



President's Communiqué

FROM THE DESK OF THUY THI NGUYEN

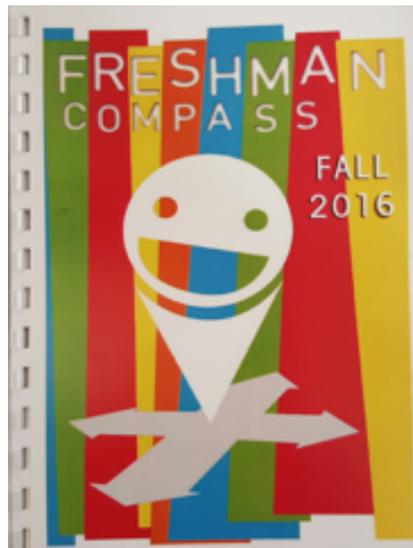
Forgiveness

Greetings Foothill,

Last week, I had a lot of fun speaking with the international students at their orientation in the Smithwick Theatre. One of the students asked me what he could do to help me. My response: *“Give me feedback. What you like ... What you don't like ... How we could do more to help you succeed at Foothill.”*

When I was walking around campus, I ran into a group of community members who were helping the international students get situated. They passed out a booklet of tips such as places where students could find housing and also included advice on American etiquette. For instance:

“The moment you arrive in the United States of America, some random strangers were already greeting you with a smile on their faces. It's something really common around here.”



The booklet had me thinking of Vietnamese cultural norms, including always asking for forgiveness before even doing anything wrong. For instance, a community leader at an assembly welcomes attendees and then spends a considerable amount of time essentially saying, *“We ask for your forgiveness for our mistakes,”* even when no mistakes have been committed (yet). When I was young, I was often irked by this cultural practice, partly because it takes up a lot of time and seems almost insincere, a blanket apology without any remorse.

Yet as I reflect on this practice and the fact that one of Foothill's stated values is *forgiveness*, I see the profundity of such practice. It's not really about asking for forgiveness before a mistake has occurred. Instead, it is asking people to be forgiving – a noble trait.

When speaking with many of you these past couple of months, some of you expressed disappointment with Foothill at one point or another or know colleagues who have felt so. I also understand some of you are just beginning to let go and heal. Thank you for that. Surely, I have already asked for forgiveness from a good number of people for forgetting your names.

What an incredible value, *forgiveness*. It seeks healing, while providing room for risk-taking and tough decision-making. I have never seen such a stated value by a community college, which gives me the impression that Foothill really pays attention to its values – further elevating the import of the other values.

Why was this value of *forgiveness* identified in the first place? How have we practiced it at Foothill? Please email me what you know.

Surely, I hope we will remember all our stated values as we engage with each other in the task at hand.

Values

Honesty, Integrity, Trust, Openness, Transparency, Forgiveness, Sustainability

Of Service,



Sincerely,
Thuy

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