



August 19, 2022

Dear Colleagues,

Yesterday morning, I was asked to use one word to describe this first week of the fall semester. My reply? *Revitalizing*. I know that many of you feel the same way because you have taken the time to share your excitement with me. I have also seen many of you stop to help students find their way on campus, and this is the level of service that we are known for in the community and beyond. I appreciate everyone's determination to make this semester meaningful for our students.

I do not want to overlook the monumental effort it has taken to get to this point; in fact, this summer and the past year, in general, have been the busiest in recent memory. Much of this work is done behind the scenes, and below I would like to highlight just a few efforts that you might not have heard about.

Setting Another Record: 5,167 Degrees and Certificates in 2021-22

Recently, the Admissions & Records department examined its graduation petition process, one of the many critical behind-the-scenes tasks that we have at the college. They found that our timeline for processing is equivalent to or better than other surrounding colleges. In fact, this summer, the department reached a new record for processing spring 2022 petitions. Please join me in congratulating them for their excellent work.

Once the spring 2022 completion numbers were finalized, we uncovered another incredible milestone: **in 2021-2022, we awarded 5,167 degrees and certificates—more than any previous year.** Our students persisted throughout this past year, and we provided them with the instruction and support that they needed to be successful. Thank you for persisting alongside our students as we navigated challenging waters.

On-Campus Enrollment Continues to Increase

The crowded parking lots and increased foot traffic are visual proof that our students are beginning to come back to campus. Perhaps less apparent (but just as noteworthy) are the persistent, creative efforts of our colleagues who worked for many months to increase enrollment by making our students feel welcome on campus. Your efforts are working, and one example that immediately comes to mind is Welcome Day, where over 600 students visited campus to learn more about the services, instruction, and activities we provide.

The data confirms our observations; in the week prior to the start the fall semester, 59% more students chose in-person classes compared to the spring 2022 semester. In addition, fall 2022 enrollment was up one percent for one week prior to the start of the semester, compared to fall

2021. While it is true that we rely heavily on student enrollment for funding, enrollment is also a key indicator of economic development in our region. We know that a college education unlocks countless possibilities for our students, and I would like to thank everyone who continues to work to increase access to education, including our faculty who inspire our students to show up day after day.

Executive Council

Our executive team at the college, which consists of four vice presidents and me, meets weekly during Executive Council meetings. Recently, I heard that there is an air of mystery surrounding what happens during Executive Council meetings (also referred to as EC). There is nothing particularly mysterious about our meetings; however, we could probably do a better job communicating what we discuss. That being said, I would like to take a moment to highlight the work that we have been focused on these past few months.

You probably know that our executive team has undergone a transformation this past year. Back in April, we held an Executive Council retreat (in the LRC for a change of scenery) to discuss the college's [vision and values](#) and develop quarterly tasks (we call them Rocks) to support the completion of our Educational Master Plan goals. We created our Rocks when the VP of Human Resources position was vacant, but shortly before the former VP of Student Services and former VP of Academic Affairs parted ways. Since then, we have welcomed Dr. Mercedes Gutierrez, Dr. Wei Zhou, and Dr. Elizabeth Miller to the executive team. Throughout this transition, our team remained committed to our Rocks, sharing each area's progress at the beginning of every Executive Council meeting.

While it is not necessarily exciting, these behind-the-scenes activities are important to the continuous improvement of our institution. We utilize our time during EC to hold ourselves accountable for what we have agreed on accomplishing as a team. We might not talk about it often, but I want you to know that the vice presidents have done an incredible job leading each of the areas, particularly throughout a difficult year. Every Rock would be impossible to achieve without the persistence and hard work of our employees. Below are the Rocks we achieved since April:

Human Resources

- 85 percent of currently listed positions will be filled by mid-August.
- Offer at least one general onboarding workshop developed and tailored to the vision of the college.
- Settle faculty negotiations for 2021-23.
- Prepare and present Diversity Plan reporting requirements to the Board of Trustees.

Student Services

- Pilot and implement EAB Early Alert System.
- Conduct a review of the graduation petition process and make a recommendation by August 12.

Business Services/President's Office

- Present the tentative budget for Board approval in June.
- Present analysis and results of student housing survey to the Board of Trustees.
- Present bond feasibility results to the Board of Trustees.
- Present resolution to the board for a GO Bond before the election filing deadline.

Academic Affairs

- Select, hire, and onboard the Interim Dean of Academic Affairs.
- Reestablish classes at the La Mirada site for the fall semester.
- Establish pilot and implement ACUE training.

There were a few Rocks that we did not quite accomplish in the time we planned for, but the institution made tremendous progress nonetheless, particularly with regard to our PeopleSoft precursors, enrollment targets, comprehensive education plan targets, and updating existing education plans. Again, we share these successes with our entire teams across the campus. In a couple of weeks, we will set new Rocks for the semester, and I encourage you to reach out to your area vice president to share your thoughts on what we might collectively achieve this semester.

Guided Pathways at Convocation – Thursday, September 1

I would like to conclude by inviting everyone to attend this year's Convocation event on Thursday, September 1 at 10:00 am in the Performing Arts Center. Prior to hosting an exciting conversation on Guided Pathways (which begins at 11:00 am), we will be showcasing our brand-new Performing Arts Center. The event will conclude with lunch and live entertainment by our Commercial Music Ensemble. We may have a surprise at our Convocation event, so you won't want to miss it.

As this first week comes to a close, I encourage all of us to maintain this positive, engaging spirit throughout the semester. I want to thank you for your dedication to Cerritos College and our students and wish you a healthy, productive semester.

Jose

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