October 21, 2015

“Education is all a matter of building bridges.” ~Ralph Ellison

Dear River Valley Family,

I believe that,

Education is a bridge, a structure that stands before us
Carrying those who seek passage to opportunity
A chance to grow, expanding capacity, value added
Transcending the divide to knowledge
A bridge across the wet unknown
The barren and unproductive familiar
It carries us back
Reflecting on the lesson of what was
It carries us forward
Defining the now and the yet to come
This fixed link connects, the past, present and future
Bonding each traveler to his dream

We have had a wonderful start to the school year. Thank you to everyone who has supported Student Success through academics, student life and student services efforts. It is exciting to know that we are the bridge bonding each student to their dreams.

We not only support students’ dreams but the aspirations of economic sustainability for our region. According to the Manufacturing Institute, by 2020, it’s projected that two-thirds of all jobs in the United States will require an education beyond high school. And yet presently more than 60% of adults in this country are unprepared to meet that need. This shortfall threatens the strength of our economy and potentially the economic health of the country. We have taken a very intentional and strategic approach to the skills gap challenge by focusing on getting students on a clear pathway to reach their education and career goals, aligning workforce training to directly meet the needs of area employers and enhancing soft skill development. America is rediscovering its community colleges as a bridge to building the middle class and valuing the tremendous roles they have played and continue to play in shaping a healthy economy and strong workforce.

We have done the foundational work for our bridge to the Upper Valley. Our new location at 15 Hanover Street is in the early stages of renovation. We have hosted two well attended open houses, one for the community and one for business and industry, with a third for our K-12 partners coming up in early November. These sessions are imperative as we strategically plan for success in the Upper Valley. We intend to host similar sessions in Claremont and Keene to further support our strategic planning.

A team of our Steering Committee Chairs attended a NEASC CIHE Self Study Workshop on October 15-16. This proved to be a wonderful opportunity to continue the momentum of our efforts in drafting our ten year comprehensive report. We will never forget: “Data First!,” “All Students, All Modalities, All Locations” and the importance of candor. I look forward to meeting with this team soon to map out our timeline for 2016 and 2017 as we prepare for our visit in spring of 2018. A strong bridge to another ten year NEASC accreditation is being formed.

I look forward to working together as we continue to build bridges each day that support Student Access, Student Success, Teaching & Learning and Sustainability.

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