

# OCC trustee candidates make pitch for faculty support

By TIM RICHARD  
STAFF WRITER

One candidate for trustee seat ripples of surprise through the Oakland Community College Faculty Association by saying he would "decline" the union's endorsement.

Most others, including the challenged incumbent, said faculty interests were close to college interests and welcomed union support.

Six of the nine candidates for two seats in the June 10 election showed up April 19 for a dinner-hour meeting with a few dozen of the college community on OCC's Orchard Ridge Campus in Farmington Hills.

Charles Neumann, the math instructor who heads OCCFA, said later the union is divided on whether to make endorsements this year. In 1994 OCCFA, an affiliate of the Michigan Education Association, and other unions teamed up to support two winning candidates for the OCC board of trustees. OCCFA and the college currently are negotiating on a new contract.

Candidates expressed their views through answers to questions in the debate style interview. The candidates were asked these questions:

Why should OCCFA endorse you?

John Wengler, retired OCC instructor and administrator from Beverly Hills, said, "I'm opposed to in-house union support. It sends the wrong message. I would decline an endorsement."

Wengler described himself as a "life-long union member" who served on OCCFA's council and



James Doyon

bargaining team prior to his retirement in 1992.

Wengler and Jeanne Tower, who didn't attend, are part of a bipartisan slate working to unseat incumbent trustee Sandra Ritter.

James A. Doyon, a former Democratic Oakland County commissioner, said he had run for that post with endorsements from both labor and the chamber of commerce, but added, "If you want to pull my string, I'm not your candidate. I'm an objective decision-maker. I'll listen to you, whether or not you endorse me. I don't believe authoritarian management is good," said Doyon, now a teacher at U-D High, a Jesuit-run school.

Early in his career, he said he was a member of UAW Local 227 and AFSCME, the municipal employees union.

Lawrence Kohl, who lives in Farmington Hills and practices law in Royal Oak, said OCC interests are "in line with those of the faculty — providing education to those who attend. I will advocate the institution as best I can," said



Sandra Ritter

Kohl, adding he has represented many United Auto Workers members and has "a particular affinity for the UAW."

"I'll take your endorsement," said Ritter, a Waterford public schools teacher and three-term incumbent on the OCC board. "I would like everyone to recognize we have the same interest — the students."

Ritter promised to listen to the faculty and respond but added "It's not always the way you like." Ritter told of attending union meetings in her girlhood with an aunt and willingly signing up with the American Federation of Teachers and MEA.

Dr. Thomas Sullivan, a dentist from Rochester Hills with a practice in Bloomfield Hills, said, "I hope your endorsement would be based on what I can give to OCC," adding he was a union member seven years before becoming a dentist.

Marguerite Walker II, a Royal Oak attorney and former part-time faculty member, said she had "direct hands-on experience



Thomas Sullivan

as faculty" with OCCFA and was a member of the American Association of University Professors at Wayne State University. Walker told of associations with the late Kenneth Cockrell in auto-related unions in the 1960s and '70s.

No-shows, besides publishing executive Tower, were Ellen Ferguson, a Pontiac junior high teacher who lives in Bloomfield Hills, and Jan Mack, a former student from Waterford making her second bid for the OCC board.

Would you vote to reinstate Patsy Calkins as chancellor?

The OCC board, led by Ritter,



Marguerite Walker II

fired Dr. Calkins last fall, causing a major political upheaval across the county, leading to a failed effort to recall five board members and resulting in the current effort to unseat Ritter.

Doyon: "I'm not here to fire or hire. If I fire someone, the person will know all the reasons. I have no problems with the Open Meetings Act."

Kohl: "I'm not privy to all the information on what happened to her. I can't say in good conscience."

Ritter: "I would not vote to reinstate. My reasons: She did not



John Wengler

keep the board informed. She had no plan for the millage (the property tax hike approved last June 12 by voters). The budget was in disarray. She circumvented board policy."

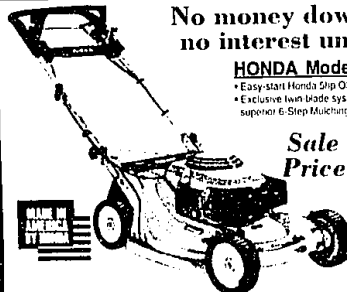
Ritter accused Calkins of carrying the fight to the news media, soiling OCC's reputation.

Sullivan: "I couldn't make a decision. It (firing) portrayed a negative image (of OCC)."

Candidates are quoted in the order in which they spoke. Watch for this newspaper's interviews with all nine candidates.

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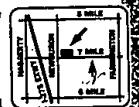
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