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## Preface

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## Preface

*By Charlie Errico*

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Dr. Glenn DuBois feels passionately about the lessons we can learn through the study of history. A deeper understanding of the past fuels his commitment to a community college system that offers hope for a better life to every student. I remember loaning him a favorite book on Thomas Jefferson; I was surprised when two weeks later he quoted from it in a speech at New Horizons. The Chancellor had singled out a passage about Jefferson's vision of a school within "a day's horseback ride" of every Virginian. Our community college system, the Chancellor noted, with campuses within a short drive of every citizen, was a fulfillment of Jefferson's dream. He knew that while many colleges take pride in their selectivity and the number of students they reject, the VCCS values the number of students it accepts – Dreamers, veterans, women, minorities, hard-working Virginians who struggle every day to achieve an education while holding down a job and raising a family.

If you review the Chancellor's speeches through the years, you will see themes emerge that tell you about the man and his values. Words such as "equity," "diversity," "accessibility," "affordability" and "social justice" are sprinkled throughout his remarks. He spotlights the importance of workforce training, developmental education, and "great expectations" for the Commonwealth's disadvantaged youth.

There is one theme, more than others, that captured my heart and those of my colleagues. In the last two years, the Chancellor has focused on the issue of race and disparities that exist in educational opportunities, incarceration rates, life expectancy, and family wealth. Resolving these problems, in his words, will take "tireless dedication and collective vigilance."

I remember attending VCCS meetings years ago in the old James Monroe Building in a conference room with pictures of VCCS presidents. A token woman and African American graced the wall filled with pleasant-looking white men with balding heads and graying temples. Thanks to the Chancellor, the majority of today's VCCS presidents are women and minorities. In our divided America, many leaders know the politically correct verbiage, but few walk the walk and make meaningful changes. Dr. Glenn DuBois is a leader who supports his words with actions.

In the past decade, the Chancellor's Faculty Advisory Committee (CFAC), blessed with dedicated and thoroughly professional chairs such as Ray Bailey and Patrick Tompkins, has worked with the Chancellor and his leadership team to make the VCCS the best community college system in the nation. This achievement was a product of the Chancellor's belief that institutional progress is a team endeavor. Meetings were respectful and collegial, and there was a level playing field because participants left their rank and titles at the door before entering the room. We were all there for a common purpose: to enhance the welfare of our students. If we replace the words "students" with "nation," our political leaders would learn an important lesson.

In a recent speech, the Chancellor stated, "nobody travels this journey alone." But for that statement to have meaning, the travelers need to have common goals and aspirations. Through shared services and other initiatives, the Chancellor kept his promise to maintain a twenty-three college Virginia Community College System. He knew that was important because he is one of us. Like most of our

students, he was the first in his family to attend college and worried, in his words, that he was not “college material.” His “mother’s persistence” persuaded him to enroll at a community college in New York where his academic journey began. Perhaps he never dreamed of one day earning a doctorate, becoming a college professor, and leading a nationally recognized statewide system of community colleges with forty campuses. Yet, as our Virginia community college students know, open-access affordable education is the path to make your dreams come true.

I know that I speak for my community college colleagues in saying that we are honored to have taken this journey with our Chancellor. He has been both an inspiration and a friend.

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