



Wayne County Community College District

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UPDATED CHANCELLOR'S MESSAGE TO THE WCCCD FAMILY Coming Back Together to Start the 2021 Fall Semester

It is my sincere pleasure to welcome all members of the WCCCD family—students, employees, and community supporters—as we come back together to start the 2021 Fall Semester. After the unprecedented and traumatic experiences of this past year, I am certain that all of us look forward to coming together and being fully engaged in the vibrancy of campus life once again. Although our hopes for the “new normal” have been sidelined to a degree by the Delta variant of COVID-19, I look forward to greeting you, at least virtually, during the Faculty Convocation Day on August 21 and as classes begin on August 23.

We have learned valuable lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of us have experienced losses, physical or mental health issues, financial insecurities, and other setbacks during the course of the pandemic. Even now, concerns about the Delta variant may cause some to struggle with feeling safe and secure. As we take all these factors into account, we can be more empathetic to one another and more responsive to the needs of the students, businesses, and communities that we serve. We will proceed into the Fall Semester with confidence and optimism and, at the same time, follow protocols that will keep us safe and healthy.

The assigned offices are communicating with students, faculty, and staff regarding specific health and safety protocols as we enter the fall and winter months. Generally, COVID-19 vaccinations are strongly encouraged but not required for students and employees. Effective August 23, 2021, please be advised, masks will be required indoors at all WCCCD locations for both vaccinated and non-vaccinated individuals. WCCCD maintains vaccine distribution sites at several campus locations for the convenience of our unvaccinated students and employees as well as those in the community. *We will continue to monitor the trajectory of the pandemic on a daily basis and additional safety procedures will be implemented as indicated.* If you have questions about these protocols, please contact the District Coronavirus Reporting Hotline at 734-374-3227 or email at mipse@wcccd.edu. Updates are also posted on the District's website.

Even as each Fall Semester is a new beginning for our students, faculty, and staff, the emerging post-COVID-19 period is a new beginning for WCCCD. We are in the early stages of the “New Day, New Way” era and the fourth stage of WCCCD's transformation that we refer to as Pathways to the Future IV. As we undertake the process of updating our strategic plan and envision WCCCD's development in the coming years, we can already see some of the contours of our future.

I am very pleased with the development of the Teaching and Learning Center in the Educational Affairs Division as we apply lessons learned during the pandemic about teaching and learning technologies and supporting the faculty in blending the best of the physical and digital world. One of the lessons learned from the pandemic is that WCCCD must anticipate and adapt more quickly and effectively to rapidly changing demographic, educational, economic, and cultural changes. To become more innovative and entrepreneurial at all levels, the Chancellor's Annual Innovation Cycle has been created. On another frontier, the pandemic spotlighted the inequities in education, health care, access to technology, and other services that were experienced disproportionately by Blacks and other persons of color. Based on this experience, we decided that our current diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programming was too limited in scope and impact and that we needed to reinvent our DEI strategy. In response, I created the Reinvent DEI Steering Team to engage the campuses and divisions in this reinvention process. It is my expectation that all our redesign and improvement efforts during Pathway IV will be developed through an equity-driven student success lens—removing personal, academic, and societal barriers so that each and every student has the opportunities and resources needed to thrive and succeed.

Finally, as members of the WCCCD family know, WCCCD and most community colleges nationally have experienced student enrollment declines during the pandemic. The decline has been particularly alarming for Blacks and other students of color. WCCCD has implemented a strategy to address this problem called the "Say *Yes* to Success" campaign. All faculty and staff members are encouraged to do their part to "move the needle" on student recruitment, access, persistence, and completion. In these and other ways, we can reimagine WCCCD as we enter the "New Day, New Way" era and move forward with Pathways IV.

As I reflect on the past eighteen months, I have a sense of enduring gratitude to the WCCCD family for sacrificing and persisting throughout the pandemic. Together, in the face of unprecedented challenges and uncertainties, we reached out in service to our students in very special ways and assured the continuity of our programs and services. Now, as we implement a new balance of in-person and digital programs and services, we can apply the lessons we have learned from the pandemic to building the WCCCD of the future that those we serve so richly deserve. I cannot imagine another period of our history when our open-door mission and our equity-driven commitments will be more vital to the success of the students, businesses, and communities that we serve.