



The following transcript was auto-generated from the video recording of Dr. Doré's keynote address at the 2026 Chancellor's Retreat on August 6. The VCCS does not assume responsibility for any errors, including misspellings or inaccuracies.

(00:00)

I want to thank all of you for being here. A couple of weeks ago, I was at this meeting with state chancellors from throughout the country, and I couldn't find anyone, as I mentioned earlier, who brings the leadership of all of our colleges in the state together like this. So I want to thank each of you for making the time to be here. And I certainly appreciate this annual time together because it gives us space to align around the year ahead, and that alignment is important to fulfilling our mission. It gives us an opportunity to strengthen our professional relationships across the system. So while you are here, please take the time to introduce yourselves to people that you don't know. And if I haven't met you yet, or I don't know your birthday yet, please introduce yourself to me.

(00:54):

So I'd like to take a few minutes to personally welcome and acknowledge some of our attendees. Mark already did this, but I want to recognize, first of all, our new state board chair, Mark Hourigan again, and our Vice Chair, David Elmore. I really look forward to the year ahead under your leadership. I also want to welcome our newest members of our state board, Lisette Carbajal and Monica Logothetis. I am grateful for the experience and expertise that you both bring to our board. And by the way, Lisette is a proud graduate of Laurel Ridge Community College. So Lisette and Monica, thank you for being here.

(01:38):

I'd also like to welcome and acknowledge all of the members of our State Board for Community Colleges. Our state board members are appointed to four-year terms by our governor and confirmed by the General Assembly. And I'd like to note that this is the only higher education governing board in the Commonwealth that is responsible for 23 individual colleges spanning every region of Virginia. These are unpaid positions, and our state board members serve because of their expertise and dedication to the mission of Virginia's Community Colleges.

(02:17):

I also want to welcome the Virginia Foundation for Community College Education Board Chair, Dr. Bill Hazel, and Vice Chair Sally Caldwell. Bill and Sally, I am grateful for your generosity and leadership to strengthen our statewide foundation. Philanthropy has always been an important part of our story, and it will be an even more important part of our future. I am also, and Mark did this already, but I'm excited to welcome our college Local Advisory Board members, who have traveled from all parts of the Commonwealth to be here. They are appointed to represent their communities because of their unique local perspectives and expertise. So to all our State Board, our Foundation Board, our Local College Advisory Board members, and on behalf of Mark, I have to give a couple thousand more, 17,000 employees actually, the latest count, I want to thank all of you for volunteering your time, talent and expertise so generously to support our colleges and our systems. Could you all just stand one more time



so we can recognize you? All of our board members that are here, could you stand one more time? Thank you.

(03:38):

I also want to welcome several new leaders whose work will help us shape the next chapter of our system. I want to welcome Maurice Jones, our new Senior Vice Chancellor for Strategic Partnerships, who has spent his career building bridges among government, business, education, philanthropy and communities. Maurice brings a deep understanding of how partnerships, advocacy and alignment can expand opportunities for students. Maurice, I am excited to have you as part of the executive team. I also want to welcome Dr. Tashika Griffith, president of Germanna Community College, who began her first 100 days with a listening tour. Tashika, your instinct to listen first before acting will serve Germanna students well. I'm excited you have joined our team of presidents as our eight-month-long president. So could both Maurice and Dr. Griffith, could you please stand so everyone can see you?

(04:48):

I'm also pleased to welcome Shamina Dillard, our director of the VCC Shared Services Center. Shamina brings extensive leadership experience in the federal government to her role, while also having deep roots in Southwest Virginia. Shamina, I am grateful to have you leading our Shared Services Center. Beth Lunde, our Associate Vice Chancellor for Human Resources, brings over 30 years of HR experience. And most importantly, she brings the college perspective, having spent numerous years as the Chief Human Resource Officer at Tidewater Community College. Beth, we have already benefited from your deep understanding of HR policies, our college and our system. And Dan Lepore, our Chief Information Officer. Dan brings approximately 30 years of experience spanning both the private sector and higher education, and he will be leading the technology modernization work ahead. Dan, I am grateful for your leadership during this time of transition for the VCCS. Can you three please stand so everybody can see you?

(06:04)

And I'm also delighted to welcome and acknowledge members of the Chancellor's Faculty Advisory Committee, led by their chair, Dirk Burris. And for the first time, I'm especially excited to welcome the newly inaugurated members of the Chancellor's Staff Advisory Committee, led by their chair, Jennifer Wilkinson. Could members of the faculty and staff advisory committees, could you all stand so we can give you a round of applause? Thank you. I want to express my appreciation to members of both committees for their commitment to these important roles. Your voice and input and system-wide policy formation are essential to making good decisions.

(06:55):

And for the first time at the system level, we are also giving students an active voice in participatory governance. This past spring, I convened the Chancellor's Student Advisory Panel, which brings together students from across Virginia's community colleges to provide valuable input into system-wide decisions. I want you to know that I am committed to continuing our work this year to strengthen our



participative governance structure across our entire system. So whether you are a board member, an administrator, faculty member, staff member, or student, every role strengthens a different part of the support system our colleges need to serve students well.

(07:41):

I also want to take a moment to recognize and celebrate the creativity and leadership of our students. Our students demonstrate their talent, resilience and determination in many ways, and the recipients of this year's state poet laureate and visual art luminary competition are examples of that spirit in action. This year, for the second VCCS Student Poet Laureate and Visual Arts Luminary Competition, students across all 23 colleges responded to a simple and powerful theme, "I dream."

(08:17)

I want to thank state board member AJ Robinson for serving as a judge. And I also was honored to be among the audience members at Virginia Western who witnessed firsthand the incredible talent and passion of our students. Connor Mancuso, who we all just heard from, is our Poet Laureate, and he is from Virginia Peninsula. And congratulations to Elena Maria Kollin, a visual arts student at Virginia Highlands Community College. And she is the inaugural Visual Arts Luminary of Virginia's Community Colleges. And her work reflects a return to art and a belief in what may still be possible on the road ahead. And Estefanía Jiménez Rivero of Brightpoint Community College, she was the recipient of the People's Choice for Visual Arts Award for a painting that transformed her grief after the loss of her father into a work that others could see and feel. These recognitions really remind us of something important. Our students are people with dreams, responsibilities and futures, and they are the reason we do this work. And our work only matters if it makes life better for our students. And I know each person in this room understands that, and I trust that you see it at work every day at your colleges. And that is the spirit that we bring into the 60th anniversary year. And this is a milestone year, and we are here to honor what Virginia's community colleges were built to do.

(09:58):

Today, I want to focus on three things. First, the promise that we have inherited as leaders of Virginia's Community Colleges. Second, the evidence that we are delivering on that promise. And third, what this next chapter will ask of everyone in this room. Anniversaries matter because they help us see continuity. In our case, it reminds us that the work we do today did not begin with us and it will not end with us. We are part of a longer story. Our system was forged out of a visionary blueprint written nearly 80 years ago. The 1947 Truman Commission report, Higher Education for American Democracy, fundamentally shifted the landscape of American higher education. Higher education was largely for the elite, dictated by wealth, status and ZIP code. The Truman Commission looked at a changing world and issued a bold declaration: Higher education must be the engine of democracy. They knew that true democracy required a new kind of institution.

(11:15):



And 60 years ago, Virginia brought this new kind of institution to life when Governor Mills Godwin, with the support of the General Assembly, signed into law the Virginia Community College System. At its heart was a promise: Where you live and what you earn would no longer determine your potential. For 60 years, Virginia's Community Colleges have helped students start, restart, transfer, upskill and move their lives forward. Our system has a proven record of creating opportunities. What we also understand so deeply is that education is not the endpoint. The degree, the certificate, the credential and the transfer pathway all matter because of what they make possible. Better jobs, improved lives, stronger families and stronger communities. The strongest proof of our impact is found in people, graduates, families, employers and communities whose paths changed because Virginia's Community Colleges were there when they needed us.

(12:31):

As a result, the people whose lives we change turn around and change the world around them. Over 60 years, our colleges have served as launching pads for leaders across the Commonwealth. We can see that in alumni who have served in public leadership roles, in business, in healthcare, in education, in the military and in communities across Virginia. We can see it in those who are now serving the Commonwealth as members of our state legislature and in our own Lieutenant Governor Ghazala Hashmi's prior service as a faculty member at Reynolds Community College. We can also see it in the VCCS alumni in this room. We can see it in students whose names we may not yet know, but whose work will show years from now in public service and leadership.

(13:29):

The breadth of this system is tremendous, and it matters. In our 60 years of service to the Commonwealth, we have more than five million alumni and continue to serve more than 230,000 students every year. Each college has its own history, its own relationships and its own sense of place. That local strength is one of our greatest assets. At the same time, each college is part of something larger, and every local success contributes to our statewide impact. Our impact often starts quietly in a classroom, a lab, a tutoring center, a career advisor's office or a workforce training program. It starts with a student who says, "Maybe I can do this." Then over time, that opportunity becomes a career. It becomes service. It becomes economic mobility. And Virginia becomes stronger.

(14:36):

The achievements that we celebrate today are part of our 60-year story. They were made possible by the foundation built over time by those who served before us. And over time, this foundation, a promise made 60 years ago, has taken shape in a number of milestones that have moved the mission forward. One of the first milestones, dual enrollment, opened earlier pathways for high school students. Last year, we served over 58,000 students. And with the implementation of College and Career Ready Virginia, all eligible high school students have access to a clear pathway to a uniform certificate of general studies, which guarantees transfer of 30 units of general studies courses to a four-year public university in Virginia.



(15:31):

Then later, the guaranteed admission agreement with Virginia Tech strengthened transfer. And that work continues today through Transfer Virginia. Great Expectations became a national model for helping young people aging out of foster care pursue higher education. FastForward, celebrating its own 10-year anniversary, responded to critical workforce needs. And I'm going to say more about FastForward in a few minutes. Credit to Careers created new opportunities for those with military experience. And G3 helped more Virginians move toward the skills, credentials and careers they need to thrive, making education more affordable for those that need it most. These initiatives have been a direct response to real need. That same purpose is now reflected in our shared roadmap for the years ahead. The promise that began 60 years ago now lives in Accelerate Opportunity. By 2030, we intend to award 300,000 cumulative meaningful credentials across every region of Virginia. And Accelerate Opportunity gives us a way to connect our mission to action. It calls us to develop Virginia's talent, reach more Virginians, deliver education that meets today's workforce needs, supports today's learners and invest in Virginia's workforce. Those are not separate ideas. They are different ways of naming the same promise: opportunity through education and training that leads somewhere meaningful.

(17:19):

So if the first 60 years have already demonstrated the vast impact of our mission, the question now is what becomes possible when we move with greater clarity and coordination? The story of our current momentum is not a story of isolated wins. It's the story of our colleges and system leadership working with greater focus, greater connection and greater confidence around shared goals. And we have real reasons to be proud. Virginia's community colleges are stepping into the national stage in a much stronger way. This is reflected in the leadership of NOVA President Anne Kress, who was just named as the next chair of the American Council on Education Board of Directors. When one of our presidents is called to help lead in this way, it says something about our influence and the role we're called to play both inside and outside the Commonwealth and the quality of the work we do.

(18:25):

The Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond's survey of community college outcomes gives us a broader way to understand how community college students move through education, transfer, workforce training and continued progress. In 2023, in one of the early Fed Reserve Bank of Richmond's college surveys, Mountain Gateway Community College reported the highest Richmond Fed student success rate, having ranked first among 63 participating institutions across multiple states. And in the most recent 2025 expanded survey, Mountain Empire Community College reported the highest Richmond Fed success rate in the Virginia Community College System. That's awesome. Now, taken together, these results show how Virginia's community colleges are producing measurable outcomes across different regions, student goals and pathways.

(19:33):

Now, a national organization helping to define excellence in our field is the Aspen Institute. Recognition from Aspen matters because it is grounded in student outcomes, economic mobility and the hard work of



changing institutions at scale. For 15 years, Aspen has researched why certain community colleges achieve high in improving student outcomes and others do not. The distinction can consistently be explained by whether colleges have highly effective presidents. That is why the Aspen recognition of VCCS leaders matters. It shows that our leaders are part of the national conversation about where community colleges are headed and how they can serve students with even greater purpose.

(20:30):

This year in Virginia, we are represented in the Aspen President's Fellowship by Porter Brannon of Virginia Peninsula Community College, Corey McCray of Paul D. Camp and Jean Runyon of Piedmont Virginia Community College. But Virginia is also represented in the Aspen Rising Presidents Fellowship by Scott Jefferies and Leonda Keniston, both of Piedmont Virginia Community College, and David Urso of Blue Ridge Community College. And this leadership network is not new for Virginia. Over the years, VCCS leaders have been part of Aspen Rising Presidents and the Aspen Presidents Fellowship Programs. Their participation reflects a larger pattern. Virginia's community colleges are not only preparing students for the future. We are also preparing leaders who help shape the future of community college education nationally.

(21:49):

Earlier this summer, I was invited to attend a convening in Washington, DC, at the Aspen Institute with a select group of national leaders and stakeholders to discuss the future of community college leadership. During that meeting, we were presented with a framework of 10 essential leadership actions that help colleges move from access and completion to a fuller definition of success. The overall message is clear: Strong presidents and senior teams define success beyond enrollment. They focus on a few reforms that can change outcomes at scale. They put learning at the center. They build strong boards and senior teams. They form external alliances. They execute with discipline. They communicate purpose. They use data. They build human capital, and they use resources in ways that advance the mission.

(22:49):

That framework sounds familiar because we see it taking shape across Virginia. It describes the work of all of you who are asking the right question, "How does this improve the lives of students after they leave us?" That is why Aspen has also recognized our colleges for outcomes. This year, 11 of our 23 colleges were named among the nation's top 200 community colleges eligible for the 2027 Aspen Prize for Community College Leadership, and I'm going to name them. Central Virginia, Germanna, Laurel Ridge, Mountain Empire, New River, Northern Virginia, Patrick & Henry, Rappahannock, Southwest Virginia, Virginia Highlands and Wytheville. Now, would all of the employees and the advisory board members from each of those colleges please stand to be recognized? And Patrick & Henry advanced even further as one of 10 finalists for the 2027 Aspen Prize. And we will be hearing more about Patrick & Henry's journey later today.

(24:34):



This recognition was based on outcomes that matter. Those are the same outcomes our strategic plan calls us to improve across the full system. There is no other state in the nation that had as high a proportion of their colleges represented. In a state with 23 community colleges, having 11 recognized at this level says something powerful about local excellence. It also says something powerful about what becomes possible when we all move in alignment. The Aspen Prize honors colleges whose students complete credentials that lead to bachelor's attainment and jobs that pay family-sustaining wages. Patrick & Henry is being recognized for the kinds of outcomes that we want to deliver for every student we serve. This is not only a moment for Patrick & Henry and the other honorees, it is a recognition of our entire system.

(25:46):

Now, Tidewater Community College and Reynolds Community College are also being recognized nationally as Achieving the Dream leader colleges. Again, let's give them a round of applause. And their work reflects a serious and sustained commitment to student success. At Reynolds, that progress is rooted in disciplined execution, focused priorities, shared accountability and steady follow-through. That kind of discipline turns strategy into measurable progress. Now, disciplined execution is not glamorous, but it is powerful. It is the steady work of choosing priorities, staying with them, measuring what matters and adjusting when the evidence tells us to move differently. It also reflects a larger truth for all of us. We cannot chase every good idea. Our students need us to focus on the reforms that can change outcomes at scale. That means being clear about what matters most and being honest about whether our work is moving the needle for students. National recognition matters, but the power of one system also shows up in how good ideas travel. Strong work at one college can lead to sharing assets for students, employers and communities across Virginia.

(27:26):

This past April, I had the privilege of speaking to the graduates of the Power Line Worker Program at Southside Virginia Community College on the 10th anniversary of the program's launch. I also had the opportunity to meet with several power company CEOs and learn that the Power Line program was born out of a partnership with rural electric cooperatives who were sending their employees out of state to get training. Southside and the power companies developed a proposal. The companies would provide funding to start the program if the state could match them. This innovative partnership helped lead to the funding for the Workforce Credential Grant and what we now know as FastForward. This week, Southside is graduating their 31st cohort and will have trained over 800 students since the program began. And now Southside's work has helped shape similar programs at Wytheville, Mountain Empire, Laurel Ridge and Patrick & Henry. Now that is system momentum in practice.

(28:44):

As we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Power Line program this year, we also celebrate the 10th anniversary of our nationally recognized FastForward program. As of this summer, our total FastForward completions are close to 94,000. I would like to take a moment to celebrate and thank all those who have



lifted Virginia through your work in the FastForward program. And so would all of our chief workforce officers and their teams please stand to be recognized?

(29:33):

Now, Radford's Tartan Transfer Program is another example of our momentum. They give eligible community college graduates a clearer path towards a four-year degree. They help transferring to a four-year university feel less uncertain and more accessible. And that is what our students deserve. They should not have to decode higher education by themselves. Our job is to make the path clearer and the supports stronger. When our colleges help students see a clear path forward, we bring our strategic plan to life. And Virginia Peninsula is doing exactly that. Last year alone, Virginia Peninsula reengaged over 600 adult learners who had previously stopped out, bringing their total number of returning adult learners to more than 1,100 since 2024. And Connor, our Poet Laureate, was one of those stop-out student success stories. Virginia Peninsula is advancing Accelerate Opportunity Objective 2, but its impact reaches beyond a strategic objective. It is changing lives. More than 1,100 adult learners have renewed their educational journeys, regained momentum and strengthened their pathways to baccalaureate degrees, to meaningful careers and greater economic security. And that is why outcomes matter. Behind every metric is a person whose future is better because our colleges believed in their potential.

(31:22):

Measuring outcomes also earns public confidence and has a significant impact on public investment. Recent General Assembly support is a clear sign of public confidence in our system. Increased FastForward funding and the 20 million capacity building investment will support our colleges' efforts to respond to workforce needs. Employers are looking for partners who can move with speed and consistency. Virginia's community colleges are showing that we can meet workforce needs across regions, not just one community at a time. At Blue Ridge, local school divisions and the college worked together to create a career academy launching this fall. We also secured funding from the General Assembly to double Blue Ridge's Aviation Maintenance Technology program and support Danville Community College's launch of their new program. That is what partnership looks like. A local need becomes a regional opportunity. A college builds capacity, another college benefits. Students have more pathways and employers have stronger talent pipelines.

(32:38):

Across all of Virginia, our colleges are demonstrating what it means to be responsive and innovative. They are anticipating workforce needs, cultivating partnerships, serving a wide range of industries and creating pathways that connect students directly to meaningful careers. Through an extraordinary public-private partnership with the United States Navy and Coastal Virginia developers, Camp Community College has opened the Workforce Trades and Innovation Center. The Center will serve as a catalyst for workforce excellence, preparing the next generation of skilled trades and maritime professionals while advancing Virginia's economic competitiveness. Danville Community College has been designated by Virginia Works as one of our system's first apprenticeship intermediaries, helping employers launch and manage registered apprenticeship programs while opening doors for students to earn, learn and gain industry



credentials. From Southeast Virginia to Southside, all the way to Southwest, our colleges have been making an impact.

(33:50):

Our colleges are also finding new ways to tell their own story and demonstrate that impact. At Southwest Virginia Community College, they have embraced a simple but powerful idea: Great work deserves to be recognized and visible. Through their Southwest Works Initiative, the college brings together evidence of its impact, student success stories, workforce outcomes, transfer achievement and partnerships into a single story of transformation. It connects data to the real stories of people, pathways and talent pipelines. And this is not only about marketing. It's about demonstrating with proof and purpose how community colleges change lives and advance entire regions. And it is about giving a cohesive, unified voice to our success stories so that our stakeholders clearly see the results and understand the value proposition of our colleges. And as our system demonstrates results, strategic investment follows. A recent Go Virginia Award will help create a dedicated cybersecurity and AI training environment at Brightpoint Community College. This investment reflects the same alignment with high-demand industries and the same commitment to innovation that we see across our system. And we are seeing these investments across multiple sectors. The Rural Health Transformation Initiative reflects Virginia's commitment to strengthening healthcare access and workforce development in rural communities. Statewide, Virginia's Rural Health Transformation Initiative includes significant funding to strengthen and modernize rural healthcare systems across the Commonwealth. In total, through this initiative, coordinated by the Virginia Foundation for Community College Education, just over six million is being invested this year to VCCS world colleges to expand high-demand allied health programs. The first Rural Health Transformation Grant went to Virginia Highlands to expand healthcare workforce training opportunities in Southwest Virginia.

(36:14):

Yeah, there's a lot of money coming out to the colleges. The Commonwealth has invested in our colleges because they see the return on that investment across Virginia. Public confidence is also reflected in philanthropy. This year, Eastern Shore received a gift of \$1.25 million from Jane Batten. The gift will help establish the Batten Engineering Fund at the college, positioning them to meet critical workforce needs in the growing aerospace and engineering sectors within our region. And Central Virginia Community College received an incredible estate gift of over \$7 million from Maryan Lorraine Marshall, a chemistry professor at Central Virginia from 1972 to 1999, that will help launch a Promise Program. Across our system, Promise Programs and last-dollar funding initiatives that make community college free to those who need us most reflect the same commitment to access and opportunity. The VCCS promise lives on through the generosity of people like Maryan. Think about that. A teacher spent her entire career impacting the lives of students. Years later, her final gift will provide an opportunity to students that she never knew. Gifts like hers remind us that those who have served our colleges often continue creating opportunity long after their service ends. Whether the investment comes from the Commonwealth, from private philanthropy or from local communities, the goal is the same: to remove barriers and create pathways to success. Each one of these accomplishments brings us one step closer to fulfilling the promise of Accelerate Opportunity. Each represents a student served, a life changed and a community



strengthened, and together they demonstrate what is possible when colleges collaborate, partners invest, communities believe and students succeed.

(38:32):

And this is how we accelerate opportunity. This is how we strengthen Virginia. And so, in celebration of our 60th anniversary, let us now focus on building boldly on this legacy. The institutions that continue to serve well are the ones willing to evolve. Our mission has never been more important, but who and how we serve has changed. The workforce has changed, along with technology. The pace of change has accelerated. We cannot preserve the model that served us in the past. Think about today's learner. Increasingly, that learner is not a high school graduate, not only a high school graduate. That learner may be a 35-year-old parent working full-time, someone trying to balance more than one job and still not making ends meet. Someone who started college years ago, but never finished. Someone who needs a credential in 12 weeks, not two years. Today's learner expects education to fit their complex lives, and it is our responsibility to create the best learning environments for their success and to make sure that when they enroll in any of our colleges, the experience is cohesive and consistent.

(39:50):

And that is why our alignment matters. Moving forward, what gives me confidence is not simply our plans. It is the people in this room and the people working across our system who work every day to deliver on our promise. And as we move through this next year, our leadership will show up in several practical goals that connect directly to the student experience. We will continue to be focused on our Accelerate Opportunity strategic plan annual targets. We will improve the dual-enrollment student experience through more consistent coding, course offerings and faculty credentialing. We will improve the financial aid user experience and outcomes because financial aid is often the difference between a student starting, stopping or finishing. We will continue to work toward a unified, uniform system-wide academic integrity policy so students and colleges can rely on clear and consistent expectations. We will create efficiencies through regionalization or centralization where that makes sense, including work connected to business offices, budgeting and human resources. We will continue building college anywhere because students need access that reflects how they live, work and learn today. Each of these goals is practical and operational. Each also connects directly to our mission. Better systems, clearer policies and stronger coordination help students move through our system with less friction.

(41:33):

As we discuss priorities and evaluate ideas in the next couple of days, let's keep asking, will it make us a stronger system? Will it improve the experience of our students? Will it help us reach learners we are not serving today? Will it prepare Virginia for the workforce of tomorrow? Will it strengthen our ability to fulfill our mission for decades to come? If the answer is yes, then we should move forward with confidence. And that brings me to Advance VCCS, a multi-year initiative to move to a modern cloud platform for finance, human resources, budgeting and performance management. This work is about risk, cost, opportunity and value. Many of the systems we rely on today are 15 to 20 years old. We have customized



them and built around them. Our employees have developed remarkable expertise in making them work, but expertise in navigating complexity is not the same as a good system.

(42:49):

Advanced VCCS is much more than a technology initiative. It is a service redesign. It is also mission work. Advanced VCCS allows us to begin investing in the future instead of continuing to invest in the past. For employees, this should mean fewer manual workarounds, more reliable data, better decisions and more time for meaningful work. For leaders and boards, this should mean stronger stewardship, clearer performance information and less risk. A modern foundation also positions us to use artificial intelligence responsibly. AI is already changing the work, learning and service all around us. We should not bolt new tools onto fragile processes and hope for transformation. We need secure, well-governed systems, clear standards, trained people and disciplined understanding of where technology adds value and where human judgment must remain central. Our students will enter workplaces where these tools are becoming part of everyday operations. Our employees will need systems that help them do meaningful work, not systems that hold them back. A stronger administrative platform helps us make better decisions, use resources wisely, support our employees and serve students more consistently across the Commonwealth. This is exactly the kind of reform that requires disciplined execution.

(44:39):

As the Aspen Institute reminds us, execution is a leadership responsibility. Let me say that again: Execution is a leadership responsibility. To achieve our goals, we must organize, resource, communicate and stay close enough to know if the work is helping people. Leadership must be visible and consistent. Communication is as important as implementation. We must help people understand the purpose of our goals so that they feel connected to our mission. Our work requires visible, consistent leadership and active participation on every level. And that is the work before us. We must lead with clarity, make choices that support the whole system, share practices that work and keep students and communities at the center of decisions. Now, I want to share a short video reminding us of why we do this work.

To watch the closed-caption student testimonial video, click [here](#).

(48:40):

So as we move through the next couple of days, I invite you to reflect on your own unique role in fulfilling our promise. In a few moments, we will hear from Dr. Maria Harper-Marinick, Senior Fellow for the College Excellence Program at the Aspen Institute, whose work connects directly to the national conversation about community college excellence and outcomes. It's so nice to have you here, Dr. Maria Harper-Marinick. We worked together in the great state of Arizona back in the day. Later, we will learn from Patrick & Henry Community College, and Dr. Greg Hodges will share the reform agenda that help propel the college to national prominence. Tomorrow, our closing keynote will be delivered by Dr. Bridget Burns, Chief Executive Officer at University Innovation Alliance. Her work will help us think about how institutions move from good intentions to better outcomes for students. Across the retreat, we will have time to gather, compare ideas and learn from one another through themed breakouts.



(49:53):

The Virginia Community College System was built to create opportunity. That has been true for 60 years. It is true today. And it will be true in the next chapter. When you leave on Friday, it is my hope that you will leave with stronger clarity, a stronger commitment to our shared goals and a stronger willingness to act in ways that advance us all. When I think about the future of the Virginia Community College System, I think about these students. And I think about the students who are not yet in our classroom. Those students will have new opportunities, face new challenges and embark on new career paths that don't even exist today. But I know that Virginia's Community Colleges will adapt and evolve to provide an open door, a clear pathway and life-changing opportunities.

(50:51):

Peter Drucker said, "The best way to predict the future is to create it." Our future has not yet been written, and we are its authors. Our system started 60 years ago with a promise. Now is our time to embrace that legacy and ensure that our promise lives on for the next 60 years. So I want to thank you for your leadership. I want to thank you for the work that you do every day. And lastly, happy 60th anniversary, everyone. Thank you.