



“You can't really predict the future. All you can do is invent it.”

– Frederik Pohl

August 2016

Dear Colleagues:

Welcome to the beginning of an exciting new adventure – the next chapter in our bold march into the future. The days ahead present unlimited opportunities, bound only by the limits of our imagination. I know this, because that spirit of optimism and creativity – the conviction that anything you can imagine is possible – has propelled College of the Canyons to where it is today. Our history is marked by incredible achievements, grand ideas executed by people who pushed the accepted limits of possibilities. This passionate pursuit of excellence has created a culture of ingenuity and hard work, resulting in a college that is uniquely equipped to build for the future.

MOMENTS IN TIME – WHAT WAS ONCE OUR FUTURE BECOMES OUR PAST

The foundation we will build upon is firmly rooted in the past – both recent and years ago. Just as our past experiences shape the decisions we make today, our memories recall moments in time, add perspective, and tell our story. For me, memories recall meaningful people, places, times and feelings that are very much a part of the fabric of who I am and fuel the spirit that motivates me each and every day.

I recently returned from a vacation in Lake Tahoe where I explored the trails and waterways, absorbed the stunning scenery, and reflected on the people, experiences and challenges that have made a difference in my life. My annual trek to the Sierra Nevada is always inspiring and reflective, providing relatively undistracted time to contemplate the past, challenge my limits, put things in perspective, refocus, recharge, and dream about the future.

What allows me to dream about the future with confidence are the many valued professional relationships I've had the great fortune to form over the years. Many of them have been developed here at College of the Canyons, which isn't all that surprising since I've spent two-thirds of my working life here! I place great value in these relationships, working side-by-side with principled, committed, hard-working people who demonstrate creativity and passion at every turn. It's inspiring to work with people who are building for the future by blazing new trails and, in the process, bringing out the best in themselves and others, especially in our students.

COMING HOME & LOOKING AHEAD

My time in Lake Tahoe was refreshing and reinvigorating and I'm looking forward to the year ahead. I hope you took time to rest and recharge, to play and to dream, and to imagine the possibilities. I am excited to learn more about the new ideas, as well as the innovations that you and your teams will introduce to continue building for the future of our college and our students.

As I returned to a Santa Clarita engulfed in the smoke and ash of wildfires, I was struck by the many challenges our community has faced in just the last month. Two major fires, one on each side of the valley and near each of our campuses, presented us with an opportunity to play a role in responding to these crises. I'm sure many of you have spoken with those who battled the Stevenson Ranch and Sand Canyon fires. Some of you were intimately involved. About 90 members of the Cougar Family were evacuated or had their homes threatened. In true COC fashion, COC staff pulled together and did what they could to help others.

*Let our legacy be
about "planting
seeds in a garden
you never get to see"
- from the
Broadway play
"Hamilton"*

I'm so proud that you demonstrate your "Cougar character" not only during emergencies, but on a daily basis. Whether you helped out with the Incident Command Center; provided relief and supplies to the less fortunate; took the time to pay a little more attention to the student or colleague who just needed to be heard; helped our students to compete; or stepped up to the plate in a heroic way to advance the campaign for Measure E, ***you are part of the great things that happen at COC.***

Your character, energy and compassion help fuel our progress and achieve success. The college stands out and grows stronger because of you, the people who make College of the Canyons the finest community college in California. I thank you, sincerely and from the bottom of my heart, for doing all that you do to epitomize our ideals, serve as role models for others, and continue to build for the future of COC.

Your selflessness and your greatness draws me back while fueling the excitement I feel at the start of any new academic year. ***And this year that is especially true with the next steps to COC's future already in process.***

BUILDING THE FUTURE STARTS NOW

As we begin a new fall semester with Opening Day on August 19, I'm sure you can agree: Every year at COC is different! **The good work of the past built the context for the future, and one key factor making this academic year so different from others was set in motion in June.**

Thanks to your tireless volunteer efforts and belief in the impact COC can have on the lives of countless students and this community for years to come, Measure E was successfully passed by the community we serve this past June 7. This bond will provide “fuel in the tank” for us to continue building classrooms, lecture halls, office space, adding access points, modernizing 45-year-old spaces and so much more for the next decade plus!

The \$230 million in resources that Measure E will provide over the next 12 years presents COC with an unparalleled opportunity to act on our program plans and provide continuous improvement in learning spaces for students and alumni as we work together, *building the future*.

Close your eyes and take a moment to imagine the completion of the Canyon Country Campus: the construction of permanent, state-of-the-art classrooms, lecture halls, labs and open spaces. At Valencia, imagine a series of long-overdue modernizations that you have identified for buildings, access, labs and lecture halls, including the much-needed parking structure! These major improvements will give COC the capacity to serve the 30,000 students expected to arrive on our campuses by 2027.

WE MAKE OUR OPPORTUNITIES

How is it that we have this opportunity? At College of the Canyons, **we are brave enough** to self-reflect and honestly assess ourselves as to what worked and what could be better. **We are smart enough** to take our best ideas and transform them into programs and services with lasting impact. **We are confident enough** to innovate, positively impacting untold numbers of lives. We do this because **We Are COC**: a community of passionate innovators; a team of visionary, tenacious and committed leaders. We have this opportunity because we created it through vision, along with tenacity, teamwork and flexibility.

As illustrated by the passage of Measure E, we anticipate tomorrow while delivering today. For the community to entrust us with such a large responsibility for the third time in 15 years, underscores the stellar reputation earned by each and every one of us. We can build for the future because of the foundation we have established by being excellent community citizens.

- ✓ We earn community support by always following through.
- ✓ We use our experience to guide us.
- ✓ We use our dreams to drive us.
- ✓ We use our integrity to finish what we started.
- ✓ We stay true to our word.
- ✓ And, always, we use the strength that occurs through teamwork to find ways to better serve students by envisioning how we can continue to invest in designing our future.

For all these reasons, it only seems natural how we arrived at our theme for the 2016-17 academic year: ***We Are COC – Building for the Future***.

So, what better way to kick off this fall semester than to challenge yourself to think of five, perhaps 10, department and division goals that you’ll see completed in the year ahead. Then, look ahead to 2022 or even 2027. Yes! Think one full decade out about the changes coming to COC and ask yourself: “What is **my** master plan?”

Once you have reconnected and recommitted to the plans you have and will set in motion, challenge yourself to work that master plan and build *your* future, both within COC and personally! As we embark on the newest chapter in ***We Are COC: Building for the Future***, together we have before us the opportunity to share our strong capabilities, characteristics and culture with prospective business and community partners; and future students and coworkers!

FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

Our future is possible because of the foundation of success laid for us by those who have come before. It is that rich history of success that has given us the ability to lay claim to certain characteristics, which have become synonymous with College of the Canyons:

- ✓ Student-focused
- ✓ Innovative
- ✓ Responsive
- ✓ Diverse
- ✓ Caring
- ✓ Award Winners

COC IS STUDENT-FOCUSED

First, and most important, as a committed group of people, we are focused on the success of our students. That's a big responsibility, as the definition of ***their*** success is as diverse as their reasons for coming to COC. It seems that no matter what individuals hope to accomplish, large numbers of students find success here.

That is evident in walking our campuses and looking at the banners highlighting our alumni. You'll see the array of accomplishments that distinguish our alumni and show what College of the Canyons can empower others to achieve. We are the:

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| ✓ Veterinarian's college | ✓ Journalist's college |
| ✓ Firefighter's college | ✓ Scientist's college |
| ✓ Nurse's college | ✓ Engineer's college |
| ✓ Attorney's college | ✓ Deputy's college |
| ✓ Teacher's college | ✓ Actor's college |
| ✓ EMT's college | |

Our accomplishments demonstrate our commitment to students, while the outcomes manifest how much we emphasize and facilitate continued success. In 2015-16, our success can be seen in specific milestones: We had the largest graduating class in college history with 1,766 students – **an increase of 21 percent over the prior year**; we ranked second in the state for student completion rate; and we are one of just a few colleges in the state where student enrollment continues to grow.

It's successes like these that strengthen our foundation, driving COC to continue Building for the Future. And, it's successes like these that shore up our collective confidence, encouraging us to be innovative.

COC IS INNOVATIVE

That COC produces innovators has been a long-established fact. Administrators, faculty and staff are encouraged to dream and dream BIG! This freedom to dream gives rise to creativity and innovation, which have long been defining characteristics of College of the Canyons.

We proved that again in the past year as we made the long-anticipated move to electronic services for our students with the launch of the **online education plan**, giving students the power to plan their college experience in advance; expanded use of **ePortfolios**, empowering students to develop professional digital examples of their work to show potential employers; and the implementation of **etranscripts**, significantly reducing costs of mailing and saving priceless time.

These are but a few of the countless accomplishments that have benefitted students. By saving time and money with these student-focused services now, it provides us with the flexibility to plan for more innovations that help us better respond to the needs of current and future students.

And, innovate and respond we do! Since Spring 2008, when we first introduced LEAP (Leadership Education in Action Program)—followed in Spring 2010 with LEAP II—participants have developed 51 “Solution Team” projects. Many of these outstanding ideas have become funded programs, which have been incorporated into our mainstream student services. Just a few of those great innovations include programs such as the Student Success Task Force, Behavioral Intervention Team, OER Degree Pathway, MakerSpace, After School Extracurricular Enrichment Space, Breaking into High Tech Fields, Safety & Sexual Assault Messaging Campaign, and Streamlined Student Registration.

Our future will be shaped by the assumptions we make about who we are and what we can be. ~ R.M. Kanter

COC does not hesitate to partner up to benefit students. “It Takes a Barrio” is one such program where COC and CSUN’s Chicano Studies programs teamed up to utilize a three-year National Education Association Great Public Schools grant. This program mentors minority students at Golden Valley high school in exploring and pursuing a pathway to higher education; and exposing them to pertinent social justice issues that affect them and their families.

Furthermore, ***we actively seek ways to help students succeed: even when they may think they can’t.*** This dedication to our students is demonstrated daily in our award-winning classes: Math 75 and English 96. **These programs triple our students’ chances of completing these classes in a shorter time period.** Programs such as these put our student focus on full display, while providing our institution the flexibility to respond to student needs *before* they arise.

COC IS RESPONSIVE

Much of our innovation is driven by our continued focus on responding to emerging community needs. Whether the need is business and industry, local school districts, or community organizations, COC has built a reputation for collaboration and partnership, which has yielded amazing opportunities for our students and the encompassing community.

Our responsiveness was on full display during the past year during **two job fairs that served more than 1,000 job seekers and employers**; and as **we delivered training in chemistry, earth sciences, biology, physics and engineering to science teachers from local K-12 school districts** to help prepare them for new science standards.

Further, COC's one-of-a-kind University Center worked with its partners to **launch a bachelor of science in nursing program**, shortening the time needed for nurses to earn bachelor's degrees; as well as a much-in-demand **bachelor of arts in accounting program**. COC also opened a civic engagement initiative highlighted by the first-ever "McKeon Leadership Forum," named in honor of retired Congressman Buck McKeon.

Our historic "firsts" started long ago and are as diverse as our student population; our faculty and staff; and the community we serve. When Cougars work together, with no artificial boundaries, there are zero limits to what we can achieve.

The future will be shaped in the arena of human activity, by those willing to commit their minds and their bodies to the task. ~ Robert Kennedy

COC IS DIVERSE

Achievement can only be reached at the highest levels when **inclusion is a priority**. Diversity is a hallmark of College of the Canyons, and we proactively encourage different perspectives, experiences and cultural influences to shape our futures and improve experiences for all. We value the richness of experience that results from differing perspectives. In this increasingly diverse environment, we naturally foster cooperation, acceptance, democracy and free expression of ideas; diversity opens the door for greater understanding among people from all cultures and all walks of life.

Our student body grows increasingly diverse, as does our faculty, administrators and staff. This is something of which I am particularly proud. Our diversity allowed College of the Canyons to showcase our efforts at the Fall Language Film Series of award-winning foreign-language films, the International Music & Dance Festival, the International Film Festival, and the International Poetry Reading.

The college community crowded in to meet and interact with acclaimed Asian American author Celeste Ng for a discussion of her best-selling novel "Everything I Never Told You" during her visit. Many more people from the community we service—students and residents—were present at the "2016 Library & Equity Speaker Series." This event addressed a number of interrelated industry

issues and themes such as emerging technology, diversity and inclusion, academic literature, and outreach efforts.

To me, one of the most impactful projects of the last academic year was a 2016 winter session assignment that soon turned into the opportunity of a lifetime for the group of **College of the Canyons advanced animation students**. **This talented group was responsible for producing “When Man To Man Is A Wolf: Scenes From The Life of Lidia Budgor,” a Holocaust-focused documentary that premiered as part of an exhibit at the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust, and will be featured on campus later this year.**

The stimulating discussions prompted by these events brought up even more ideas and inclusive events for the 2016-17 academic year and beyond. At COC, we take great care to ensure that our best practices reflect and serve our global student, faculty, administrator and staff population.

COC IS CARING

The spirit of connectedness and care for one another is clearly evident on our campuses. I see it in the way faculty, staff, and administrators interact, and I see it particularly in how we make an effort to serve our students and help them face challenges beyond the classroom.

From presenting the **“I'Mpossible Project,”** a one-man Broadway-style play **tackling the subject of suicide and its prevention**; to hosting the **Body-Mind-Wellness Community Resource Fair**; to organizing **Volunteers in Action**, which enabled dozens of organizations to share their mission and recruit student volunteers, to the **in-depth research of human trafficking** and its impacts on the Santa Clarita Valley by students from the **Civic Engagement Club**, our **real compassion for others shows** itself time and again as COC seeks a way to help with every challenge, at every turn.

That Cougars continue to turn their thoughts and give of their time to others is just one more characteristic of which we should all be proud.

COC IS AWARD-WINNING

Who we are as a college – student-focused, innovative, responsive, diverse, and caring – has enabled us to stand out from the rest. Individual actions and a commitment to teamwork have contributed to our collective success. The byproduct has been the public acknowledgements the college has earned through **your** diligence and effort.

The highest recognition was the **2015 Student Success Award**, bestowed by the California Community College Chancellor’s Office. As if that wasn’t exciting enough, the Board of Governors honored COC with the **2015-16 Exemplary Program Honorable Mention Award for the “Accelerate Your Dreams to Reality” project.**

Our excitement continued with the **California Community College Classified Senate (4CS) Model Senate Award won by the Classified Senate**. This honor is given to only three of California’s 113 community colleges.

And, COC Athletics made it a three-peat with its **third consecutive Western States Conference Supremacy Award**.

WE ARE COC: BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

These accomplishments are just a few of those that COC realized in a single year. We'll highlight more for you on the college's website in the next few days. Watch your email for details!

At the same time, the qualities that enable us to stand out have also set the stage for the future. As we move forward, I am eagerly awaiting our upcoming achievements, which I am confident will be many!

When we act as one, College of the Canyons can achieve remarkable feats and reach amazing heights of success. **So, I ask and challenge you:** If we can achieve whatever we can imagine, ***what will you accomplish?*** In 2017? In 2022? In 2027?

There is nothing like a dream to create the future. ~ Victor Hugo

We aim high. We are tenacious. We have high standards. We risk. We dream. We dare to do, and we do more. We Are COC – Building for the Future!

The future ***you invent*** will be amazing, indeed, so let's get started! **Please join me on Friday, August 19, for our annual Opening Day Luncheon** as we kick-off the 2016-17 academic year at College of the Canyons. **Doors open at 11:30 a.m.** You will trip the light fantastic through a futuristic tunnel that takes you back to the 1950s. Nosh on diner specials, get your toes a tappin' along to live music and navigate your way "Back to the Future" at our *Hall of Innovation*. I hear **there will be some unforgettable surprises** at this year's event, so, believe me, you don't want to miss out!

Wearing a poodle skirt or white t-shirt and leather jacket is entirely optional, but I won't stop you if you'd like to really get in the swing. The new academic year is right around the corner, and 2016-17 is shaping up to be the most exciting year yet!

Sincerely,

Dr. Dianne G. Van Hook
Chancellor