved in higher education. ‘It’s hard to allow for how serious a student is going to be – what push he is going to give. Quite often someone with a bad background on paper, who looks like he has little chance for success, may have that extra desire to work hard and make it. ... My efforts have always been with students in mind. I look for any possible way to try to help get them an education. I’m a believer in students having the right to try.’”

We extend our sympathy to Wayne’s wife JaNene and his entire family. We owe him a debt of gratitude for helping to shape the future of Seminole State College. He will be deeply missed.

I wish each of you a restful and fun Spring Break. I look forward to seeing you in a couple of weeks as we begin our final descent of the 2008 academic year.