

# FIRST 100 DAYS AND BEYOND

Listening  
Tour Report

by **Chancellor  
Julianna M. Barnes**



**South Orange County Community College District**





“I am so inspired by your  
commitment to our students  
and your passion and pursuit  
to carry out our mission.”  
– **Chancellor Barnes**





# DEAR SOCCCD COMMUNITY

In fall 2022, I was honored to join the South Orange County Community College District (SOCCCD) as the tenth Chancellor. Being new to the district, I was eager to meet students and employees, along with community partners. I notified you of my plan to engage in a 100 days of listening tour and a report that would follow to include my observations of the District and plans for the future.

I am thrilled to report that my time spent meeting with Irvine Valley College, Saddleback College, District Services, and community stakeholders was invaluable. I am so inspired by your commitment to our students and your passion and pursuit to carry out our mission.

I spent 100 working days and beyond listening – to understand our strengths and challenges and explore with you, ways to collaboratively develop strategies focused on the priorities that will move us forward.

Across disciplines, governance groups, and areas of focus throughout the district, five major themes were illuminated during my listening tour, which are outlined within this report.

While my first 100 days are now behind me, I remain committed to engaging with you, openly and transparently. I am looking forward to working with all of you and taking our colleges and district to new heights!

Sincerely,  
Julianna Barnes

# THEME #1 CARING

## Caring for our People:

### Our People, Our Strength

When I asked the question about what our greatest strength is in the SOCCCD, unequivocally, I heard “it is all about the people.” It was clear when I stepped into my role on day one, that our colleges and district have some of the most dedicated and caring employees and this was affirmed as I spoke with students, staff, faculty, and administrators in my early months. Numerous examples were shared, demonstrating how our employees step up to show support and care for students and one another. Indeed, people are the District’s greatest asset, and we have an institutional opportunity to strengthen the way in which we show that we care and value them.

### Summary of What I Heard:

- We are devoted to our students and will go to great lengths to show that we support and care for them.
- Our district has done an excellent job of attracting talented employees across constituent groups.
- There is a strong sense of collaboration and camaraderie among our employees.
- We have longevity in our district and many employees feel that SOCCCD is like a family.
- Our classified professionals have embraced the Caring Campus movement to deepen our culture of care.
- There is always more that our institutions could do to show that we support and value one another and our students.
- We have an opportunity to make even more focused, student-centered decisions.
- Transparent and effective communication related to decision-making is good, but could be better.
- While we value professional development, more opportunities leading to growth and/or advancement are needed.



## Areas to Explore Moving Forward

How can we deepen our understanding of the student experience to drive student-centered decisions?

What new strategies can be implemented to improve campus climate and overall care and support for one another?

How might we institutionalize Caring Campus behaviors beyond classified professionals?

What could we do to take transparency and communication in our decision-making to the next level?

What opportunities exist to support our internal talent that could lead to professional growth and/or advancement?



# THEME #2 DEIA

## Strengthening Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility: Living Our Values

A clear value within the SOCCCD is Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA). It is deep. It is real. It is pervasive. The student bodies at both Irvine Valley College and Saddleback College are remarkably diverse and we know this is an incredible strength. Validating students' social and cultural realities both inside and outside of the classroom not only contributes to a sense of a belonging, but also lays the foundation for equitable success. While there are numerous examples of practices and policies being employed in our district and colleges, there is still so much more that we can do together to eradicate equity gaps to ensure that students can achieve the success that they need and deserve.



### Areas to Explore Moving Forward

How do we more robustly move from “talk to walk” in our DEIA efforts?

What opportunities exist to develop a more cohesive DEIA vision and plan?

How could we effectively use data, both quantitative and qualitative, to inform our decisions to improve equitable access and success?

What strategies might we employ to broaden participation in DEIA efforts?





## Summary of What I Heard:

- Across the board, DEIA is viewed as one of the most important shared district-wide values.
- Our students embrace DEIA in all its forms and recognize its importance as future leaders in a global world.
- There is broad understanding that data-informed decisions are critical to establish equitable student outcomes.
- Our Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI) designations are points of pride for SOCCCD.
- We are committed, as a collective, to deepening our understanding of DEIA and applying our learning into practice.
- While DEIA is a collective value in the district and colleges, we must move robustly district-wide from talk to walk.
- While there are numerous examples of DEIA focused efforts happening throughout the district and colleges, they are largely siloed.
- While we are great at celebrating diversity, we must strengthen our use of data and high impact practices that translate to equitable outcomes.
- Faculty and students cited the importance of diversifying the faculty ranks, which contributes to student success for all.
- There is opportunity to build capacity with our DEIA work and broaden participation among students and employees districtwide.

How could we move toward institutionalizing DEIA efforts and embedding the work into the fabric of the work we do each day?

What DEIA efforts are contributing to the closing of equity gaps and what additional efforts can we develop and implement?

How might we organize and expand DEIA- focused professional learning and development to elevate practitioner consciousness?

What strategies can we implement to better recruit and retain diverse faculty?





# FUTURE

## Rethinking the Post-Pandemic Future of our Colleges:

### What Does the Future Hold?

The COVID-19 pandemic led to unprecedented disruptions for our students and colleges, shining a light on disparities that exist in such areas as food and housing insecurities, financial burdens, mental health issues, and technology gaps. While there are many unknowns as we emerge from the virus-phase of the pandemic, I heard loud and clear with stakeholders that returning to the pre-pandemic “normal” is not an option. Through student-centered approaches to address academic and non-academic needs, we have a unique opportunity to establish our “new normal” and define who we are and who we need to be for our students and community.



### Areas to Explore Moving Forward

How can we embrace the principles of resilience, flexibility, and change as we plan for the future and define our “new normal”?

What do we already know about what students want and need in this post-pandemic era? What more do we need to know?

Where is our sweet spot between face-to-face and virtual instruction and support?



## Summary of What I Heard:

- The pandemic proved to us that we are resilient, flexible, and open to change.
- We acknowledge that technology is here to stay, and the pandemic prompted us to use the suite of technology tools available to us.
- As a collective, we embrace the opportunity to rethink the post-pandemic “new normal.”
- The colleges are proud of the efforts they implemented to address students’ non-academic needs, particularly in the areas of food insecurities and mental health.
- We must better understand what students want and need in this post-pandemic era and design their college experience accordingly.
- We must find our sweet spot between face-to-face and online instruction and support services to meet student needs.
- Priorities shifted for employees during the pandemic. There is a desire for work-life balance.
- Relationships suffered during the pandemic, which is linked to mental health and overall well-being.



How can we create more work-life balance opportunities for our employees?

What does the post-pandemic physical campus experience look like?

Are we effectively using new technologies? What more do we need to explore?

How could we be more intentional about supporting interpersonal relationships and well-being?





# EXCELLENCE

## **Embracing Excellence and Innovation: Preparing Our Students for the Future**

Our society is ever-changing, as is each generation of students. As such, we must keep our finger on the pulse of these changes and courageously grow, change, and innovate to address new and emerging needs of both our students and our community. At the end of the day, our students come to us as they want a brighter future and are seeking social and economic mobility. And in turn, our community counts on us to fulfill this commitment to meet ever-changing societal and workforce needs. I am proud of our district, as we embrace excellence and innovation in all that we do and remain committed to doing so as we forge ahead in the future.

### **Summary of What I Heard:**

- The colleges are proud of their national Aspen recognition which affirms that we put students first and strive for excellence.
- There is a keen recognition that our student demographic is changing, and we are open to new approaches and high impact practices to meet their evolving needs.
- We leverage our relationships with educational, business, and community partners to collectively meet the challenges of the future.
- There is a lot of excitement and energy about a number of new student success initiatives.
- Students expressed their desire to have more internships and work-based learning opportunities.
- We have an opportunity to heighten our understanding of community and workforce needs and to better align our programs to address these needs.
- While the colleges embrace many of the new student success initiatives, it will be important to build our capacity to scale and institutionalize these efforts.



## Areas to Explore Moving Forward

How will we heighten our understanding of the unique needs of our student body who come from different backgrounds, experiences, and generations?

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What do we already know about community and workforce needs? What more do we need to know?

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What opportunities exist to strengthen our alignment between our instructional programs and community and workforce needs?

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What approaches do we need to take to build capacity, scale, and institutionalize the various student success initiatives?

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What opportunities exist for students to gain knowledge, skills, and experience in their chosen career field? How might we expand?

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What more do we need to learn about the challenges that our students will face in the future?





# COMMUNITY

## Deepening Community Engagement:

### We are in this Together

I have quickly learned that the south Orange County community is a tight knit community, comprised of a unique culture and environment. As the only community college district in south county, we maintain strong value amongst our external partners and have incredible opportunities to strengthen our partnerships with K-12 districts, local universities, community organizations, as well as industry and elected leaders. We must continue to build upon the relationship with entities outside of our internal district structure and amplify the good work we do on behalf of students every day to ensure that we establish a big tent in supporting the most critical needs of our students.

### Summary of What I Heard:

- We are well-known in Orange County and our external community sees the colleges as extraordinary places.
- Our community honors our legacy and contributions to Orange County.
- We see the value of developing strong partnerships with our education and business community to streamline pathways to careers.
- We have close ties with elected leaders and could call upon them to support our colleges and district.
- We proactively engage with our external community and invite them to engage with us.
- While we are known in the community, there is always more that we could do to amplify our brand and areas of distinction.
- The Advanced Technology and Education Park (ATEP) has a great deal of potential, but it is not well-known in the community.
- While we have a lot of external partnerships, we have an opportunity to engage with them in more meaningful ways.





## Areas to Explore Moving Forward

How might we showcase our points of pride and existing strengths to broaden community understanding of who we are?

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How can we strengthen community knowledge and engagement specifically with ATEP?

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What strategies can we employ to be more intentional about creating pathways from the K-12 to transfer or to careers?

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How can we engage with our business and industry partners in more meaningful ways to ensure that our students reap the benefits?

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In what ways might we better partner with our elected officials?



# MY VISITS AROUND THE DISTRICT

One of my greatest pleasures during my first few months in the SOCCCD was getting to know the people that work to fulfill our mission and help students reach their goals.









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## **SOUTH ORANGE COUNTY** COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

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