



“Our chief want is someone who will inspire us to be what we know we could be.”

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

August 10, 2011

Dear Colleague:

I trust this letter finds you relaxed, and ready for the new academic year ahead!

For me, it wouldn't be summer without kayaking and some outdoor hiking and exploration. I find the hours on the water and on the trail to be both physically and mentally rewarding. As I paddle and seek new vistas, I push myself and build my endurance as I go farther, explore new territories, and hone my appreciation for these things larger than the imagination can describe. At the same time, the solitude gives me an opportunity to ponder and reflect.

As I plied the waters and trails of Lake Tahoe and the eastern Sierras this summer, I had a chance to talk to strangers. As we shared something about ourselves, many told me about what was going on in their communities. When I made my association with College of the Canyons known, and folks talked about “their” community colleges, I was struck by how different COC is from other community colleges. There are 112 campuses across the state. And although we are part of one large system, each campus is unique to itself. Every college charts its own course and fulfills its true potential in varying degrees.

It would seem that the common external factors we've all had to deal with in recent years – the economy, the budget, rising enrollments – would have had the same effect on every campus. Those things should have halted progress, stifled innovation, and dampened optimism and enthusiasm. And, that has certainly been true on some campuses – but not at College of the Canyons. We have instead charged ahead to blaze new trails, launch innovative initiatives, create connections, form partnerships and continue our forward progress to help our students and our college succeed. As Bruce Barton said, “Most successful (people) have not achieved their distinction by having some new talent or opportunity presented to them. They have developed the opportunity that was at hand.” At College of the Canyons that is what we do every day.

I have always said the people make the place, and that was confirmed for me again this summer. Having heard the tales of woe, disaster and disappointment that exist throughout our system's community colleges, I am absolutely convinced that College of the Canyons is the place where the best and the brightest faculty, staff, administrators, board members, and volunteers converge to guide and propel students to the next level and beyond. We're mindful of the formidable tasks at hand, but we accomplish them precisely because we relish the idea of educating, inspiring, and helping people move ahead, both professionally and personally. And in the process, a defining spirit and powerful momentum are created.

There is a difference between a place that has competent people, and place that has people who **inspire**. In those places that inspire:

- ✓ There is an energy.
- ✓ There is a passion.
- ✓ There is an excitement.

- ✓ There is a spirit.
- ✓ There is a cause and a calling.
- ✓ There is a hope.

At College of the Canyons, where we inspire people daily, I believe that is the most important difference between us and other colleges. In their relatively short time with us, we provide our students with the skills and knowledge to help them succeed and excel in an increasingly complex world. We help people get where they want to go in life, and we inspire others to discover new destinations—all the while instilling a sense of passion, commitment, and excellence in what they do. We put life into the dreams and futures of people where before they had been lifeless or directionless with no destination on the horizon. We accomplish this by practicing what we preach and by being passionate and committed in our own quest for excellence. Because we know what we can and should do and because **we do it**, we make an incredible difference in the lives of others. As has been said, “You may only be someone in the world, but to someone else, you may be the world.”

How is it that we are able to inspire others? While it is because of many things, I believe six key characteristics define our college, set us apart from the rest, enable us to influence those around us, and give us the power to inspire our students.

We are:

- ✓ Optimistic
- ✓ Confident
- ✓ Enthusiastic
- ✓ Motivated
- ✓ Resilient
- ✓ Productive

Optimistic

We shape the opinions and hopes of others in the broadest and most profound ways as we inspire in others the desire to **want** to make a difference. And in the process, we create a lasting legacy.

- ✓ Someone once said, “What you see depends on what you're looking for.” You inspire others to carefully consider their point of view. We all observe the same events but see different things. Being in an environment in which people **see** the bright side is a night and day difference from those who opt for the “dark side” first.
- ✓ Seeing the bright side puts people in a **good mood**. And research (Seligman) shows that people who are in a good mood select higher goals, perform better, and persist longer.
- ✓ Optimism can be learned, and at COC, it is taught everyday in every corner of the campus.

As a result of our optimism, we help people see possibilities beyond their current reality. Sometimes they never knew the possibilities existed. But more often than not, they never saw those possibilities as something within their reach.

Confident

An attribute widely displayed in every program and department at College of the Canyons is confidence—the abiding belief that if you attempt something, you will succeed. Tom Krause said, “If you only do what you know you can do – you never do very much.” That is certainly not the case at College of the Canyons as people try new things daily. **You** demonstrate your confidence as:

- ✓ You act with assurance and boldness.
- ✓ You have strong belief in your capabilities.
- ✓ You don't shy away from difficult tasks.
- ✓ You have high aspirations and strong commitments to the goals you choose to pursue.
- ✓ You don't give up quickly.

- ✓ You recover and rebound after a less than successful try.
- ✓ You perform well.

Investing energy is not worth it unless you have a strong belief you will succeed. As Frank Lloyd Wright said, “The thing always happens that you really believe in, and the belief in a thing makes it happen.” If you have confidence, you have that! And, **you** do! Confidence empowers you to push forward and upward to try things that are new and challenging, and we see that happen time and again at College of the Canyons.

Enthusiastic

Some places and people merely go through the motions. Some people deliberately constrain their enthusiasm. Others, like **you**, inject passion and energy into what they do. You’ve heard me say this many, many times, but it’s so true it bears repeating again: Attitude makes a difference. In fact, I believe, attitude makes THE difference – attitude is everything. William James said, “The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitudes.” Because of our attitudes, we are not only changing our lives, but the lives of those whom we serve.

The prevailing attitude at COC is one of enthusiasm and “can do.” It is evident in every smile you offer a student when they register. It’s evident in every question you patiently answer during office hours. It’s evident in the pride with which you do your work.

Such enthusiasm is not the norm on other campuses. Our students sense that difference and it draws them here. It’s also the reason why, after transferring, many are quick to say they received a better education at College of the Canyons than at a four-year college or university.

From your enthusiastic attitude, it’s clear that you are engaged and feel a profound connection to what you do. As a result, you drive our innovation and accomplishments and move us ahead. Together:

- ✓ We work to attract people with energy and enthusiasm.
- ✓ We support them to grow and develop.
- ✓ We support innovation and creativity.
- ✓ We provide excellent service to our customers.

Because **you act** with great enthusiasm, we—COC—become more enthusiastic. Our attitude creates the context for what we do and for our students. That lights the spark in them to believe they can, and in turn develops the enthusiasm to move them forward.

Motivated

Because you are enthusiastic, that naturally leads to you being motivated. I define motivated as taking initiative. Around here, people don’t sit around and wait to be told to do something. Because people are given the freedom and encouragement to experiment and innovate, they look around and see what needs to be done and begin to do it.

- ✓ You step into resolve something that is about to fall between the cracks.
- ✓ You take ownership for solutions.
- ✓ You take risks.
- ✓ You risk doing.
- ✓ You have the mentality to seek to do the most you can in your work versus only doing what is least expected.
- ✓ You are responsible.
- ✓ You do what is right for our college.

Faculty, classified staff, administrators, board members – we all share a dissatisfaction with the status quo, and a relentless desire to make things better. We want to serve our students better. We want to serve our local businesses better. Jimmy Johnson said, “The difference between ordinary and extraordinary is that little extra.” In short, we want to do whatever we

can to better serve our community – and we take the initiative to give that little extra and do it! That motivation lives with each and every one of you – after all, the only person who can really motivate you – is you!

Resilient

We at COC are resilient. When we face adversity, we bounce back from barriers and hurdles. Why? We see barriers as largely external, temporary, and surmountable. We accept reality, yet work to improve and adapt to circumstances to achieve our goals.

Here is the thing about adversity; if you can make it your friend, you may find yourself in one of the most transformational situations that life has to offer. People generally don't choose adverse circumstances, but when they find themselves in them, it's how they deal with the unexpected that separates those who fail from those who achieve their goals and succeed. After adverse circumstances, we immediately analyze the situation to see what went wrong, and we focus on what we could have done differently.

While no one likes to experience adversity, it can become one of the most powerful catalysts for change. We always have a choice. No matter how terrible the setback, we can choose to look back and let it consume us, or we can face the situation head-on and make the most of it. By facing it, we are stretched, and learn from it. We choose the path that delivers the greatest benefit, not only overcoming adversity, but better yet, using what we learned to improve ourselves.

When we look at people who have overcome adversity, we see the same traits we see in those who exhibit leadership. They are:

- ✓ Naturally intuitive.
- ✓ Can size up situations quickly.
- ✓ Able to empathize with others.
- ✓ Resourceful and innovative in both practical and detailed manners.
- ✓ Visionary.
- ✓ Knowledgeable and perceptive.
- ✓ Able to adequately get information that is missing.
- ✓ Clearly exhibit wisdom and sound reasoning in matters small and large.
- ✓ Possess outstanding personal values and strong work ethic.
- ✓ Passionate with purpose.
- ✓ Looking to learn and able to keep abreast in an ever-changing world

Do those qualities seem familiar? They should – they describe **you!**

You, as an individual, and together with your colleagues, are consistently great and have these traits! You are adept at:

- ✓ Both system and local thinking—understanding not only the big picture, but also what is happening at your doors. You get results quickly and anticipate problems and successes.
- ✓ Sifting, sorting, prioritizing, discarding, storing, and stitching together information that gives our college a business savvy—an edge others do not enjoy.
- ✓ Knowing what you don't know so you can fill the information voids, gather the information, learn from others' expertise, and refrain from making a decision before you know it is a good decision.
- ✓ Digging down until you have reached the root of a problem so your efforts all contribute to finding it and making it better.
- ✓ Communicating, both through discussions and presenting different views to dialog where they are presented as a means of developing a new perspective and a richer grasp of complex issues by listening well.

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- ✓ And, empathizing and seeking to understand by being in someone else's shoes, by being able to see the thoughts, feelings, and objectives of others.

You accept what comes your way. You determine NOT to let it stop you. You use what adversity has taught you and you end up better than you were before adversity struck. You encounter challenges, but because you are resilient, you maintain much greater composure in difficult situations. The difference is in how you respond to events.

- ✓ You plan.
- ✓ You anticipate.
- ✓ You prepare multiple paths to get somewhere.
- ✓ You change quickly.
- ✓ You are passionate.
- ✓ You don't brood about things.
- ✓ You talk to others and solve problems, build bridges, and make connections.

And in return, **you** continue to inspire others and create a climate for success.

Productive

As a result of being optimistic, confident, enthusiastic, motivated and resilient, you achieve more than others think is possible. Much of what was forecast in last year's Opening Day letter came to fruition – along with so much more. The accomplishments have been amazing. Working together, we:

- ✓ Secured more than **\$6.1 million** in grant revenue to fund innovation and needed programs.
- ✓ Redeveloped our **Human Resources website** to provide a professionally designed informational website highlighting COC as an employer of choice and information on working and living in the Santa Clarita Valley.
- ✓ Saw the **1,604th** person graduate from the University Center with a bachelor's degree or master's degree.
- ✓ Secured **\$1.9 million** in economic development grants and training revenue for the Small Business Development Center, Center for Applied Competitive Technologies, Business Incubator, and Employee Training Institute so we could help area businesses retool, retrain, and build momentum in these challenging economic times.
- ✓ Provided training services to **3,063 local employees** and served **547 employers** through ETI, CACT and SBDC.
- ✓ Launched the week-long "**Celebrating the Humanities**" program, which featured a wide range of events enjoyed by faculty, staff and students.
- ✓ Hosted another successful installment of "**ArtStart**," and provided the community with samplings from the artistic offerings at COC - music, dance, theatre, RTVF, animation, graphic design and studio arts.
- ✓ Received recognition as the **top-performing SBDC** in the Los Angeles region as measured by client results/service levels provided.
- ✓ Approved **new degrees and certificates** for Electromechanical Systems, Electronic Systems Technology-Residential Applications, Medical Office Administrative Assistant, Skills for Healthy Aging Resources and Programs (SHARP) and Solar Energy Technician, as well as three degrees in Mathematics, Psychology, and Sociology that are part of the streamlined transfer process established by Senate Bill 1440.
- ✓ Reached out to **80 local organizations** through the efforts of more than **45 faculty and staff** and **400 students**, which resulted in our Service Learning Program being named to the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll (one of only 16 colleges or universities in California to receive the distinction – and the only community college).
- ✓ Launched the **Medical Lab Technician** training program, becoming one of the first community colleges in the region to offer training in this high-demand field.
- ✓ Served **17,000 elementary school students** through the K-12 Arts Education Partnership.
- ✓ Completed the Osher Foundation Scholarship Challenge, and generated **\$1,065,000** in scholarship funds, which will be matched by \$532,500 and create 95 \$1,000 scholarships every year for the rest of time.

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- ✓ Moved the **Re-Entry/Veterans Center** into its own office so we could expand its services and help ensure our growing number of veterans and re-entry students are successful as they work toward completing their educational goals.
- ✓ Cheered as our **Cougar Hockey** team won its first-ever national championship.
- ✓ Celebrated with our **Speech Team** as a COC student won a national gold medal for the first time ever.
- ✓ Opened the much-needed **30,000**-square-foot expansion of Mentry Hall.
- ✓ Broke ground on the \$16 million expansion of the **Library**, which will enable the Tutorial Learning Center (TLC) to move from Bonelli Hall and grow its services.
- ✓ Established an Alternative Energy Regional Center backed by a **\$3 million** grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF).
- ✓ Continued to grow our own leaders as we conducted **LEAP²** and saw 36 participants graduate from the advanced session of the popular professional development program.
- ✓ Launched the **Fast Track Training Institute**, which is helping local residents quickly obtain the skills needed to launch careers in high-demand, high-wage industries.
- ✓ Celebrated as the “**Just Jazz**” vocal group was one of six collegiate vocal ensembles in the nation selected to compete at the Next Generation Jazz Festival and placed second among a field of 14 high school and college jazz choirs.
- ✓ Expanded our **Honors Program** and made more courses available to students.
- ✓ Finished four more gardens in the **Gardens of the Canyons** project, bringing the total completed to 11 out of 14.
- ✓ Learned through our research that student athletes who met 76 percent or more of the required hours in **The Zone** had higher success rates than athletes who completed fewer hours.
- ✓ Congratulated our **Phi Theta Kappa** students as they placed second at the Nevada/California Regional Convention (out of 98 chapters in the region) on their Honors Research Topic.
- ✓ Cheered as Honor students Belem Casas, Fiorella Candamo, and Vahid Hamzeinejad, made the **All-California Academic First Team**.
- ✓ Congratulated **Cooperative Work Experience Education** for being named “Outstanding College/University” for its exemplary internship and work experience program by the California Internship & Work Experience Association (CIWEA).

What we accomplish together is nothing short of amazing – and inspiring. I know the achievements of your colleagues help you to envision, create, and continue advancing forward toward bringing your own innovations to life. So let’s celebrate them all!

So What’s Ahead For College of the Canyons?

As we look ahead, I know great things are in store because success inspires more success. Your optimism, confidence, enthusiasm, motivation, and resiliency have set the stage for our college’s record of accomplishment, and we will continue to build on that foundation. Bolstered by your commitment to innovation, and those of the colleagues with whom you collaborate in creative and strategic ways, we will be inspired to launch many amazing initiatives in the 2011-12 academic year. This is just a snapshot of what we will accomplish together:

- ✓ To better serve our students, we will **double the size of our library** by adding **\$2,000** square feet of state-of-the-art space to house the TLC, instructional labs, classrooms, offices and expanded Library facilities.
- ✓ We will debut the **Applied Technology Building** at the Canyon Country Campus for the start of the fall semester. Be sure to join us as we celebrate its official opening with a ribbon cutting at 5 p.m. on August 25.
- ✓ We will begin construction of a five-story burn tower, an ambitious expansion of the **Del Valle Fire Training Center** in Val Verde in partnership with the Los Angeles County Fire Department.

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- ✓ We will tear down the nearly 30-year-old Administration Building and begin construction of a two-story, state-of-the-art **Student Services/Administration Building** that will bring key services to students together in one location, and house more than double the number of employees in the current building.
- ✓ We will work on a Habitat for Humanity Project that will benefit local veterans.
- ✓ The **University Center** will expand its menu of offerings with new degrees:
 - BS Engineering – CSULA
 - MS Social Work – CSUN
 - BS Social Work – Brandman
 - BA Interdisciplinary Studies – Brandman
 - BA Pre Law – Brandman
 - BA Paralegal Studies – National
 - MS Criminal Justice – National
 - Board Certified Behavioral Analyst Credential – National
- ✓ We will offer three **upper-division engineering classes** in partnership with Cal State Los Angeles in the University Center’s new engineering lab .
- ✓ We will debut **new degree/certificate options** in Environmental Studies, Environmental Science, Risk Management and Insurance, Geographic Information Systems, Plumbing Technology, Commercial Dance, Semiautomatic Welding, Laser Welding, Metal Fabrication, Pipe Welding, and Welding Automation.
- ✓ We will offer new classes in solar and alternative energy technology, including Introduction to Energy Technology, Solar Photovoltaics Systems and Solar Thermal Systems.
- ✓ We will offer the Skills for Healthy Aging Resources and Programs (**SHARP**) certificate program, which will provide the skills and knowledge needed to begin delivering various types of evidence-based health promotion (EBHP) strategies to older adults in a variety of health care settings.
- ✓ The **Fast Track Institute** will build on its momentum and launch two new classes– Model Building and Commercial Photography – and continue to develop other offerings like, Operating Room Nurse lecture series, Fire Tech certifications, and Security Guard certifications.
- ✓ We will continue to explore innovative ways to expand access to higher education and resume our work on trying to pass **Assembly Bill 515**, which would enable us to offer for-credit extension courses.
- ✓ The **SBDC** will apply for designation as a center specially equipped to assist technology-focused businesses and entrepreneurs.
- ✓ We will expand the award-winning **Associate Program**, a unique professional development opportunity available to adjunct faculty.
- ✓ We will expand our welding program and offer training in robotic welding.
- ✓ We will add more **mini-grants** through the Foundation to support faculty innovation in the classroom.
- ✓ We will launch a new partnership with Henry Newhall Memorial Hospital to help train Licensed Vocational Nurses (LVNs) to become Registered Nurses (RNs).
- ✓ Through a generous grant of \$343,474 from the **Simms-Mann Family Foundation**, we will establish a think tank at College of the Canyons designed to advance the knowledge of infant and toddler development for community college early childhood educators.
- ✓ We will launch an ambitious capital campaign to construct an on-campus location for the **Institute for Culinary Education** (iCuE) on the Valencia Campus.
- ✓ At the Canyon Country Campus, we will enhance community partnerships with new and innovative events such as a gardening series and the establishment of our new “Outdoor Research Garden” for Environmental Science majors and others.

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- ✓ We will continue to lead the way in economic development, as we seek out grant and alternative funding to support advanced transportation technician training for CNG technicians, and enhance the Small Business Development Center by offering international trade consulting and training.

The success we have experienced to this point will serve as the foundation for our achievements in 2011-12. College of the Canyons is clearly forging its own path of innovation and accomplishment – and this list is just the beginning. Theodore Roosevelt said, “Believe you can, and you are halfway there.” I **know** we can do what we set our minds too, and the results will be amazing.

Unseen opportunities lie ahead, waiting for us to respond as only we can. We are poised to truly make a difference for our students and our community, and what we bring to life in the coming year will be fueled by the optimism, confidence, enthusiasm, motivation, and resiliency that you bring to what you do.

So Much To Celebrate!

A college providing education without inspiration is just another business. College of the Canyons doesn't fit that description. As we prepare to begin a new year, I am reminded once again of how unique College of the Canyons is; of how much we have done—working together; of the strong foundation that has been built; and of the exciting future that lies ahead. But, more than anything—I am struck by how incredibly fortunate I am to work with such talented, innovative, and committed people—people who care, who act, who commit, and who dream it and who do it.

You exemplify the wisdom of Tommy Lasorda, who said, “The difference between the possible and the impossible lies in a person's determination.” Like the kayaker paddling for the far shore, or the hiker pushing for the summit, you are determined to reach your goal. Working together, and with determination, we as a team will continue to do significant things, to surpass prior thresholds, to blaze new trails, to develop the talents of our students and ourselves, and to continue to keep College of the Canyons in the lead on all fronts. We are meeting the community's expectations, and with the support from our community, we plan to continue to do so. As we do, we will all be proud of what we will accomplish.

I treasure being Chancellor of College of the Canyons because of the teamwork, passion, and pride I see around me every day as I watch staff and students alike work hard to do their very best, overcome challenges, move ahead, and make a difference in human lives. Inspiring others, setting high standards and taking time for others are the things that make our college a special place to learn, work, teach, grow as individuals, and to create the experiences that will shape the future of our college. You do make a difference in the life of the college, the lives of your students and the quality of the work environment you create. Never doubt that for a minute!

Can you think of a better reason to celebrate? To launch our year, I invite you to join me on Friday, **August 19, at 11:30 a.m. in the Gym** for our inspiring Opening Day Luncheon. As is our tradition, we will welcome the new additions to the Cougar Family, honor the service of our long-time colleagues, salute our visiting retirees, and be entertained in grand COC style!

I look forward to seeing you at Opening Day and launching a new year of adventure as together we work to inspire those we serve!

Go Cougars!



Dr. Dianne Van Hook
Chancellor