



March 17, 2021

Dr. Dianne Van Hook, Chancellor
CC: Diane Rausch
College of the Canyons
26455 Rockwell Canyon Road
Santa Clarita, CA 91355

Re: Letter of Interest for IEPI

Dear Chancellor Van Hook:

I submit this letter of interest on behalf of Skyline College in the San Mateo County Community College District (SMCCCD) for technical assistance under the Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative (IEPI). We had an excellent experience with the IEPI PRT team as we launched our Equity Institute. We are interested, now, in having assistance with our climate review work and our anti-racist initiatives. Please consider our application for technical assistance below.

1. Institution name:

Skyline College, San Mateo County Community College District (SMCCCD)

2. Description of areas that your institution is doing well:

As a new president, I have been on a delightful journey, learning everything I can about Skyline College since August, 2020. We have one overarching initiative that covers the work of the entire college: The Comprehensive College Redesign. This was envisaged by my predecessor, Dr. Regina Stanback Stroud. It is a sweeping initiative dreamt prior to the Guided Pathways initiative. We were ahead of our time, and have since seamlessly integrated Guided Pathways into the Redesign project. The redesign integrates functions of the Academic Senate, Instruction and Student Services, with the focus on improving completion and retention for our hyper -marginalized populations. Our pathway and meta major mapping work are nearing completion. We also moved forth with the Promise Scholars Program as an integrated part of the redesign effort, which is now producing data showing remarkable completion success. Two-year completion rates have tripled for first time full-time students from 4.5% to 19%, and 50% of three-year plan students are on track to graduate. We are also excelling in the roll out of a new Dual Enrollment Program which has doubled enrollments to an anticipated 2500 in Fall, 2021, and our persistence and retention rates are solidly over 92%. Both the Promise Scholars Program and our Dual Enrollment Program have been adopted by the District to scale across our other two colleges. Skyline College has been a long-time innovator within the District. I intend to keep our reputation as a first-mover in the

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District alive and well, as we set the example for innovative approaches to student programs – and now, potentially, as a leader in climate improvement.

3. Description of your institution's areas of focus for PRT or Mini-PRT assistance that will help advance your institutional effectiveness even more. Previous visits to institutions have addressed diverse topics such as enrollment management, student learning outcomes assessment, integrated planning, fiscal strategy, technology applications, and professional development.

Our area of focus for PRT assistance is laying a strong foundation for a sustainable healthy climate. As the new college president, I personally surmise that with the intense focus on student success and innovation in the last five years, we may have lost some focus on the caring of our people and the college climate. Our hypothesis is that the climate of our college and our active antiracism efforts intersect and work together to transform us as a community of the people. As such, we would like to launch the *People's College Initiative (PCI)*. *PCI* will focus on creating a healthy climate at Skyline College. We believe the key ingredients to transforming our climate into a healthy college and workplace experience is three-fold: (1) Having a robust participatory governance process that people trust and believe in, rendering open and transparent decision-making a way of life at Skyline College. We will work to provide the structure and practices needed to ensure all voices are heard, and that the people and students of Skyline College actively work together to shape its future; (2) Creating an antiracist culture that embraces campus wide training, practice, and action toward becoming an antiracist college; and (3) Engaging in regular climate review in order to measure our transformation in becoming a true institution of the people. We will measure success by the existence of a broad-based understanding of how our college functions as a democratic institution, how our shared governance model works, how we can come together and learn to be antiracist practitioners in an educational environment. And, the *piece de resistance* is a healthy climate. We intend to norm participatory governance, antiracism activity and training, and regular climate review. Below is a tentative outline of our vision for this transformation and is subject to revision. If accepted, we will look forward to the opportunity to flesh out this outline with our constituency groups on campus, and the PRT team, to help us refine our vision and scope.

A. Create Climate Review and Participatory Governance Task Forces to:

- 1) Transform participatory governance to be truly transparent and democratic.
- 2) Ensure wide engagement and understanding of the participatory governance process.
- 3) Ensure democratic process and structure is in place to norm participatory governance in perpetuity.
- 4) Review and revise the compendium and committee structures as we redefine the work.
- 5) Address the 2020 Climate Review report and implement current recommendations.

B. Antiracism Training and Action

- 1) Launch Intergroup Dialogue learning and a train-the-trainers model. Intergroup Dialogue is a methodology to retrain us in how we engage with each other and how we listen. It serves as a basis and facilitation for difficult and courageous conversations around social justice, racism, and politicized current events.
- 2) Conduct “dialogues” campus wide on difficult topics to include racism, utilizing an affinity group model.
- 3) Equity Training: Continue cohort training using our Equity Training Series as a model to address ongoing unconscious and conscious bias, gender discrimination, antiracism and whiteness.
- 4) Integrate the Equity Institute internally, to support the college-wide work.
- 5) Integrate antiracist pedagogical practices into the curriculum and classrooms.
- 6) Develop a culture of lifelong learning and an action mindset campus wide.

C. Outcomes Measured through Regular Climate Review Surveys

- 1) Set a baseline comprehensive climate and antiracism review survey, and conduct ongoing annual reviews and reporting to see our trajectory in improvement of the climate and antiracist culture and to identify gaps for follow on work.

4. Description of the rationale for these areas of focus.

The rationale for a focus on this is born from my listening tour as a new president. During the interview process and upon arrival, I was informed of the widespread sense of a lack of transparency in our governance coupled with innovation fatigue. In addition, there appeared to be a lack of transparent input from our constituency groups into decision-making and hiring, and a lack of campus wide understanding of the shared governance process. In addition, we had a professional climate review report published March, 2020 that indicated a serious systemic climate problem. Layered atop that, we are charged as a campus to support the District and State’s antiracist call to action. While Skyline College is likely ahead of most colleges in the system in terms of addressing social justice, equity, and antiracism, we have a lot of work ahead of us, especially if we intend to continue as a leader in these statewide efforts. And, as a campus, we see the clear connection between our climate work and our antiracist efforts as working together to transform our community. A positive climate and culture, alongside active antiracism work undergirds a healthy 21st century community college campus – and when your campus community is healthy, students feel a greater sense of belonging and thrive. It’s the direction we are all heading in the statewide system in support of Chancellor Oakley’s call to action, and Skyline College is helping to pave the way for the rest of the community college system.

5. Description of how these areas of focus relate to the Core Commitments in the Vision for Success.

I sincerely believe that our newest and ongoing initiatives - Comprehensive College Redesign, Promise Scholars Program, and Dual Enrollment - meet these seven core commitments with vigorous and robust intention and a relentless focus on students at the center – with wrap around high-touch supports to ensure completion – and producing the inquiry and data to produce evidence of our progress. With these ongoing initiatives, we have seen thoughtful and intentional action to close our equity gaps and are seeing results. As such, I would like to focus this answer on how *PCI* relates closely to the final three core commitments – numbers 5, 6 and 7 – and, how this initiative also closely relates to Chancellor Oakley’s call to action, number 8.

1. *Focus relentlessly on students’ end goals.*
2. *Always design and decide with the student in mind.*
3. *Pair high expectations with high support.*
4. *Foster the use of data, inquiry, and evidence.*
5. *Take ownership of goals and performance.* Skyline College needs to make some strides in its transparency and inclusion in decision-making. This proposal intentionally addresses ways in which we can empower our campus constituents to be motivated to participate in shaping Skyline’s future. With this work, we will provide the direction and structure needed to ensure a long-term democratic approach to decision-making, and push us to act as a cohesive group in creating an open and transparent governance process, and an integrated planning cycle – to ensure decisions are based on the college values that move the master planning forward.
6. *Enable action and thoughtful innovation.* We are planning a thoughtful approach to motivate widespread participation and enthusiasm in shaping the future of Skyline College. While on my listening tour in the early days of my presidency, I got a great sense of hope for change for the better. I am so afraid that if we stay on the current trajectory, leaving climate unaddressed, we will see apathy seep into the faculty and classified ranks. We are on the precipice of change, with a hopeful momentum, and this initiative will help us right the ship to set us on a new track for long-standing and steadfast shared governance practice contributing to a healthy climate.
7. *Lead the work of partnering across systems.* With the *PCI*, we are partnering both from within and without. Within - our Student Equity and Support Programs Division and our Equity Institute will work together to bring our antiracism and equity scholarship to bear. Without – partnering with our District Council on Antiracism, and across the State, sharing our results and success, to serve as a model for climate improvement and antiracist practice.
8. *Chancellor Oakley’s Call to Action.* Our work cannot stand alone, and we must show our solidarity and thanks to the Chancellor Oakley’s sweeping vision in his “call to action” for campuses to address racism and improve campus climates. He has given all of us permission, if you will, to follow our desire to improve our campuses and become antiracist institutions. We hope to be a model institution, addressing climate and exemplifying at least one way to improve the workplace and environment for students –

March 17, 2021

Page 5

so they feel a sense of belonging to a healthy institution, that has taken care of its employees and constituents, and enables faculty and staff to focus better on students and serve their needs.

6. Indication of what would be the ideal time for the first visit. We are keen on having our first visit this Fall, 2021.

7. Signature of institution's CEO.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Melissa Moreno".

Dr. Melissa Moreno
President
Skyline College

cc: Diane Rausch

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