

President Jeff Fox's Address for In-Service
August 18, 2014

On behalf of my colleagues in administration and the CSI Board of Trustees, I welcome you to the start of the new school year.

I would remember two friends of CSI. We lost Tom Hamilton, long-time faculty member and colleague. Also many of us knew Trish Randolph, Colin Randolph's wonderful wife. Trish and Tom passed on this summer. They both made a difference in so many lives, and they elevated students, colleagues, family and friends. They will be missed.

I would like to recognize my administrative team, Mike Mason, Todd Schwarz, and Eric Nielson. They have done an outstanding job, and I am grateful to work with such talent and well-intentioned colleagues.

At the state level, there are some exciting initiatives. This year and for the first time, the three community colleges are coordinating on legislative decision units. As our number one request, each community college is asking for roughly \$1 million to support Complete College Idaho and the state's 60% goal. CSI's requests are primarily for new positions in recruitment and advising, ongoing efforts to repurpose remediation reform, and instructional design personnel. Additional requests are for new and upgraded placement and instructional software, and additional personnel in the institutional research area.

The Governor's Office appointed two new members to the State Board of Education: Magic Valley's representative is Debbie Critchfield from Oakley, and the Boise area is represented by Dave Hill.

I've also appointed Chris to be the College's Accreditation Liaison Officer, and as such he have primary oversight for our accreditation processes. Chris will be preparing our seven-year comprehensive accreditation report, which is due this spring, and he will be working to align our new core themes with institutional strategic planning. On another innovative front, John Hughes will continue his excellent work in coordinating our many STEM activities and initiatives on campus, engaging CSI students, faculty, and staff as well as external agencies and educational partners. In the area of workforce development, Workforce Development Director Brandi Turnipseed has hit the ground running and has been active in connecting CSI with new partners.

CSI continues to be the gold standard for how a community college supports economic development and educational partnerships. The College's support of the Southern Idaho Economic Development Organization (SIEDO) and our partnerships with St. Luke's, the University of Idaho, Boise State University, and Idaho State University bring benefits to many in our service region. Some highlights of these relationships include helping to bring Clif Bar and Frulact to the Magic Valley. We

have been actively engaged with both U of I and ISU to bring advanced opportunities to our region in terms of upper division courses, graduate programs, and research partnerships to the CSI campus and service area.

Last spring at the College In-Service address, I spoke of a couple of initiatives. One was the creation of a new grant, the Innovation Circle Grant, and I will be pleased to speak of that more in a few minutes. A second initiative was intentionally addressing instructional technology. Over this last spring, Ken Campbell's area has worked with faculty to develop some ideas moving forward, and the faculty Best Practices Committee has explored technology and instruction in some amazing and meaningful ways. I also mentioned Academic Integrity, and I am pleased we have Dr. Teddi Fishman with us this morning from the International Center for Academic Integrity to present a keynote address on that very topic. A developing focus for the College is service learning, and the Office of Instructional Administration is working with faculty leaders to develop plans. Finally, and as you heard from Eric Nielsen this morning, we are engaged as a campus, faculty staff and students, in population wellness, and in partnership with St. Luke's and SelectHealth, we are part of an exciting pilot that could be the template for the future of wellness and health care reform.

This coming year, we will work on how we fulfill our commitments to our students and to each other. As I mentioned, part of this will be broad service learning initiatives in our educational programs. As important is how we conduct ourselves, how we relate to one another. Later today, Dr. Cynthia Clark's will explore this topic with her presentation on "Why Civility Matters in Higher Education," and we will have additional training opportunities throughout the year.

We are not without challenge. Change, real and anticipated, is with us. For instance, enrollment is down about 6%, and we can never quite know what allocations will look like at the end of legislative session. We are moving forward with a number of significant process reforms in student services and instruction. We have had a number of retirements this last year, and so we move forward with new colleagues, and we need to help them learn what it means to work at CSI. In all this, I absolutely feel we are on the brink of wonderful events, a palette of grand opportunities and challenges. Walt Whitman's indelible poem *Song of the Open Road* serves to illustrate. He calls us to order with these words:

Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open
road,
Healthy, free, the world before me,
The long brown path before me leading where-
ever I choose.

And later, Whitman invokes some ideas I would use as a theme for today.

From this hour I ordain myself loos'd of limits

and imaginary lines,
Going where I list, my own master total and
absolute,
Listening to others, considering well what
they say,
Pausing, searching, receiving, contemplating,
Gently, but with undeniable will, divesting
myself of the holds that
would hold me.

For the final part of my address this morning, I will speak about Innovation Circle Grants.

Ideas are relationships. In fact, every idea is an attempt to express relationship between the person and the internal or external world. Ideas are often framed with questions like “why?” “how?” or “what if?”

We all have ideas. We all try to explain ourselves in the world. Sometimes we are deliberate in our thinking, striving to solve a problem or flesh out a concept, working with ideas in some sort of defined arena. Other times, we are captured by the moment, surprised into asking these questions of “why?” “how?” and “what if?”

Ideas can come to us in a dream in the night where waking suddenly, we are temporarily full of brilliance; we fall back asleep, and all is forgotten by morning. Ideas can come from a glimpse of color, a bird on the wing, some face in the crowd, a sound, a song. The moment passes. In each case, awake or asleep, ideas come to us and pass through; unless we somehow hold on as they pass, ideas move on and so do we.

What if ideas were somehow captured? Really, the capture surrounds us in architecture, ethics and mores, music, dance, color, fashion. We are rich this way. This abundance is not the end, though, merely the record. There are more ideas waiting to be substance.

I operate with a couple of premises.

To begin, faculty members in whatever discipline are hired as experts in their field and as evolving artists in teaching over time. Next, faculty members are in the trenches, so to speak, of the core of what we are—a teaching institution whose goal is to connect our students with the world, preparing them “to lead enriched, productive, and responsible lives in a global society.” Finally, education is generally undergoing significant reform, and the maelstrom of our times--challenged funding streams, partisan political shenanigans, emerging technologies, a modern student profile—drives us all to reimagine and possibly reinvent our purpose.

This requires innovation, creativity, and encouragement to think outside the box. But this is easier said than done, for success can create stagnation to some degree. Describing the downside of organizational success, educator and consultant Gary Hamel writes this in his recent book, What Matters Now. “Effective strategies get translated into operating policies, which spawn best practices, which harden into habits.” It is these policies, practices, and habits which build the walls around us and in some ways limit our world in terms of thinking outside the box.

In the past, we have had the Pioneering Grants. These grants were designed to be awards for ideas, plans, projects associated with our mission in what I consider a fairly narrow fashion, sort of like creating something only within the box of CSI. Moreover, the Pioneering Grants usually were limited to one person, and the award was above and beyond the workload associated with faculty responsibility, something added on to regular teaching load. Those grants will still be available; they are valuable, and the work faculty did was outstanding. This year, however, we’re rolling out a new concept: the Innovation Circle Grants.

First, I firmly believe we all work hard, and we are very busy balancing our commitments here, our hobbies, families, and friends. At the end of the day, there doesn’t seem to be much time to relax and reflect. Quiet, creative, reflective time is a gift. And that’s the first principle: quality time is required.

Second, as outlined above, ideas are constantly all around us, in us, between us. Most often, we channel those to ourselves. The next principle is teamwork, shared reflection and creativity, shared quality time. For this iteration of the Innovation Circle Grants, I will be soliciting broad proposals from teams of four faculty members, all of who must come from different disciplines. Each team member will receive a one-class release time for one semester. That means a team of four will spend the three weekly hours for fifteen weeks; forty-five semester hours together in a dedicated effort to create.

Third, and you may have already wondered about this, there is no clear end goal. Unlike the Pioneering Grants where there was a specific proposal with a budget and outcomes to be measured as a measure of success, the Innovation Circle Grants have no planned, specific end result. The goal is reflection, creativity and innovation. The outcome is not so much a return on investment, but rather a return on humanity.

The application guidelines will be on the grants website within the week. I look forward to hearing from you!

This presentation on Innovation Circle Grants is the fruit of a wonderful collaboration with Cindy Jones, Ashley Rivera, Mykell Walton, Scott Farkas, Brent Jensen, Michael Frew, Serena Jenkins-Clark, Bill West, and the master of light, Jud Harmon. This tangible evidence of an idea started with a random conversation over dinner and blossomed as a collective, creative, and energetic collaboration. I owe

them my heartfelt appreciation. They each responded to my plea for a way to creatively present this to you today.

In closing, I wish you a magnificent semester, full of creativity, passion, joy, and hope.