
From: Bernadine Chuck Fong <fongbernadine@fhda.edu>
Sent: Thursday, June 23, 2022 10:58 PM
To: foothill
Cc: centralservices; asfcelelectedappointed@foothilldeanza.onmicrosoft.com
Subject: State of the College 2022

After eight months at Foothill, and after a 16 year absence, I have returned to find the college continues to be an amazing place for students to find an educational experience of the highest quality. The programs are vibrant, innovative, and through them, our students, along with their programs, have been recognized in various ways throughout the state and through national accrediting bodies. Given the leadership challenges that began the academic year, and the continuing challenges of coping with the pandemic, Foothill continues to show its resilience and the cultural DNA for innovation and student commitment. **Congratulations to each and every one of you for a job very well done!**

There is positive energy and deliberate focus on the campus. I have also seen what I would call three pillars of the college - **digital education; experiential learning and institutional transformation**. I am calling them “pillars” because they are not new to Foothill but characterize Foothill over time and give us the framework for our future work.

Digital education, building upon Foothill’s leadership in online learning decades before Zoom. Foothill’s first online class was taught in *April 1996** on our own open source (free) platform, the early, early precursor to Canvas. Now, more than a quarter of a century later, Foothill is still a leader and is a certified POCR (Peer Online Course Review) campus (one of 20 CA community colleges) recognized by our peers for the quality of our offerings online, thanks to our Office of Online Learning team! This was no small feat which means when potential students go to the state’s California Virtual Campus, we come up as one of the top 20 colleges on the search list.

And we also have the opportunity to enrich the online, now somewhat interchangeably called virtual, experience in expanding into new realms in technology, such as augmented and virtual reality. Some faculty and staff responded to my call for interest in learning more about the metaverse – what is it, what will it be? And have been experimenting with demos of VR and how could course content, experiences, or experiments be simulated with AR/VR. A few of us had the recent opportunity to visit a VR lab in the Communications Dept. at Stanford and we were introduced to “1,000 Cut Journey,” a project in collaboration with Columbia University which uses immersive virtual reality (IVR) to “create a ‘virtual shoes’ experience through which a participant viscerally embodies an avatar who encounters various forms of racism.” <https://cogburnresearchgroup.socialwork.columbia.edu/research-projects/1000-cut-journey>. “This project builds on previous studies, in which we have examined how virtual reality can induce empathy for people different from oneself.” (quoted from website). This opens up a new avenue for how can become more culturally responsive. I am also in touch with a faculty member from Morehouse College’s VR department in Atlanta and thinking of how we can partner with Morehouse in not only VR but also in working with us on culturally responsive pedagogy and services.

Like we did to introduce online teaching to the college, I am putting together a Summer study group/thought partners/incubator innovators/ or the like to pursue how VR/AR can complement our programs, whether

through student support services, instructional labs or experiences, such as inducing empathy, as noted above. *If you are interested let me know.*

Experiential learning, at all levels, from apprenticeships and internships to service learning, field studies, and study abroad, is endemic in what we do in providing students with application to the world around us. Many of you were involved in the always amazing Research and Service Learning Symposium held last month. Students worked on projects throughout the year with the symposium being the capstone of their work and their experience. Our Business Innovation Challenge is another great opportunity for students to address real world problems and how they can be addressed, and the “Challenge” was the culmination of their work and the winners walked away with real money, (that’s business for you!). The day after graduation we have a group of 60+ anthropology students leaving for Ireland for three weeks, on an archaeological and anthropological tour. Another group leaves in July for three weeks to the Hawaii indigenous Archaeology Field School in a joint program with Stanford. We hope to expand our study abroad programs in the fall. Foothill led the Campus Abroad initiative in the Bay Area, but we have lost the edge to other colleges to the north and south who have very robust programs and we are needing to realign staffing to support this revitalization effort for us.

We have a \$1M grant with Canada College to train apprentices for Unity, a company focused on 3D and VR interactive content creation for education, training, gaming, and the like. In addition, we have been well funded with categorical workforce funding for our Career Technical Programs in the arts and health sciences and our youth programs, like the Science Learning Institute (SLI), which incorporates internships. And SLI has been named one of the 2022 Inspiring Programs in STEM Award by *INSIGHT into Diversity* magazine.

And of course, our allied health programs are designed with experiential learning embedded in them, and they, collectively, and individually, yield one of the highest success rates of any of our programs (>90+%). This success rate is reflective of their entire student population and the diversity within it

To re-attract international students, we are planning a dual enrollment high school program for students abroad, beginning with online courses FWS followed by a campus onsite two week summer institute called Experiential Learning Institute for International Students (ELIIS). We are at the beginning of the planning stages but the intent is to develop specific programs to attract cohorts of international students, as well as the typical individual recruitment approach through recruitment fairs et al.

Institutional transformation has been “in process” for multiple decades with respect to multiculturalism, diversity, equity, inclusion and though the keywords change with time, the issues and the goals are essentially the same. Since returning to Foothill, I have seen increasingly more diversity among our students (67%), our staff (67%) our faculty (44%), and administrators (58%), but how do we truly internalize our mission “educational opportunity for all” which is on the college’s seal, created in 1957? At this point in time, “opportunity” is not just about “access” or even “success: but by Merriam-Webster’s definition: “Opportunity” is “a favorable combination of circumstances, time, and place.” So, for us, how do we assure our students have a “favorable combination of circumstances, time, and place” for the education they seek from us? To this end, we are starting with the administrative leadership of the college and embedding into their administrative evaluations specific goals and objectives found in our *Strategic Vision for Equity*, for which our administrators will act upon to assure a “favorable combination of circumstances, time, and place.” And to what extent can we, should we, use our other two pillars to strengthen this all important one?

Other matters

As we go into the summer and the start of the 2022-23 academic year, we are in firm ground with respect to our college budget. We have a healthy ending balance, largely due to the effects of Covid and reduced spending accordingly. However, this balance is “one-time only” money so we have the opportunity to use this balance to fill in some budget gaps in departments which need funding more than others, other due to enrollment shifts. We are also in what the state calls “hold harmless” which means that we will not be penalized for our substantial enrollment loss. However, “the hold harmless provision does not promote the state’s value of promoting access, equity, and student success” according to the LAO (Legislative Analyst’s Office), because districts receive funding “regardless of the number of students they serve, the type of students they enroll, or the outcomes of those students,” (p. 12). Also, hold harmless does not mean we can be liberal in our spending, as we need to shore up our expenses due to our shrinking enrollment. And as I shared with our Mission (I’m)Possible Council (affectionately named by our students), our budget is heavy in personnel expenses, 96%, which is out of line with good personnel, spending practices, and therefore, we are holding the line on any “new net positions.” We are also looking at how to institutionalize two important programs that have been running on one-time “soft” money. Our signature Research and Service Leadership Symposium (RSLs) has been solely supported by proceeds from a fundraiser several years ago, and those funds are running out. We are working with the wonderful and dedicated leaders of the program to “institutionalize” it, meaning that we are identifying ways to incorporate the expenses for this program into our ongoing budget by creating more credit bearing courses to increase our state apportionment which in turn helps cover the costs of the program. Similarly, our Family Engagement Institute (FEI), has also been supported for the last 10 years through private donor support. However, this support is also waning and will not be able to support our ongoing expenses associated with the program. We have been in dialogue with the leadership of this program since February to also incorporate it into our college budget, *if* we can justify the expense through both credit and noncredit programs, which have been marginal to date. At this writing we are looking at incorporating this program into our dual enrolment programs so that our families and young students in FEI have a direct pathway to and through college level courses and thus, streamlining some of the cost overhead of this program.

Lastly, because enrollment has shrunk over the last few years, we are now categorized by the state as a “small” college rather than a middle-sized college. This may not mean much other than we lose some of the economies of scale when we are “small,” and thus, my reference earlier to needing to keep our expenses contained, especially with regard to personnel. We are being conservative as we also try to rebuild our enrollment, hence some of the new initiatives, mentioned earlier in this email. Early data from our summer enrollment is showing signs of “growth” which we hope will continue into the fall.

And to assure our academic and educational health, we are continuing to hire high caliber faculty, staff, and administrators, including filling as many as 14 new faculty positions (instructional and non-instructional), and making our division structure “whole” again by decoupling the STEM division into STEM and Health and Environmental Sciences, and also separating Kinesiology from Fine Arts, so that we will return to the historically “normal” seven division structure. I should also add that we are honoring our “rule” of not hiring any “new net positions.” We are repurposing some other vacant management positions to reinstate these two dean positions.

Our summer plans are to prepare for a robust fall quarter, beginning with a **September leadership retreat** for new tenure-line faculty along with the college leadership, student, staff, faculty, and administrative. This retreat will be before the fall quarter and also include a full onboarding of new, as well as fairly new employees, to Foothill’s history, culture, and legacy of innovation. I am also going to review the numerous committees still in place and develop a strategy to reduce committee work, or at least eliminate redundancies and relieve people of so much committee work where the ends may not justify the means. One administrator,

using Microsoft Viva to examine work trends, reported that according to his calendar, he spends 84% of his time in meetings and emails, and had only 16% available time to focus.” This is not the way to proceed if we consider ourselves an innovative leader but we have left little time to think.

This is likely to be my last collegewide communique for the ‘21-22 academic year and I wish those of you leaving for the summer, a very restful and enjoyable one, and for those of who are “sticking around,” to enjoy our 4-10-hour a day work week and take advantage of the three day weekends! And for those who are retiring, our very best wishes and greatest expression of gratitude possible. And to our students, particularly those who are leaving us, let me share this quote from Adlai Stevenson: “Your days are short here; **this is the last of your springs.... You will go away with old, good friends. And don't forget when you leave why you came.**”

**in January 1996, a CS faculty member, Michael Loceff, also the co-producer and writer for the Emmy and Golden Globe TV series “24,” came to me and said he could put a course online in the spring, and I said, “do it.” Then I was called up by the State Legislature to see if we were violating the Ed Code (we weren’t because online anything was not in the Ed. Code).*

Best regards,

Bernadine

Bernadine Chuck Fong, Ph.D.
Acting President, Foothill College
Senior Scholar and Director of Leadership Initiatives, Stanford University