**The Success of our Students Depends on Us**

The fall semester has started with a bang! Fall enrollment is looking strong and may surpass last fall’s numbers. And once again there’s construction on campus to add more parking, sidewalks and accessibility needs.

I have been here two years now, and it’s the best two years of my 35-year career in higher education. I keep looking at our performance metrics and our benchmarks that we achieved here. This is the fifth community college I have been to and there’s no comparison. There’s no comparison on the minds and talents that we have and no comparison on the success of our students. NVC is a wonderful place despite the challenges many higher education institutions are facing right now. Thank you for allowing me to lead this institution.

If you missed my convocation speech, make sure you read it below:

One of our long-time Professors, Dr. Dennis Gittinger recently shared his passion for students and his profession. In his heartfelt email he wrote, “Faculty members are critical to the fundamental mission of the college. *They deliver the educational product, and their full participation in the educational process is critical to student success.*

Hence, we must ensure that each faculty member is the most effective teacher he or she can be, and that requires the curriculum to resonate with the students and include practical and interesting topics. Great instructors teaching a great curriculum will necessarily improve all desirable outcomes, including retention, persistence, and graduation rates.”

I appreciate the importance and power of Dr. Gittinger’s words. The success of our students is so dependent on you and I….everyone of us.

These words are important as all words and they have the ability to inspire our commitment to students and recognize the central importance and long-term impact of what we do in and out of the classroom.

Words both spoken and written can inspire passion and action and today, I hope to do both. Inspire your continued passion to serve students in a manner that places them at the center of our academic enterprise and inspire our collective action to work together with civility and kindness and with a spirit of care and compassion to accomplish the big and small goals that are before us.

NVC is a leader in completion because we care, we connect and exceed the expectations of our students. We have to continue providing a high quality, high rigor curriculum paired with co-curricular and experiential learning experiences. We must be willing to work with our business and university partners to demonstrate that our student learning objectives are relevant to employer expectations and aligned with university program transfer requirements.

Last year, I spoke of closing the equity gaps, renewal and the opportunity for us as a college to create a plan for the future by envisioning one by our design and last year we set out together in that direction and what amazing success, we have achieved.

The landscape of higher education is changing quickly and what was ok in the past will no longer allow colleges and universities to keep pace with the world and with the needs and expectations of students and communities. We must out innovate and have a laser like focus on continuous quality improvement that is responsive to the needs of those we serve. We must do things differently, if we are to survive and thrive. You have only to read the newspaper about reductions in state funding for higher education, reductions in faculty and staff, increased accountability standards and questions about the relevance of our curriculum. It’s not hard to understand that our future will be determined by each of us here today and how much we each are willing to invest in sustaining Northwest Vista College.

I quoted one of our distinguished professors not only as a reminder of the importance of the work that we have yet to do in support of student success and as a reminder to not only envision a future by our design but our need to develop a plan to achieve it. By working together, collaboratively, with integrity, character and honesty and by operating outside of perceived and actual silos, I am confident that this will be our time and that Northwest Vista College will grasp the future.

Over the past two years, I have gotten to know many of you as we have worked hard together to re-envision this amazing institution. I have been impressed by the talent and creativity of many in this community, not to mention the passion, understanding and simple hard-work of so many others.

We worked to build a sustainable infrastructure to place us on even footing with other higher education institutions and we continue our work in this area. We launched new articulations, forged new partnerships with business and industry, re-examined our processes and barriers and expanded partnerships with our community.

I encourage each of us to embrace moving forward event through challenges and setbacks and together we can move effectively through the future. Northwest Vista College continues in its season of renewal centered in learning – focused on student success. There is still much work to be done together and I am confident that we will do it. We will continue to dream and plan together. We will continue to examine our programs, our services, our systems and policies and we will continue make the necessary changes to provide our students the very best teaching/learning environment and to position this institution for even greater success.

It will continue to be my vision that Northwest Vista College will lead the way in innovation, instructional pedagogy, Student Services and in the establishment of solid corporate and business partnerships that will enable us to provide greater access to students throughout the county and beyond.

I have also come to realize the important social mission that we must play in helping our community and responding to the many challenges that it faces. Our success will also hinge on our community’s success.

Vista must find ways to lift and sustain its community through our active engagement.

Today, I invite you to continue to envision the future. Envision the possibilities that are before us and envision what it will take for us to get there. Time, energy and resources will continue to be identified to enable our movement. We will continue to identify the right people, placing them in the right seats, with the right tools, moving in the same direction.

We cannot and will not move forward if only some of us look forward, while others are looking back and holding on to the challenges of the past. We cannot move forward if good people do nothing. We cannot move forward if we forget the power of our actions and words in our treatment of each other. The culture that we seek to build is based on mutual respect and enables our greater success. Together, we must, identify barriers and develop appropriate strategies as a community of thinkers.

I continue to encourage your passion, optimism, creativity and determination to achieve positive outcomes for our students.

Our future, after-all, will be what we make it. It will be our future – by our design. The standard is raised, the expectations are high and I believe that we can make what was once felt impossible – extremely possible.

I continue to ask for your trust in the process as I will continue to trust you to lead as you deliver your best self to each task, to our students and to each other. We will continue to work together to close leadership gaps, professional development gaps, resource gaps, and where they exist, even vision gaps.

I will continue to listen, continue to explore and continue to encourage each of you every day as we move closer our goals. We will plan as a college, discuss the difficult issues openly and respond in a manner that will always move us forward in fulfillment of our benchmarks. All of my decisions will continue to be guided by what is in the best interest of our students and I ask that each of your decisions be guided similarly.

We must ask with honesty,” How does every decision, policy and action improve or expand learning and how do we know?”

These simple questions will guarantee our ability to measure and focus our efforts on student success outcomes, retention and college completion. This academic year, we will continue our work on our Strategic Plan, focused on the core strategic directions of Student completion, Learning and Sustainability.

We will continue examining our program mix and course offerings to determine their relevancy and currency.

We will assess the effectiveness of our current infrastructure and make changes where necessary. We will complete our SACSCOC Report and prepare for our upcoming visit and continue preparing our students.

Today, we continue our design process and together we move Northwest Vista College forward. I also ask for your leadership in recruiting, retention and overall development of strategies for sustainability as an ambassador of NVC. I hope that you will join me and remain committed to envisioning and transforming our future through constructive engagement in the leadership process, student-centered interpretation of policy and strategic design.

Thank You!

At this time, I would like to share briefly some of our 2015/2016 academic year highlights and priorities for 2016/2017. But first, the highlights.

* NVC has exceeded the degrees/certificates targets set for NVC for its WIG for three years. NVC has grown degrees and certificates awarded by 39% from 2014 to 2015 and 74% from 2013 to 2015. Spring degrees/certificates of 1,920 is the largest number awarded by NVC in the spring, beating last year’s record number of 1,039. Fall 2015 and spring degrees awarded total 2,720, exceeding our 2016 WIG of 2,719. We should exceed 3,000 degrees and certificates for 2016 or a 110% increase in the past 3 years.This will be the third year in a row NVC has met or exceeded its WIG completion targets.
* NVC had a four-year graduation rate for the 2011 FTIC cohort of 27.6%. This was the best in state for 2015 for very large community colleges. The graduation rate for Hispanic students in this same cohort was 28.1% indicating that NV student services for Hispanic students at NVC are contributing to their success and completion. NVC also has a 29.3% 6 year transfer rate which is well above the 22.6% rate for Texas very large community colleges.
* The goal of the SACSCOC approved Information Literacy QEP for 2016/17 is to build and assess assignment models to help our students learn to find, ethically use, synthesize and evaluate information. Outcomes include the start of an Information Literacy Academy for faculty and staff, full assessment of the Information Literacy QEP via student product and rubric, and pilot assessment of the ePortfolio in EDUC 1300 classes and by advisors.
* **Enrollment** 
  + Fall 2015 enrollment up 5.4% from previous fall
  + SDEV/EDUC 1300 enrollment increased from 2,250 in 2011-2012 to 2,837 in 2015-2016, a 26% increase in five years. SDEV/EDUC 1300 enrollment is an important measure predicting future overall NVC enrollment.
  + Dual Credit Enrollment grew to 3,150 students, the largest number ever enrolled at NVC. NVC conducted the first ever Dual Credit Convocation for all Dual Credit faculty and coordinators.
* **Veterans Programs**
  + The Veterans’ Lounge was successfully opened and has been utilized by many veterans on campus.  The Vet2Vet program expanded its reach beyond personal mentoring to include providing opportunities for veterans to become engaged on campus through the lounge, activities and events.
* **Funded and Awarded Four Faculty/Staff Innovation Grants--**Four teams were selected to receive the 2016 Faculty/Staff Innovation Grants:
  + Assessment in Action Team – Investigating the relationship between information literacy and key process indicators to assist future students in achieving their goals
  + Roopa Prasad/Jacob Crandall – Project Based Learning in Chemistry 1301 to enhance student learning

# Viviane Marioneaux – Software to allow virtual student class attendance from anywhere

# Rudy De La Cruz – Scanner for the Academia and Community Partnership to support a repository for documents and artifacts of early San Antonio history.

* **Reduced number of High Challenge Courses** to 11. NVC faculty conducted two charrettes to discuss strategies for addressing these difficult courses. Faculty will continue to meet to identify additional strategies for student success.
* **Top Minority Degree Producer**
  + Northwest Vista College is among the nation’s Top 100 Minority-Degree Producers according to "Diverse: Issues in Higher Education" magazine. NVC has been listed since the rankings began in 2010. The Diverse Top 100 Minority Degree Producers rankings are compiled each year according to the number of degrees awarded to minority students. The publication this year focused on the achievements during the 2013-14 academic year, comparing them to the previous year.  NVC was ranked 18th nationally for all disciplines for Hispanic degrees awarded. Also reported for these categories was the percentage of minority graduates. For example, 68 percent of education degrees and Business Administration, Management and Operations degrees awarded in 2013-2014 at NVC were awarded to minority students. Fifty-six percent of all degrees awarded were presented to Hispanic students.
* Budget: Increased by 15.4% - over 6 million dollars (with compensation adjustment and student success overlays)

**Priorities for 2016/17:**

SACSCOC (add scanned letter)

Further develop program pre-major articulation with top public and private universities - Implementation of Institutes

Vista Central (Title V)

Bond Passage –

Additional Parking Garage/Student Success

Renovation of Cypress for Classroom Space/Cultural Center for Excellence

STEM Center for Excellence

Completion WIG

High Challenge Courses