

BCC, VVC hold joint talks

Meeting is a first for region's two community colleges

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Posted Jul. 10, 2015 at 5:46 PM

APPLE VALLEY — For the first time ever in the over 50 years since the colleges were founded, Barstow Community College and Victor Valley Community College held a joint study session Thursday evening.

The two college boards gathered together, along with other members of administration, at the VVC Public Safety Center in Apple Valley to discuss current and future collaboration between their schools.

VVC trustee Joseph W. Brady said the first meeting between the boards was a huge success, “far exceeding the expectations.”

“It was my proudest moment as president of the board,” Brady said. “I think that the meeting allowed both our boards to better understand what both schools are doing behind the scenes in collaboration already.”

VVC Superintendent Roger Wagner and BCC Superintendent Deborah DiThomas worked together to create a presentation at the meeting to give an overview of the colleges and spur further discussion on current and future joint projects.

“The most important outcome is that both boards concurred that the outcomes we decided we should focus on are good collaborative efforts,” Wagner said, “and that we should continue discussion in those three areas.”

Those three areas, as listed in the presentation, are the public safety center, CSUSB High Desert Education Degree and professional development. Professional development seemed to be the hot topic of discussion, as Wagner explained the colleges are planning to visit each other’s campuses to provide one another with professional development training sessions.

Tim Heiden, a 17-year BCC board member, said he gives all the credit the meeting's success to Wagner and DiThomas.

“Not only did they work hard to make it happen,” Heiden said, “but they also sold the meeting to both groups.”

Heiden said communication on Barstow’s end has always been and will continue to be good, and this recent development is something that will improve both colleges’ development.

“We’re going out there and showing the High Desert that we have two community colleges interested in promoting each other,” Heiden said.

Modern technology, Brady said, is forcing administrators to get out of the excuse that they cannot collaborate, and that Wagner’s leadership finally guided VVC to work with its sister college.

“It’s only going to make all our schools better and increase our graduation rates,” Brady said.

Amongst the teamwork on the horizon for the two colleges is shared advertisements for their respective fine arts performances and classes offered. The boards also plan to meet together more regularly to continue open dialogue.

“There’s been great effort between our superintendents. Now we want to see the boards do it,” Brady said. “I really hope that our board will adopt a policy that requires ongoing meetings.”