

**Opening Day Speech 2015**  
***“Action Drives Innovation”***

Good afternoon! It's a pleasure to be here and I'm excited to see everyone together, and excited to launch a new year. Our theme this year is **“Our Spirit of Innovation & Excellence,”** which perfectly captures our passion for enhancing student access and success with creativity, determination, and enthusiasm.

All of you are eager adopters of new technology and quick to incorporate the latest apps, software, and hardware into your teaching or the services provided by your department. A faculty member dropped by my office this week to show me kahoot, which she uses to engage students, and assess their learning and comprehension. I had so much fun with it, I was inspired to put together a short quiz for today.

So let's see how well you know your colleagues! Pull out your smartphones or tablets, and go the website **kahoot.it**. While you do that, technology guru Jim Temple will come up and tell you more about how this works.

**>>KAHOOT QUIZ <<**

**At the conclusion of the Quiz, Mike Wilding will come up to make a transitional introduction.**

## **SPEECH**

You can Google. But you can't Ask Jeeves.

You're holding an Apple. But why not a Tandy?

Take a picture. In fact, take a thousand. Film is free, and so is developing.

Your movie is on Netflix. Boy, that saved a trip to Blockbuster.

Plug in a Tesla. Say so long to Saturn.

Remember answering machines? Or better yet, home telephones?

We may not think much about innovation day to day. But when we look back at history, we can see just how the process of innovation has shaped who we are, what we value, and what we can do. Let's rewind a moment, and reflect on what life was like a century ago.

In 1914:

- The average life expectancy for men was 52 years.
  - Fuel for the Model T was sold in drug stores only.
  - Only 14 percent of the homes had a bathtub.
  - Only 8 percent of the homes had a telephone.
  - There were only 8,000 cars and only 144 miles of paved roads in the USA.
  - The maximum speed limit in most cities was 10 mph.
  - The tallest structure in the world was the Eiffel Tower.
  - The average US wage in 1910 was 22 cents per hour.
  - The average US worker made between \$200 and \$400 per year
- ...

- A competent accountant could expect to earn **\$2,000 per year**, a dentist **\$2,500 per year**, and a mechanical engineer about \$5,000 per year.
- More than **95 percent** of all births took place **at home**.
- **Ninety percent** of all Doctors had **NO COLLEGE EDUCATION!**
- Sugar cost **4 cents a pound**.
- Eggs were **14 cents a dozen**.
- Coffee was **15 cents** a pound.
- Most women only washed their hair **once a month**, and used **Borax** or **egg yolks** for shampoo.
- The leading causes of death were:
  - Pneumonia and influenza
  - Tuberculosis
  - Heart disease
  - Stroke
- The American flag had 48 stars.

- **Only 6 percent** of all Americans had **graduated** from high school.
- And, there were about 230 reported murders in the ENTIRE U.S.A. !

It really is amazing how fast things change. While they are changing, it seems as though it is monumental, earth-shattering change – something hard to adjust to and not well embraced. But when we look back, we say, “**How come it took so long to get from there to here?**”

Now, we depend on innovation to make it better, faster, more relevant, and frankly, more interesting. Innovation shapes the future and inspires change in every area of the life we experience.

## **The Ingredients of Innovation Drive the Future**

If innovation drives the future, then what drives innovation? A 2009 study by the *Journal of Marketing* studied 759 companies from 17 different countries to answer that question.

As educators in the “learning” business, we need to know the answer. More importantly, we need to **apply** the answer. While critical for determining the future, the stakes are even higher for the more than **30,000** COC students who will be on our two campuses this year. Their futures depend on our ability to not only understand what drives innovation, but to actually **do it**. To innovate, we must:

- Change what we do.
- Change how we do it.
- Add new programs and services.

- Abandon outdated ones in order to ensure our students are prepared to excel.
- Continue to learn and adapt; to risk, to rebound, and be, most of all, resilient.

The *Journal of Marketing* study identified several variables that predicted whether an organization **would** innovate. The most important driver came down to one thing: **corporate culture** – those beliefs and values common among a company’s employees that lead to particular behaviors.

No surprise, right? **Thoughts drive actions.** We know that. What your students think they can do is what they will do.

**But what are those specific characteristics that drive innovation?** Here, at our college, six characteristics empower

innovation, drive us to do, and to be, and enable us to stand out from the rest:

- **Attitude**
- **Courage**
- **Teamwork**
- **Initiative**
- **Optimism, and**
- **No compromises.**

Together, these six characteristics spell **ACTION**. **Action drives innovation** at College of the Canyons. So here's how it works.

## **Attitude**

**It starts with attitude.** The attitude people bring to what they do either sets the stage for innovation, or stifles it. You've heard me say this many, many times: **Attitude makes a difference.** In fact, I believe, attitude makes **THE** difference. The attitude that we can accomplish anything we put our minds to is what enabled us to

reopen the college for spring classes just two weeks after the devastating Northridge **Earthquake in 1994, pass two bond measures** in five years, grow **159 percent** in FTES and triple our academic majors of study.

William James said, “The greatest discovery of **my** generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitudes.” Because of our attitudes, we are not only changing our lives, but the lives of those whom we serve.

At College of the Canyons, **we are ablaze** with positive attitudes.

**We believe that if we can dream it, we can do it.** That inspires us to not only create new ideas, but to act and carry them out. Whether it’s a degree program that uses only OER course materials, creating a Civic Engagement Initiative, or launching a Center for Excellence, we are constantly daring to take new initiatives from ideas to action.

That prevailing attitude at COC is one of enthusiasm and “can do.”

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

**That enthusiasm and “can-do” attitude helps us to stand out.**

Such enthusiasm is not commonly the norm on other campuses: Our students sense that difference and it draws them **here**.

It's also the reason why, after transferring, many are quick to say they received a better education at College of the Canyons than at a four-year college or university.

**From your attitude**, it's clear that you are engaged and feel a profound connection to what you do. As a result, it is **you who drive our innovation**, achieve results and **move us ahead**.

As we celebrated our service awardees during our recognition events earlier this week, I noted that:

- We work to attract people with energy and enthusiasm.
- We support them to grow and develop.
- We support innovation and creativity.
- We provide excellent service to those we serve.

That attitude is what creates the context that inspires our students.

It lights the spark in them to believe they can, and in turn inspires them to move them forward and ACT! And, they tell us that!

I regularly receive letters from students who tell me that they never would have accomplished their goals without the inspiration they received from the dedicated instructors and staff members they encountered during their time as students at College of the Canyons.

### **The second ingredient of innovation is Courage**

Our attitude of optimism fuels courage . My definition of courage is simple: **A willingness to try**. Having an idea is one thing. **Acting** on it is another. It's **not easy** to move forward with something new – to go from idea to action. Trying requires courage. As Oracle co-founder Larry Ellison said, “When you innovate, you’ve got to be prepared for people telling you that you are nuts.

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

- Drive away our fear with action.
- Realize that this is a place where action pays off—moping about circumstances does not.

- Leap and risk. Change starts when someone sees the next step and acts. Henry Ford said, **“One of the greatest discoveries people make, one of their great surprises, is to find that they can do what they were afraid they couldn't do.”**

Our humor; our desire to be good, better and best; our ability to respond; to coordinate and cooperate; and our ability to look at things from a different perspective affects our attitudes and inspires in each of us the courage to try.

- To do what we want we to do and achieve what we want to achieve, and to
- Have the courage to act.

It's inspiring to think of just a few examples where someone on this campus had an idea, and demonstrated effort, action, and the courage needed to bring it about.

Whether it is:

- E-portfolios
- Online orientation
- Accelerated courses in Math and English
- The Zone
- or the Behavioral Intervention Team

There are countless instances of people demonstrating their

**willingness to try.** But we do more than try – **WE DO!**

The third ingredient to innovation is **Teamwork**

You might have a brilliant idea on your own. But we all benefit from the insights and skills of others to make the idea better and bring it to life.

Every day in many offices and corners of this place, you recognize that, and work to help each other in ways that are not common at other colleges. Working together, you:

- Focus on the big picture.
- Care about what's best for the college, not just your department.
- Break down silos and find innovative ways to collaborate.
- Make finding a solution a higher priority than placing blame.
- Don't waste time pointing fingers — instead — work to get it right.
- You make stars out of others instead of seeking the spotlight yourself, and
- Are ethical, honest, and civil in your interaction with each other.

Harry Truman said it best: **"It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not *care who gets the credit.*"**

The COC team is extraordinarily strong, because **individually** each of you brings an amazing **array of talents** that have led to substantial, creative, innovative, and organization-shaping contributions.

By giving of yourselves, sharing your confidence and energy, and serving as role models, confidants, and advisors to students and colleagues alike, you enhance lives – one person at a time.

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 levels of education.

When I’m out and about in the community, I’m regularly stopped by those who want to tell me what THIS college enabled them, or their family members to achieve. A degree from the University Center led

to a promotion for them. Or a child or spouse who found their career after being inspired by a dedicated instructor who showed them that they could do it. Or someone who was homeless and now is not because this college helped them get skills **and** a job!

The fourth ingredient is **Initiative**

In addition to Attitude, Courage and Teamwork, **innovation requires internal drive**. Around here, people don't sit around and wait to be told to do something. Instead, you look around and see what needs to be done and get going. You ACT as you:

- Step into resolve something that is about to fall between the cracks.
- Take ownership for solutions.
- Take risks.
- Seek to achieve standards and outcomes that “stand out,” versus settling for the bare minimum.
- Demonstrate responsibility.

- Do what is right for our college and our students, not just what is easiest for you.

The people who make up COC share a relentless desire to make things better!

I applaud the motivation that lives within each and every one of you.

After all, the only person who can really motivate you – is **you!**

Whether you're applying for a mini-grant, keeping your office open late to enroll more students, serving as an advisor for a student club that creates learning opportunities outside the classroom, staying after practice or rehearsal to provide that extra bit of instruction and encouragement, or creating and implementing Math Jams, you demonstrate the initiative that leads to achievement and excellence.

The fifth ingredient to innovation is **Optimism**

Innovation is rooted in optimism. Before you can make things better, you have to first believe that you can make things better.

Helen Keller put it this way: “Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement; nothing can be done without hope.” I believe that is the most important characteristic of our college, and what truly helps us stand out and sets us apart from other colleges. With optimism comes:

- Energy.
- Passion.
- Excitement.
- A cause and a calling.
- Hope.

At College of the Canyons, we inspire optimism daily. And, that brings out the best in all of us as employees, and the best in our students.

In their relatively short time with us:

- We provide our students with the skills and knowledge to help them succeed and excel in an increasingly complex world.
- We help people get where they want to go in life, and we inspire others to discover new destinations—all the while instilling a sense of passion, commitment, and excellence and optimism in what they do.
- We put life into the dreams and futures of people where before they had been lifeless or directionless with no destination on the horizon as we see potential that is not yet visible to them.
- We accomplish this by practicing what we preach and by being passionate and committed in our own quest for excellence.
- Because we know what we can and should do, and because **we do, we make an incredible difference in the lives of others.**

As has been said, **“You may only be someone in the world, but to someone else, you may be the world.”** We had a very visible reminder of that last spring when we celebrated with our 99-year-old graduate Doreetha Daniels, who credited the faculty, staff, and administrators at the Canyon Country Campus with helping her achieve her lifelong dream of earning a college degree.

There will be times when the important work you do will change lives without your knowing the individuals personally. I’m thinking particularly about **OER**, and those of you who have worked to developed free online educational resources for many of the courses we offer. The benefits will go far beyond your classes, and touch students **you** will never meet. Because of your willingness to invest the time in creating an alternative to traditional textbooks, they will persist and save money that can be used to take additional courses and achieve their goals more quickly.

As a result of our optimism, we help people see possibilities beyond their current reality.

- Sometimes they never knew the possibilities existed.
- But more often than not, they never saw those possibilities as something within **their** reach.

Because of your optimism, you saw in them what they could not see in themselves and for that person THAT made all the difference.

The last critical component of innovation is **No Compromise!**

Innovation requires principles – an ability to stick to your guns and a resolve to continue moving forward – even in the face of adverse circumstances and **challenging people**. You can't let roadblocks force you to settle for "good enough." **Compromise is not an option.**

It takes confidence to keep innovating when the going gets tough. Confidence in your idea. And confidence in those around you that they can help you get it done. We have confidence in abundance at College of the Canyons. It's an attribute widely displayed in every program—the abiding belief that if you attempt something, you **can** succeed. And that inspires you to keep innovating.

When we face adversity, we bounce back from barriers and hurdles. Why? We see barriers as largely external, temporary, and surmountable.

So, here is the thing about adversity; if you can make it your friend, you can find yourself in some of the most transformational situations that life has to offer. “Hardships often prepare ordinary people for an extraordinary destiny,” author C.S. Lewis observed.

While no one likes to experience adversity, the resilience that is required to bounce back is one of the most powerful catalysts for change. It's how you deal with the unexpected that separates those who fail from those who achieve their goals and succeed.

**We always have a choice.** No matter how terrible the setback, we can choose to look back and let it consume us, or we can face the situation head-on and make the most of it. By facing it, we are stretched, and learn from it. And, we can learn resilience from our students. I am reminded of George Vasquez who works in my office. Before coming to College of the Canyons, he was struggling to raise his daughter and make ends meet after making some bad decisions. Instead of making excuses, he made the decision to return to school. He earned his A.A. last year, and is now majoring in business at CSUN.

And then there are our student teams. Whether they are competing in athletics, or academics like Model UN, FBLA, or Forensics, they learn they are capable of more than they imagined when they come from behind, compete against prestigious 4-year colleges and win when others may have counted them out. They deal with changes that happen minute to minute, none of which are predictable.

**So there they are – the six characteristics that of our culture at**

College of the Canyons that enable us to innovate – Attitude.

Courage. Teamwork. Initiative. Optimism. No Compromise.

## START RUNNING LIST HERE

Together they enable us to take **ACTION** as we move our college into the future. And, if the last 46 years of our college can foretell the future, we will always move our college into the future.

I am excited about the year ahead. This is an amazing team. I look forward to seeing what we accomplish together as we take ACTION and bring the future to life. What do we know is coming?

Here are just a few of examples of what's ahead: Together, we will:

- Identify funding needed to build a 21,000-square-foot science lab and classroom building at CCC.
- Develop a “road map” to guide students through their entire College of the Canyons experience, from application to graduation.

- Surpass the grant revenue we generated in 2014-15. (In fact, with more than \$12.5 million in hand for 2015-16, we are already ahead by 25 percent.)
- Move forward with implementing the new Adult Education/Community Extension Initiative.
- Continue to accelerate our Math and English curriculum so that students can continue to move forward quickly and with more confidence.
- Pilot the use of two software platforms – Pathbrite and Digication – to enable students to upload samples of their work, create, e-portfolios, and demonstrate completion of student learning outcomes.
- Continue to expand the reach of International Services and Programs .
- Implement exciting student equity initiatives, including the addition of Student Athletic Academic Mentors, the Principles

of Excellence Program in the Veterans Center, a Library Speaker Series, and expanding Foster Youth Services.

- Launch the Center for Excellence to expand professional development opportunities for faculty.
- Open a Center for Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility.
- Digitize and make available to the public the archives of retired Congressman Howard "Buck" McKeon.
- Kick off the Pathways Grant with the Hart District for CTE career development.
- We will develop an associate degree for transfer that uses all OER materials.
- And there will be more!

As we close, I want to leave you with a charge from Phil McKinney, host of the Killer Innovations podcast. He said: "Innovation is not the result of chance, it's the result of action. It's not a thing to wait for. It's a thing to do."

>>**VIDEO**<<

So go for it. Take action. Innovate. Create opportunities for our students. Believe in yourself, and don't let anyone set limits on what **you** can do! Welcome and good luck. And enjoy the ride!