

Dr. Jean Runyon: PVCC and the Bright Future it has Ahead

PVCC remembers Gequetta Murray-Key, page 7

Makenzie McCoy, staff writer

PVCC’s sixth and latest president, Dr. Jean Runyon, is bringing more than 25 years of previous education experience to PVCC and shared her enthusiasm about her arrival in an interview. This is not Runyon’s first time serving at a community college; her passion for higher education itself was communicated when she said, “Community college is more than just about access, it’s about access, opportunity, and success.”

Runyon began her teaching career in Southern Maryland as a high school business education teacher. After teaching high school education for five years, she became an adjunct at the Community College of Southern Maryland. Following 22 years of working there, she went on to serve as the associate vice president at Anne

Arundel Community College. During the last seven years before coming to PVCC, Runyon served as vice president of Front Range Community College in Colorado.

During the interview, she said that taking on the position of PVCC President involves working together with students, faculty, and the rest of the community to make the best decisions for the college. “The position is about passion and an opportunity to be a part of the community,” Runyon said. With the college just passing its 50th anniversary, Runyon describes this as a time to both reflect and celebrate the past accomplishments the university has made while looking forward to the great new things to come.

Runyon has already taken the initiative to start planning a prosperous future for PVCC and all who attend. She has begun the development of

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Dr. Jean Runyon with Pouncer and students.
 Photo courtesy of Dr. Jean Runyon

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Reaping the Rewards of Hard Work

Shazila Nadia Muzafar Shah, staff writer

Balkees Rekik was recently awarded the 2022 Coca-Cola Leaders of Promise Scholarship. She is one of 207 Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) members who was awarded this scholarship. PTK is an international honor society, and it is only one of the various activities that Rekik participates in outside of the classroom.

Rekik moved to Charlottesville from Tunisia in Fall 2021 to attend PVCC. Since then, she has become the vice president of service for the PTK, the vice president of International Club and she volunteers weekly at the UVA Hospital's oncology unit. Although she is thriving now, her initial move to the United States was not easy. Rekik said, "Being away from my parents was definitely the hardest. I developed panic attacks and anxiety, which was not fun."

Rekik's four older sisters are all graduates of the Virginia Community College System and two of them transferred on to Cornell University. She plans to follow in their footsteps by applying for transfer to Ivy League colleges, majoring in psychology in the Fall of 2023.

Rekik said, "I encourage people to be more active and to join as many clubs as possible. That way, you'll get this sense of satisfaction and this feeling of belonging, and it would definitely look good on your resumé and application to schools



or job applications." However, she also mentioned that she treats herself whenever she experiences burnout so that she can recover and feel more energized for the activities to come.

Rekik believes that being active outside of the classroom is overall a very rewarding experience. It allowed her to make many new connections and she reaped the benefits of doing it as well.

She said, "I don't usually check my emails. I was in D.C. with my parents. Right before going to bed, I was opening my email and I saw an email from PTK saying that I got this scholarship. I read the email probably three times, until I realized that I got this scholarship. It was like the last thing that I could ever imagine. So yeah, I was so happy. I yelled at the top of my lungs to my parents."

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the strategic plan for 2024-2027 to create a revived experience for future students.

She went on a series of discovery tours designed to help her learn about and engage with the surrounding community. This helped her get an idea of how to move PVCC forward in the best

way possible.

To hear more, she will be reflecting on her experience with the discovery tours and discussing some common themes that came up during a town hall meeting that will be accessible through Zoom on Oct. 31 from 10-11 a.m.