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Commentary by Chancellor Ford and President Swallow: The power of partnerships to transform

Debbie Ford and John Swallow

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When the goal is as universally important as increasing access to higher education and attainment of bachelor's degrees, we must roll up our sleeves and work together.



Carthage College and the University of Wisconsin-Parkside have a long history of working together for the betterment of students and our communities. We invite you to learn more about the “Power of Partnerships” between our institutions and how together we are transforming the lives of our graduates and our communities.

Moon shot for equity

Our commitment to eliminate persistent equity gaps in higher education is unwavering. That's why Carthage College and the University of Wisconsin-Parkside recently joined the nation's first regional consortium to commit to Moon Shot for Equity, a national initiative that aims to close equity gaps in higher education by 2030. We'll be working with our Milwaukee-region higher education colleagues and national education services firm EAB to implement 15 best or promising practices to eliminate equity gaps. Our goal is to provide more students, especially students of color, with pathways to complete — and not simply begin — a four-year college or university education.

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According to the U.S. Census (2019), in Kenosha and Racine counties the percent of individuals 25 and older with a baccalaureate degree was 25.7% and 24.7% respectively as compared to an overall rate of 29.5% in Wisconsin. Our collaboration with the Moon Shot for Equity is one way we're working to increase the number of baccalaureate degree holders in our counties, thus improving the economic potential of our region. Our institutions are deploying software to enhance student success, sharing and reviewing data, setting targets for the years to come, and working to learn what practices succeed here.

Higher expectations and building our future

Both of us are proud to serve on leadership teams for Higher Expectations for Racine County and Building Our Future in Kenosha County. Functioning as

conveners, these groups create more seamless and equitable systems across the education spectrum in our communities. Together we share data on enrollment and student success; we review processes and practices; we evaluate how new initiatives are working; and we work together to improve access to our institutions and the successful outcomes for all students.

These partnerships strengthen our work in still other ways. Both of our institutions are committed to understand more deeply structural racism and systemic inequities and have participated in the REI sessions hosted by Higher Expectations and Building Our Future. In January 2020, Building Our Future held a two-day Racial Equity Institute for community leaders on the Carthage campus. REI's approach to issues of racial inclusion and diversity helps participants consider, most importantly, what is needed to understand attitudes and feelings about race within their organizations and communities. Since our gathering, we have worked to implement actions to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion on our campuses. This work extends beyond our campuses into the community and we are committed to serving as leaders for courageous conversations and as educators to expand our understanding of society's most pressing issues.

Striving together

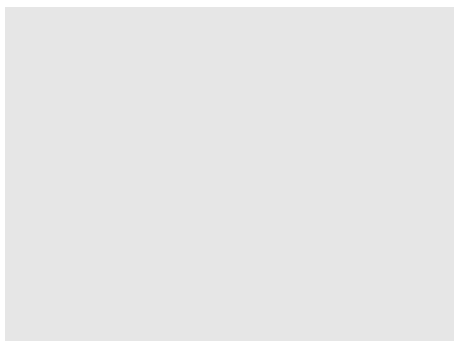
The need for partnerships is really part of a long evolution in our country, as people become more specialized and have less time to interact and solve problems informally. There are many examples of that strong individuality leading us back toward partnerships. Partnerships are needed now more than ever. Thanks to the work of awe-inspiring people in our community and the natural response of organizations working together in today's climate of individuality, we learn from each other on several levels and witness firsthand the power of partnerships. That is exactly why partnerships are needed now more than ever.

Access – the first step

Increasing access to K-12 and higher education in our communities is, and must continue to be, a priority. Access is just the beginning. Students need the resources

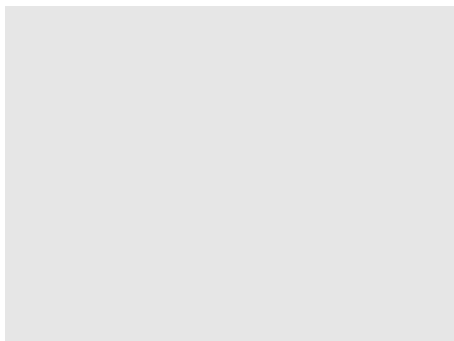
for success. Each of us is unique in the way we gather and retain knowledge, and then put that knowledge to use as a valued contributor. Through our partnerships, Carthage and UW-Parkside will ensure that all who desire to transform their lives and their communities by furthering their education have the opportunities to do so.

To learn more about the “Power of Partnerships” between our institutions, please visit the news sections of our websites: **carthage.edu** and **uwp.edu**.



Ford

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Swallow

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Debbie Ford is the chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Parkside. John Swallow is the president of Carthage College.