

For OCC presidency

Paradise offers Grecian formula

By MICHAEL MATUSZEWSKI
Paradise in Oakland County.

Michael E. Paradise certainly hopes so.

The diminutive president of Central Technical Community College (CTCC) in Hastings, Neb., is one of four finalists in the run for the presidency of Oakland Community College. He recently was interviewed by the college board in public session.

The 39-year-old Paradise stands only five-foot-three but comes to OCC with a tall reputation.

Paradise leads a novel institution. Prior to 1980 his college was strictly a post-secondary vocational school. It has evolved into a comprehensive community college and a recognized leader in individualized education. Paradise has been with CTCC since 1972 and assumed the presidency in 1973.

According to Paradise, the Nebraska college's programs are "completely individualized, mediated and self-paced."

"Students may and do enroll in the college every day classes are in session and may and do graduate every day classes are in session," he said in a European accent one might not expect from a man from the corn belt. Paradise was born on the Greek island of Crete.

CTCC's EDUCATIONAL programs and philosophy are non-traditional. The college has no academic terms.

Paradise said.

"Students may enroll, interrupt their studies and re-enroll any day the college is in session," he said.

"There are no traditional lectures and the college has no lecture halls," he said.

"Each student progresses in his studies according to the pace he sets for himself," he explained. "And he is advanced within both a course and a program according to the competencies he has mastered."

"The college's philosophical position is that it is the right of any individual to enter the institution and that, therefore it is the right of each student to choose only what he wants to take," Paradise said.

"Every day of the year is the first day of college on your campus if the person wants it to be," said OCC Trustee Suzanne Reynolds, explaining CTCC's philosophy. Mrs. Reynolds visited the Hastings college as a member of OCC's presidential search committee.

WHILE CTCC has attracted national attention, it was not until 1976, Paradise said, that the college was fully accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.

"Central Tech tried for six years to get accredited and they couldn't. That's basically because Central Tech is kind of a different institution. North Central wouldn't even talk to us," Paradise said. "Four years later, we were fully accredited."

Paradise, who is CTCC's foremost booster, said he would not try to implement the same program and philosophy at OCC.

"What works in Hastings won't necessarily work at Oakland Community College."

"You cannot superimpose a program from one institution to another," Paradise said. "Every community college is different from every other community college."

"Why?" he asked rhetorically.

"Because every community is different from every other community."

"This where the universities and other four-year institutions have failed. They've tried to create programs in one another's image," Paradise said.

LIKE TWO OTHER presidential candidates, Paradise differs radically from the late Joseph Hill, who was OCC's president for a decade.

Under Hill, the multi-campus college had been an inward-looking institution,

avoiding involvement with other schools.

Paradise advocates an active relationship with the community and the state legislature.

"It's important that the community knows that the institution is there and that it is interested in the community," he said.

"Sometimes we make the mistake that because the institution is there, people should know it is there. And that because we are there, they should come to us. That's not the way it works."

"We must go to them. And the president is the one that should give the first example."

Paradise points to a lengthy list of professional and community groups to which he belongs.

Paradise believes he can lead Michigan community colleges in their annual tussles with the state legislature.

He said that from 1971 to 1977 he served as the chief lobbyist for Nebraska's community colleges, with outstanding results.

"The community colleges had not lost a battle in the legislature since 1971," he said. "Last year was the first time that legislation was detrimental to community colleges since 1971 and I wasn't lobbying."

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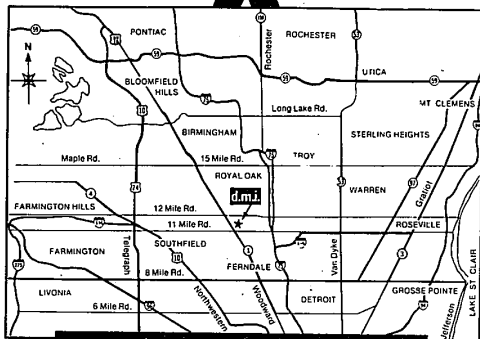
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