

*This is the speech I gave at the June 11, 2019 Governing Board meeting. – Tracy Johnston*

Why do we have rules?

This is an important question.

Rules exist in an institution like Palomar to help everything run smoothly, to help people know what to do, to give certainty and clarity to the processes.

With Dr. Blake as president, you have someone who doesn't follow the rules; in fact, she has boasted publicly that she is okay with not following them.

Her behavior disrupts the processes and causes resentment, confusion, and stress. Perhaps this is what she intends, but I can tell you, it is not giving positive results.

Why does the State of California have laws? Laws are rules that have legal consequences if they aren't followed. In particular, the State has laws that prohibit us from considering ethnicity, gender, race, and more when hiring.

Dr. Blake's behavior during the last few years has caused hiring committees to worry if the candidates they choose as the best instructors aren't the right ethnicity or race – a concern they are not allowed to have, as specified by the laws of the State.

A compliance officer's job includes protecting Palomar from lawsuits, but Dr. Blake has done her best to shut down any compliance officer who might challenge her poor behavior. She prefers compliance officers whose regular job is at-risk if they contradict her or those who support her when she breaks the rules.

This has opened Palomar College up to lawsuits, and indeed, they should come. By perverting the rules and manipulating at-risk people, she has made it possible for any person who has applied to question if they were rejected because they were white or male or their names weren't ethnic enough.

Think about this. There were over 20 positions opened and many candidates who applied. Anyone, anyone who wasn't chosen for an interview or offered the position has reason to believe they were discriminated against.

All because of Dr. Blake's behavior, that no one has stopped.

In the meantime, while Dr. Blake ignores and perverts the laws and rules, the rest of us are trying to follow them. We also wonder what would happen to us if we ignored the laws and rules as she does. I think I know, and I bet you do, too.

So, I have to ask:

Why do some people have to follow the rules and others don't?

Members of the Governing Board, I am an introvert. I don't want to pick a fight or stir up trouble. I like working at Palomar and it is important to me to see it run smoothly and well, and to help it avoid legal trouble. I wouldn't be here if I didn't see a big problem.

I started reporting this problem months ago and I haven't seen any improvement. Actually, it has been getting worse. As far as I can tell, no action has been taken to correct it.

I was raised by parents who taught me not to judge people by their race, ethnicity, and more. That brought up the question, how DO you judge a person? The best answer I found was, "On their behavior, the behavior they can control."

When I first learned that our new president was black, female, and disabled, I was impressed. I was proud of Palomar for taking that step and showing the community that we value diversity.

But Dr. Blake has shown us behavior that is divisive and authoritarian. She has told us we should not question her decisions, which completely ignores the idea of shared governance. She shows blatant disrespect for the faculty and has made it clear she wants to marginalize us. She has also demonstrated that anyone without tenure must worry about losing their job if they displease her.

Is this the Palomar College you want? Do you want people angry, stressed, and ready to fight? Do you want faculty and staff feeling like they can't trust Dr. Blake or the administrators? Because this is what she has created with her behavior and her negative attitude.

Is this in the best interest of our students? Shouldn't every employee be focused on giving their best to teach and support them? We can't do that if we are distracted by worry and suspicion. I think the majority of employees value diversity and want to see more of it on campus. But the illegal way it is being implemented is just wrong.

You need to put a stop to it. You need to direct Dr. Blake to fulfill her contractual obligation to ensure the rules and laws are followed by her and by everyone on campus. She needs to set a good example and lead us in a positive direction. She should bring us together, not divide us, and enlist us to help bring in more diversity. I think you will find a lot of enthusiasm for it, if you just give it a shot.