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## Imagine New Possibilities with Wonder, Not Fear

### ARE YOU FEELING A BIT OVERWHELMED?

Does it seem like the pace of change is faster and more chaotic than ever? The life experience of most human beings today would have been inconceivable to even a great science fiction author 124 years ago, when the first community college was founded. The once-radical inventions of the telephone, television, and the Internet presented profound revolutions that over time became ubiquitous enough to regard as mundane utilities. The calculator and computers provided tools to replace laborious, time-consuming processes and created new, more productive ones.

The pace of change continues to accelerate. The adoption of technologies has grown faster and faster. It took 75 years for the telephone to be adopted by 100 million users. Television reached that mark in 38 years. It took the internet eight years to hit the 100 million user mark, and Facebook reached that milestone in five. Artificial intelligence (AI) is impacting every part of our lives and every aspect of our colleges, and ChatGPT reached the 100 million user mark in just two months!

While no one can see into the future, a lot of very smart people are predicting that artificial general intelligence (AGI), which would match or surpass human capabilities across virtually all cognitive tasks, is near. The changes AGI might bring represent a sea change in our communities and our colleges. We can consider this revolution through a lens of wonder and awe even as we navigate the resulting changes with care, loyalty, and obedience — our sworn fiduciary duties.

AI is the ultimate product of the human imagination, founded in our collective knowledge. Even its so-called hallucinations are mirrors of our own minds' unwieldy imaginations. While we could succumb to

feeling overwhelmed, we can also instead — or even simultaneously — look back and realize that every technological and industrial revolution was disruptive.

As trustees of community colleges, we are responsible for leading on behalf of our students, faculty, and staff. We serve in the interests of our communities, local economies, and our colleges' immediate and long-term wellbeing. We need to embrace this opportunity and realize that productive innovation is a perspective and a value system that applies an extraordinary tool like AI to the needs of our communities. Trustees must have a long-range perspective — and this is precisely the reason colleges have volunteer governing boards whose collective wisdom and diverse perspectives must ensure stability while guiding rapidly developing progress.

This fall, over 1,500 of us will gather in New Orleans to reimagine community college in light of the extraordinary changes we are living through. I encourage trustees and CEOs to gather together with a spirit of optimism, remembering all the transitions of the past and all the seemingly overwhelming and chaotic changes that our institutions have weathered over the past century-plus, and recalibrate for the future.

Education is an unlimited resource, and it will always be needed as long as educators understand and address the needs of our students and our communities. I am excited for all of us to share our experiences. *Laissez les bons temps rouler!*

**Rich Fukutaki**  
*Bellevue College, Washington*