

# Tempers cool at OCC; Roelofs apologizes

Kathy Parrish  
staff writer

Oakland Community College trustees usually play to a small audience. But it was standing room only to see President Robert F. Roelofs apologize to the elected officials for losing his temper with them.

Instead of the usual two or three listeners, about 30 OCC faculty and staff members turned out to ask the president and trustees to mend their differences.

"The faculty is beginning to get concerned about the lack of harmony between the president and the college," said Al Bogucki, president of the 300 member OCC Faculty Association.

"Our concern is that kind of void could cause real problems for the college."

TWO MONTHS AGO, Roelofs and some trustees had words when they refused to approve immediately the creation of a vice president for academic and student affairs.

Roelofs' plan is to divide the present vice president for employee relations and academic affairs position into two jobs. Additional duties would be added to the academic vice presidency, which was approved 5-1 at last week's meeting.



Suzanne Reynolds  
"super cooperative"

Trustee Margaret MacTavish cast the dissenting vote, objecting to reorganizing the president's staff with his contract due to expire in June.

Roelofs apparently has privately asked the board for a year's extension. An argument ensued during the June board meeting after trustees asked for more information about the new position.



Robert F. Roelofs  
"I am sorry"

tion. Its net cost is expected to be an additional \$3,350 a year.

"In a moment of anger, President Roelofs said we didn't have to worry about renewing his contract because he didn't want to deal with us any more," recalled Suzanne Reynolds, board chairman. "He called us a wonderful name."

Reynolds said she was shocked by the comment. "I just hold in such high esteem a person in such a high position. I hit the gavel and stopped him. It all came to a halt."

ROELOFS, WHO received a very positive evaluation from the board of trustees last spring, wouldn't talk about the incident. When asked what happened, he replied only "Darned if I know."

But he started his usual presidential comments with a cryptic apology.

"We're all part of a college with the best record, proven by documented data the best anywhere," he said. "But we criticize each other and even resort to maligning one another."

Roelofs admitted he made a disparaging remark. "The fact that I and others have been the targets of other sarcastic and disparaging remarks in no way justifies that I did it."

"I am sorry."

PRESENT AT the meeting were representatives of the school's Academic Senate and OCC Faculty Association, which wrote Roelofs a letter about the incident.

Both groups praised the community college's accomplishments and asked for an end to the rift between the president and trustees.

"Academic Senate embodies a spirit of cooperation. And whatever rift exists between the president and the board I wish could be healed," said Dick Taylor, the group's chairperson.

The trustees also received a letter from the members of Roelofs' immediate staff. It expressed concern over "what appears to be a rapid deterioration in the relationship between the president of Oakland Community College and some members of the Board of Trustees."

"It is our fervent hope that the good relationship between the president and all trustees, that once existed, can be restored so that the entire college community may again devote their energies to the operation of this fine institution."

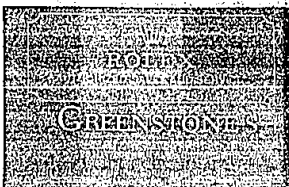
SAYING THAT "things had been running very smoothly" between Ro-

elofs and the board, Reynolds was pleased that so many people were at the meeting.

"Things have been running very smoothly. The faculty supports the president and board and college, and wants things to continue," she said.

Calling Roelofs a "very capable president," Reynolds said she is optimistic that the board and president have learned things out.

"I'm a lover, not a fighter. And I think especially educated people can sit down and work out their problems."



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— Al Bogucki  
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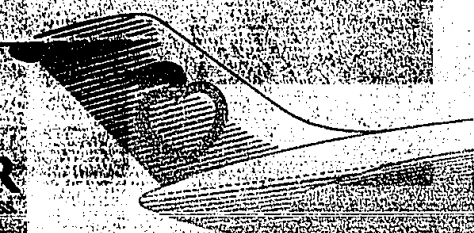
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