



January 5, 2015

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the New Year, winter term, and all the promise that awaits us!

I'm so honored to be here at Shoreline, part of a community that includes wonderful and supportive colleagues who care deeply about creating the best environment for our students to learn and complete their educational goals. I hope you are as excited as I am about welcoming our students back to campus. Fall quarter involved a lot of learning and listening for me both on and off campus. What impressed me most was the tremendous dedication I saw and I'm looking forward to being inspired again this quarter by your commitment to students.

As we begin 2015, it is a time to remember our past accomplishments to show the way forward. Students are engaged and learning. This fall, we were able to provide recognition of all employees' contributions to our students. Stable leadership is in place across the campus and we're on solid financial footing because of good stewardship of our resources. As we mark our 50th anniversary, we have the opportunity to look at where the college has been and build a legacy for the coming decades.

It will be important to stay focused on our vision and mission because I'm sure there will be plenty of distractions in the coming months. The challenges our legislators are facing in Olympia are indeed formidable. Despite signs of an improving economy and growing state revenue, there will be even more demands on those funds. We know that a dollar invested in a community and technical college student returns far more than that to society, but there is plenty of competition for that dollar. Lawmakers are under a state Supreme Court order, the McCleary decision, to provide adequate funding for the K-12 system. Voters added their voice in November by asking for reduced class sizes with Initiative 1351.

We can and will vigorously make our case in Olympia and participate in the political process that does impact our environment. However, the decisions we make about how we interact with that environment can have much a bigger impact on our students, the college, and the communities we serve. We are in a position to not just react, but to set our own path with strength and determination.

How have we positioned ourselves to be responsive? We began this work fall term by establishing, along with the Board of Trustees, four focus areas that will help us in the near term to design a common picture of our preferred future. In October, our trustees affirmed months of work by staff and faculty by adopting four areas of focus that point the way forward for the 2014-15 academic year, including:

- 1) Increase Enrollment, Retention and Completion
- 2) Leverage Community Engagement
- 3) Develop Human Resources and Physical/Technical Infrastructure
- 4) Strategic Planning

The full document is [available here](#).

Our opportunity is to look deeper into those areas and find ways to make progress that brings success to our students. Finding those solutions will come in shared conversations that will start this month and become an ongoing feature of our campus community. I'd like to share some of the work that is already taking place as well as still to come:

Increase Enrollment, Retention and Completion

This is all about strengthening our student success strategies from application, enrollment, persistence, retention, student learning to completion.

Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs, Bob Francis, is gathering and convening a group to be known as the Student Success Coordinating Committee. The group is focused on communicating and coordinating student retention efforts, as well as all efforts related to student success from pre-enrollment contacts to the ultimate achievement of students' educational goals. Smaller work groups will tackle specific projects such as the First-Year Fast-Forward effort that launched during fall quarter.

Participation will be broad and include members of the Dean Team, Strategic Planning and Budget Committee, Faculty Senate, Faculty Federation, Math and English faculty, PIO, Counseling, Grants, Business and Student Support Services, Registration and International Education.

We'll also enlist some expertise to walk with us and add perspective in these areas. This fall, we published a request for proposal for consulting services on strategic enrollment management. The scope of work is broad. We're asking for help in our recruitment through enrollment efforts, as well as identify students we are not currently serving. We will also assess where we can do even better in retaining the students we have and helping them attain their goals. The deadline for proposals is 4 p.m. today, Jan. 5.

I'm looking forward to the rich and exciting conversation that I'm sure will take place in this area of focus.

Leverage Community Engagement

Here, we're looking to launch a plan to improve the "ownership" of Shoreline Community College by the communities we serve.

Over 50 years, the college has helped tens of thousands of students go on to lead successful, productive lives. The more resources the college has, the more students can be helped and that means strengthening the relationship between the college and the Shoreline Community College Foundation. As the college gets clearer about how we can best serve our students and communities, we can partner in deeper ways with the Foundation. In some cases, that will be capital campaigns to improve the space and environment for learning. In other cases, it means growing scholarship funding to help students with the increasing financial burden as the state reduces support.

You may have seen the [Dec. 4 announcement](#) that Laura Rehrmann has joined the college to help with this work. I've known of Laura and her successful work as president and CEO of the Group Health Foundation. She also knows community colleges, having led Seattle Central's foundation for five years. She will work closely with our Foundation staff and board members, as well as reach out across the

campus to engage all of us in this work. I can't tell you how excited I am to have Laura and her expertise here at Shoreline.

Develop Human Resources and Physical/Technical Infrastructure

Our students and the communities we serve are becoming increasingly diverse. It is important that the college develop the infrastructure to attract, recruit, hire, and retain employees to meet their needs.

This may seem like a job for HR, but it is much more. Yes, we're going to develop a plan that helps recruit and hire a workforce that reflects our students and communities. We also want to assess the needs of our current employees and provide opportunities to strengthen our skills, abilities, and professional knowledge.

When we can create an environment that allows us all to do our best work, our students will benefit, too. We're looking at opportunities to broaden our perspectives in this area, too. We're in conversations with people such as Seattle University Associate Dean of Education, Dr. Bob Hughes, to assist in our journey. Dean Hughes also served in dean positions at Seattle and Highline community colleges so he knows well our work and our students.

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning can sound like a rigid and unforgiving process, but I see it as just the opposite. It has been my experience that creating a common picture of our future provides an opportunity to come together and find ways that make the college the best place to work and learn.

Our Strategic Planning and Budget Committee does terrific work in creating an annual snapshot of work and integrating resource allocation and budgeting into the planning process. We can build on that work to look at a longer, five-year horizon. Having a longer term plan will allow us to know where we need to go in order to achieve our bold vision and mission of being a world-class leader in student success and community engagement. Those words have real meaning when we create a plan that links our resources with a clear picture of our common destiny. We can then assess how closely our efforts help us achieve our desired future!

The process of planning is an open, ongoing conversation that creates a framework which can accommodate change and adjust to opportunities. That plan, that framework, doesn't sit on a shelf, but informs and guides our work on a daily basis. To work with us, we've invited Tom Mesaros on our journey. Tom has served as President and CEO and is now Senior Counsel at The Alford Group, which specializes in helping organizations such as ours. Tom's work with our trustees and administrators dovetails nicely with the broader strategic planning effort.

Here's a general outline of the process as currently envisioned:

- Early January
 - Form a strategic planning task force with the help of the existing Strategic Planning and Budget Committee.
- January 23
 - All-Campus Gathering, where we'll talk more about the strategic planning process, as well as provide an update on the Areas of Focus for the term.
- February-June
 - Open campus forums to introduce and start the planning conversations.

- Workgroups formed with the input of the forums will focus on more specific areas, such as student retention, human resources, community engagement, governance and finances.
 - External advisory group meetings to make sure off-campus voices are heard.
- June
 - Update Board of Trustees on work and progress
- June-September
 - Refine, review and craft draft five-year strategic plan
- September-October
 - Board of Trustees confirms final five-year strategic plan

This is an exciting process in front of us, but it is just the beginning. A strategic plan that we've created together allows us to move ahead together in a purposeful way. When conditions change or the unexpected occurs, as they surely will, we'll know how to engage in the meaningful conversations using a common picture to guide our decision making. It will also ensure we know how to navigate those unexpected conditions with an outlook on where we need to head to achieve our goals.

And the unexpected won't wait for a plan to be in place before arriving on our doorstep and demanding our attention. That happened this fall when several incidents of defacing posters for the Queer Film Festival were discovered. I was heartened by the immediate response by so many across campus coming together to discuss what we can do as a community. When one of us is diminished at our college, we are all diminished. The response we displayed speaks to the character of our college and gets to the heart of who we are as a community of learners. We will continue the discussion toward the goal of establishing community standards, values that can be on display for all to see that Shoreline is a safe environment for all to learn, to grow and realize their dreams.

I hope this opening welcome provides a context for the important work ahead of us. I realize this work will require all of us to be involved, and I can't wait for us to come together and get started. We are the right people, at the right time, to create a plan that builds on the rich heritage that Shoreline has enjoyed. I'm looking forward to designing the path forward with you! I see great success ahead!

Gratefully,

Cheryl