



November 2022 Leadership Update

Colleagues,

If you have attended community conversations, you've heard me ask for examples of the "Oakton Experience" moment that captures what we strive to create for every student at Oakton. When we center students in our decisions and intentionally live out the Oakton brand through our actions, we create the "Oakton Experience" that allows students to feel connected, have a sense of belonging and allows them to thrive. This month I have heard examples ranging from automotive faculty going out of their way to help a student get their car repaired to switchboard operators resourcefully using google translate to assist non-English speaking prospective students. I've heard countless examples of Oakton's values in action. You create the Oakton Experience – it is the way students feel about their engagement with Oakton. As Maya Angelou said, "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

I can't imagine a better example of delivering the Oakton Experience than our Adult Education team's recent work. When we learned several hundred Venezuelan refugees had been relocated to local hotels, our Adult Education team sprung into action, visiting the hotels and registering students for ESL classes that will be offered on-site. This truly makes a positive difference for families who have endured a great deal of hardship and are trying to rebuild their lives in a new country - creating more just and thriving communities.

As you know, the last few weeks of the semester can be stressful for students as they prepare for final exams and consider their next steps. In your daily interactions with students, remember to take extra care to ensure they feel supported and empowered to continue striving toward their goals. That includes reminding students that spring registration is now open. Ask them if they have registered for classes. If they have not, ask how you can assist them in getting enrolled. If they are experiencing a barrier, warmly connect them to the support service that can help remove the barrier to their continuation. This is how we deliver the Oakton Experience and make progress on our institutional strategic enrollment management goals.

This time of the semester can also be stressful for colleagues as we manage multiple priorities and deal with the whirlwind of the end of the semester. I am glad that over the past few weeks, we have had several opportunities to come together as a campus for professional development, reflection and celebration.

Thank you to all who planned, organized, presented and participated in last month's All College Learning Day, focusing on serving adult students. I hope you gained a deeper understanding of why serving adult students is an equity imperative as we lean into our vision to create just and thriving communities. We recently sent a survey to our adult students so that we can also learn directly from them what they need in order to thrive at Oakton.

Our keynote speaker, Jairo McMican, associate director of equity initiatives at Achieving the Dream, provided us with thoughtful reflection on how we engage with our post-traditional students. When serving adult students, Mr. McMican told us that rather than asking "how smart are you?" - we should ask "how are you smart?" This reminds us to consider the previous work and life experiences that adult students often bring to the classroom, and provide them credit for that work whenever possible. This demonstrates that we value their lived experiences and approaches adult learners from an asset-based perspective, acknowledging that they are smart and can do this! Another poignant moment of Mr. McMican's address was his reminder that "Students gravitate to where they are tolerated; students stay where they are celebrated." We want each of our students to feel celebrated. It is that feeling that matters.

It was great to see more than 240 of you earlier this month at the Employee Recognition Dinner at Cafe La Cave as we celebrated our colleagues' milestone anniversaries and accomplishments. The energy in the room was a testament to the need for community and the importance of celebrating one another. There was a warm feeling in that room that encapsulated the Oakton Experience that we want all of our employees to have.

I hope we can capture that same energy when we come together for our Opening Day Kickoff, set for Monday, Jan. 9. Opening Day will serve as our official internal transition from Oakton Community College to Oakton College - and I encourage everyone to join us to celebrate the start of this exciting new chapter. As we discussed during our Community Conversation last week, our mission as the community's college is not changing, but this is an opportunity to re-introduce the College and reaffirm the life-changing impact of an Oakton education. You should start to see signs of our refreshed identity around campus soon as we begin to transition signage to include our updated logo.

I'll close this month's Leadership Update similarly to how it started, acknowledging the many ways we collectively create the Oakton Experience for our students. That includes this month's Lifesavers, recognized by students and colleagues for their outstanding contributions. As you can see, I have been busily writing lifesaver notes (and appropriately using up my Oakton Community College note cards!).

Andrea Abonce Lopez
Rebecca Affeldt
Steve Aguilar
Angelyn Anderson
Dear Aunaetrakul

Gabriela Ayala
Robyn Bailey
Allison Conner
Aneta Tamraz
Angela Jalloh

Anna Sowinska
Anthony Robinson
Anu Seth
Beverly Projansky
Brenda Cruz

Brooke Roche
Carol Bustamante
Cary Turner
Charmaine Johns
Cheryl Warmann
Cindy Nijmeh
Colette Hands
Daniel Mulligan
Danielle Terry
David del Rio
David Kendrick
Debbie Christie
Edwin Chandrasekar
Elena Smoukova
Ella Whitehead
Esperanza Salgado-
Rodriguez
Ewa Lyczewska
Facilities and
Housekeeping
Gabrielle O'Connor
George Vail
Giacomo Cirrincione
Grace Norte
Gretchen Schneider
Henrietta Nigliazzo
Hetal Patel
Ileo Lott
J Byrd
James Schmittou
Jamie Petersen
Javier Padilla Jr.
Jeff Hoffmann
Jennifer Crowley
Jennybee Lino
Jesse Ivory

Jim Kowols
Joan Boggs-Waribold
Joe Scifo
John O'Doherty
John Widera
Joshua Budruweit
Kamari Jordan
Kanchana Mendes
Karl Brooks
Kathy Roberson
Kayla Ruchti
Kelsey Kapolnek
Khursheed Ichhaporla
Krissie Harris
Leah Kintner
Lisa Robles
Louis Pierozzi
Luz Trejo Camarillo
LV McAllister
Malarie Edwards
Manish Varma
Manisha Shah
Marc Battista
Mark Palmsiano
Mary Johannessen-
Schmidt
Mary Obernesser
MaryAnn Nederost
Matt Kooi
May Coulson
Michael Peat
Michelle Oh
Mindy Finnigan
Miny Wu
Nadine Mitchell-Poyser
Nini Tella

Pamela Young-Smith
Paul Sanburg
Paul Thomas
Phil Cronin
Police Department
Prashant Rawal
Prashant Shinde
Princess Escudero
Rani Edassery
Renee Kozimor
Ricardo Olave
Rich Schwass
Alan Stewart
Richard Van Hees
Robin Ratledge
Roger Eisen
Ruben Howard II
Russell Kracke
Ruth Williams
Saad Muhammad
Sam Pudi
Sebastian Contreras Jr.
Stacey Vanada
Stella Pillay
Stephanie Herrera
Steve Brody
Steve Martin
Sylvia Rosillo
Tiffany Olson
Tiye Sherrod
Tom Dattilo
Tom Hicks
Vibhuti Joshi
Victoria Przybyl
Vinita Shah

As we approach Thanksgiving, please know I am grateful for all that you do, and I wish you and your loved ones a restful and happy holiday.

In Community,

