

August 08, 2008

Dear Colleague:

The start of a new academic year is an exciting time. While College of the Canyons is offering classes on a year-round basis nowadays, there is still that newness to the fall semester, with new students, new faculty and staff members, new programs, new hopes, new dreams and new opportunities for all of us.

Summer vacation provides Roger and me with the opportunity to do what we always love to do - spend time in the mountains, hit the scenic trails, find new paths and visit with old friends. And, a road trip inevitably takes us by other community colleges, and I can never resist the opportunity to visit colleagues throughout the state and learn what they are doing at their colleges. The more I do that, the more I am reminded of just how special a place College of the Canyons is. I am not referring to College of the Canyons as just so much dirt, brick, mortar and steel. To me, the heart and soul of the college is the people – the faculty, staff, students, volunteers, community members and supporters who have come together to create a place where dreams do indeed come true. **And our people are the BEST!**

As we embark on the 2008-2009 academic year, the college is marking its 39th year of service to the Santa Clarita Valley. We begin this year with a strong sense of purpose and an awareness of the responsibilities we have to contribute to our community, to **provide access and paths** for them to get where they need to go, to raise the bar of excellence in everything we do, to provide a safety net for many community members during the current economic downturn when they need us most, and to be here as we always have been to **enhance possibilities and to change lives**.

A New Theme for A New Year – Our College Planning Team (CPT), made up of representatives from virtually every facet of the college, has traditionally developed themes that give individuals and departments a way to focus, develop, acknowledge, and celebrate new activities and programs. In previous years we worked toward goals related to Expanding Opportunities, Connecting Communities and Access and Success. Choosing a new theme every two years gives everyone a chance to refocus and think creatively about the direction their departments and the college are moving. This year, acknowledging the pace of change and development in the world and our place in it, the CPT created a new theme to reflect our priorities for the coming two years. Brainstorming our new theme is an exciting event at CPT meetings, and the discussions are always lively, passionate, insightful, and tinged with humor. Above all else, they demonstrate the commitment that every department on campus has to student success. Everyone there is committed to offering our students the best classes and services possible, and it comes through in their suggestions for a new theme. This year's process for selecting a theme was particularly exciting. With the newly-updated college Mission and Vision Statements and updated language in our college Philosophy, we focused on the college's fundamental reasons for being and reached consensus on the theme, **"Advancing the Student-Ready College."**

Much has been made in academia of "college-ready students" and the level of preparedness that students have when they arrive on campus. While we hope that all students come to us ready to dive into what has traditionally been labeled as "college-level" work, we know that is not always the case. As the gateway to higher education in California, community colleges welcome students as they are. That means we need to be prepared to serve students who differ in their past educational achievements, racial and cultural heritage, socioeconomic backgrounds, and levels of readiness and preparation to succeed in college. By and large, we are prepared to do that, but in some areas, we require a shift in thinking to adapt to the varying needs of students. Our theme, "Advancing the Student-Ready College," is fitting for not only where we stand now in terms of our ability to serve students, but it provides the backdrop and

context for developing our action plans and carrying out our strategic goals. This new theme will help us to move forward in new and meaningful ways.

We Are Decidedly Different –I'd like to share with you a long-held belief of mine. Quite some time ago, I ran across an article on Albert Einstein in which he stated that the definition of "insanity" was "doing the same thing over and over, expecting different results." The simplicity of this statement struck me at a fundamental level. How on earth can we expect change, if we insist on doing things the same way over time? And, in a world that expects us to keep up with change as it occurs, how on earth can institutions like ours react to the demands and needs of our communities if we aren't willing do to things differently?

So, I am particularly gratified when College of the Canyons is singled out, time and again, for leading the way in developing innovative solutions to current challenges. I am gratified that the faculty and staff who are the heart and soul of our college embrace the challenges we face, take risks, work as a well-drilled team to find solutions, and **dare to think differently**. With this philosophy in mind, we free ourselves to fearlessly pursue our dreams, the dreams of our students and of our community. We enable ourselves – by being constantly responsive– to touch lives, one person at a time.

That is what makes us unique among the 110 California Community Colleges and why I am so proud to be associated with our college.

A Quick Look Back – As we begin to think about what we want to accomplish in the year ahead, I'd like to take a moment and reflect. It is inspiring to look back on all that we accomplished in just 12 short months, what we did for the first time, and see what a high level of "student-readiness" we have already achieved. In 2007-08 the most visible outcome was becoming a **two-campus college** with the opening of the Canyon Country Campus just in time for the fall 2007 semester. I still marvel at what a remarkable accomplishment that was, given that the parking lot was installed the weekend before classes started, and so many of you donned work clothes, rolled up your sleeves, endured the summer heat, and pitched in at the last minute to apply the finishing touches and to spruce things up so we could put our best foot forward the day we opened. But it wasn't enough just to open the campus. No, in fact, Canyon Country continued to get better throughout the year as we made improvements to the facility, made adjustments so things could work more smoothly, and continued to expand on the potential of the new campus to make it a continuously improving resource for students.

As impressive as that was, we also managed to open three new instructional facilities at the same time. **Aliso Hall, Aliso Lab, and Hasley Hall all made their debut**. And again, it was because many of you gave up nights and weekends and jumped in to lend your helping hands by moving furniture, installing software and computers and the myriad of things we needed to do to get these buildings ready for students. The camaraderie, collegiality, care and can-do attitude displayed by so many was such an inspiring way to start the year and demonstrated your commitment to not only your colleagues, but to our students who are our ultimate beneficiaries.

At the same time, other improvements were happening on both campuses. The East PE building and tennis courts began to take shape, plans for updating the cafeteria and Culinary Arts lab were developed, and work begun; some elements of Business Services moved from the A building to renovated spaces in the Classroom Village; plans for expansion of the Library and Media Arts buildings were developed; new and improved signage on the Valencia campus was finally developed and installed; food services, the TLC and Library on the Canyon Country campus were improved; more parking lots were paved in Canyon Country, the 110,000 square foot University Center began to take shape, and the list just goes on and on.....

We Achieve – We had many accomplishments this past year that were remarkable and underscored our commitment to advancing the student-ready college. I couldn't possibly include the whole list here, but the sampling below demonstrates the breadth and depth of achievements of which we can all be proud. We:

- ✓ Completed our Educational and Facilities Master Plans for 2007-2012.
- ✓ Saw **enrollment climb to 21,300** in Fall 2007 –the most ever!

- ✓ Graduated 1,147 students – again the most ever!
- ✓ Nearly tripled the number of summer enrichment classes offered to high school students.
- ✓ Developed four new certificate programs.
 - Automotive Technology
 - Building Inspection
 - Landscape Maintenance
 - Retail Management
- ✓ Updated 217 courses.
- ✓ Doubled the number of new nursing students.
- ✓ Wrote our self-study for the college's accreditation.
- ✓ Demonstrated our fiscal stability and responsibility through a series of **six audits** by an independent firm — one each for the district and COC foundation, and two each for bond measures C and M – that noted **no exceptions**,
- ✓ Began the accreditation process with the American Bar Association for our Paralegal program.
- ✓ Completed a successful re-accreditation of the Child Development Center.
- ✓ Increased the number of online students by 1,149 percent from when we first offered online classes in Fall 2000.
- ✓ Brought **student services to the Canyon Country Campus** including: counseling offices, admissions and student business office, a student health center, offices for specialized programs such as EOPS, DSPS, Career Campus, Student Development, and Service Learning, an assessment center with 12 computers, and a student services computer lab with internet access for online registration.
- ✓ Boosted the number of concurrently enrolled high school students by 17 percent, serving 1,295 during the Fall semester.
- ✓ Grew FTES in the Winter Session by 5 percent.
- ✓ Added more than 1,500 computers on both campuses, a 34 percent increase.
- ✓ Added **34 new and replacement faculty** members in the following fields:

▪ Animation	▪ History
▪ Anthropology	▪ Mathematics (3)
▪ Art (4)	▪ Music (2)
▪ Biology	▪ Nursing (2)
▪ Chemistry	▪ Physical Education
▪ Communications	▪ Physical Science
▪ Counseling (5)	▪ Political Science
▪ Culinary Arts	▪ Psychology
▪ English (3)	▪ Sociology (2)
▪ Geology	▪ Theatre
- ✓ Hired 52 new and replacement classified staff members and 12 new and replacement administrators.
- ✓ Launched the first-ever Leadership Education in Action Program (LEAP), in which 45 faculty, classified staff, and administrators participated and developed terrific “solutions” and “business plans” that are being implemented in the 2008-09 academic year.
- ✓ Initiated a faculty mini-grant program through the Foundation.
- ✓ Developed a new three-year strategic plan for the Foundation.
- ✓ Installed five new members on the Foundation Board of Directors.
- ✓ Welcomed the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra to the Performing Arts Center.
- ✓ Won the 2007-08 California Community Colleges Economic and Workforce Development Exemplary Innovation Award for the Manufacturing Education Boot camp started by the Center for Applied Competitive Technologies.
- ✓ Collected more than 1,600 pairs of eyeglasses and donated them to the Lions Recycle for Sight Project.
- ✓ Opened the Early College High School at the Canyon Country Campus.
- ✓ Broke ground on the long-awaited University Center.
- ✓ Hosted the Santa Clarita Valley Sheriff's Station Toy Drive Giveaway on campus for the first time.
- ✓ Expanded our Friday night cinema series to every Friday night showcasing the new Cinema classroom in Hasley Hall.

- ✓ Launched a Friday afternoon children's films series.
- ✓ Exceeded our 8.3 percent FTES growth cap.
- ✓ Designed and constructed the amphitheatre at Canyon Country Campus.
- ✓ Launched a new advocacy Website providing the information and tools necessary to assist college supporters in advocating for a variety of college issues – including budget and a variety of legislation important to community colleges.
- ✓ Were recognized as a statewide leader and awarded \$6,751,087 in grant funding for 2007/08 to support program development and our students in emerging technologies like biotechnology and nanotechnology; Early Childhood Education; Nursing; SBDC; Teacher Preparation; Automotive Technology; Math, Engineering and Science Achievement; Child Development Center Expansion and more.
- ✓ Made significant progress in developing Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). Departments have reported 67 percent of all courses and 60 percent of all certificate and degree programs now have defined SLOs. In addition, all institutional support services, instructional support services and student support services have completed Administrative Unit Outcomes (AUOs) and are using the results in their departmental planning processes.
- ✓ Welcomed state Assembly members Cameron Smyth and Anthony Portantino to the campus for a tour, and Congressman McKeon visited the campus for several special events.
- ✓ Offered a new course for literary writing and published a student literary magazine, Cul de Sac.
- ✓ Hosted the "Focus the Nation" Conference for the first time to discuss sustainable development and the issue of global warming.
- ✓ Implemented the field studies model for instructional delivery.
- ✓ Launched a Junior High Summer Institute to give students in the 7th and 8th grades exposure to possible careers in science, theatre, and engineering.
- ✓ Constructed a new box office in the Performing Arts Center that is easier to find and will better serve audiences.
- ✓ We were recognized for excellence:
 - The Speech team's Loretta Rowley earned a Bronze Medal in Communication Analysis at the 2008 Phi Rho National Speech Tournament in St. Charles, Illinois. This continues the team's **5-year streak of earning a medal in every national tournament** it has entered.
 - The National Council for Staff, Program & Organizational Development (NCSPOD) honored the College of the Canyons Professional Development Program with the Institutional Merit Award.
 - The college was one of only 127 schools nationwide, **and the only community college in California**, named to the 2007 President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll with Distinction.
 - The Community College Public Relations Organization (CCPRO) recognized the District Communications Department with 7 statewide awards.
 - The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) won three of the five awards given out by the Los Angeles Regional SBDC Network, SBA and California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office and was recognized for being the best performing center in the region.
 - The COC Model UN team excelled at regional competition.
 - The Journalism Department and Canyon Call once again received numerous JACC Awards at its annual Southern California competition.
 - The MESA Program received a MESA Excellence Award (second year in a row) having transferred more MESA students to four-year colleges and universities than any other MESA program in the State.
 - COC intercollegiate sports teams continued to excel as:
 - Cross Country Coach, Lindie Kane, was named Coach of the Year.
 - Football Coach, Garrett Tujague, was named Co-Coach of the Year.
 - Our Women's Golf team won the WSC as well as Southern California and State Championship titles.
 - Our Men's Golf team won the WSC as well as Southern California and State Championship titles. This was their 4th State title in 9 years.

- Our men's Cross Country team brought home its first Western State Conference Title in school history.

We Work As A Team – It was an exciting year indeed and one that underscores the commitment to teamwork and partnership that marks everything we undertake together at College of the Canyons and enables us to continue fulfilling our goal to be a student-ready college. Noted Broadway conductor, arranger, and music supervisor, Eric Stern, observed that, “In creating and performing in a play, there is a sense of common purpose, of living something outside of yourself, of hauling to one common goal. All these different artistic disciplines are corralled into one purpose, and in the process, incredibly strong bonds have been created.” Stern perfectly describes how we do what we do, day in and day out, at College of the Canyons - how we have developed bonds and relationships that enable us – as individuals, departments, informal teams and formal groups, and a college – to move forward with energy and enthusiasm year after year.

The COC team is extraordinarily strong, but individually each of you brings an amazing array of talents to the things we accomplish at the College. The combined effects of those talents have made substantial, creative, innovative, and important contributions to the community and enabled us to achieve an impressive state of student-readiness as a college. You have given of yourselves, shared your confidence and energy, and served as role models, confidants, and advisors to students and colleagues alike. In so doing, you have altered the quality of life of our neighborhoods, our businesses, and the students who chose us to help them achieve their goals. Working together, as a community, you have contributed to the amazing daily impact the college has on those around us. Because of that, our community sees this college as a place where they are welcome, a college that says “yes” instead of “no,” and a place where they can come to achieve their dreams, regardless of their past experiences or current state of “college-readiness.”

We Are A Cut Above The Rest – I believe that happiness comes from working at what we are good at and in ways that suit our capabilities. There is no more capable group of individuals than the team we have assembled at College of the Canyons. As a team, we have all created an environment that is responsive and forward thinking, open to new ideas and fueled by creativity, where achieving more than the expected is commonplace. I know each of you is aware of the part you have played. As you have done so, you have collectively built the foundation that is composed of principles, quality, integrity, commitment, a hope for the future, and character that sets COC apart from the rest. That character is evidenced by each of you day in and day out.

We possess these unique qualities at College of the Canyons, and we continually work together on common tasks - to influence the present and future; to create a legacy for others to build on; to make a difference and to inspire, support, and enable others to do the same. But, working together every day means more than just showing up. It involves listening to others, taking risks, having the self-confidence and belief in ourselves to venture out and get involved, sharing our new and unproven ideas with others, letting others see our dreams, and setting the standards a little higher. It means connecting our college community with other communities and figuring out how college departments can work together productively. It means caring, communicating, anticipating, and moving forward with enthusiasm and energy, and doing so with the confidence, support and spirit of each other. To me, that's what teamwork means and why COC is successful on a day-to-day basis. **Our uniqueness, our collective vision, and our commitment to delivery of excellence in everything we do** make an enormous difference in connecting with students and meeting their needs in the long run.

At College of the Canyons, each of you is encouraged and challenged to contribute your personal best, to add value, and to make the college the best it can be for everyone. Each of you at COC makes a difference every day. I continue to be swamped with phone calls, personal visits, cards, letters, emails and am even stopped on the street, in shops and restaurants by people telling me how someone at COC changed their lives. I don't have to tell you how wonderful that is and how grateful I am to each of you who commit and focus on making a difference in all you do.

What I appreciate most about COC, and you who choose to work here, is your dedication. Each day begins with a schedule and a predetermined plan of daily activities, but as the hours progress, the day unfolds and presents unexpected opportunities and challenges - just as in nature. There is always something to learn, to try, to add, to get involved in, to explore, to risk, to dream about, to contribute, and ways in which to invest one's personal interest, energy, and involvement for the good of the whole.

Whether you add humor, help solve a problem, help design an excellent solution, or keep going on a complicated goal and move a little bit closer toward success, every day the energy, activity, enthusiasm, and commitment that each of you brings to our college is amazing. You don't just go through the motions, you get the job done. You care about **how** you do **what** you do, but most importantly, you do it because you care about each of our students and each other.

The Future Beckons – As we move into the coming year, we have much to look forward to as we continue, “Advancing the Student-Ready College.” We will:

- ✓ Break ground on the 19,000-square-foot **Media Arts expansion project**.
- ✓ Open the **Physical Education Expansion**, which features new classrooms, a sport court, and tennis courts.
- ✓ Finish designing the **Library/TLC Expansion project** and commence construction.
- ✓ Complete the installation of new signage to help students and visitors navigate our campuses.
- ✓ Pave a new parking lot at the Canyon Country Campus to accommodate more students.
- ✓ Launch intensive five-week, online classes under the auspices of the **GO! program** that will allow students to complete three to six transferable units in each mini-session.
- ✓ Implement intensive, five-week classes at both the Canyon Country and Valencia campuses as part of the **Personalized Accelerated Learning (PAL) program** for college success classes.
- ✓ Double the size of our non-credit offerings in ESL and Basic Skills.
- ✓ Establish a College Skills Task Force to design college-wide activities to promote our commitment to “Advancing the Student-Ready College.”
- ✓ Move to multi-year scheduling to allow students to plan their educational futures.
- ✓ Continue developing new educational programs, including speech language pathology assistant, nanotechnology, instructional aide, with a special education emphasis, and human services, with options in gerontology, addiction studies, and general services.
- ✓ Enjoy and support the wonderful programming in our Performing Arts Center, featuring performances from our music, theatre, and dance departments; community performances such as the Symphony and Master Chorale; children's programming; the new Cabaret series; and of course, the headliners such as Art Garfunkel, Bill Medley of the Righteous Brothers, and Los Lobos!
- ✓ Finish designing the new two-story Student Services/Administration Building, which will replace the current facility when state funding is available.
- ✓ Advocate on the Budget to keep growth and COLA funding for the 2008 – 2009 Fiscal Year as proposed by the Conference Committee. We're approved for a 28 percent growth factor but it will also be deficated. However, we could be funded to grow by 12 to 14 percent of which we've already generated approximately a 7 percent carry forward from 2007-2008.
- ✓ Unveil a much-needed **renovation of the cafeteria** that features new serving spaces along with a teaching kitchen that will enable our Culinary Arts Department to expand and serve more students.
- ✓ Welcome the **Accreditation Visiting Team** for their evaluation of our campus and its activities.
- ✓ Launch a new three-year project funded by the National Science Foundation to recruit, mentor, and support Biology, Chemistry, Engineering and Mathematics majors.
- ✓ Participate in the **Book of the Year celebration** led by the English department. The COC family is being encouraged to read Khaled Hosseini's novel, **The Kite Runner**, about contemporary Afghanistan, and participate in a wide variety of literacy activities sponsored by the Los Angeles County Library, the City of Santa Clarita, and our own Performing Arts Center which is sponsoring a live reading of passages from this work on Sunday, February 22.
- ✓ **Finish construction of the University Center** and welcome additional four-year college and university partners, who will expand access to higher education in the Santa Clarita Valley by offering more degrees and programs.

- ✓ Launch new Career Technical Education classes, and expand existing ones, at the Canyon Country Campus with the addition of a new building. Automotive technology, construction management, landscape maintenance and management, land surveying, building inspection, construction technology (plumbing, electrical, building/carpentry), HVAC, alternative energy, and energy management classes will all be added.
- ✓ Finalize plans to build a **Public Safety Training Academy** in conjunction with Los Angeles County Fire Department at Del Valle.
- ✓ Establish a **Biotech Clean Room** on the Valencia campus.
- ✓ Finalize plans for the **Career Technology Education Center** on the Canyon Country Campus, where hands-on learning and training in the construction and automotive programs will be taught with an emphasis on green technology.
- ✓ Launched a College Ambassador Program.

These projects and initiatives, when completed, will provide additional access for students, add new options, contribute to the stimulating environment that typifies College of the Canyons, and add new substance to the meaning of Student Ready College. The ability to create new programs will enhance the already-outstanding reputation the College has earned for academic excellence, innovation, responsiveness, and integrity in the community. When students are asked: "What were the hallmarks of your experience at College of the Canyons?," they proudly cite reputation, accessibility, faculty expertise, access to relevant and cutting-edge technologies, and the caring attitudes of the faculty and staff.

This is high praise indeed! It is deserved, it is welcomed, and knowing that our efforts are appreciated by our key constituencies, it should motivate us to continue our pattern of excellence for many years to come.

This year, I am confident that we will continue to do amazing things and make a difference in the lives of those who look to College of the Canyons for a myriad of reasons. I have no doubt we will continue to expand and connect our college community to other communities of learning, of working, of public service, of social service, and of resources in the Santa Clarita Valley and become more rooted in the strong foundation we have at College of the Canyons. I also have no doubt that the consequences of our decisions to do so will help us be more complete, fulfill our ever-changing leadership role in this community, and positively impact lives of our students.

We will do so without hesitation and with vision. We will see what **is** and will focus on what **can be**. "Chance favors the prepared mind," said Louis Pasteur, and our mindset at College of the Canyons is to not only determine what can be, but to bring it to reality. Many of you remember motivational speaker and photographer, Steve Uzzell, from his visit to our campus last year. His observation that "our eyes will only ever see what our mind is prepared to comprehend" takes Pasteur's idea one step further. He reminds us that our creativity is only limited by our collective imaginations – that the limits of what we can achieve are defined by how well our minds' eyes can focus on new horizons, new inventions, new innovations, and new ideas.

I believe that collectively here at College of the Canyons, we embody the ideas of Pasteur and Uzzell as we dare to dream about the impossible and then make it happen. This spirit is what makes COC a "can-do" place and one of which I could not be more proud.

I am also reminded of another astute observation by Steve Uzzell that I frequently invoke when talking with other community college leaders about the uniqueness of College of the Canyons. Uzzell says, "When your horse dies, dismount!"

At College of the Canyons we are focused on doing the best we can and are always willing to "dismount" if we need to, to regroup, to respond to what's new and different, to abandon the comfortable trail if necessary, and to take a more challenging path if it will get us where we want to go. We have a propensity for taking risks and **a willingness to blaze new trails**. That contributes to our uniqueness and helps to explain why we are successful in so many areas.

When people ask me where I work, and I say I'm from College of the Canyons, I do so with pride and gratitude that I am able to work in this place with such incredible people as you. Privilege and appreciation only begin to express how I feel about College of the Canyons. I am excited about the new academic year and all we will do together as a community for our students because every year, we raise the bar higher and higher, we brainstorm, we collaborate, we innovate, and we create a new chapter in the history and legacy of this college. It just keeps getting better and better!

And Then, We Party! – As with all outstanding organizations, we are proud of who we are today and the traditions we have developed over our history, and we want to celebrate those traditions as much as possible. One of the most important traditions that faculty and staff observe at College of the Canyons is the annual Opening Day activities and luncheon. It is with great pleasure I invite you to join me at the Opening Day Luncheon at 11:30 a.m., Friday, August 22nd in the Gymnasium. To kick off the new year, you will be treated to entertainment, a chance to see retired faculty, meet new staff, eat, eat, and eat, reflect on the past, enjoy the debut of the infamous Opening Day video, eat some more, and begin a new academic year. The planners have done a great job of creating our first official party of the year (rest assured it won't be the last!).

As I close this letter I am reminded of one of the great partiers (and eaters) of all time, Luciano Pavarotti. He frequently said, "One of the very nicest things about life is the way we must regularly stop whatever it is we are doing and devote our attention to eating." So, please stop what you are doing on August 22nd, drop by, see old friends and meet new ones, and enjoy a meal with us as we kick off our 39th year of service to the community.

Oh, and a word of caution and advice from another famous celebrity as you sit down to party with us. "**Never eat more than you can carry!**" advised Jim Henson's "Miss Piggy."

With those words of wisdom, I bid you "Adieu," wish you "Happy Trails" for your last weeks of summer vacation, and look forward to seeing you on the 22nd!

Sincerely,



Dr. Dianne G. Van Hook
Chancellor