

Good evening and welcome to the President's Circle Dinner at College of the Canyons. My name is Dianne Van Hook and I have the privilege of serving as Chancellor-President of our community's college. It is my honor to welcome you here this evening

If you are a friend of the college, it is nice to have you back with us. And if this is your first introduction to College of the Canyons, I extend to you a warm welcome. On behalf of our faculty, staff, administration, students, Board of Trustees members and Foundation Board of Directors, we appreciate you taking the time to be here, and to learn more about what we do here and how we do it – with passion, commitment, and optimism about what we can all do together.

For those of you who have attended the President's Circle event in the past, you might have noticed some changes to our campus as you looked around this evening. Hasley Hall was completed this past year, along with the Aliso Hall and Laboratory buildings. The expansion of the P.E. Building opened this semester, along with the new tennis courts. And, of course, the University Center is under way at the south end of campus. It will open in late spring and is currently ahead of schedule and under budget.

Our theme for this year's event is "Bringing Dreams to Life, One Student at a Time." You might ask, "what is a dream anyway?" To me, dreams are a vision of your better self – what you are capable of becoming or achieving if you're willing to put the time and energy into pursuing what you want. Dreams are important because they give us a glimpse of the future, and they can guide our steps in the present and keep us focused as we move forward.

But sometimes we may not be able to clearly see how we're supposed to get there. That where College of the Canyons comes in. Tonight's theme captures the essence of why this institution exists, and provides a context for every effort and initiative undertaken on our campus. We fill in the missing pieces of those dreams and provide the support, encouragement, and practical necessities that thousands of students need to make their dreams come true.

And we're doing that for more and more students. Our enrollment continues to increase rapidly, and we are serving 17 percent more students this semester than we did last fall. By the time we finish this year, I predict we will have served close to 25,000 students. Quite a change from the 4,000 we served 20 years ago.

That's an impressive number by any measure. But we're not about quantity at College of the Canyons. We're about quality. I'm more interested in the impact we have on individual students and the ability we have to affect change in amazing, life-altering ways. Yesterday's students are today's business and community leaders in Santa Clarita. People like Jill Mellady, Kevin Holmes, Greg Kincaid, BJ Atkins, Greg and Michele Jenkins, Steve Arklin, Brian Koegle, Jey Wagner and many, many more.

I also know we're successful, because I hear regularly from students about how an instructor took the time to care, and gave them the time and attention needed to help discover their passion. Students are also quick to point out how unique that is to College of the Canyons. After

graduating from four-year colleges and universities, many of them report that professors there never offered the same level of support and personal concern that they experienced at COC. I guess that's why close to 50 percent of our full-time faculty and staff are our former students. They liked it as a student and chose to come here to make their professional contributions. And, I think those students-turned-colleagues who are here tonight:

Chuck Lyon  
Len Mohny  
Audrey Green  
Mary Ann Bardin  
Donna Haywood  
Michele Edmonson  
Jim Temple

All had dreams and I am glad they chose COC as the place to pursue them.

The dreams we make reality are as varied as the students we serve. That's why we try to create as many different opportunities as possible for our students. Location can make a difference on whether a student is able to attend classes or not. By building the Canyon Country Campus on the east side of the valley, we drastically reduced the time it takes for residents from that part of our valley to get to their classes. We're constantly creating new majors and certificate programs to not only meet the needs of business and industry, but also to match our students' interests and ensure they get the training that will enable them to compete in emerging fields. We have new degrees in:

- Retail Management
- Landscape Maintenance
- Landscape Management
- Building Inspection
- Theatre-General

These lists were  
pulled from All College

- Theatre-Performance
- Psychology
- Math and Science
- Humanities
- Social Science

We are working to develop new programs:

- Insurance Certificate
- Construction Technologies (Plumbing, Electrician, HVAC, Carpentry)
- Alternative Energy and Energy Management
- Human Services
- Emerging Technologies Lab Technician
- Medical Lab Technician

At the same time, we've made a point of offering classes in multiple formats so they are available to as many students as possible. Most of our students attend part-time, as they have other responsibilities to attend to, whether that be jobs, family, or both. By offering classes in the evening, on weekends, and in condensed formats, we make it easier for them to attend.



New this semester is the GO Program and the PAL Program. GO is a series of five-week, online classes that will allow students to earn college units at an accelerated rate. The program will help to meet the needs of community members who prefer learning in a more compressed manner than the traditional 16-week college format. Classes will be offered in back-to-back, five-week windows in which students can accomplish their goals in shorter, more intensive classes. This allows them to move on to the next level faster. In addition, students will have the flexibility to start a class at the beginning of any five-week window throughout the year.

PAL, or Personalized Accelerated Learning, is also based on a five-week model. Students participate in intensive classes in either an English or math track as well as a class that focuses on goal setting, learning styles, time management, and accessing resources that will help them be successful. It is aimed at new students whose assessment test results reveal below college-level skills so they can complete courses to improve those skills more rapidly and be on the path to succeeding in college and transfer-level courses.

The dreams of some students will carry them beyond College of the Canyons. So we built the University Center. There, our alumni – or anyone in the community for that matter – can earn advanced degrees without having to commute outside the valley. Many of our nursing students desire to go on and earn bachelor's degrees. Thanks to a \$99,988 grant from the state Chancellor's Office, we are partnering with CSUN to create an accelerated BSN pathway for students. So, they leave COC and seamlessly transfer to CSUN to earn a bachelor's of science in nursing after earning their associates degree.

Learning happens outside the classroom too, so we look for ways to engage students and augment their academic experiences. I personally know that. ***Insert DVH story.*** Athletics, Forensics, Model UN, Theatre Arts, Music, Choir, Student Ambassadors, Clubs, Associated Student Government, and many more give students the opportunity to get involved in ways they otherwise wouldn't, make new friends, connect with faculty and receive the support needed to succeed. Will all of the faculty in the audience who work with students out of the classroom please stand? They go over and beyond and we can only begin to measure the difference it makes in students' lives.

There are countless stories across the campus, and throughout our community, of dreams brought to life at College of the Canyons. And what's particularly exciting is that some of those dreams were made reality by people just like you.

You say – Me? I'm not a professor. No, but many of our students need more than a professor who believes in them.

- They need mentors willing to guide them and provide input and direction.
- They need managers willing to hire interns and take the time to show them how classroom knowledge integrates with the reality of the workplace.

- And often they need someone willing to help provide the resources necessary to put them in the classrooms with our professors.

When it comes to bringing dreams to life one student at a time, personal contact and scholarships are among the most powerful ways you can help.

In 2007-08 the College of the Canyons Institutional Scholarship Program awarded approximately \$92,000 in the form of roughly 100 scholarships designed to assist students on their educational paths. Created solely for COC students, the Associated Student Government and COC Foundation work together to raise funds and accept donated gifts and endowments from private individuals, community organizations, corporations and other foundations in order to fund and create a multitude of student scholarships.

Those scholarships become the missing link between a student's dreams, and reality.

With scholarships we can marry desire with resources to create new opportunities that otherwise would not have been possible.

Just ask Nicole Franklin. The 34-year re-entry student is a single mother to her son Isaiah, and guardian to her teenage cousin Victoria. In 2000, Franklin was forced to take a leave of absence from school to support and care for her family.



After five years out of the classroom spent working three jobs and often operating each day on just a few hours sleep, Franklin decided she needed to go back and finish her degree requirements. Doing so meant quitting her main job as a tenured staff member at a juvenile residential treatment facility.

“I was really at the end of my rope,” said Franklin about the reasoning behind her decision to go back to school.

“Every performance evaluation I would do extremely well on, but they would always say ‘Nicole you need that paper. You need that diploma.’ I couldn’t accept (not being promoted because of) that, so I said ‘I don’t care what it takes, I need to go back to school,’ and I gave my two weeks’ notice.”

Despite the financial implications, Franklin moved forward with her plan, and enrolled at COC as a sociology major in 2005. She became aware of the college's scholarship program and subsequently applied for aid. In the three years since re-entering school she has been awarded a combined \$2,500.

“All the scholarships were all unexpected, but they all meant so much to me,” said Franklin, who is now a human services aide for the Los Angeles County Department of Child and Family Services and recently transferred to California State University, Northridge (CSUN).

Scholarships offer second chances, and they can also smooth out some of the bumps we hit on the road through life.

When Daniel Luthi started at COC in 2004 while still a junior in high school, he probably didn't think he would ever need a scholarship. But without the financial support of scholarships, his educational plans might have been derailed. Tragedy struck the Luthi family in 2005, when Daniel's father passed away from cancer — leaving the family with limited financial resources.

“There was a time when things were particularly tight around the house, when I began to think ‘OK, now what am I going to do?’” said Luthi, who before his father's passing had never applied for any form of financial aid.

But after being encouraged to apply for aid and discovering the college's scholarship program, Daniel was soon able to concentrate more on his education instead of his finances — receiving the Harry Howard Memorial, ASG Allied Health and Hite and Honors Outstanding Student scholarships totaling about \$1,100. Luthi, now 21, is a nursing major planning to transfer to CSUN in 2009.

A thousand or \$2,500 may not seem like enough money to make a significant impact in the life of a student. But even \$100 can mean the difference between buying a book and taking advantage of all that a class has to offer, or going without and trying to just get by, trying to get the material without having access to the course content in the book because they couldn't buy the book.

Our students often need to work full-time jobs and support families while attending college, and the cost of books, transportation, computers and child care can put a real strain on their ability to succeed.

“Having these scholarships allowed me to complete my schooling without having to worry about where the money was going to come from,” said Luthi, adding that his books for the first semester of the nursing program cost more than \$1,200 alone.

“Awarding these scholarships benefits the community in ways that people probably don’t even realize.”

Did the donors who contributed to the scholarship funds awarded to Daniel Luthi give thought to the fact that they were helping to solve our state's nursing shortage.

Probably not. But their generosity ensured that this young man had the resources he needed to accomplish his goal of becoming a nurse. And if we're lucky, he'll be hired at Henry Mayo Newhall Memorial Hospital and be there to provide treatment for us.

Your support of other initiatives sponsored by our Foundation also touches lives. Some of you have contributed to the Canyon Country Campus Innovation Fund, which benefits the students and faculty at that campus. And with your help, we have launched a mini-grant program that enables faculty to bring their great ideas to life in the classroom.

Your support of President's Circle, of COC, of our students, makes a huge difference. You never know how far the impact of your generosity will carry. It has been said that a teacher never sees the full extent of their influence. The ripples carry forward in a person's life long after they leave the classroom. So it is with donors. They may directly impact one life at a time, but their influence carries on in perpetuity as that one changed life moves on to change others.

Our Foundation offers an amazing array of opportunities for touching a life. Whatever your passion or interest, we have a way you can contribute and make an indelible impact on the life of a student at College of the Canyons. And if one does not already exist, then we can launch a new one with your contribution!

In closing tonight, I would like to leave you with one of my favorite quotes: "Excellence can be obtained if you:

- Care more than others think is wise.
- Risk more than others think is safe
- Dream more than others think is practical and
- Expect more than others think is possible.



President's Circle Comments

We live out that quote every day, and I'd like to ask you to join us in caring, risking, dreaming and expecting more by permanently touching a student's life.

Thank you.

## **Ambassador Bios**

### **Shyntel Del Aguila**

Shyntel Del Aguila has been a student at College of the Canyons since Fall 2006. She enjoys being a College Ambassador because she is able to help students achieve the same positive college experience that she has had here at COC. She is a Music Vocal Performance Major and her career plans include becoming a famous singer and actress. She plans to graduate from COC in Fall of 2009 and transfer to USC. In her opinion, the students and staff are the best part about COC because she has made great friends as well as experienced great classes with great instructors.

Shyntel graduated from Saugus High School in 2006. She has lived in Burbank and Saugus and currently resides in Castaic. Shyntel has been singing since she was little and enjoys performing and writing songs. In her free time, she likes spending time with her family and friends, dancing, reading, and going to the beach. Three words that Shyntel uses to describe herself are “responsible, leader, and loving.”

## **Allan Gao**

Allan Gao has been taking classes at College of the Canyons since 2006. He enjoys being a College Ambassador because it helps him to strengthen his communication skills while helping prospective and current students. He is taking classes towards majoring in Pharmacy and his career goals include becoming a successful businessman and to have his company land on the Forbes 500 List. He plans to graduate from COC and transfer in Spring 2011. In his opinion, the cafeteria food is one of the best parts of COC.

Allan graduated from Valencia High School in 2008. He currently resides in Valencia with his parents and younger brother and has lived in California since 2002. He has lived in China and New York City for 6 years each and is fluent in both Chinese and English. Allan enjoys going to the gym and spending time with family and friends. Three words that Allan uses to describe himself are “driven, inspirational, and committed.”

## **Arcelia Lopez**

Arcelia Lopez has been a student at College of the Canyons since 2006. She enjoys being a College Ambassador because it allows her to educate others about all that she has learned about COC. In her opinion, College of the Canyons is a great community college because it is fast-growing and trustworthy. Her favorite class at COC was drawing because it allowed her to express her ideas in a new way. Her career objective is to become a teacher.

Arcelia grew up in Mexico and is a graduate of Colegio Cultural de Puebla. Arcelia is fluent in both English and Spanish and has previously lived in Puebla, Mexico, Reinheim, Germany, and Hudson, Massachusetts. She has lived in Santa Clarita since 2005 and has a 7-year old son. In her free time, Arcelia enjoys walking and reading.

## **Lisa Rhett**

Lisa Rhett has been a full-time student at College of the Canyons since Summer 2005. She enjoys being a College Ambassador because it allows her to share all of the opportunities available at COC with the community. She is currently majoring in Biology and Psychology and plans on graduating in Spring 2009. Her favorite class at COC was prosection because it was interesting and the instructor and fellow students made the class very enjoyable. Her career objective is to become a Nurse Practitioner. In her opinion, the people and the programs are the best parts about College of the Canyons.



She is a graduate of Canyon High School, class of 1987, and resides in Newhall. She has 4 children ranging in age from 7 – 18 years old. Lisa enjoys playing word twist, watching movies, and spending time with her children. Her goals are to finish school, raise successful and happy children, and to find a great job helping others. Three words that Lisa uses to describe herself are “funny, perceptive, and passionate.”