



Office of the  
President

June 3, 2022

Dear Colleagues,

It has been great seeing so many familiar faces back on campus, most recently at last week's Outstanding Classified and Confidential Employees Awards Ceremony. It felt like hardly any time had passed since we last gathered to celebrate our employees. Working through a computer screen for two years really puts things in perspective, and nothing can replace celebrating alongside those who I am honored to call my friends and colleagues.

It was also a privilege to congratulate Monique Valencia, Program Assistant in the Center for Teaching Excellence, on being selected as Classified Employee of the Year. Thank you to the Outstanding Classified/Confidential Selection Committee for doing such a great job in hosting the event, and to the managers who volunteered their time to make the day special for our classified and confidential employees.

I would like to provide you with a brief update on a couple of topics.

### **The Great Resignation**

Like I said during commencement two weeks ago, The Great Resignation is a thing—it is a really big thing. Spurred on by the pandemic, no labor sectors are escaping this phenomenon. By now I am certain all of us have seen the effects of staffing shortages in various ways; examples that come to my mind are navigating new, modified business hours at my favorite restaurants and waiting in longer-than-usual lines because fewer cashiers are available.

Yesterday, I participated in a Coast Plaza Hospital Governing Board meeting (our local hospital, down the street on Studebaker) and we had a lengthy discussion on the challenges of filling vacancies in the healthcare sector due to retirements and resignations.

As several of our colleagues at Cerritos College retire or move on to pursue a variety of interests and opportunities, we are happy for them, yet it causes additional strain and pressure on us in unexpected ways. As you know by now, I am not exempt from feeling this additional strain! I am looking forward to relinquishing my duties as “partial VP of Human Resources” in the very near future, and I am sure VP Felipe Lopez feels the same way. Last week, the campus held four very successful candidate forums to fill the permanent position. I plan to bring forward a recommendation to the Board of Trustees at our next meeting and I have appreciated your thoughtful feedback from the candidate forums.

Back in April, our leadership team set an ambitious goal of filling 36 or more vacancies by mid-August, and I am pleased to share that we are on track to reach that goal. A big thank you goes out to everybody who has stepped up to serve on selection committees. I would also like to thank our Human Resources employees who are working hard to move the institution forward.

It is a lengthy yet rewarding process to interview dozens of talented individuals for faculty positions, and it is incredible to hear from the candidates about the outstanding reputation that Cerritos College has in the community and across the state. This is an exciting time to join our college community, and we continue to attract highly qualified individuals. This is yet another testament to the good work we accomplish together.

As I've mentioned in previous messages, Dr. Elizabeth Miller is now serving as our Acting VP of Student Services and our search for a permanent VP is underway. She hit the ground running this week and we are fortunate to have her as a part of the team. Dr. Wei Zhou is already preparing for his role as Interim VP of Academic Affairs which will begin effective July 1. We have many exciting changes happening at Cerritos College and it is a good time to be positive about the future.

## **COVID**

As you know, we are not currently mandating that everyone must wear a mask indoors. While it is still not required, I would like to consider wearing a mask in high-capacity indoor spaces. To reiterate: **we are not currently mandating that everyone must wear a mask indoors.** This is a friendly reminder to stay vigilant about our current public health situation.

I recognize that navigating change is difficult, and we have had to change so many things in recent years—how we spend our personal time, the way we work, the way we visit friends and family...we have even changed the way that we spend our money. These changes generate emotional responses from each of us, and while it may feel unexpected sometimes, it is natural. I would just like to acknowledge that this is happening to all of us, all the time. I know that we are unusually stressed, anxious, and fatigued due to countless factors. Yet, all of us are here at Cerritos College because we believe in and support the mission of the college. That means a lot to me.

To conclude this message, I would like to say that I am deeply appreciative of the respect, patience, and grace that you have shown to me during the past two years in particular. I, like all of you, have struggled to navigate all the changes that we continue to face in relation to the pandemic and its effects. I try my best, every day, to treat each of you with respect, patience, and grace as well. I am confident that we can continue to move forward and achieve great things for our students and community while working together.

Jose Fierro, D.V.M., Ph.D.  
President/Superintendent