

August 27, 2007

### **Message From the Chair Emeritus—Richard Johanson**

School bells have once again signaled the start of another year heralding the magic of education. Why don't we take a few minutes to reflect upon our debt to all of those who labor so intensely to ensure that our kids receive the knowledge foundation they will need to propel them into a satisfying and productive lifetime? To school boards, superintendents, administrators, support personnel and, most all, our teachers, our community thanks you for your devotion to your accepted responsibilities. Particularly, to the *Fresno Unified School District* we offer our appreciation for your return to financial integrity coupled with an absolute commitment to return as many assets as possible to the classroom. Finally, we owe a debt of gratitude to those community volunteers, including members of this *Business Council*, who have given so freely of their time and talent to come alongside our educational professionals on behalf of our kids. Let the school bells ring. It's the sound of tomorrow!

### **An Engaged University—Preparing Citizens Through Experience & Example**

For too long we have expected government, all the while complaining about its size, cost and dysfunction, to do for us what we must do for ourselves—create a sense of community, raise our kids, live a healthy lifestyle, pick up after ourselves and care for one another. To help restore the tradition of personal responsibility and service, **Bud** and **Jan Richter** have pledged \$3.5 million to Fresno State to create the *Jan and Bud Richter Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning*. Once again, members of the greatest generation challenge the rest of us to remember their legacy of stewardship and service. Regular practice develops habits of a lifetime, particularly within in a supportive culture. The Center will plant many seeds. In addition to direct service through nonprofits, the Center will assist in directing other University resources as needed to help address our community's most critical needs. The many institutes at Fresno State are already doing this in areas of public policy, economic development, business, education reform and human services. Kudos also to **Chris Fiorentino** and **Matt Jendian** who have already inspired hundreds of students to become engaged citizens through their classes and programs.

### **Michelle Rhee Takes On District of Columbia School System**

Many believe the District of Columbia (DC) has the most dysfunctional school system in the nation. While one of the highest spenders, it still has the lowest performance. Rhee, hired as the first ever chancellor, founded and then led the *New Teacher Project* for ten years, a nonprofit that helped recruit, train, and retain high quality teachers for at risk schools. 23,000 teachers were placed in 200 school systems. After graduating from Cornell, she joined *Teach For America*, a program that after a boot camp preparation plugs graduates from top universities into tough schools. While considered a radical move by some, the council confirmed **Mayor Fenty's** move unanimously. "She has the kind of impatience that we've been missing." Something to watch—will adding a passionate, persevering CEO to the mix allow DC to achieve what seems impossible? Clearly a steward, seasoned by experience and relentlessly dedicated, let us all cheer her on. In the end, the followers, not the leaders decide. People have to want to change and stay at it.

### **Interdependent Parts—The Role of the Cultural Arts**

The role of the cultural arts in a thriving economy is both chicken and egg. They are interdependent. The *Fresno Coalition for Arts, Science & History* (FCASH) has gained steady traction due to the irrepressible leadership of **Cynthia Cooper**. On October 4 from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., FCASH is hosting a conference to demonstrate the cultural arts impact on the community. Leaders of the California Arts Council will speak and sessions aimed at strategy and capacity building will fill out the day. The impact on the economy is the topic of the luncheon keynote. The cultural arts are a 166.2 billion dollar growth industry that when added to intangibles can pretty much determine the quality of life in a community. To register go to [www.fcash.org](http://www.fcash.org) or call 286-8282. The event end with **Patrick Contreras**, The American Gypsy.

### **Creative Fresno Issues Report Card on Recommendations of the Creative Economy Council**

"As a dynamic document, the Creative Economy Council Report provides a sense of urgency to the exciting changes occurring in Fresno. The goal of the report card...is to encourage City and community leaders to persevere in the marathon that has become true community transformation in Fresno." This quote captures the key ingredient of transformational change—perseverance. Transformation has to do with how we think and what we do daily. Taken in aggregate this is the dominate culture. The report card has A's, B's, lots of C's a few incompletes and two D's. There are many oars left idle and the report card challenges more folks to step up. For a copy of the report card and original recommendations go to [www.creativefresno.com](http://www.creativefresno.com). Thanks to **Suzanne Bertz-Rosa**, **Jamie Holt** and the rest of the report card team. Perseverance, indeed!