March 5, 2015

Board of Trustees

I attended the Community College League of California’s (CCLC) Annual Legislative Conference on January 25-26, 2015, in Sacramento, California.

I attended the following sessions:

**California Looking Forward: Why Equity and Inclusion Matter for All of Us**
This session analyzed how equity and diversity are intertwined, having key impacts on who is included in higher education. Manuel Pastor (the presenter) exclaims, “equity is about really difficult questions — the neighborhoods people grow up in, the schools they attend, the differences in the life chances of people who grow up ten miles and a world away from each other.” This session explored how funding and policy choices have too often created barriers to equity. Pastor discussed how higher education equity is the key to California’s economic future and something that we all must be concerned about.

**Closing the Gaps: Adult Education Partnerships and Implementation**
Adult education occupies a unique place in the state’s education continuum between K–12 and higher education. Over the last two years, adult education has been a key topic of reform with final recommendations for a new model of operation released this January in the Governor’s Proposed Budget. This session explored the implementation realities at play in making adult education reform successful. Both community college and K-12 perspectives regarding their key role in adult education were presented. Additionally, the panel discussed effective ways to advocate for an adult education model that is truly designed to serve all Californians.

**Community College Budget and Fiscal Update**
Governor Brown’s proposed budget plan endorses the work colleges are doing to improve student success rates, close achievement gaps, and outlines a vision to create a more coherent and coordinated workforce system. Key legislative staff, community college fiscal experts, and Administration representatives talked about Governor Brown’s 2015-16 proposed state budget, fiscal priorities of the Community College System and the State Legislature; and the opportunities and challenges facing state and local decision makers.

**The Democracy Commitment**
Brian Murphy spoke about the importance of California community colleges joining The Democracy Commitment (TDC), a national project aimed at ensuring that every community college student has an education in democratic practice. TDC is a national initiative providing a platform for development and expansion of community college programs, projects, and curricula aiming at engaging students in civic learning and democratic practice across the country. Its goal is that every graduate of an American community college have had an education in democracy. This includes all of our students, whether they aim to transfer to university, achieve an associate degree, or obtain a certificate.

**The Inside Scoop: A Discussion with Legislative Staff**
Legislative staff plays a critical role in the legislative process. Not only do they research potential bills, draft reports and briefing, but also they serve as the gateway to collaboration with legislators.
and policy committees. This session provided a forum for an insightful discussion with key legislative staff. We heard their perspectives on the higher education priorities, which are likely to be forwarded by the members of the Senate and Assembly.

Kimberly Rodriguez, Education Consultant, Office of Senate President pro Tempore Kevin de Leon; Monica Henestroza, Higher Education Consultant, Office of Speaker Toni Atkins; Kathleen Chavira, Chief Consultant, Senate Education Committee

A Conversation with Legislative Leaders
This session provided a forum for an insightful discussion with California legislators playing an important role in higher education. We heard their insight as policy issues take shape. From budget to policy initiatives, legislators have an enormous influence on our college and district.

Jose Medina, Chair, Assembly Higher Education Committee; Rocky Chavez, Member, Assembly Budget Subcommittee 2 on Education Finance

Higher Education Outlook
California faces a serious shortfall in its supply of college-educated workers. Improving access to higher education and boosting the educational attainment of young adults will enhance economic growth throughout the state. Dr. Hans Johnson highlighted his insightful research on the future of higher education and key steps the State needs to take to its outlook.

Townhall with Senator Block
The changing demographics of California have led education leaders to invest greater focus on issues of equity, access, and success. The legislature has mandated many changes for the California community colleges. This session was an intimate discussion with Senator Block to hear his priorities for higher education, specifically community colleges, during this time of important changes.

Keynote: Senate President pro Tempore Kevin de León
The 2015 legislative year is shaping up to be a critical year for higher education. Early in his first legislative session as Senate President pro Tempore, Kevin de León and Senate Democrats unveiled comprehensive plan to improve access to a higher education in California and help students afford college and finish their degrees. With student success, student equity plans, and a new growth funding allocation model, among others, it is clear the legislature is proposing major changes and priorities for California community colleges. Senate President pro Tempore Kevin de León shared his vision for higher education, specifically for community colleges and the state’s financial aid system during this time of important changes.

Attending the conference was a valuable educational experience, and allowed me the opportunity to share and obtain information with other trustees throughout the California Community College system. Thank you for the opportunity to attend.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard Watters