



"FUNdraising Good Times" Community college trends

By Mel and Pearl Shaw

Community colleges play a vital role in educating people of all ages across our country. Enrollments are increasing as people look to gain new skills in our changing and challenging economy. Those seeking a four-year degree are beginning their education at their local community college. They know they can receive quality education at a much lower price. At the same time, community colleges are facing challenges such as decreased state funding, and the need to provide services and scholarships not covered by funds from state government allocations or federal grants.

We wanted to know more about community college trends and so we reached out to Robert "Bobby" McDonald, a member of the California Community Colleges Board of Governors. If you have met Bobby you won't forget him! He began his education at a community college — Los Angeles Harbor College — and is a strong advocate for community colleges.

Mel and Pearl Shaw: What are current and emerging trends within community colleges?

Bobby McDonald: I really believe the most critical trend is understanding that the usual sources of income have dried up. (Reduced) funding from federal and state, due to our current financial climate, will force community colleges to seek that innovative and entrepreneurial spirit. Community colleges will have to revamp and outreach in the community, both public and private, to garner resources. It's no longer business as usual. Outside sources of revenue will be needed for program development, athletics and scholarships. Community colleges will have to build stronger relationships



and partnerships while securing stronger relevance, like the four-year institutions, especially in the fundraising arena.

Mel and Pearl Shaw: What is the profile of California's community college student?

Bobby McDonald: The profile of California community college students is as varied and diverse as the 112-campus system. The 2.9 million students range from high school students using the community college for additional classes or AP courses, to the returning veterans reintegration process with education, career technical support and adjustment, to the laid-off worker or career-changing individual who is seeking a necessary skill set change. The age group is from 17 to 68, more women than men, but very, very multicultural, cross-cultural and diversified, similar to the make-up of our communities.

Mel and Pearl Shaw: What do you envision as the future role of community colleges?

Bobby McDonald: The mission of the California Community Colleges Board of Governors is "Empowering Community Colleges through Leadership, Advocacy and Support." During these difficult financial times, the board will play a significant roll for the future, especially maintaining the precepts and enhancing the mission. We are forced to review, revise and re-evaluate the way we go to market. Key issues such as basic skills, transfer, career technical training, counseling and graduating are paramount. As we look into the upcoming "green era," major corporations are already investing in the community colleges to begin to train and educate students for these jobs. We will always be there for that second chance, for that new wave of technology and, more importantly, for that student or employer that needs that special training or help with training.

Mel and Pearl Shaw: Why

do community colleges need to engage in fundraising?

Bobby McDonald: In 2008, California's Community Colleges made history when they received the largest gift to community colleges. The Bernard Osher Foundation made a commitment of \$50 million to the California Community Colleges, which created a new trend in community college philanthropy, helping raise awareness of the need to increase scholarship support to California's community college students. With an additional \$50 million funds, raised by our community colleges and the scholarship endowment, the total could reach \$100 million.

The goal of the California Community Colleges Scholarship Endowment is to support student success and opportunity by creating a permanent fund for scholarships, offering long-term relief to the rising costs that keep many students from completing their education. Our communities need to actively support the fundraising goals of the community colleges in their area to help support a winning opportunity that has a clear total impact on our future.

Mel and Pearl Shaw: What are the challenges that impact district chancellors and college presidents as they begin the work of fundraising?

Bobby McDonald: Before our financial crisis, there wasn't a strong emphasis to fundraise. Now there is a need to find good development/foundation consultants, community organizations, grant writers and the like. The new breed of leaders now must look at entrepreneurial opportunities from the public and private sectors, in the communities, as a regular way of garnering resources.

Mel and Pearl Shaw: There must be hundreds of thousands of community college alumni in California alone. How can alumni get



Bobby McDonald

involved? What should they do?

Bobby McDonald: Hopefully, the directors of the community college foundations have been challenged and engaged to use the Osher gift as impetus to grow their college foundations. Now more than ever alums need to be asked to give and support. Whether it be a name on a building, a special art or science wing, an athletic field, a nursing facility — whatever is part of the mission and vision of the campus. Just ask!

Mel and Pearl Shaw: Beyond alumni, who should support and invest in community colleges?

Bobby McDonald: We are serving 2.9 million students. We are setting, maintaining and enhancing the educational opportunities for everyone in our communities. Veterans, continuing education, fire science and police science, criminal justice and nursing students, just to name a few, are being served by our community colleges. We serve everyone and anyone that wants to improve their business or their quality of life. Everyone should invest in our community colleges. It is the best investment in our country.

Mel and Pearl Shaw are the principals of Saad & Shaw – Comprehensive Fund Development Services and the authors of "How to Solicit a Gift: Turning Prospects into Donors," available at www.saadandshaw.com or by calling (510) 834-4310. ©