

Oakland Community College

9 vying for 2 board seats on June 10

oters in the Oakland Community College district on June 10 will elect two trustees from a field of nine candidates. Winners will serve six-year terms with no salary but some perks.

The seven-member board meets at least once a month, usually at 7 p.m. on a Monday, in the administrative center in Bloomfield Hills. Meetings are open to the public and to public comments.

The board adopts a \$100 million budget, hires and evaluates the chancellor, and sets college policy. OCC has five campuses — Royal Oak, Southfield, Orchard Ridge (near Farmington Hills), Highland Lakes (in Union Lake) and Auburn Hills — plus a Pontiac center. The budget was boosted about one-third when voters in 1995 approved a 0.8-mill property-tax increase for seven years.

OCC serves 30,000 students with two-year programs. Some graduates go into technical fields; others transfer to four-year universities.

Chief issue this year has been the board's decision last fall to terminate Chancellor Patsy Calkins. Sandra Ritter, one of the trustees who voted for firing, is seeking re-election. This has become the most discussed issue of the campaign.

Candidates were interviewed by staff writer Tim Richard and asked about their backgrounds in civic work, budgets and hiring, and their views on the future.

Persons who wish to see the candidates in person may attend a Student Coalition town meeting 7-9:30 p.m. Monday, June 3, in the Lila Johnson Theater on the Royal Oak Campus, 739 S. Washington. Audience questions will continue the program.

The League of Women Voters will interview candidates May 29 for cable television. Consult your local guide for broadcast times.

JAMES DOYON, 49, Huntington Woods. Instructor in speech and government and debate coach, University of Detroit Jesuit High School. Oakland County commissioner seven terms; chair of personnel appeals board. Henry Ford Community College (AA); Oakland University (BA and teaching certificate); University of Detroit (MA); other post-graduate credit.

"We fired a city manager, and it was an Us versus Them mentality. I view the last six months at OCC as the same kind of event. The focus should not be political stuff but how to deliver education."

"I'm not on either side of the line. I have an issues orientation — take out the politics. 'Budgets? I had 14 years on the county board where we had a budget of \$250 million — more than twice OCC's. I have graduate classes in public administration and fiscal administration. On the planning and building committee, we met with contractors on the jail and courthouse."

"At U-D High, I have a budget for the speech department and extracurricular activities — student congress, mock trial, forensics."

"What's happening with adult ed now (Gov. Engler is shifting it away from K-12 schools and into job training) — that's a new market for community colleges. I can see that at OCC."

"I don't know the union situation at OCC. Unions are not all bad; but we need to communicate." He has been a member of public employees unions and the UAW.

"The board itself needs to be. It plays two roles: policy and budget. The board should not micromanage anything. It should set policy and step back."

"I agree with the renovations (started with new tax money). Older buildings need to be renovated, and we need new technology."

"I know Sandy (Ritter). I know Anne (Scott), a Calkins loyalist. I can work with both of them. I'm nobody's slave."

JAN A. MACK, 35, Waterford. Operates a property management firm. Student at Oakland University. Graduate (liberal arts) of OCC; took part in student activities; AAU.

Scholarships prevented her from attending candidate forums sponsored by the Faculty Association, League of Women Voters and Student and the Student Coalition.

"Running and owning my own property management firm in Livonia gave me experience with budgets. We have one commercial property, with 16 tenants in a 20,000-square-foot office building. The other properties are residential, in various states."

"I have no formal training in hiring, but I have to deal with subcontractors in maintenance of buildings and must maintain relationships with our tenants."

"I am a member of the Oakland County AAU (American Association of University Educators) and was formerly a board member but had to resign for a family emergency."

"I volunteered to work with the learning disabled students in Waterford School District and won an award from OCC. I was an outstanding volunteer and outstanding student in psychology."

"At OCC we need to change the relationship between the board, faculty and mid-management administration. There has been major dissonance between the groups. That issue has been in the forefront, and students have been lost in the shuffle."

"Most of it was divided for and against Patsy Calkins. Minds have been closed. Faculty members have been doing what's expected of them and going by the book. Now is the time to move on. Dick Thompson (new chancellor) is capable of handling it."

"I attended OCC from 1991-94. I was on the Student Activities group, Phi Theta Kappa (honor society) and the Highland Lakes chapter of the Women's Counseling Center, helping women with problems they've experienced, finding child care, assistance in a divorce."

"We need a major p.r. campaign with business, the media and the college. The millage (passed in 1995) was for seven years. It's a short-term gain. Most of the publicity in the last two years has been about the dissonance."

SANDRA RITTER, 49, Waterford. Teacher, Waterford schools. Elected to OCC board in 1978, 1984 and 1990; chair, 1988-92; chair, Chancellor's Search, 1989; trustee, Michigan Community College Association, 1979-88; board, Association of Community College trustees, 1982-88; author of professional publication articles. Has taught in Detroit, worked for state Department of Education and as district staff of U.S. Rep. Bob Carr. U. of Michigan (BA), U-Detroit (MA), graduate courses at U-M and Michigan State.

"We're still the most expensive community college in the state, operating with fewer state funds. The tuition rate is still low. We manage that money very well. We're accessible, affordable and high quality."

"The millage approval says a lot for how the community views the college — we have confidence in you; you've managed on a shoestring. Now we've got to do the job — program development, renovations of buildings, new capital equip-

ment. "We hired a new chancellor over the Open Meetings Act. We're accountable to the public. We have a chancellor who came up through the ranks; he's open; people want to talk to him."

On the aftermath of Chancellor Calkins' discharge: "People are happy to be here. They know where they stand. There had been no vehicle to utilize the institutional assessment stuff; we got bits and pieces — reports on enrollment trends and diversity of students."

"So what? The reports gathered dust. We hadn't talked about the real issues of higher education. I look forward to improving it with Chancellor Thompson. The budget will follow the institutional plan: planning, budget, assessment."

Ritter had criticized the former chancellor for being unfamiliar with union dealings. She commented on Thompson: "We had a closed meeting Monday (on union negotiations). I could tell the difference in the way the issues were being presented to us (by Thompson). The board can weigh the information to set the parameters instead of being told 'this is what we're going to do.' It was one of the best discussions in a year. There was an immediate difference."

On criticism of her using a college credit card for personal expenses, Ritter said no board policy prohibits it. All trustees who did so either reimbursed the college or had the personal expenses deducted against reimbursements for college-related expenses. "It was myself who noticed I used the wrong card. I went to the college and game them the money; they didn't ask me for it."

THOMAS P. SULLIVAN, 58, Oakland Township. Dentist in Bloomfield Hills. Past president of Oakland Dental Society; officer in Michigan Dental Association and American Dental Association. University of Detroit (BSc, DDS).

"Accomplishments? Setting up an outpatient dental clinic at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Pontiac. We were able to get space, start a two-tier treatment program, we took care of indigent for the county. Member volunteers would staff it. Then it became a larger facility; then a teaching facility. The powers at St. Joe decided to close it."

"When I was a trustee of the Michigan Dental Association, we thought of a way to get non-dues revenue and started a for-profit corporation, which has a budget of \$1 million and a trust fund of \$18 million. We handled Blue Cross insurance for members, term life, disability and liability insurance, homeowner and auto insurance. I was treasurer (of the MDA Insurance and Financial Group) for six or seven years. I was on the committee to search for a president."

"My daughter finished at OCC in dental hygiene. I've hired quite a few products of the dental hygiene program. It's excellent. I just hired a woman of 38; she can go to school at night, hold a job and take care of her kids."

"There's concern about OCC in the community. People want some type of change. There has been friction between the board and chancellor. A couple of the faculty members are my patients. I'm sitting back as a taxpayer and saying, 'What in the world is going on? This camp and that camp.'"

"I'd like to see the board work in a cohesive manner with common sense. We need a strategic plan for the workforce of the future — facilities and technology. The students are the consumers. You have to offer what they want and need."

JEANNE TOWAR, 62, Royal Oak. Vice president, Crain Communications; publisher of Detroit Monthly magazine and Crain's Detroit Custom Publishing Division. Former publisher of Daily Tribune; newspaper advertising posts. Boards of OCC Foundation, Boys and Girls Club, Haven, Salvation Army, Women's Economic Club; Detroit Rotary, Adcraft, United Way.

"I'm a media person. I bring a business background. I've done a lot of hiring, and some of them have gone on to great things. I've made some good hires in my time."

Towar said, sitting several newspaper publishers.

"I read books like other people read books... overseeing department heads, tracking performance."

"I just got elected secretary of the OCC Foundation. We have undertaken Campaign 2000 to raise \$8 million in cash and kind. A lot of gifts we received are being used at the Auburn Hills Campus. We're almost at \$4 million. We provide scholarships. We provided funding for the millage campaign."

"I tried to tell the board (during the battle over firing of Chancellor Calkins) that it was detrimental to our effort. The board was totally insensitive to this. I put my butt on the line. I never was allowed to read that statement. I felt the foundation wasn't heard."

"The foundation grew under Patsy Calkins and Dan Jaksen's stewardship from five figures to where we can mount a capital campaign."

"My basic reason for running is that I have spent 10 years with the college. I want to send a message to Sandra (Ritter, who led the firing of Calkins) that it's not OK to conduct yourself that way. Morale at the college is low. They (board majority) are little people who couldn't handle it." Towar and John Wangler (below) are a bipartisan slate seeking to oust Ritter and form a new majority on the OCC board.

"Long term, we need to be on the cutting edge of technology. An area the college is not involved in is skilled trades — electrician and carpenter. There are job that aren't so glamorous; we need to prepare those for the future."

"That's one reason Brooks Patterson (county executive) is so vocal. This is a very, very important part of the county."

MARGUERITE FITZSIMMONS WALKER II, 44, Royal Oak. Attorney; general practice, corporate law, real estate; "self-employed working single mother."

Adjunct faculty at OCC for four years, teaching legal terminology and law office environment. Macomb Community College (AA); Wayne State University (BA, JD).

Unable to arrange an interview with the candidate, we publish some of her answers to questions at the faculty's April 19 forum.

"The major needs of the college are: 1) funding, 2) competition for students and 3) facility aging."

"The (voter approved) millage will be renewed at the end of this six-year term. But negative publicity about the college has obscured the progress the college has made."

"The board shouldn't be a rubber stamp. But it's not the role of the board to be creative in setting of policy."

"The differences in geography and demographics within the college community are remarkable. We serve a broad-based community (the county). We can serve those whose needs haven't been satisfied elsewhere."

"I have direct, hands-on experience as faculty. My first job was in a non-union shop at 23 cents an hour; they followed us into the bathroom. In the 1960s and '70s, I worked with Ken Cockrell in auto-related unions."

JOHN A. WANGLER, 69, Bingham Farms. Taught psychology and philosophy at OCC, 1968-92. Administrator in continuing education for U. of Detroit and OCC. Now works in building design and contracting; owned an operated a farm; worked in bottle shop at Stroh and Coca-Cola. Many professional memberships, including council and bar association. Team of faculty union. Board of Fox Manor (Lourdes Nursing Center), serving elderly; church pastoral council; Dads Club. Sacred Heart College (BA); U-D (MA); Wayne State U. (EdD).

"I grew up on a farm in West Branch, went to a one-room country school and was salutatorian in a class of two. I dropped out in 10th grade but (after a few days cutting wood) went back."

"In 1952, I drove a brewery truck from Detroit to South Bend. I worked part-time in summer and west to the University of Detroit and got an MA. I went into education and became U-D's assistant dean for continuing ed in 1964."

"I came to OCC in 1967 as assistant director of community services. I had to open 20 centers for credit courses — a one-man operation. After a year, there was an opening at Orchard Ridge, and I became department chair. I taught philosophy and psychology at the Southeast Campus System."

"I've been in every side of the spectrum — department chair, teaching, union council, union organizing. I'm fascinated with the college's open policy, the opportunity for a second start."

"OCC has been part of the family. Of the five chancellors I've worked with, Patsy Calkins was tops... I never saw a person with more dedication, no good of boy's club. She won the only millage of the last three chancellors."

"I was utterly disgusted with what happened last fall. It put a black eye on the whole college. There's gotta be two new members, or forget it."

Jeanne Towar and Wangler are a bipartisan slate supported by former trustee George Mosher and aided by County Executive Brooks Patterson.

"Don Tucker (former Democratic chair) and Gailly Longo (current Republican chair) got involved because they didn't like what they were seeing."

"We used to be one, big, happy family. Let's get on with the work at hand. The taxpayers are supportive. As for new Chancellor Richard Thompson: 'He'll move it along. Everybody likes him.'"

Wangler's wife teaches at OCC. He acknowledged he would have to refrain from voting on the faculty contract to avoid a conflict of interest.

ELLEN FERGUSON, Bloomfield Hills. Teaches phys ed and health in Pontiac schools 28 years. Church elder; past president of local Democratic Party; National Army advisory board; NAACP board; YWCA board; Pontiac Urban League; Children's Village; Michigan Education Association. Smith University, Charlotte, N.C. (BS); Michigan State U. (MA) and post-graduate work.

"I like fundraising. I've been committed the last five years to raising scholarship funds for underprivileged kids. I see so many kids who are dropouts. They don't have a lot of money to go to school."

"With my daughter Debora, a

psychiatrist, we formed a club called Women Extraordinaire. We're helping four students all the way through (four years) of college. I want to give something to the community."

"This year we'll probably give five scholarships of \$2,000 apiece. We don't focus on the 'A' students; we focus on the middle of the class."

"I coach basketball and track in middle school. Many of my kids have done well; some have gone by the wayside. Jan Simmons (OCC trustee) was one of my kids — she's done well."

"I haven't had too much contact with OCC in the past. I haven't done much with big-money budgets; the Salvation Army board had a tight budget. Hiring? We've hired in sorority ties and evaluated."

"I've done lots in politics, but this is my first time running. I'd like to be on the board, but I won't commit suicide if I don't make it. I don't take my personal feelings into a board. You've got to be objective; you're a policymaker. I don't know why they fired that chancellor."

"Some people in Pontiac came to me and said, 'We need a person to be fair. They (OCC) can offer a lot of folks a lot of skills. I'd like to see it a four-year college.'"

The widow of dentist Otis Ferguson Jr., she has three children, all medical doctors, and five grandchildren.

LAWRENCE D. KOHL, 40, Farmington Hills. Attorney in private practice in personal injury and franchising. Served on Wyandotte Downtown Development Authority. Grew up in Bloomfield Hills; University of New Hampshire (BS); Detroit College of Law (JD).

"I've never run for office. OCC is more of a challenge, more interesting. It has a greater diversity of issues (than other offices)."

"I grew up here. My friends attended OCC; I've been there."

My wife went to OCC and liked it. I live near the Orchard Ridge Campus, and I've been on the grounds. My outside interest were previously athletic; I want to devote more non-work time to this."

"I read *The Delirious Decade*, 1966-75 by Dr. Don Nichols (about the Orchard Ridge Campus). I never knew anyone would choose to write a book about a community college. I never knew there'd been a bombing there. When you look at it objectively, it (OCC) is a real success story."

"Our DDA budget was in six figures. We were involved in tax-increment financing. I didn't do any (executive) interviews there, but I'm all for (open interviews). I don't see where subterfuge ill help any body, in an institution supported by taxpayers."

"I'd like to restore, or perhaps increase, the level of trust among people who work there. We need to reduce the animosity. The divisiveness is a short-term problem."

Kohl said OCC needs to adapt. "I look at OCC no differently than someone in the car, business wanting to sell cars. You have to meet the needs of the community. Highland Park Community College no longer exists — it wasn't adapting."

"General Motor is starting automotive research on Opdyke Road. OCC is a mile down the road. Let's talk with GM — intertwine facilities."

"(Under welfare reform plans) as a condition of receiving welfare benefits, you need job training. We should be currying favor of state government to provide this training. We need to keep college affordable. It's a win-win."

(Kohl is the son of Konrad Kohl, whose law firm has done work for OCC. Lawrence Kohl is not a member of that firm, under anti-nepotism rules, and said he would have no conflict of interest in serving on the OCC board.)



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