
From: Bernadine Chuck Fong <fongbernadine@fhda.edu>
Sent: Sunday, November 14, 2021 9:29 PM
To: foothill
Cc: Fatai Heimuli
Subject: An Open Letter to the Foothill faculty, staff and administrators

As we start our journey, let me share with you, in the spirit of openness and transparency, what I have been doing since leaving Foothill in 2006. Though I retired from Foothill, I did not retire from life, nor did I leave Foothill to take another position. I just thought it was time to move on to the unknown. I was fortunate enough to be tapped to be an executive leadership coach with Achieving the Dream (ATD): the first major national community college initiative to question the low completion rates in community colleges and the need to focus on *data-driven decision-making and institutional transformation to foster student success*. ATD was started in 2004. When I joined in 2006, I was assigned to coach the presidents or chancellors at two colleges in Washington state, (Seattle Central and Tacoma), seven colleges in Hawaii (three on the island of Oahu, and the ones on the islands of Kaua'i, Maui, and Hawai'i), and LaGuardia Community College in New York City. The focus of ATD and these colleges was to transform the institution's culture, curriculum, and organizational structure to focus on student success and reduce the achievement gap that exists among student groups. Guided Pathways was an outcome of the joint efforts of ATD and the American Association of Community Colleges. Besides my work with ATD, Guided Pathways was jump started by the work of Completion by Design (CBD- not the drug!) in 2011, co-lead by Rob Johnstone, the former institutional researcher and VPI at Foothill. CBD was based on the following principles:

- (1) Accelerate entry into coherent programs of study.
- (2) Minimize the time required to be college ready.
- (3) Ensure that students know the requirements to succeed.
- (4) Customize and contextualize instruction.
- (5) Integrate student supports with instruction.
- (6) Continually monitor student progress and proactively provide feedback.
- (7) Reward behaviors that contribute to completion.
- (8) Leverage technology to improve learning and program delivery

"Research on organizational effectiveness from within and outside education strongly indicates that to substantially improve student completion and learning, discrete innovations—even when they are implemented at scale—are not sufficient; rather, colleges need to *redesign* programs and support services comprehensively and at scale to support student progression and learning," (AACC, CRC, 2015)

While doing my coaching assignment and working on institutional transformation to support guided pathways, I was also asked to join the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in a new initiative to reduce the achievement gap of community college students, and all students who were struggling with success in math. The success rate of basic skills math students, proceeding to and successfully completing a college level math course was only 20% and it took three years! The president of Carnegie wanted to apply the principles of continuous improvement to reconceptualize how math was being taught. As a senior managing partner at Carnegie, I was joined by a whole host of scholars, such as a professor and cognitive scientist from UCLA, a linguistics professor from Stanford, Uri Treisman from UT, Austin (whose early work was the basis for Foothill's Pass the Torch program) and other distinguished faculty in the learning sciences from across the country. We were also joined by Foothill faculty members, Rachel Mudge and Nicole Gray, as the "on-the-ground critics and users" to assure that the new pedagogy and curriculum made sense and was practical and doable.

My work at Carnegie resulted in the *Carnegie Math Pathways*, a nationwide program adopted by over 100 community colleges and universities, and reaching over 80,000 basic skills math students, of whom *70% successfully reached and completed a college level math course in less than a year* (as compared to 20% in three years)! The spectacular success

rates were due to faculty incorporating the design principles built into the curriculum and the pedagogy that emphasize a sense of belonging and a growth mindset. This is NOT to say the math department needs to adopt this program, but it is to say that ***creating a campus and classroom that generates a sense of belonging and inculcating a growth mindset in our students, is paramount.***

Lastly, I was not exactly sitting at home idle when Judy called to ask if I would “return to service.” I did not hesitate because of my history and love for the college. However, I was already committed to my teaching at Stanford and running two programs: Leadership Dinners, where well-known leaders were invited to have dinner with a dozen students to talk about “leadership” and the Preparing Future Professors Program, which places PhD students interested in a teaching career with faculty mentors at one of six institutions, USF, SFSU, Menlo, SJSU, West Valley, and Foothill. PFP mentors at Foothill include Carolyn Holcroft, Sara Cooper, Jeff Schinske, Gillian Schultz, Amy Edwards, Kathleen Armstrong, Rosa Nguyen, Ron Painter, Bitu Maloom, Sarah Parikh, Scott Lankford, Steve Batham, Falk Cammin, Robert Hartwell, Eta Lin, John Fox, Patricia Gibbs, Rachel Mudge, Eric Reed, Lisa Schulteis (hope I didn’t miss anyone). These mentors were selected by Foothill, not me, to align with the specific academic areas of the PhD students.

This is also a long way of saying, I hope these post-Foothill experiences will help me in my return-to-Foothill, and for us, collectively, to focus on our primary function, teaching (whether in the classroom or a counseling office, or anywhere on campus), data driven decisions, and where we are and what we want to be for our students. It is also to ask each of you, why you came to Foothill to work, and does Foothill offer the culture, the structures, and the climate for you to successfully serve our students so they will also be successful. And will our work in the coming months attract your future president?

Best regards,

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