

Murillo – a stabilizing force for LTCC

By Kathryn Reed

A fiscally sound institution. That's what Kindred Murillo thought she was walking into. It was just the opposite.

It took her four months after coming on board in July 2011 to figure out that Lake Tahoe Community College's budget wasn't what it appeared to be. Previous administrators, with the board's approval, were carrying over \$1 million every year that wasn't projected.

The South Lake Tahoe institution was bleeding financially, with a tourniquet applied each year, but no surgeon in the house.

"I don't do business that way," Murillo said.

She was speaking Sept. 15 at the annual convocation before faculty and staff. In many ways, it's like the state of the college address as well as a pep rally for the coming year.

This was Murillo's last such talk, as she is leaving in February. She tendered her resignation earlier this year.



LTCC President Kindred Murillo on Sept. 15 talks about accomplishments during her tenure. Photo/Pat Leonard-Heffner

In her first three years about \$2.5 million was cut from the budget.

“Leadership for the college used to reside in the president’s office,” she said. “It now resides throughout the campus. I think it’s important we all have some voice for what happens.”

The focus has been returned to students – what their needs are. This includes working to create a schedule that meets their needs and not the desire of those who are teaching the courses.

Murillo has established a leadership team that she says is strong, reliable and will carry the college forward – and will listen to students, faculty, staff and the community. The budget now reflects actual expenses and revenues. Strategies and goals have been developed, and are in the works to be

achieved.

New programs must pass the test of whether they meet the strategic goals.

“We now have a vision. We know where we are going. We want to be a destination college,” she said.

With this area not growing, it’s attracting students from elsewhere that will help sustain LTCC. It means probably building dorms to house them. A study about student housing should be completed in November.

It means expanding distance learning. It means being creative, like the program LTCC participates in to educate prisoners.

While things have improved under her watch, Murillo said the road ahead is not going to be easy. Projections are for small community colleges to see a drop in enrollment over the next 10 years.

Toward the end of Thursday’s talk she got a bit melancholy, even appeared to be on the verge of tears, as she thanked those in the room for helping mold her into the president she has become.

“Don’t every stop being a student of life,” Murillo told them.

As she said her parting words of wisdom she was met with a standing ovation and whoops from those who call her boss.