



NEW COLUMBIA COLLEGE PRESIDENT SELECTED

September 13, 2006

MODESTO, CA – Dr. Joan E. Smith has accepted an offer by the Yosemite Community College District (YCCD) Board of Trustees to be the new president of Columbia College effective January 1, 2007. Smith will replace President Jim Riggs, who is moving back to the classroom and has been the college's top administrator since 1997.

According to Interim Chancellor Hodges, "Dr. Joan Smith comes to us with an extensive background in Community Colleges. She has held a variety of positions in the Ventura County Community College District, gaining instruction and administrative experiences throughout her career. She currently serves as Executive Vice President of Student Learning."

Smith has served in her current capacity at Ventura College since 2002. She was previously the Dean of Business, Industry, Technology and Off-Campus Programs at Ventura College from 2000-2002. Prior to that, she held various positions at Oxnard College in Oxnard, California for a period of 20 years. Her most recent position at Oxnard, from 1997 to 2000 was as Dean of Institutional and Student Services. She began at Oxnard College as an instructor/counselor from 1980 to 1992, then held several administrative positions.

Yosemite Community College District (YCCD) Interim Chancellor Stan Hodges and members of the YCCD Board interviewed three finalists for the position last week, after the candidate presidential forums were held. Interim Chancellor Hodges formally announced Dr. Smith as Columbia College's next President at the September 13, 2006 YCCD Board of Trustees meeting.

"I am very excited about the challenges and new opportunities presented as a new member of the YCCD and the President of Columbia College," said Dr. Smith. Smith is a proven leader in instruction, student services and economic development. She served as an instructor and/or counselor for 17 years and has a wide breadth of experience from economic development to establishing and running off-campus programs. As Executive Vice President of Student Learning at Ventura College, she served as the operational manager of the college, supervising all the college deans and all off-campus and economic development programs with combined budgets of over \$36 million in general funds and \$12 million in externally funded programs.

“It is an honor and privilege to have been selected as the President of Columbia College. It was a thrill getting to experience some of the Columbia College campus community and community at large through the interview processes and the forum,” said Dr. Smith.

Interim Chancellor Hodges adds that, “Observing her at the forum at Columbia, she was comfortable, humorous, and developed an immediate rapport with the audience. At the forum and later during the interview she was able to express to all her desire to be President at Columbia College, and convinced all of us that she is the right person to do the job. In discussions with her it was determined that she has an excellent grasp as to what the job entails, and that she has the expertise to perform it well.”

According to YCCD Area 1 Trustee Pat Dean, “After interviewing many outstanding applicants, Dr. Joan Smith clearly stood out from the rest. She has worked in a multi-college system (both large and small) has been active on many fronts up to and including Vice President and acting President.”

Smith received her Ed.D. in Higher Education (1988) from Nova (Southeastern) University in Florida. She received an M.S. degree from University of Wisconsin-Stout in Vocational Rehabilitation (1983) and B.S. degree in Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology from University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point (1975).

“Columbia College is clearly an excellent educational resource to the community as well as being one of the most beautiful community college campuses I have ever seen,” said Smith.

Smith’s selection comes after a nationwide search conducted by Dr. Abel Sykes, a consultant with the Association of Community College Trustees. The search began in April 2006 and produced 59 applicants. After interviews, the pool was further narrowed to four finalists, three of whom participated in campus forums held at Columbia College in August.

Summing up the process, Interim Chancellor Hodges noted, “it was a pleasure for me to have participated in the search process, and to have had some influence in bringing to Columbia College an excellent President.” That enthusiasm is shared by Trustee Dean who shares that “Dr. Smith is bright, articulate, student oriented, and experienced with shared governance, bond issue building, and is aware of the financial issues of Columbia College specifically, and California Community Colleges in general. She is personable, shows a sense of humor, and listens to issues. She seems to be a perfect fit to guide and move us on to new horizons.”

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