

Howdy! I want to welcome y'all to College of the Canyons and our Chancellor's Circle Dinner. We are privileged to have you join us tonight for a Texas-sized celebration.

What a way to start it off with Kevin and Kristin – let's give them another hand!

We are excited that you are here! If you are a friend of the college, it is great to see you back on our beautiful campus. And if this is your first introduction to College of the Canyons, I extend to you a warm and Western welcome on behalf of our administration, faculty, staff, students, Board of Trustees members and Foundation Board of Directors. We appreciate all of you taking the time to be here, and, we are so grateful for your support of our college, your community college, and inspired by your desire to learn more about what we do here and how we do it.

Tonight, as we celebrate in a Texas, western way, I can't help be reminded of the cowboy wisdom that is such an important part of our country's heritage. And how that wisdom parallels and has set the standard for what we do and how we do it, right here in Santa Clarita.

The code of conduct for those who took the high road was no different than it is now in Santa Clarita and all around us. Common advice and standards included:

- Make your word your bond;
- Be courageous, as cowards and quitters are not tolerated in any outfit or organization that is worth its salt;
- A person's got to have a code, a creed to live by, no matter what their job;
- The best way out of a difficulty is getting through it;

- No matter where you go, there you are! It doesn't work to run away from problems.
- And, my personal favorite: I've been dreaming about it all my life. So let's ride!

I have to tell you, Texas is a fascinating place. The pride that Texans have in their state is legendary. It is a one-of-a-kind place and certainly stands out. They have their own way of doing things down there and I admire that sense of independence and optimistic outlook. In fact, it reminds me of Santa Clarita and College of the Canyons – without the twang, dust, and gun racks.

Santa Clarita is a unique community that, like the Lone Star State, has a history of going its own way and blazing its own trails. I consider myself fortunate to be here at College of the Canyons and that it is where it is – here in Santa Clarita because it is a community of doers and dreamers, people with vision, determination, and a will to get things done. We are forward-thinking, courageous, pro-active, and filled with a can-do enthusiasm that invites collaboration, fosters partnerships, and inspires innovation.

They say everything's better in Texas. I beg to differ. In Santa Clarita, we don't let many opportunities pass us by. People commit to make it better, they commit to dare to dream, they commit to do it differently; they commit to keep going until it gets done. And they commit that if it doesn't work right the first time, they'll keep after it until they see results ... or in Texas terms, they get 'er done!

All across Santa Clarita people do things with 10 gallons of energy and passion and a spirit that is not commonly found elsewhere. If things are worth doing, they are worth doing with passion. We aren't afraid of biting off more than we can chew because we aren't afraid of hard work. One only has to look at all of the good that is done by people like you all over this valley to make it a better place to live, to work, to grow, to develop, and to help those less fortunate.

If good deeds were water, y'all would fill up the Rio Grande, or here, the Santa Clara River, and then some!

In Texas, they have a saying ... cowboy up or go sit in the truck! I see that happening everyday on our campus and in Santa Clarita as people go over and beyond to help each other and urge others to get going or get out of the way.

We are bold here in Santa Clarita. Cowboys say it is better to be a has been than a never was. We don't learn without trying and here in Santa Clarita and at COC, persistence and tenacity are putting in place the blocks to progress and success. People here have integrity, and usually know where they are going. We are bold here and are not afraid of biting off more than we can chew of riding with pride, of speaking the truth, of knowing when our horse dies to dismount, and of having courage. Cowboys say that courage is being scared every day ... and saddling up anyway.

I can think of no greater inspiration for courage than our students at College of the Canyons.

They come to us from all walks of life and perspectives with their real-life circumstances. They overcome odds that most of us can not imagine, nor fortunately have ever experienced. And in doing so, they inspire us daily.

They are the reason your support means so much to the college, because you help us let them to change their lives. I want to highlight two for you right now. Two that are in the audience, two who are now administrators here and influencing others every day, in a way only they can through example.

Donna Haywood

Renard Thomas

I am so proud that the college is here in Santa Clarita. I am proud of our partnerships, our supporters, our past, and I am incredibly excited about our future, about the dreams and ideas yet to be pursued and achieved, and about the partners and friends yet to be made. At College of the Canyons, we will always be looking for these exciting futures, these relationships and these opportunities, because there's no better place to aim high, to dream, and to become the best place that we can be than here in Santa Clarita. With that inspiration, our college is working hard to keep pace with our dynamic community and all that you are doing to contribute to its continued development. And I gotta tell ya, we're busier than a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs tryin' to keep up with y'all!

I'd like to take a few minutes this evening to share with you some highlights of the places, programs and partners that set College of the Canyons apart. It's no 8-second ride, but hold on tight cause I'm gonna move fast!

Cowboy wisdom says, when you are in a hole, stop digging! That pertains to most of us, but not to Jim Schrage, our VP of Facilities and his amazing team of architects, construction managers and many businesses in the valley who are the horses beneath the riders as we move down the trail on our construction plans.

Since last year's Chancellor's Circle dinner we debuted the University Center. Some of you have told me it's the biggest thing to come to town since the rodeo, and many of you joined us as we celebrated the opening of that amazing 10-year-dream-come-true facility. And I thank you kindly for partnering with us to bring this innovative resource to our community. Nearly 1,400 students were enrolled in the more than 40 different bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programs offered by our eight partners in the spring semester. That's because we had a dream about it for a long time, and we decided to get on our horses and ride! We mounted up, and

got tough. And even though we weren't sure what we would find out on the open range, we had confidence that our saddle pals would help us get it done, and YOU did!

The success of the University Center is astounding. Since we opened the interim center in 2002, nearly 7,500 students have taken classes there, with almost 1,500 earning their degrees. Building on that momentum, we are expanding what's offered there and creating even more opportunities for students and our business partners. In the coming year we have plans to add about 20 new programs, including a bachelor's in engineering from Cal State L.A., a certificate in landscape architecture from UCLA Extension, a bachelor's in environmental resource management from Cal State Bakersfield, a bachelor's in paralegal studies from National University, and a master's in financial services from The American College.

Another great building we recently opened is a 32,000-square-foot expansion of Mentry Hall. This will give students the space and equipment needed to explore their creative horizons and sharpen the skills necessary to excel in today's world of digital media. Completed in time for the fall 2010 semester, the building now encompasses 76,000 square feet of classrooms and labs, as well as offices and conference rooms. The \$10.7 million project was funded entirely by Measure M, the general obligation bond passed by Santa Clarita voters, thanks to the help of many of you out there, in 2006.

Mentry Hall is noteworthy not only for what it will provide to students, but also what it will do for community college construction in California. The project was completed using the design/build construction model, where both the design and construction of the project are contracted through the same entity and performed at the same time.

This streamlines the building process, cuts costs and accelerates the construction timeline. Though common in the private sector and other types of public sector projects, until recently community colleges had been prevented from using this model.

Mentry Hall was one of just five projects allowed to utilize the design/build project model as part of a pilot project. Mentry Hall was the only instructional facility approved for design/build construction. The others were parking structures.

While the normal timeline to request state approval, plan and design, secure funding and construct and open a building takes roughly seven years — Mentry Hall was completed in less than 12 months. Because the project was such a success, College of the Canyons now has the authority to utilize the design/build process for all future projects. It's always good to change state policy and streamline bureaucracy. Once again, we got-r-done!

At our Canyon Country campus, construction is currently underway on the new Applied Technology Education Center. Designed to include 10,000 square feet of classrooms and workshop space, the new facility will provide students and community members with a multitude of hands-on learning and training opportunities that can be put to use in the renewable energy and green technology industries.

Adding the Applied Technology Education Center to the Canyon Country campus will expand our ability to provide cutting edge education that leads directly to employment. The programs housed in the ATEC will be specifically focused on the in-demand, new technologies our economy needs and our community expects to receive from College of the Canyons. COC programs slated to move into the building upon its scheduled completion in spring 2011 include: alternative energy management, solar panel installation training, automotive technology, electrical/electronics, construction management, plumbing and water systems technology.

At a time when the knowledge base has exploded, and people need retraining and technical skill development almost faster than we can keep up, more and more businesses are looking to us to help them keep up and grow their capacity through the education and training we offer here.

Just yesterday, I had a meeting with Lockheed as a follow-up to a presentation that some of our architecture students made at the aerospace company's Palmdale facility. They were impressed with our students' creativity and plan to implement some of their ideas for shade structures. And, they want to initiate a project-based learning model for our students that is usually only offered exclusively to Cal Poly San Luis upper division and graduate students.

On another front, you may not realize it, but we provide thousands of hours of public safety training each year. The College's joint venture with the L.A. County Fire Department to provide realistic training scenarios at the county's Del Valle Training Center continues with the construction of a fire simulation facility. Life-like demonstration pieces are already in place and being used to train emergency personnel, including a rubble pile for search and rescue work, and a tanker truck freeway wreck.

Breaking ground next month will be a 51,000-square-foot expansion to the Library, which will essentially double its size. In this era of Kindles and iPads, you might wonder why we're adding on to our Library. Well, libraries have changed dramatically since we built ours 15 years ago. The new space will house our Tutorial Learning Center where students receive extra help outside of class in math, foreign languages, writing and more. The additional square footage will also enable us to add instructional labs, classrooms, offices, and yes, room for more books. With an 18-month construction schedule, we expect to be open for students the fall semester 2012 and look forward to developing numerous community partnerships that will live and thrive in this great new space.

One upside to our down economy is significant savings on construction projects. When we opened the bids on the Library project, we found a significant – and pleasant – surprise. Because the bids were so low, we will realize a savings of \$3.6 million in district funds.

And what are we fixin' to do with that extra money? Build a Culinary Arts Institute on campus! The college's culinary arts program leased space during the last academic year at Valencia Town

Center in a former restaurant. After having to vacate the space at the mall, the students and faculty are now in Castaic at the site of another former restaurant. The growth in demand for graduates of this program and moving around has underscored the need and urgency to build dedicated culinary arts space on the College of the Canyons campus. Our architects have drawn up plans for a facility that will cost \$4.7 million to construct. We are in the process of forming a fundraising committee to help close the gap between what we have available and the full cost of equipment and construction. So, if y'all know someone who would like to help, please send them our way.

Building new facilities provides us with the capacity to develop new programs to help meet this community's needs. New degree and certificate options that will make their debut this year include:

- Architectural Computer Aided Drafting
- Communication Studies
- Engineering Apprentice
- General & Emerging Technology Laboratory Technician
- Liberal Studies – Elementary Teaching Preparation
- Personal Trainer
- Water Systems Technology

We're also developing new degree and certificate options in:

- Commercial Dance
- Energy Management
- ESL: Beginning & Intermediate
- Insurance: Property & Casualty
- Human Services – General, Gerontology, and Addiction Studies
- Medical Laboratory Technician
- News Reporting and Anchoring
- Pipe Welding

- Web Publishing & Design
- Web Development

One of the most innovative programs to debut this fall is the Fast Track Training Institute. The Institute offers a variety of fast-paced, intensive job preparation courses that will allow participants to develop entry-level skills and quickly begin working in local businesses and industries where applicants with up-to-date training are in high demand.

Taking anywhere from 8 weeks to 10 months to complete, participants will earn a professional certificate in their particular area of study and/or obtain skill competencies needed by local employers. The program is fee-based, yet students will save as much as 90 percent over the cost of attending similar programs offered through proprietary colleges.

A total of 18 initial programs have been identified for inclusion in the Fast Track Institute's first offerings. Programs will be divided into four general industry areas: Manufacturing, Green Technology, Medical/General Office and Managerial/Professional. The managerial/professional track is specifically focused on the needs of mid-career professionals who either need to re-enter the labor market due to downsizing, or require additional training and certification in order to remain competitive in their current industries.

Classes being offered this fall include Machinist Training, Precision Assembly, Inspection/Quality, Office Automation and Medical Office Administration. All Fast Track courses are competency based, meaning students will need to demonstrate skill set proficiency before receiving certification.

While we are building new buildings and developing programs to meet emerging needs, we are paying attention as well to the changing student populations who are coming to us in ever increasing numbers.

Another group we're aiming to serve with the same commitment and dedication with which they have served all of us is the increasing numbers of returning veterans. We now have a stand-alone Re-Entry/Veterans Center on campus that is staffed and equipped to meet the unique needs of students who are coming to college after military service, or returning to campus later in life. It can be a difficult transition to make, but we're hearing from these students how much they appreciate having the support we provide, and what a difference it makes in their ability to succeed.

So how are we doing this...in this downturned economy. Well, if you hadn't already noticed, over here at COC, we choose to see the glass as half full rather than half empty. Every day, we each get to get up and decide what to do with that day. And, here at COC, we chose to make it as good as we can and, just as the cowboys in Texas did, find the resources wherever we can and rely on our partners! Despite the fact that it took the governor and legislature 100 days to come up with a spending plan for California, (by way of contrast, the battle for the Alamo only lasted for 13 days.) relatively speaking, the state budget was better for community colleges than it has been the last two years. It restores a little of last year's cuts, which is welcome news. Demand for community college classes has surged throughout California in the last three years. That is particularly true here at College of the Canyons, where we had 8,000 students on waiting lists for this fall semester.

And despite what isn't happening right with the state budget, College of the Canyons is better off than most. Through strategic planning and careful management, we have avoided layoffs and furloughs for full-time faculty and staff, and we have a 13 percent reserve to deal with any future contingencies that might emerge from Sacramento. Those advantages are very important and we have worked hard to create them, but our biggest advantage is you...our business partners and friends who, as we do, believe in the power of partnerships, new trails, and gathering around the campfire to build those relationships that are making the critical difference between surviving and thriving.

Because we cannot count on state support to fund our continued innovation and development, we are aggressively pursuing grant funds that will facilitate new opportunities for our students and business partners. And YOU help us do that. We could not do it without YOU!

Thanks to funding from a variety of sources, our K-12 Arts Education Outreach Program continues to flourish. Last year, more than 12,000 students received benefit from the K-12 program. This year the PAC will host five special bus-in shows, several multi-week residencies, 25 special school assemblies, and 31 teachers from five school districts will participate in a year-long professional development program.

We recently received \$350,000 to create a welding automation certificate program and train our welding students on state-of-the-art technology that will give them a distinct advantage in the job market. With a \$150,000 Responsive Worker Training Fund grant, we are partnering with Boston Scientific to offer project management training. This training is the first of several levels of training needed to prepare 40 employees to take the exam to be certified by the Project Management Institute as Project Management Professionals.

A \$3 million National Science Foundation grant will enable us to establish the California Regional Consortium for Engineering Advances in Technical Education (CREATE) Renewable Energy Regional Center at the college. Charged with developing and expanding renewable energy courses and workforce-training programs, the center will lead the way in preparing workers to launch new careers in the rapidly expanding field of alternative energy. In fact, it is estimated that of the approximately 7,000 solar photovoltaic technicians/installers in the nation, nearly half work in California.

With \$25 million in funding available from the state Chancellor's Office for Economic and Workforce Development programs, we will pursue the establishment of a Business Entrepreneurship Center at College of the Canyons.

While most of the attention in Sacramento was focused on the budget this year, community colleges were also able to accomplish another important legislative objective. The Governor recently signed Senate Bill 1440, the Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act (STAR), which is designed to create a seamless transfer pathway from community colleges to the California State University campuses.

While we expect more students to start at College of the Canyons, we also know more people will rely on College of the Canyons throughout the course of their careers. People are realizing education is not a one-time accomplishment. Instead, it is a life-long process that requires returning to college to obtain needed skills demanded by rapidly changing industries. And thanks to the University Center and the Fast Track Training Institute, we are ahead of that curve and already offering opportunities for local residents to reinvent themselves.

In closing, I want to acknowledge that the common element in all of these diverse activities is **you**, our loyal friends who consistently support our endeavors through your time, your talent, and your resources.

- ✓ **You** stepped up and invested in the University Center Campaign, demonstrating your commitment to expanding access to higher education for our students, and those who would like to continue their educations but have been prevented from doing so because of the difficulties posed by logistical challenges.
- ✓ **You** are always there to serve on advisory help us create cutting-edge academic programs.
- ✓ **You** support scholarships, without which many of our students would be unable to change their lives by pursuing education and ultimately their dreams.
- ✓ **You** rely on us as your source for cutting-edge employee training.
- ✓ **You** hire our students, either as interns or as employees, giving them the real-world experience that complements their classroom instruction and ensures they have the tools to succeed.

- ✓ **You** cheer our student athletes as they compete on the field, in the pool, on the court, and in life.

We're proud that we have earned your trust and we consider it a privilege to partner with you. We couldn't do what we do without the backing of this community and the people like you who help get things done.

A favorite quote of mine is this: "There's a difference between interest and commitment. When you're interested in doing something, you do it only when it is convenient. When you are committed to something, you accept no excuses, only results."

The commitment you demonstrate to College of the Canyons empowers us to think boldly and create Texas-sized plans as we build for the future. I thank you for keeping that bar so high, for investing in YOUR community college, for giving us the privilege of your affiliation and for letting us become more of what we can be because you offer us more than we ever expected.

If you can imagine it, you can become it. If you can dream it, you can do it. And we do that, because of you! Words can only begin to express my gratitude for helping us to be the best we can be, for the confidence you have in us and the regard and respect you show us as partners and friends.

As we move forward, we look forward to cowboying up with you, shooting straight, forging many new trails and exploring horizons together.

I thank you for being you, and I am glad to be able to share tonight with you. As you watch the production, a product of our amazing theatre arts department at COC, remember that the lives of the students on the stage will be forever changed and those changes will play out in the stage of life in our college and our community. Thank you for helping us build the stage that is College of the Canyons, where people get a chance to shine every day.

DVH Chancellor's Circle Comments

Enjoy the show – and y'all come back now ya hear!