

SUMMER 2022

CURRENTS

A PUBLICATION OF SKAGIT VALLEY COLLEGE

A portrait of a middle-aged man with grey hair and glasses, wearing a dark grey suit, white shirt, and a dark red patterned tie. He is sitting at a desk with his hands clasped in front of him, smiling at the camera. The background is a blurred office setting with a red wall and a framed certificate on the wall.

President Keegan
RETIRES

FOCUSED ON EQUITY: ACCESS, ACHIEVEMENT, COMMUNITY

SVC
Skagit Valley College



Q&A WITH TOM

SVC president reflects on rewarding career in higher education, upcoming retirement

Dr. Thomas Keegan is Skagit Valley College's sixth president and has served as SVC's president since 2012. He will retire from a 43-year career in Washington state's community and technical college system at the end of August. Please enjoy the Q&A with Dr. Keegan and his reflections on a lifelong journey in higher education.

What drew you to a career in higher education and especially community colleges?

I was recruited to SVC as a baseball/soccer player out of high school. I had no idea what I wanted to study or what I wanted to pursue as a career. By the time I finished my degree at Skagit, I knew I wanted to study psychology (faculty member Mike Witmer inspired me) and knew I wanted to work at a community college to serve students just as I was served at SVC.

What are some of your best memories of working at a community college?

I have so many amazing memories—too many to count! Certainly, the most impactful was the work to complete the first Native American Longhouse on a community college campus—at Peninsula College—in the country. My work at SVC to get us on the cusp of becoming a Hispanic Serving Institution is also filled with great memories. In addition, the Removing Barriers and the Childcare/Early Learning Center campaigns are filled with great memories. The common theme is the relationships built during the work. I continue to be inspired by the people I worked with along the way, and many have become life-long friends.

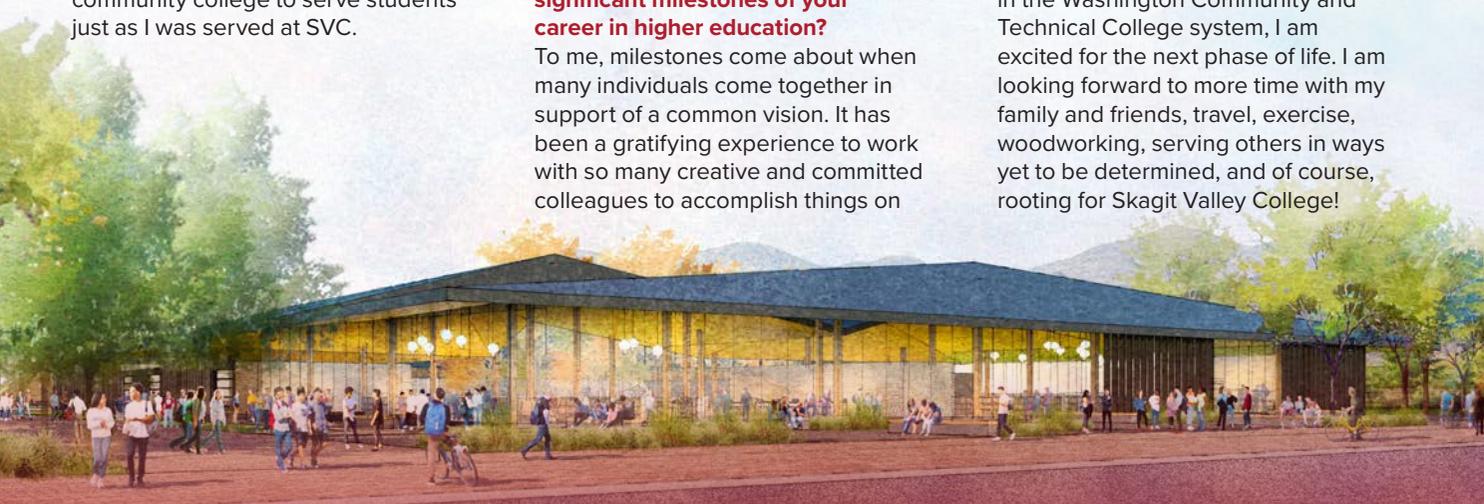
What have been some of the significant milestones of your career in higher education?

To me, milestones come about when many individuals come together in support of a common vision. It has been a gratifying experience to work with so many creative and committed colleagues to accomplish things on

behalf of students. Some of those milestones include working to bring Applied Baccalaureate authority to our system (and to Peninsula and Skagit), leading the funding formula development for our system, and leading equity efforts statewide. Other milestones include leading the development of the strategic and operational planning process at SVC and nurturing a culture at SVC grounded in the Guiding Principles of Respect, Integrity, Open and Honest Communication, Collaboration, and Compassion.

What does retirement hold for you?

While I will miss SVC dearly, and will miss working in the communities we serve, as well as my system-level work, after 43 years working in the Washington Community and Technical College system, I am excited for the next phase of life. I am looking forward to more time with my family and friends, travel, exercise, woodworking, serving others in ways yet to be determined, and of course, rooting for Skagit Valley College!



New SVC commons building to be named after Dr. Tom Keegan

Skagit Valley College will name its new learning commons after retiring president Dr. Tom Keegan. The vision for the commons building is to serve as an entrance for students accessing campus from the east parking lot, where they're currently walking past

a loading dock and through narrow passageways between buildings.

The building will provide an upgrade to the library; learning labs and a tutoring center where students can receive academic support; community

gathering spaces for students; and become the culinary program's new home, with the most up to date equipment and laboratory space.

The design phase will be complete by the end of the 2023 academic year.



CHILDCARE CENTER

We celebrated the opening of the **Sue Krienen Early Learning and Childcare Center** June 28 at our Mount Vernon campus. The center was the vision of SVC Foundation donor Sue Krienen back in 2017 and came to fruition through a partnership with the college.

The Foundation raised \$3 million in community donations and grants, including a substantial donation from Krienen, an \$800,000 grant from Washington's Department of Commerce in early 2019, and a \$1.5 million grant from Head Start. George and Sheila Saul generously established the endowed Peg Moy and Sheila Moy Saul Early Childhood Education scholarship fund to support students pursuing a four-year ECE degree.



PICKLEBALL PAVILION

Skagit Valley College celebrated the grand opening of the **Blackburn Pickleball Pavilion** June 30 on its Mount Vernon campus.

SVC officially named the court after Claude Blackburn – who donated \$1.7 million to build the court. Through a close partnership, SVC, SVC Foundation, Blackburn, and the Skagit Valley Pickleball Club worked together to envision and develop a place on the SVC campus where the community could gather, play pickleball, and build connection to the college and to one another.

The 10-court pavilion is free and open to the public on a daily basis.

Skagit Publishing president shares insights on being an SVC Foundation Board member

Heather Hernandez is the president and publisher of Skagit Publishing and serves as the regional president and publisher in Washington state for Adams Publishing Group. She oversees the print and publishing of many of our county news publications and around 40 other publications in Washington and Canada in their regional commercial printing facility in Mount Vernon. Heather has also served on the Skagit Valley College Foundation Board of Governors for the past 10 years.

Heather was introduced to SVC and the Foundation while attending the Fall 2011 Champions of Diversity breakfast event. Over the course of the next year, she stayed engaged with the college and was invited to join the Foundation Board in 2012. The SVC Foundation is entrusted with managing a \$15 million endowment and raises over \$1 million each year to support SVC students and programs.

In looking back on her years of service, Heather identifies serving as chair of the Removing Barriers fundraising campaign as a major point of pride. "It was an important time for the board and the college," she said. The campaign identified non-traditional barriers for SVC's diverse

student body, such as childcare assistance and emergency funding needs. This was SVC's first capital campaign and was also an opportunity to elevate the image of the college – not just through materials and design, but in how the college and general community interconnect.

Heather is dedicated to the Foundation's mission and enthusiastically champions providing access to education, the college's close connection to the community, and its ability to connect people to resources. These are rooted in the Foundation's mission and are extensions of what Heather cares about personally and professionally. Moreover, Heather said the leadership and structure of the Foundation and board make the work easy and fun to do. She has also seen the direct impact the board and SVC has on students' lives and educational journeys. She shared the following for those looking for engagement opportunities: "People can see this as giving up their time, but the more you lean in and give, the more you get back."





Skagit Valley College

2405 East College Way
Mount Vernon, WA 98273

skagit.edu
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SVC welcomes incoming president, Dr. Christopher Villa

After an extensive nationwide search, the Skagit Valley College Board of Trustees appointed **Dr. Christopher Villa** as the college's seventh president. The board voted unanimously in support of Villa. His first day will be Sept. 1.

"We're excited to welcome Dr. Villa to Skagit Valley College," said Board Chair Flora Perez-Lucatero. "He brings a wealth of experience and commitment to the community college mission. We are looking forward to his leadership in continuing the vision for the college."



Villa is an experienced community college leader who most recently served as president at Portland Community College (PCC)-Rock Creek. He has served an accumulated 12 years as vice president of student services for Los Angeles Mission College, Fresno City College, and Long Beach City College. He earned his bachelor's degree in social

ecology from University of California, Irvine, a master's degree in public administration from University of Southern California, and a doctorate in educational leadership and policy from University of Utah. Villa has also served as an adjunct faculty in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Department at California State University, Northridge.

"I am deeply honored to have been selected as the next president of Skagit Valley College," said Dr. Villa. "I'm eager to serve the communities of Skagit,

Island, and San Juan counties while advancing the college's core themes of equity in access, achievement, and community. I look forward to furthering SVC's unwavering commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in support of the success of all of our students."

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