

January 21, 2008

ISS Colleagues:

Today, on this Martin Luther King Day, I complete five years at Lane. I am delighted that it is MLK day that commemorates my entry to Lane—particularly as an immigrant from India.

After five years, even now, when I come down the hill towards Lane and look at the very different winter, fall, spring, and summer skies, I am thankful to be living in such a beautiful part of the world. Every day, as I take the curve on the road into campus and get the first glimpse of Lane, I feel fortunate to be here. And then getting out of the car, passing the series of metal sculptures that capture our vision statement so magnificently, pausing to look at the new flowers and plants that Frank has outside Building 1, ... I am struck at how transformational this place is.

There have been quite a few changes at Lane over the five years. The one constant though has been the tight budget, which has not looked good from my first day at Lane. A meeting that I attended immediately after joining Lane was about the college's budget deficit. But, even as the dark budget clouds loom over us, I don't want us to lose sense of who we are—a tenacious group of student-centered people, who have kept Lane vibrant through significant budget reductions. Over these five years, I have a clearer understanding of why Lane is one of the leading community colleges in the country. The remarkably qualified, talented, dedicated, passionate and able faculty, staff, and managers truly make this a very special community college. I can't imagine very many colleges like Lane where everyday there are new curricular and institutional initiatives despite the resource constraints—a constant reminder about the extraordinary caliber of Lane's people.

In such a context, I don't know which of the following two is more appropriate: Charles Dickens' "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times", or the Chinese saying, "may you live in interesting times." These are interesting, as well as best/worst of times because of the wonderful opportunities that are available to us along with some very complex problems. Together, we can be a powerful force to work through these complex problems and further the vision of catalyzing transformation. As Martin Luther King said, "change does not roll in on the wheels of inevitability, but comes through continuous struggle."

Early this morning, I spent a long time looking at the splendid moon, almost full, in all its glory, and was yet another reminder of the phenomenally beautiful place where we live. It definitely gave me a renewed sense for what Lane can accomplish in 2008.

I am so lucky to be working with all of you. My best wishes for a fun-filled and peaceful 2008.

Sonya