

August 24, 2008

Dear Community College Colleague,

Some things never change. Fall brings a return to school and college. Students bring memories of past successes or failures, along with hopes for their futures. Faculty, staff, and administrators bring renewed commitment to make a difference in the lives of students, to help them overcome the obstacles they face and to achieve their goals. At community colleges the hopes of students and the commitment of faculty and staff combine in a unique educational process that has led to remarkable opportunity for students and extraordinary success for institutions. Community colleges have grown exponentially since their creation because students have found an open door and a college community dedicated to helping them to achieve independence, economic self-reliance, as well as personal and professional growth.

The successes we've enjoyed in terms of growth have led to growing public awareness of the relevance of community college programs and the role played by community colleges in economic development. The relationship of community colleges to the State's ability to compete in a global marketplace has been established beyond question as Connecticut businesses and industries seek the skills of community college graduates.

Your efforts in classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and offices throughout our colleges have created this success. The role of faculty in program development and oversight, in engaging and mentoring students has been recognized as critical to continued growth and success for students. And for the first time this year the Connecticut General Assembly has directed funding to increase support for student services in order to foster student success. But increased public awareness and recognition does bring change. At a hearing of the Spellings Commission on the Future of Higher Education in April 2006, Richard Kazis, of Jobs for the Future, a Boston-based consultancy that deals with education and workforce issues, testified, "Any effort to improve postsecondary education in the United States must focus significant attention on [community colleges], this uniquely American and critically important institution, so that [our] students can succeed and move on educationally and economically." As increasing numbers of students attend college and choose community colleges as their starting point, the ability of students to succeed at the college-level and in careers, and to continue to the baccalaureate level and beyond, are increasingly important. The interest of policy makers and educational leaders has gone beyond access to concentrate on student success in terms of performance and persistence in courses and programs, preparation for the workforce, success in transferring, and graduation rates.

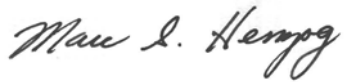
A shared vision of student success has always been the spirit that brings the mission of community colleges to life. This vision has not changed since the founding of our first colleges and our system. It is evident in the core values that differentiate community colleges from other institutions, and it is supported by Board of Trustees policies that ensure affordable, accessible, and widely available educational opportunities to help students succeed. That vision of student success will be the focus, in the coming years, for our strategic planning efforts. Five key strategic priorities have been identified by the Council of Presidents and other leadership councils to guide system and college planning efforts. Aligning our efforts on the college and system levels to address each of these priorities will enable us to deliver on the promise of community college education in terms of both access and success.

Each of you has a key role to play in this planning effort. The Community College Survey of Student Engagement has reinforced the primary role of faculty and college staff in engaging and encouraging students in achieving and completing their academic goals. Your experience working directly with students can inform our understanding and appreciation of what helps students to succeed. I encourage your participation in the planning and research on promising practices that will provide us with opportunities to expand innovation in the classroom and in student services with the goal of fostering student success. Having more information on our students, their interests, their academic needs, and barriers to success will help us to be more effective in providing opportunities for success as institutions and as individuals.

This is my eighth year as Chancellor, my thirty-fourth year in our system, and my enthusiasm hasn't changed. The potential of Connecticut's Community Colleges to play a critical role in helping to make success a reality for our students is greater than ever. I want to thank you for your many contributions that have made our institutions and our students successful, and I encourage your involvement and continued commitment to student success.

Nothing changes about the excitement that comes from seeing students strive and succeed. I wish you a success-filled year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marc S. Herzog". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of the typed name below.

Marc S. Herzog
Chancellor