Dear Colleagues,

Today, Saturday, November 7, 2015 marks the first day of my fifth month at Cerritos College. As promised, I have been observing and trying not to change many things before I learn about the culture of the institution and get to know you. The last four months have been very rewarding, exciting, and even challenging at times. However, my overall belief, based on the last four months, is that Cerritos College is a wonderful institution, comprised of passionate faculty, staff, and administrators, as well as superb students, all of whom are supported by a very welcoming community. I am a proud Falcon and committed to supporting you as we keep the institution moving forward together.

Here is what I have been thinking:

**New: Campus Collaboration**
In order to increase campus collaboration and communication, I created a new group called *Campus Leaders*. The Campus Leaders group is composed of the CSEA president, CCFF president, Faculty Senate president, ACCME president, and ASCC president. The goal is to engage in meaningful dialogue that leads to student and employee engagement in the educational process at Cerritos College, while at the same time correcting issues before they become a problem. Our first meeting is scheduled for November 25. Thank you, Carlos Arce, for the idea.

**New for our students: Refocus our efforts around access, success, and completion**
During the January 20, 2016 Board meeting, I am planning to present the Board with a plan to refocus our efforts to improve the academic experience for our students. The Campus Leaders group, named above, will lead the plan and collaboration and input will be solicited from all constituent groups. The final product will be a reasonable and actionable strategic plan using the existing planning model. The focus areas are below and additional details will be provided during the Board presentation. I hope to see you there.

**Access, Success, and Completion**

- **Learning**: In order to attain faculty collaboration and foster successful graduates and employees, it is important to *maintain and enhance the rigor and integrity of the curriculum*, not lower the standards to increase success.

- **Completion**: At the time of registration, 80% of our students state their intent to attain an associate degree or a credential. However, only 32% of them meet this goal in 4 years or less. Increasing this number is not only good for our students, but for the economic development of the communities we serve.
• **Workforce and Transfer Alignment**: Our programs need to prepare students for the challenges that they will face in the job market and at their transfer institutions.

• **Equality**: All students should have equal access to institutional services and opportunities in order to be successful.

**Everyone’s favorite topic: The 16- vs. 18-week calendar**

As many of you know, we hosted a couple of forums related to the 16- vs. 18-week calendar topic. The forums were held in order to provide the campus community with an opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns. Please continue to communicate with your Faculty Senate president, CCFF president, CSEA president, ASCC president, ACCME president, or directly with me regarding your thoughts on this matter. One of the things many of you asked me to do when I arrived to campus was to be inclusive. Again, the forums were meant to achieve just that. *I am willing to support the campus direction on this topic. If the campus wants to move to a 16-week calendar, I am here to support you and the same applies if the campus wants to stay on an 18-week calendar. My only request is to ensure we make this decision based on what is best for the students.* As I mentioned during the forum, what I would like to see is better planning in our schedules and clear pathways to graduation in order to decrease time to graduation and increase our graduation rates while minimizing the number of excess credits of students take. I know this is easier said than done, but I know we have the ability to do this based on the collective capabilities at this institution. This has to be a collaborative effort.

A big thank you to Michelle Lewellen, our Faculty Senate president, for developing examples of the pathways for graduation for our forums.

**Campus Security**

As you may be aware, we have held several campus security forums. It is unfortunate that we have to even speak about this, but recent acts of violence on college campuses across the nation are a reminder that this is something we need to consider to keep our students and employees safe. The campus community has been engaged in open dialogue and is genuinely interested in safety, which is a positive outcome of these efforts. Please ask your managers to invite our campus police to one of your meetings to perform an active shooter response drill and work with your students to make sure they also know what to do in the event of an emergency.

Thank you for reading and please let me know if you have any questions. I am excited to continue working with all of you and happy to be part of Cerritos College.

Have a great weekend.

Best,

Jose Fierro, D.V.M., Ph.D.
President/Superintendent