

Opening Day Speech #6

[Video Clip plays before DVH takes the stage]

Rachael Ostrom Sachar, Veterinarian

I was not exactly your academic candidate of the year. I don't think anybody would have probably taken me at any regular university. I didn't walk with my class and graduate high school. I even started and stopped taking classes here multiple times. When I came back and decided that no, this time I am focused, and I am going to completely turn myself around and this is what I want to do, I remember sitting down with the counselors. And they had their doubts as well and they were trying to be very cautious in their support of me because I didn't look good on paper at all. I see people all the time and I'm asked to talk a lot of places. Everyone always thinks you have to get straight As to become a vet. It's hard getting through the classes and I was not your typical student. But I believe if you have the determination and you have the passion and you have the persistence that anybody can do it, but you have to also have the opportunity. And not everyone is willing to give you

that opportunity, especially if you have a track record that looked like mine. College of the Canyons gave me that opportunity.

As we launch the 2016-17 academic year at College of the Canyons, what you just heard our former student say is why we do what we do.

This is what we do:

- ✓ We help our students **become** what they think they can be.
- ✓ We help them **discover** their unique talents and abilities.
- ✓ We give them **hope** as we help them understand their potential.
- ✓ We **support them** to acquire the skills needed to succeed in their chosen fields, and
- ✓ We help them feel **confident** and that they **can do it**.

Maya Angelou said, **“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said – they will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”** We empower our students who come to us from all walks of life with the belief that **they can**.

As the banners on campus honoring our alumni demonstrate, as a college, we do an outstanding job of helping students build their futures. Our alumni have found success in a broad range of professions. We are the:

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

With **your** help, there's so much that happens before they become veterinarians, attorneys, actors, or scientists.

- ✓ First, they must believe they can become those things.
- ✓ And second, they must begin taking the steps to do so.
- ✓ Third, they must be resilient.

Believe. Begin. And finally, become.

As the faculty, staff, and administrators of College of the Canyons, each of you play a critical role during each step. You help our students, like Rachel, believe in themselves.

- ✓ **You** help them see beyond the obstacles that loom large and obscure the possibilities that lie ahead in their future. Things like lack of childcare, reliable transportation, or choosing between paying rent and buying books.
- ✓ **You** help them believe that if they work hard, it will pay off.
- ✓ **You** help them see beyond their past mistakes that might limit their view of what they can become.
- ✓ **You** help them focus on what's important – believing that they can **indeed** achieve their dreams.

Even when they can't see their potential and their ability, **you see it.**

You help them see it. And you help them believe they are **capable of becoming** what they imagine. **You** teach them to do that for themselves and once **you** do, that attitude and spirit will help them throughout their lives.

Henry Ford said, “**Whether you think you can or think you can’t, you’re right.**” **You** help them believe that they can. We all need people to do that for each other.

That belief is foundational. With it, our students move forward. But belief must be matched with action. They must take steps to pursue their dreams. They must begin.

And as they do, **you** are there to lend a hand. From the small to the large ways, the specific actions, or just simply being there...

- **You** help them apply.
- **You** help them get financial aid.
- **You** help them pick classes.
- **You** help them find their way to class.
- **You** tutor them.
- **You** help them understand and get their grounding.
- **You** listen to them.
- **You** welcome them in.
- **You** challenge them to think “**Yes I can!**”

Whatever it is, you are there to support them.

- ✓ You provide the encouragement and reassurance that they can get started, and when it gets hard, that they can keep moving forward.
- ✓ You get barriers out of the way. You keep them focused on the future while helping them pay attention to getting it done today.

And as you do, you **help students like Robert become** what they were **meant to become**.

[Video Clip – Robert]

COC is where I first started to get higher grades, and that's what led me to UC Berkeley, which is what led me to Harvard Law. COC opened those doors for me and showed me what I can do with my life.

As we look ahead at the coming year, and beyond, keeping those doors open for the thousands of students who will come to COC to learn, to train, to find - they are our priority. That's why our theme for the year is

We Are COC: Building for the Future.

The future is a funny thing. As I noted in my Opening Day letter, “You can't really predict the future. All you can do is invent it.” You can create it.

This is the part where you might ask yourself, “I don't have a time-traveling DeLorean, so how do I invent the future?”

At COC, we do it by being ready for the future. Louis Pasteur famously said, “**Fortune favors the prepared mind.**” Over the years, College of the Canyons has proven itself to be prepared and that **distinguishes our college from others**, enables us to achieve outstanding results, and ensures we are ready to make our own opportunities in the future. We do so via our:

- ✓ Consistent planning
- ✓ Leading every day
- ✓ Our Energetic spirit
- ✓ Being innovative

Malcolm X said, “**Education is the passport for the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today.**”

The first step to inventing the future is planning the future. If you’ve been here for any time at all, you know we have a thing for planning at COC. Go on our website, type in “plan,” and you’ll get 50 pages of search results. Well, at least 50 pages. There’s more, but I stopped counting.

Planning at College of the Canyons involves **everyone**.

- It is not a top-down exercise.
- Planning starts at the individual level.
- Every department at this college participates in planning and Program Review.
- The goals, objectives and future plans are created by those who will ultimately carry them out.
- Those department level plans roll up to form our Educational and Facilities Master Plan, and our Five Year Strategic Plans, and all guide our growth and development at the big picture level.

- In every department on campus, people provide ideas and help set the course as to what we accomplish and how we will go about doing so.

With your engagement, our plans are in place, and we have blueprints to ensure that together we are **building for the future success** of our students.

What else sets us apart is that people across the campus **lead every day**. We all know that plans alone don't get it done. **Getting it done** happens when leading takes place. And, at COC – that is what people all across the campus do **every day**. Because we have plans for moving our college forward, we lead the way forward for others. And, as we do, we garner accolades and recognition along the way. In just the past year, **you** helped us achieve so much!

- ✓ We received the state Chancellor's Office **Student Success Award** for our accelerated remedial Math and English courses that double **student success** rates.

- ✓ Our Athletic Department claimed its third consecutive **Western State Conference Supremacy Award**, which recognizes the academic and athletic achievements of the student athletes.
- ✓ Achieving the **second highest completion rate** in California – for college ready students and the **highest transfer rate in L.A. County** as a higher percentage of our students transfer to four-year universities than any of the 21 other community colleges in Los Angeles.
- ✓ Our Classified Senate won the **Model Senate Award**.
- ✓ We were honored with the state Chancellor’s Office **Technology Focus Award** for using text messages to alert students about deadlines.
- ✓ We celebrated as our **FBLA** and **Model UN** teams excelled in competitions against teams from four-year universities.
- ✓ We sat in awe and **applauded our Forensics Team**, which was ranked No. 1 at the annual national tournament, bringing home a combined 14 medals in its most successful season ever.

- ✓ We received the California Community College Chief Information Systems Officers Association **Technology Excellence Award** for adding online education plans, online counseling services, and online tutoring.
- ✓ We celebrated as our Communication Studies Program was named a “**model program**” by the Western States Communication Association.
- ✓ We were one of **11 institutions** from across the nation selected to participate in a strategic partnership with **OpenStax** to encourage the increased use of free, peer-reviewed textbooks that will help make college more affordable for our students.
- ✓ And, so much more!

The third thing that helps us stand out is our **commitment to innovation**. In fact, that is what links planning and leadership to success. Our commitment to innovation is driven by your risking, dreaming, reaching, and never giving up.

We are committed to innovation because it helps us determine our future:

- ✓ Innovation ensures we never get stuck in the past. If you look at where we have come, it is clear that we are never content with the status quo at College of the Canyons.
- ✓ There is a restlessness that characterizes our college as we always look at doing new things, or doing things in a new way. That commitment to innovation ensures we are always **building for the future.**

In just the past year we:

- ✓ **Expanded the use of ePortfolios**, empowering students to develop professional digital examples of their work to show potential employers
- ✓ Became the first community college in California to install a state-of-the-art **ambulance simulator** in our EMT classroom.
- ✓ **Implemented etranscripts**, making it easier for our students to get in and get out.
- ✓ **Debuted the MakerSpace**, giving students the chance to use tools that enable them to bring ideas into reality.

- ✓ Continued to lead the way in the adoption of **open educational resources** and assisted in getting \$5 million in the state budget to help other community colleges to do so.
- ✓ Added new **accounting and nursing bachelor's degrees** in the University Center, bringing the total number of degrees to 44.
- ✓ Generated **\$15.9 million in grants** – a 72 percent increase in just one year.
- ✓ Hired **85 new employees**.
- ✓ Became the only **community college** in California to hire a full-time academic program mentor to support **student-athletes in the TLC**.
- ✓ Became **the only community college** in the USA to have a project accepted for a high altitude **NASA research flight**.
- ✓ Launched the **\$5.5 million Career Pathways** project with the Hart District that enables students to begin career paths while in high school.

Because we are committed to innovation and improvement, **we will never be stuck in the past. All of you** are pushing us forward, keeping us at the forefront of change. **You** are ensuring that we will create new opportunities. And that we will stand out for doing so.

Our planning, leading and innovating is fueled by an uncanny, rarely found **energetic spirit.**

When I'm doing final interviews, candidates always comment on two things about College of the Canyons:

- How nice our campus looks and our amazing facilities.
- How friendly and welcoming everyone is.

That's not a common experience they have on other campuses. Our students, like 26-year-old Marine Corps veteran Amanda notice the difference too. It draws them to this college, and it inspires them to pursue their goals.

[Video Clip – Amanda]

On this campus, it's extremely personable. They want you to get involved. Some days its almost like, 'You're getting involved whether you want to or not.' ... A lot of positive energy. It's definitely a much happier school than other ones I've been to.

Longtime Disney Executive Lee Cockerell is famous for saying, **“It's not the magic that makes Disney World work; it's the way they work that makes it magic.”**

You work with energy and enthusiasm and magic. That makes a real difference for Amanda and thousands of students. And it makes a real difference in what we can accomplish.

Community college enrollment is dropping in California. In fact, over half have fewer students than they had six years ago. Only twelve of the state's 113 community colleges are growing and **we are one of them.**

Our enrollment is climbing beyond our cap, enabling us to capture resources left on the table by other colleges. For us, that means more programs, an ability to hire more staff, and enhance student success, like growing the number of degrees awarded **by 21 percent** from 2015 to 2016.

Remember when I said there are 21 community colleges in LA County? Our students have many choices. But because of all you do and your energetic spirit, they are choosing **College of the Canyons**.

Your enthusiasm, your optimism, and your commitment to student success are evident and inspirational. **You** draw people to our college, and **you** enable them to build their own futures.

That same energy also inspires us to take the bold steps necessary to prepare for the future. We did that last spring with Measure E.

Conventional wisdom said don't go for a bond measure in the June primary when all the typical rules of politics were thrown out the window. I heard all the reasons why it was a bad idea when we first started discussing it. I heard this many times.

- ✓ Can we really do it?
- ✓ Too much risk.
- ✓ Not enough time.
- ✓ Not enough money.
- ✓ Not enough support.
- ✓ Not enough volunteers.
- ✓ Too much work.

Well, like me, many of you knew that we had too much at stake to not go for it. Thousands of future students who will count on us to help them believe, begin and become far outweighed the risks. With your energy and enthusiasm, the case was made to the community. Based on the results of two previous bond measures that can be seen all around us, our community knew they could count on us to deliver, and they approved our third bond measure in 15 years.

That would not have happened without the extensive efforts of over 1000 volunteers who planned, who created, who overcame adversity, who energized, and who volunteered their time to make phone calls, walk precincts and spread the word about how the \$230 million from Measure E would enable us to better serve students and our community.

Now, we are now able to not only plan the space, but also build it! In the coming months, we will form planning teams to shape the development of our Valencia Campus modernization, begin planning for the arts building at Canyon Country, and break ground on a new science building at Canyon Country.

But that's just **the beginning**. Because we **plan**, because we **lead**, because we **innovate** and because we **energize**, the coming year will deliver significant accomplishments on both campuses. A lot of what we will do will evolve as opportunities are created and we:

- Open the outdoor learning spaces in the child development centers at both campuses.
- Enhance our services to veterans by adding three new classified staff in the Veterans Center.

- Hire **24** new faculty across a broad range of disciplines.
- Roll out a new campaign to help students and employees become aware of the resources available for victims of sexual assault.
- Upgrade computers, technology, and equipment in multiple departments ensuring currency and relevance to what is taught.
- Offer a revamped First Year Experience program.
- Debut the new online **COC radio station**.
- Launch the revamped Canyons Extension and create short-term learning opportunities.
- Expand our partnership with the **Pitchess Detention Center** by adding more English, Math, and Business classes and offering solar installation training to inmates.
- Design and launch industry-recognized certificates **in cyber-security training**.
- Implement the most recent LEAP projects:
 - ✓ Rolling out a new summer program to introduce junior high and high school students to coding
 - ✓ Streamlining of our registration processes

- ✓ Introducing the “I Am COC” social media campaign to brand College of the Canyons as an exciting way students can pursue their dreams.

Everything is in place for us to build an amazing future for our college and our students. Now it's up to us make it happen and make this COC's best year ever.

Thank you for your big part in doing it – for the sake of students –as someone once said – Excellence can be obtained if – you care more than others think is wise; risk more than others think is safe, dream more than others think is practical, and expect more than others think is possible. Keep doing that because it matters and helps our student's succeed!