



## Office of the President Sunil Ahuja, Ph.D.

Dear Colleagues,

Today is my first official day as President of Lakeland Community College. I am thrilled to be here. I had the pleasure of meeting many of you over the last few weeks, and I am deeply appreciative of the warm welcome as I have transitioned into the role. I look forward to meeting the rest of you in the weeks and months to come.

I wanted to send this message not only on my first day, but also as we end an academic year and plan for the next. These thoughts are intended to articulate my vision and strategic direction for Lakeland to address the many challenges and opportunities ahead of us, subject, of course, to many collective conversations on campus about significant directions.

In order of equal importance, I see the following as major priorities:

- **Performance Audit:** The recent state Performance Audit identified a number of concerns about the College's operations. I take these concerns seriously and am committed to addressing all of them promptly and comprehensively. We will respond to the audit within the 60-day timeline and begin implementation of that response in the required timeframe.
- **Financial Sustainability:** Our most important priority must and will be to ensure a secure financial future for the College, with responsible stewardship of public dollars. This will entail producing balanced budgets annually, increasing our reserves, and improving our Senate Bill 6 and Higher Learning Commission's Composite Financial Index scores, as key financial benchmarks. We will look at both sides of the ledger – to contain costs further and maximize revenues through appropriate programmatic changes and other initiatives.
- **Enrollment and Retention:** All else being equal, it is easier and cheaper to retain than to recruit. We will look for new opportunities for growth in enrollment (either via new or redesigned programs, including microcredentials for the workforce, or via other subsets of student populations, such as more adult students), aided by an effective recruitment and enrollment management operation. At the same time, we will appropriately shore up our retention efforts as we look toward Fall 2024 enrollment and beyond.
- **Academic Portfolio:** We will soon engage in a comprehensive, data-informed review of the College's academic portfolio and program sustainability. Particularly in light of the Performance Audit, we will evaluate and address low-enrolled programs and courses and

optimize course offerings. As a consequence of these reviews, we will identify programs which provide Lakeland a competitive advantage, know what Lakeland stands for, and appropriately invest in areas of strategic growth and those central to the mission.

- **Workforce Development:** We must and will focus on workforce development and grow opportunities in Lake County and the region. Workforce development is a core part of a community college's mission. I look forward to engaging with area businesses and industry for workforce development opportunities, not only to establish or strengthen college-industry partnerships, but also for Lakeland to serve as the economic anchor and driver in Lake County and Northeast Ohio.
- **Organizational Structure:** I have been reviewing the College's organizational structure and will soon engage in conversations and develop a more streamlined staffing structure. At the same time, we need to rebalance our resources toward student support services and enrollment management, areas connected to growth, retention, and institutional reputation.
- **Strategic Plan:** Last but not least, as our current strategic plan ends this year, I look forward to working with the campus community on renewing our plan and vision for the future. We will develop a forward-looking plan, one that is responsive to higher education trends in the state and the country.

I am still learning about Lakeland, and I look forward to many conversations with many of you about our future. In all these efforts, my approach will be based on strategic considerations and in alignment with the mission and vision of the College. My guiding principles will include being pragmatic, transparent, thoughtful, inclusive, and data-oriented (especially as a quantitatively trained social scientist), working under guidance provided by the Board of Trustees.

As significant changes are occurring in higher education throughout the country and the state, many of which impact us directly, we must rethink the way we do things and readjust in light of those trends. This is a reset moment. Together, we will reset, reshape, and rebuild Lakeland for the success of the students, the College, and the community. I believe a bright future for Lakeland lies ahead.

Again, I am thrilled by the opportunity to serve as President of Lakeland Community College. I look forward to working with all of you and engaging with you about the future of the College.

I wish everyone a happy summer. Thank you for all you do for the students, the College, and the community.

Very best regards,

**Sunil Ahuja, Ph.D.**  
President