

Proposed Update of "Where We Stand," LWVDC Position on "Higher Education" with respect to a Community College for the District of Columbia

Compiled by Barbara Yeomans

A. Purpose of Update Position

The position on "Higher Education" was aimed at the University of the District of Columbia, with only passing reference to UDC's also including a community college. In 2009 UDC took initial steps to establish such a college. LWVDC conducted informational meetings about the college and believes that our position should address the college more specifically. Thus, the phrase in the first paragraph of the current position ("...and a community college.") would be deleted and new provisions would be added. (Note that the new language proposed for the position is flexible, is silent as to whether or not the college should be part of the University).

With the background provided at meetings, together with information provided by this paper, member consensus on an updated position is being sought by agreement to the statements proposed later below.

B. Background Concerning Community Colleges Nationwide

A community college of the District of Columbia should be consistent with community colleges across the country in its policies and programs. Note that community colleges throughout the U.S. typically:

1. Offer two-year degree and one-year certificate programs, plus non-credit courses designed for businesses, community groups, and citizens' interests;
2. Offer three kinds of programs-
 - a. the first two years of standard college/university degrees,
 - b. technical and vocational programs,
 - c. preparatory sequences (remedial courses) for students who lack the abilities in mathematics, writing, or reading that are expected in college classes, as well as English language classes in reading, writing, and speaking for students speaking languages other than English. (ESOL);
3. Offer open admission to all with a high-school diploma or GED; and to those over 18 without high-school credentials who wish to study at the college but who must demonstrate academic abilities, usually by testing, in mathematics, writing, and reading before enrolling in credit classes and degree or certificate programs (note: students who test at levels below college expectations must take preparatory (remedial) or ESOL classes;
4. Comprise public institutions, supported by local, state, and federal funds; tuition and fees; and some grants and gifts;
5. Welcome part-time students whose work and/or family responsibilities make full-time enrollment impossible;
6. Welcome students in all adult age groups;
7. Charge lower tuition than four-year institutions; provide financial aid; and
8. Are located, by definition, in their communities.

(Over)

C. Updating Our Position

Note that interest in free admission for students was expressed in one unit; but this is not included because financial constraints around the country have precluded such option for some time (even in California).

Below are statements proposed to update our current position on Higher Education, understanding per above that we will delete from the current position the brief reference to including a community college in connection with the statements directed at the University of the District of Columbia.

Position

Be it agreed:

-- "A community college of the District of Columbia should be consistent with the fundamental policies, programs and capabilities characteristic of community colleges through out the nation. This includes open-admission policies and the offering of two-year academic, associate-degree programs; shorter programs for certificates for technical and vocational areas; and perhaps special short courses (such as sought by businesses). Developmental, remedial classes in reading, writing, and mathematics should be available. In addition, programs to improve English language proficiency in reading, writing, understanding, and speaking should be available to students whose native language is not English.."

-- "With respect to location of a community college for the District, the District's compact geography could be regarded as the 'community.' Nonetheless, a single community college for the District should have a presence in the community beyond the main campus."

-- "LWVDC recognizes that constraints may be imposed on the funding sources available for a community college in the District. The DC League believes, however, that such a community college should achieve and maintain stand-alone credibility and excellence."

-- "The guidelines for a Board of Trustees (or similar body) should guarantee opportunity for both faculty and citizen input into Board decisions, consistent with the League's policy with respect to the University of the District of Columbia."

Please bring this insert with you to your Unit meeting.

For additional information, please contact Barbara Yeomans at 363-8940.