



“Vision is the ability to see what others do not see. To see the future as you will and make the necessary plans to get there. When you recognize opportunities that others can’t see – you have vision.”

Anonymous

Dear Colleague,

The best thing about being part of the College of the Canyons' community is that it never gets old. Each new year brings a fresh infusion of faces with dreams, goals and expectations. Each year we revise a variety of curricula to reflect advances in science and technology and we rethink what we are going to teach in core subjects based on new insights, points of view and fresh understandings.

Each year we take a look at the world around us in an effort to understand how the rapid changes we are seeing apply to what we are going to provide our students. And, each year, we are spring-loaded to offer the cutting-edge and relevant training that our work force needs.

Our work has been constant, fast paced and sometimes quite challenging. But the outstanding payoffs are clear when one considers all the positives we produce at the end of the day, particularly the students who succeed because of us.

For me, the start of the fall semester is a time of renewal – an important baseline for the beginning of the annual cycle that inevitably will end in the advancement of our collective purposes – to educate, inform, train, enlighten, inspire and prepare people – young and old – for the opportunities that await them and the lives they can create for themselves. It is also a time to reflect on where we've been, how we've adapted and what we've learned along the way!

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Reflection is a natural process. We do it even when we are not always conscious of doing so at work and in our personal lives. As I was hiking, kayaking, exploring, capturing moments and creating memories on my annual trip to the Sierras this summer, the reflections inspired and motivated me to move forward with energy and enthusiasm on existing and emerging possibilities. As I explored the out-of-doors, the trails and possibilities – the time passed so quickly!

Where does the time go? It seems impossible that this year marks the College's 45th year of service to our community and leadership in higher education in California. For those of you who have been a part of this college for as long as I have (26+ years), I wonder if you find yourself asking, "Where did the time go?" I know I ask myself that question regularly.

It boggles the mind to consider all that has occurred at the college and in our community over the last 45 years. It pays to reflect on how much things have changed in order to understand just how vital embracing change is to our mission, as it has both inspired us and challenged us in achieving what we have become as a community college.

So let's do a little time-traveling and remind ourselves how we got to where we are today. For those of you who are newer to the college – as well as for all the "natives" of the SCV – it is an interesting story indeed!

WE SOWED THE SEEDS IN THE '60s

Until the 1960s, the Santa Clarita Valley was considered "the other side of the hill" by Los Angelinos and residents of the San Fernando Valley. The phrase wasn't pejorative: it was simply the result of too few ways to get here and, frankly, no reason to do so!

As transportation corridors improved, that notion changed and the development of our valley blossomed. Affordable housing communities signaled the beginning of a growth spurt, bringing new families in droves to the area.

In 1967, there still wasn't very much infrastructure in the area: no mall, no auto center, no big box stores, there were darn few restaurants, there was no Henry Mayo Newhall Memorial Hospital and Cal Arts was still on the Disney Drawing Board. The I-5 was new and not a soul thought the area needed a cross-valley connector. You couldn't cool off with a swim in Castaic Lake on a hot day because there was no lake yet.

But people kept coming.

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As families settled in, infrastructure followed. But one thing most families wanted back then was access to a local, high-quality education for their children. And that became an imperative for community leaders. Growth in the area simply exploded and it was only a matter of time before people began to talk about having their own college. It became more than just talk in 1967 when voters approved a junior college and a Board of Trustees to govern it. Where to build, what to build, how to build, how to fund and thousands of other details consumed the Board for a while, but they never lost sight of the goal.

All this was happening at a time of great change in our country and in our culture. You may remember (if you're old enough) that the sixties were turbulent and to some, unsettling or at least confusing.

In the late '60s, we were entertained at night by a brand new show called "*The Newlywed Game*," we tapped our toes to the new release by the Rolling Stones, "Let's Spend the Night Together" or strolled with the Beatles down "Penny Lane."

You were likely on one side or the other of the Vietnam War debate and had strong opinions about whether guys should or should not have long hair or whether brassieres were, indeed, an essential part of a woman's wardrobe. You might have been of a generation that extolled "wine, women and song" but were chagrined when that reality was supplanted with "sex, drugs and rock & roll."

And who could not help but stand in awe and be utterly impressed as mankind slipped its surly bonds with earth and set foot on the moon for the first time?

The '60s were a transformative time in our state, our country and the world. Thank goodness the change, in our little corner of the world, included the birth of a college! Dr. Robert Rockwell was named president in 1968 and, after a whirlwind of preparation, classes officially opened on the campus of Hart High School on September 22, 1969. Thirty-one new faculty welcomed 735 students on that day with nearly 150 students enrolled in Peace Officer Training classes in conjunction with the LA County Sheriff's Department. Yes, this partnership with Peace Officer Basic Training (POST) was the first one we ever had.

THE SIGNIFICANT '70s

Tie-died shirts were quickly giving way to super-wide bell-bottom pants as the new decade began. Dr. Rockwell and the Board of Trustees made the case that the college needed its own home and voters agreed, in 1970, when they approved a \$4 million construction bond that enabled the purchase of 154 acres at the intersection of the I-5 and Valencia Boulevard. Up to this

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time, the College really had no name – it was called by the cumbersome “Santa Clarita Valley Junior College District:” -- quite a mouthful.

The search for a more marketable and snazzier new name followed, but it wasn’t easy. Finally, Dr. Rockwell’s vice president, Dr. Gary Mouck, simplified things when he observed that the area was filled with more than 50 canyons. At a meeting in an office over on Lyons Avenue, he blurted out, “How about College of the Canyons?” And, to put it simply, the rest was history. It sure was better than “Rattlesnake Gulch,” Santa Clarita Valley’s former name!

The new, 154-acre site was initially populated with the first phase of temporary buildings and classrooms. With a great deal of ingenuity, energy and perspiration, the first classes were held on a rather unglamorous campus in 1970 and an amazing 1,200 students signed up.

The decade was marked by constant growth – in students, faculty, programs and infrastructure. The statewide Community College Construction Act of 1972 brought in \$11 million and a local bond provided \$8 million in funds for permanent buildings. Bonelli Hall was the first building constructed and it was followed by major construction of Cougar Stadium, the Student Center, Boykin Hall, Towsley Hall, the Physical Education building and Seco Hall as the campus took shape.

Nursing, drafting, electronics, languages and theatre courses attracted a broader range of students and campus life buzzed. Dr. Leland Newcomer replaced the retiring Dr. Rockwell at the end of the decade and he inherited a college that clearly had momentum.

I wasn’t here then, but as I look back on these ever-so-significant early years of our College, I can’t help but admire the vision and tenaciousness of our early leaders.

I am reminded of a quote by Will Rogers that describes the 1970s at the College. He said, *“Even if you’re on the right track, you’ll get run over if you just sit there.”*

He couldn’t have been more right. The College was on the right track and it was not just “sitting” there. It was, indeed, moving!

But let’s not forget the backdrop of history during this decade. In addition to those bell-bottoms I talked about earlier, our culture was continuing to shift. The classes and daily life at the College couldn’t help but be influenced by the times.

The ‘70s saw the founding of Microsoft, the introduction of the VCR (remember them?), the release of the first *Star Wars* movie, and the birth of the first test-tube baby. Our collective psyches were tested by a terrorist attack at the Munich Olympic Games, the beginning of the Watergate scandal, the resignation of a President, the end of the Vietnam War and the tragedy at Three Mile Island. The 1970s also saw the birth of disco and, unfortunately, the death of Elvis.

Technology related to mass media was bringing all of these stories into our living rooms and helping to fuel debate on our campus – a key role that higher education plays in our society.

THE EXCITING '80s

Serving nearly 4,000 students, the College entered the 1980s with a full head of steam only to be slowed a bit by the impacts of Proposition 13 on community college funding. Proposition 13 was a big pothole to overcome. As the California community college system adopted \$5 per unit fees for the first time ever and district boundaries that had restricted students to attending only where they lived, were abolished.

In fact, over the course of the last 45 years, there have been a number of funding “bumps in the road” to overcome. Some were major potholes that temporarily sent higher education “out of alignment” for a bit, with unpredictable funding impacting our planning for the future in a big way. Others were points of a change in our mission and what we were funded to do.

As I think back on this, I am reminded of a pearl of wisdom I learned from none other than Dolly Parton. *“The way I see it,”* she said, *“if you want the rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain.”*

And that is just what the College did. It looked past the immediate issues, focused on the big picture and the future, and continued to push ahead.

The College Services Building that housed the Child Development Center and Administration Building (now leveled with a new building under construction) was constructed in the early '80s. A new road was added to the local landscape easing access to the campus and officially joining Valencia Blvd. with McBean Pkwy. It was named Rockwell Canyon Road, in honor of the college's first president.

Funding challenges spawned the birth of the independent fundraising arm of the College – The College of the Canyons Foundation. Additionally, community and college officials welcomed the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Training Academy in 1987 setting the stage for a relationship that endures today.

A new president in the form of Dr. Raymond LeGrandeur replaced Dr. Newcomer when he retired in 1983. Five years later LeGrandeur retired and provided me the opportunity I'd dreamed of as I was fortunate enough to become the fourth President of College of the Canyons in 1988.

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Do you remember the day you interviewed for your position at College of the Canyons? I do. I remember the excitement of that time like it was yesterday. I remember what I wore and who was in the room. I remember the board meeting when I was hired and the “ceremonial swallow drop” as Jan Keller walked me from L105 to the Board Room for a reception. I remember thinking how fortunate I was to be able to pursue my dreams and profession at College of the Canyons. As Steve Jobs said, *“Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven’t found it yet, keep looking. Don’t settle. As with all matters of the heart, you’ll know when you find it.”* In retrospect, I remember knowing that I had indeed “found it.”

When I look back at that day, May 16, 1988, I never could have envisioned what was to come. The last 26 years have exceeded my wildest dreams and the relationships and friendships formed have inspired me and have become important parts of my life.

While changes were occurring at College of the Canyons in the ‘80s, the world around us was changing too. What was happening in the world was characterized by blazing new territory and it was exciting, impactful and innovative. And, College of the Canyons kept up with the standards and the pace as we reflected the excitement around us and began to shape the change we wanted to see on our campus for our students.

The ‘80s brought us Rubik’s Cube, personal computers, and *E.T. the Extraterrestrial* movie was released. We saw Sally Ride become the first American woman in space at about the same time that scientists were first announcing the discovery of a hole in the earth’s ozone layer. And, at College of the Canyons, we developed our first Facilities Master Plan to help guide the building of the Valencia campus.

The world watched in awe as nature made a big statement with the eruption of Mt. St. Helens in Washington State. Another royal wedding captivated millions (Charles and Diana) and Ted Turner established a little news network he called CNN.

We were stunned when the Space Shuttle Challenger exploded on take-off, killing brave astronauts and we wept collectively when Pan Am 103 exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland killing all aboard.

The decade ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the gigantic oil spill from the Exxon Valdez and the massacre of Chinese students in Tiananmen Square. The vividness of these news events was beamed into our living rooms nightly and, despite great advances, the world seemed less safe. The impacts of worldwide events got “up close and personal.”

THE NO-NONSENSE '90s

By the time College of the Canyons entered the 1990s, it had reached the distinction of being the fastest-growing community college in the nation and remained so for several years in a row!

Some 6,500 students were crammed into a campus originally designed for 5,000. But we were not going to turn students away. So we needed to grow, and grow we did.

One of my favorite authors when I was a child as well as when I taught English was Mark Twain. I think, in hindsight, that I've lived my life according to this observation. He said, "*Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do, than by the ones you did. So throw off the bowlines, sail away from the harbor, catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream.*"

I've long been a believer in the axiom that "If you can dream it, you can do it" and I have always believed that we need to push the limits to get what this college has needed and deserves. Fortunately, the memories of our team, while respecting the past, embraced planning and vision as a way to create the future we wanted for our students. After making our case in Sacramento, thanks to our State Senator Ed Davis, legislation finally passed in the early '90s that corrected a decades-old funding formula that stymied growth of community colleges. The state finally agreed to provide the funds to colleges who build buildings, to actually hire the people to staff the new buildings with instructional programs and services for our students.

With funding in place, we undertook the largest facilities expansion in a quarter century, embarking on a much needed and long overdue construction effort that produced a string of new buildings and expanded facilities. Remodeling of Boykin, Bonelli and Towsley Hall followed, along with Seco Hall and the Instruction Center, creating a formal TLC space, classrooms and technology.

Mother Nature interrupted our plans in 1994, as the devastating 6.7 magnitude Northridge earthquake hit - striking with such force that many of the college's classrooms were uninhabitable. Although our buildings suffered major damage, we pulled together and erected tent classrooms on the athletic fields, only delaying the onset of the spring semester by one week. Our focus and resiliency was steadfast and evidence of our optimistic spirit was illustrated when, only a year after the earthquake, a new Family Studies & Early Childhood Education Center was constructed, making way for Admissions & Records space in the "A" Building.

Groundbreaking ceremonies for the Library Building and the Media & Fine Arts building (Mentry Hall) occurred, and a Fitness Center was fashioned out of a storage area. Our sense of creativity, courage and spirit of responsibility moved us through these challenging times and became the symbol of our college as we moved forward.

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Because the students chose to tax themselves by passing of a Student Center Fee, the Student Center received a major rehab in 1999, taking on the shape you see today. Yet, we were still out of space, so we added seven modular buildings and made 14 new classrooms available.

With the new repurposed space, enrollment continued to climb and demand increased. We began offering classes in places like the Canyon Country Library and other off-site locations. Student growth also meant providing services to students and numerous - then revolutionary - improvements such as the STAR "telephone" registration system were spawned of necessity. The college's website was created in 1995 and has grown exponentially since. Programs were added that the community wanted: multi-media, fire technology, the PACE program, Employee Training programs, MESA (Math Engineering Science Achievement) and others were expanded such as: theatre, physical education, photography and radio-television. Football was brought back to campus, and we added men's and women's soccer as well as women's golf as inter-collegiate sports.

In 1999, the 10,000-student headcount milestone was reached after a second consecutive year of double-digit growth. From the Cougar Den, to Academy of the Canyons, to the first University Center programs and activities described above, the '90s were exhilarating, exciting, energizing, evolving, ever changing --- and tiring.

Unbeknownst to many, while there were outward signs of incredible expansion in the '90s, staff were laying the groundwork for "bigger and better" in the next decade as they prepared educational and facilities master plans, technology master plans, plans for permanent performing arts and University Center facilities and much more.

The world kept on chugging along and the 1990s brought its share of ups and downs. On the outside, we witnessed the collapse of the Soviet Union, a bombing at the World Trade Center, the aftershocks from the Rodney King verdict, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and Operation Desert Storm. O.J. Simpson, the first "celebrity" I met in 1988 when I arrived on campus (filming a Nike commercial), was arrested on double murder charges after a bizarre slow-speed freeway chase and a crazy guy called the Unabomber was sending bombs through the mail to university professors and others.

We viewed the Hale-Bopp comet and marveled at images from Mars via an innovative piece of machinery called Pathfinder. We mourned with the world on the news of Princess Diana's death and feared that society would unravel via computer as we neared the new millennium. We didn't really know what the "Y2K bug" was but we really didn't want it. We took the time to wonder about what caused two young men to kill so many at a high school in Columbine, Colorado, not really knowing that such a mindless act would be repeated so many times in the ensuing years.

“HOLY MILLENNIUM BATMAN” - THE 2000S

A new millennium brought new demands, new challenges, and a new vocabulary! Here at College of the Canyons, that included biotechnology, fire technology, laser and orbital welding, advanced manufacturing, hotel and restaurant management, graphic arts, multimedia technology, broadcast technology, cinema, radio-television-film, electronic music, computer networking and more, as we added new programs to meet the growing needs of the community.

In just over 30 years, the college had come so far – and in hindsight – had done so quickly. Some of the original faculty members were ready to retire and I was chagrined that in the years ahead, I’d see a lot of pioneers and friends leave the college. But that is the nature of change and life. And as I remember these people, I am so grateful and in awe of the foundation they laid for this college district to become what it is today.

Growth was continuing and driving our continued expansion. Having passed two local bonds with the help of so many, including most of the college staff who were here in 2001 and 2006, as well as plenty of flying pigs, flying cows, business leaders, students and alumni; we finally had the funds in the 2000s to move forward on a permanent University Center Building; to purchase the land and develop our 70-acre Canyon Country Campus, to plan, design and build Aliso Hall and Aliso Lab, Hasley Hall, East PE, the expansion of Mentry Hall, the Library and TLC expansion project, and to improve many of our existing facilities including Cougar Stadium and the tennis courts.

After many years on the drawing board, we finally built our beautiful Performing Arts Center. And, because of the financial assistance of the City of Santa Clarita, we were able to increase the size from 450 seats to 900! It is a source of pride for the college and the community as it celebrates its 10th anniversary this year. And, thanks to Measure C, we were able to add the Music/Dance building (Pico Canyon Hall), the space to support the instructional programs and the students who performed in the PAC.

More students meant more cars: Inspired by Joe Lanthier’s adaption of a Peter, Paul and Mary song, “*Where Have All the Parking Spaces Gone*,” we completed a parking lot project to accommodate an additional 1000 cars. Now, if you were here, you may remember that there was quite a verbal scuffle with some local oak tree advocates who were pretty upset about our plan to remove about 14 mature oaks.

After some “interesting” Board meetings where the issue was extensively discussed, a compromise was struck where we agreed to plant 10 young oaks on campus for every mature one removed. We also agreed to place a majority of the trees in a 20-acre conservation area on the west side of the Valencia campus with the promise that we would never touch them. So the parking lot finally went in, the trees are thriving and the environment benefited in the long run.

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Sometimes what you think would be a fairly easy task, turns out to be hard. Progress is rarely easy. But, in the words of David Viscott, *"If you have courage to begin, you have the courage to succeed."* And that, is what makes our history and our lives interesting!

Those of us born in the last century were both excited and sad as we left the "19s" and entered the "20s." Why? Who knows, but it seemed that simply having different numbers on our calendars, our checkbooks and bank accounts implied that we were aging too quickly or that the numbers themselves would portend an as yet unforeseen great change.

As much as we were nervous about the arrival of the new millennium, it happened anyway. And, as the Y2K hoopla faded, we learned the "2000s" are much the same as the last century – but maybe a bit "faster." We still had the same kinds of activities going on in the world and it seemed that we became a bit more skeptical, cynical and, if truth be told, a bit more scared if not a bit more hardened by some news reports, yet empowered at how we could more easily shape the future of our college.

We were all stunned and saddened by the devastating attack on September 11, 2001 by extremists that left so many dead and shaken on our own soil. We may never get over that. I remember making Measure C calls the following week at Headquarters and reassuring parents who were worried about their children away at colleges in faraway places. Many wanted to bring them back to the SCV, specifically to COC.

Did we have more room in our hearts for grief when the Space Shuttle Columbia disintegrated upon re-entry and when thousands died as a result of an Indian Ocean tsunami? Hurricane Katrina, a massive oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, the capture and killing of Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden, suicide bombers, financial collapses – all part of our world in the 2000s.

But despite all that seeming negative news, the world made great, positive strides in just the past 13 years in cancer research and medicine, artificial intelligence, personal computer and smartphone technology, our knowledge of space and our solar system, architecture, international trade and business, and much, much more.

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As we get set to launch our 45th year of providing high-quality education to our community, we can all be extremely proud of the work that has been accomplished by faculty, staff, administrators, the Board of Trustees and our many, many stakeholders, volunteers and students over the four-and-a-half decades of our College's history.

At the same time, given that world conditions change daily, as we prepare for the 2014/15 academic year, it is incumbent on us to acknowledge that our students are preparing themselves

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to enter an extremely complex world. In order for them to excel, we must do the same. In order for them to balance, we must be ever more flexible. We must do everything we can to ensure their collective success one student at a time.

After all, they will become the scientists, politicians, businessmen, educators, poets, computer technicians, health care providers, law enforcement officers, first responders, auto mechanics, and public and private sector leaders -- virtually every occupation you can think of – that make the world we live in and the world of the future – function at this highest levels.

Will Rogers would not need to worry that College of the Canyons will get run over. Mr. Rogers, we are indeed on the right track and moving forward!

What a tribute it is to those who have been, as well as those who are here now and have been a part of our college for some of these past 4 ½ decades, that we are able to offer studies leading to 83 associate degrees and 71 work force/training certificates! What a tribute it is that last year we exceeded our Associate for Transfer Degree goal. What a tribute it is that we exceed the state average for completion rates due to our outstanding assistance to students in the classroom as well as in counseling and tutoring. What a tribute it is to proudly say that our focus is on student success and the proof is in the numbers!

You have often heard me say that this College is one of the most innovative, forward thinking, cooperative, problem-solving, responsive, caring and inspirational places to work. It is because people like you have helped to make it so. We have been recognized locally, regionally, statewide and nationally for our excellence and we all should be extremely proud of the foundation, the structure, and the human talent that has produced both the teamwork we see every day here at COC, as well as individual standards of excellence.

Now, we should be extremely excited about our future! American poet and author Bret Harte became well known, in part, for his short stories and verse about the California Gold Rush. As a struggling writer, he knew the value of hard work and continuing to persevere despite the difficulty of the task. In some respects he was a dreamer who, not satisfied with the present state of things, was apparently fascinated about the possibilities that the future unfolds. He succinctly described this with the line:

*"Behind the curtain's mystic fold
The glowing future lies unrolled."
(1870)*

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I look forward to “unrolling the future” of College of the Canyons with you according to the plans we have made, and the new opportunities we create in 2014-15. I am intrigued by the possibilities of our collective future and what we can do together for our students. I hope that you are too.

Please join us for our Opening Day Luncheon on Friday, August 22, 2014, to honor the past, to share stories and memories, to celebrate the people who have made this college an incredible place, to anticipate our fantastic future, and to start the 2014-2015 academic year with some fun!

The festivities will begin at **11:45 am in the Main Gym** and will include themed entertainment, fabulous food, trivia challenges, extensive displays of our 45 year history, reunions with retired faculty and staff, a chance to meet new staff and some special surprises. Feel free to dress for the decade in which you were hired – which should make for some interesting photo ops at lunch!

In closing, I am grateful to work with uniquely talented and spirited people who make College of the Canyons a truly special place and who create and expand opportunities for our students as we move forward together with a common goal of student success. The past gives us hope for the future, and ensures that the trails and journeys ahead will be challenging and exciting.

As Ernest Holmes said, *“Great things are done by people who think great thoughts and then go out into the world to make their dreams come true.”* We will continue to commit, to dream, to get involved, to risk, to focus, to create, to adjust, to anticipate, to persist, to cooperate, and to achieve in ways that will benefit our students, amaze our community, and continue to make us all proud.

Go Cougars!

Sincerely,

Dr. Dianne Van Hook
Chancellor