Dear River Valley Community College Family,

Several members of the community have reached out and asked for a copy of the State of the College Address I gave on August 18, 2015. We have since posted it to our website, but I thought it appropriate to send it out today as we pause this afternoon to support Umpqua Community College as we, as a family of community colleges, move forward Undeterred By Fear. I look forward to being with you at the National Moment of Silence today at 2pm ET (11am PT) as we show Umpqua Community College that we all stand with them as they begin the process of healing their college community.

Below, you will find the speech. Thank you to those who recognize that there is greatness before us, as we press boldly forward.

Sincerely,

Alicia B. Harvey-Smith, Ph.D.
President

As I began my third year as President of River Valley Community College on July 15th, I felt it a perfect time for reflection and gratitude about the important work that has been achieved at River Valley and to focus on the important work that remains to be done.

A great deal of planning and work continued throughout the summer and I would like to take a moment to thank the faculty and staff who actively took part in these efforts including: the Educational Advisory Board Briefing, Year of Giving Scholarship Development, Lebanon Expansion and Implementation, Degree Works Training, Academic Advising, Northern Borders and Community Development Block Grant Applications, Submissions for the Gladys Brooks, Byrne and Claremont Savings Bank Foundations, the CCSNH Guided Pathways Retreat, Science Camps, Collective Bargaining, Sponsorship of the Swamp Bats and Orioles Baseball Teams, and of course the Claremont and Lebanon Alumni Parades.
I also would like to give a very big thank you to all those who assisted with the event last week as RVCC hosted hundreds of guests who gathered to see Secretary Clinton speak as she unveiled her national plan for education. This event placed River Valley prominently in the national spotlight.

Those of you, who were involved in any of these activities over the summer, please stand and be recognized. Thank you so much for your hard work on behalf of our College.

To those who work tirelessly with me in support of our students, our future growth and sustainability, I also say thank you.

Thank you for speaking up, showing up and for delivering your best work undeterred by needless dwelling on mole hills when there are mountains before us.

Thank you for being a beacon of light in challenging times. You make the difference and it matters.

Thank you to those who recognize, that it is always more productive to focus on solutions instead of living without resolution in complaints or creating problems where none exist.

There is greatness before us, as we press boldly forward.

Thank you for understanding that despite one’s perception of the glass being half full or half empty, it is so important to remember that the glass is always refillable.

Thank you to those who refuse to let others speak for them but courageously speak for themselves with confidence and sincerity, knowing that negativity will only triumph when good people say or do nothing and knowing that the culture that we seek to nurture at River Valley is one of courage and kindness.

Thank you to those who are brave enough to learn from the past and smart enough to recognize that the – “the past” is behind us and wise enough to know that our eyes must stay focused on the future.

Thank you to those who demonstrate that there is absolutely no separation in our mission, that there is only one college and that the administration, faculty, staff and students are on the same team! We will succeed or we fail together.

There is greatness before us, as we press boldly forward.

Thank you to those who everyday - try to be better, work harder, dream more and grow by connecting their purpose with their passion in support of excellence and student success.

Thank you to those who are brave enough to hold each other accountable for the ethical principles that we have committed to embrace and remain focused on improving and expanding learning for our students and all of us within our college community.

Thank you to those who explore and take informed risks knowing that at River Valley “it is only through error that we are pointed to success.”

We strive to create a caring culture that works hard in pursuit of excellence. As we continue to put the right people, in the right seats, with the right tools, moving in the same direction.
There is greatness before us, as we press boldly forward.

Thank you to those who have committed to our vision and who understand that “anyone who cannot change their minds cannot change anything.”

In light of the dramatically changing Higher Education Landscape, River Valley will continue to change and shift in support of our students, our partners and the communities we serve. It is now more critical than ever to embrace and live out our mission. Where each of us has the ability to share, engage and commit with excellence to the role he or she is assigned to play.

At this time, I am so very pleased to share that according to all available data received from our accrediting body and the Community College System of New Hampshire that River Valley Community College is healthy, strong and growing. I have been informed that this is the very best institutional position for RVCC in the last decade.

I am confident that this is because of the strength of the administration, faculty and staff who have committed to our new vision and forward direction. Please give yourselves a round of applause.

River Valley Community College has moved from 6th in enrollment growth to 2nd highest in the Community College System of New Hampshire. This remains critical to our long-term sustainability.

There is greatness before us, as we press boldly forward.

River Valley Community College continues to build a strong reserve to support unplanned emergencies and strategic initiatives. We now have the 2nd largest reserve in the Community College System of New Hampshire. ($654,865.00)

We have worked tirelessly and collaboratively with community and business partners to raise over half a million dollars in scholarship funds. I encourage each of us to continue to support this campaign and to also attend our scholarship dinner on September 18th. I would also like to publically recognize Harvey Hill again for his hard work with me in chairing this important initiative.

When I arrived in July 2013, our Nursing Program had lost its national accreditation, much good work has occurred since that time as we continued to work to rebuild a strong, thriving and accredited Nursing Program now poised to graduate skilled nurses in 2017.

We are excited to have our Nursing Program rejoin our list of elite accredited offerings in specialized programs. Over the next year, we also look to implement New Fine Arts and Humanities Offerings.

During our Focused Accreditation Team Visit, we received overwhelmingly positive feedback from NEASC with clear areas of strength and opportunity that will be incorporated into our strategic plan.

There is greatness before us, as we press boldly forward.

Our College has transformed into a bright, clean, inviting renovated building – and we are looking forward to moving through Phase Two of our renovations.

Our College submitted 16 Innovation Fund Grants to the System; this is a level of faculty and staff engagement previously unheard of! Thank you to each faculty, staff and administrator that rose to this challenge!
We have grown significantly as a College and have moved from a position within the System of being on the sidelines to a position of being a main player at the table, a main player that our System has invested heavily in and expects to lead the way. I would like to publicly thank our Chancellor and Board for this vote of confidence and support for River Valley.

RVCC has dedicated a significant amount of time to begin the formation of our strategic plan with input from everyone to create a living document to guide our everyday decisions.

There is greatness before us, as we press boldly forward.

We continue to invest heavily in our faculty and staff with the highest of expectations. We have increased faculty and staff numbers to meet the needs of our students and will continue to assess current and future needs in support of student success and institutional efficiency.

We have increased strategically the methods and amount of communication used throughout the College, from such things as Presidential Messages, Notes, and standing meetings all designed to solicit feedback from faculty, staff and students. I am so pleased to share that Our Collaborative Communications Model was reviewed and commended by both NEASC and our Focus Visit Team as an excellent communication’s model.

We have increased and created new ways for high school students to participate in early college opportunities, from Running Start to Catch the Wave to Dual Admissions, all designed to increase early exposure to a college pathway.

Our efforts have also been noticed on the national stage as a Finalist for AACC’s National 2015 Awards of Excellence in the Emerging Leadership Category, my recent election to the AACC Board of Directors representing more than 1,123 Community Colleges across the country and our recent selection as a participant for “In America – With James Earl Jones”, a national documentary highlighting educational and organizational excellence.

There is greatness before us, as we press boldly forward.

River Valley Community College has increased funds available for Professional Development. We will continue to look for funding in this area and to improving our processes to ensure its effectiveness.

Over the last year, we have painstakingly developed a plan to expand educational opportunity in the Upper Valley and we will continue to plan throughout this year and beyond to assure its success for our students and community. Despite a very challenging Higher Education Landscape, River Valley Community College continues to receive overwhelmingly positive feedback from our: College Community, Advisory Committee, Chancellor, CCSNH Board of Trustees and our business and industry partners. The future is bright for River Valley and we have much to celebrate and much to be proud of.

There is greatness before us, as we press boldly forward.

Over the next academic year our goals will surround:

1. Completing our Strategic Plan
   A. Each of us will be expected to engage in this important work as it will set our trajectory for the next five years.
2. Initiating Preparation for NEASC Self Study and Impending Site Visit
   B. Each full time faculty and staff member will be expected to engage in this critical work in partnership with the Standard Chairs.
3. Finalizing / Implementing and Tracking Plan for New Site River Valley Community College in Lebanon
   C. Lebanon Implementation Team will finalize project and continue to update college where needed
4. Reviewing / Implementing and Assessing NEASC Projections
5. Exploring Guided Pathway Models / Evaluating Student Success Systems

Each of these 5 areas aligns with our four strategic directions of: Student Access, Student Success, Teaching and Learning, and Sustainability and support our CCSNH Annual Goals.

We will continue to thrive only if we remain undeterred by fear: fear of leaving the past, fear of the future, fear of holding others accountable, fear of thinking differently, fear of new approaches, or fear of change.

There is greatness before us, as we press boldly forward.

One of our CCSNH board members stated, as I was presenting about the opportunity of expanding in the Upper Valley that and I quote, "you cannot shrink into greatness" and a RVCC faculty leader recently shared his excitement about working here in such a dynamic change environment, where he was encouraged to take risks without fear.

River Valley - Undeterred By Fear

River Valley, there is greatness before us and we will press boldly forward undeterred by fear
We cannot shrink into greatness but will press boldly forward
We are undeterred by fear
We press boldly forward
We shrink not into greatness
We embrace it

No longer paralyzed by the past
We stake claim on the future
Shaping and creating the culture of tomorrow
Not a culture of today as "things they are a changing"
Not a culture of yesterday as "things they have changed"
The old has passed away
Celebrate the lessons learned, successes achieved, legacies launched
As we look to the future

We cannot shrink into greatness but will press boldly forward
Strength to persevere
A culture of innovation, talent, and skill
Not the same as yesterday
We grow and develop and change
Undeterred by fear
We press boldly forward
Offering our best gifts
Pressing boldly forward in service to each other

No time to focus on the small
Dwell on the insignificant
When big ideas await us
Big challenges to overcome
No time to create problems were none exist
Time to seek answers and to be grateful for the mountains overcome
Big ideas unfolding, vision igniting, mission in focus, living out ideals

We create what we want
Envision it now
Not mere words
But actions taking hold
We cannot shrink into greatness but will press boldly forward
Getting out of our own way - designing our future now - together
Accountable and responsible for our own happiness
Owed nothing
Except kindness, care, appreciation, and respect

We each have a role
Focus on it
We each have a job to do
Do it well
Be bold
Be excellent

We cannot shrink into greatness but will press boldly forward
Undeterred by fear
No small conversations
Diminishing us with each word
Forgetting we are not only what we eat
But we are also what we say and we are what we do

Today giving permission to support our better selves
By removing not only the physical clutter that may crowd our spaces
But, the clutter of old ideas, toxic relationships and bad habits
Giving permission to be happy
Permission to be kind
Permission to be grateful
Permission to live our best lives
We cannot shrink into greatness but will move boldly forward
Undeterred by fear
There is no fear here - only that which we create within ourselves
Push past it

Grant ourselves this day to be open to joy, to celebration and to love
Open to new passions, new purposes
Open to change and innovation
Open to embrace our mission as never before
Learning together and knowing that it is always what we choose to believe

Undeterred by fear
We will move passionately and compassionately forward
Embracing our path
Enjoying the journey
Remembering
Not to judge
No perfection in any
Each of us connecting
Working in alignment
Learning our way together
Each in our lane
Racing towards our goal

We will not shrink into greatness but will move boldly forward
Undeterred by fear
Embracing change
Learning from the past
But not repeating it
Painting a beautiful future
A mosaic of systems, processes and people
Dancing in unison
Grateful for the opportunity
Undeterred by fear
Creating a future by our design

Thank you again for being a part of River Valley future and committing to our forward movement as we press boldly forward. I am confident that this will be our best year ever.