“I can do this. Please show me how.” “I can do this. Just show me how.” How many times have you heard that? How many times have you heard someone in your family say to you, “I can do this, Mom.” “I can do this, Dad. Could you just show me how?” Or, “I can do this! Let me do this by myself.” But you know they need help in doing what you want them to do.

Our students at Santa Ana College say to us loudly and clearly every day, “I can do this. Just show me how.” We have a difficult time understanding that our students need help. We don’t want to believe they need help. They just come in off the street, register for a class, and we expect them to know how to navigate a system. How would they know? How would they know if they come from a school district or a home where no one has gone to college before them? They don’t know how to navigate that system. They don’t know that if I didn’t go to high school, I only went when I wanted to, nobody checked on me, why would I have to go to school every day in college? What? I have to stay all day? What? You want me to study? What? You want me to go to a library? Why? I didn’t do it in high school, and I have a diploma. Why do I have to do it now?

But I’m not showing you how to do it, and I’m certainly not telling you that there are other things that you need to learn how to do to be successful in college. I am a product of California Community College, the CSU, and a product of UCLA. Now, where I came from as a student, as a child in Compton, California, no one would have ever imagined that I would be a college president because I barely went to school. Nobody called my house when I didn’t show up for school. Nobody. So I could drive my sisters to school, get in the car, and go to Point Fermin. Spend the day there. Nobody knew.

Graduated from high school low, very low in my class, but I graduated. I thought I wanted to go to college. No, didn’t do that either. I didn’t feel I was college material and no one in high school said to me, “You can do this; I’ll show you how.” So what did I do? I went to work in a factory in Vernon, California, in an area where they butchered animals at the Farmer John plant and used sand to manufacture bottles. I worked in that plant. Nobody said to me, “You can do this; I’ll show you how.”

But what we are doing at Santa Ana college with guided pathways is beginning to say to students, “You can do this, and we will show you how.” That’s a change from the way the college has done business in the past. We told a small group of students, “You can do this; we’ll show you how” ... if you’re in Fresh X, if you’re in Guardian Scholars, if you’re in EOPS. “You can do this. We’re going to show you how.” But what about all the other students? Doesn’t every student who enters my campus every fall semester deserve to be told, “You can do this! We’re going to show you how”? Every student.

Right now, I am providing my campus with information about how many students come to our college every semester, first‑time students. Usually over the past five years we’ve determined we have over 3,000 students, but not all of them get ed plans. Not all of them are sat down and told, “You can do this; we’re going to show you how to do it.”

What happens, they come in, they used to take a test, they don’t take the test anymore, but they come in and they’re like okay, I got my classes, what do I do, where do I go, how do I do it. Oh, you’ll figure it out. I, as the leader of the college, have decided no more. We are going to say to students, “You can do this, and we are going to show you how.” Every single student deserves that.”

I think as a leader on a campus, I have to have the courage to stand up to the pushback when I say to students, “You can do this; we will show you how.”

**[END OF FILE]**