

Joseph Brady Speaks on the Economy and the Role Victor Valley College Can Play to Stimulate Economic Development

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By Nolan P. Smith

(Victorville)– With the second part of our interview with Victor Valley College Trustee Joseph Brady, we talk to the longtime community leader about the all important economy in the High Desert, and what part the community college takes in economic development for our region.

Brady was adamant to the college owning the problem of expanding the amount of skilled, educated, employable residents, and how best to meet the growing needs seen across the Victor Valley. Being a unique geographic area in its own right, Brady addressed how the college knows there is a disconnect between the education being offered at VVC to what needs the various sectors in the desert need.

“What goes on up here is our problem,” said Brady in a telephone interview. “You can sit back and complain about it or you can get involved. We realize where we are at, that we don’t have the level of education within our reach. Until we get that educated workforce, we aren’t going to attract the employers that we need to help balance out our economy; it’s not going to happen.”

As many think that the traditional sense of college is indeed not for everyone, there are far more pathways VVC has to offer besides earning a degree. Case in point being the many trades that are taught at the local college. From automotive to aircraft maintenance to the ever-popular nursing program, the college offers far more than most might realize at first glance.

One major issue that Brady touched on is transparency, and exactly what that term looks like within the walls of VVC. Being transparent has far more than one meaning, and affects far more than one group, as Brady mentioned how the board’s transparency to their teachers, their constituency groups, and of course, to the students, allowed for everyone to look at things in a different way.

“I’m all about the taxpayer,” said Brady. “I’m all about the voter. If we are going to talk a game about transparency, lets live by it. Lets not just talk about it, lets live by it. Part of that is saying, “lets have the conversation with the voters and have them tell us what they are thinking.”

Economic development has been a huge issue for the High Desert, especially since the closure of George Air Force Base all those years ago. VVC’s Board of Trustees and the Victor Valley College Foundation recently held a joint meeting which revealed that even though the college had reached out to some of the employment sectors here in the community, the need to expand and to determine what the needs are for employers was crystal clear.

“We need to expand and we need to really take a hard look at what do those employers really need from our college,” said Brady. “That’s number one. It’s not going to come with a 15 minute PowerPoint presentation. It’s going to be a sit down with the industry leaders within each one of those sectors. So, you can take aircraft maintenance. We know that we have some great companies out at SCLA, but what do their suppliers need? What do manufacturers need in order to compete?”

Of course, identifying the needs of all the sectors here in the High Desert is one thing, but meeting those needs is where a balance is needed. Brady explained how, as much as VVC would love to take on every job-creating category, they simply cannot due to capacity and size. The programs VVC offers can be quite expensive, with nursing being the most expensive by far. Yet, the program has an extremely high success rate, which demonstrates the balance between how much money can be spent and what the industry needs are, and how best to meet those needs.

Brady sees economic development as being something that involves all stakeholders: the city councils, town councils, and of course, the citizens of the High Desert. For a community to solve the problems plaguing the area, it will indeed take collaboration on a grand scale.

“Before we have the conversation of an economic development movement council partnership with VVC,” said Brady, “I would like to see VVC take a leadership role in holding city council and town council meetings in public, at the gym, with the council members. This way, we could discuss what we are going to do about our lack of education, our high amount of welfare, about opiate use, we have neighborhoods that are deteriorating, we have a bunch of issues that I think that the college could help be an independent group that allows our citizens and our voters to have some input.”

Brady is up for re-election as a Board of Trustee for Victor Valley College. Election day is November 8th.