



August 2021 Leadership Update

Colleagues,

It's such an exciting time of year, as we begin the fall term and students return to our campuses — many for the first time since the pandemic's onset.

I hope you enjoyed last week's Orientation Week workshops, during which many of you reconnected with colleagues you've not seen in months. Hopefully, these workshops provided practical strategies to apply in your classroom or support role and inspiring messages that help you re-ignite your promise to our students.

Many of the workshop sessions — including the keynote address by Dr. Ravi Hansra — focused on trauma-informed care. Trauma-informed care starts with people and their lived experiences. It also requires an “intentional commitment to exploring one’s understanding of self in order to be more sensitized so that we can responsibly engage with others.” Applying the concepts of trauma-informed care when supporting students is critical as it allows us to understand their life experiences. Seeing beyond a students' ability to master curriculum concepts, but rather seeing their full humanity, will help us better “meet them where they are” and support them as they work toward their goals. As you probably learned during these sessions, Oakton has 30 employees who have received Conscious Ambassador of Trauma Informed Care certification. I want to recognize Dr. Bakahia Reed-Madison for bringing this training to Oakton and Dr. Angelyn Anderson, Ms. Ella Whitehead, and Ms. Shannon Sloan-Spice for leading sessions during Orientation Week.

The following employees at Oakton have received their Conscious Ambassador of Trauma-Informed Certificate:

Angelyn Anderson
Arti Ayachit
Cameron Carrara
Jenny Diaz
Mindy Finnigan
Daryl Long
Will Crawford
Kristin Keramidas
Michelle James
NaYoung Lee
Keenan Andrews
Herma Prieto
Nargis Wardak
Nicole Thompson
Sheila Tsatsakis

Richard Lyon
Hanh Huynh
Beatriz Sparks
Cheryl Joseph
Barbara Vazquez
Krissie Harris
Stacy Lomax
Marc Battista
Monique Hudson
Margaret Sanders
Ella Whitehead.

We thank them for their commitment to being trauma-informed and helping all of us to use this approach in our work.

As I reflect on all of the trauma our world has seen this past year including the impact of the global pandemic, racial reckoning, human rights crises around the world (most vivid right now in Afghanistan), impacts of climate change resulting in natural disasters, and other more local and personal crises, having a trauma-informed approach to our students and colleagues is even more important. When we start with honoring lived experiences, we are more capable of seeing each other in our full humanity.

Thank you to the Faculty Professional Development Team, the Center for Professional Development, workshop presenters, and all who helped facilitate our Orientation Week, especially for selecting such a relevant focus for the week.

Thank you also to everyone who attended and helped facilitate the Opening Day presentation last Monday. I hope you found the opportunity to look ahead to the upcoming academic year and celebrate some of our collective and individual accomplishments as meaningful as I did. I also hope you took a moment to reflect and participate in our Hope and Commitment Observance, letting go of the challenges of the past year and committing to brave strategies in the upcoming year.

Congratulations to all of this year's Excellence Award recipients, as well as the winners of the inaugural faculty High Impact Practices Awards, which were announced at Opening Day.

This year's award winners include:

- Ray Hartstein Award for Teaching Excellence, part-time faculty: Christopher Bower
- Ray Hartstein Award for Teaching Excellence, full-time faculty: Bincy Reginold
- Staff Excellence Award: Oscar Yaquian
- Living Diversity Award: Tania Boisson
- Business and Career Technologies High Impact Practices Award: Tracy Fulce
- STEM and Health Careers High Impact Practices Award: Mary Kakenmaster
- Liberal Arts High Impact Practices Award: Jessica Pinedo

If you missed the presentation or would like to see it again, you can [view it here](#) with many of the technical issues we experienced during the live event fixed.

Additionally, if you'd like to view the videos featuring our students — Raine Calimutan, Carlo Roque and A'mon Holmes — describing their Oakton Experience, please check out the links below:

[Enter](#), — Raine, Carlo and A'mon

[Navigate](#) — Raine

[Grow](#) — Carlo

[Transition](#) — A'mon

I've said it many times before, but creating the Oakton Experience requires each of us to commit to supporting students through all phases of their academic journey, creating educational experiences that are equitable, just and inclusive. This support must begin when prospective students start thinking about their college options and continue through their transition into their life's next steps.

Creating the Oakton Experience and delivering the support our students need requires bold vision and brave strategies.

As I discussed in last month's leadership update, one bold strategy is encouraging students to invest in their education this fall by offering three free credit hours at the in-district rate to students who enroll in at least nine credit hours. My hope is that combined with the continued availability of federally funded CARES grants, the piloting of a new debt forgiveness scholarship and suspending drops for non-payment, we can remove financial barriers that prevent some students from beginning or continuing their education.

It's important to note that many students are still considering their options for this fall, including enrolling in late start classes. As you engage with students, please make intentional efforts to connect them with the resources they need to complete their registration process and enroll in the courses that will help them achieve their big goals and big dreams. As our enrollment campaign says, let's have our students' backs in every way possible!

As we work diligently to serve our students' immediate needs, we are also looking further into the future. It's critical that we consider the college's long-term vision, so that we can continue to serve as a valued resource and play a leading role in creating just communities through education.

Many of you are aware that last week, our Board of Trustees adopted a resolution to change the College's name from "Oakton Community College" to "Oakton College."

The Board first discussed the prospect of the name change nearly two years ago as they considered Oakton's identity as we moved into our second half-century of

service.

To be clear, the name change does not take effect immediately. We are still Oakton Community College, which I ask you to keep in mind as you engage with current and prospective students and community members.

The next step is for College administrators to work with a subcommittee of the Board of Trustees to develop a timeline and transition process for implementing the change.

I know many of you will have questions, and I look forward to engaging in conversations with you about how the transition reflects the College's evolving vision.

This evolving vision will become clearer as we continue to develop the College's next strategic plan. The Strategic Plan will be the focus of the next College Learning Day on Oct. 27. Please save the date and keep an eye out for more information on how to participate.

But no matter what the signs say on our front entrance, website and postcards, I'm confident we'll stay true to our mission of empowering and transforming our students in the diverse communities we serve.

And we have you — our dedicated faculty, staff and administration — to thank for that. That includes this month's lifesavers, recognized by colleagues and students for their exceptional service.

Angelyn Anderson
Kelly Becker
Nahraen Benjamin
Stephanie Blumer
Mario Bohra
Tania Boisson
Mario Borha
Christopher Bowers
Anne Brennan
Steve Butera
Stacey Cameron
Lisa Cherivtch
Tom Cierniak
John Curtis & Media Services Team
Vanessa DeJesus
Princess Escudero
Randy Farmer
Tracy Fulce
Lauren Hackett
Jeff Hoffmann
Ruben Howard
Jesse Ivory
Amanda Johnson

Mary Kakenmaster
Tamara Laws
Ellen Lieberman
Bakahia Madison
Connie Negron
Felix Ortiz
Kunnain Osman
Valerie Parilli
Juletta Patrick
Jamie Petersen
Jessica Pinedo
Bincy Reginold
Jim Schmittou
Vinita Shah
Poleen Shamoon
Zaya Shamoon
Prashant Shinde
Shannon Sloan-Spice
Bea Sparks
Danielle Terry
Val Westphal
Ella Whitehead
Larry Wilson
Oscar Yaquian
Brad Young

I'll close this month's leadership update by once again reiterating my excitement for the upcoming academic year. Welcoming students back to campus after nearly 18 months is such a meaningful milestone for me as I hope it is for you. I look forward to engaging with them and you throughout the year as we enter the "next normal" and create the Oakton Experience that will help them achieve their big goals and dreams.

In community,

