

August 21, 2007

Message From the Chair Emeritus—Richard Johanson

The farther we travel down the road as a Business Council committed to transformational change, the more we recognize the impact being made by our adherence to the **Community Values of the Fresno Region** in our decision making. The second value is **Boundary Crossing and Collaboration**. *“We are willing to cross political, social, ethnic and economic boundaries and partner with others to achieve community outcomes. We will lead ‘beyond the walls’ to create an inclusive, cohesive community through partnership and collaboration”*---something to keep in mind the next time you hear someone espouse that only certain components of our society are qualified to lead us!

Regional Jobs Initiative (RJI) Yielding Results; Changing Mindsets

Last week the Implementation Task Force of the RJI had its monthly meeting. In attendance was Dianne Church, our regional representative from the Economic Development Administration (EDA), U.S. Department of Commerce. While once a forgotten region, Ms. Church made clear her intention to commit time and money to the Valley and she provided a list of the projects underway. As a regionalist, she is also supporting the development of a regional plan for economic development which will leverage the work of the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley.

Manufacturing Cluster—Moving Forward

A key project of the Manufacturing Cluster is the creation of an Advanced Manufacturing Center (AMC). This cluster includes companies from Modesto to Bakersfield. Revenues generated in our region by the manufacturing cluster totaled 11.6 billion, 2.6 billion in Fresno alone. The biggest growth is in midsize companies. The EDA invested in a feasibility study to determine interest and priorities. In terms of interest in potential services, workforce development, better energy use and help with compliance issues topped the list. As the geographic center and prime sponsor and catalyst of an AMC, the most logical location is CSUF. The goal is to compete on a “smart” basis through innovation and excellence. Thank you to **Ray Dunn** for your steadfast leadership of this essential cluster and to **Dr. John Welty** for your ongoing support. The Lyles Center, Craig School of Business, International Center for Water Technology and the Central Valley Business Incubator are part of a synergistic network for business formation and job creation all supported by Fresno State. **Steve Geil**, CEO of the Economic Development Corporation, noted that one of the first questions companies ask when exploring a Fresno location is “What is the role of Fresno State in the community?” Fortunately, Steve has a powerful story to tell.

The California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley—Why It Matters

Years ago, visionaries started talking about regions becoming the economic engines of the future while noting political jurisdictions were based upon the past. Across the nation, successful communities were capitalizing on the new model and finding ways to support regional networks. Joint Venture Silicon Valley was one of the first regional organizations to promote economic development through collaboration and attending to support infrastructures including education, the environment and quality of life issues. Stirrings of a regional identity in our region began when the Great Valley Center pushed us onto the radar and Fresno leaders lobbied hard for a regional platform to address the unique challenges of the San Joaquin Valley. We need customized strategies to meet our needs and the state and federal government to adopt policies, practices and funding approaches that support them. The Partnership is a powerful platform to accomplish these ends. Thank you to everyone serving on the task forces. Check out <http://www.sjvpartnership.org> for more information.