
VVC has made great strides under Dr. Roger Wagner

By Joseph W. Brady / Contributed Content

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I find myself continually looking at the headline from the Sunday, July 16, 2017, edition of the Victor Valley Daily Press titled “VVC’s accreditation reaffirmed.” Why? Late on the night of Feb. 1, 2011 I was selected as an appointed trustee (yes, there is a difference between being appointed and ultimately being elected in the minds of some). At that time Victor Valley College was truly challenged with lack of leadership and direction.

The next three and a half years marked the most challenging days of my professional career in participating on a board that was severely divided and overseeing a college that was in serious trouble. There was continual bickering, arguing, and quite candidly a board that neither got along, nor wanted to work together. That board included my friend and ally, former trustee, and former Board President, Lori Denson, who I deeply miss. It was under her direction that we started to make some serious progress.

The wisest decision that our Board of Trustees has made since I became a trustee was the night in 2014 when we ratified the hiring of Dr. Roger Wagner. I consider Dr. Wagner to be the greatest President/Superintendent in the history of Victor Valley Community College and we have had some great ones, so it means something for me to make that statement. For three years, we were not only on probation with the Commission on Accreditation, we had a structural budget deficit (nearly \$3.5 million), our expenses were out of control (some of the expenses are still rather challenging based on how the state of California requires community colleges to operate), and we had a serious attitude problem, not only internally but externally.

The College suffered from a lack of trust on the part of many of our employees towards senior management and quite candidly we were just not working together as the voters who elected us and approved our bond in early 2006 expected us to do. Recently I spoke to Dr. Wagner about the great things that he and his leadership team have completed at Victor Valley Community College District in the last 12 months:

- We hired Tracey Richardson as our new Vice President for Administrative Services;
- Our ASB, one of the most noted ASB organizations for any community college or university in the country, held its annual retreat in Big Bear, this July;
- Adopted early registration policy for spouses of disabled veterans;
- Entered into a MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with Hesperia Unified, Victor Valley Union High School and Oro Grande Elementary School Districts for Dual Enrollment Program;
- Received Strong Workforce Grant \$1.2 million;
- Completed our Accreditation Self-Study and site visit;
- ACCJC (the organization that oversees our accreditation) announced full accreditation for 18 months. There will be a follow up in 18 months;
- Raymond Quan was hired as our new Director of Human Resources;
- Received \$200,000 Institutional Effectiveness Grant for Enrollment Management and Effective use of Data;
- We hired 10 new faculty members;
- Hosted the 2017 Youth Poverty Symposium;
- Began development of two new programs, Industrial Maintenance and Manufacturing;
- Opening and dedication of the Automotive/Welding Facility.

The Board of Trustees is elected to mainly hire their President/Superintendent, to adhere to the governing documents of the College and the State Chancellor's office, to set educational goals and physical goals and to ensure that we deliver the best education possible for our students, through our employee partners and faculty. Once these broad parameters have been established the Board relies upon the College's management, faculty and staff to do the difficult work of implementing their vision.

While we, like every other college in the state, will be confronted in the future with higher costs of operating, increasing costs for retiree benefits, as well as other challenges that may not yet be known, I truly commend Dr. Wagner and his management team, our employee partners, and our faculty partners for helping us make these great strides and I hope we will see even more accomplishments in the years to come.

I am proud to serve our community as a College Trustee and will always take pleasure in the organization's many achievements.

Joseph W. Brady is president of the Bradco Companies and a Victor Valley College trustee.