

Opening Day 2009

Good afternoon and welcome to Opening Day 2009 at College of the Canyons.

I look forward to this time of year as we ramp up for the start of another school year. It is so inspiring to see so many people coming to the campus and so eager to start anew. For many of them, this is a new experience and you can see a range of emotions on their faces they come and go. Uncertain. Afraid. Hopeful. Confident. No matter how they respond to jumping in to a new environment, they remind me that what we're doing here is important. We're making a difference, creating opportunities, and changing lives at every interaction.

That is a collective effort, of course, and requires all of the special skills that each of you bring to what you do. Andrew Carnegie describes teamwork as "the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results." Our celebration today is a shining example of teamwork, and I want to thank those who have contributed their ideas, energy, attention to detail, expertise, and care to make sure today is one to be remembered. Please join me in thanking:

- David Marshall, Dan Cardona, and everyone at ISSI for the incredible food;
- PIO, Graphics, Reprographics and HR for the programs, which showcase the employees whose anniversaries we are celebrating today;
- Diane Fiero for the Presentation of New Employees, a visible example of how we are continuing to build our staff and our programs;
- Shawn Irwin, Joe Lanthier, and Noel Lopez for the audiovisual set-up and always entertaining video, which provides a good deal of laughter for all of us;
- Our hard-working Facilities staff for setting up the tables and chairs, which gives us a place to sit and eat rather than stand around balancing our plates and utensils;
- Sue Bozman and her staff in PIO for producing the content for the flash drives, which allow us to get a great deal of information to you in an easy-to-handle format;

- Nick Pavik for the t-shirt design, which you are wearing or hopefully will be in the future; and
- Mary Bates, David Bogna, Linda Clark, Renee Drake, Gail Ishimoto, Karyl Kicenski, Lynne Lowe, Bonni McGhee, Gay McMichael, Jamie Milteer, Sheryn Monheim, Debbie Nakashima, Judi Nugent, Sherilyn Plevack, Nancy Williams, Leila Yahata, and Robyn Yoon for handing out t-shirts and flash drives, and assisting with the decorations, which helped this wonderful event to run smoothly.

Today launches a new academic year at our college. And it also marks the start of a year-long celebration as we commemorate the college's 40th anniversary of service to the Santa Clarita Valley.

So let's flash back to the past. The year was 1969. That may sound like a long time ago to some of you. I'll probably regret this, but let's put that year in context. If you were alive in 1969, please stand up. OK, please sit down.

And if 1969 is something you've only heard about from your parents, or read about in history books, please stand up.

Wow! Our staff is even younger than I thought.

OK, you youngsters can sit down.

We better have a quick refresher on 1969. The first thing you need to know is this - it was a year of great music. In fact, the 60s were a decade of great music. **Hendrix. Zeppelin. Simon & Garfunkel. The Beatles. The Beach Boys. The Righteous Brothers. The Who. The Rolling Stones. And Floyd Moos.** And on and on it goes. I'd like to say the songs from that era are timeless, but now they call it "classic rock." That's just a polite way of saying something is old. So I better not hear any of your refer to me as "a classic."

I couldn't help but notice that some of the song titles from the '60s echo the COC experience, so you'll see some of them up on the screens while I'm talking.

Here's some other trivia from 1969:

- The average cost of a **new house** was about \$15,000.
- The average **annual income** was \$8,550.
- **Rent** was about \$135 per month.
- A **new car** could be had for \$3,270.
- **Gas** cost 35 cents a gallon.
- Richard **Nixon** was president.
- The first **Concorde** test flight was conducted in France.
- **Neil Armstrong** landed on the moon.
- **Wal-Mart** incorporated.
- 250,000 people marched on Washington in **protest** of the Vietnam War.
- The **Pontiac Firebird Trans Am** debuted. Did any of you have the privilege of driving one?
- The **UNIX** programming language was developed by a group of AT&T employees at Bell Labs.
- **Sesame Street** hit the airwaves.
- **“Easy Rider,”** starring Peter Fonda, Dennis Hopper, and Jack Nicholson, cruised into theaters.
- And 400,000 people gathered on a farm in upstate New York for three days of music, mud, and mind-altering substances remembered as **“Woodstock.”**

So what were we doing in Santa Clarita while Woodstock was rocking?

College of the Canyons began classes on September 22, 1969. But just barely. Administrators were in a panic the weekend before as two instructors, and a board member were missing. Finally, about 30 minutes before the first classes started, **Tom Lawrence** wheeled his rusting, dented, VW microbus into the parking lot at Hart High. **Lee Smelser**, and **Bruce Fortine** all tumbled out of the back in a cloud of smoke. They quickly tried to explain their tardiness to an irate **Dr. Robert Rockwell**, the college’s founding superintendent-president.

“Hey man, relax,” Coach Smelser said.

“Yeah, and I’ve got just the thing to help you mellow out,” Tom Lawrence said.

“Relax?” Rockwell yelled. “Maybe you need a reminder of what’s expected here at College of the Canyons.”

“No, all you need is love,” Fortine said.

OK, maybe not **all** of that story is true. But this part is.

Santa Clarita was a small town in 1969. In fact, it wasn’t even called Santa Clarita.

- ✓ There was **Saugus** and Canyon Country, where a growing assortment of tract homes was sprouting.
- ✓ **Expanses of vacant or agricultural land** still separated the valley’s distinct communities.
- ✓ **Downtown Newhall** was the established commercial center, featuring car dealerships, a supermarket, a bank and many other merchants that have since relocated.
- ✓ The master-planned community of **Valencia** was just two years old, luring young families from over the hill with homes priced at about \$25,000.
- ✓ Valencia Town Center did not exist, of course. Neither did the Valencia Auto Mall, Magic Mountain, Henry Mayo Newhall Memorial Hospital nor California Institute of the Arts, as they were several years from appearing on the local landscape.
- ✓ There was no Stevenson Ranch, **just a vast unadulterated plain** accented by rugged foothills that have since been terraced and built upon.
- ✓ The Valencia Industrial Center was just beginning to be developed.
- ✓ The single-screen Plaza Theater in Newhall and the Mustang Drive-In off Soledad Canyon Road were the only local cinematic venues.

And our campus? Well, it wasn’t even our campus in 1969. The Newhall Land and Farming Company owned it, and grazed their vast herds of cattle here. Locals called it “Rattlesnake Gulch.” The 153-acre plot was one of 45 sites that Dr. Rockwell and assistant superintendent **Mr. Gary Mouck** reviewed as possible locations for the campus. They even had their eyes on what is now the location of Magic Mountain. When they approached Newhall Land about acquiring that site, the company made a counter-offer, since it was already moving ahead with its original plan to open a Sea World theme park there. Newhall Land offered Dr. Rockwell the land we’re

sitting on here and the college district purchased the property for about \$10,000 an acre. That was below market value for the time, and Newhall Land even returned 10 percent of the purchase price as a donation to the fledgling college.

It was Gary Mouck who would eventually propose a name for the college that stuck. He was in his office one day in early 1969, examining topographic maps of the Santa Clarita Valley, when he noticed the large number of canyons. There already was a College of the Desert and a College of the Redwoods, so College of the Canyons made sense, he reasoned. On May 15, 1969, the Board of Trustees agreed. "College of the Canyons" won out over several other suggestions that included Santa Clarita College and Valencia College.

In the meantime, COC's classes were held that first year at **Hart High** in the afternoons and evenings after the high school finished its school day. Administrative offices were located several blocks away, on Arch Street, in a strip-mall storefront just over the railroad tracks at what used to be San Fernando Road.

The college organized its **first-year** schedule around the quarter system, with the winter quarter starting January 7, 1970 and the spring quarter commencing April 8, 1970. There was no summer quarter. The 29 majors and 150 classes taught by 31 full-time faculty were comprehensive for such a new institution.

And what about enrollment? That first year was not unlike this one at COC. Dr. Rockwell expected about 600 students to register for classes in the fall quarter. 735 showed up – a 23 percent increase over expectations.

That was then, this is now.

This semester:

- ✓ We will likely serve more than 25,000 students.
- ✓ We will offer more than 1,400 classes sections in 109 degree and certificate programs each semester.
- ✓ Our budget will total more than \$175 million.
- ✓ We will have 195 full-time faculty, and 221 classified staff.

- ✓ Instead of sharing space with the high school, we have two full service campuses and more than 650,000 square feet of space.
- ✓ We will field 16 inter-collegiate men's and women's athletic teams.
- ✓ We will have 51 student computer labs and 2,546 networked computers serving students, faculty and staff.
- ✓ We will generate more than \$7 million in grant revenue.
- ✓ We will transfer 49 percent of our students .
- ✓ We will graduate more than 1,000 students.
- ✓ We will provide more than \$6 million in financial aid to almost 3,000 students.

We've come a long way, baby! And we have created – together – a great foundation for our future.

As we began planning for this anniversary year, I charged a top secret committee made up of some of our most creative minds on campus with developing our tagline for this year. Their brainstorming sessions (coincidentally held in **Tom Lawrence's VW bus**) yielded dozens of ideas that can best be described as, well, groovy.

Let me share the **10 best ones** with you:

10. Lordy! We're Forty!
9. Celebrating 40 Years – Let's Limbo!
8. Celebrating 40 Years – No Wrinkles! (We've got Botox!)
7. I've got socks older than forty!
6. Celebrating 40 Years – Anything But Old School!
5. Celebrating 40 Years – From First Classes to First Class!
4. Quatro XXXX – "I'll Drink To That"
3. 40 Years? We ARE the hill!
2. We Don't Look A Day Over 20! (But then we all need glasses!)

1. 40 years of operation but we still have that new college smell

OK, so those weren't really contenders. While they may be funny, they don't really capture what we've been able to accomplish in the past four decades. So, we ultimately adopted "**Fulfilling Dreams for 40 Years**" because we have done just that.

Why use the word dreams? What do dreams have to do with higher education? Everything. The essence of a dream is change. It is the idea of transforming your current existence into something almost beyond imagination. We offer classes, grant degrees, and **provide training**. And our students go forward and use those new skills and experiences with which we've equipped them to achieve the transformations and dreams they have envisioned. We create opportunities for dreams to become reality. We are what we are because we first imagined it.

As I hear myself describe how all of us at College of the Canyons fulfill dreams, it sounds almost magical. A little like Disneyland maybe. Unlike CalArts, we weren't launched with funding from Walt Disney. But we do share some similarities with his magical theme parks.

Lee Cockerell spent a decade as the executive vice president of operations at Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando. In that role, he led a team of 40,000 cast members whose daily challenge was to create magic for the millions of people who visited the parks and resorts. He said this in his book "Creating Magic:" "It's not the magic that makes it work; it's the way we work that makes it magic."

That is especially true at College of the Canyons. We've been able to fulfill dreams for 40 years because of the way we work. Although much has changed over the past four decades, the way we work has remained constant and enabled us to accomplish amazing things. All colleges exist for one purpose: to help people achieve goals together that they would not individually achieve. What makes colleges different, is how they do that.

There are so many things that set us apart from the rest – that distinguish this college and predispose us to lead, to succeed and to thrive in all times, but especially in challenging, changing circumstances. Today I want to

focus on **four things** that characterize and distinguish how we work at College of the Canyons:

- ✓ We work with **commitment**.
- ✓ We work with a **positive attitude**.
- ✓ We work with **care**.
- ✓ We work with **courage**.

As a result, what we do matters, what we do makes a difference, and what we do results in excellence.

We work with commitment. The people at COC have always been committed. Committed to helping our students. Committed to each other. Committed to working through whatever circumstances we find ourselves in and committed to developing and thriving with our community.

As an amazing group of people, past and present, you have led us down the path to incredible things because of your commitment. There's a difference between interest and commitment. If you're interested in something, you'll stick with it for awhile. But if you're committed to something, you're in it for the long haul. In the process, commitment unlocks the doors of imagination, unleashes vision, and gives us the 'right stuff' to turn our dreams into reality.

People at COC have always been committed because:

- ✓ They had vision and "the courage to go there."
- ✓ They knew what to do and mustered the strength to move forward
- ✓ They inspired others to follow
- ✓ They followed their beliefs
- ✓ They shared credit with others
- ✓ They realized when situations needed to be changed, and when it was time to move forward.
- ✓ They took responsibility for situations.
- ✓ They made a plan for change and carried out that plan.
- ✓ They did so with energy and enthusiasm.

As they did so, departments and individuals across campus have:

- ✓ Distinguished themselves with competence.
- ✓ Generated **respect**.
- ✓ Infused commitment and passion in others.

- ✓ **Inspired** our students
- ✓ Won the **admiration** of our community

For those of you who are relatively new, I hope you can see that you have joined an amazing team!

You are committed together, and you are successful. That is what is so unique and that which stands out about what COC has achieved.

Whether it's getting **The Zone** up and running for our student athletes, making online enrollment available to our concurrently enrolled high school students, implementing **LEAP Team projects**, or keeping our campus colorful with **new landscaping**, you accomplish amazing things. Howard Schultz of Starbucks fame said it best: "Victory is much more meaningful when it comes not just from the efforts of one person, but from the joint activities of many. The euphoria is best when all participants lead with their hearts – winning not just for themselves, but for each other."

Change takes guts. It takes imagination. It takes commitment and that "on a mission" attitude we see all around us at COC. When the grenades are flying, the committed don't go AWOL.

These are the changing times in which a genius would wish to live. Great challenges call for great talent. And now, where we are opportunities are taking shape within problems. Out of challenges, we are creating miracles. Working together, learning together, risking together, there is nothing we cannot get beyond, rise above or overcome. Vitality shows in not only the ability to persist, but in the ability to start over. Ever tried? Ever failed? No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better. But keep going. And that's what we do at COC.

Second, we work with a positive attitude.

The attitude that people bring to what they do either sets the stage for innovation or stifles it. At College of the Canyons, attitude lights the way for **dreamers, doers, and builders** and energizes us all as we do what we do in our own COC way.

The thoughts behind our words and actions create our attitude as we lift ourselves by our thoughts and what we think we can or cannot do! Because we think we can, **we create the force** that enables us to do so.

It all starts with the thinking that comes at the beginning of any task. The attitude reflects the outcome. As Theodore Roosevelt said, “Believe you can and you're halfway there.” It's that sense of optimism that led us to establishing a **Field Studies** station. It didn't matter that most community colleges don't do Field Studies. What mattered was that it was something good for our students, that we found a way to do it, and that we did it.

When we needed to pass a **bond measure** in 2006, some naysayers said we couldn't do it since gas prices were high and we had just passed a bond measure five years earlier and the voters wouldn't get behind us. We knew better. We believed we could, and we did. We had that confidence that working together, we would get it done.

When we approached the state about funding the **University Center**, they said no. We took that to mean, “No, not right now.” So we kept asking because we believed in what we were trying to do. That belief proved infectious and eventually, the state caught our vision, believed that we could do what we said we could, and put \$20 million into the project.

Results like this are fueled by our attitude – our outlook on life. Each day here at COC we have a special fuel to get us to where we dream to go – that fuel is our “on a mission” attitude that is evident in every corner of the campus. That attitude – that fuel in all your tanks – makes a difference every day, but it is especially evident when times get tough. Hope believed is history in the process of being changed. People either make themselves miserable, or they make themselves strong. The amount of work it takes to do either is the same.

What's different is the attitude they put into it. The more we realize just how often things can go well for us, things get better. It is our attitude at the beginning of a difficult task, which, more than anything, will affect the outcome. If you believe it will work out, you'll see opportunities. If you believe it won't, you'll see obstacles. If you want to do something, you'll find a way. If you don't, you'll find an excuse. After all, you can't get “there” from “not here.”

Third, we work with care – we work with heart.

The third thing that speaks loudly for itself, every day through your actions and the daily choices you make, is that you are committed, and it is part of your attitude to be compassionate and **care about others**. People at COC work with heart.

When the term “community” is used, the notion that typically comes to mind is a place in which people know and **care for one another** – the kind of place in which people do not ask “how are you?” as a formality, but care about the answer. Appreciation can make a day - even change a life – and whether you know that or not, you do so daily.

You think about others and always:

- ✓ Have time to listen
- ✓ Write nice little notes of thanks and encouragement
- ✓ Get involved to solve problems
- ✓ Welcome new staff to the College of the Canyons
- ✓ Plan parties to celebrate others’ successes
- ✓ **Exhibit joy and laughter**
- ✓ Offer your unselfishness and sincere concern for your colleagues
- ✓ Are willing to take on whatever is needed in order to help your colleagues and students have the best experiences possible
- ✓ Rally when adversity comes
- ✓ Are compassionate and human.
- ✓ Love and accept people’s inabilities as well as their strengths
- ✓ Challenge others to have confidence in and respect for each other.
- ✓ And you never, ever, give up on what you believe you can do together.

You are a family. You Value people and your relationships, and caring about others and our students is our competitive advantage that helps to distinguish us from the rest and lets us do things others only dream about.

We work with courage.

The fourth characteristic of the reputation that we have built these past four decades is courage.

My definition of **courage is a willingness try**, for as Theodore Roosevelt said: “Far better is it to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure... than to rank with those poor spirits who

neither enjoy nor suffer much, because they live in a gray twilight that knows not victory nor defeat.”

We're different at COC

- ✓ We drive away our fear with action.
- ✓ We make finding a solution a higher priority than placing blame.
- ✓ We don't waste time pointing fingers—instead—we work to get it right.
- ✓ We get it; we realize that this is a place where action pays off—moping about circumstances does not.
- ✓ We leap and risk. We know that change starts when someone sees the next step.

Our humor, our desire to be good, better and best, our ability to respond, to coordinate and cooperate with others, our ability to look at things from a different perspective affects our attitudes and form the foundation for what we do and what we achieve. It is about what we do with, and how we react to what happens to us. It's about overcoming fear, dealing with uncertainty and raising the bar.

Not only do we dream big ideas at College of the Canyons, but we also move to implement them – the **University Center**, Academy of the Canyons, a second campus, two bond measures in five years, online classes. All of these had an element of risk, the possibility of failure. Nobody would have blamed us if we weighed the risks and decided to walk away. But we had the courage to try. And every one of those seemingly risky endeavors were embraced by our students and community and are now considered “glorious triumphs.”

At the same time, courage is something in short supply these days. People look around and they are scared. Things have changed. Instead of reacting with reason and looking for common sense solutions, many of our colleagues at other colleges reacted with fear. They took drastic action, and their students, staff, and faculty have suffered. Layoffs. Furloughs. Cancelled summer, winter, and inter-session. Student services functions eliminated. Lives altered, opportunities lost, dreams delayed.

Many colleges looked to someone to blame, and they were successful. The search for someone to blame is always successful. But unfortunately

for them, when they blame others, they give up the power and motivation to change. Change takes guts. It takes imagination. It takes commitment.

Like every other college in the state, we too faced revenue shortfalls. But we pulled together, looked for the common good, and we responded with a strategic, thoughtful, methodic approach that sought to use the resources we do have to benefit the most people. We reduced class offerings, but kept those courses most needed by students. We slowed hiring instead of resorting to furloughs or layoffs. We pursued and secured outside resources, developed partnerships and helped out those less fortunate than us (*little kid story*).

And through it all we have remained a **beacon of hope and opportunity**. Whenever I'm out and about in Santa Clarita, people stop me to tell about their experiences with COC. But really, they're talking about all of you. You are the smiling face who enrolls them in their classes. You are wisdom of experience that helps them choose a major or course of study. You are the passion and enthusiasm that inspires them to learn in the classroom and help them achieve their dreams. We have served 12 percent more summer school students, and enrollment for the fall is up 18 percent. People know they can count on us, and it's because we have the courage to do what's right in difficult times.

A sample of recent headlines underscored the difference between College of the Canyons and other community colleges. I flipped through a stack of articles sent to me by PIO and read things like:

- ✓ **CSU Approves 20 percent fee hike**
- ✓ **UC Regents approve furloughs for 140,000**
- ✓ **Budget may again sink into deficit**
- ✓ **CSU may cut future enrollment by 10,000**
- ✓ **State budget shortfall getting worse -- a lot worse**
- ✓ **Short-term cuts, long-term worry for our colleges**
- ✓ **California's higher education system could face decline**
- ✓ **Cal State, UC hike fall tuition fees**

Article after article with bad news. But the COC headlines were a marked difference:

- ✓ **COC Helps Paramedics Make the Next Jump**
- ✓ **COC moves forward with Applied Technology Center**

- ✓ **Small Business Center Serves 100th Client in San Fernando Valley**
- ✓ **College of the Canyons Offers Assistance to Re-entry Students and Job Seekers**
- ✓ **COC students excel on land surveying exam**
- ✓ **COC's enrollment soars**

Things are different here because of the courage that we exhibit as a team to move forward with confidence and meet our community's needs. As Noah benShea said, **"Things don't have to be good for us to be great."** And never doubt it – you are great, and that makes College of the Canyons great!

These four characteristics that distinguish us – working with commitment, working a positive attitude, working with heart, and working with courage – result in excellence and making a difference that matters. Success does not lower its standard for us. We instead raise our standards to success.

We are leaders in our field. We aren't A+ in some things and C+ in others. We are As straight across the board. And we are that because you all are genuine craft persons. You don't cut corners on your work. It isn't because duty says you shouldn't. It's because passion says you couldn't. We are all capable of doing so much more than we usually permit ourselves if we let ourselves. And, at COC, we do. People become who they are. Even Beethoven became Beethoven and **you** have become the best that there is.

I'll put you, the COC team, up against anyone else any time, any where, as you distinguish your work, your role in this carrying community with commitment, attitude, care and courage, and as a result, you achieve excellence each and every day. Excellence, as you know, is the notion that if something is worth doing, it is worth doing well. I see that spirit in action every day at College of the Canyons and it shows in every part of every operation on this campus. It's not always easy, but you make it look that way.

Education is different than so many other professions. A doctor can go months between seeing patients. Those who make things never meet those who buy what they made, nor do they see the recipients use and enjoy the final product.

That disconnect is erased on a college campus. We have the privilege of seeing firsthand the difference we make in other's lives. We interact with students several times a week. We can see them shaped and changed by the knowledge they acquire and the support they receive. The feedback is immediate. The results are tangible. The gratification is instant. And it inspires us to continue our efforts.

Take, for example, the way we've handled the flood of students enrolling here for this semester. We'll end up serving 30 percent more students than we did last year. The process of enrolling that many people is daunting. But despite the lines stretching out of the A Building Lobby and down the sidewalk, those of you who work in Counseling and Admissions and Records you patiently answered questions, deftly moved the paperwork through and saw to it that all those students could enroll and begin fulfilling their dreams. In fact, on Tuesday of last week, you served almost 1,000 students who showed up on campus.

You brought your "A" game during this hectic registration period, but I know that you're always on. Lee Cockerell said, "Behave as if you're always on stage, because in a way, you are." You do the right things in the right way, even when you don't have a 1,000 pairs of eyes watching your every move. You are not part-time professionals who only perform when the spotlight is on you – you are full-time professionals who are always at the top of your game.

At COC you'll never hear, "We almost had a great year," "We almost achieved our goals," "We almost did what we said we would do?" Instead, we look at each other and say: "We did!" That explains why we are constantly being recognized for our achievements. Whether it be:

- ✓ Receiving a full **reaccreditation** with 12 commendations.
- ✓ **LEAP** earning the National Innovative Program Award from the North American Council for Staff, Program and Organizational Development.
- ✓ The **Automotive Technology** program that achieved National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certification.
- ✓ The Hewlett Leaders in Student Success program, which honored College of the Canyons as one of three California community

- colleges for the use of innovative and proven teaching strategies in the college's 'basic skills' foundational math and English programs.
- ✓ Our **Service Learning Program** being named to the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll in recognition of the college's wide-ranging community service-learning courses and programs available to students.
 - ✓ The college receiving the "Best Large Employer to Work For" honor in the first-ever "SCV Best Places to Work" competition.
 - ✓ Starting the GO and PAL programs for students wanting to fast-track their educational progress.
 - ✓ The Speech Team taking first place in the small schools division at the Pacific Southwest Collegiate Forensics Association spring championships.
 - ✓ The Institute of Teaching and Learning (ITL) winning the coveted Academic Senate for California Community Colleges Exemplary Program Award for its excellence in providing faculty members with an innovative professional development program.
 - ✓ The Small Business Development Center receiving the Service Excellence and Innovation Award.
 - ✓ Or all seven land surveying students who took the Land Surveyor In Training (LSIT) exam passing the exam. While it typically has a 36.2 percent pass rate, COC's pass rate was 100%.

These are only a few of the ways we have distinguished our college this past year, at College of the Canyons, excellence is an ongoing pursuit. You recognize that fact that we have not arrived. So you all continually raise the bar, and then leap over it. You set new standards and exceed them. You are constantly pushing to do things that set the pace for others and enable us to be current, responsive and of a quality to which others aspire.

This year will be no different. Thanks to your innovation, creativity, and commitment to doing new things, and doing old things better, we can look forward to:

- ✓ Launching a K-12 outreach program through our Performing Arts Center with special school bus-in performances and in-school assemblies.
- ✓ Opening a new Early Childhood Education Center at the Canyon Country Campus.

- ✓ Starting a **Medical Laboratory Technician** training program in the Allied Health Division.
- ✓ Offering an **Optometric Technician Training** program through Community Education.
- ✓ Recruiting international students **from Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain**, thanks to Bruce “Almost of Arabia” Pelkey.
- ✓ Implementing an **“Online Career Advisor”** allowing anyone, anywhere to get their career-related questions answered via email.
- ✓ The debut of the **new COC Honors program**.
- ✓ Deploying six new programs that grew out our last **LEAP** session:
 - The Get Real Center – Re-Entry and Adult Learners,
 - Project-Based Learning Model,
 - BIT – Behavioral Intervention Team,
 - Idea Incubator Program
 - Gardens of the Canyons, and
 - Team ABC – Arts and Business Learning Community at College of the Canyons.
- ✓ Moving to an **online application viewing system**, so those of you on hiring committees won’t have to troop down to HR to screen applications in person.
- ✓ Opening the **University Center**.
- ✓ The **Cooperative Work Experience Education program** reaching a significant milestone: helping its 1000th student acquire an internship.
- ✓ Breaking ground for the expansion of **Mentry Hall**.
- ✓ Opening the Writing Center.
- ✓ Making our first big push **into social networking**, tapping into both Facebook and Twitter with the year-long “40 Ways to Change Your Life at COC” promotion.
- ✓ Starting construction on the **Applied Technology Building** at the Canyon Country Campus.
- ✓ Initiating the **Idea Incubator** to support the development and implementation of new ideas.
- ✓ Opening an **SBDC training center** in the Antelope Valley.
- ✓ Opening the new Sigma Center **Math Lab**.
- ✓ Leading the way in sharing our successes through the **Skills for Success** program.

Every 24 hours as we usher in a new day, we have a choice to make about how we approach and perceive what greets us. We have the choice to

make the most of it and make it count. And each day, you choose to be excellent.

Conclusion

In closing, I want to tell you how excited I am about this year. Will things be different this year? Absolutely. It's not business as usual anymore. But it never was business as usual at COC. Times have changed and the era in which we now find ourselves puts us at a competitive advantage.

Noted photographer Steve Uzzell said, "**Chance favors the prepared mind.**" We are prepared to face the future at COC, even if we're not certain what that future holds. And the reason is because of the timeless principles in which we work here at College of the Canyons. Again, "It's not the magic that makes it work; it's the way we work that makes it magic."

- ✓ We work with commitment. We are committed to making the most of the opportunities that come our way.
- ✓ We work with a positive attitude. Opportunities often come disguised as challenges. But we see through the disguise. We recognize the opportunities for what they are.
- ✓ We work with care. We take care of our students and we take care of each other.
- ✓ We work with courage. We don't hesitate to take advantage of the opportunities when we find them.
- ✓ And as a result, what we do really matters and makes a difference, and we do it very well.

As Elizabeth Dole said, "When we are in our 90s and we're looking back; it's not going to be how much we made or how many awards we've won. It's really, "What did we stand for?" Did we make a positive difference for people?"

There are many exciting things around the corner for College of the Canyons ahead as we capitalize on the foundation of success we have built over the last 40 years. Working together, I know we will accomplish great things and I can't wait to see what the future holds for College of the Canyons.