

Paula P. Pando, Ed.D.

PROFILE

Dynamic community college president and nationally recognized higher education leader with more than 30 years of experience advancing student success, workforce innovation, and institutional transformation. Proven track record reversing enrollment decline, restoring financial stability, and positioning institutions as engines of regional economic mobility. Widely respected for forging high-impact partnerships with industry, government, and philanthropy to expand opportunity and strengthen talent pipelines. Twice selected as an Aspen Presidential Fellow (2017, 2023) and recipient of the Virginia Community College System's Dana Hamel Leadership Award. Bilingual in English and Spanish; skilled in public policy advocacy, collective bargaining environments, and leading complex institutions through change.

EDUCATION

Doctor of Education (Educational Leadership, Community College Leadership Focus)

Rowan University, Glassboro, NJ

Master of Arts (Education Administration)

Saint Peter's University, Jersey City, NJ

Bachelor of Arts (Studies in the Arts)

Stockton University, Pomona, NJ

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Reynolds Community College – Richmond, VA

2018-Present

Virginia's youngest and among its largest community colleges, serving over 15,000 credit and non-credit students annually across four campuses and multiple learning sites. Accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, Reynolds serves a diverse urban, suburban, and rural population in the City of Richmond, and surrounding counties of Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, Louisa and Powhatan.

President

- Appointed following a seven-year enrollment decline (40% student loss) and four consecutive reductions in force; eliminated a \$10.5 million structural deficit, rebuilt longterm financial stability through consistent operating surpluses, and drove sustained enrollment growth with double-digit gains in retention and completion.
- Earned designation as an Achieving the Dream Leader College for sustained, institution-wide improvements in student success outcomes.

- Selected as one of only 55 community colleges nationwide to join the Aspen Institute's Unlocking Opportunity Network, reflecting Reynolds' commitment and readiness to advance post-completion outcomes and economic mobility.
- Consistently positioned Reynolds as Virginia's #1 community college for awarding workforce credentials and a regional leader in talent development through deep alignment with high-demand industry sectors.
- Partnered with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, the Governor's administration, local leaders, and Eli Lilly to help secure a \$5 billion regional pharmaceutical investment, establishing Reynolds as a trusted workforce engine for large-scale economic growth.
- Launched Next Step VCU, a dual-admission partnership with Virginia Commonwealth University that streamlines transfer pathways, strengthens advising, and improves bachelor's degree attainment for Reynolds students.
- Built high-impact community and industry partnerships - including Toyota North America, VCU Health, Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, and the YWCA - to strengthen workforce pipelines, expand access, and drive regional economic mobility.
- Secured record philanthropic and grant support, including more than \$15 million in student scholarships over seven years and \$11 million in federal grants in a single year, along with the largest gift in college history to renovate the downtown campus and expand high-demand healthcare programs.
- Selected as one of only 18 community colleges nationwide to receive a highly competitive FIPSE grant - a nearly \$2.4 million federal investment to expand short-term healthcare workforce programs.
- Modernized institutional operations by expanding data infrastructure and literacy, enabling real-time strategic decision-making and positioning Reynolds as a statewide benchmark for data-informed practice.
- Advanced a culture of excellence through historic investments in employee development and the establishment of a Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning recognized statewide as a model.

Hudson County Community College – Jersey City, NJ

2003-2018

An urban, Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) enrolling over 12,000 credit and non-credit students annually across three campuses and multiple attendance centers. HCCC is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and located in one of the most ethnically diverse and densely populated regions of the United States.

Senior Vice President, Student and Educational Services (2016 – 2018)

- Served as Chief Administrative Officer of the North Hudson Campus while providing college-wide executive leadership for more than 200 staff across student affairs, enrollment services, academic support, libraries, technology, online learning, and campus safety.

- Served on the college's collective bargaining negotiating team and tenure committee, building extensive experience in labor relations, faculty advancement, and shared governance.
- Spearheaded student success and institutional transformation efforts by adopting nationally recognized best practices, modernizing systems and processes, and strengthening pathways that improved student outcomes.
- Served as Accreditation Liaison Officer to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

Vice President for the North Hudson Campus & Student Affairs (2009 – 2016)

- Led the planning, development, opening, and growth of the North Hudson Campus, ultimately serving more than 3,000 students, while providing college-wide leadership for student affairs.
- Partnered with county leaders to establish the Hudson County Government Scholarship, securing a recurring \$250,000 annual investment in student access that remains funded nearly two decades later.
- Served as a visible and trusted ambassador to diverse communities, engaging students, families, community organizations, and civic leaders to advance educational opportunity and college-going aspirations.

Vice President for Student Affairs/Dean of Students (2006 – 2009)

- Led a comprehensive student affairs division responsible for counseling, advising, financial aid, student life, and federally funded student success programs serving diverse and historically underserved student populations.
- Served as Chief Conduct Officer, Title IX Officer, and institutional lead for Office for Civil Rights (OCR) matters, ensuring compliance with federal regulations and effective resolution of student concerns.

Associate Dean for Student Services (2003 – 2006)

- Supported Title V Hispanic-Serving Institution initiatives and led development of the college's student success course.

DL Capital – New York, NY

2000-2003

A private investment firm providing financial services in New York City.

Coordinator, Professional Development

- On a part-time basis, designed and led professional development programs for NYC's finance sector during a planned career pause to raise three children.

Saint Peter's University – Jersey City, NJ

1994-2000

A private Jesuit, Hispanic Serving Institution serving 2,500 students on a residential campus in an urban setting. Known for its commitment to social justice and student-centered learning.

Director of Campus Activities and Programs/Administrator in Residence

- Advanced student engagement and leadership development through innovative educational and cultural programming, while providing residence life leadership, crisis management, and mentorship in a mission-driven institution committed to social justice and student success

SELECTED BOARD & COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIPS

- **American Association of Community Colleges** – Board of Directors (2024 – Present)
- **The Community Foundation for a greater Richmond** – Board of Governors (2021 – Present)
- **Bon Secours Mercy Health System** – State Board of Directors (January, 2025 – Present)
- **Chamber RVA** – Board of Directors (2018 – Present)
- **Higher Education Research and Development Institute** – Board of Directors (2022-Present)
- **Henrico Sports and Entertainment Authority** – Commissioner (2024-Present)
- **Venture Richmond** – Board of Directors (2018 – Present)

SELECTED AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS

- **Liderazgo Visionario CEO Award**, *National Community College Hispanic Council* (2026)
National award recognizing visionary executive leadership advancing student success, educational opportunity, and the success of Hispanic students in community colleges.
- **Richmond Humanitarian Award**, *Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities* (2025)
Presented to those individuals who have demonstrated a personal commitment to the promotion of respect and understanding among people of diverse racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds.
- **Women in Leadership Award**, *Virginia Business Magazine* (2024)
Recognized for exceptional contributions to leadership and influence within the higher education sector, large employer category.
- **Aspen Presidential Fellow**, *Aspen Institute* (2023-2024)
Selected for the inaugural cohort of 25 presidents nationally to participate in a yearlong program dedicated to advancing transformational leadership in higher education.
- **Medal of Excellence**, *Rowan University* (2023) Awarded for outstanding alumni achievement and contributions to higher education and leadership.
- **Outstanding Woman Award**, *YWCA of Greater Richmond* (2023)
Celebrated for creating lasting positive change in the Richmond community through education and leadership.
- **Dana Hamel Leadership Award**, *Virginia Community College System* (2021)
The highest honor in Virginia's community college system, recognizing exemplary leadership, commitment to public service, and fostering access to higher education.

- **Aspen Rising Presidential Fellow**, *Aspen Institute & Stanford University* (2017-2018)
Selected for a rigorous ten-month executive leadership program for aspiring community college presidents, focusing on equitable student access and success.

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

- **"The Scoreboard that Matters: Reflections on Three Decades of Leadership in Higher Education"** – Keynote Address, Women Education Leaders of Virginia (WELV) Annual Conference, Williamsburg, VA (2026)
- **"From Reform to Results: A Disciplined Approach to Advancing Early Momentum at Reynolds"** – Achieving the Dream Conference, Portland, OR (2026)
- **"Culture Eats Strategy for Breakfast"** – American Association of Community Colleges, Workforce Development Institute, New Orleans, LA (2026)
- **"The Presidency in Practice: What Success Really Requires"** – American Association of Community Colleges, Future Presidents Institute, Washington, DC (2025)
- **"Moving our Mission Forward"** – Northwest Vista College, Alamo Colleges District Fall Convocation Keynote, San Antonio, TX (2025)
- **"Supporting Access and Completion for Adult Learners"** – The Hunt Institute's Virginia Education Summit, Richmond, VA (2024)
- **"Turning Data Insights into Action: Transforming How we Work"** - State Council of Higher Education of Virginia (SCHEV), Virginia Boards of Visitors Orientation, Virginia Beach, VA (2024)
- **"Head, Heart and Hands"** – Keynote Address, Rowan University College of Education Commencement Exercises, Glassboro, NJ (2023)
- **"Creating an Economy for All"** – Virginia Chamber of Commerce Summit on Education and Workforce, Richmond, VA (2022)