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Chancellor's 2023 Fall Semester Welcome Message to the WCCCD Family

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and the Executive Team, it is my great pleasure to welcome all members of the WCCCD family—students, faculty, staff, and community supporters—to the beginning of the 2023 Fall Semester and the 2023-24 academic year. The start of each academic year is a time of anticipation, promise, and new beginnings as our college family gathers and we greet the new and returning students who come through our open door of educational opportunity. It is a time to renew our shared commitment to student belonging, satisfaction, and success. The Fall Semester starts with the faculty convocation on August 19 and the opening of classes on Monday, August 21.

The theme of this year's faculty convocation is "Embracing Students—The Promise of Our Impact." When I hear the words "embracing students," I think first about those unique student groups at WCCCD who must overcome inequities and personal challenges to pursue their educational and career goals. This includes student constituencies such as marginalized groups, parent students, unemployed and low-income persons, returning citizens, working adult learners, and persons with limited physical capacities. WCCCD is the best and, in many cases, the only pathway to career and educational success for these unique student groups. The promise of our impact on these student groups can be truly massive and life changing. And this is not only a promise; we see our impact in action at each of our joy-filled commencement exercises when graduates, most of whom overcame significant life challenges, proudly walk across the stage to receive their diplomas and certificates to the cheers of their families and friends. And virtually all these graduates could point to faculty and staff members who empowered them and encouraged them on their journey through WCCCD. I honor the work you do to turn the promise of success into a reality as you make a positive difference in the lives of our students. I have recently started to encourage our faculty and staff at all levels to become "future thinkers."

With the emergence of the post-COVID era, WCCCD enters the fourth phase of its transformational journey that began in 2002 with the launch of the Pathways to the Future initiative. The theme of Pathways IV is "Equity-Driven Talent Leadership and Student Success." During Pathways IV, as outlined in the "New Day, New Way" 2022-2026 strategic plan, we will apply the lessons we have learned from the massive disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic to bring about radical reframing and reinvention at all levels of the college. This includes addressing the economic and gender inequities that were spotlighted during the pandemic. With equity as the overarching imperative, we must rethink at a deep and fundamental level how we deliver programs and services and how we operate. We must become more innovative and entrepreneurial, building on the adaptiveness and creativity exhibited by the faculty and staff during the pandemic. We must think beyond the parameters of our typical strategic and annual plans to anticipate and investigate those "signals" from the future that will impact the future of WCCCD. This includes major long-term trends such as changing student demographics and the

basic needs of students, generative artificial intelligence, changes in teaching and learning technologies, competition from non-collegiate enterprises, and social challenges. Informed by these well-considered expectations of the future, each one of us can move with discipline and integrity to undertake those daily decisions and actions that will move us toward our best future.

As a part of the call for all of us to become “future thinkers,” I have published the “Chancellor’s Strategic Imperatives for the Long-Term Future of WCCCD.” These are enterprise-level, cross-functional, and multiyear imperatives that I feel are urgent, essential, and compelling as WCCCD strives to achieve its best future. These imperatives require the leverage of time beyond the parameters of our current strategic plan. They are the basis for study, dialogue, and actionable insights that will influence changes in our goals and plans. I will share six of the strategic imperatives that are most compelling for faculty and staff members at WCCCD.

1. *Most central is the equity imperative.* I have directed that all strategic initiatives will be developed through an equity lens.
2. *Provide leadership for the development of the regional talent pool needed by employers.* I am very proud of the work that WCCCD faculty and staff members are doing to advance career education and workforce development in support of economic growth in Detroit, Wayne County, and Southeast Michigan.
3. *Develop a student success, belonging, and satisfaction ecosystem that encompasses the total student experience.* Every member of the WCCCD family has a role in assuring that students have experiences at WCCCD that empower them to succeed and thrive.
4. *Develop a student enrollment strategy focused on unique student groups.* As mentioned above, WCCCD is the best and, in many cases, the only pathway to educational and career success for racial and other marginalized groups.
5. *Further develop and implement the academic master plan.* I am proud of what Dr. Beaumont, his leadership team, and the faculty are doing to develop equity-driven high-impact instructional strategies, including the work of the Rethink Developmental Education Team.
6. *Create a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship at all levels.* We must become “future thinkers” as we respond to the rapid demographic, educational, economic, technological, and cultural changes in the communities we serve.

Together, I am confident that we will shape WCCCD’s best future, starting with the daily actions and decisions of all members of the WCCCD family. I thank you for the privilege of serving as your chancellor, and I wish you a joyful and successful Fall Semester.