

February 28, 2011

Dear Committee Members:

I am pleased to nominate Damon A. Bell, Vice President of Student Services for the SBVC *Annual Awards Celebration, Manager of the Year*. I have worked with Damon for the past eight months and I have found him to be dependable, efficient, and loyal to the organization. I feel strongly that Damon is deserving of this award because of his leadership, creativity, and steadfast commitment to education and the San Bernardino community as exemplified through the following programs:

Valley-Bound Commitment Program

Damon was asked to create a program modeled after the Kalamazoo Promise in Michigan. The student success program for low income students was designed to remove economic barriers and strengthen the academic achievement of its participants through a learning community within the First Year Experience. He worked tirelessly with his staff and created the award winning Valley-Bound Commitment program. The program was launched with a pilot of 36 students in 2008 who graduated from one of the high schools in our local area. The Valley-Bound Commitment is a student success program that is increasing the college-going rate within the Inland Empire one family at a time. By covering all enrollment fees and textbook costs and a variety of ancillary expenses for the first year of college, the Valley-Bound Commitment effectively eliminates all economic barriers for graduating high school seniors to begin pursuing their educational dreams. The program now serves 150 students from Colton, Bloomington, Eisenhower, Rialto, Carter, Arroyo Valley, San Geronio, Pacific, Cajon and San Bernardino high schools.

At an awards reception in Pasadena for the conclusion of the Community College League of California Convention on November 20th, SBVC's Valley-Bound Commitment was honored as the unanimous recipient of the California Community Colleges 2010 Chancellor's Student Success Award. The award recognizes a college that has demonstrated significant progress toward achieving student equity goals and success for all students. The Valley-Bound Commitment program was singled out from a variety of nominations as a program that has instituted a creative approach proven effective in achieving student equity and student success in the areas of access, retention, course completion, degree and certificate completion, and transfer.

Man like Me Mentorship Program

The Man like Me (MLM) Mentorship Program was envisioned and created by Damon. The SBVC Student Equity Plan identifies a need to recruit and retain African American students especially males. Damon's involvement leadership with our Tumaini Program which is part of the statewide Umoja Community helped him to identify a missing need on our campus. Students in the Tumaini Program received counseling, mentoring and other support services during their first year only.

The MLM mentorship program is a retention based program that targets second-year male African American students at SBVC. The learning goals for the program include academic success, retention/degree attainment, community involvement, and knowledge of campus resources. The program connects participants with a professional faculty or staff mentor that can help them navigate the educational and social pipelines at SBVC. The mentorship component of the program allows for one on one interaction where the mentor can be a resource to the mentee.

This program is innovative because it continues the work of a traditional first year experience program for students needing additional assistance. One unique difference about this program is that the mentees actually pick their mentors at the end of their first year at SBVC. I have no doubt that this program will continue to flourish and will become a next best practice for California Community Colleges.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was honored and celebrated at a community breakfast host by our campus for the first time in the 85 year history of SBVC. The celebratory program was led by Damon. A crowd of nearly 200 community members, elected officials, staff, faculty, and students gathered on Friday, January 21st in the SBVC Campus Center for the event.

Damon created the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commitment to Diversity Dream Award. The award recognizes and celebrates outstanding accomplishments and sustained commitment by individuals who promote appreciation for diversity, human rights, and cultural understanding at San Bernardino Valley College and in the community. The first awards were giving to a community member and a campus employee who are dedicated much like Damon to making the Dream of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. come alive. This is a new tradition for the college and Damon can take pride in knowing he played no small part in making it happen.

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.” Damon exemplifies this quote by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in his daily work. Damon has made and continues to make significant changes within the community and the college. He is deserving of this recognition. His trajectory as an administrator in the California Community College system is upward and moving at a commendable speed. He is definitely on his way to being one of the next leaders in the system. I feel confident that you will agree that Damon A. Bell is the most deserving candidate for this award. Also included with this nomination letter are several letters of support from Damon's colleagues who feel that he is deserving of this most prestigious award. Please feel free to contact me for any additional information you may require.

Sincerely,



Shari Blackwell

Administrative Assistant I, Student Services

701 S. Mt. Vernon Avenue

San Bernardino, CA 92410



San Bernardino
Valley College

Tommy Ng
San Bernardino Community College District
Human Resources
114 S. Del Rosa Drive
San Bernardino, CA 92408

Dear Mrs. Ng

I am writing this letter to nominate Mr. Damon Bell for Manger of the Year. Damon exemplifies what a manager should be. He is hardworking, honest and patient. Student Services has developed its customer service and become more effective under his leadership. He has been recognized by his peers at ACCCA as he was recently recognized for progress in diversity at the February conference. He is also receiving the San Bernardino County Education Medal of Honor for excellence in the educational profession.

He gives guidance as a manager while not micro-managing. He truly reaches out to students, staff and anyone he meets. He is an excellent representative for SBVC. I recommend him without reservation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Zelma Russ".

Zelma Russ, Ed.D,
Dean – Student Success & Special Services