

PVCC's New President Dr. Jean Runyon

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With PVCC finalist interviews winding down, it was time for students to meet the third presidential candidate, Dr. Jean Runyon. The student forum was held on Monday, April 11, at noon in the Bolick Student Center. All were welcome, and refreshments and pizza were provided for those who attended the event.

Runyon earned her bachelor's degree from Bloomsburg University in 1980 and began teaching at the College of Southern Maryland in 1985. While working at the College of Southern Maryland, she received her master's degree from George Washington University. In 2000, she became the director of the Innovative Teaching Center at the College of Southern Maryland. From 2007 to 2015, she worked at Anne Arundel Community, holding successive leadership roles in the college while simultaneously earning a doctorate degree from Northcentral University. She is currently the campus vice president of Front Range Community College in Colorado, a position she has held since 2015.

Runyon began by explaining her connection to the area, namely her father's 30 years of service in the Navy, her attendance and graduation from Princess Anne High School in Virginia Beach, and her sister's residence in the area.

To Runyon, the president must lead with equity. At Front Range Community College, she had worked on the college's plan for achieving equity of outcome. She emphasized her experience transitioning from Anne Arundel Community College to Front Range Community College. She had to determine where the college was at in terms of meeting its diversity and equity goals as a whole, and talk to the college community about what they felt should be addressed immediately. "As president, it is always important to move forward with equity in mind but also to understand where we are as an institution and to engage students and their voices as well in that journey," said Runyon.

Runyon stated that as students are coming back to campus, it is important to help rebuild the college community by engaging students in campus activities. "It really is about engagement. If we can host events, if we can sponsor activities,

the engagement of all the clubs here will make this a really vibrant campus community," said Runyon.

When asked about how she thought PVCC's program competitiveness and performance could be improved Runyon said that although PVCC has a very diverse portfolio of programs available and a high placement rate into jobs in the community, that it is important that the college stays aware of the employment opportunities and needs of the community. "When you leave this college, we want to make sure that you can join the workforce, that there will be a job for you," said Runyon.

"When we bring on these programs, we work with our community partners to identify programs that have high needs in the area that will result in jobs for our students ... We also want to look at our program health, we want all our programs to deliver on our promises for each one of you. We are not a destination, we are a bridge to what you want to do," said Runyon.

In her current position at Front Range Community College, Runyon strives to be present in the community by attending all student events and regularly meeting with the Student Government Association. Runyon said, "College is for you, student engagement is extremely important, and it is at the heart of what I do and something I value." As PVCC's president she plans to uphold that value by engaging with the student body of the college.

The last question was what was one thing that Runyon would change or that she believes needs changing at PVCC. Runyon emphasized that she did not have a specific action plan in terms of what she wants to change yet. It is important for her to hear the feedback of both what is working for students and what needs the college has yet to fulfill in order to better serve both the students and the community at large. Through student engagement with the college president, she hopes to figure out both where the college is now and where it needs to be.

"I can't say what I want to fix. I want to start, learn, and celebrate, and then also have a chance to get alongside the college community to also see what the next 50 years will look like, and set together a shared vision for what PVCC will be in the future," said Runyon.