



October 2021 Leadership Update

Colleagues,

For many of you who spent much of last school year working remotely, you may have forgotten how beautiful our campuses are in the fall. There's something inspiring about the vibrancy of fall colors combined with students' increasing confidence as they continue on their educational path.

I've come to realize opportunities to engage with students and community members — which we may have taken for granted before the pandemic — are truly worth savoring. Although we face challenges, so much of the work we are currently engaged in to move Oakton forward is exciting. I know the work is hard. At times, it even feels overwhelming. Yet, I am confident our collective efforts will result in a better Oakton Experience for students, employees and community members.

As you know, we are currently devoting significant time and energy to developing Oakton's next Strategic Plan. This crucial work will guide us through the next several years, helping us realize our bold vision of creating just communities through education.

Next week's Learning Day (Wednesday, Oct. 27) will allow time for us to engage with colleagues, gain clarity around the bold vision and provide input on the "big ideas" that will be the cornerstone of our next strategic plan.

Thank you to our Learning Day committee for coordinating a day of learning that includes experts from across the country who will help demystify the strategic planning process, share insight on how to effectively operationalize the plan, and use data to track our progress. Our panel discussions will also deepen our collective understanding of the plan's three "big ideas" and why they are critical to the future success of the College and the community we serve.

As a reminder, all employees scheduled to work between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. are expected to participate in Learning Day. Because there will be no classes during this time, you are able to participate remotely. Check out the [agenda and registration information](#), and please email learningday@oakton.edu with questions.

Our strategic planning work is positioning the College for the future. As part of that positioning, we will be engaging in rebranding efforts as we implement the resolution approved by the Board of Trustees in August to formally change the name of the College from "Oakton Community College" to "Oakton College." A committee of trustees, faculty, staff, students and college leaders will be forming shortly to identify our implementation strategy moving forward.

We also position ourselves for the future by continuing to transform and modernize our

facilities. Last month, we celebrated completing a sweeping round of upgrades to our Skokie campus, and you've surely noticed the beautiful new Cafe at Des Plaines as well as the temporary walls surrounding the Board room, which is currently under construction.

Thanks to everyone who participated in the Master Plan Update virtual town halls earlier this month, which will help shape the priorities of future facilities upgrades. Check yesterday's Oakton Matters for links to view recordings of the sessions and instructions on how to provide additional feedback.

Creating just communities requires us to continue our efforts to create a more equitable and inclusive teaching, learning and working environment. I'm grateful for our colleagues' efforts to create opportunities to gather and better understand one another and our different backgrounds and cultures.

For example, in commemorating Indigenous Peoples' Day earlier this month, members of our Elevating Indigenous Voices at Oakton (EIVO) group commemorated the legacy and contributions of the original inhabitants of the land on which Oakton sits by reading the current draft of a land acknowledgment and leading a rock painting activity to deepen our understanding of Native American culture. Keep an eye out for opportunities to provide feedback on the land acknowledgment draft.

We recently concluded our celebration of Latinx Heritage Month, and we're now in the midst of celebrating LGBTQIA+ History Month. I hope you'll consider attending one (or more) of the [upcoming events](#) to celebrate and understand the struggles of another historically marginalized group.

There are many other opportunities to attend events that seek to lift historically marginalized voices, including the annual Women's Art Show, Diwali festival, National First Gen College Student Week, Jewish Studies fall webinar, Women in Tech (presented by COMPASS and the Computer Science Department) and many others. There are also many opportunities for professional development directly connected to our equity commitment, including a new opportunity to participate in racial healing circles. Please check Oakton Matters and the News & Events section of our website to stay up to date on opportunities to participate.

Thank you to our Center for Campus Inclusion and Diversity and the Office of Access, Equity and Diversity for serving as the common thread as we advance our equity work, and to all those who lend their time, expertise and support. Thanks also to this month's Lifesavers, recognized by students and peers for their outstanding contributions:

Angelyn Anderson
Dear Aunaetitrakul
Brian Bacon
Kelly Becker
Tania Boisson
Anne Brennan

Edwin Chandrasekar
Rick DiMaio
Carol Fox
Greg Hamill
Stephanie Herrera
Ruben Howard
Alyssa Humbles
Mohammed Hussaini
Heather Jakob-Short
Jennifer Jennings
Kristin Keramidas
Mark Kiel
Leah Kintner
Melissa Kitzmiller
Angela Koenigs
Maja Lamik
Shannon McKenzie
Michelle Naffziger-Hirsch
Cindy Nijmeh
Teresa O'Sullivan
Javier Padilla
Sandra Payan Catano
Jamie Peterson
Katherine Schuster
Manisha Shah
Peggy Swedroe
Evelyn Tsai
Alexandra Ware
Cheryl Warmann
Andy Williams
Michael Williams
Ruth Williams
Suzi Ziegenhorn

These individuals — and so many others across the College — make it possible for Oakton to continue to prepare students for personal and professional success and to become leaders in their communities.

I'm excited to share that our Covid Response team is moving forward with plans to increase the number of in-person courses to pre-pandemic levels in spring '22. We will increase classroom capacity limits as well, but masking and other safety measures will remain in place until further notice.

Part of the reason we're able to move toward returning to normal operations is that so many of you helped us comply with the statewide mandate by submitting your COVID-19 vaccination status form and/or enrolling in the College's weekly COVID-19 testing program. Thank you! Human Resources is reaching out to offer solutions to the

small number of employees who have yet to comply with the mandate. Likewise, Student Affairs is reaching out to students who remain in non-compliance.

I'm hopeful that increasing our in-person course offerings will allow many students to start or resume their education and that we can rebuild the relationship-rich educational experience that has been a cornerstone of the Oakton Experience. As a reminder, spring Priority Registration opens Nov. 15, and full registration opens Nov. 18. The spring class schedule is now available to view in the myOakton portal.

As we did ahead of the fall semester, we will incentivize students to invest in their education this spring by offering a free class to credit students. As always, please work to connect students with the proper resources to help them register, enroll and stay on track to reach their goals.

This Monday (Oct. 25), our student Media Preferences survey opens, through which we'll collect data to help us improve communication with current and prospective students. Please encourage your students to look for a survey link, which I will email to them next week. In the meantime, please [post this PDF in your D2L shell](#) with more information about the survey. Thanks to our College Relations and Institutional Research teams for partnering to gather this important information that will help us better serve our students.

Once again, I thank you all for your hard work and the many ways you inspire me through your dedication to living out our mission of empowering and transforming students in the diverse communities we serve.

In community,

