

From Teacher to Advocate: I Wish I Had Found FACCC Twenty Years Earlier

By Wendy Brill-Wynkoop

A college without a campus, a corporate funding formula, free college for just incoming first-year students, and placement of unprepared students into transfer-level math and English. These are the policy changes affecting the work we have done at the California Community Colleges (CCCs) throughout the past five years. If you had asked me if I would have a front-row seat to these dramatic changes prior to my involvement in policy and legislation, I would have thought you were nuts. I'm a photography teacher, after all. How did I get here?

Well, that's the story I want to share.

In spring 2016, after 20 years of complete focus on my teaching and shared governance at the local level, I attended a workshop on citizen lobbying in Sacramento at a California Community College Association for Occupational Education (CCCAOE) conference by past FACCC Executive Director Jonathan Lightman. I was familiar with local politics, but this workshop introduced me to the mechanics of the legislative process and state politics. Once the curtain of Sacramento politics was pulled back, I was hooked.

A few months later, I volunteered to serve on the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, the Community College Association, and the FACCC Legislation and Advocacy Committee. I cut my advocacy teeth discussing

major bills like AB 19 (2017), College Promise, AB 705 (2017), and budget items including the Student-Centered Funding Formula and Calbright College. Most of these dramatic changes were instigated by nonprofit lobby organizations funded by nonpractitioners who seem to have a simple "fix" for higher education in California. Not all of their ideas were bad, but they were formed without properly understanding our students' needs.

The faculty have been successful in changing policy too. Faculty-proposed and FACCC-sponsored legislation has helped our students. We successfully sponsored legislation allowing undocumented students to use their ITIN number to enroll in certain career education programs, fought for the CCCs to be able to use unused lottery dollars for basic student needs, and cosponsored legislation to provide emergency grants for our students. In addition, FACCC has successfully advocated for more money in the budget for new full-time faculty and part-time faculty support and to extend the hold harmless provision of the student centered funding formula.

As I assume the role of FACCC president, I will continue my work in advocacy and am committed to building an army of FACCC member advocates to join me. Hundreds of bills introduced in Sacramento each year affect

the community colleges. Without practitioner experts to meet with our 120 legislators, there is no possibility of ensuring that this legislation will benefit our students.

I want to thank all of our members, without whom FACCC would not be able to successfully advocate for faculty. However, our efforts are far from over and we need more help from our members.

First, reach out to faculty and tell them about our organization. Stress the importance of joining FACCC. It is imperative that we contact our new faculty and educate them.

Second, become a FACCCtivist. Learn the skills required to track legislation, and meet with local legislative representatives. Faculty gain knowledge, network, and learn how to advocate at our legislative roundtables, Advocacy & Policy Conference, and other events.

To overcome the policy battles we've lost and to strengthen our wins with the Legislature, we need to improve our connection and communication with every state legislator. Faculty should be the first people our elected representatives call when they have a question or concern about the community colleges. Join us!

