Dear CSM Community,

This has been a year of many “firsts.” As some of you have stopped to ask how I am doing in my first year, I cannot help but be proud of all we have come together to accomplish this year. For college presidents, first years are difficult. To be quite honest, being the first president of color and third woman in 100 years has been no easy feat. As one of our coaches reminded me the other day, “Well, you didn’t think it was going to be easy?” Any meaningful endeavor worth taking is likely to come with ups and downs, surprises and achievements. But through it all, the college and our community partners have been my joy—all of you have buoyed me in trying circumstances, have shown me the light, the truth, and the way. I am so proud of our college for how we have navigated this first year back to in-person learning for our students’ sake and for each other’s. And I thank you.

Meditating on the significance of “the first,” I’ve reflected not only on my own “firsts” but also on the many firsts I know all of you have experienced in this past year. And then ultimately, I think about the firsts so many of our students have experienced these past two years—the first person in a family to go to college, to make a successful transition into a new career, to travel to a new country, to make the starting team, to win a state championship! Think about this: some of our students will earn their first certificate and/or degree having taken all of their coursework online—the first to graduate during a pandemic or endemic. Honoring all of our students who are completing in person at commencement will be a special time indeed.

As we honor our students at commencement, let’s celebrate with them their accomplishments and resilience—in celebrating them, we celebrate our institution, our own resilience, care, and influence. Let’s welcome summer (Thank, goodness!), and we can even think ahead to fall, when we’ll greet another class of students who will begin their journeys as the first.
Our success this year as a campus would not have been possible without the steadfast leadership of Andrea Morales, Fauzi Hamadeh, Teresa Morris, and Arielle Smith. Your leadership is a model for always doing what is right and just. In addition, Robert Gutierrez, Robert Dean, and our ITS crew have ensured our campus safety, beauty, and technological needs are met.

And to our cabinet leadership, Hilary Goodkind, Mike Holtzclaw, David McLain, Micaela Ochoa, Kristi Ridgway, and former Director of Equity, Jeremiah Sims, you have embodied a spirit of collaboration and leadership always working toward “yes” and keeping equity and justice at the core of your work—to step up for CSM students and employees.

I express my appreciation and thanks to all CSM students for believing and trusting that CSM will help you achieve your educational, professional, and personal goals. I recently witnessed some of the many achievements and success at several year-end celebrations. One celebration brought me to tears. Brothers Empowering Brothers, a student club soon-to-be learning community, inspires male of color success through mutual support and genuine care. Thank you, Manny Delgado, Dionicio Garcia, Andy Gomez, and Warren Shelby, for having the foresight, commitment, and courage to inculcate black and brown success at CSM despite the challenges or obstacles. I appreciate all of the time and effort that everyone has put into all of our end-of-the-year celebrations especially during this time of transition.

The other day I was reminded of a song lyric (“So Many Tears”) by the late poet and voice for justice Tupac Amaru Shakur, “Ah, I suffered through the years, and shed so many tears. Lord, I lost so many peers, and shed so many tears.” Our world has changed in many ways. Ideas and ideology can be liberating—just as they can be deadly. We have seen too much death, too much harm. So we have the profound responsibility to lead for liberation and by example.

Our local communities continue to grapple with regular calamities and tragic events. Nationally, we witness continued calculated, racist murders which are too consistent, too dangerously tied to American ideology to be “senseless” or reviled as “random acts of violence.” Let’s hold on . . . to truth, to our values and to our commitment to service and care, to liberation and to the mission of our college as an institution of higher learning. We provide the salve, the place for healing, growth, and opportunity.

The community college system locally and nationally is experiencing a high degree of executive turn-over as a large number of college presidents have retired or resigned in the past few years. Quite frankly the system is experiencing historically high attrition and low retention rates of CEOs. So what does this mean for us? As presidents leave office, vice presidents have the opportunity to replace them, which in turn creates opportunity for deans to replace them. As we celebrate those members of our leadership team who are moving on to higher level positions, I ask that you remain patient and understand that this time of leadership change too shall pass, eventually.
This year we have laid a foundation of constant mutual respect and compassion for one another. We will stay true to this core principle as we move forward sharing in and celebrating the many, many achievements of our CSM students and likewise those of our colleagues.

Looking ahead to the 2022-2023 academic year, we have much to be excited about.

- **Accreditation Oversight Committee**
  After a two-year break, the accreditation oversight committee met in May to discuss our next steps and committee purpose. We are moving forward with a new meeting schedule and committee composition. Details will be shared in September 2022.

- **CSM Impact Report, 2021-2022**
  The Community Relations and Marketing office will publish its inaugural impact report—an overview of the past year’s highlights and accomplishments and preview of what is to come for both internal and external community stakeholders. The report will be available electronically and in print.

- **CSM One Book: The Sum of Us**
  We are thrilled to have author and racial justice advocate Heather McGhee deliver the college opening day keynote address in the theatre on August 16, 2022.

  “Heather McGhee’s specialty is the American economy—and the mystery of why it so often fails the American public. From the financial crisis to rising student debt to collapsing public infrastructure, she found a common root problem: racism. But not just in the most obvious indignities for people of color. Racism has costs for white people, too. It is the common denominator of our most vexing public problems, the core dysfunction of our democracy and constitutive of the spiritual and moral crises that grip us all.”

  The college will discuss and reflect on the book for the academic year as we come together to realize how best to express and integrate true solidarity into our college system. Copies of *The Sum of Us* will be available for free in the Library, Learning Center, Bookstore, division offices, Office of Student Life, and President’s Office beginning in early June. Please pick up a copy at your earliest convenience.

- **Education Master Plan 2023-2028**
  The college will kick-off the education master plan (EMP) development and collaboration this summer at our leadership retreat on June 15 and 16. Management Council, Academic Senate, Classified Senate, and ASCSM will come together to begin the work of determining our strategic direction. The campus will be able to weigh-in
through our participatory governance process starting in fall 2022. One of the highlights of this new EMP will be leadership commitments.

Leadership Commitments (draft)
1. Be Great for Our Students
   College of San Mateo is committed to being a campus that is anti-racist, equity-advancing, and focused on academic excellence. (See Solidarity Statement.)

2. Engage in Thoughtful Inquiry
   We are committed to critically examining our policies and practices, utilizing self-reflective inquiry, critical reflection, and data-informed decision-making.

3. Inspire and Innovate
   Foster an environment where we can be brave and open to create ways to educate, engage, and support students, employees, and the community.

4. Reflect and Connect
   We commit to honoring one another in our practice by allocating time to support one another with humility, trust, and respect.

5. Commit to Continuous Improvement
   As members of the CSM community, we strive to improve individually and collectively as we deliberately and continuously assess/evaluate our practices, policies, procedures to promote accountability to CSM students.

Thank you, Krystal Duncan, Charlene Frontiera, Aubrey Kuan Roderick, Kristi Ridgway, and David McLain for your contributions to these draft commitments.

• Enrollment Sustainability and Growth Plan Work Group
  This fall we will embark upon a journey together to determine what uniquely distinguishes CSM, what makes CSM relevant to the many communities we serve. We will answer the question, why would students choose CSM over other colleges?

• Health and Wellness
  Health and wellness will continue to be a priority as we begin the new academic year, and it will be an important theme in our summer leadership retreat.

• Student Equity/Achievement Plan and CSM Equity Integrated Plan
  As we welcome our new Director of Equity, we are excited to begin in fall 2022 the work as a campus in drafting and developing both our Student Equity and Achievement Plan and CSM Equity Integrated Plan. Both plans rely on the participatory governance process. I look forward to your continual support and participation as we continue to define liberation, justice, and action at CSM.
Lastly, I am happy to share that this year SMCCCD will send the largest delegation of any college or district to the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity (NCORE)—over 80 SMCCCD employees, 39 of whom are from CSM. I look forward to hearing about all of the rich learning experiences and likewise exciting possibilities that may result.

As we break for summer, laugh, relax, and enjoy a well-deserved summer recess! My next update to the campus community will be in July so stay tuned.

In unity and hope, and see you at commencement,

Jennifer

College of San Mateo