

Accreditation at VVC is critical

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For any number of reasons, Monday was an important day in the history of the Victor Valley, not least of which was the arrival on Victor Valley College's campus of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, latest step in the process of determining the status of the school's accreditation.

Last April two groups, California Forward and the California Stewardship Network, held a summit meeting regarding the economic future of the Inland Empire. The aim of that meeting, and 15 similar meetings regarding other regions of the state, was to fix California's economy — or rather, the state's many regional economies.

What emerged was a checklist of issues, seven in all, that the meeting attendees considered crucial to those economies and their recovery. On the list was what we consider the most important of all, even more important than, say, how to modernize government regulations that essentially block economic progress rather than help it along.

The most important? How to better prepare California's workforce for the 21st century.

On our Op-Ed page Sunday, Helendale's Richard Reeb wrote, in Valley Voices, that while selection of a college to attend could be critical, it was not necessarily the "best" school that a prospective student should concentrate on, but the one that would be most useful. In fact, Reeb said, it is not necessarily useful to many people to attend college at all. "Most students today enroll," he said, "because they have a well-paying or respected career in mind, a worthy goal. But the question always is, is college the best place to pursue that goal?"

"College," in Reeb's view and ours, does not necessarily mean a four-year school. It also includes community colleges such as VVC, where skills immediately useful in the job market are taught — nursing, mechanics, landscaping — and may well be the best option for those uninterested in spending four years in pursuit of a Bachelor's degree in a purely scholastic skill. History, for instance.

For those people, community colleges are critical to their future, and to the Inland Empire's future. Manufacturers are more likely to bring their operation to the High Desert if a skilled workforce is readily available.

Paul Granillo, president and CEO of the Inland Empire Economic Partnership (IEEP), wrote in the Riverside Press-Enterprise the other day that the Inland Empire "has the highest unemployment rate in the entire nation for a region with more than 1 million people — higher than even Detroit."

His cure for recovery? We must "invest in educational improvement." OK.

But of course High Desert taxpayers have already invested vast sums in "educational improvement" in pursuit of economic wellbeing. The question being weighed at VVC even as we

write is whether that investment is being properly managed and if Victor Valley taxpayers should continue to pony up for an institution that isn't paying the dividends sought.

We'll soon see.