

Community Comment 9/30/2013

By Jon Sapper

HSU President Rollin Richmond

Humboldt State University President, Dr. Rollin Richmond, announced his retirement last week, to be effective at the end of this school year. He has been the President for over 12 years.

I've seen a lot of changes at HSU since Dr. Richmond took over the reins. The facilities are top notch. It looks like a university. Enrollments are up significantly. In fact, there are a thousand more students at HSU now than 7 years ago. Some bemoan that increase in student population when they are looking for a parking space, but local businesses that benefit from the 6,000 out-of-area students, probably don't complain. At an estimated \$10,000 of local spending per year for every student, that's over \$60 million annually circulating in our local economy, that comes from just the out-of-area students. That's a big number.

I met Dr. Richmond soon after he arrived 12 years ago. It was early on he questioned why we have such a high level of childhood poverty in our community. He has not wavered from continuing to raise that question. As a community, we need to ask ourselves that same question.....and then do something about it.

Dr. Richmond has been a very strong supporter of local K-12 education. He believes that a good education is the ticket to a prosperous future for every young child in this county. I happen to agree. Under his leadership and advocacy, HSU launched the I've Been Admitted to College Program where local 8th grade students visit HSU and at the end of the day receive a compact from the university guaranteeing their admission 4 years later if they meet minimum requirements. This is a tremendous incentive for local students.

Even with his very busy schedule, Dr. Richmond has volunteered countless hours in our local community working with young children helping them learn how to read. His support for children is an inspiration and a challenge for all of us to step up and do what we can to nurture the next generation.

A local story, when reporting on his retirement mentioned there have been tumultuous times at HSU during his tenure. Any leader of a large organization with an annual budget of plus or minus \$175 million dollars and having gone through the economic implosion of the last 5 years is going to have some people at some time raise questions about decisions that are made. There are times I get questioned when making a decision in a household of two.

I have known Dr. Richmond to a man of high integrity, a champion for the importance of education for all and as a dedicated hard working member in our community.

I have been honored to work with him as a colleague and friend.

This has been Jon Sapper for Community Comment.