

Remarks after the BOG approves appointment.

Feb 23, 2024

Introduction:

Thank you President Costa, Past President Haynes, Vice president Aguinaldo and all members of the Board of Governors.

Dr. Daisy Gonzalez ... two stints as interim chancellor keeping this ship steady and moving forward. Thank you.

I want to acknowledge and thank those who have rearranged their schedules and traveled to be here with us today. Some of you left your homes at 3:00 a.m. this morning to get here

My CEO colleagues – thank you. Thank you to the League.

Faculty, classified, student leaders, trustees. Thank you. Political leaders, I see you. Thank you.

Colleagues with whom I have served on various boards and advisory committees – women’s caucus, AAPITA, PPIC Higher Ed Center, CA Learning Labs, and the Campaign for College Opportunity.

Senior leadership from UC and CSU.

And my Kern CCD family.

Chancellor’s office colleagues I am so looking forward to be part of the team.

And students from California’s Community Colleges. We are here for you.

I am honored to be selected as Chancellor, and I am grateful for the leadership and collective work that has created the largest and best community college system in the nation. I do feel a sense of urgency and moral obligation to the job at hand.

The times we are in:

It is a uniquely challenging time for public education, particularly for community colleges. Reasons are not hard to find – public demand on the “value proposition” of higher ed; widespread deployment of online technologies, the emergence of potential game-changers like virtual reality and generative AI; pressing need for climate action; redefining of jobs and therefore the workforce; uncertainties in college enrollment even among the unemployed and underemployed; a legacy of student debt; social and political unrest; and the persistence of inequity.

Faced with these great challenges, and more, my sense of urgency is also one of eager anticipation, because I believe *our greatest challenges enable us to do our greatest work*, triggering our creativity and letting our collective brilliance shine. *The time is now* that we are called to design the most vibrant, resilient, and effective learning environment ever. We are called to do this work, with equity, at scale, not eventually but now. And our students demand that we engage in our work with a shared vision that keeps students first.

We have no choice but to succeed. Our time is now.

The work:

We are blessed with the framework and expectations of the Board of Governors' *Vision for Success* and we are blessed with the work already being done at our colleges.

The better part of the last decade has been a time of significant policy reform:

- 2015 Dual Enrollment
- 2017 with the Vision for Success adopted by the BOG, AB 705 legislation on student placement in transfer level English and math.
- 2018 Student Centered Funding Formula implemented.
- 2021 The passage of the Community College Baccalaureate legislation AB 927 and wave 2 of the transfer reform legislation AB 928

This work when fully implemented within California's community colleges and intersegmentally with our colleagues at the CSUs and UCs, will transcend any other such policy work undertaken before. The Board of Governors is tasking the 11th Chancellor of the California Community Colleges to be both implementer and visionary, all at once, to further advance the next frontier of student success with equity.

So... our work then is twofold: (1) Implement the *Vision for Success* with equity, fidelity, at scale, using the identified metrics, and (2) expand the canopy of community college learners, to accelerate the socio-economic mobility for our most marginalized communities through partnerships that will reach working adults, disconnected youth and others left behind.

The implementation work includes building on and expanding exemplary work like:

- Dual Enrollment: Colleges across our system have made significant progress on Dual Enrollment. Going forward we will/must double down on this work with equity at the center.
- The work of our colleges has resulted in very real, hard-won progress in closing *equity gaps in access* and *equity gaps in success* to transfer level English and Math – a leading indicator of degree completion. Going forward, we will/must engage with this work, full throttle, and continue to make unprecedented progress.
- We are blessed that our colleges are making recruitment and retention efforts more specialized, refined and localized when compared to efforts of the past. We will/must build on customization to improve *enrollment* of our students with easy-to-use data tools to provide student information that supports a case management approach to cohort management. *One size fits all* is absolutely a thing of the past.

We must expand the canopy of community college learners, and this means focusing on communities that have remained in generational poverty. *You can't be what you can't see* will be a driving principle to create the conditions of engagement for learners who previously have been bypassed. Our work today is creating the future of learning where there are many more flexible onramps to educational pathways that lead to quality jobs.

The Governor's multi-year Roadmap for the Future lays out clear goals to support socio-economic mobility, and the California Labor Agency has called this framework the High Road Training Partnerships.

Four priority sectors – healthcare, climate action, education and early education – are specifically called out. Community colleges – together with our partners – will lead the way to meet these goals.

President Biden and Governor Newsom have an ambitious climate agenda that includes decarbonization, electrification, grid resilience and more. Community colleges must be at the core of this largescale transformation, in a multifaceted way:

- workforce development through a smart evolution of curriculum, co-curriculum, noncredit onramps, recognition of prior learning, work-based learning etc.;
- deepening partnerships with industry and community based organization to advance natural and technological solutions that preserve and enhance the quality of our life and our environment and;
- upgrading our own facilities and other physical infrastructure to be aligned with new standards of sustainability.

Our time is now!

Conclusion:

As a child growing up in Kerala India, my brothers had a band, and they played popular American songs including California Dreamin' ... *California Dreamin' On such a winter's day*. Not that subtropical Kerala was cold or dreary, but still the dream was there, a life of warmth and sunshine ... evoking an idyllic living, a dream land. Still, much later on, arriving in LA as an international student, when I was introduced to the California Higher Ed Master Plan that espoused higher education as a fundamental right ... a human right, I said, yes of course, only in California.

I believe that California leads from values - a right to higher education, right to healthcare, right to a clean environment, and a right to a quality of life where each of us as individuals are honored and respected, and where our sons and daughters can be bold, fearless and joyful.

We see stress fractures of these values here and elsewhere, even as significant resources are being poured into emerging technologies that impact every aspect of life. California will certainly find the path forward in leading this revolution without compromising our values of equity, diversity and inclusion. I firmly believe that California's Community Colleges are at the heart of this path. *Our time is now.*

It is true that our challenges are great, and I do not minimize them. Our people – faculty, classified, administrators, students – give us the power and the will to transform, to do our greatest work. The CACCs together are a powerful force for higher education – with thousands of employees at 116 community colleges and close to 2 million students. Each of us lives at the nexus of overlapping identities – our identity as faculty, classified, administrator, student; our identify as advocacy groups; our identities based on race, gender, sexual orientation, ... However, we have one unifying identify - we are all community college champions for our students. When we lead from this unified identity, and when we tap into this power source of talent, ingenuity, dedication, and care for each other – together we are a formidable force for good – absolutely unstoppable. Our time is now as *community college champions* to grow strength from diversity.

Our time is now as *community college champions* to tackle each barrier that prevents our students from completing their credential and moving on to a quality job and engaging as healthy, and contributing citizens in our society.

Our time is now as *community college champions* to ensure that each and every learner participates in their learning with curiosity, joy, and confidence.

Our time is now as *community college champions* to convert systemic disadvantage to individual and collective success.

Our students' challenges are *our* challenges. The work ahead will be
– must be – *our* greatest work. So #Let'sLiftEveryVoice. We are
#CommunityCollegeChampions

Thank you.