



**That which you vividly imagine, sincerely believe, ardently desire and enthusiastically act upon will inevitably come to pass.**

*– William R. Lucas*

August 5, 2010

Dear Colleague:

**W**ow! Wasn't that a party? Our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration was one for the ages. I don't know about you, but I'm still impressed by what an extraordinary year we had. Somewhere between the Family Picnic, the "40 Ways to Change Your Life" videos, the Business Partners Reception and 40 years of graduates represented at Commencement, time got away from me. And, here we are ready to start another year – and another four-decade-record of remarkable achievements!

While pride is something I always feel when talking about COC, I have never been more proud of this college and its faculty, staff and administrators as I have in the last few months. COC, as well as all California community colleges statewide, have faced unprecedented funding challenges during the past year, yet we resolved to maintain our commitment to a high level of service that our community has come to expect while continuing to dream about the future. We did not use the state's economic situation as an excuse to stop dreaming, to stop doing, and to stop innovating. Instead, we moved boldly ahead with confidence and hope.

As I have talked with staff and colleagues from other colleges, read the news releases about the impact of the state's condition on their livelihoods, and talked to students from other colleges (or who have their feet in more than one community college) on our Study Abroad trip this summer, I was constantly reminded that the choices that are made, along with the people who are associated with a place and what they are made of, truly make the place. Being able to see the big picture, being able to stick to what we know is right for our students and community, having the courage to boldly go where others have not gone before, having a greater commitment to people, genuinely caring about others, realizing that each day matters, providing a chance for us to do something that counts, working to be the best we can be—not tomorrow—but each day, and doing so with honesty, integrity, and personal and collaborative pride – these are not common characteristics. They are not clearly visible—nor commonly present elsewhere. And that's just some of what makes College of the Canyons different from other community colleges.

Moreover, we don't allow others – our competitors or those who make decisions (or fail to do so) – to define us and our college. Instead, we create our own expectations and standards, hold ourselves accountable, and answer to ourselves, and thereby have the peace of mind knowing we gave it our best. As John Wooden said, "Success comes from knowing that you did your best to become the best that you are capable of becoming." We work at that every day.

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We are ambitious but, at the same time, keep our eyes on the target we are pursuing at the time. Because we do so, we seek and achieve satisfaction in the effort. Think back on how many times this past year you felt the joy associated with doing something really well; with achieving something you had not done before; of the pride and self-confidence that emerged because you “did it,” whatever it was!

Ambition, courage, focus, stick-to-itiveness, accountability, effort, and attitude all contribute to setting COC apart from the rest, and have marked our last 40 years of achievement. We started with 700 students, a handful of faculty and staff, and no campus. Today we have two physical campuses and a comprehensive online presence, more than 500 full-time employees, more than 1,500 class sections per semester, 23,000-plus students, and an overall budget of \$202 million.

**How Have We Done That?**

We have built on the momentum of our success and taken the initiative to create new opportunities and expand our connections. As a College of the Canyons employee, you share in the credit for what we have accomplished during our storied and sometimes colorful history. It is your energy and initiative that enhance our development and propel our forward motion. You help create an environment that enables our students to pursue opportunities, take the next steps, open doors and create the futures they envision for themselves. You bring your character, your integrity, your compassion, and your care to all you do here. Your impact changes lives each and every day. Nowhere was that more evident than at Commencement, when we saw 40 alumni representing their individual classes lead the procession. To see the college’s record of success embodied in each graduate was a tremendous source of pride for me, and served as a visible reminder and powerful inspiration of our purpose and mission.

Our theme for this year is **Creating Opportunities ▪ Expanding Connections** – two ways in which our service to students and to our community’s businesses is exceptional. In their relatively short time with us, we equip students with the skills and knowledge to help make connections and create opportunities for themselves and develop the foundation and confidence to discover, wish, and grow. We help people get where they want to go in life, and we inspire them to discover new destinations—all the while instilling a sense of passion, commitment, and excellence in what they do. We accomplish this by practicing what we preach and by being passionate and committed in our own quest for excellence.

And, although it’s a mission we don’t take lightly, it’s not all that difficult to do. The reason is simple: College of the Canyons is the place where the best and brightest people –faculty, staff, and administrators – converge to guide and propel students to the next level and beyond. We’re mindful of the formidable task at hand, but we accomplish it precisely because we relish the idea of educating, inspiring, and helping people move ahead, both professionally and personally. We have:

- An exceptionally well-qualified, motivated and committed staff;
- The support from key community partners, friends, and advocates to build the bridges and remove the obstacles so we can blaze trails to future success;
- Dreams for the future;
- Plans to get there;
- An impressive record of accomplishments and quality;
- An image as a “can-do” place that embraces opportunities and change; and
- An “attitude” that attracts winners and *inspires* people to give it their best shot day after day.

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### Creating Opportunities ▪ Expanding Connections

You and your colleagues offer an amazing array of talents to the things we accomplish at the College. The combined effects of those talents have made substantial, creative, innovative, important, and lasting contributions to the community. You have altered the quality of life of our neighborhoods, the growth and development of our businesses, and the futures of the students who chose us to help them achieve their goals. You have given of yourselves, shared your confidence and energy, and served as role models, confidants, and advisors to students and colleagues alike. And, working together as a community, you have contributed to the amazing daily impact the college has on those around us, and enhanced our potential to meet this community's needs in unique, timely, responsive and lasting ways.

#### What Did we Accomplish in our 40<sup>th</sup> Year of Service to Our Community?

The results of your character and the foundations you have helped to put in place through your actions, your leadership, your passion, your spirit and your commitment are visible across both campuses and in our community. 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 **\$5 million** in grant revenue to fund innovation and needed programs.
- Opened the University Center and debuted **five** new bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programs, bringing the total number of available degree and credential programs to **37**.
- Obtained American Bar Association **approval** of our Paralegal program.
- Redesigned the registration process to create a smoother, **easier-to-navigate** process for our students.
- Completed the wireless campus project, so all student and staff spaces have **wireless access** on both the Valencia and Canyon Country campuses.
- Launched an **Honors Program** to offer an enriched curriculum to students with a strong academic record in order to help increase their chances for successful transfer to competitive four-year institutions.
- Debuted the **First Year Experience** program, which helps students prepare for college by providing face-to-face counseling, guaranteed classes, and faculty mentors for students who sign up for this innovative offering.
- Opened the **Writing Achievement Center**, which offers supplemental instruction workshops, guided learning activities, and tutoring services to help students bolster their writing skills.
- Achieved a **95 percent** fill rate in our classes, thanks to the flexibility and dedication of our outstanding faculty who welcomed as many students as there were desks in their classrooms.
- Launched the **SIGMA Math Achievement Center**, which offers supplemental instruction workshops and guided learning activities with the goal of improving the success rate in our basic skills math courses.
- Helped more students afford college as we increased Financial Aid applicants by **32 percent**, and processed **36 percent** more Financial Aid awards.
- 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.
- Celebrated with our Speech Team, which won **second place** in the Small Schools Division at the 2010 Pacific Southwest Collegiate Forensics Association (PSCFA) Spring Championships, and earned a school sweepstakes award.
- Increased safety awareness training and reduced work related injuries by **43 percent**.
- Negotiated a textbook rental program estimated to save COC students approximately **\$370,000**.
- Welcomed the City of Santa Clarita's **Work Source Center** to the University Center, enabling job seekers to take advantage of not only what the Work Source Center offers, but also our college's complementary services. (Forty percent of our students are eligible to take advantage of the services offered by the center.)

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- Saw the **1,359<sup>th</sup>** person graduate from the University Center with a bachelor's degree or master's degree.
- Expanded the Field Studies program by increasing student participation by **22 percent** and recruiting new faculty members from History and Sociology to participate.
- Commenced construction on an ambitious expansion of the **Del Valle Fire Training Center** in Val Verde in partnership with the Los Angeles County Fire Department.
- Launched the **Chancellor's Business Council** to help bridge the gap between the college and the business community and enhance the services we provide to local companies.
- Increased the overall funds raised this year by the College of the Canyons Foundation by **14.3 percent** over the same time last year (second year in a row with an increase).
- Secured **\$1,403,063** 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 **2,774 local employees** and served **805 employers** through ETI, CACT and SBDC.
- Received recognition as the **top-performing** SBDC in the Los Angeles region as measured by client results/service levels provided.
- Celebrated Academy of the Canyons' selection as "one of America's Best High Schools" by *US News and World Report* and its Bronze medal award, which makes it rank among the top **10 percent** of high schools in America!
- Approved **new degrees and certificates** for Architectural Computer Aided Drafting, Communication Studies, Engineering Apprentice, General & Emerging Technology Laboratory Technician, Liberal Studies – Elementary Teaching Preparation, Personal Trainer, and Water Systems Technology.
- Implemented the **Behavioral Intervention Team** to help employees identify student problem behaviors and get help for them as soon as possible.
- Celebrated as the Women's Volleyball Team received the **Pepsi Scholar Team Award**, the highest academic team achievement given annually by the state Commission on Athletics.
- Completed Student Learning Outcomes for **85 percent** of our courses.
- Reached out to **90 local organizations** and contributed 7,482 hours of volunteer service through the efforts of more than **40 faculty and staff** and **350 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).
- Saw two **Phi Theta Kappa** students – Kelsey Kim and Eric Ibrahim – named to the All-California Community College Academic Team.
- Built on the success of the inaugural ARTstART event, and drew thousands of visitors to the Valencia campus, including **12 elementary teachers** and more than **1,500 students**, for a daylong event in May that highlighted COC's fine and performing arts departments and partnership activities with local school districts.
- Welcomed **11,000 elementary school students** to our campuses through the K-12 Arts Education Partnership, which received **\$260,000** in external funding.
- Celebrated our **40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** with a wide variety of activities that paid tribute to our amazing record of service to the community.
- Reduced our **operating budget** in the wake of state funding shortfalls without laying off full-time staff, or eliminating programs and services for students and/or staff.

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- Launched the **Department Chair Institute**, which explored successful strategies used by chairs to meet the increasing challenges of leading from the middle while staying focused on carrying out the goals of the department.
- Opened the **Early Childhood Education Center** at the Canyon Country Campus.
- Broke ground on the expansion of **Mentry Hall**.
- Held a ribbon cutting for the **Clean Room/Nano Lab** that will support our General and Emerging Technologies Lab Tech Training program, which helps students gain needed skills to obtain cutting-edge jobs in the biotech, electronics, pharmaceutical and chemistry fields. And, we dedicated the Clean Room in memory of Dr. Ram Manvi, our former dean of math, science, and engineering technologies.
- Established **8 new endowed scholarship** funds. Matched by the Bernard Osher Foundation, they will yield **\$307,794** or **15.5 new scholarships** for COC students, in perpetuity.
- Launched the Summer Technology Institute, a series of **30-plus technology workshops** offered over the summer for faculty, classified staff, and administrators.
- Created the **Department Showcase Program** where department staff introduced themselves to others and provided a summary of their services available for students and staff.
- Obtained a commitment of state funding so we could **expand our Library** and create state-of-the-art information resources.
- **And so much more!**

The list could go on, and I could fill page after page with the accomplishments members of the COC team achieved individually and together in the last year. **Instead, let me thank you for a job well done!** When viewed in the overall challenging context in which we found ourselves – shrinking state resources and enhanced expectations, along with constantly changing parameters from external entities – you did an extraordinary job, and as a result, our college once again distinguished itself from the rest. I am in awe of this amazing team!

We did so because **you** refused to give up, because **you** chose to be resourceful, because **you** collaborated across departments and with the greater community, because **you** dreamed, planned and did, and most of all, because **you** brought **your** unique talents and were personally committed to all that **you** do! As a result, **you** contributed to strengthening our foundation, expanding our capacity, enhancing our reputation among our students and within the community we serve, and adding to our 40-year legacy of service, of high quality, of always going above and beyond, of always daring to do what is needed, and of figuring out how to make it happen.

#### **What Does the Future Hold for College of the Canyons?**

As we look ahead, I know great things are in store. Futurist John Schaar has said, “The future is not a result of choices among alternative paths offered by the present, but a place that is created – created first in the mind and will, created next in activity. The future is not some place we are going to, but one we are creating.” Because of your energetic efforts and commitment, and those of the colleagues with whom you collaborate in innovative and strategic ways, we will create many amazing initiatives in the 2010-11 academic year. This is just a snapshot of what we will accomplish:

- We will complete construction on the **Applied Technology Building** at the Canyon Country Campus and offer hands-on training in high-wage and emerging fields like solar technology, automotive technology, electronics, construction management, building inspection and construction trades (plumbing and electrical technician).
- The much-needed **30,000**-square-foot expansion of Mentry Hall will be completed. Funded by local bond money, this project will enable us to meet increasing student demand for media arts classes. The

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building features a cutting-edge learning environment where students will gain the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in the digital workplace.

- We will move forward with continuing to implement the **LEAP projects** that have been developed over the last three years.
- To better serve our students, we will **double the size of our library** by adding **52,000** square feet of state-of-the-art space to house the Tutorial Learning Center (TLC), instructional labs, classrooms, offices and expanded Library facilities. The project should be completed in late 2011.
- If you are flying on Southwest Airlines in October, pull out the airline's **Spirit Magazine** from the seat pocket and enjoy the articles featuring the City of Santa Clarita, the college's role in the community and why our valley is such a great place to live!
- The **Athletic Hall of Fame** dinner will be held on January 27, 2011, and will feature NFL great and Hart High graduate Joe Kapp, the only player who has played in the Super Bowl, the Rose Bowl, and the Grey Cup (Canadian Football League championship game).
- The **Re-Entry/Veterans Center** will move into its own office and offer admissions, registration, and counseling services for eligible students, as well as workshops and orientations designed to help ensure these students are successful as they work toward completing their educational goals.
- The **University Center** will expand its menu of offerings with new certificates in Culture Language and Diversity (CLAD), Fitness Instruction and Fundraising from UCLA Extension, and Financial Planning and Life Insurance Underwriting from American College. Brandman University will bring an Autism certificate and a Master's degree in Leadership in Early Childhood Development.
- Backed by a **\$3 million** grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF), we will establish an Alternative Energy Regional Center and create and expand alternative energy programs at partnering four-year colleges and universities.
- A **\$500,000** federal appropriation will enable us to launch an Alternative Energy Training Institute in partnership with Copper Mountain College and College of San Mateo.
- We will debut **new degree/certificate options** in Energy Management, News Reporting and Anchoring, Property and Casualty Insurance, Gerontology Services, Restaurant Entrepreneurship, Web Development, Web Publishing and Design, and English as a Second Language.
- In partnership with the **Performing Arts Center** and with funding from a James Irvine Foundation grant, the Public Information Office will continue reaching out to the Hispanic community with Spanish-language radio and print ads.
- We'll be rolling out a new **Career Technical Education** print ad campaign featuring powerful images and a new tagline targeted at high-school-age audiences.
- The working drawings for the new two-story **Administration/Student Services** Building will be completed.
- We will implement the **LEAP** Class of 2010 projects, which will lead to a student services call center, a permanent student art collection, a community outreach road show, better connection of the training opportunities available in the district, an international education center, a new service for local businesses to contract with COC employees on freelance projects, new workshops that will provide students with information on CTE options, and a wellness center offering services to staff and students.
- The **Canyon Country Campus** will continue to welcome the community by hosting innovative events, include two "Star Parties," a gardening lecture, and an outdoor movie night.
- We will continue to lead the way in **economic development** by expanding the service area of the Center for Applied Competitive Technology, partnering with Southern California Edison for energy management training, and hosting a Small Business Access to Health Care Conference.

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It is clear that, consistent with the spirit and enthusiasm that has helped get us to where we are today, College of the Canyons is definitely forging its own path to create opportunities and expand connections! The future is ours to mold...there for our discovery, challenging us to innovate and create, to dream bold dreams, and to make our efforts count as we turn our dreams into reality.

#### **What Makes College of the Canyons Different?**

Why are we moving forward while others are barely treading water? What sets us apart from the rest is that as a college, and as individuals working together as a team:

- We don't take "no" for an answer.
- We don't only depend on state funding to get the job done.
- We are resourceful and seek out external revenue and partnerships and sponsorships to fund our innovation and enhance our ability to fulfill our goals.
- We are flexible, resilient, responsive, and we reinvent ourselves daily.
- We dare to dream, and act to turn those dreams into reality.
- We believe in and foster the leadership qualities of all staff members.
- We know long-term success requires short-term focus.
- We do not give up!
- We encourage and support risk-taking and applaud initiative.
- We celebrate our success, but we don't rest on our laurels. Instead, we move on to the next opportunities.

That's what sets College of the Canyons apart from the rest.

The last few years have brought challenges to every college in the state. And yet few colleges have demonstrated the courage or put forth the energy needed to achieve their dreams. Whatever the reason – a lack of confidence, an unwillingness to change the status quo, or even plain old fear – they find themselves paralyzed and intimidated. They will not leap ahead, do what it takes to gain a competitive advantage, or lead and clear the path for dreams and opportunities ahead.

Unlike these "other" colleges, we at College of the Canyons will continue to do all of this and more! It is in our spirit. It's what we do naturally. And it is what has made us what we are and has enabled us to create a history of which we can be proud.

College of the Canyons is a "can-do" place comprised of a committed team that strives to achieve great things. And, I'm convinced that the energy, hope, vision, spirit, and belief in possibilities each of you bring to what you do are the keys that open new doors so we can achieve great things together. Your passion for your students, the way you approach daily challenges and changing circumstances, the way you seek out and define opportunities, the plans you have for the future of your department, and the reputation of the college define COC and set it apart from places whose greatest claim to fame is maintaining the status quo and staying afloat. Combined with your capability, determination, enthusiasm, compassion, and commitment, the excellence we have achieved is certain to continue. What a powerful place COC is and what a difference your leadership and commitment make in the lives of our students!

Each and every one of you has helped to make that possible. I thank you. As a person, and as chancellor of this district, I am humbled by what you do. I appreciate what you have done in the past and look forward to what you will do in the future.

- We are where we are and will go where we will go because of you and your colleagues at COC.

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- The energy and confidence you project is visible proof that attitudes do make a big difference—in both the short and long haul.
- The caliber of standards you set for yourself, the way you care for and about your students and each other, how you communicate with one another, and your commitment, are among the many things that allow our college to excel and make it a great place to work.

I look forward to 2010-11 with eager anticipation. I'm excited because I know we can *create opportunities and expand connections* as long as we do it together. That unity of purpose motivates me, and reminds me how blessed I am to work with such uniquely talented and spirited people who make this a special place, where leadership, action, innovation, compassion and commitment are evident in people, in offices, in departments, in classrooms and in events and initiatives across our campuses.

That is certainly a worthwhile reason to celebrate! To launch our year of **Creating Opportunities ▪ Expanding Connections**, I invite you to join me on Friday, August 20, at 11:30 a.m. in the Gym for our Opening Day Luncheon. As we always do, we will honor our colleagues with a service award presentation, acknowledge our visiting retirees, and be entertained in unique COC style! As well, we will also be distributing our commemorative 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary book that highlights our 40 years of service to the community.

In closing, I would like to inspire you with a quote from Henry Ford: "Believe in the best, think your best, study your best, have a goal for the best, never be satisfied with less than your best, try your best, and in the long run things will turn out for the best."

I look forward to seeing you at Opening Day and starting together on our next four decades of being the best community college anywhere!

Go Cougars!



Dr. Dianne Van Hook  
Chancellor