

VVC students impress leaders at Big Bear retreat



The Victor Valley College Associated Student Body Council for the 2015 to 2016 academic year gather together with guests Frank Mensel and Bonny Franke in Big Bear for their annual retreat. Submitted photo

By Charity Lindsey
Staff Writer

Posted Jul. 22, 2015 at 12:01 AM

Updated Jul 22, 2015 at 9:48 PM

VICTORVILLE — Guided by esteemed education leaders and Victor Valley College administrators and alumni, the students of the VVC Associated Student Body Council spent the past weekend in Big Bear for its annual retreat learning a variety of skills, from team-building to parliamentary procedure.

Amongst the guests visiting the retreat at the Northwoods Resort were Superintendent/President Dr. Roger Wagner and all five of the board's trustees.

“It was nice to be able to directly engage our student body,” board member John Pinkerton said.

Board president Joseph W. Brady and board member Brandon Wood participated as judges of presentations the students gave on the final day of the retreat, which mimicked the sort of presentations that are given to a governmental board, Wood said.

“I witnessed the ASB board working hard from 7 a.m. until well after midnight on all sorts of leadership and professional development subjects,” Wood said. “I was completely blown away at how hard they were working. I saw our future leaders firsthand.”

Along with a workshop on board procedures from licensed parliamentarian Bruce Bishop, Frank Mensel, a long-time annual guest of the retreat who was a key player in the enactment of the Pell Grant in 1972, presented to the students. His wife, also a guest speaker, is Dr. Bonny Franke, a former director for the South Carolina State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education. While the students expressed how much they enjoyed Frank and Bonny’s presence, Sciences Senator Chantel Picon saying that visiting with them was her favorite part of the whole experience. Franke said she felt she learned just as much or more from the students in return.

“I felt as though I learned a great deal from the students in watching, listening, and seeing the growth that took place and the willingness to go forward,” Franke said. “They taught me that variety is strength.”

Representing a range of different ethnic backgrounds, ages, and programs of study, the group of 20 students is diverse indeed.

“I think most importantly we all learned the commitment that we have for each other and for VVC,” Activities Senator Marco Aguayo said.

Aguayo said the retreat was “stressful, fun, and coffee-fueled,” with a lot of work to be done.

Among the things the students worked on was the compilation of a total of 405 “goals” that they all came up with, and the narrowing of those goals down to 13 core focuses, including advocating for additional tutoring for students and increasing campus events.

Treasurer Christian Bergman said that what impacted him most from the retreat was “the passion that the faculty at VVC have for their students.”

“It has shown me the expectations that I should reflect,” Bergman said

President Gabrielle Gallindo said the retreat was “an initiation into a support system of brilliant minds and motivated professionals.”

“No sleep and constant concentration made me both acquainted with my adrenaline, and this Council’s ability to work in waves of goal-reaching cohesion.”

Vice President Jazmin Gailey said VVC ASB is recognized as one of the best student body organizations in the country.

“We’re the best because we set our foundation before we even start the school year,” Gailey said. “Now all we have to do is build so we can advocate on behalf of the 12,000 students at VVC to make sure all our students’ voices are heard.”

Charity Lindsey may be contacted at clindsey@vvdailypress.com or 760-951-6231. Follow her on twitter @DP_Charity.