

Good evening President Ortiz, Chancellor King, and esteemed members of the Board.

My name is Colleen Cohen, and I have had the honor and privilege of serving as the Folsom Lake College Classified Senate President for the past three years. As my term comes to an end and we welcome a new president, this will be my final opportunity to address the Board in this role.

As I reflect on my time serving classified professionals, I would like to leave you with an idea—one that began as a conversation but has the potential to become something meaningful for our entire district.

Recently, I was invited to attend the Sacramento City College Classified Retreat organized by Carmen. She graciously extended an invitation to all of the Classified Senate presidents, and I was fortunate to attend for part of the day.

What stood out most was the opportunity to connect with classified professionals from across Los Rios. We shared ideas, discussed challenges, celebrated successes, and explored solutions together. The sense of connection and collaboration was energizing. It reminded me how much we gain when we create opportunities to come together across our colleges.

That experience led to a conversation about Classified Staff Appreciation Week. I appreciate that this Board established a districtwide Classified Staff Appreciation Week each May, and I know our college leadership teams work hard to recognize classified professionals during that time. At the same time, I recognize the realities our campuses face—limited budgets, limited time, and competing priorities.

I work at the El Dorado Center, which shares a campus with Mountainside Middle College High School. Their Teacher Appreciation Week includes several small gestures throughout the week—coffee and pastries one morning, snacks another day, a hosted lunch, and other opportunities for connection and recognition. The goal is not extravagance; it is creating multiple moments where employees feel valued and appreciated.

This made me wonder whether the district might explore ways to support campuses with shared resources, ideas, or funding that would help transform Classified Staff Appreciation Week into a more robust week-long experience. In addition to appreciation events, campuses could offer professional development opportunities, employee recognition activities, wellness events, or other programs that strengthen connection and morale.

But I would also like to share a larger vision.

What if Los Rios hosted a districtwide Classified Staff Appreciation Picnic?

Imagine classified professionals from all four colleges and our centers gathering together for a day of connection, networking, recognition, and community building. Many employees have worked at multiple campuses throughout their careers and would welcome the opportunity to reconnect with former colleagues and build new relationships across the district.

I understand this would require planning, resources, and a significant commitment of time and effort. However, I believe the potential benefits are worth exploring. Even if we started small—perhaps bringing together two neighboring colleges as a pilot program—it could be the beginning of something truly special.

We often hear how much classified professionals are appreciated, and I know that appreciation is sincere. One of the greatest gifts we can offer employees is time: time to connect, recharge, share ideas, learn from one another, and strengthen the relationships that ultimately support our students' success.

As you look toward future planning discussions with the incoming Chancellor and district leadership, I encourage you to consider how Los Rios might further invest in opportunities that celebrate and connect classified professionals across the district.

Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your continued support of classified staff.

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as Folsom Lake College Classified Senate President and to be part of the Los Rios family. I look forward to many more years of serving this outstanding district.

Thank you.