Colleagues,

The College has created an Office of Dispute Resolution to effectively address complaints and grievances from students, employees and the community.

The Office of Dispute Resolution will be central to the intake, triage, investigation, tracking and analysis of complaints and grievances, as well as the identification of process improvements. PCC’s phone- and web-based compliance and ethics hotline will be expanded for use by all constituents as the primary intake point.

The independence of this new office should be emphasized. It will report to the Office of Internal Audit, which provides objective appraisal of College operations, including programs, finances and governance. The internal auditor has access to College employees, policies, procedures and data, and also has access to the Governing Board.

It also should be emphasized that improving how we address complaints and grievances is a necessary condition for PCC to retain accreditation. In placing PCC on probation in April 2013, the College’s accreditor, the Higher Learning Commission, determined that PCC was out of compliance with HLC Assumed Practice A.4, “The institution provides clear information regarding its procedures for receiving complaints and grievances from students and other constituencies, responds to them in a timely manner, and analyzes them to improve its processes.”

The HLC directed the College to write a Monitoring Report outlining its plans to comply with Assumed Practice A.4. In the report, PCC recommended the College “research the efficacy of and, if deemed appropriate, create a Dispute Management Office or Compliance and Ethics Office . . . for consistent oversight and tracking of complaints, grievances and feedback from all constituent groups.” The HLC endorsed the Monitoring Report in August 2013.

Upon writing and approval of the Monitoring Report, the College created a Complaint and Grievances Oversight Team and the Monitoring Report Follow-up Team. These groups, along with the Grievance Ad Hoc Working Group, have been working since 2013 to develop complaint and grievance processes. The groups represent a broad cross-section of College employees.

The framework of the new office will include the grievance process being developed by the Grievance Ad Hoc Work Group. The new office will be evaluated after six months as part of the College’s culture of continuous improvement.

Goal 2 of my 2013-14 Goals, Objectives and Timelines is “Improve and strengthen the level of constructive employee engagement,” and the College has an overarching goal of becoming a student-centered learning organization. Creating an Office of Dispute Resolution is an important step in achieving those goals. Students, employees and community members with a complaint or
grievance about PCC should know that their concerns will be addressed consistently, objectively and fairly.

Lee D. Lambert, 
Chancellor