

President's Report February 2014

Construction

Ferrell/Brown will provide us a formal update at the meeting. Construction on the Del Rio Campus is wrapping up. We have furniture scheduled to come in during this month for the Admin building. The Academic building is not far from completion. The general contractor estimates to be done by Spring Break. We will have a short reprieve until school breaks in May. Once classes are done for the semester we will proceed with moving the existing portable building and allow the general contractor to continue with new parking area in front of the new Admin building.

Future Expansion

We continue to work with architects, financial advisors and bond counsel to finalize the documents for our bond issue and next round of construction projects.

Crystal City – We have explored many options for the Crystal City Campus and have come up with construction challenges. The most recent option of placing the new library upfront presents us with the possibility of creating a dam of sorts. It appears that entire downtown area drains toward the south and placing the library across this area raises the possibility of future flooding into our facilities. We will discuss in more detail with the board about alternative locations.

Eagle Pass – We have continued to refine our space needs in Eagle Pass and we are on the third major revision of the site plan. However, with each iteration the site plan is being refined to the most efficient and effective use of space.

Financing – We have had a busy month with conference calls with our rating agency, underwriters, financial advisors, and bond counsel. On February 13, 2014, we received our bond rating (BBB Stable). We had hoped for an A rating. The bond raters provided us with rationale and discussion as the basis for the rating. Financial Advisors and Bond Counsel are proceeding with the process and we should have more detailed information at the board meeting. In the short run the bond rating translates to about 20 basis points difference or 0.20 (for example 4.25% to a 4.45%). These are not actual rates just example of the projected difference.



Partnerships/Community

I have had a busy last thirty days. On January 25 Dr. Watkins joined Mia, Jaclyn and myself in awarding the Showmanship Awards and Scholarships at the Uvalde County Junior Livestock Show. We had a great time and received a lot of press coverage for the event.

On January 31, I had a phone conference with Bruce Leslie, Chancellor of the Alamo District. We are planning a joint presentation to all the superintendents of Region 20 on how we can better collaborate on dual credit, early college high school, career and technology, and a unified request to the legislature to support those endeavors in our region.

On February 5, we held a signing ceremony with Knippa ISD, formally announcing our joint efforts in Knippa's Early College High School. Later that day I traveled to Laughlin AFB to meet with the Commander, Mayor Fernandez, and Supt. Dr. Rios, discussing how we join forces to offer a basic aviation mechanic technician degree. During my conversation with the superintendent we discussed the future plans of Del Rio San Felipe ISD. He mentioned his plans to establish an Early College High School across our campus and plans to create a Career and Technology Center as well. His plans are to build the career and tech center at an old elementary school campus. I told him that it would be more appropriate to locate it adjacent to our campus (on the 10 acres behind our campus) the idea intrigued him and he contacted me the next day advising me that he is definitely interested. This would be a great addition to our campus, the facility would be a joint use one where the ISD would use it during the day and we would use it in the afternoon and evening. Provided the board has no objection, we will draft a Memorandum of Understanding and Lease agreements for the proposed project.

On February 7, I had the pleasure of hosting as Master of Ceremonies the 94th Uvalde Area Chamber Banquet. I want to thank the board members that attended. We had great representation for the college.

On February 12, we attended the Eagle Pass Chamber banquet. Texas State University System Chancellor, Dr. Brian McCall was the guest speaker. We took the opportunity to promote the great partnership between Sul Ross State University – Rio Grande College and SWTJC. I had a great conversation with IBC President Hector Serna, Carlos Uresti, and Poncho Nevarez. Incidentally, I asked State Representative Poncho Nevarez to be our commencement speaker, he graciously agreed.

On February 13, we had a follow up meeting with Hondo Mayor Danner and discussed the bringing aviation mechanics to Hondo. The city has recruited and signed a 20 year lease is multibillion dollar company headquartered in Signapore with a major operation in San Antonio, to begin expanding to the Hondo airport. This development coupled with the interest from Laughlin AFB for the aviation mechanics has placed this program high on radar screen. We are currently investigating the possibility of offering the program. Both Hondo Aviation and Laughlin AFB are willing partners to see this program get off the ground. Hondo Aviation is working on securing a fully functional 727 aircraft from FedEx as a training aircraft for our students.

Rio Grande College – we have reached an agreement with RGC that would enable our students to declare a RGC major as freshmen with SWTJC. This effort would help align

our curriculum and eliminate the possibility of students taking unnecessary courses for their four-year degree. We expect to have an official signing sometime in late February.

Other

Strategic Plan – The cabinet continues to review the 2011-2015 strategic plan. We have a second planning retreat scheduled for February 20 to finalize the review. We should be in a position to have a report with requested modifications by the April Board meeting.

Policy – The cabinet has worked on several policy revisions. We have two policy revision regarding employee leaves and education policy ready for board consideration at the February meeting.

Conferences – On January 22, I traveled to Austin to our quarterly presidents’ meeting. On January 26, our leadership team traveled to Atlanta for a one-day orientation session with SACS-COC staff to kick off our reaffirmation process.

Students – This semester I have held three “Conversations with the President” one at Uvalde, Del Rio, and Eagle Pass campuses. These events are for students to sit down, informally with me to discuss issues and concerns they have. The sessions have been received well. Student are very appreciative of the ability to have an audience with the president, therefore my plans are to continue with the visits.

On the recruitment front, we are holding another College Day on February 18 for those schools and students that could not make the Fall College Day event.