

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

# Cultivating Tomorrow's Leaders: How Mentorship, Engagement, and Volunteering Shape Student Success

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In today's dynamic global environment, nurturing the next generation of changemakers starts long before students graduate. Effective mentorship, early career navigation, volunteer engagement, and leadership development help students transform into successful professionals and impactful community leaders. Intentional support systems help to guide students along this journey, ensuring they are prepared not only for careers but for meaningful contributions to society.

**Mentorship** has been shown to significantly influence students' academic, personal, and professional growth. Structured mentoring programs enhance students' career readiness, resilience, and sense of belonging, particularly in underrepresented populations. Mentors provide personalized guidance, helping students navigate challenges, set goals, and build confidence in their skills and abilities. A well-structured mentoring relationship acts as both a safety net and a springboard, equipping students with the insights and support needed to thrive in competitive environments.

Equally important are **early career navigators** - programs or individuals who help students plan and prepare for life after graduation. These initiatives help students identify career paths aligned with their passions and strengths. Through personalized coaching, skill assessments, and internship placements, career navigation services reduce the ambiguity and stress many students face about their futures. Institutions that invest in career services create more confident, goal-driven graduates.

Another pillar of student success is **volunteerism**. Beyond enhancing resumes, volunteer work fosters empathy, leadership skills, and civic engagement. Students involved in structured volunteer programs develop adaptability, teamwork, and community awareness - all traits essential for future leaders. These experiences also promote social responsibility, helping students understand their role in driving societal change.

Encouraging students to function as **changemakers** aligns with the growing emphasis on leadership development in higher education. Changemaking is not reserved for those in formal leadership roles; it is about identifying challenges and working collaboratively to create solutions. Leadership is increasingly viewed as a shared, values-driven process rather than a position of authority. Cultivating this mindset among students prepares

them to lead in diverse professional settings, as well as in community service and advocacy.

To harness the full potential of these strategies, colleges and universities must adopt an integrated approach. This means fostering ecosystems where mentorship, career services, volunteer opportunities, and leadership development are not optional but integral to the student experience. Partnerships with alumni, employers, and community organizations are also essential for nurturing and creating real-world learning and leadership opportunities.

In conclusion, when students are actively mentored, engaged in purposeful activities, and given the tools to navigate their early careers, they become empowered, resilient, and effective leaders. These experiences not only shape their professional paths but also cultivate their capacity to be changemakers in their communities and beyond. ■



## Save the Date

