



## June 2022 Leadership Update

Dear Colleagues,

I hope you are enjoying what has been a rather warm start to the summer. And while some perceive this as a “slow” time in education, that couldn’t be further from the truth (but really, are there any slow times?). Many faculty are engaged in summer courses and all employees are actively supporting students and one another. I remain incredibly proud of the significant steps we’ve recently taken to chart Oakton’s path forward in the short- and long-term during these very challenging times.

This week, the Board of Trustees adopted the College’s next Strategic Plan, “Vision 2030: Building Just and Thriving Communities.” Led by the Strategic Planning, Accountability, and Resources Committee (SPARC), the plan’s development was not only a college-wide collaboration but also incorporated input from external community partners.

As I’ve said before, in Just and Thriving Communities, the racial predictability of educational outcomes disappears, unemployment and poverty rates decrease, affordable housing exists for all who need it, everyone has access to quality healthcare, there is strong civic engagement, and overall quality of life improves. We play a significant role in creating these Just and Thriving communities and our strategic plan is a road map for that work. The Strategic Plan will also be the focus of the Opening Day address to the College to kick off the fall semester Monday, Aug. 15 at 9:30 a.m. Please save the date and keep an eye out for information on how to participate.

In many ways, adopting our Strategic Plan and its bold vision during the month of June is appropriate. June is a month where we acknowledge historic events that provided greater freedom and rights for historically marginalized communities. The Oakton community observed Juneteenth with an on-campus gathering for students and participated in Juneteenth events in Skokie and Evanston. June is also Pride Month, during which we acknowledge and affirm the LGBTQIA+ community. This month we also marked the 50th anniversary of Title IX, landmark legislation prohibiting gender-based discrimination in federally funded educational institutions, including Oakton.

As we celebrate progress toward advancing equity for marginalized communities this month, many in our community are also deeply troubled by the U.S. Supreme Court’s overturning of *Roe v. Wade* and its implications on women’s health and reproductive rights. And while we surely have colleagues, family and friends with opposing views on this and other political issues, I encourage you — and our students — to remain civically engaged and advocate for justice for all members of our community. Increased civic engagement is a cornerstone of just and thriving communities.

In addition to adopting our next Strategic Plan, this week the Board of Trustees also approved the College’s FY23 budget and our five-year Facilities Master Plan. The Master Plan will guide us toward improving our physical spaces to reflect students’ changing needs and creating an optimal teaching and learning environment. I’m especially excited about the modernization of student-centered spaces, including the libraries on both campuses, which will be transformed into Learning Commons spaces.

Additional work that aligns with the new Strategic Plan and will support the College’s mission, vision and values is the forthcoming name change from Oakton Community College to Oakton College. Thank

you to everyone who provided input via the logo concept survey to help us consider the evolution of Oakton's visual identity along with the name change. The Brand Refresh Leadership Team is finalizing the selection of the refreshed logo and College Seal and working to identify physical and digital assets to update.

But more than simply changing our name and updating our logo, this is an opportunity to examine our institutional identity. As we affirm our role as an educational institution, we can re-introduce ourselves to the community and effectively communicate the value of the resources we provide.

These connections are critical as we work to reverse the national trend of declining community college enrollment. To do this, we must intentionally focus on helping all students — not just traditional-aged students — discover how Oakton can help them reach their academic, professional and personal goals. We've already begun to focus on helping adult students by creating short-term certificate programs designed to quickly help them increase the skills necessary to start a new career or advance in their current job. This fall, we'll introduce several certificate programs focused on the automotive and health care industries, all of which can be completed in one semester.

I'm hopeful that increased resources from the state of Illinois will incentivize students to enroll this fall and in future semesters. These resources include Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI) grants for students who reside in qualifying areas within our district. WEI grants cover tuition (and include a stipend to assist with non-tuition related expenses) for programs focusing on in-demand careers like health care, manufacturing, real estate and transportation (CDL). Additionally, the state's Monetary Award Program (MAP) expanded this year to include short-term programs, further eliminating financial barriers for students and allowing them to enter or re-enter their educational path. These strategies will help us reach the Strategic Plan's goals and ultimately create just and thriving communities in Oakton's district and beyond.

While our progress may seem slow and non-linear at times, please know I appreciate each of you and your work. That includes this month's lifesavers, recognized by peers and students for their exceptional efforts.

Steve Aguilar  
Syed Alavi  
Kelly Becker  
Tania Boisson Sanvillier  
Edwin Chandrasekar  
Brenda Cruz  
Dan Cunningham  
Rick Daniels  
Jenica Doma  
Chris Dubé  
Bill Fratto  
Julia Gray  
Krissie Harris  
Tom Hicks  
Khursheed Ichhaporia  
Jennifer Jennings  
Kelsey Kapolnek  
Andrea Lehmacher  
Mike Loveday

Jeff Manson  
Steve Martin  
Shannon McKenzie  
Patricia Muffoletto  
Javier Padilla  
Kristine Panopio  
Rick Pastor  
Samantha Schenk  
Joe Scifo  
Ray Sheldon  
Prashant Shinde  
Jillian Sliwa  
Francisco Sosa  
Aleda Thompson  
Leslie Van Wolvelaar  
Barbara Vazquez  
Andy Williams  
Ruth Williams  
Larry Wilson

I'll close this month's leadership update simply by reminding you that even as you continue to work to support students and one another, please also take time to relax and recharge and spend meaningful time with family and loved ones. This is critical to allowing us all to be our best selves and support the College's mission, vision and values. Wishing you all the best for a safe and happy Independence Day Holiday, and I hope to see many of you this Friday evening at our Des Plaines campus for the City of Des Plaines fireworks display (check our website or Oakton Matters for details).

In community,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be the initials 'Jri'.