



Newsletter

Dr. Terri Jett

Associate Vice-President and Senior Diversity Officer

I have been amazed with all the programs and events that have taken place on our campus throughout this school year that highlight and uplift diversity. During months such as National Hispanic Heritage Month, Black History Month and currently, Women's History Month there is so much information and unique perspectives provided that should probably be integrated not just into our formal educational process, but also into our general ways of knowing and understanding. While the level of anti-DEI (translation for anti-Blackness), anti-immigrants (translation for anti-Latinx(e)) anti-Trans (translation for anti-LGBTQ), anti-disabilities (translation for anti-everybody), anti-women, anti-federal workers, anti-Veterans, rhetoric has escalated in our national political climate, on our small campus we find ways to continue to do good work, to remain focused on our Catholic, Lasallian and Liberal Arts social-justice principles, and to simply be in community with one another. I struggle with the uncertainty created from the chaos that envelops are national identity, laws and policies while searching for clarity on how to respond. Like many, I think about the best way forward to a peaceful existence while dodging the everyday antagonisms and biases such as the marginalization of my humanity and the disregard of my extensive educational and professional background. We need to talk about the idea of "meritocracy."

There are spaces at Saint Mary's that I find comforting - the Center for Women and Gender Equity (CWGE), the Intercultural Center, the Library, our amazing Art Museum, the Legacy Garden, the Recreation Center pool and our beautiful Chapel. It is in these spaces where the opportunities to get to know one another through close conversations around unique programming are ongoing. To my friends and colleagues involved in the work of these spaces - Thank you.

I will end with my favorite quote:

"No one can make you feel inferior without your consent." - Eleanor Roosevelt



In this newsletter you will find:

Announcements, Updates, Real Talk, Campus and National Events, & DEI Tool of the Month

Updates and Announcements



Office of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

Official ODEI Mission Statement

Saint Mary's College is committed to building a diverse and inclusive workplace and learning environment where systems of oppression and exclusion are actively opposed and dismantled. We believe diversity is one of our greatest strengths; we broadly define diversity to include race, ethnicity, gender identity, gender expression, sex, sexual orientation, disability, nationality, immigration status, physical appearance, religion, age, military status, and socioeconomic status. However, we recognize that diversity without equity is neither sustainable nor morally just. The College commits to creating a safe, respectful, and equitable environment for all community members and does not condone discriminatory or disrespectful behavior, policies, or practices. Saint Mary's, as a college community, works to actively interrupt and transform systems of oppression, including but not limited to white supremacy, xenophobia, ableism, patriarchy, homophobia, transphobia, religious intolerance, and economic inequality, recognizing that these systems manifest at multiple levels - systemic, institutional, ideological, interpersonal, and internalized. We work together to mitigate the impacts of these systems and to build an emotionally supportive community where students, faculty, and staff feel seen and valued and can flourish as their full, authentic selves. We strive to act upon our Lasallian value of 'Respect for all People' in our everyday actions, through continuous individual self-inquiry and improvement, and through regular reviews of our policies, procedures, and systems.

Addressing Campus Climate Issues Through GUIDE

A central goal of GUIDE is to raise staff and faculty awareness of the campus climate.

Numerous studies have concluded that how students experience their campus environment influences both learning and developmental outcomes, and that discriminatory environments have a negative effect on student learning. Students thrive in healthy environments, free of the negativity of discrimination, where inclusion and respect for diversity is the daily norm.

Creating a healthy campus climate is as important for faculty and staff as it is for students. Faculty and staff who consider their campus climate healthy and inclusive are more likely to feel personally and professionally supported. In addition, faculty and staff who have encountered prejudice directly attribute its negative effects to decreased health and well-being. Gaels Uniting for Inclusion and Diversity through Education (GUIDE) "represents our conviction that shared intention combined with collective action will guide our college on the journey toward a respectful, inclusive, and safe environment for all members of our campus community." We are holding three cohorts of GUIDE Tier I **this March**. They will be held during Flextimes on **Mondays and Wednesdays (1:30-3 pm)**. An **online option on Thursday evenings** will be offered as well. Faculty and staff will be notified of specific dates and a form for confirmation of attendance will be provided. I want to personally thank the amazing faculty and staff who are serving as facilitators this spring: **Amaury Avalos, Kimiya Shokri, Mary Raygosa, Nash Anderson, Stephanie D' Costa, and Jennifer Heung.**

Updates and Announcements

THE *good eating* CO.

The Good Eating Company Ramadan Statement

Dear Saint Mary's College Community,

At sunset on February 28, Muslims across the United States and around the globe commenced fasting from dawn to sunset, marking the beginning of Ramadan. I would like to emphasize the importance of understanding and supporting our Muslim community members during this significant time. This sacred month, deeply rooted in Islamic tradition, invites individuals to reflect on their faith through acts of fasting, prayer, and spiritual devotion. Ramadan is a time of introspection, self-discipline, and communal solidarity, underscoring the values of compassion, empathy, and charity.

During this time, many of our Muslim students, faculty, and staff may abstain from eating from dawn until sunset. This practice of fasting is one of the fundamental pillars of Islam, symbolizing obedience, self-restraint, and gratitude.

It's important to recognize that each individual's experience during Ramadan may differ. We encourage groups and friends to engage in open dialogue to discuss how this observance may impact participation and energy levels. Additionally, providing a quiet space and allowing short breaks for prayer can greatly support those observing Ramadan.

Furthermore, as Eid al-Fitr approaches on Saturday, March 29, 2025, we remind everyone to extend understanding and flexibility to our Muslim community. Eid al-Fitr marks the end of Ramadan and is a time of celebration after a month of fasting.

Good Eating has offered to provide food for students before and after the fasting period. Students may use their meal plans or buy food in Cafe Louis until 8 pm weekdays. Late Night in Oliver takes place starting at 9 pm, Sunday through Thursday. Students can request breakfast bags the night before to have in their rooms in the early morning. For more information, please contact Mike Lee Michael.Lee@GoodEatingCompanyUS.com.

As we enter the holy month of Ramadan, I want to acknowledge the challenging context in which this year's observance unfolds. The current conflict in Gaza casts a somber shadow over this sacred time for Muslims around the world. We cannot ignore the impact of geopolitical events on the lives of our Muslim brothers and sisters, especially during a period of spiritual reflection and devotion.

Amidst these challenging circumstances, let us reaffirm our commitment to creating a community of empathy, inclusion, and respect. As we extend accommodations and support to our Muslim community during Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr, let us also hold space for conversations and reflections on the broader social and political contexts that shape our world.

As a Lasallian, Catholic institution grounded in the liberal arts tradition, we embrace the diversity of beliefs and practices within our community. Ramadan serves as a reminder of the interconnectedness of our faith traditions and the shared values of compassion, service, and social justice. Let us use this opportunity to deepen our understanding, foster inclusivity, and strengthen the bonds of empathy and respect that unite us as a community. Let us embody the spirit of empathy, understanding, and inclusivity as we support our Muslim community members during Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr. Together, let us create an environment where all feel valued, respected, and celebrated.

Michael Lee

Senior General Manager - St. Mary's College

Updates and Announcements



SMC Land Acknowledgment

As the community of Saint Mary's College of California, we acknowledge we are gathered on the ethnohistoric tribal territory of the intermarried Saclan/Jalquin (hal-keen)/Huchiun (hoo-choon)/ancestral Muwekma Bay Miwok and Ohlone Territory.

The present-day Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, with an enrolled Bureau of Indian Affairs documented membership of over 600, is comprised of all of the known surviving Indian lineages aboriginal to the San Francisco Bay region. They trace their Tribe's ancestry through the missionization policies deployed by the Catholic Church in connection to Missions Dolores, San Jose, and Santa Clara, during the expansion of the Hispano-European Empire into Alta California beginning in 1769. Their Muwekma families are the successors and living members of the sovereign, previously Federally Recognized Verona Band of Alameda County, now formally recognized as the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area who would like you to know that they are alive and thriving members of the broader Bay Area communities today.

The Muwekma Ohlone Indian families have never left their aboriginal ancestral homelands of the Bay Area and maintain their identity, traditions, culture and language through the tenacity, strength and legacy of their ancestors and elders. Today, they attempt to repair the sustained ecological, environmental, and cultural devastation to their Tribe wrought by over 254 years of colonial processes of disenfranchisement through the politics of erasure. Their priorities are moved forward through three established entities: the Muwekma Ohlone Tribal Council, Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, Inc. and the Muwekma Ohlone Preservation Foundation.

They respectfully request that the good citizens of St. Mary's College and the Town of Moraga, and surrounding towns strive to be faithful stewards on behalf of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe by maintaining the bay, freshwater creeks, native plants, animal habitats, and the air we all breathe. We recognize that the De La Salle Brothers of Saint Mary's College and the Lasallian Family, have worked to serve honorably as good stewards of this land since its purchase in 1926.

Watch the full Land Acknowledgment video here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_GDYvbWaeYM

Real Talk

This is a new section for people to freely express their thoughts in a manner that encourages informal community conversations. Be ready when you receive an invite to engage in some “real talk!”

Real Talk-15 minutes departures

Upon my arrival at St. Mary’s College in October 2020, I, Lt. Lyla Lauren, immediately recognized the strong sense of community and belonging that permeated the campus. I felt genuinely valued by students, faculty, and staff. However, as time progressed, I observed a significant shift in this dynamic, leading to an atmosphere characterized by fear and anxiety. It became clear that one could be deemed indispensable one moment and face unexpected departure the next. Good people disappear! 15 minutes!

It is crucial to understand that many individuals constantly fear job loss and are anxious about being asked to leave on short notice—sometimes in as little as 15 minutes!

We must commit to creating a work environment free from harassment and intimidation. Everyone should feel empowered to leverage their creativity and skills to perform at their highest potential. We should treat individuals with the same respect upon their entry as we do during their exit. Providing advance notice during life transitions is not just a courtesy; it’s a necessity. We want individuals to leave feeling respected and valued. Your well-being and success in your role should be of paramount importance. We must prioritize creating a positive environment for employees and students, as any negative experience may result in the loss of potential future students, faculty, staff, and donors. By nurturing a supportive atmosphere, we can effectively engage with individuals who might contribute to our mission.

At its core, life is not inherently difficult; instead, we often find ways to complicate it with our actions, thoughts, and choices. We tend to create unnecessary challenges by overthinking situations, setting unrealistic expectations, and getting caught up in the complexities. By simplifying our approach and embracing the present moment, we can navigate life with greater ease and clarity.

Make an effort to truly understand the experiences and emotions of others by imagining what it would be like to live their lives. Consider their perspectives, challenges, and feelings as if they were yours. This practice of empathy can foster deeper connections and compassion in our relationships with others.

Remember that any behaviors or conditions you allow to persist will become ingrained in the culture. Together, we have the power to reshape this environment for the better.

Respectively,
Lt. Lyla Lauren