



## Retired Community College Presidents Continue to Serve

By Terry O'Banion

Community colleges have been evolving for over 120 years and have morphed from culture to culture to meet the needs of their various constituencies. Initially, community colleges created a Culture of Transfer and a Culture of Workforce Training. A Culture of Teaching is perhaps the most embedded culture in the community college's history, fortified by the 1988 special report *Building Communities: A Vision for a New Century* declaration, "At the center of building communities there is teaching . . . thus building community through dedicated teaching is the vision and inspiration of this report" (American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, 1988, p. 8).

A decade or so later, community colleges embraced a Culture of Learning as their priority and proudly claimed to be Learning Colleges. More recently, creating a Culture of Evidence has held sway as community colleges have learned that they need evidence of their success to maintain their credibility with their communities, students, legislators, accrediting agencies, and foundations. And now, there is an emerging call for community colleges to establish a Culture of Leadership, which will be required to ensure that the other cultures survive (O'Banion, 2022).

Oddly, few community college leaders have called for their institutions to create a Culture of Service to their communities and profession, despite service having long been one of the outstanding features of the community college. In the late 1960s, a flourishing of reports urged community colleges to make such service a priority. Three seminal works on community service were published in 1969 alone: Harlacher's *The Community Dimension of the Community College*, Cohen's *Heretical Concepts for the Community College*, and Myran's *Community Service in the Community College*. In 1974, Alan Pifer, President of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, joined the chorus of advocates and stated, "Community colleges should start thinking of themselves from now on only secondarily as a sector of higher education and regard as their primary role community leadership" (Valencia Community College, 1974, p. 71). Edmund J. Gleazer, Jr., President of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (AACJC) 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, 1974, p. 68).

Under the advocacy of these national leaders, community colleges became more community centered in their programs and policies, and especially in the practice of service to their communities and profession by their presidents. Today, community service is required of

most presidents by their trustees. The statements below were extracted from vacancy announcements, job descriptions, and evaluations and illustrate the expectations that boards of trustees have of their presidents.

*Hartnell College, CA*

- Value building meaningful relationships in the local community and show a demonstrated ability to do so.
- Be an active participant in college and community life.
- Promote the College's role as a contributor to local, regional, economic, and cultural viability.
- Demonstrate an understanding of issues from a local, diverse perspective and implement ideas that are mutually beneficial to the College and greater community.

*Hillsborough Community College - Dale Mabry Campus, FL*

- Evidence of a willingness to be visible on campus and in the community, and to play an active role in college and community.

*Laredo College, TX*

- Bolster Laredo College's visibility as a welcoming Hispanic Serving Institution of higher learning throughout the region and position the College as an exceptional place to learn and work.
- Partner with industry, secondary and post-secondary educational and governmental entities to promote the economic development and growth of the region.
- A genuine collaborator who advocates for the unique needs of a bilingual and multicultural community
- An approachable and dynamic leader who is dedicated to the College, all students, and the community of Laredo.
- An entrepreneurial leader who builds partnerships with businesses and industry and civic entities in alignment with the College mission.

*Piedmont Virginia Community College, VA*

- She/he must also have a broad vision for the college together with the skills and energy for implementation, in addition to the demonstrated ability to work with representatives from businesses, industry, the government, and the community at large.

In today's community college, presidents understand the importance of their roles in participating in the community, whether they are in a small town in Idaho or a large metropolitan area like Chicago. They are involved in economic development, social services, political activities, and a range of services reflecting their own personal interests as well as serving as a community leader representing their college's programs and commitments. Most have enjoyed and prospered in their community service activities. Many community college presidents appear to observe the Rotary mottos: "Service Above Self" and "One Profits Most Who Serves Best."

Larry Tyree has been President of three Florida community colleges—Gulf Coast Community College, Santa Fe College, and College of Florida Keys—and Chancellor of the Dallas County Community College District (now Dallas College) in Texas. He retired to Orlando, where his wife is President of Valencia College. He recently said, "Best 'job' I ever had was

volunteering in Nemours Children's Hospital's Pet Therapy program here in Orlando with my dog Cooper until he got too grumpy. We did it for five years—once or twice a week—and I can't recall anything I ever did that was more gratifying" (L. Tyree, personal communication, December 30, 2021).

In this article I feature 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 the Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov* (1981): "The mystery of human existence lies not in just staying alive, but in finding something to live for" (pp. 306-307).

### **Four Senior Exemplars of Community Service**

In December 2021, I contacted 12 national leaders for their recommendations of community college presidents who had been retired for a number of years but who still continued to participate actively in community and professional service. I received about 20 recommendations, some of whom could not be located. With the help of colleagues, I selected the four presidents featured in this article. All four were outstanding presidents of their colleges and systems, with significant records of community service during their presidencies, who have been recognized for their local, state, and national leadership. Some of the service noted below overlaps between the time they were president and after they retired. But what is truly amazing is that long after retirement, all of them continued to serve their communities and professions as leaders—indeed "something to live for." Some of these presidents also held full-time positions after retirement, which are included in their profiles because these positions were service to their professions and to their communities.

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.

**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.

### **Other Selected Highlights of Service**

- President, Saginaw General Hospital Foundation, 1993-1996
- Director, Covenant Hospital Foundation, 1996-1997
- Honorary Member, Covenant Hospital Foundation
- Member, Bay Area Community Foundation Environment Committee
- 30-year member, Downtown Development Authority
- 16-year board member, Bay Area Library Authority
- 60-year member, Rotary Club
- 58-year member, Torch
- 30-year member, Saginaw Community Action Committee
- 54-year board member, Saginaw Bay Symphony Orchestra
- Member, State Theatre Fund Development Committee
- Member, Mid-Michigan Prison Community Committee
- Member, Bay City in Bloom
- Member, State of Michigan Committee Establishing Authority for Physician Assistant for doctors in Michigan

Carlyon's wife Betty served by his side throughout his career, becoming a model of how spouses can work with presidents to serve a college and a community. She hosted many special events for faculty and staff at the Farmhouse, the college-owned residence for the president. She was deeply loved by the faculty and staff of Delta College. Betty received the first local American Association of University Professors award for a person not employed by the college for her work in community service and with the college. Delta was a charter member of the League for Innovation in the Community College, and Betty became the "den mother" for all the League Representatives. She never missed a League board meeting and is the only person ever to be named to Honorary Lifetime Membership in the League. In 2021, her book *Curly Hair and Other Stories*, was published by Page Publishing. Betty passed away on June 27, 2018.

*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.

**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.

#### **Other Selected Highlights of Service**

- Executive Search Consultant, Association of Community College Trustees
- Consultant on Accreditation: California Conservatory of Jazz, Los Angeles Southwest Community College, and Compton Community College

Anderson is married to jazz musician John Handy. According to Del Handy, jazz encyclopedias describe John as a consummate world musician and teacher who has devoted his life to using music to elevate the human spirit. *The San Francisco Chronicle* wrote, "John Handy is living jazz history" (Selvin, 2006, para. 2). In addition to being a performing musician, composer, arranger, and bandleader, John was Adjunct Professor of Music at San Francisco State University and taught at other colleges and universities in the San Francisco Bay Area. He is best known for his Grammy-nominated performances and recordings of *Live at the Monterey Jazz Festival* and *If Only We Knew*, his crossover hit *Hard Work*, his cross-cultural composition *Spanish Lady*, and musical collaboration with musicians from India.

*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 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.

#### **Other Selected Highlights of Service**

- Mentors many aspiring community college presidents
- Advises organizations on fund-raising
- Worked with consultants on long-range campus plan for Sinclair Community College
- Advised staff at Sinclair Community College on how to make its drone program a major national program. The program is now the only such program with national certification
- Meets with several state legislators in Ohio on how to improve student success programs
- Helped write the curriculum for the Ponitz High School Career and Technical Center
- Meets with the Sinclair Community College Foundation on occasion

Ponitz's wife Doris was a well-known advocate for the arts, education, civic engagement, international relations, and much more. Doris's passion for education led her to establishing and chairing the Centerville Education Foundation. She founded Kids Voting Ohio and chaired the Dunbar Institute and the Dayton Philharmonic Volunteer Association. Following the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords, Doris made numerous trips to Croatia and Bosnia in an effort to strengthen bonds of peace. She also received numerous accolades throughout her life, including an Ohio Governor's Award for her community service. She was also the Honorary Chair of the Dayton Literary Peace Prize Foundation Board of Trustees. Doris passed away December 1, 2020.

*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.

**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.

Tsunoda has been married to Peter Taisuke Tsunoda since 1960. Peter was born in Taiwan in 1935 and raised in Japan. He attended Hosei University in Tokyo before coming to Hawaii to attend the University of Hawaii where he majored in accounting and business administration. Peter and Joyce met as students at the University of Hawaii and were married in June 1960 following their graduation. Peter used to be an avid tennis player, but his current exercise is daily walks with the family dog. He remains an avid sports fan and enjoys sports programs from Japan on cable television.

## **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 (Cummings, 2015).

Volunteering encourages people to help others and creates a sense of community among like-minded human beings who collaborate on the same activities. Community service is in the DNA of many Americans and has become embedded in the curriculum of U.S. schools and colleges. Service learning is a fairly recent innovation that allows students to volunteer in their communities in venues of their choice. Classes and seminars schedule opportunities for students to share their experiences and to learn about the programs and activities in which they can stimulate change.

Volunteering (i.e., participating in service to the community) is not just about helping others; research has shown that those who volunteer also benefit. In 2021, Haley Guiney and his associates in the Department of Psychology and Brain Health Research at University of Otago in New Zealand studied 91 retired 65- to 75-year-olds to investigate the idea that volunteering in the community might benefit cognition. The participants completed self-reports and computerized cognitive tests that tapped specific functions known to decline disproportionately with age. The researchers discovered that volunteering at least monthly was associated with better working memory and more social and cognitive activity (Guiney et al., 2021).

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 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. As Dostoevsky (1981) said, “The mystery of human existence lies not in just staying alive, but in finding something to live for” (pp. 306-307).

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*Opinions expressed in this manuscript are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the League for Innovation in the Community College.*