



AFFIRM
newsletter



Evergreen Valley College • 3095 Yerba Buena Road • San José, California 95135

Issue 1, Number 1

AFFIRM Coordinator's Corner



Flora Payne

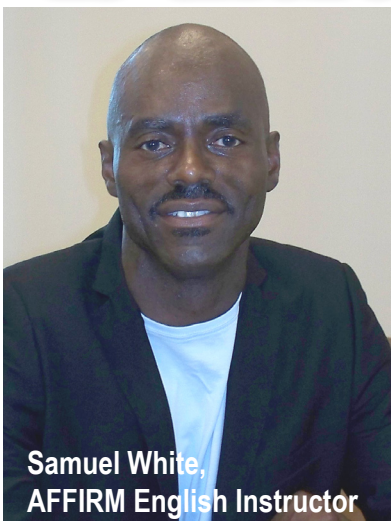
Since its inception, the AFFIRM Program has been dedicated to offering the best academic and support services it can. However, this fall, we would like to challenge you, our students, to rise to the occasion and help us support the community we all live in. Our theme for this semester is Building Stronger Communities through the Power of Networking and our ultimate goal is to develop a sense of social awareness within our students while we continue to promote their scholastic success.

Community involvement can be achieved in many different ways from donating your time at your child's school to raising money for your local church. During last month's Fall Kick-Off Celebration, we welcomed three prominent African American leaders from our community to share a few new ways that we can get involved. AVID Program Coordinator, Chris Davis, and Urban Champions Director, Vince McCastle, introduced two peer mentoring programs, which would pair college students up

with high school and middle school students, geared towards helping them prepare for higher education. Also Rev. Jethro Moore, President of the NAACP Silicon Valley-San Jose Branch, encouraged students to reach for their academic potential while staying aware of their social responsibilities to the African American community.

As the semester progresses, I think it is important for all of us to challenge ourselves to give back in any way we can. Volunteerism is not restricted to our campus community alone nor should it be limited to one particular event or season. It is our responsibility as members of the San Jose community to try to support each other through these difficult times.

Is there Power in Networking?



Samuel White,
AFFIRM English Instructor

Have you ever stopped to consider the people that make up your support infrastructure? Are you even sure that you have such an infrastructure in place? Better yet, do you really know what is meant by the term support infrastructure? Let's say that you need help with a tough math exam that's coming up, and you're clueless as to how to study for it—let alone pass it. You love reading and writing, however, math has never been your strong subject; in fact, you cringe at the very thought of solving all of those intricate word problems that seem to be what math is about. So, you resolve to do your best—and hope for the best. Of course you fail the exam.

What if you happened to meet someone who was really good at math—someone who would be willing to help you through those rough spots? During the process of getting help, you discover that they could use some help with English composition—your favorite course! The exchange of know-how makes this

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Reflection of Life as an Instructor

I remember back in my undergraduate days at the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH). I was part of program called Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participants (LSAMP), which was an academic program for African American students on our campus. Dr. Adriel Johnson was our campus advisor for the program. It was the director, Dr. Louis Dale, who encouraged me to apply and be a part of it. The program provided some tuition money and support while I was at UAH. So, I applied and was accepted. Every month, we met together and had meetings. I laugh now because I remember how much we hated it. Sitting in a room with walls covered with historic icons of our African American history, we had to come together and introduce ourselves, tell exactly why we were in college, and tell about any accomplishments we had since our last meeting. At first, I never understood why we consistently did this every meeting. But the older I got, the more I came to enjoy those meetings. The further along I got in my degree, the more those meetings were a refreshing, confidence boost. Those meeting made me say, "Man, I feel like I'm doing something big..." Everyone coming together and encouraging each other was something I cherished.

Dr. Johnson had this vision of bringing us together so we always saw ourselves in a positive sense. He wanted us to see People of Color doing well and accomplishing MORE. I can honestly say, and I have been saying this since I graduated from UAH, that had it not been for Dr. Johnson being there to push me and show me what was expected, I would not have finished my Bachelor's degree in Mathematics. Likewise, I think of Dr. Dale and having meetings in his office about my academic goals. Every LSAMP student has a memory of Dr. Dale and his bittersweet push on us in school. It wasn't a push that you'd expect from an instructor; it was the push you would expect from your parents or grandparents or an uncle that wanted you to do better in life; a family member that expected greatness and wasn't accepting anything less. He wasn't trying to be your friend; he was trying to make you great.

Dr. Dale said, "Ajai, you are going to get your Masters in Mathematics..." even when I said, "Dr. Dale, I think I have reached my peek in school..." I remember crying in Dr. Johnson's and Dr. Dale's offices every time I felt like I was not fit to make it. They both would let me cry, and then they would say, "Are you done? Cause you need to finish this degree..."

In 2005 I got my Bachelors degree in Mathematics from UAH, and in 2007, I got my Masters degree in Applied Mathematics from University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). And to this day, I credit Dr. Johnson and Dr. Dale for being there for me, when I didn't believe in myself. I call them the "Uncles" of my academic career.

In 2009 I started teaching, with the icons of my life Dr. Johnson and Dr. Dale in the back of my mind, and I have not looked back since. I have gone full speed ahead because I want to be as great as they were to me. I want to be the same push and inspiration that they were to so many students, because I know college is not easy. I know what it is like to be lost in the crowd and to eventually feel like you are fading away. I know what it is like to want to quit and throw in the towel. I know the option to quit was easier to me than enduring school. But I also know what it is like to have someone there that expected you to succeed. I know what it is like to have someone push you, when you could no longer push yourself. I had someone there to show me that the more you educated yourself, the further you are along in the race of life. I want to be that person for my students. I need to be that person for my students, because I want the best for each and every one of them.

So, after all of that, is it necessary to say why I am beyond excited about joining the Affirm Program at Evergreen Valley College? Should I elaborate on the joy I get from being a part of the start of the Umoja Program at San Jose City College? The idea of support for our students is a necessary part of the success of our students. They need the "family" to push them just like I needed the push when I was in school. We need to look to each other when everyone else is expecting us to fail. I want to be a constant reminder that the bar is raised, and I expect my students to reach that bar regardless of their situation or background. The Affirm Program is a family that provides exactly that support. The Affirm Program provides that push. The Affirm Program provides that family that our students need.

Knowledge is power. It seems like such a cliché statement, but it is so true. The more WE know in life, the more WE are able to get ahead. The more WE know in life, the more WE are able to avoid the ideas of being taken advantage of or being over powered by the outside world. If WE choose to not educate ourselves, then WE are powerless. I say WE because WE are in this together. WE are building on the people that fought in our past, and WE are setting ourselves up for our people of the future. You are not in this alone.

Tragically on February 12, 2010, Dr. Adriel Johnson and Dr. Maria Ragland Davis were killed on the campus of UAH during a department meeting. For everything they provided to students like me, I am forever grateful. Their efforts toward so many students striving for a degree will never be forgotten. For people like them and the generation to follow, we must continue to better ourselves. It is people like them that lay the foundation of why I go to work every day and push my students to the next level. So, again I am thankful.

To the students, faculty and staff. Thank you for the welcome to EVC and SJCC! Let the work begin and continue!



Mathematics Instructor,
Ajai Cribbs

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH

EVC PRESIDENT, DR. HENRY YONG

By Timothy Burpee

Timothy Burpee (TB): As the new president, how have you adjusted to being at Evergreen Valley College?

President Henry Yong (HY): The past two and a half months have gone by very quickly. I'm still trying to learn everyone's names and which departments they work for. However, this has been a very good opportunity for me and I feel welcomed by all of the students, faculty, and support staff. I know that I arrived at a very difficult time. I started on July 1st and that was the day after the college had a rather large layoff and while some lost their jobs, others were bumped or moved to other departments. So when I came in on that day and visited different areas of the campus, I got a sense of sadness due to the loss of staff and those trying to adjust to new work environments. There was a very sober mood everywhere that day. There is definitely a morale issue and it's still present. However, we need to see that not everything is gloom and doom. There's an old Chinese proverb which states that "in every adversity there's also an opportunity". I think if we handle it right and reorganizing, we'll be able to emerge leaner and stronger than before.



Dr. Yong

TB: What about our campus has caught your attention?

HY: The first thing that impressed me a lot is the amount of space available here. I've been on many other college campuses where there isn't a lot of land and all the buildings are very close together. Essentially, these campuses weren't much different from a downtown city block. So that's the urban jungle concept. Here we have a lot of land with a lot of green trees and grassy areas. Since starting here, I've come back on the campus during the weekends just to see what it's like. There are a lot of families coming here to have picnics, retired people walking their dogs, and joggers utilizing our beautiful facilities. Members of the community come here to take a class but not for the purposes of transferring. They are attracted to the campus by our facilities like the tennis courts, soccer and baseball fields, walking trails, etc. This attraction subsequently leads to them taking classes more for enrichment purposes than anything else. They aren't on a degree track. They come and take a class simply to walk around and enjoy the beauty of the campus. So EVC is very unique in terms of its connection to the community.

TB: As a college student, I am very involved in campus life. What does student involvement do for students on campus?

HY: I used to be president of the student body many years ago and I think we have a great opportunity for our students to participate in the governance process and to participate in the unified effort to make the college a better institution. By being a better institution, I mean both scholastically and by improving our services to meet the diverse needs of our students. Students can come and take classes without ever participating in any clubs or committees. However we want to have these clubs and committees available for students to participate to the degree that they have the time to participate. These student organizations are ways for them to build self-esteem, self-confidence as well as leadership skills that will help them in the future. Students can transfer to four-year institutions without having aspects of leadership and personal development really fulfilled. I think EVC has these leadership opportunities to offer our students and I hope our students will take advantage of them.

TB: How did your experience in student government help you?

HY: My experience in student government increased my understanding of the student's perspective. For example, we [faculty, staff, and administrators] sometimes don't realize that students have to juggle a lot of things and still come to school. I understand that coming to school and getting a degree and then developing personal leadership skills would better serve to in equipping students for life later on.

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“INTERVIEW” CONTINUED

TB: What advice, ideas or recommendations would you give to students to encourage them to integrate volunteerism into their everyday lives?

HY: Volunteerism is one key way that we can give back to the community. We all do it in our own way based on the amount of time we have to contribute. There are so many opportunities for all of us to give back to our community in some shape or form. Sometimes we may think, “What can I do? It’s not going to make any difference”, but if lots of people contribute just a little bit it will all add up to work towards the big picture. For example, at my previous college, there was a group of students who decided to get involved in a canned food drive for the local food bank. They took it upon themselves to get the whole campus involved and once everyone was on board it was a great success. There was another drive that collected toys for a battered women’s shelter. One person bringing a toy may not make a lot of difference but if a lot of people would do the same thing then it is very significant. So if people all came together to volunteer, in a combined effort, the overall impact could be tremendous. I really believe in volunteerism as an avenue of giving back to the community and as an avenue for changing our community for the better.

TB: How would you describe some of the benefits of giving back to one’s community?

HY: When an individual has an opportunity to give back to the community and he/she sees the changes or positive effects made within that community I think one receives a sense of inner satisfaction. You can go to sleep at night knowing you have done something positive to help other people. When people volunteer they should not do it out of a sense of receiving any sort of special recognition because you may not get it. However we should all strive to do it in the spirit of humility and as a way of sharing our talent and time just for helping people in need.

TB: Who has made the greatest impact on your leadership style and abilities?

HY: I would have to say my parents and my teachers made the greatest impact in my life. As I think back over my life, I realize that a lot of things that they said to me when I much younger did not make sense at the time but, now that I’m older, I begin to see the value of what they taught me and that has made difference in how I see things and how I handle problems. So my advice for students would be to listen to wise advice because it will be handy to know at some point in the future.

TB: How would you define leadership?

HY: I believe that leadership does not mean arrogance. Leadership can be effective through example through a spirit of friendship and mutual respect for all individuals.

TB: How do you plan to use your leadership skills to influence the students on campus and their pursuit of higher education?

HY: I have a few ideas that I’m going to suggest to the proper channels through the student government on campus here on avenues in which the students can participate more in the area of governance and in every aspect of campus life. Student participation should not be limited to organizing a dance or a picnic. Students should be involved in student government, the shared governance processes, and community outreach. Students should be able to serve as a bridge to the high school and junior high school students as role models young people to think about coming to college and not getting involved in gangs and dropping out of school.

TB: What are your future plans for our college?

HY: I would hope that the college would be able to quickly recover financially and get off of warning for Accreditation. And I believe we will due to the help of the faculty, staff, and students who have participated in that process. We’ve submitted a follow up report to the ACCJC and we look forward to welcoming the team from ACCJC again so they can see what progress has been made since their last visit a year ago.

The AFFIRM Program staff is a team of people that diligently work together to see you succeed. Everyone does their part. I develop your educational plans, give you career advice and monitor your progress towards the completion of your educational goals. Our English instructors help develop your writing skills to clearly articulate thought on to paper. Our Math instructors help you develop your analytical and problem solving skills in order to pursue higher levels of mathematics. Our political science instructor introduces you to the importance the three branches of government and the difference between the political parties and our chemistry instructor introduces you to a level of science that will help prepare you to pursue careers in the health and science fields. Together, we provide you with the foundation needed to help you pursue whatever major or career you decide to choose. However, it is our interaction with the entire community that ensures your success. Our program could not survive without our ties within the community, both on and off campus.

For example, we use the Library's Tutorial Center to obtain tutoring services for you. The tutorial coordinator can help you find a tutor for whatever subject you need help with. You can also find great workshops such as Time Management, Test Anxiety and Effective Study Tips and Test Taking Strategies to help you cope with stress and efficiency issues. Our Financial Aid office offers financial assistance to all those eligible to receive it along with work-study opportunities. Every year the Bookstore contributes to our Black History Month Celebration by assisting us with bringing an African American author to discuss their latest book or novel.

Additionally, we collaborate with the other special programs to help provide you with services. Thanks to Enlace, we were able to provide AFFIRM students with text books for their AFFIRM classes. The EOPS Program is allowing us to use their computer lab to conduct our MyWeb workshops that will teach you how to use web registration. These workshops will be offered in the beginning of November and we will be sending out the dates of these workshops in by email soon. So if you don't know how to use MyWeb to register for classes, then you should attend these workshops.

Furthermore, for all those students transferring next Fall, the Counseling Department, is providing workshops on how to apply to the UC and CSU system for admission starting the month of October. So please keep an eye out for those workshops. Last, the AFFIRM program is able to provide you with mentors from the community that are providing you with their time in order to help you make wise decisions regarding your future.

As you can see, it takes our ties with the entire campus to make this program work. The AFFIRM program alone cannot succeed without the assistance of our community. As the saying goes " It takes a village to raise a child" well, it takes a community to keep a program alive.

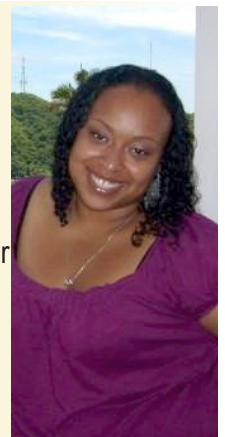
Please, read your emails from AFFIRM when you get them, because you don't want to miss out on the opportunities that we provide you with through our email announcements.



A MESSAGE FROM

FINANCIAL AID SPECIALIST EBONNIE HOPKINS

As students, it is important for you to know that outside of applying for Federal and State Financial aid, there are scholarships available for you to apply for. The great thing about scholarships is that they are usually merit-based or based on specific criteria that doesn't include parents or the applicant's income as does the financial aid application. Every year our Financial Aid Office offers numerous scholarships to our students, and every year we wish that more students would take the time to apply for them. The chance of winning a scholarship here at EVC is high because we only have a handful of students apply for each scholarship that is offered. Scholarship amounts range from \$100-\$5000 depending on which scholarship is applied for. So, I hope that more students take the time to apply for scholarships. We generally post our scholarship information on our website in the month of December, and applications are due sometime during the following March. Once all applications are in, a committee then reviews each scholarship and the winners are announced in April. We host a scholarship reception for all winners, their family and friends. With the rising cost of fees, and the cost of living, I urge all students to take the time to apply for scholarships even if you are eligible for Federal/State aid. Remember, the more assistance, the merrier.



EVC scholarship information can be found at www.evc.edu/scholarships.

SUCCESS THROUGH NETWORKING

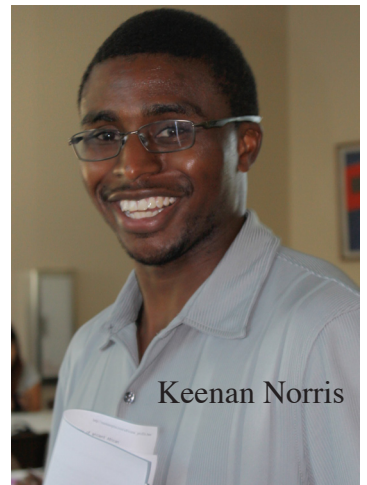
Networking is a vitally important aspect of academic and professional success. No man (nor any sister) is an island, and because of that fact it doesn't make much sense to act like one and absent oneself from the social aspects of academia, business and life that are actually productive, affirming and beneficial for one's future. The issues of networking as well as community-identification and community-building are especially poignant for black college students. Let's speak plainly about this issue: Black students are under-represented at every level of higher education from medical and law schools and PHD programs, down through undergraduate divisions of 4-year institutions, and even at our community colleges. Along with a vast host of real and deep systemic problems that cause black students to under-perform in school, there is also a lack of focus on education and a lack of knowledge about the real price that needs to be paid to achieve at the college and university level in our families and communities. Many black students in San Jose and throughout the Bay Area who are intent on getting good grades and advancing to degree-granting colleges and universities take stock of their high school classrooms and realize very quickly that their academic journey will in some ways be a lonely one. At least it won't be a journey where they can presuppose that large numbers of other black students will come along with them, thus creating an organic community inside academic walls in the way that Asian American students or White students can. This isn't the South, after all: There is no Howard, or Fisk, or Xavier out here. Consequently, there are vanishingly few examples of predominantly black academic spaces. Thus, the black student often is alienated from the higher education environment in California simply because he or she is suddenly without the apparent community of success that other students can take for granted.

I know this was the case for me in high school and beyond as I pursued my B.A. at UC Riverside and then later in graduate school. I found myself studying alone, which, I would later learn, is one of the quickest ways to fall behind as a student. Knowledge-sharing, which is the principle benefit of networking and community, is crucial to individuals just as it is to civilizations. Notice how those civilizations that occupy the border territories between different cultures or ports of call on the water's edge, those docking-points and those land paths where goods are bartered, people travel and meet each other, where cultures merge and ideas intermingle always lead the way in technological advances. Those areas isolated by vast deserts, mountainous terrain, terrible weather, rampaging disease, dictatorship and political strife tend to fall behind.

Students are the same way: A good idea is a good idea, and those students who go beyond themselves and beyond the confines of their own minds and expose themselves to the largest number of good ideas within their learning communities tend to perform the best. By contrast, those students who are isolated (even when that isolation exists for perfectly good reasons) do not do as well as they should. I have seen this script play out at every level of education.

When it comes to networking and community, the issue for black students is, I think, two-fold: On the one hand, black students need to make sure we are as open as possible to joining whatever learning communities can help us. In a diverse and open society it only makes sense that we take advantage of every idea and every community of thought, no matter where its origin or the culture from which it springs. On the other hand, it is important not to dismiss black spaces of intellect, community and networking. Just as it makes no sense to uncritically join up with other black folks just because we're black, even if we hold no values, beliefs or goals in common, it is equally illogical for black students (or students of any other race or ethnicity, for that matter) to reject black-identifying spaces, places and institutions of learning such as AFFIRM at EVC. Without the black world of thought, networking and collective there is no Toussaint L'Oeuverture organizing Haitian slaves to study military tactics by night in order to overthrow their French enslavers. There would be no W.E.B. DuBois, who brought sociology as an academic discipline to American shores, who helped to found the NAACP, who ultimately established one of the most extensive bodies of work in American history. There would be no Ralph Ellison, whose books *Invisible Man* and *Shadow and Act*, made Ellison the only writer named to the Top 100 lists for best books of the 20th century for both fiction and non-fiction. There would also be no men such as my father, who recently passed on. My dad introduced me to not only Toussaint, but Frederick Douglass, not only DuBois, but Richard Wright, not only Ellison, but Toni Morrison.

My dad emphasized that knowledge itself is a community and the act of learning an act of networking, of drawing connections. I couldn't read Douglass' slave narrative without also learning about Locke's philosophy of human nature. I couldn't learn about DuBois' Black Reconstruction and the Niagara Movement without also coming to know Abraham Lincoln's complicated path to emancipation. Learning is all one, when done right. Our learning communities begin at home, with our loved ones. We are teachers and students both. From there, we need to expand and connect, in college and beyond.



Keenan Norris

The Black Student Union **GET INVOLVED!**

Leadership, individuality, and responsibility are keywords I've learned while being a part of the Black Students Union (BSU). Before joining, I was your typical college student who was satisfied with just coming for class and going home. There was nothing really special for me here. However my attitude changed once the AFFIRM staff asked me to participate in the BSU along with a hand full of other students last fall. At first, I wasn't really interested but then I tried it and, to my amazement, it was an extracurricular activity that ended up benefitting me. As a member of BSU, I gained a greater understanding of what it takes to be a leader. It also helped me to refine the leadership skills that I already possessed.

So if you find yourself looking for ways to utilize your leadership skills, please consider joining the BSU. We meet every Wednesday at 11:00am in P107B.

- Derek Rice, BSU President



THREE CHEERS FOR THE **AFFIRM** PROGRAM

Before I begin my letter, please let me take this opportunity to mention how wonderful this program truly is. There are plenty of wonderful people at Evergreen Valley College starting from the top of the administration and moving down to the people who do the maintenance. I have observed a deep sincere passion for caring while I've been here at Evergreen Valley College. I have seen what a great education can do when students are given the opportunity to shine which leads me into the AFFIRM Program. The AFFIRM Program spends countless hours helping students and receives very little compensation for doing so. So, every time you see them with a smile, it is because they have worked hard to help their students achieve their academic goals. In short, I have been deeply moved by AFFIRM's conviction to students' educational commencement goals.

Since I have been a member I have experienced a deep passion for helping those that are in need. Take for instance my student, Kearra. She is a shining light and is determined to accomplish anything she sets her mind to do. She's motivated and driven to become the best in her field of expertise. Sheara holds certain qualities that many students lack. It's enlightening to see what this program is doing for her in a cohesive effort to keep her focused. Last, but not least, Jasmine reminds me of myself when I was a part of a similar program at her age. At the time that I was going to school, I found myself flopping around with no real goal in mind until the program I was in, much like AFFIRM, helped me change my direction and got me back on a successful track. Programs like AFFIRM assured me that if I tried, I would most definitely succeed. It was that guarantee that set me on a path to become a university professor and a well respected member of the community.



Dr. Bryan Hickman

I am writing this letter simply because there are hundreds of more students out there like the three I just mentioned and they are in need of help. We need to support programs like AFFIRM in order for students to succeed within higher education. It is an honor to be able to share with you about what this program truly means to me and to people that have been in my situation.



"We can be separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand, in all things, essential to mutual progress."

Atlanta compromise address by Booker T. Washington

a win-win situation for all. This is the **POWER** of networking. Expanding your circle of associations in an effort to increase your chances of success, while helping others to succeed, is what networking is all about. Individuals in the business world have relied on networking for years to increase knowledge, and advance in their respective fields—relying on the expertise of others, while offering in exchange, their own expertise.

You are likely familiar with the saying, “It’s not what you know, but who you know.” The power of networking has enabled countless individuals to achieve their dreams—just by getting to know someone who could help them do so. So, again, the question for you as a student is, “Do you have a networking structure in place?” How can having such a support system benefit not only you, but your community as well? Remember: Whatever you don’t know, someone else does. Having worked in various roles for most of my life, I have the fortune of knowing many people in many different fields. Most of these fields are areas that my life’s path will never direct me to. However, this does not mean that these fields do not touch my life from time to time.

So, what do I do when I need the expertise of someone more experienced in a particular field? I rely on my network. I am admittedly, challenged when it comes to the topic of technology; I am not computer-savvy in the least. However, I have several contacts in the computer industry. So, guess who I go to when I’m stuck? And yes, they come to me for help with writing. It is this exchange that makes the networking process work for those who engage in it.

How do you plan to get through college? All on your own? Would having a network in place help you—and others in your situation? Of course it would! Perhaps there is someone on campus who has the same academic and career aspirations that you have? Wouldn’t it be helpful to know someone who is literally on the same path as you? Have you considered including a mentor in your network? Knowing someone with life experience who could not only counsel you in academic areas, but could also offer the knowledge that comes from going through experiences that you can only imagine could be a great help.

Aside from the benefits that you will realize personally as a result of engaging in networking, is there a chance that networking can ultimately benefit the larger community? If you knew the mayor of San Jose, or the president of the local chapter of the NAACP, would you be more inclined to get involved with issues that affect your community? Or what if you were on a first-name basis with the judge who now oversees the agency that investigates complaints filed against the San Jose police department? Do you believe that these relationships might increase your desire for success, thus improving our community? Well, each of these individuals has a relationship with our college, and supports the power of networking to strengthen the community that they serve.

The next time you find yourself thinking about ways to increase your success, consider the power of getting to know people, and resolve to increase your support network. Know that you never have to go it alone; networking with your peers, counselors, teachers, and other members of the community will not only help you, but will improve our community as a whole. Your homework assignment: Get out there and network!!!



The **AFFIRM** Program

at Evergreen Valley College