

Candidate says OCC board needs more cohesion

On June 12, Oakland voters will elect two people from a field of six to the Board of Trustees at Oakland Community College, which has about 24,000 students at five campuses. This is the first in a series of brief profiles on the candidates and their respective positions.



John Wangler

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Four years ago, Bingham Farms resident John A. Wangler came within 130 votes of winning a spot on the Oakland Community College Board of

Trustees. detected, he was informed he had lost.

The experience didn't leave Wangler bitter. It left him determined. "This time I'm better organized," he said last week as he talked about being one of six candidates vying for two seats on the board of trustees.

Wangler, 72, said his experience as an educator — coupled with extensive community involvement — give him a unique perspective to bring to the board. He taught psychology and philosophy at OCC for 24 years before retiring in 1992.

CANDIDATE PROFILE

Prior to that he was an associate dean at the University of Detroit and a teacher and director of adult education in the Berkley School District.

He's on the board of directors at the Fox Manor Nursing Center and he's active at Shrine High School in Royal Oak where he's on the board of education and a member of the Dad's Club.

While at OCC, Wangler was

also active in OCCFA (Oakland Community College Faculty Association) and helped draft the first Faculty Master Agreement in 1968.

Wangler still teaches psychology on a part-time basis. His wife Theresa, a nurse, teaches medical classes as well as psychology.

Wangler said his direct and indirect involvement at OCC helps him understand day-to-day operations at the college. It has also convinced him change is needed on the board.

The current board lacks cohesion, Wangler insisted, and there

is a morale problem within the ranks of some managers and administrators. Morale is important, he said, because people perform better when they feel like they are part of the team.

Asked to elaborate, Wangler declined. "I'm running a positive campaign," he said, "but there's definitely a need for change."

For one thing, Wangler said he'd like assurances that taxpayers are getting the most for tax dollars and that students are getting the most for their tuition. "I'm prepared to campaign on behalf of the millage renewal," he said, referring to the election in June, 2001, when voters will be asked to renew the millage that provides 18 percent of the OCC operating budget, \$116 million.

"But before I ask voters to approve it," Wangler continued, "I want to make sure we're getting the most out of what we have."

Wangler said he's fascinated with continuing development in education, such as the growing trend toward so-called "distance learning," the name given to courses taught or augmented with television, the Internet or other technological advances.

"Distance learning provides great opportunities," Wangler said. "But it's not for everybody. It's no panacea."

Wangler is not particularly disturbed by the drop in enrollment at OCC. Since the fall of 1991, when nearly 30,000 students attended one or more of the five campuses, enrollment has fallen to about 24,000.

"We've experienced prosperous times," he said, "and history shows that fewer people enroll in classes when times are good."

Wangler said his major concern is delivering the best possible education. Enrollment will take care of itself, he said.

The Wanglers have three grown children — John, Marian and Dan — and eight (soon to be 10) grandchildren.

Other candidates are incumbents Carol L. Crew and Pamela Davis, and challengers Richard J. Akehurst, Athena Dumas-Lawrence and Marjorie Nanian Mugerian.

OCC BRIEFS

The Oakland Community College Board of Trustees concluded the long process of evaluating Chancellor Richard Thompson recently in a closed session. Thompson had requested the meeting be held behind closed doors, as he is allowed to do under the Open Meetings Act.

At the conclusion of the session, trustees returned to open session and announced the results of the evaluation, ranking Thompson's performance as average to above average. The board then unanimously voted to give the chancellor a 3.5 percent pay increase.

The vote concludes a long process of revising the chancellor's evaluation process. A subcommittee, headed by Trustee Judith Wisner, has been reworking the evaluation process since last year, when the board split on votes to extend the chancellor's contract and increase his salary. Trustees Jan Simmons and Anne Scott had opposed the earlier pay increase. Simmons also opposed the contract extension.

SENDING A MESSAGE: Board members of Oakland Community College objected April 17 to plans by the Michigan Community College Association to hike membership dues 3.4 percent.

Noting the state has put a requirement on the colleges to keep tuition rates within the rate of inflation, 2.2 percent, Ritter pointed out that the jump in membership dues for the MCCA exceeds that amount.

Trustee Anne Scott, who represents OCC to the MCCA, defended the increase, noting that the association's overall budget is up just one percent over the previous year.

But OCC trustees decided to send a message to the association, voting 6-2 to instruct Scott to vote against the MCCA's coming year budget at its next meeting.

OCC belongs to the association, along with all other community colleges in Michigan, for support and lobbying services. Because dues are based partly on enrollment, OCC is the largest dues payer in the association.

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