



September 4, 2024

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you to everyone who joined last week's Convocation. We had a great turnout and introduced a new element to our event – the “Are You Smarter than a VP?” game, testing the audience's knowledge of Cerritos College. Now we know that Dr. Lisa Boutin-Vitela is in fact smarter than a Vice President. It was wonderful to celebrate our successes together and share the stage with our faculty and alumni, who conveyed their own experience with leveling up for student success. I hope you found the conversations inspiring as we aim to reach the next level at Cerritos College, moving toward our goal of graduating 50% of our students within five years or less.

As we discussed last Thursday, it is time for Cerritos College to level up. This is essential not only for our institution, but also for our community. Last year, I emphasized that the work we do here matters. We build our communities and bring about change that spans across generations. As we strive to reach new levels of access, completion, career and transfer success, and institutional health, these impacts will continue to compound in the future, building a great institution and community.

In my presentation, I highlighted incredible work already being done at Cerritos College. We invested in our infrastructure and processes to create a wide and solid foundation. That work is already yielding results. Over the last four years, we nearly tripled the percentage of students graduating within two years. Last year, we provided a majority of our students with an educational plan that places them on the trajectory to graduate in less time. We have award-winning programs that are supplying a robust and diverse workforce in the future. None of this could be accomplished without all of you.

I encourage you [to view the presentation](#) on our Convocation web page, but I also want to provide a few key takeaways from our in-house experts on student success:

Rosa Carrillo and Dr. Daniel Gardner (Puente): Align every aspect of our instruction and support programs to the student's long-term goals. Ensure every step our students take is to achieve that goal.

Dr. Shelia Hill and Dr. Damon Cagnolatti (Umoja): Connect our students with a community early. When students feel a sense of belonging, they are more likely to engage with the programs, enroll consistently, and shorten their time to completion.

Joe Mulleary (Automotive Technology): Develop pathways that work for our students. The use of stackable credentials and flexible scheduling reduce barriers and bring our students to the workforce faster.

Wendy Wright (Retail Management): Provide concierge services and walk our students through the process. Eliminate barriers by maintaining constant contact with our students, enrolling them in classes, and seeking out support and assistance for them through our partners.

These are the things we are already doing at Cerritos College and our data shows that they are effective. These programs have higher transfer rates, greater retention and persistence, and shorter time to completion than the campus as a whole. It is now our time to build upon these practices to ensure student success.

As we are all key players in institutionalizing the next level at Cerritos College, I also want to thank the key players who made last week's event a success. Please join me in thanking them for their collective efforts.

Culinary Arts Team
Facilities Team

Public Relations Team
Theatre Production Team

President's Office Team
Serafina Chun

I encourage you to reach out to me with your own ideas as we continue our momentum and reach the next level. Thank you all for your incredible work.

Sincerely,

Jose

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