

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Christopher M. Reber, Ph.D.



State of the College Address Fall 2020 College Service Day Wednesday, August 26, 2020

Good morning! It is wonderful to see all of you! It is a great pleasure and honor to join you this morning, to take stock of the tremendous challenges we have faced and navigated together, and to look forward to the coming year.

Today, we begin a new academic year, and we contemplate how we might anticipate and navigate a “new normal.” We have been through a lot together, and I have been inspired every day by the caring and selfless acts of kindness by so many students, faculty and staff, coming together to support one another through adversity.

We have never lost sight of our overarching goals, and our guiding principles of safety and student success. Working as one community in more ways than ever, we have stayed on top of rapidly changing and concerning dynamics, and, as a result, we are ready to begin our new year in the best possible way.

Together, we have achieved a host of notable outcomes.

We have planned a mix of fall courses and services offering a balanced approach that students need, including the opportunity for all students to maintain academic progress and stay on course to achieve their academic goals.

Eighty-five percent of fall courses will be offered online or remotely, and select courses will be offered on-ground in areas of greatest student need for face-to-face instruction. All student support services will continue to be offered remotely, with priority services also offered on-ground.

Thanks to the leadership and approval of our Board of Trustees, we have supported our students financially, keeping tuition level with no tuition and fee increases through next year, and we have allocated millions of dollars in federal stimulus funds and money raised by our HCCC Foundation, through “Hudson Helps,” to support our students’ severe financial challenges to the fullest extent possible.

We have kept our food pantries open throughout the pandemic, and have begun adding meals prepared by our chefs to the distribution of food and supplies for our community members. We have purchased and delivered 650 Chromebooks to all students who have needed them in order to continue their studies online and remotely.

We have significantly exceeded recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and other health agencies in our safety precautions, and have spent over \$3 million for equipment and supplies to ensure that our campus is the safest possible environment for continued teaching, learning, and service.

Together, we have also achieved what is likely the most flexible range of supports, accommodations and outcomes for our employees. With the strong support of the County of Hudson, which increased our annual allocation of county appropriation funding by over 11%, or \$1.9 million, we have held all employees harmless. We have kept all full-time and part-time employees, including student employees, on the payroll throughout the pandemic. To date, we have avoided any employee layoffs, and we have honored significant increases in salaries and benefits negotiated last year with all four of our Collective Bargaining Units in spite of very significant financial challenges caused by the pandemic.

We have offered all employees the option to continue working remotely throughout the fall if necessary for health, family care or other reasons. Since March, and continuing through the fall semester, we have offered employees the opportunity to care for family members and children without using accumulated sick or vacation time.

We take pride in our leadership within the community college sector and all of higher education for modeling high standards in all areas: safety protocols; support for students and their ability to maintain academic progress; advanced training for those teaching and learning online; and safety, support and flexibility for employees.

Collectively, these outcomes are truly extraordinary. We came together as one community – as a family – to achieve these outcomes and support one another.

It is impossible for me to thank all of the thousands of faculty, staff and students, who truly deserve recognition, for their dedicated and tireless efforts to support one another. They include the many faculty, staff and students who have been working on-ground throughout the pandemic, and who will continue or begin working on-ground to support our students in the fall. In addition, they include many more HCCC community members who continue to work remotely to support our students and our College's mission.

They include the many faculty, staff and students who have worked long hours on our initial COVID-19 Task Force, and later on our Return to Campus Task Force. They include colleagues on our All College Council, in our Professional Associations, our President's Executive Council, Cabinet, our Student Government Association, Phi Theta Kappa and many other student organizations, our Peer Leaders, and so many others who came together to work outside of our comfort zones to rise to the challenges. They include our Trustees and Foundation Directors, who have provided steadfast leadership, advocacy and support, in so many forms, every step of the way.

Together we agreed upon needed interim changes and solutions in how we test and place students into courses, how we staff online and remote courses, and so many other supports for members of our College community. Together we developed a pass-fail grading option for students who needed that reassurance due to their concerns about remote instruction, anxiety, life circumstances and other factors. Together we considered all options for maintaining the highest level of safety for our College community; we found ways to purchase and obtain needed technology, equipment and supplies, and we developed procedures for managing safety, and compliance with safety protocols, under all possible scenarios.

There are several individuals and groups I would like to specifically thank for their extraordinary leadership and support, and, again, please forgive me as there are so many whom time will not allow me to acknowledge, but who are also deserving of our deep and sincere thanks and gratitude.

I want to thank Dr. Darryl Jones and Kathleen Smith-Wenning, who co-chaired our COVID-19 Task force in the early stages of the pandemic and established the foundation for our approach, planning and deliverables throughout the pandemic.

I thank Sylvia Mendoza and her team, who developed complex procedures for distributing CARES Act, Hudson Helps and other funding to students in need – early, throughout the pandemic, and continuing through the coming year.

I thank David Clark, June Barriere, Larry Anderson, Bernadette Barns, and the IT team, who have worked at the Food Pantries and managed the laptop deployment throughout the pandemic.

I thank Vice President Veronica Zeichner and her Accounting and Finance team, who implemented e-student refunds and direct deposits to provide faster student access to needed funding, maintaining seamless student account processes throughout the pandemic.

I thank Lisa Dougherty and Heather DeVries, who have co-chaired and continue to lead our Return to Campus Task Force with unwavering dedication, transparency and integrity, and have skillfully overseen the development and implementation of our HCCC Restart Plan.

I thank Dr. Sheila Dynan and Heather DeVries, who have so capably chaired our ATD *Dream Team*, which has helped us keep a focus on student success throughout the pandemic and beyond. I thank the many members of our *Dream Team*, who have worked tirelessly to develop our Student Success Action Plan that documents all we have learned, and where we need to focus our energies going forward in order to achieve continuous improvement in student retention, completion, transfer and gainful employment. This work is informed, as never before, by the development of data and consideration of best practices nationwide.

I thank Archana Bhandari in our Center for Online Learning, Trisha Clay in Information Technology Services, and all of their team members for their unrelenting dedication to substantive and comprehensive support for thousands of our community members in the areas of remote teaching, learning, services, and new uses of technology.

I thank Dean of Libraries, Jennie Pu, and her team for their phenomenal work to expand access to library resources, deliver training and special programs, and support students in all of their educational endeavors.

I thank Ilya Ashmyan, Julio Maldonado, Jack Quigley and their team members for their expert and conscientious efforts to ensure that our facilities and services are safe; are prepared for social distancing; are tested, cleaned and disinfected – all in an environment of constantly changing needs and circumstances.

I also thank members of our President's Advisory Council on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, led by Yeurys Pujols and Lilisa Williams, for their inspirational leadership and daily efforts to support community members as we have encountered new acts of murder, racial injustice and

intolerance in our community and our nation that continue the long cadence of such violence and injustice.

These horrific acts of violence have amplified our collective and individual distress and high levels of anxiety at this time of immense challenge for all of us. We can all be proud of how our HCCC community has come together to promote action, offer support, engage in dialogue and professional development, and expand upon our continuing focus and commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in all of its forms.

I want to acknowledge the leadership of Vice President Anna Krupitskiy, Coordinator of North Hudson Campus Amaalah Ogburn, and Academic Support Services colleagues Natalia Vazquez-Bodkin and Kyle Wooley, who have collaborated with many members of the college community to facilitate highly meaningful programs, conversations, and the sharing of life stories during this period of physical separation. They have helped all of us remain united and feeling togetherness and belongingness. These programs and conversations, in no small measure, have kept us strong in times of despair and anxiety. Our “Employee Spotlight” has also been so wonderful in helping us thank and celebrate one another.

I thank CARE Team co-chairs, Dr. David Clark and Denise Rossilli, and team members, Joseph Caniglia, Jennifer Christopher, Chris Conzen, Lisa Dougherty, Veronica Gerosimo, Anna Krupitskiy, Doreen Pontius, Yeurys Pujols, Jack Quigley, Jackie Safont and Kathleen Smith-Wenning. These caring colleagues have met weekly to support our students and other community members in myriad ways during this time of unprecedented challenge.

I thank Lisa Dougherty, Matt Fessler, Sylvia Mendoza, David Clark, Veronica Gerosimo, Angela Tuzzo, Jose Lowe and so many others in Student Affairs and Enrollment Services for their steadfast caring, and enduring support of our students, including prospective students, at all hours of every day.

I also thank Victoria Orellana and Irma Williams for their conscientious “behind the scenes” work required to implement the new Pass/Fail grading option, our new electronic faculty contracts, and all of the challenges of the fall schedule.

I thank Director of Communications Jennifer Christopher and her team for ensuring consistent messages to our College community, and a positive presence in our social media outlets and other media throughout the pandemic.

I’d also like to take this opportunity to recognize and thank the officers and leaders of our All College Council and our Professional Associations, with whom my colleagues on the President’s Executive Council and I work closely and collaboratively for the College community’s welfare. We thank them for their leadership and support during the pandemic, and their ongoing collaboration and contributions to our participatory governance processes.

From the All College Council, we thank Chair Lauren Drew, Vice Chair Angela Tuzzo, and Secretary Kathleen Smith-Wenning.

From the HCCC Professional Association, we thank President Michael Ferlise, Vice President Dorothy Anderson, Treasurer Claudia Delgado, Corresponding Secretary Tony Acevedo, and Recording Secretary Sirhan Abdullah.

From the Academic Administrators Association, we thank President Jose Lowe, Vice President Christine Peterson, and Secretary Angela Tuzzo.

From the Support Staff Federation, we thank President Dorothea Graham-King, Vice President Patrick DelPiano, Treasurer Daisy Baiza, and Recording Secretary Hope Guirantes.

And, from the HCCC Adjunct Faculty Federation, we thank President Nancy Lasek, Vice President Qamar Raza, and Secretary Raffi Manjikian.

Valued colleagues, thank you for your collaborative and caring leadership!

I would also like to recognize several of our student leaders, and I regret that I do not have enough time to thank all of them.

We thank our phenomenal Peer Leaders, who also serve on our *Achieving the Dream* “Dream Team”: Koral Booth, who will be the next Student Alumni Representative on the Board of Trustees beginning in November; Katricia Colon; Suri Hidalgo; Hillary Kouevi; Crystal Newton; Brian Ribas; Tyler Sarmiento; and Abou Traore.

We thank EOF Scholar Leaders, and creators of the new student club, Latinx American Association, Keiry Hernandez, Rossi Castellanos, and Luis Flores.

We thank all members of our Student Government Association, led so capably by outgoing SGA President Warren Rigby. Warren, thank you for your dedicated, consistent, and unwavering leadership.

We thank and celebrate all members of Phi Theta Kappa, led by Darciane Barbieri Eltz and members of the Executive Board: Christopher Galarza; Courage Lahban; Racco Marisetla; Pedro Moranchel; Sofia Pazmino; Sherazad Sow; Abou Traore; and Isabel Vintimilla.

We thank our student representatives on the President’s Advisory Council for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Warren Rigby and Christine Tirado. Further, we thank student representatives on the Return to Campus Task Force, Warren Rigby, Paola Leon, and Sofia Pazmino.

We also thank all of our student tutors, and student organization leaders in our STEM Club and Computer Science Club, who met and worked continuously throughout the summer to support their peers and the College. In addition, we thank many student employees, who worked over the summer to help and support other students and offices.

I also want to thank Veronica Gerosimo, Angela Tuzzo, and all of their team members, who support and mentor our students with superior dedication and excellence. They lead the finest student life and leadership programs I have observed in my forty-year higher education career.

I also thank members of the Cabinet, with whom I work so closely. To a person, these colleagues have offered unceasing and selfless leadership and support over the past six months.

We have worked together nearly 24-7 to navigate challenges and leave no stones unturned in living and breathing our principles and serving our community. We have felt and borne the weight of our leadership responsibility, together, and in unison.

I thank Executive Vice President and Provost, Dr. Eric Friedman; Vice President for Business and Finance and CFO, Veronica Zeichner; Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment, Lisa Dougherty; Vice President for Human Resources, Anna Krupitskiy; Vice President for External Affairs and Senior Counsel to the President, Dr. Nicholas Chiaravalloti; Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Darryl Jones; and Executive Administrative Assistant to the President, Jennifer Oakley.

In addition, I thank all members of the President's Executive Council, and Marcella Williams and Alexa Riano in my office, who lead and support our community conscientiously and with the greatest caring and skill. Thank you, gifted colleagues, and so many others unmentioned, who make our mission of life-changing and transformational opportunity possible!

As we have often repeated during this time of challenge, it truly "takes a Village," and our Village remains united in its care, appreciation and support for all community members.

I look forward to working with all of you in the coming year to serve our students and our community, and to realize our collective vision and aspirations for HCCC. As we begin a new year together – new in so many ways – we continue our mission-central work as a community and family that focuses on student success; on diversity, equity and inclusion; and other related priorities and values.

Going forward, our work this year will include several interrelated priorities:

- Considering lessons learned during the pandemic, including continued innovation in how we serve students and our College's mission;
- Continuous improvement in the opportunities for online and remote learning, and the quality of the online experience, specifically informed by our collective experience since last March;
- Remaining laser focused in our efforts to promote student success, guided by our new Student Success Action Plan, including continuous improvement in how we address student needs; holistic supports; how we remove barriers to student retention, degree completion, transfer and gainful employment; and how we address equity and other student achievement gaps.
- Addressing our shared values and goals for reaching new levels of excellence in our support for diversity, equity and inclusion in all of its forms, informed by the overarching goals developed by PACDEI following their first year of leadership and service in this area of institutional priority.
- Integrating and acting upon vital planning over the past year, including the Academic Master Plan, Student Success Action Plan, and the overarching priorities of the President's Advisory Council on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; and,

- Review of our mission and the development of HCCC’s next comprehensive strategic plan, which will be built upon all of these foundational efforts.

As I begin my third year at HCCC, what continues to inspire me most is the commitment everyone here has to our students. We have the privilege of working in an institution that changes and transforms lives, and it is clear that our core common value – what everyone here champions – is our students and their welfare.

In spite of the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic, and the pervasive challenges of racism and intolerance that were manifest so brutally – locally and across the nation over the past year – the 2019-20 academic year was a monumental one for HCCC thanks to the efforts of everyone in our community.

I would like to review some major accomplishments over the past year, beyond those I have already mentioned related to the pandemic, that are the result of the entire College community’s dedicated commitment to supporting our students.

Together, we have achieved significant growth, development and outcomes in so many areas. Notable examples include, in no specific order:

- Our Educational Opportunity Fund program, which doubled the number of students served while maintaining high levels of student success thanks to the passion and caring of EOF Director Jose Lowe and the entire EOF team;
- Our Honors Program, which also saw phenomenal increases in student participation and achievement under Jenny Bobea’s expert leadership;
- Our Institutional Research program, which has been reorganized under John Scanlon’s exceptional leadership to offer new levels of meaningful data to inform our College’s continuous improvement goals;
- Our Advising Program, and our Academic Tutoring and Related Support Services and Programs, which have served more students, more comprehensively and efficiently, while removing barriers to student success. We thank all of our dedicated advisors and counselors under Dr. Sheila Dynan’s and Dr. Pamela Bandyopadhyay’s leadership.
- Our Continuing Education and Workforce Development programs, led by Dean Lori Margolin, which have continued to grow and develop into a regional and national model for workforce development. Last year, HCCC was the only community college in the United States and Canada to host an Aspen Institute sponsored Workforce Leadership Academy. In addition, we soon expect to announce an \$850,000 corporate gift to advance educational excellence at HCCC. This transformational gift is the result of the entrepreneurial leadership of Lori and her team, supported by Vice President Nicholas Chiaravalloti.

Last year we came together as one community to develop the new “Hudson Helps Resource Center” that includes two HCCC food pantries; a career clothing closet; social work graduate

interns; Department of Family Services representatives; emergency funding assistance for students; childcare assistance for students, faculty and staff; SNAP benefits assistance, and more.

This is the work of students, faculty and staff across the College and its campuses, as well as valued community partners. I offer special thanks to Dr. David Clark for his extraordinary and inspirational leadership.

We celebrate significant work to improve our processes and services for supporting individuals in distress, informed by the consultancy of Dr. Brian Van Brunt, Executive Director of the National Behavioral Intervention Team Association.

Similarly, we thank Vice President Lisa Dougherty, Associate Vice President Darryl Jones, and their colleagues for leading a comprehensive review of the College's ADA/504 compliance activities in partnership with Salome Heyward & Associates, a nationally respected consultant in all areas of accessibility services and compliance. We established a new Office for Accessibility Services, hired Jackie Safont as Director, and have begun the development of new and enhanced accessibility services under Jackie's leadership.

We further celebrate completion of the comprehensive renovation of 81 Sip Avenue to become HCCC's first, and state-of-the-art, Student Center. We thank our Board of Trustees for their support of this project that will serve our students and College community in so many important ways for years to come.

We thank Executive Director of the Secaucus Center and Early College Programs, Dr. Chris Conzen, and his team, for the highly successful start-up last year of HCCC's new Secaucus Center at the Frank Gargiulo Campus of Hudson County Schools of Technology. The Center now serves more than 257 students in HCCC's Early College and evening programs. The first cohort of 11 high school dual degree students completed their HCCC associate degree upon high school graduation last May, and forty-eight students are participating in this dual degree completion program in the coming year.

With leadership from Dr. Paula Roberson, Director of the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Innovation, we have collaborated with the American Council on Education and the Association of College and University Educators, or ACUE, to provide full- and part-time faculty with opportunities for high-level professional development. Currently 20 faculty are participating in ACUE's Certificate in Effective College Instruction program focusing on evidence-based teaching practices that improve student engagement, persistence to graduation, and deeper levels of learning. We thank Dr. Roberson and our faculty participants for their involvement in this nationally recognized program that we hope to continue to offer interested faculty going forward.

Over the past year, a team of faculty, staff and students has been fully engaged with our consulting partner, iFactory, in leading and supporting the complete redevelopment of the College's Web Site. This exciting project will employ new uses of technology and new media to reach expanded markets and promote student and institutional achievement, with a focus on the use of student testimonials. Redesign is in an advanced stage and we expect to launch the new site in early 2021. I thank Lisa Dougherty, Jennifer Christopher, Omar Williams and so many others for their diligent leadership and support of this monumental project.

We also take great pride in our new, comprehensive partnership with *Year Up New York New Jersey*, through which students are provided internships, soft skills instruction, coaching, and mentoring while pursuing an associate degree that is fully funded through corporate sponsorships.

Last year, our Board of Trustees adopted a new College policy on Recruitment, Screening and Hiring, and with the full input of our College community, we developed procedures to ensure best practices in developing a qualified, professional, talented, inclusive and diverse workforce. We thank Vice President of Human Resources Anna Krupitskiy and others for their leadership of this important work.

And we thank CIO Patricia Clay and all of our ITS colleagues for installation of new, state-of-the-art Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) stations throughout our campuses, and new, state-of-the-art ITV equipment that will provide opportunities to offer courses for students at both the Journal Square and North Hudson campuses, simultaneously.

Over the past year, we celebrated nationally distinctive student, faculty, staff and trustee accomplishments and recognitions, including:

- Our Abigail Douglas Johnson Center's receipt of the Frank L. Christ Award from the National College Learning Association in fall 2019. This award recognizes the outstanding learning center among all two-year colleges nationwide. Kudos to Associate Dean Pam Bandyopadhyay, Head Tutors Kyle Woolley and Natalia Vazquez-Bodkin, and their colleagues.
- Board of Trustees Chairman Bill Netchert's receipt of the 2019 ACCT M. Dale Ensign Outstanding Trustee Award for the Northeastern United States, and, Professor of Humanities Laurie Riccadonna's receipt of the 2020 ACCT Outstanding Faculty Member Award for the Northeastern United States. Laurie will be honored at ACCT's national convention, the ACCT Leadership Congress, in early October. These are very significant honors, which are exceptionally well deserved. To have two HCCC community members honored back-to-back in this way is truly distinctive and a great point of pride for our College community.
- Similarly, we celebrate Professor of History Tony Acevedo's receipt of the American Association of Community Colleges' Dale P. Parnell Faculty Distinction Award, a prestigious and well-deserved national recognition of Tony's outstanding teaching. This also marks the second consecutive year that an HCCC faculty member has been recognized with this award, as Professor of English Katie Sweeting was a Parnell Scholar in 2019. We also celebrate Katie's Fulbright Scholarship to teach in India.
- We celebrate HCCC graduate and Phi Theta Kappa member, Abdellah Amrhar, who was awarded a prestigious Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Scholarship last spring. This is the second consecutive year in which an HCCC student has been named a Jack Kent Cooke Scholar. Abedella is one of just 50 students nationwide to be named a 2020 Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Undergraduate Transfer Scholar. This highly competitive national scholarship provides recipients up to

\$40,000 per year, for up to three years, to complete their bachelor's degrees, and an opportunity for an additional \$75,000 scholarship to pursue graduate studies.

- We celebrate Alumni Representative to the Board of Trustees Abderahim Salhi's receipt of the nationally prestigious Goldwater Scholarship for excellence in STEM research. It is only the second time that a New Jersey community college student has received this national scholarship since it was established thirty-five years ago.
- We also congratulate Abderahim for receiving the Phi Theta Kappa Guistwhite Scholarship; Brian Ribas for the Coca-Cola Leaders of Promise Scholarship; Aireen Aquino for the Hurst NCLEX Scholarship; Rahma Gado for the Walgreens Pharmacy Technician Certification Scholarship; and Kailyn Segovia-Vazquez for the Coca-Cola Academic Team Bronze Scholarship.
- We further celebrate Phi Theta Kappa students Brian Ribas and Abderahim Salhi for their invitation to participate in highly coveted NASA Aerospace Scholars Internships.
- In addition, we honor Rimsha Bazaid and Kailyn Segovia-Vazquez for being named to the New Jersey All-State Academic Team.
- Moreover, we celebrate the continued excellence of our Beta Alpha Phi Chapter of Theta Kappa, mentored so caringly by Professor of Mathematics, Ted Lai. Ted was honored this year with the Phi Theta Kappa Continued Excellence Award for Advisors.
- Again this year, our Beta Alpha Phi Chapter achieved Five-Star and REACH Chapter status, recognizing the highest levels of performance for PTK chapters worldwide. The Middle States Region of Phi Theta Kappa also honored Beta Alpha Phi as a Gold Chapter. Several of our students were named "Superheroes" by the Middle States Region of Phi Theta Kappa, including Rimsha Bazaid, Anass Ennasraoui, Selisha Mohammed, Sofia Pazmino, Jamie Swanson, and Christine Tirado. In addition, Selisha Mohammed was named a "Top Superhero"!
- However, why stop there? Briana Espinosa was named Distinguished Chapter Member and Hall of Honor Chapter Member. In addition, Anass Ennasraoui and Christine Tirado received the Hall of Honor Chapter Officer Award. Wow!
- We celebrate our radiography program students' 100% pass rate last year on the American Registry of Radiologic Technologist, or ARRT, exam. This, coupled with our students' 94% pass rate on the nursing NCLEX exam, places our School of Nursing and Health Sciences in the top tier of like programs in New Jersey and nationwide. We congratulate all of the students, faculty and staff in these exceptional HCCC programs for their excellence. As first responders and front-line caregivers, these community members are heroes!
- We celebrate HCCC faculty and staff who were selected as major collaborators for the National Association of Staff and Organizational Development's May 2020 International Conference on Teaching and Leadership Excellence. Five

HCCC faculty and staff presented 13 workshops. They are Nursing and Health Sciences Instructor, Sirhan Abdullah; Business Lecturer, Sharon Daughtry; Assistant Dean of Student Life and Leadership, Veronica Gerosimo; Director of Faculty and Staff Development, Lilisa Williams; and Associate Professor of English, Joe Caniglia.

- We also celebrate 11 HCCC faculty and staff who received 2020 Excellence Awards from the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development, or NISOD. They are: Instructor of Academic Foundations Math, Bernard Adamitey; Assistant Professor of ESL, Shannonine Caruana; Assistant Professor of English, Monika Chappilliquen; Assistant Dean of Student Life and Leadership, Veronica Gerosimo; Executive Administrative Assistant to the Provost, Linda Guastini; Assistant Professor of English, Angela Hebert; Assistant Professor of ESL, Eva Kozlenko; Instructor of Medical Assisting, Dr. Jihan Nakhla; Assistant Professor of ESL, Maria Schirta; Associate Professor of ESL, Rick Skinner; and, Assistant Professor of English, Susannah Wexler. Congratulations, valued colleagues!
- We celebrate six HCCC students who participated in last spring's annual Harvard University Model United Nations in Boston, and we thank Model UN Advisor Joe Caniglia for his mentorship of these students each year. They are: Cynthia Criollo; Sokhna Diarra Fall; Hassan Farhad; Tannia Maradiaga; Raul Mendez; and Abou Traore.
- We celebrate the outstanding contributions of time and talent of our HCCC Foundation Board of Directors, led and supported so skillfully by Nicholas Chiaravalloti and Mirta Sanchez. Last year's HCCC Foundation Holiday Gala, entitled "Cultures and Diversity," raised over \$211,000 for scholarships, a 17.5% increase over the previous year and a near record in the history of this spectacular fundraising event that showcases our faculty, staff and students in HCCC's nationally recognized Culinary Arts Institute.

There are many more outcomes we realized together, which time will not allow me to mention. All of these accomplishments reflect the dedicated commitment of our entire community to excellence and student success, which are central to our mission. Very importantly, these accomplishments are focused on our HCCC values, beginning with my own Presidential goals that flow from our Board approved Mission, Vision and Values statements, and cascading throughout the College through initiatives and day-to-day contributions of every member of our HCCC community.

Indeed, every person matters! We celebrate every community member's contributions, which, collectively, lead to our mutual success.

As I have shared in many meetings and conversations on and off our campuses, I continue to believe that community colleges are uniquely positioned to address many of the nation's highest priorities, challenges, and aspirations. We are a gateway to the American Dream for the millions of students who join our communities and traverse our pathways.

The mission and principles of community colleges – to meet students where they are; offer access, support and inspiration that can change lives; and focus on the specific workforce, economic development and quality of life needs of the community – make this the most exciting and fulfilling part of our nation’s higher education system.

It is particularly inspiring and fitting that Hudson County Community College continues to thrive, even in this time of unprecedented adversity, in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty! May she, and we, continue to bring light, inspiration, and caring to all of our people!

Henry Ford once said, "*Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success.*"

Colleagues and friends, I pledge to do everything I can as your president to support our collective efforts to continue to grow and excel as an institution that is committed to serving our students, our community, Hudson County, the surrounding region and beyond. I am honored to have the opportunity to work side by side with all of you!

As we evolve toward – and increasingly understand – our “new normal,” I look forward to our continued, close-knit work together to support our students and our mission. Moreover, I look forward to continuing to celebrate our successes, and work through our challenges, as one extended and caring family.

Happy New Year!