

Tualatin Tomorrow

COMMUNITY EDUCATION FORUM

Summary Notes | April 3, 2013

Mayor Ogden welcomed everyone to the Tualatin Tomorrow Community Education Forum. Mayor Ogden introduced Chair Candice Kelly from the Tualatin Tomorrow Advisory Committee as well as the other Advisory Committee Members in attendance Adam Butts, Dana Terhune, Linda Moholt, Larry McClure, and Ed Casey. He thanked Tigard-Tualatin School Board Member Dana Terhune for serving on the Tualatin Tomorrow Advisory Committee and also welcomed the other School Board members in attendance, Maureen Wolf and Barry Albertson. He welcomed the new incoming superintendent for the Tigard-Tualatin School District (TTSD), Ernie Brown.

The issue of education and lifelong learning is important to the community; children need to be educated to be prepared for the workforce, and continuous ongoing learning for adults.

Panel Introductions:

Karen Twain, Director of Alternative Services for TTSD

Dr. Linda Gerber, President of Portland Community College (PCC) Sylvania Campus

Lita Colligan, Associate Vice President for Strategic Partnerships and Government Relations at the Oregon Institute of Technology

Trish Hennon, Vice President of Human Resources at Precision Wire Components

Jay Anderson, Superintendent of Horizon Christian Schools

Bob Hanks, Executive Director for the PCC CLIMB (Continuous Learning for Individuals, Management and Business)

Q: How has the community colleges' role changed? And how are community colleges strengthening the connection between classroom and career?

Bob Hanks: At the CLIMB Center there are two programs for workforce development and life by design. The curriculum is now starting at the high school level to get kids started early. Their programs also offer assistance for people to develop additional skills at the workforce level. An example of their continuing education services are courses for nurses who need continuing education and maybe only require a class or two.

Linda Gerber: She added that PCC offers a lot of continuing education options in addition to what the CLIMB programs and other institutions offer. She said one of the rapid changes will take place in the health care sector due to the affordable health care act. The prediction is that Oregon will need many more health care workers in the future because people will begin to have better access to health care. Community colleges have the flexibility to provide this level of education; however, funding these programs will be a challenge.

Lita Colligan: She commented that there is a huge focus on community colleges at the national level that previously wasn't there before. OIT has a very strong relationship with the community colleges, and they work together to offer a dual enrollment program for students.

Q: What is workforce development and how has it evolved?

Trish Hennon: Workforce development is a partnership between businesses, education and the community. She said her company has had a difficult time accessing the training the employees have needed over the past few years. The awarding of grant dollars for these curriculum programs has been very valuable to meet the needs of their business.

Lita Colligan: Workforce development is really continuous training from birth all the way through the workforce. Many of the dollars for these programs have been cut. Advocacy efforts coming from the community to maintain or enhance funding for workforce development programs is really important.

Q: Education institutions are often viewed as the arbiter of student supply and workforce demand. How can the Tualatin community help education institutions develop and implement strategies that meet both the needs of a diverse population and the needs of businesses to fill highly skilled, livable-wage jobs?

Trish Hennon: I think it needs to start in the K-12 schools. The technology/technical education is so important, and this is where the focus needs to be. The students who graduate with Science, Technology, Engineering or Math (STEM)degrees is such a small fraction and that is not going to supply the jobs we need moving forward. People will retire, and there will be no one who will be able to fill those jobs. During National Engineering month, at least 29 technology companies participate to reach out to young students and spark interest in learning about science and engineering. The engineers in our company love participating in this program and the kids get really excited about science and technology.

Linda Gerber: I think there are opportunities for everyone to participate; there are needs for volunteers for the robotics programs in the schools. One demographic we do not see represented in this group is girls. Overall, more students need to be interested in STEM.

Jay Anderson: A little uncomfortable with the question with what business needs, and I think it should start with, "What's best for kids?" Horizon has a program which looks at the different kinds of smart a student has. Every student is smart, and one of the things they do is to help kids discover what their purpose is, and how they can invest in the world. How can we develop the basic competencies of these students? I believe we need to maintain this focus on the students' needs.

Karen Twain: It's a lot of responsibility for the schools, and it can't just start in high school. Full day kindergarten is starting soon after being recently passed by the Oregon Legislature. The schools are starting earlier. The most interesting part of this question to me is the diversity piece. Not all students are as advanced as others. At TTSD, we have many kids from different ethnic backgrounds and many kids who live in poverty. Many of these kids don't know what an engineer is. We frequently talk about closing the achievement gap and try to get these kids into advanced programs. In talking about partnerships, it is important that people from the community approach us about partnering on things. An example from local 290 is where the kids have an opportunity to learn technical skills about HVAC, plumbing, etc. This is a great example of the kind of partnership where the company reached out to the school and had a great idea. The school district is busy doing what they can, but they are always open to partnerships. STEM has been a learning experience and the schools understand the needs in these areas.

Lita Colligan: OIT has formed a partnership, and they have 13 school districts, community colleges, etc. to try and get more kids involved in STEM. They are working on engaging companies to participate in the effort to help encourage kids. This program can be the connector between kids and the community resources.

Bob Hanks: There are not many people who consider manufacturing to be an attractive job. There aren't enough students who can fill these jobs. People should consider focusing some students or their kids on these jobs because not everyone is cut out for a 4-year degree.

Linda Gerber: Many of these types of programs have been cut because they don't fill up and they aren't glamorous. Many students who aren't academics get lost in the school system and often drop out. Career Technical Education (CTE) are programs centered in the high school. These jobs are high tech jobs which require a lot of skills. They are coming back particularly in Oregon.

Q: Do you think college is for everyone?

Karen Twain: Today I took a group of students down to Salem. All of these students (aged 15-18) have children of their own. This question often stumps people, and they have different answers. The state has laid out this 40-40-20 rule. Some kids say my main focus is providing for my child, but I realize why college is important. Sometimes the timing matters and kids can be more serious a little bit later down the line. What's most important is providing the opportunity for college when they are ready.

Linda Gerber: We have many students who already have their bachelor's degrees which come back to the community colleges to attain more technical education- nurses are a great example of this. It is important to keep the whole picture in mind because not all (or even a majority) of the jobs are STEM jobs in Oregon, however there is a desperate need for people to fill STEM jobs at the moment.

Bob Hanks: It is frequently about finding the passion and then finding the education path to get there.

Lita Colligan: It is really competitive right now. You shouldn't go into STEM if you are not passionate about it; however, there are currently so many more STEM jobs and not enough qualified candidates.

Trish Hennon: During the highest period of unemployment, we were hiring but couldn't find people to fill the positions because they were STEM jobs. If a kid never has exposure to something fun related to engineering, then they will never be interested in these fields. Sparking the passion is important, and the businesses can help to spark that passion.

Linda Gerber: There is a natural world of science and really interesting stuff, and all too often students don't get to experience that. Having people in the community share this information directly with the students is really helpful. For many students, there is no one in their family or their world that are in these professions, so the students don't consider it. Students don't always see the possibilities, and so they need mentors who can say, "you will be a great scientist." We need to expand their universe.

Q: What can Tualatin do as a community to help your institution prepare young people for their eventual careers?

Lita Colligan: We have touched on a lot of this. The state has added more of this in the standards. Teachers are the conduits and more teachers need to be exposed to STEM jobs. Bringing teachers into internships to learn more about these companies could be really helpful. That is another opportunity to engage students and the community.

Karen Twain: Lita organized a tour of companies who are doing exciting technical work, and teachers had the opportunity to go on this tour and be exposed to some really cool things that are happening at these companies. It would be great to continue to expose teachers and kids to these companies. You don't know these possibilities and the exposure helps to see what is possible.

Q: How would you assess the continuing education needs for the "50 and Better" population? Do you see this as a strong future need for our education institutions to explore? Perhaps even degree/accreditation courses?

Linda Gerber: PCC put together a task force to discuss this issue. So many retirements were anticipated, but with the economy that never happened. PCC talked about how to develop training for second careers. "Life by Design" was a program which grew out of that. PCC's average age is 35, yet we have a lot of students who are over 50.

Bob Hanks: Life by Design is a program to help baby boomers transition to the next phase of their life.

Small Business Development- encore 50+, we guide them through a process of looking at opportunities and business development. They hold classes on writing business plans, dealing with financials, human resource issues, and other items related to running a business. We also look at tools for financing a business.

Q: How do we address the funding issues and the expense of paying for higher education?

Lita Colligan: We try to do a lot to address the issue by offering dual credit programs at the high schools, but it requires a lot of work to put those programs together and the schools are staffed so lean.

Jay Anderson: In the climate of making cuts, there are so many programs which get cut and these items make a well-rounded education. Karen painted a picture earlier about the buses going out to discover these different fields. It is difficult to do these things in a climate where you are only focused on test scores and achieving reading, writing, and text scores.

Karen Twain: There is a lot of pressure felt by kids, parents, and teachers to get the kids up to par in reading, writing and math. So many other subjects and extracurricular activities get put off to the side.

Beth Roach (Audience Member): I participated in Women in Engineering high school and that is the reason why I went into engineering. However, high school is too late. Do you still see a gap in gender?

Lita Colligan: It's about 17% nationwide.

Trish Hennon: We have one female engineer out of 20. However, our female engineer is a Girl Scout leader, and is constantly trying to expose young women to science and engineering.

Lita Colligan: There has been a passion for engineering among women when it comes to renewable energy.

Kevin O'Malley (Audience member): Many of our businesses don't know where to turn for some of these resources, how can we do a better job of informing people where to access these programs?

Lita Colligan: At the state level, that is what the business development program is for. The first thing I did was meet with the Mayor and the City Manager, and local economic development teams. However, you're

right, the resources are really spread out and can be difficult to navigate what program best meets your needs.

Mayor Ogden thanked the panel members for their time. He said we will be continuing this discussion about the vision for education and the overall vision for the community this summer during the update of the vision plan.