

OCCA Report
November, 2020
Doris Lathrop, Trustee

I attended the first ever virtual 2020 OCCA Annual Conference, “When nothing is certain, all things are possible”. Although we had some technical difficulties and it was lacking the in-person sharing, networking, and visiting with old friends, the keynote speakers and breakout sessions maintained the quality we have become accustomed to for an OCCA conference.

Eboni Meil Zamani-Gallaher, the Director of Community College Research and Leadership in Illinois, gave the first key note address. Her comments about diversity pinpointed for me how UCC’s faculty and administration are not as diverse as they could be. I wonder, can all of our students see reflections of themselves within our staff?

I also tuned into the break-out session with Greg Evans, Director of Equity and Inclusion at Lane Community College. It became evident to me that UCC could improve upon their recruitment, retention and support of diverse students and staff.

Thursday’s keynote speaker, Maria Flynn, the CEO of Jobs for the Future in Boston, is a national authority on the future of work, technology’s role in the labor market, career pathways for the underserved, and employer engagement. She shared some labor market reports, talked about career advisement and services at the community college and what role they should play, partnering with the local workforce board, etc.

The break-out session that I tuned into was extremely relevant as it outlined how Mt. Hood Community College dealt with the difficult decisions related to creating the budget for 2020-2021, making huge cuts in order to balance the budget with fewer resources. The board wanted to be involved in the budget creation from the start rather than having it presented to them when it was completed. They held a retreat to set budget principles, and established priorities. They created a committee to develop the budget that consisted of 50% administrators, 30% faculty and 20% staff. Their entire process was outlined during the session and was very interesting. We might learn from their process.

Friday’s program started with the Howard Cherry Awards. Ron Fox, Board Member from RCC and President of the OCCA Board, who recently passed away, was honored posthumously.

The Howard Cherry Award for the Outstanding Board Member went to Annette Mattson, Board Member at MHCC and Past President of OCCA Board. In her acceptance speech she noted that “Education is the ladder to your dreams”, it’s much more than the pathway to your career.

The award for Outstanding Community College Administrator went to Dr. Dana Young, President of TVCC, who was the first in her family to graduate from college.

The Oregon President’s Council created an additional annual award: The Cam Preus Award for Extraordinary Service to Oregon’s Community Colleges in honor of all the work Cam has done for community colleges statewide since 1997. Jim Eustrom, VP for Instruction at Chemeketa, received the first award.

The Friday break-out sessions dealt with coping in the time of COVID-19. The first year of college can be extremely challenging for students –and NOW the uncertainty of COVID-19 transitioning classes from face-to-face to online. The College of Southern Idaho (CSI) presented what they did to improve persistence with a required 3-credit General Education class. The format of the class allows for easy transition between face-to-face, hybrid, and online.

Again, OCCA did not disappoint with their quality conference. I hope all of our board members were able to attend at least some of the sessions. Thank you for allowing me to be your OCCA representative.