



**HOWARD**  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE



*I also want to take this opportunity to mention a few names who were not included in today's introductions, but who we congratulate on new positions and promotions.*

- Michael Smelkinson – Associate Vice President, Athletics
- Linda Mercurio – Interim Dean; Business, Engineering & Technology
- Helen Rose – Interim Department Head for Business & Hospitality
- Joel Offenbergl – Department Head for Computer Science & Cyber Technology
- Christopher Vizcarrondo – Dual Enrollment Academic Success Coach

**DARIA J. WILLIS, PH.D.**

# PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

## #DRAGONCOUNTRY

*"Happiness is not a goal; it is a by-product."*

– Eleanor Roosevelt

### FALL 2025 CONVOCATION

**Dragon Country!** Thank you to everyone who joined us in Smith Theatre or tuned in virtually to celebrate the start of the upcoming academic year at Convocation.

After a delicious breakfast, we gathered together to welcome new employees, celebrate promotions and new positions, and to honor this year's recipient of the Trustees' Award for Outstanding Service, Zack Shariff. Mr. Shariff was a pivotal part of the upcoming Cathy and Danny Bell Workforce Development & Trades Center, serving as co-chair of the capital campaign committee. It was my honor to partner with him as we worked to bring this anti-poverty and racial equity resource to fruition.

During my state of the college presentation at convocation, I shared stories of my recent travel, including my time in Japan, where we signed a historic memorandum of understanding with Setsunan University. I recalled the experience of trying to climb one of Japan's beautiful mountains, in the rain. As we climbed the mountain together, we took turns leading, allowing others to rest. As we reached our summit, everyone had a hand in the overall success of the group.

As the college continues to grow and continuously improve, we all have a role in the success of our world-renowned institution. I look forward to continuing to work with everyone in Dragon Country as we work to move HCC forward.

View my full remarks from Convocation on Vimeo, with my thanks to **Dragon Media** for the recording: [Convocation Fall 2025 President's Remarks](#).

Let's make it another great year in Dragon Country!