

Power takes power

COLLEGE BOARD APPOINTS NEW DIRECTOR

STORY BY ETHAN M. ROGERS
NEWS EDITOR

Karin Power was sworn in to an appointed position as a director on the Clackamas Community College Board of Education on Sept. 21, 2022.

Power takes the position vacated by Greg Chaimov, who left the board position early in order to spend more time with his grandchild in Vancouver, Washington.

Power edged out applicant Deb Barnes, who teaches media and communications at North Clackamas School District, largely due to her legal and legislative experience.

As a lawyer and former Democratic representative to the state legislature for Milwaukie's District 41, Power brings with her the experience and skills that the board once relied on Chaimov, also a lawyer, to provide.

Though the board position is new for Power, she was active in the college's Summer Connections event. That stood out to CCC President Tim Cook, who lent his voice in support of Power when asked by the board for input.

"I appreciate the conversation," Cook said. "I think I saw the same things you saw after last week. Both are very, very talented and, I think, really care also about the college. (I was) really impressed with the work they had done. Cut to the chase, I think Karin Power's past legislative background would be really helpful for us."

Power will hold office until June 30, 2023. She is eligible to run for a four-year term on the board during the May 2023 election cycle.

Cook said Power has "been engaged in other work with us, she's worked with us a little on some childcare issues and some other things moving forward."

"It is just an unexpected gift to have this board vacancy," Power said during her interview with the board. "Over the last couple of years, I have



Karin Power is sworn in to the Clackamas Community College Board.
Photo by Ethan M. Rogers.

been working most especially on access to childcare as a workforce issue, as an education barrier, as an underinvestment in the littlest kids in a way that really holds back women, moms, from being able to participate in the workforce.

"It's important for board members to be out in the community and representing broad sections," Power said in her interview, "not just their district but at events and seeing what folks are experiencing, listening to the barriers to education, so you're being mindful - not just delivering high quality, affordable education for folks, but are they able to get there? And, if not, how can we figure out how to help them get there? And then, once they're there, be successful?"

Power is concerned with barriers to opportunity such as food insecurity and housing insecurity - all the external factors that most people take for granted but which can stifle a person's ability to grow and learn through education.

"I think of community colleges like I do our libraries," she said. "I wish they were also free, but that is not where we are."

For Power, it's about "finding people where they are," she said, "helping them to see pathways to whatever success means for them. That might be a couple classes here and there to learn a new skill. It might be a new career pathway. It might be more credits to get ready for college as a high-school student."

Power decided not to seek reelection to the state legislature, along with two other female legislators, due to a lack of childcare.

"I would love to see more support in the entire pipeline of career development around affordable childcare," Power said, "it is the linchpin that we are missing in helping people be able to go to school, look for work, have kids have stable places to learn and play when they're little and frankly lift people out of poverty. That, to me, would be a meaningful success."

COOK, from page 4

"Students need opportunities to get together and connect," Cook said. "They might have liked online because it was more convenient, but they really missed being together."

Convenience, connections, caring and community. These are the watchwords of the new campus model.

"If I'm having my classes online, or some of them online, are there places on campus I can pop in and do that? Are there other reasons for me to come here and be engaged that way?" Cook said. "Students and staff have said we need more of these spaces where we can just pop in and can get this done."

Cook spoke of the new collaborative spaces, small one- and two-person rooms, available on campus for student use.

People also are often surprised by the basic needs challenges many CCC students experience while trying to earn a degree, according to Cook.

In a 2019 survey of CCC students, almost 60% of respondents had experienced basic needs insecurity.

That means they weren't sure how they were going to eat, pay a bill or have a place to sleep.

"Almost half experienced housing insecurity in the past year," Cook said. "That doesn't necessarily mean homelessness. It means that they, for a time, might have had to miss a rent payment, might have had to do some couch surfing or had to figure out some way to live that wasn't secure in their own housing."

Twenty percent of CCC students experienced homelessness in the last year, he said.

"This is provocative," Cook said, "so I'm saying it wherever I can. We're looking at affordable housing. We're really trying to figure out - how do we help be part of the solution with some of the housing issues and the affordable housing issues."

"This isn't new. PCC is doing it right now. Columbia Gorge just opened one. Some of the other rural community colleges have been doing this for a while, and so we're exploring that pretty seriously."

He also said that a lack of childcare remains one of the biggest barriers for CCC students.

"We've had a childcare program, a training program for years. We just this last year started offering it entirely in Spanish," Cook said. "This is another area that we're really trying to think about what size we need to be because it also helps us inform what types of facilities and buildings that we're needing as we move forward."

People often ask Cook if the brick and mortar campus is going away.

"I would argue that we're always going to be here, and we're always going to have a place in this community," Cook said. "I run every weekend on campus. People are walking their dogs, people are connecting. It's a place where people come together, and we pride ourselves on being a welcoming place."

"I say it every presentation," he said, "community's our middle name. We take this really seriously. Being involved with all of you, with our community, is really important to us as we do this work."