



**“DO NOT FOLLOW WHERE THE PATH MAY LEAD.  
GO INSTEAD WHERE THERE IS NO PATH AND LEAVE A TRAIL.”**  
~ Muriel Strode

August 2017

Dear Colleague:

**M**y favorite place to be in the summer is the mountains. Hiking the trails of the High Sierras. Paddling the emerald waters of Lake Tahoe. Admiring the views of open space along Highway 395.

I always return from the mountains inspired and invigorated. Something about the crisp air at 10,000 feet clears the mind. A gentle breeze blowing through the pines carries away my thoughts and inspires me with renewed energy and zeal.

On my hikes I sometimes run across the remnants of an old homestead or mining operation. I'm amazed by the hardy souls who sought their fortune in these rugged mountains. The comforts, conveniences, and technologies of our modern era make me appreciate the courage, determination, resilience, and single-minded purpose of those early prospectors, farmers and ranchers to pursue their dreams. At the same time, I see similarities between their stories and ours at College of the Canyons.

## **BUILDING, LEADING & INNOVATING**

**W**hile life is much easier for us than it was for them, College of the Canyons is known for pioneering leadership. It's who we are, and as a result, our history is marked by building, by leading the way, and by a restless spirit of innovation.

Like California's early settlers, we've **built something out of nothing** over the past five decades. The Valencia Campus was a pasture for herds of cattle. And our Canyon Country Campus, which celebrates 10 years of serving students in 2017-18, was once home to more goats than people. Today, we offer 100-plus degree and certificate options to more than 30,000 students who attend classes annually on our two campuses.

Being a pioneer is synonymous with being a leader. You're out in front. You're ahead of the pack. You're leading the way forward. You're marking a pathway for others to follow in your

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footsteps. As a trailblazer, **you** create possibilities for others that did not exist before. That, of course, requires vision and an innovative spirit as you work to figure how to do things that have never been done before.

Our **leadership and innovation** can be seen in numerous accomplishments. It is what distinguishes us from the rest. It is a standard that we set for ourselves. From launching a Civic Engagement initiative, to implementing accelerated math and English classes, to creating new ADTs, this year we have continued to create new pathways to success for our students.

Embarking on the **acceleration initiative** was like hiking a new trail. The trail gives you an idea of what you might see, but the true beauty of the place is revealed only by visiting it. In the same way, the results of our acceleration efforts are beyond what we imagined. By helping students bypass remedial courses, we have reduced a significant barrier that kept many students from earning degrees. When you look at the difference in student achievement between 2010-11 (before the changes were implemented) and 2016-17, the results are **astounding**.

- The overall graduation rate increased **61 percent**.
- The graduation rate of minority students jumped by **122 percent**.
- For Latino students, it was a **189 percent** increase.
- And for African-American students, it was **142 percent**.

Thanks to the leadership and innovation of our faculty, staff and administrators who championed the acceleration effort, these students experienced an amazing new pathway to success and achieved that which many did not think was possible. How great is that?

Likewise, by changing how new students are placed into math and English classes, our math and English faculty, along with our research and assessment teams, also addressed another key barrier that hampered students' abilities to reach their goals. Rather than relying solely on a standardized test to determine placement, we now review students' high school transcripts to see what classes they took and what grades they received and use that data to inform placement.

What we accomplished here reminds me of mining. You start digging in some place that looks promising, and strike a vein that yields more than you expected. We knew there was potential in changing our placement practices – but eureka! – the results are amazing.

- Now, **70 percent** of new students place into transfer-level courses versus 15 percent in the previous system.
- More importantly, students successfully pass the classes.
- Students save **\$1.3 million** in books and tuition costs and **97,200 hours** of class time by avoiding unnecessary classes.

“THERE HAS TO BE THIS PIONEER, THE INDIVIDUAL WHO HAS THE COURAGE, THE AMBITION TO OVERCOME THE OBSTACLES THAT ALWAYS DEVELOP WHEN ONE TRIES TO DO SOMETHING WORTHWHILE, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT IS NEW AND DIFFERENT.”  
» Alfred P. Sloan

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Another new path we've opened for students recently is our **First-Year Promise** program. Last spring, we were among **only 14 colleges selected** out of 51 applicants to receive a **\$750,000 grant** from the state Chancellor's Office to launch our promise program.

FYP gives qualified students the opportunity to attend College of the Canyons for free during their first year of study. It is exclusively for first-time, full-time enrolled freshmen who have applied to and been accepted into the program.

We received more applicants than we had spots available, but the students who were not selected for FYP were still welcomed to the campus. Our Outreach team followed up with every student to help them register for classes and find their place at College of the Canyons, because education matters.

Another trail-blazing venture is under way that you'll hear more about soon. We are one of 20 California Community Colleges recently selected to join the **California Guided Pathways** project. (This is more selective than the state Chancellor's Office Pathways initiative that was funded for 2017-18.)

The goal is to shift colleges away from the traditional "cafeteria" mindset where students pick and choose among majors. Instead, students will:

- Benefit from a structured experience from registration to graduation.
- More quickly choose a major.
- Focus on the courses needed to complete that major.
- Access the support services that will help them achieve their goals.

This effort will include every department engaged in direct service to students at the college. It will change how we do business, yield significant improvements in student achievement, and further demonstrate our college's commitment to leading the way in adopting innovative and effective completion practices. Its success will depend on you and your colleagues.

We continue to remove barriers related to affordability that can block our students on their path toward completing a degree or preparing for a career. Textbooks represent one of the most significant cost barriers, but as you know, **open educational resources** (OER) offer a promising alternative. Our students are fortunate that rather than using traditional textbooks, more and more faculty are opting for OER - teaching and learning materials that have been released in the public domain or under an intellectual property license. Students access these learning resources for free online, or purchase printed editions for a small fee to cover the cost of the copies. Using OER materials saves our students approximately \$3 million each year.

**"THE PERSON WHO  
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THAN THE  
CROWD. THE  
PERSON WHO  
WALKS ALONE  
IS LIKELY TO  
FIND HIMSELF  
IN PLACES NO  
ONE HAS EVER  
SEEN BEFORE."**

*» Albert Einstein*

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Our leadership and innovation have delivered real results for our students, and helped to remove barriers that can block their pathways to success.

### COLLABORATION DELIVERS RESULTS

These are just a few of the most recent examples of how the faculty, staff, and administrators at College of the Canyons have not only led the way to blaze new trails to success for our students, but also served as an example for other colleges to follow. Here are more accomplishments from the past year that demonstrate how our collaborative spirit enabled us to expand opportunities for students and enhance our service to the community. Working together as a team of talented professionals, we:

- Set a new record for the **largest graduating class** – 2,046 students, an increase of 40 percent over the Class of 2015 – and the number of degrees awarded – 2,531, an increase of **86 percent** over two years.
- Generated \$ **16,067,015** in grant revenue to expand what and how we support our students – another new record!
- Earned our **third consecutive** Western State Conference Supremacy Award for the athletic and academic accomplishments of our 300 student-athletes.
- Launched the **first apprenticeship program** in California to train students in the logistics industry in partnership with AMS Fulfillment.
- Received approval of our mid-term accreditation, plus a **two-year extension** on submitting our next self-study report, which reflects the Accrediting Commission’s confidence in our operations, outcomes, leadership, and governance.
- Earned the **No. 2 completion rate in California** as measured by the Student Success Scorecard. Nearly 80 percent (79.4%) of our college-prepared students complete a degree or certificate, or are prepared to transfer to a four-year university.
- Achieved the **No. 1 transfer rate in Los Angeles County**. The percentage of our students who transfer to a four-year university leads all 21 community colleges in L.A. County.
- Ranked among the **top 15 community and career colleges in the nation** for alumni salary potential. PayScale’s 2016-2017 College Salary Report showed COC’s graduates move into high-paying jobs after completing their classes.
- Welcomed a team of experts assembled through the statewide **Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative** (IEPI) to help us implement best practices for expanding our non-credit offerings.
- Continued to expand the assistance we provide to local business and industry under the **Doing What Matters** framework, in turn strengthening the local work force and bolstering the region’s economy.
- Initiated a **partnership with USC** to have interns from their School of Social Work provide counseling services in our Veterans Resource Center.

“IF YOUR  
DREAMS DO  
NOT SCARE  
YOU, THEY  
ARE NOT BIG  
ENOUGH.”  
» *Ellen Johnson  
Sirleaf*

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- Organized and hosted a **communitywide conference on human trafficking** to call attention to an issue that many people assumed was not a problem in Santa Clarita.
- Received our 13<sup>th</sup> contract from the California Employment Training Panel (ETP), which will provide **\$548,205** to conduct skills training for employees at local companies, and brings our total amount of ETP contracts awarded to **\$4 million**.
- Achieved a **top-25 national ranking** in *Washington Monthly* magazine's first-ever list of "Best Two-Year Colleges for Adult Learners."
- Celebrated the accomplishments of our academic teams, including **Future Business Leaders of America, Model United Nations, and Forensics**, which won numerous awards, often while competing against four-year universities.
- Led all California community colleges with five players selected for the **Women's Soccer Academic All-State team**.
- Received the 2017 **Outstanding College Work Experience and Internship Program Award** from the California Internship and Work Experience Association.
- Installed **water-saving artificial turf** on our soccer fields through a partnership with the Castaic Lake Water Agency.
- Envisioned, organized, and hosted the **Cancer Awareness and Resource Expo**, which gave our community the opportunity to learn from the expertise of renowned cancer doctors and researchers.
- Were recognized as the 2016 **Top Performing Small Business Development Center** within the Los Angeles region.
- Won the **California Community College Classified Senate Model Senate** award in recognition of our local senate's leadership and innovation.
- Claimed the North American Association of Environmental Education Award for **outstanding service in environmental education** by SCEEC (Santa Clarita Environmental Education Consortium).
- Received the Outstanding Achievement Award from the South Bay Workforce Investment Board for attaining a **100 percent placement rate** for graduates of the FastTrack CNC Operator Program.
- Opened a **second MakerSpace**, bringing 3D printing and hands-on tutorials to the Canyon Country Campus, and received a **\$311,432 grant** from the state Chancellor's Office to expand hours and services at both MakerSpace locations.

**"IT'S THE WAY  
YOU RIDE THE  
TRAIL THAT  
COUNTS."  
» Dale Evans**

## WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A TRAIL BLAZER

**T**hat's an impressive list of accomplishments that sets our college apart. So what's our secret? Why aren't all California Community Colleges blazing the same trails? What makes us unique?

We are defined by certain traits that enable us to achieve what others wouldn't dream of even starting. We have:

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- Confidence
- Courage
- Teamwork
- Focus
- Resilience

These qualities are especially evident among the faculty, staff, and administrators at College of the Canyons, and they enable us to create new pathways to success for our students and the community.

### Confidence

We go boldly in new directions, resolute in our belief that if we can imagine it, we can accomplish it. With the confidence that comes from past success, and in the talent and capabilities of our team, we are inspired to not only create new ideas, but also to carry them through to implementation. Whether it's designing a degree program that uses only OER course materials, launching a vibrant Civic Engagement Initiative, or planning a biodiversity initiative for the Canyon Country Campus, we consistently make our dreams a reality.

Our confidence inspires a prevailing attitude of enthusiasm and “can do” spirit that helps our college stand out and make it attractive to students.

- It is evident in every smile you offer a student when they register.
- It is evident in every question you patiently answer during office hours.
- It is evident in the pride with which you do your work.

From your confidence, it's clear when you are engaged and feel a profound connection to what you do. As a result, **you** who help us move forward and blaze new trails of opportunity.

### Courage

Going where others haven't gone before also requires courage. To me, the definition of courage is simple. It's a **willingness to try**. Having an idea is one thing. Acting on it is another. It's not always easy to move forward with something new - to go from idea to action. Trying requires courage. And courage is necessary for results. Like Muhammad Ali said, “He who is not courageous enough to take risks will accomplish nothing in life.”

With attitude and courage at College of the Canyons, we:

- Leap and risk.
- **Drive away our fear** and replace it with action.
- Realize that this is a place where action pays off. When we move in new directions, we discover amazing results, and inspire others to follow in our footsteps.

“WE KEEP  
MOVING  
FORWARD,  
OPENING NEW  
DOORS, AND  
DOING NEW  
THINGS,  
BECAUSE WE  
ARE CURIOUS  
AND  
CURIOSITY  
KEEPS  
LEADING US  
DOWN NEW  
PATHS.”

» *Walt Disney*

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Our humor; our desire to be good, better and best; our ability to respond; to coordinate and cooperate; and our ability to shape change and the propensity to risk doing inspires in each of us the courage to employ a growth mindset in what we tell ourselves we are capable of doing and becoming.

Change starts when someone sees the next step and has the courage to act. As Henry Ford said, “One of the greatest discoveries a man makes, one of his great surprises, is to find he can do what he was afraid he couldn't do.”

### Teamwork

Our courage is inspired by confidence in those around us. We are a collection of bright, talented individuals who together make a dynamic combination. We become more effective when **we believe we CAN** do it and work together to make it happen.

The passage of Measure E stands as an amazing example of the power of our belief in each other, and our willingness to pull together in pursuit of what some said was an impossible goal. We ignored the naysayers, and we did it. Now, after forming a citizens' oversight committee and selling our first \$50 million of bonds, we're moving ahead to make the improvements to our campuses that we promised the voters.

The COC team is extraordinarily strong, because **you** and your colleagues use an amazing **array of talents** to make substantial, creative, and organization-shaping contributions. By giving of yourself, sharing your confidence and courage, and serving as an inspiring role model to students and colleagues alike, **you change lives** – one person at a time.

Teamwork will be more important than ever as we say goodbye to more than 40 of our colleagues who retired this past year. Nearly every department on campus will welcome a new employee into their midst as we hire replacements in the coming months. I know that our new team members will be **welcomed with open arms** and quickly learn why this is such a special place to work. They will experience the warmth, care, and compassion that characterizes the Cougar Family, and immediately be made to feel at home here.

The opportunity to add new members to our team brings with it a powerful reminder that the **strength of our team lies in its diversity**. In the past year, we have hired 60 new employees. Our team is a wonderful blend of every segment imaginable. With the variety of age, culture, and gender represented, we are enriched by equally varying opinions and ideas, and we are better able to understand, relate to, and assist our students.

### Focus

Another element critical to our success in blazing new trails is our ability to focus. By that I mean our ability to **remember where we're headed and why**. We keep in mind what's

“TO THE  
WRONGS  
THAT NEED  
RESISTANCE,  
TO THE RIGHT  
THAT NEEDS  
ASSISTANCE,  
TO THE  
FUTURE IN  
THE  
DISTANCE,  
GIVE  
YOURSELVES.”  
» *Carrie Chapman  
Catt*

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important. We don't let distractions divert our attention, siphon our energy, or dampen our attitude.

Our job is to **do what's best for students**, regardless of what department we're in – whether that's launching the Guided Pathways Project, revamping our assessment practices, retooling remedial education, expanding open educational resources, initiating First-Year Promise, and even changing how we sell student parking permits. The focus of these efforts is enhancing what we do for students, and ultimately improving their chances of successfully achieving their goals at College of the Canyons.

**“MAKE  
HISTORY,  
DON'T TELL  
STORIES.”**

*» Constance  
Chuks Friday*

The interaction of our energy, enthusiasm, attitude, and passion permit the focus that enables us to implement these changes. We're focused on the outcome and what it will mean for students. We're not, as in some other colleges, worried about what's best only for our own departments. At College of the Canyons, we:

- Strive to break down silos and initiate collaboration across departments.
- Help others get the job done rather than worrying about who gets the credit.
- Go the extra mile and do whatever it takes to see a project through to successful completion instead of saying, “That's not my job.”
- Remember that attitude is contagious and inspire others with our enthusiasm.
- Take responsibility and own up to mistakes rather than pointing fingers.
- Engage, because it matters to our students!

At this time in the California Community College system's evolution and bold vision for itself, we're moving forward and accomplishing our goals while others wander in circles.

### Resilience

Charting new paths requires **an ability to bounce back** from missteps. Where there is no trail, you sometimes encounter obstacles. Deep snow. Towering cliffs. Roaring rivers. Inherent in being a trailblazer is the ability to continue moving forward in spite of adversity. You go through. You go over. Or you go around. Whatever it takes, you find a way. But you don't let roadblocks stop you.

It takes confidence to **keep moving forward** when the going gets tough. When we face adversity, we bounce back from barriers and hurdles. Why? We see barriers as largely external, temporary, and surmountable. Whether it's quickly restoring air conditioning to the campus after a weekend power outage, or passing a bond measure to provide construction funding when the state won't, we find a way to get it done.

While no one volunteers to experience adversity, the resilience required to overcome it is one of the most powerful catalysts for change. How you deal with the unexpected separates those who fail from those who break through to achieve their goals. You see that every day with our students. Adversity often brings them here. They weren't planning to return to school, but they lost a job or lost a spouse and now find themselves looking for a new way to

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support their families. Others see education threatened by adversity in multiple forms. They have every intention of graduating from college, but face obstacles like financial pressures, family obligations, a daunting work schedule, or a lack of support from those who don't believe they can do it. But whatever the challenge, you help our students find a way to make it work, and enable them to keep moving down the pathway to their success.

**“GO AS FAR AS  
YOU CAN SEE;  
WHEN YOU  
GET THERE,  
YOU’LL BE  
ABLE TO SEE  
FARTHER.”**  
» *J.P. Morgan*

## HOW WILL WE BE LEADING THE WAY IN 2017-18?

As I look at the year ahead, I am reminded of the views afforded from the high elevation passes in the Sierra Nevada. Getting there requires determination and sustained effort over many miles, but the views are worth every step. It's a perspective you can't get anywhere else. Behind you lies the trail you've traveled to that point. And, before you, the trail to come stretches into the distance. You can see some of where you're headed, maybe catch a glimpse of the amazing scenery ahead, but you don't know for sure what's coming.

We're at one of those unique points as a college, and as a system of 114 community colleges in California. Thanks to the collaboration of faculty, staff, and administrators, College of the Canyons has made remarkable strides forward through the development and implementation of the Student Success and Support Program (3SP), Student Equity, Associate Degrees for Transfer, and the Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative, and other innovative programs.

Now, new initiatives on the horizon promise even more benefit for students:

- The Chancellor's Office statewide "Learn by Doing" marketing campaign rolling out this fall will showcase the opportunities available through career education.
- The Strong Workforce Stars program highlights career education programs at individual colleges where students show significant gains in factors important for advancing social mobility – a substantial increase in earnings, attainment of a living wage and a job closely matched with the field of study. Congratulations are in order to the four COC programs that earned spots on the initial list: Emergency Medical Technician, Administration of Justice, Fire Technology and Water Technology.
- A \$150 million state budget allocation will enable the Chancellor's Office to roll out a statewide Pathways initiative where every college will be expected to retool their processes to help students identify pathways of study that lead to specific degrees or careers, select a pathway, stay on that pathway, and ultimately complete their goal. We already have a jumpstart on this process thanks to our participation in the *California Guided Pathways* program.

These efforts are inspired by the Chancellor's Office newly released "Vision for Success" report, which points the way forward for California Community Colleges. Specifically, it sets ambitious goals for the system to achieve in the next five years, including:

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- Increase the number of students who acquire degrees, credentials, certificates, or skill sets that prepare them for an in-demand job.
- Increase annual student transfers to a UC or CSU campus.
- Decrease the average number of units accumulated by CCC students earning associate degrees.
- Increase the percent of exiting CTE students employed in their field of study.
- Reduce equity gaps through faster improvements among traditionally underrepresented student groups.
- Reduce regional achievement gaps through faster improvements among colleges located in regions with the lowest educational attainment of adults.

**“THE BEST  
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AFTER THE  
HARDEST  
CLIMB.”**

The “Vision for Success” also clearly states core commitments to guide the system toward achieving the goals and realizing its full potential to meet California’s workforce needs:

- Focus relentlessly on students’ end goals.
- Always design and decide with the student in mind.
- Pair high expectations with high support.
- Foster the use of data, inquiry and evidence.
- Take ownership of goals and performance.
- Enable action and thoughtful innovation.
- Lead the work of partnering across systems.

These commitments are familiar to us at College of the Canyons. They mirror our own approach to serving students and meeting the needs of the community, and they will be reflected in our own efforts to blaze new trails in the coming year. We will:

- Break ground on the 55,000-square-foot **Science Center at the Canyon Country Campus**, which will bring eight new labs online for students and help alleviate the long waitlists that STEM majors experience when trying to register for lab classes.
- Begin building a much-needed **parking structure on the Valencia Campus** where Lot 7 is located, bringing 1,000 new parking spaces to the campus.
- Implement a faster and **easier ordering process for student parking permits**, part of our ongoing efforts to enhance student services through technology.
- Launch the state’s first **Gig Economy pilot project**, which will help students build careers in self-employment through the online “gig” economy.
- Expand the hours and services of our Makerspace, thanks to a **\$311,432 grant** from the state Chancellor’s Office.
- Continue to **lead the OER movement** by expanding our use of OER materials and inspiring other colleges to follow in our footsteps.
- Collect cosmic dust particles through NASA’s High Altitude Student Platform (HASP) project, which will feature COC as the only community college team to have a student experiment carried onboard the scientific balloon this year.

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- Partner with the Valley Industrial Association to host **Connecting to Success** and bring almost 3,000 high school students to campus to learn about skills needed in the workplace, and also experience what our college has to offer.
- Launch our continuing education initiative and **grow our non-credit course offerings** by adding more classes, expanding subject areas, and holding classes in new locations throughout the community.
- Roll out *Abriendo Caminos*, a transfer pipeline from College of the Canyons to California State University, Northridge, for low-income, first-generation college students in nursing, animation, or graphics and multimedia design.
- Form the **Strong Workforce Apprenticeship Group (SWAG)** in partnership with Goodwill Southern California to bring together businesses, workforce development agencies, and educators in developing meaningful work experiences for students.

These are just a sample of what's on the horizon for the 2017-18 academic year. Given our history of pioneering leadership, I know we will accomplish all of these goals, and more!

## LET'S CELEBRATE!

**W**ith everyone returning to campus for the fall semester, we will experience the energy, vitality, anticipation, and creativity that mark the start of a new year. That sense of promise and possibility will spark fresh ideas, lead to innovations we haven't yet imagined, and create opportunities for collaboration that will open more pathways to opportunity for our students and our community.

That sounds like a reason for celebration! Please join me as we kickoff the 2017-18 academic year at College of the Canyons at our annual Opening Day Luncheon. The festivities begin at **11:30 a.m.** on **Friday, August 18**, in the Gymnasium. Inspired by our theme of "Blazing Trails - the Pathways to Success" the Opening Day Committee is rustling up an afternoon of Old West fun. With tasty vittles, toe-tappin' entertainment, an inspiring video, and **special surprises**, it promises to be a celebration that could only occur at College of the Canyons!

In the meantime, enjoy the rest of your summer, and I'll look forward to seeing you back on the COC ranch soon.

Happy Trails!

Dr. Dianne G. Van Hook  
Chancellor