

JoCo JCCC BOT Candidate Questionnaire 2017 -- Paul Snider

1. Why are you running for the position?

The College is a great community asset that has played a key role in the success of Johnson County. I'm running because I have a proven record of strong, experienced, and accountable leadership to ensure the College continues to serve the needs of students and the community.

2. What are your top three priorities?

The first priority is maintaining the College's current path and record of success. The existing Board of Trustees has done a good job balancing priorities. I'll be a productive member of the board helping to ensure Dr. Sopcich has the resources and direction needed to advance the College.

Second, I want to support and strengthen the College's workforce development efforts. This is a critical role for the College as it looks toward its 50th anniversary in 2019. I want to look for even more opportunities to partner with employers in the county, and expand the programming at the Logistics Park in Edgerton campus as manufacturing and distribution partners continue to grow at that location.

Third, I want to help the College be prepared to engage and support the county's aging population. As many of today's community members transition to a new phase of life, the College has a great opportunity to take a leadership role in addressing new needs of a large segment of the county and expand access to the current arts, music, and lifestyle offerings.

3. What are your concrete strategies to achieve these priorities, and what financial resources are needed to accomplish these goals?

Maintaining the College's record of success requires thoughtful, engaged leadership and I'm ready to deliver. Expanding workforce development efforts can be achieved by collaboration with the business community and other interests. These efforts would be funded in part by partnerships with industries that need workers. On the third priority, engaging the aging community and stakeholders doesn't need special funding, however certain projects or initiatives that result may need a resource allocation.

4. What makes you uniquely qualified for this position?

For over a decade, I've been involved with chambers of commerce and other businesses and organizations in the county, understanding what drives development, growth and quality of life in Johnson County. In addition, I've been involved directly with local and state policymakers on a range of issues.

Perhaps most importantly, I've been an appointed board member for the Johnson County Parks & Recreation District for five years, serving as chair of the board the last two years. I have also been on the board of United Community Services of Johnson County for nearly six years.

Through these experiences, I've seen challenges and opportunities in the county. With fellow board members, I've set policies, approved budgets, worked through priorities and provided leadership to executive directors. I know how boards work and how to collaborate with colleagues of different ideologies and backgrounds.

5. Tell us something you've done recently that makes you proud?

In early 2016 a county resident informed me there weren't any nearby universal or inclusive playgrounds for children with disabilities. After doing some research, I proposed that Johnson County Parks & Rec construct an inclusive playground for kids with physical challenges and autism spectrum disorders. Now two such playgrounds are in development and will open in early 2018.

6. Are you running as a change agent? If so, what do you hope to change?

JCCC is well run and has a great board of trustees. As noted, my first priority is maintaining the College's current path and record of success. In addition to my priorities, another focus area is improving external communications so the community understands all the impacts JCCC is making.

7. Is the economy in Kansas a concern to you? Local economy? If so, why?

I'm optimistic the Legislature is headed in the right direction to get the state growing again. Most cities are prospering, despite state cutbacks, by focusing on what has made the county a success: investing in infrastructure, education and a good business climate.

8. What is the most critical issue you will face should you be elected?

Setting the budget is the key role for the Trustees each year and striking the right balance between local funding and student tuition is significant.

9. What is your stand on tax abatements?

In general I support the use of incentives to spur economic growth. It's been a key strategy for our communities. However, I think more should be done to review, or audit, whether desired outcomes have been achieved.

10. What is your primary source for information?

I am constantly interacting with elected officials and community leaders. With regard to JCCC issues, I've been attending board meetings since April and I've met with past and current Trustees, Dr. Sopcich, JCCC faculty, and other community members to understand different aspects of the college.

11. What do you believe the impact has been to JCCC with the funding cuts imposed on Kansas colleges and universities in recent years?

JCCC has not been materially impacted by state budget cuts. Community colleges were mostly insulated from cuts experienced by universities. However, reductions are always a possibility and the college needs to continue to show its value to the both the community and to legislators.

12. In your opinion what is the biggest issue facing JCCC today?

Balancing local support with the need for additional resources. Increased property tax valuations helped the college make investments without adjusting the mill levy. Future decisions will need to balance several interests and be sensitive to local taxing pressures and student tuition.

13. What is your stand on the transgender bathroom issue?

While this is a very divisive issue, I think many high school and college-age students are much less concerned than parents. I will uphold any laws passed. My priority is to keep our students safe. Many public and private facilities are providing unisex bathrooms for convenience, to reduce lines, and provide alternatives. These seem to be a reasonable compromise.

14. How would you work to improve the campus climate overall?

I think JCCC has a good campus climate and has made strides to improve. Investments in the Co-Lab and even solar-powered phone-charging tables are examples. In addition, parts of the Facilities Master Plan will make additional improvements, adding student amenities.

15. How would you work to facilitate a broader dialogue on the issues and problems facing JCCC with the public, policy makers, and the community?

One of my strengths is that I work in the community with a range of elected officials and community leaders. I can bridge the communication divide that is prevalent in parts of our community.

16. How would you work to foster innovation at JCCC?

One of the roles of a board, of any organization, is to challenge the status quo and to encourage dialogue of new ideas. I will ask questions, do independent research and talk to stakeholders to help ensure JCCC stays competitive and continues its path of success.

17. Do you believe Kansas has a spending problem?

No. I certainly agree efficiencies can be found, but the state is not meeting its safety net obligations for the state's most vulnerable populations.

18. What role does the federal government play in higher education?

The federal government provides needed financing options for students and should continue. The government also partners with certain universities to conduct research. Outside of that, there's no clear role and I don't believe one is currently needed.

19. Are you familiar with the Children's Initiative Fund? Would you pledge to help defend this fund from securitization in the future?

Yes and yes! The CIF has been a success for early childhood education efforts. We can use more funds, not less.