

DR. MARIE-ELAINE BURNS

I was born in San Mateo and raised in San Francisco, I am a native Californian. I am a first-generation college student and a single parent. As an educational leader, I am visionary, energetic, and passionate. While adaptable to change, I also am a risk-taker/entrepreneur; not afraid to explore an idea different from my own or to encourage others to try their ideas. I encourage and support innovation and creativity.



My leadership style is characterized by respect, inclusiveness, transparency, collaboration, effective listening skills, and participatory governance. I am committed to equity and student success. Contributing to a positive impact on students has always been integral to the decisions I make as a college leader. Having worked in higher education for many years, I have been responsible for college access, student retention, support services, transfer and graduation success which are major components of student success.

I have worked at universities and colleges throughout the state which include but are not limited to the following: San Francisco State University where I had my first opportunity to teach; California State University at Long Beach where I assisted the Director in training college and university learning assistance professionals (faculty, coordinators and practitioners) from countries around the world; Skyline College in San Bruno where I was the Director of The Learning Center and the Student Support Services TRIO program and lead the establishment of the Jump Start Program for high school students that continued long after I left the college; and Foothill College in Los Altos Hills where I was Dean of the Middlefield Campus and established the successful Dare to EXCEL program for high school students with a grade point average of 2.0 and below.

As Vice-President of Student Affairs at San Jose City College (SJCC). I developed a vision and championed core values for student affairs and cultivated an effective Student Affairs management team. Under my leadership the College opened a Veterans Resource Center; the Annual African American/Latino/Pacific Islander/Native American Male Summit was established which I led for six years; the Mental Health Advisory Committee (MHSAC) was established and is running effectively; and I developed the first online student support services which assisted the College in being released from an accreditation sanction.

Also, I was the Vice-President for Special Services at San Jose City College (SJCC). In this position I worked collaboratively with the SJCC vice-presidents and the Milpitas Unified School District partners to ensure the establishment of student services at the new Milpitas Community College Extension and a successful opening; I represented the College and participated in the Silicon Valley Leadership Group (SVLG) Working Council and the Education Committee; and assisted the District and colleges in providing Title IX Responsible Employee training.

Currently, I am the interim President of Merritt College where I provide leadership, oversight, planning, and accountability for the College. This work has included, but is not limited to, the following accomplishments;

- providing support for the Accreditation Follow-up Report in October 2016 and leadership and support for the upcoming Follow-up Report and Mid-Term Reports;
- implementing an “open door” policy
- initiating the Leadership Council which meets on a regular basis which resulted in the establishment of Courageous Conversation for campus constituents in collaboration with the Leadership Council
- Continuing the increase and development of partnerships with the Oakland Mayor’s Office, Oakland Unified School District, individual schools, Oakland Police Department, community based organizations and more;

- Began the distribution of food in collaboration with the Alameda County Community Food Bank every two weeks to students and community members;
- Provided funding to support the Merritt Technology Committee's recommendation to implement and mobile application for students and community to more efficiently access the Merritt College website;
- Allocated monies for three funding opportunities: Classified Staff Development, Diversity and Inclusion activities and events, and a small Innovation Fund to assist faculty and staff realize their innovative ideas in support of student success and equity; and
- Initiated the first Merritt College Student Summit to be held in May 2017.

My postsecondary educational accomplishments include a Bachelor's of Arts degree in Broadcast Communication Arts from San Francisco State University, cum laude; a Master's of Science Degree in School Management & Administration, summa cum laude and a Doctorate in Institutional Management, magna cum laude, both from Pepperdine University.

The greatest accomplishment and success in my life, however, is my daughter Marie-Alicia Burns, who is completing her Bachelor's Degree at California State University, East Bay.