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Date: Tue, Feb 4, 2020 at 2:31 PM  
Subject: Our Redesign of Developmental Education is a Bellwether Winner  
To: Pima-All <[Pima-All@pima.edu](mailto:Pima-All@pima.edu)>

Colleagues,

I am proud to announce that our redesign of Developmental Education has received the best-in-the-nation recognition it deserves. Earlier today, our entry “Transform Developmental Education, Transform an Institution” won a Bellwether Award in the category of Instructional Programs and Services.

Winning a Bellwether demonstrates that our Developmental Education redesign is advancing student success in an innovative, substantial, evidence-based way. In finishing first in the category among 10 finalists from community colleges across the U.S., we showed the expert judges, and the nation, that our initiative produces real benefits for our students and community.

The achievement is a milestone in a persistent Collegewide effort to solve a problem that community colleges have long grappled with, and that Pima had tried to address in the 2000s. An added driver of change was included in our Monitoring Report to the Higher Learning Commission on July 29, 2013, a few months after the HLC had placed the College on probation: “The College needs to conduct a thorough review of developmental education” by July 2014. Thus my first set of Chancellor’s Goals, approved by the Governing Board in September 2013, included Objective 5.B: “Begin the redesign of the Developmental Education program no later than Fall 2013.” I charged the Provost’s Office with implementing the objective.

Provost Dr. Dolores Durán-Cerda, at the time the Special Assistant to the Provost, was instrumental in moving the initiative forward in 2013 and 2014. A Developmental Education Redesign Committee was formed with representation from external and internal constituents. From that committee, eight members were chosen to serve on the Developmental Education Steering Committee. Their incredible dedication was founded on the guiding principle that the redesign be student-centered and promote access, retention and success.

Also in 2014, we hired a Dean of Developmental Education, Jeff Thies, who created interdisciplinary teams to revise placement processes, improve curriculum and student support, and undertake other initiatives to move the needle on gateway access and completion.

At our presentation to the Bellwether judges today, student success data proved our efforts have paid off. We demonstrated a 20 percent increase from 2014 in students earning credit in English Composition, and a phenomenal 90 percent increase in students earning credit in a gateway Mathematics course.

The voice of a former Pima student, Taylor Bailey, gave our effort a human dimension. In Fall 2017, Taylor participated in our pilot College Algebra corequisite course and, in December 2019, graduated with honors from Pima with an Associate Degree in Business. He is attending the University of Arizona, pursuing a degree in Management Information Systems. Taylor credits his college success to the holistic support he received in his corequisite Mathematics class.

In addition to Taylor, the list of people to thank for this success extends to the other presenters who joined me in San Antonio, Texas. Governing Board Chair Demion Clinco, along with his fellow Board members, set high expectations for the College in this critical area. Jeff Thies, now Dean of College Readiness and Student Success, and Nina Corson, Dean of Mathematics; faculty counselor DeLisa Siddall; and Dr. Morgan Phillips, Vice Chancellor for Academic Excellence, also made outstanding contributions to our presentation.

The reality is that everyone who participated in this comprehensive Collegewide effort, which spanned more than half a decade, deserves kudos. Thank you for helping break down a barrier to student success!

Lee D. Lambert  
Chancellor

Postscript: As we were the only community college with Bellwether finalists in two categories, I would be remiss if I did not mention our finalist in the category of Planning, Governance and Finance. While our collaboration with Earn to Learn did not win, Pima Community College Foundation President Marcy Euler, who was one of the presenters, states: "The entire process was tremendous. Many people now are connected to us and to Earn to Learn, and are excited about our partnership. Pima and Earn to Learn are paving the way for community college students to minimize or eliminate student loan debt through matched savings, financial literacy training, and wraparound support, resulting in improved access, retention and completion rates."