

October 1, 2007

Message From the Chair Emeritus—Richard Johanson

Oftentimes we seemingly overuse such terms as collaboration, interaction, boundary crossing and similar expressions to emphasize the pathway for effectively addressing the social and economic difficulties faced by this region. The validity of such descriptions, however, was dramatically confirmed at the presentation of the *Human Investment Initiative* at our well attended membership meeting last Thursday morning. Moderated by Deb Nankivell, the eclectic audience was given a road map out of poverty and educational shortcomings through this “rubber on the road” approach. The initiative is the result of months of intense effort by volunteers and staff from private, public, civic, cultural, education and faith based organizations and agencies. For other examples of the impact of cooperation rather than isolation, see the examples below.

Creating a Dynamic, Entrepreneur-Producing Economic Climate in the SJV

At the session of the Economic Work Group of the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley this week, the value of working together showed up as substantial dollars for infrastructure and air quality, plus specific project grants. Each EDC has taken responsibility for executing a strategy that will move the entire region forward. In terms of gaps, we need more specialized experts to provide technical and business expertise, more equity capital, stronger industry networks and better economic infrastructure. A common refrain from EDC directors was the benefits and results of collaboration—more money, sharing of best practices and an opportunity to leverage resources behind shared strategies that could not be accomplished in isolation.

Education Reform—Everyone’s Business

David Long, the governor's secretary of education, has been convening a series of meetings with educators and parents across California. The priorities include creating a better student data system, improving safety, giving school districts more control over funding and curriculum, developing more career-oriented classes for students who don't go straight to college, improving staff development for teachers and ensuring there's enough money in the system to do all of that. Long underscored that the challenge will be to synthesize all of those goals and the many ideas coming from philanthropists and others to come to the governor with something specific. As long as the focus remains on intended results and the best interests of children, synthesis will result in a leveraged blend of the best ideas. If the focus is blurred by single interests, synthesis could result in undermining compromises and increased expense with little added value. A healthy alignment, where policies and funding serve what works at ground zero, is **vertical integration**. With vertical integration, we get speed, effectiveness and efficiency.

Results Where They Matter Most—Academic Performance by Kids

The cornerstone of California’s Public Schools Accountability Act of 1999 is the Academic Performance Index (API). API measures the academic performance of schools on a variety of academic criteria. Closing the achievement gap is about ensuring that all students reach their potential regardless of socio-economics, first language, or cultural and racial background. From 2006 to 2007, based upon preliminary data, Central Valley Districts that enlisted the coaching and technical support of **Springboard Schools** posted higher gains than the state average across all subgroups except Asian American. Springboard is the implementation partner for the **Central Valley Educational Leadership Institute (CVELI)** at Fresno State led by **Dr. Walt Buster**. CVELI is working on a complete analysis of the data. **Springboard Schools** (www.springboardschools.org) works collaboratively with teachers and administrators to provide a continuous improvement process using professional development tools and coaching to achieve and sustain results. Transformation is not an event; it is about an unrelenting commitment to improve daily practice behind shared strategies to achieve specific goals.