Good Morning. I am pleased to welcome everyone back to campus for the new academic year.

It’s hard for me to believe that this is my fifth Fall Faculty Conference as Provost. It reminds me of the time, many years ago, when Lynne and I were celebrating our 5th anniversary.

A friend asked Lynne: “How are the two of you going to celebrate?”

Lynne said, “I’m taking Harvey to Florida.”

Our friend said, “That’s terrific! So: how are you going to celebrate your 6th anniversary?”

Lynne said, “I suppose I’ll let him come back home.”

This morning, we’ve heard encouraging information from the President – particularly regarding Stockton’s fall enrollment numbers.

It is especially exciting to note that this is the fourth consecutive year that Stockton’s incoming freshman class is its largest ever.

We all play important roles in this success – by participating in recruiting events, or during registration and advising days, even our casual conversations with students and their families.

We have built this freshman class together. Thank you for your work in this important endeavor.
Every interaction with a prospective student or parent is an important one, and our outstanding freshman numbers are a testament to how serious and passionate we are about a Stockton education.

I would like to take a moment to congratulate John Iacovelli and the hard-working team in the Office of Enrollment Management.

Four consecutive years of record growth is no easy task, especially in such challenging times, and they deserve an enormous amount of credit for leading this exceptional effort.

My remarks this morning will focus on a few key issues that are inexorably linked, and that will have a major impact on the plans of the Division of Academic Affairs this upcoming year.

We’ll talk about the Academic plan itself, our periodic review for Middle States, our COACHE and NSSE results, and how we may continue strengthening our successes, based on those results.

If you attended one or both of our summer retreats, you will have heard some of these points already. But: it’s important for all of us to understand both the significance and the relationship of these key issues.

First: our Academic Plan is complete and available for viewing on the Academic Affairs web page.

Last fall, after receiving suggestions and recommendations from the 12 study teams, we integrated your input into a final document.

Our goal was to craft, from all of your hard work, a simple, yet cogent document, one that would connect our LEGS themes to the crucial everyday tasks that reinforce the primacy of teaching and learning at Stockton.
The result is a three-page summary plan that outlines 12 specific goals. The fundamental core of the Academic Plan rests on three vital principles, which were identified, to one extent or another, by all 12 study teams:

1. To continue incorporating the 10 Essential Learning Outcomes into as many courses and other learning experiences as possible

2. To support and reward ongoing assessment practices

3. To maintain a commitment to professional development efforts for faculty and staff

These three principles, along with the 12 goals, represent the immediate and long-term future plan of the Division.

As the saying goes: “If you don’t know where you’re going, any road will get you there.” Well, the Academic Plan is the roadmap for our Division.

We know where we want to go: building a bright future on the strength of our past tradition.

From this framework, we were able to integrate many common components from your study teams.

Members of the study teams who review the plan’s Executive Summary as well as the 12 goals will see elements that directly relate to your team’s suggestions. Thank you for your work.

I encourage everyone to review the document and add your feedback after you have done so.

With a plan of action in place for this academic year, our living document will continue to incorporate your changes and additions for next year.
On the Academic Affairs web site, there is a text box where you can submit your comments. I look forward to reading your ideas and suggestions.

The second key issue I wish to discuss is Stockton’s upcoming Middle States Periodic Review Report which is due June 2017.

If you recall, two years ago, during our Fall 2012 Faculty Conference, we celebrated our Middle States reaccreditation success. Stockton received the academic equivalent of a “clean bill of health” with no follow-up requirements.

I mentioned at the time that such an outstanding performance on our 10-year reaccreditation efforts provided us with the “gift of opportunity.”

While other colleges had to invest time and energy in revisiting – and, in some cases, correcting – their past, Stockton could focus its efforts on making our future even brighter and more successful. Thank you for your work in ensuring this success.

Although our Visiting Team did not issue any follow-up requirements, they did present several suggestions, and together, we have acted on these.

Consequently, we will present compelling evidence of continued success to Middle States when Stockton submits its PRR in a few years.

For example: the Visiting Team suggested that the College increase personnel dedicated to assessing student learning outcomes.

In response we established two new positions to support faculty work.
First: the Director of Essential Learning Outcomes. Dr. Carra Hood has performed at such an exceptional level in this role that we asked her to assume an expanded role as interim Assistant Provost.

With Carra as a guide, mentor, and leader, the ELO Initiative has embarked on several short- and long-term projects consistently led by faculty.

A few examples:

Dr. Susan Cydis, Assistant Professor of Education, received a 2020 grant to begin an ELO study group. As a result, participating faculty have started integrating ELOs into their course assignments.

Several Stockton faculty, administrators, and professional staff have, over the past few years, published scholarship related to ELOs and have presented their work at national conferences.

This semester, Stockton will pilot ELOs and ePortfolios in 11 courses: 6 first-year seminars, 2 FRST courses, and 3 Program courses.

The piloting faculty and students will work with ELOs for critical thinking and information literacy, among others, and test out two ePortfolio platforms, Blackboard and Digication.

These projects will provide us with important formative feedback as we continue our efforts to integrate ELOs into courses and assignments.

The second position we added was the Director of Academic Assessment. In this role, Dr. Sonia Gonsalves provides expertise to faculty and staff in developing meaningful assessment activities to improve teaching and learning.

Sonia also has the responsibility for institutional assessment throughout Academic Affairs.
Last academic year, your Deans, Sonia, and I encouraged eligible faculty to complete the COACHE faculty satisfaction survey.

COACHE is a national survey facilitated by the Harvard Graduate School of Education to appraise faculty job satisfaction with respect to teaching, research, and service responsibilities, overall workplace environment, tenure and promotion policies, recognition and appreciation efforts, and work-life balance.

This past year represents the second time that Stockton attempted to participate in the COACHE survey. In 2005, our response rate was too low to be reliable.

But: this past year, 138 faculty completed the survey, which represents a 52% response rate of those eligible to participate and, as a result, we now have reliable and representative information.

The full COACHE report will be accessible from the Academic Assessment website and, throughout the semester, our EVIDENCE newsletter will feature analyses, reports, and commentaries on various aspects of our faculty satisfaction profile.

I am pleased to report that Stockton faculty expressed high levels of satisfaction with:

- teaching and research
- interdisciplinary work
- opportunities to collaborate
- mentoring experiences
- appreciation and recognition
- senior leadership
- and facilities and resources
There are, however, areas we need to further review and address.

For example: full professors, women, and faculty of color are less satisfied with some aspects of their work and life at Stockton than faculty at comparison institutions.

However, it is extremely gratifying to learn from COACHE that Stockton faculty recognize the importance of mentoring, value the support of their mentors, and that mentors find their roles to be fulfilling.

In fact, for every single one of the ten questions on mentoring, Stockton faculty have higher ratings of their experience than the mean ratings of the more than 120 colleges and universities that participated, including some of the most prestigious institutions in our nation.

Therefore, I want to acknowledge the work of faculty mentors and join with the early-career faculty in thanking you for your contributions to this critically important task of orienting new faculty into programs, Schools, and to the College. Thank-you Faculty Mentors!!

At this year’s Academic Affairs retreat, we invited faculty and staff to reflect on mentoring at Stockton and to identify the important aspects of Stockton’s culture that are best transmitted through mentoring partnerships.

They responded with the following suggestions.

Mentoring partnerships are best at providing support to new faculty in the following aspects of Stockton’s culture:

- Explaining and reinforcing the egalitarian and collaborative nature of Stockton’s culture

- Helping with understanding the General Studies curriculum
• Interdisciplinarity and the importance of one’s own contribution to the College

• The nature of “campus citizenship”

• And... early counseling on building a tenure/promotion/reappointment file

We now have two crucial information sources – the Division’s Academic Plan and the COACHE survey – that stress the importance of professional development and faculty mentoring.

We will use both the plan and the feedback to guide us in this academic year. As is our custom, we will use these assessments to shape our planning and decision-making for the future.

In other words: we will “close the loop” on the COACHE findings.

Sonia will convene a work group to study the COACHE report and to make recommendations about possible courses of action that are indicated by the voice of the faculty and all faculty will have access to the report via the Academic Affairs website.

So: as Stockton begins to gather the necessary data for our future PRR report, we will use the information collected from the Academic Plan, our ELO efforts, and the COACHE survey to substantiate that we continue moving forward –collectively, collaboratively – in ways that strengthen our commitment to the teaching and learning process well beyond the visiting team’s suggestions.

Today, I would also like to address mentoring from another perspective: that of the preceptor. Preceptorial teaching represents one of Stockton’s founding principles that has set us apart from other colleges.
In fact, both seniors and freshmen who responded to our most recent National Survey of Student Engagement – commonly called NSSE – rated their advising experience higher than did students in the national sample.

Stockton seniors had significantly higher ratings than the national sample for nine out of the ten questions that related to advising. Thank you for your precepting work.

However, along with the excellent narrative comments about precepting, some students who responded to NSSE also contributed suggestions for improvement.

For example, a few students report having to change preceptors before reaching that high level of satisfaction we see in the quantitative results.

There were others who informed us that they received inconsistent precepting during their time at Stockton.

As we acknowledge the outstanding efforts of so many of the preceptors who made our positive results possible, as our last key issue for discussion this morning, I would like to call on ALL of us to re-energize this important point of connection between students and faculty.

We must ALL make it MORE intentional, MORE visible, so that it truly becomes an indispensable component of EVERY students’ educational development.

From a purely pragmatic viewpoint, the preceptorial process, when working effectively, helps students avoid taking unnecessary courses.

This, in turns, helps them stay on the path toward graduating on time, thereby reducing the cost of their education.

As important, this personal relationship between faculty and students goes a very long way to improving retention and to helping students make good choices in their majors and eventual careers.
This spring, the first of its kind national Gallup-Purdue Poll released a study of 30,000 college graduates measuring components of what the study referred to as “great lives.”

In particular, the study assessed not only the graduates “financial well-being,” but also “their sense of purpose, their social lives, their connectedness to their community, and their physical health.”

The report indicates that: “if graduates had a professor who cared about them as a person, made them excited about learning, and encouraged them to pursue their dreams, their odds of being engaged at work more than doubled, as did their odds of thriving in their well-being... feeling supported and having deep learning experiences means everything when it comes to long-term outcomes for college graduates” (Gallup-Purdue Index Inaugural National Report, 2014, p.6).

Stockton has a great system in place that can be made even better if we put our minds to it.

We don’t need to overhaul or rebuild the entire preceptorial system. Instead, we need your help for a bit of a tune-up. And there are a lot of great mechanics in this room who can help us.

You can help us to enhance the visibility of precepting by sharing your own precepting innovations, perhaps via a web page, or, if we want to be more ambitious, a conference.

We could host panels at our annual Days of Scholarship, or even select a faculty fellow who can help pull this all together.

Preceptorial advising helps students to build their own educational narrative, one that speaks to their own hopes, their own dreams.

Good preceptors not only help students attain an education worth having for a lifetime, they also help students construct meaning in their education.
Great precepting is great teaching, and it is as much of an art as it is a science.

Let’s keep working to capture that subtle yet profound magic, mix it with reliable evidence, and strengthen the vitality of the preceptorial advising process that has been a defining part of our relationship with students.

It is a transformational process and it is something embedded within the spirit of Stockton.

Precepting is part of our DNA, and it is one ingredient that makes Stockton the special place it is.

Let’s all take a moment to think about our own undergraduate experience. By a show of your hands, who in this room still recalls fondly a professor, an advisor, or staff member at their college who influenced you strongly in your career or life choices?

Whether it was a brief encounter or a relationship that lasted all four years, and perhaps even beyond... I suspect the relationship you had with a mentor in college is one of the main reasons you were inspired to pursue your careers in higher education.

As for me: many of you know who my inspiration has been. He was my preceptor, he’s been my mentor, and personal friend for 43 years.

If you want a singular example of the crucial importance that a preceptor can play in shaping the life of a young mind, then my academic and professional development is illustrative of the importance of a caring and involved preceptor.

Bill Daly’s fingerprints are all over my academic and professional growth.

My greatest wish for any student at Stockton is to experience the kind of inspiration and guidance I received from Bill.
In my humble opinion, he is the most revered faculty member in the history of Stockton and, literally, thousands of students consider him to be the most influential educator in their lives.

This is due, in large measure, to the preceptorial teaching he offered beyond the walls of his classrooms.

And: knowing that our good friend will be retiring this year, if there could be just ONE gift we could give back to him, it would be that ALL of us keep working on perfecting his passionate approach to precepting.

Thank you for committing to join me in strengthening our precepting program this year.

Consider applying for a faculty fellowship, launching a future teaching circle, or contributing to the scholarship and practice of excellent precepting with a Day of Scholarship session or a paper at an external conference that we can publish here as well.

Thank you also for your ongoing work in advancing our academic plan and our progress on all of the key issues we discussed this morning.

Before I finish this talk, permit me to remind everyone of our 10th annual Constitution Day event on Wednesday, September 17th at 6:00 p.m. right here in the Event Room.

This year, we are proud to welcome Nina Totenberg as our keynote speaker.


Special thanks go out to Linda Wharton and the Constitution Day series planning team for hosting another exciting speaker.
Colleagues, it has given me great pride over the past five years to conclude my Fall Faculty Conference remarks with a similar refrain: that we at Stockton have as much to celebrate as we have to be thankful for.

That we can continue to spend our time, energy, and passion, looking forward to an exciting future rather than worrying about the past.

I am proud that faculty and staff have supported my calls for a thoughtful and collaborative succession of initiatives that continue to propel and sustain us going forward.

I ask you to do so again this year, for the long-term good of an institution that, itself, does so much long-term good.

Thank you for your time this morning and let’s make this academic year another truly productive and enjoyable one for everyone on campus.

Now, it is my pleasure to introduce Rodger Jackson, President of the Faculty Senate.
References