



Wayne County Community College District

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CHANCELLOR'S FALL 2022 WELCOME MESSAGE TO THE WCCCD FAMILY

It is my pleasure to welcome all the members of the WCCCD family—students, faculty, staff, members of the Board of Trustees, and community supporters—to the beginning of the fall 2022 semester. I wish to express a special welcome to those faculty and staff members for whom the fall semester will be the first experience at WCCCD. We enter the 2022-23 academic year with high expectations and the ambitious plans as we launch an updated strategic plan and begin a new phase of institutional transformation. The fall semester starts with the faculty convocation on Saturday, August 20 and beginning of classes on Monday, August 22.

This fall 2022 semester marks the introduction of the fourth phase of WCCCD's transformation that began in 2001 with the launch of the Pathways to the Future initiative. We have labeled this fourth transformational phase (Pathways IV) the "New Day, New Way" era in recognition of the urgency for new beginnings as we apply the lessons learned during the pandemic. COVID-19 has brought about the most significant disruption of higher education in the United States since post-WWII, and the resulting changes now underway will transform higher education as we know it today. At WCCCD, our priorities for significant institutional change during Pathways IV are expressed in our updated (2022-26) strategic plan as we address goals in areas such as student success and completion; diversity/equity/inclusion; curriculum development; teaching and learning technologies; student support services; faculty and staff professional development; community partnerships and engagement; technology infrastructure; excellence of operations; and management of our human, financial, physical, information, and technological resources.

At WCCCD, students come first. We are committed to the success of students from all racial, ethnic, gender, income level, and experiential backgrounds who come through our doors. At the same time, we recognize that the negative impact of the pandemic has weighed most heavily on the low income, racial minority, and first-generation populations from which the majority of our students come. About 37 percent of community college students come from families with an annual income of less than \$20,000, and 30 percent come from families with an annual income of between \$20,000 and \$50,000. During COVID-19, WCCCD students dealt with financial problems, the loss of jobs, closed schools and the learning of their children, sick family members, lack of access to computers and the internet, and other stressors. The basic needs and insecurities of our students were even more pronounced than we imagined in areas such as food, housing, transportation, childcare, and mental health. For these reasons, I have directed that all

redesign and improvement efforts during Pathways IV must be developed through an equity-driven lens.

This outreach is part of an effort to minimize the disproportionate negative impact of COVID-19 on persons of color (including our own students). The social unrest of the past few years has caused me to make social equity a major priority. I recognize that my own background informs the way I see the world, lead, and act, and I have become more proactive and authentic in addressing the social, gender, and economic inequities in our communities and our nation. I am the co-author of a new book on this topic entitled Urban Voices: Racial Justice and Community Leadership (African American CEOs of Urban Community Colleges Speak Out). In the book, I and several of my colleagues who are chancellors or presidents of large urban/metropolitan community colleges share our positions and the work of our colleges in addressing social inequities. I have also co-authored a second new book, Detroit and the New Political Economy of Integration in Public Education, which is a multidisciplinary analysis of the national dynamics of race, education, politics, and integration as seen through the lens of the Detroit experience. I also had the opportunity to serve on a panel at the 2022 Mackinac Policy Conference of the Detroit Regional Chamber during which Detroit and Michigan leaders addressed community talent development and equity issues. As well, I led a panel discussion on the “Urban Voices” book at the 2022 national convention of the American Association of Community Colleges.

I am very proud of the WCCCD faculty and staff for their courage, resilience, and persistence as we achieved with excellence even amid the trauma and uncertainty of the pandemic. These “points of pride” include:

- The granting to WCCCD by our regional accrediting agency, the Higher Learning Commission, of the reaffirmation of another ten-year period of full accreditation with no findings. The HLC also granted WCCCD approval to expand its distance learning programming through the offering of full online degrees and certificates.
- ACEN accreditation of WCCCD's Nursing Program.
- The opening of the Curtis L. Ivery Health and Wellness Education Center which provides the District with a much-needed venue for health education, wellness, and career programming. This new facility completes the projects of the “New Century Facility and Site Master Plan” that has guided the transformation of WCCCD's campuses since 2000.
- The opening of the Teaching and Learning Center as an essential resource for faculty professional development and support of innovative teaching and learning practices.
- The initiation of the first cycle of the Chancellor's annual innovation cycle which engages faculty and staff in “pitching” innovative redesign and improvement ideas, approves and supports the most promising ideas, and celebrates the advancement of a culture of innovation at all levels of WCCCD.

- The launching of the Reinvent Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiative to “reinvent” WCCCD’s DEI based on the lessons learned during COVID-19.
- Participation in the Detroit Regional Chamber’s Detroit Drives Degrees/Community College Collaborative (D3C3). Funded by the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation and the Ballmer Group, the initiative involves the seven Southeastern Michigan community colleges: Henry Ford College, Macomb Community College, Monroe County Community College, Oakland Community College, Schoolcraft College, Washtenaw Community College, and WCCCD.
- Expansion of the Student Success Center as a primary resource for the implementation of WCCCD’s guided pathways model.
- Partnering with SwiftMD, a nationwide health care institution, to offer students and their dependents access to free medical health and mental wellness professionals 24/7.
- Building a student support service ecosystem that ensures student success through an equity-driven lens with the goal of removing personal, academic, and societal barriers.
- The final phases of securing WCCCD’s long-term financial viability and sustainability with the full implementation of the voter-approved permanent (into perpetuity) 3.25 mills. This permanent millage replaces two time-limited millage authorizations, one that expired in 2021 and one that will expire in 2023.

I want to thank all of those who congratulated me on receiving a “CEO of the Year” award from the American Association of Community Colleges at the 2022 AACC convention. I accept this award in all modesty because I am cognizant that the applause should go to all of you who have worked tirelessly and with great passion over these many years to give shape and substance to the WCCCD we see today.