

January 3, 2023

From: Michael J. Avaltroni, Ph.D., Interim President

Re: The Next Chapter

Happy New Year to you all! I hope everyone had a relaxing and enjoyable holiday break. As I shared in a previous note, I am truly excited to have the opportunity to serve as Interim President as we begin the next chapter of our institutional journey at Fairleigh Dickinson University. I have spoken at length about the transformational impact that FDU has had on my own personal experience, and I have heard over the past several weeks from countless others who have shared similar stories of impact from across the years, generations and programs.

While I know that we have much to celebrate, we also have much to do to be ready to navigate the challenges that lie ahead for higher education amidst the many complexities of our industry. With changing demographics, less students selecting college as their default path and a widespread public sentiment of concern about the cost of higher education, we must begin to reimagine our institution's future, preparing to be more effective and better equipped to provide high-value, student-centered and personalized educational experiences to learners across the lifespan.

Much of this focus will involve thinking about ways to provide educational opportunities to three key groups: pre-college students looking to get ahead and find their path at FDU; our first-time college student population seeking out a personal experience to transform their lives as they live and learn at FDU; and lifelong learners who are seeking educational opportunities as a gateway to their next step toward upward mobility. We are fortunate to have a legacy of success with each of these three groups, and we must now begin to revitalize, reform and reinvent our programs and services for the next generation of learners who have different needs and expectations.

Shortly, we will be circulating a working draft of a strategic transformation plan, "FDU will SOAR," which will put us on a path toward transforming our institution to be more ready than ever to transform the lives of our learners. It will capture much of the initial work that was done over a year ago during the strategic planning process as we listened to faculty, staff, students and alumni to learn about the path we needed to take to be ready for our institutional future. This version has been expanded, now taking into account some of the significant landscape changes that warrant an even greater boldness toward changing for our future. Our ability to

get this right will position us at a place where we are ready to do what our institution has always done well, which is to meet our learners where they are, preparing them on a path toward new opportunity and upward mobility. This institutional legacy is our greatest strength, and it is my hope that it will be our guidepost forward toward a new generation of success.

Additionally, we will be seeking to engage our community in building, transforming and reinventing our institution through regular interactions and listening sessions. I have begun to assemble a plan for communication through regular town hall meetings and small group “learning sessions” with subsets of our community on a regular basis, as well as ongoing interactions with our faculty leadership, professional staff leadership, students, alumni and other stakeholders who believe in the mission of our institution. I am hopeful that we will have an opportunity to hear many voices, ideas and perspectives on our path forward, and hope that as we adopt this new plan shortly, there will be much opportunity for our community of colleagues to be a part of planning, implementation and operationalization.

I continue to hold firm to what I have always believed since my first day at FDU: we hold a special and important place in the community, we transform the lives of those who enter our doors, and our best days still lie ahead. While there will be much work to do, I believe that we will realize our goal of reinventing FDU to lead the way toward a bright future ready to serve a new generation of students. I look forward to walking this path together with all of you!