

# State probes 2 OCC trustees — 'politics'?

By Kathy Parrish  
staff writer

Suzanne Reynolds' husband jokes about her "7-cent-an-hour job" as director of the Oakland Community College (OCC) Foundation.

Even her detractors admit the West Bloomfield resident works more than full time at the 15-hour-a-week position which pays \$7,200 yearly.

That "lucrative" job has made Reynolds the subject of a Michigan Attorney General's office investigation into a possible conflict of interest with her other role as an elected OCC trustee. The trust position is unpaid — except for 20.5 cc. a mile to and from monthly meetings.

"They certainly get more than they pay for," contends Reynolds, serving her second term as board chairperson. "I just believe in the Foundation so much."

BUT MONEY is not the issue behind the inquiry into two OCC trustees' possible conflict of interest and incompatibility of public position.

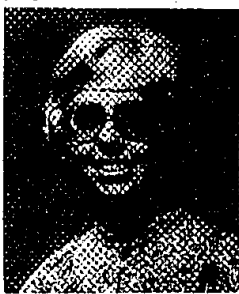
Also being investigated is trustee Margaret A. (Peg) MacTavish, a Birmingham resident who is a Macomb County Community College administrator.

Some observers charge "politics" because the investigation coincides with a college controversy over the board's refusal to extend its president's contract.

Both Reynolds and MacTavish opposed a request by OCC President Robert F. Roelofs, 68, for another year. That 4-3 vote by the badly split board created a furor on the college's four campuses, where Roelofs has strong support.



Suzanne Reynolds  
7-cent-an-hour job



Margaret MacTavish  
"It took me by surprise"

**'There is no special love relationship between Bob Roelofs and I. . . I just saw something in my district that didn't look right. I'd like it looked into.'**

— State Sen. Rudy Nichols  
who requested investigation

"There is no special love relationship between Bob Roelofs and I," said state Sen. Rudy Nichols, R-Waterford, who asked for the attorney general's investigation.

"I just saw something in my district that didn't look right. I'd like it looked into," said the freshman senator.

EXPECTED TO take several weeks — if not months — the ruling could mean the trustees stepping down. Or it might just avoid a similar situation in the future.

"It's not that unusual for a trustee to be affiliated with two public bodies in some way," said Gerald Young, assistant attorney general for the Education Division.

"But we don't get many inquiries like the Foundation one."

NICHOLS, WHO represents northern Oakland County, said he became aware of the possible "conflict" in November through an article in Oakland Business Monthly.

The senator said he questions the ethics of a trustee with access to confidential information about OCC working for a competing one like Macomb. MacTavish is di-

rector of human resources management at Macomb.

He also voiced concerns about the board chairperson making decisions about the Foundation, a non-profit group which raises funds for school scholarships and programs. Reynolds' OCC Foundation salary is paid through interest on a grant made to the organization.

"I would have requested a ruling sooner if I'd become aware of it," said Nichols. "It just seems to me there is potential for conflict of interest."

WHILE HE MET with Roelofs Dec. 10 — two days before the investigation was formally requested Dec. 12 — Nichols said the lunch at Fox and Hounds in Bloomfield Hills was strictly to discuss taxes.

The senator stressed that he and the college president have been on different sides of the fence on the issue of Tax Increment Financing Authority (TIFA). TIFA allows property taxes that would go to schools to be channeled instead into developing an area.

"We talked about OCC, TIFA, nothing about the trustees — not even a mention, a word," said Nichols firmly.

Roelofs confirmed that he knew nothing about the investigation until a month after it was in motion.

"I think it's extremely dishonorable to take something you can't prove and make something out of it," said Roelofs. "We talked about TIFA, that's all."

THE PRESIDENT said his only involvement in the investigation has been to answer questions posed to him about it.

Before becoming Foundation director in 1980, Reynolds asked him and the OCC legal firm about the possibility of a conflict of interest. Both assured her there was no problem.

"The Foundation and college are really pushing for the same thing. I don't know how it can be a conflict," Roelofs recalled telling Reynolds at the time.

Now, however, he does see a problem with the trustee receiving a salary from the Foundation. Roelofs has expressed concerns about the Foundation not bringing in

more money for the college, which he says has put \$15,000 to 20,000 a year into the organization.

"The money she receives is college money, whether it's laundered through the Foundation or not," he said. "It's probably not a legal violation, but a violation of the spirit."

ROELOFS IS NOT so charitable about MacTavish's possible conflict of interest. A former employee of his at Macomb whom he encouraged to join the OCC board, the Birmingham trustee is no longer one of his favorite people.

He traces their difficulties to a presenta-

tion in which he used state data to show that OCC is the best performing college in the state.

From that point on, Roelofs believes MacTavish began doing a "whole string of things which could be an effort to hamper our ability to function well and help Macomb."

He pointed specifically to her concerns about some parts of a contract between OCC and UAW-GM to locate a UAW-GM Resource Center on the Auburn Hills campus. Other schools were vying with OCC for the site.

"Macomb is my explanation for her actions," said Roelofs.

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