

## 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Corporate Equity & Inclusion Roundtable (CEIR) Conference Remarks

Presented by

President, Community College of Allegheny County

- Good morning and thank you for providing me with the opportunity to share some of things the Community College of Allegheny County is doing to enhance the lives of all individuals who are fortunate to call Southwestern Pennsylvania their home.
- With the college's emphasis on providing industry-relevant academic and career training, CCAC continues to develop and refine programs designed to create a highly responsive and technologically savvy regional workforce fully equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully compete in today's increasingly complex global marketplace.
- With more than 160 associate degree, certificate, diploma and transfer program offerings available across six broad industry sectors—the arts & humanities; business; education, social & behavioral sciences & human services; health; STEM; and skilled trades, and nearly 45,000 students taking classes every year—CCAC is well placed to make a significant impact on the region's economic prosperity.
- Thanks to the college's strong partnerships with business and industry, numerous professional organizations and the region's trade unions, CCAC is able to provide curricula and training that address specific industry needs and for some programs, provide a direct pipeline to employment opportunities for our graduates. For example, of the college's 29 programs offered in the skilled trades and energy technologies, many are offered as apprenticeship programs. These students are able to earn college credits and gain critical hands-on experience while earning a paycheck, and they often have a job waiting for them upon graduation. A similar situation exists with students enrolled in CCAC's Nursing and other health care programs, with graduates often landing full-time positions following their clinical and field work.
- In other instances, CCAC's ability to quickly respond to industry trends and emerging technologies has enabled CCAC to be the first to offer a program in a growing field. Just recently, CCAC began offering a Data Analytics Technology associate degree program—the first college in the state to do so. Another new CCAC program—the Anesthesia Technologist associate degree program—is one of only eight in the country that provides training in this high-demand occupation.
- Sometimes, CCAC is the only institution to offer a particular program. For example, CCAC offers the only Paramedic associate degree program in Western Pennsylvania and the only Court Reporting associate degree program in the state. It is not difficult to imagine how critical CCAC is to the development of future workers in these professions.

- And when demand for a particular program is at its peak, the college will often come up with ways to increase access to training, either by adding new training locations or by adding additional classes, often at nontraditional hours. Our popular HVAC and Welding programs both benefitted from this approach, with HVAC classes now being offered at CCAC's space in the Energy Innovation Center and students now being able to take "midnight welding" classes at CCAC's West Hills Center.
- Another way CCAC is helping increase access is through articulation agreements. In addition to saving students up to \$57,000 during their first two years of college, these agreements enable our students to seamlessly transfer into more than 160 programs offered at 49 other colleges and universities, including the 14 PSSHE schools.
- And in order to encourage high schools students to attend college, we've entered into a unique 2+2+2 partnership with the University of Pittsburgh and the Pittsburgh Public Schools, which enables Pittsburgh Public School students to network and build vital relationships on both the CCAC and Pitt campuses. In yet another effort to capture the interest of future students, CCAC continues to work with area high schools to expose students to new educational options, including offering high school students taking Advanced Placement and Honors classes the opportunity to enroll in CCAC's Dual Enrollment courses.
- When speaking about access, it is important to remember that perhaps more than any other college or university in the region, CCAC is a college for all members of the community. CCAC, like other community colleges across the nation, has a higher percentage of first-generation college students as well as students requiring academic, financial and other assistance. Because of this, CCAC continues to seek out and secure new funding sources for programs that will expand opportunities for all students. Some of these programs include the college's In-School and Out-of-School Youth programs (which were funded by the Partners 4 Work Workforce Investment Board to provide college in high school opportunities and GED classes) as well as the Micro-Credentials program, which trains out-of-school youth, adults with low basic skills and individuals who are underemployed or unemployed for high-priority occupations. Another very valuable program currently underway is the Health Profession Opportunity: Pathway to Success in Healthcare program, which provides education and training in nursing, emergency medicine and medical records/health information technology for low-income and underserved individuals. One of CCAC's main recruitment goals is to increase enrollment of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (or TANF) recipients in the region. Programs like the three I just cited are excellent examples of the power that public and private funding has in helping to provide truly transformative education, especially when it helps to lift individuals out of poverty.
- Because our students come from a diverse range of backgrounds with an equally diverse range of interests and abilities, CCAC offers a full complement of programs and wrap-around services designed to ensure students succeed. For academically gifted students, CCAC offers

Honors program degrees and courses as well as the opportunity to immerse themselves in learning experiences outside the classroom. For students who may require academic assistance, CCAC offers a host of learning supports including access to student success coaches, individual mentoring opportunities and Math Cafés and Learning Commons where students can seek help with math, writing and reading. Studies have shown that these types of supports foster student success, with students receiving higher test scores and grades, particularly those students who visit these facilities three or more times in a semester.

- In addition to general assistance, CCAC offers services aimed at helping specific student populations. With one of the state's largest number of enrolled veterans, CCAC's Military and Veterans Services Centers provide help with VA educational benefits, as well as information on other services of interest to veterans and their families. CCAC also offers supports aimed at increasing the retention, campus and community engagement, and academic success of students of color through the Men of Merit Initiative and Women on a Mission.
- Another group of students that critically need assistance but who have often been overlooked in the past are those individuals who have been incarcerated. Because these individuals need our support to re-enter society, CCAC is reaching out with the aim of presenting CCAC as a welcoming environment. As a founding member of the Allegheny County Anchored Re-entry Consortium (otherwise known as ACAR), the college works with like-minded agencies and organizations such as Partner4Work, the Allegheny County Jail Collaborative and the Renewal Center to help these individuals identify programs that will fit their interests and skillsets, and most importantly, that will enable them to find gainful employment. In addition to identifying employer-friendly career programs, we also help these individuals with career counseling and job placement opportunities as well as help them in determining which financial aid programs may be open to them. Many re-entrants choose to enroll in our Culinary Arts, Business, CIT and Skilled Trades programs.
- One of CCAC's most well received services to date has been the Campus Cupboard food pantry at South Campus and the "pop-up" food pantries at the college's Allegheny and Boyce campuses. During 2016, the South Campus food pantry served 106 individuals during nearly 250 visits. This service has been vital to those students struggling to support themselves and members of their family. With food insecurity in Southwestern Pennsylvania an ongoing concern, 93 percent of student food pantry users surveyed said the food pantry has improved their ability to focus on class activities and academics, and three out of every five reported that their grades have risen. Funding is currently being sought to provide for the addition of permanent food pantries at all the campuses.
- As a college president, I can tell you that there is nothing more satisfying—and humbling—than knowing you've helped empower someone to reach their potential. And this is only possible when as a society, we make access to education a priority. Because if there is anything we have learned through the years, it's that education is the key to opening so many doors in life. And just knowing the work everyone in this room is doing to ensure that all individuals

have the opportunity to attend college, gives me hope for the future of education in this region. Together, we will succeed. We MUST succeed.

- Thank you.

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