

AACC 21st Century Virtual Center

Icons of community service

Leaders & Training

By Terry O'Banion

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Community service has long been one of the outstanding features of the community college. Edmund J. Gleazer, Jr., president of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC) — now AACC — from 1958 to 1981, had long advocated for community service as a major priority of the community college. Under his leadership, the mission of the AACJC was newly articulated as such: “to provide an organization for national leadership of community-based, performance-oriented postsecondary education,” Gleazer said in the 1974 book “Beyond the Open Door.” In 1988, the association confirmed its commitment to community service in its landmark report “Building Communities: A Vision for a New Century.”

Featured below are four outstanding community college presidents, senior exemplars in their 80s and 90s, who remained deeply dedicated to community service long after their retirement. They each express a philosophy noted by writer Fyodor Dostoevsky in “The Brothers Karamazov”: “The mystery of human existence lies not in just staying alive, but in finding something to live for.”

Four senior exemplars of community service

All information about the following senior exemplars was submitted by these presidents and was edited by the author to conform to a standard format.

Donald J. Carlyon retired as president of Delta College in University Center, Michigan, in 1992.

Don Carlyon’s first job in education was Director of Men’s Housing at the University of Nebraska. He served as President of Delta College for 28 years and retired in 1992 at the age of 68. Today, Carlyon is 97 years old and still very active in the Bay City region. He serves on many committees and is a member of many organizations, often serving longer than his citizen colleagues. He is a founding member of a number of these committees and organizations. A few highlights of his years of service after retirement are presented here.

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Save the Theatre Project. Carlyon chaired the Friends of the State Theatre committee that saved one of only four Mayan-themed theatres in the country; at the time, it was destined to become a parking lot. Under his leadership, the theatre was fully restored and now is a focal point of downtown Bay City. The theatre houses its own ghost. See [State Theatre](#), Bay City, Michigan.

Add a Rare Statue Project. Carlyon, a life-long member of Rotary, created a project to erect a [statue in Bay City of Rotary founder Paul Harris](#). It is one of only three in the world; one is in Evanston, Illinois, and the other is in India. The statue in Bay City is the only one in which the founder is seated. [Click here](#) for more.

Restore Battery Park. When Bay City built a new library, local veterans became angry because the historic Battery Park was destroyed. A few years later, Carlyon became Chair of the Library Board and pledged to restore the park. The park was at an intersection in downtown Bay City and consisted of four diagonal sections, each with a Civil War gun. The guns were melted down in World War II for salvage. A retired hospital foundation CEO, Keith Markstrom, volunteered to work with Carlyon on the restoration project. Markstrom secured the original specs from the Army and had a local foundry build replicas of two of the guns; one was a copy of a gun from Admiral Farragut's flagship. In addition, Carlyon recruited Delta College faculty and students to construct a duplicate of an original guardhouse in the park. The guardhouse is positioned in one of the diagonals on the library side of the park and is used by the library to advertise library activities. [Click here](#) for more.

Bay Commitment Scholarship. Carlyon was a founding member of [Bay Commitment](#), established in 2002 to provide scholarships to first-in-family to attend college. The organization has awarded \$2 million in scholarships thus far.

Del Anderson Handy retired as president of City College of San Francisco in 1998.

Del Anderson's first job in education was Assistant Professor of Social Work at San Diego State University in 1969. She began her career in the California community colleges as a temporary counselor in 1972 and was Dean of Counseling at Grossmont College (1977-1981), Vice President of Student Services at Los Angeles Harbor College (1981-1986), Vice President of Instruction and Student Services at Skyline College (1986-1990), and President of San Jose City College (1990-1995). In 1995, she was appointed as the first African American and first female Chancellor of City College of San Francisco; she retired in 1998 at age 61. Anderson is 84 years old and is very active in a number of organizations. A few highlights of her years of service after retirement are presented here.

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Vice President for Strategic Planning, CampusWorks (1999-2001). [CampusWorks](#) was founded in 1999 to provide information technology services for the higher education market nationwide. Anderson played a leading role in creating the foundation for CampusWorks, secured the first three contracts, and now serves as a member of the Executive Advisory Board Emeritus.

Vice President, Board of Trustees, San Francisco Jazz Organization (SFJAZZ) (2012-2015). In 2008, the board of trustees voted to build a permanent home for jazz in San Francisco. In 2012, Anderson was elected to a three-year term as Vice President to help launch the [SFJAZZ Center](#), which opened in 2013. SFJAZZ is the only free-standing building in the United States designed and built specifically for the jazz performer and the jazz listener. SFJAZZ is located in the cultural arts district alongside other cultural arts, including the symphony, ballet, opera, conservatory of music, and theater.

Honorary Co-Chairs of SFJAZZ Gala (2018). Anderson and John Handy served as Co-Chairs for the gala that raised \$1.2 million for SFJAZZ arts and education programs.

Member, Board of Trustees SFJAZZ (2006-2015). As Chair of the Education Committee, Anderson led the effort to increase and maintain ethnic diversity in the SFJAZZ award-winning High School All-Star Band, and to broaden the SFJAZZ education footprint to include the Oakland public schools. Through a generous grant which Anderson helped to obtain, SFJAZZ provided jazz educational experiences to over 69,000 middle school students in Oakland and San Francisco for three years.

Member, Board of Trustees, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco (1997-2006). The [Fine Arts Museums](#), comprised of the de Young Museum and the Legion of Honor, is the largest public arts institution in San Francisco and one of the largest art museums in the United States. Anderson was a member of the Education Committee and helped raise funds to rebuild the de Young Museum after it was destroyed by an earthquake in 1989.

David Ponitz retired as president of Sinclair Community College in Dayton, Ohio, in 1997.

David Ponitz's first job in education was Principal of Waldron Area High School in Waldron, Michigan. He was the founding President of Freeport Community College in Freeport, Illinois, in 1962, where he served for three years. He was appointed President of Washtenaw Community College in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in 1965, where he served for 10 years. In 1975, Ponitz was appointed President of Sinclair

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Community College, where he served for 22 years. Ponitz is a rare leader who has served for 35 years as a President of three community colleges. Today, Ponitz is 91 years old and still very active in his community, nationally, and internationally. Here are some highlights of his service after retirement.

CEO, David Ponitz Consultants (1998 to Present). David has assisted many community colleges and organizations around the world to better serve their communities.

Informal Change Agent (1995 to 1999). In his last few years as President of Sinclair College and for a few years after, Ponitz joined with Ohio Governor Bob Taft and the President of the University of Dayton, Brother Ray Fitz, to increase opportunities for disadvantaged students and citizens. Their first project was designed to increase equity for vulnerable families.

The David H. Ponitz Career Technology Center (2009). A partnership between the Dayton Public Schools and Sinclair Community College established the Center to honor his leadership in career and technical education.

Joyce Tsunoda retired as chancellor of the University of Hawaii Community College and vice president of International Education of the University of Hawaii System in 2003.

Joyce Tsunoda's first job in education was Instructor of Chemistry, University of Hawaii-Leeward Community College. She was appointed Provost (Campus President) of University of Hawaii-Kapiolani Community College in 1976, where she served until 1983, when she was appointed Chancellor of the University of Hawaii Community Colleges (UHCC). During this period, Tsunoda also held the position of Vice President of International Education for University of Hawaii. She served in this capacity for 20 years, retiring at the age of 75.

Tsunoda was the second chancellor of UHCC. Her predecessor initiated the operations of the community colleges as a system, and shortly thereafter returned to his UH systemwide administrative role. As the Chancellor of the community college system, Tsunoda played a major role in creating an organization that was invited to join the League for Innovation in the Community College in 1996 as one of the most outstanding community colleges in the U.S.

Today, Tsunoda is 84 years old and continues to be involved in her communities in Hawaii and Japan. A few highlights of her years of service after retirement are presented here.

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Visiting Scholar, East West Center. The [East West Center](#) was established in 1960 by the U.S. Congress “to promote better relations and understanding between the United States and the nations of Asia and the Pacific region”. It is an international institute focused on research, communication, and scholarship on international issues.

English Language Learning. Tsunoda and her husband were born in Japan and Taiwan, respectively, and after retirement they shuttled between Hawaii and Japan. As Vice President of International Education for [University of Hawaii](#), Tsunoda became well acquainted with two-year colleges and universities in Japan and after retirement she reestablished many of those contacts. In her work Tsunoda had observed that students from Japan were quite knowledgeable about English grammar and reading, but were often not prepared to speak English. To address this issue, she taught English as an Active Tool of Communication at two Japanese universities. She established an English Learning Center at one of the universities and hired teachers from around the world who shared her objective to help students enjoy learning and using English.

Study Abroad Programs. Expanding her interest in students studying abroad, Tsunoda gained the support of a successful Japanese businessman retired in Hawaii to pledge a gift of \$1 million to the [University of Hawaii Community Colleges](#) to establish an endowment for community college students in Hawaii to study abroad. In Japan, Tsunoda continued her work in helping Japanese students to study abroad in short-term and degree-granting programs.

Translator and Biographer. Tsunoda retired in 2018 from the Japanese universities and since then spends her time translating the biography of her father who was one of the pioneers in Japanese professional baseball. She is also writing a sequel based on her mother and her Japanese American immigrant family. Both will be published in 2022.

Service is in our DNA

Writing about his travels through the U.S. in the 1830s, the French political scientist Alexis de Tocqueville frequently commented on Americans’ tendency to form voluntary civil associations. He was impressed by their desire to come together with their friends and neighbors to accomplish community, commercial, and personal goals. This was, he felt, an important foundation for the egalitarian and democratic society that he studied.

The four senior exemplars in this article have been significant contributors and leaders in service to their communities—throughout their long careers and into their retirement years. In so doing, they have helped firm the foundations of American

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democracy as de Tocqueville observed. In addition, it is also possible they have benefitted in preserving their memory and engaging in more social and cognitive activity. These are benefits that could accrue to many retired community college presidents who wish to extend their values and commitments long into their retirement years.

This article is a briefer version of the original article, "Retired Community College Presidents that Continue to Serve," that appeared in April 2022 in Profiles in Public Service published by the League for Innovation in the Community College.