



MID-SOUTH COMMUNITY COLLEGE

June 11, 2015

Mid-South Trustees Receive Honorary Degrees at Final Meeting

During what is most likely the final meeting of the Mid-South Community College Board of Trustees, the institution awarded honorary degrees to board members for 2014-15. The college also presented Board Chair Mary Toney with a plaque for her leadership over the past 12 months.

The trustees, in turn, recognized Dr. Glen Fenter and Dr. Barbara Baxter with mementos in honor of their 20+ years of service. Both are retiring from the college this summer.

Pending approval of the Higher Learning Commission, MSCC will become part of the Arkansas State University System as ASU Mid-South on July 1, and the Board of Trustees will become a Board of Visitors.



While some of the trustees suggested special recognition for the three founding members – Toney, Solon Anthony, and Alex Coulter – Toney said she felt everyone should receive something for their time, effort, and place in MSCC history.

“I’ve tried to do everything this year that members asked, other than one thing. The board told me to do something for myself, Mr. Anthony, and Alex, but I wanted to do something for everybody. So I exerted my authority as chair.”

Dr. Fenter made the diploma presentations.

“The highest honor that this institution can pay anybody is to award them an associate degree,” he said. “And the cool part is that these are going to be the last ones that say Mid-South Community College. It’s something we hope the board members will cherish.”

Each of the trustees spoke after receiving their awards.

Hershel Owens said he researched the college before and after being appointed to the board, and “to say that I was surprised and impressed would be an understatement.

“When you look at what they (MSCC employees) have done, I never cease to be amazed at the talent we’ve had here. Dr.

Fenter has done a lot, but he’s had some good support people. That’s what I am really proud of about this institution.”

“It’s been a pleasure to be on this board; it’s meant so much to me,” added Lynn Allen. “It is so wonderful to tour this campus and visit with the wonderful staff we have here. The board has been phenomenal. We all have our own qualities that we bring to this table.”

Denny East noted that his 12 years on the board have been good ones. “Like many of us in this community, I serve on a lot of boards, but this has been the coolest, most fun.



I love Dr. Fenter. He gives me a hard time, which means he's really a good friend. It's just been a pleasure."

Harold Scifres expressed appreciation for those who encouraged his appointment and expressed confidence in his ability to contribute to the college's leadership.

"I have worked so hard my whole life that I wouldn't accept any possible appointments or board positions because I knew I couldn't commit the time. Since I'm no longer actively flying, it gave me the opportunity to give back.

"I can't think of a better place to have given back some time, and I hope I have contributed in a certain way to help all of these board members who have been here so long."

Dr. Marian Barr, the most recent appointee, described her service as an "absolute pleasure."

"It's been wonderful watching what Dr. Fenter has done here at the college as well as the entire staff. In my youth if this college had been here, I wouldn't have had to ride the 'greyhound dog' to Pine Bluff every weekend."

Richard Williford said he appreciates fellow board members for "putting up with me." He also praised Alex Coulter for his role in the college's evolution.

"In my mind, the person behind this college is Alex Coulter. Alex has put in many years of hard work. I can remember when 50 of us raised a hundred bucks apiece to start working on this thing. Alex had his heart and soul in it.

"I congratulate him on getting us this far down the line because without his hard work and foresight...we wouldn't have gotten this far."

Solon Anthony said he appreciates the way the MSCC board has always worked so well together. "I've served on many boards, but this has been the smoothest one I've ever served on. We always walked out of here happy. You don't find many boards like that."

Anthony also recalled the early days of Crittenden County. "I'm a pretty old guy. Where I'm standing, where this building is, used to be corn and cotton raised. When I finished elementary school, there was not a high school in the area that I could have attended.

“So now here’s a junior college that has served and served well. God is going to bless this institution because of the fact that it has helped many souls. It has helped to educate our young ones and our old ones. I’m grateful and thankful to have been a part of what has happened here.”

“It’s been a ride, and it’s only the beginning,” Coulter said. “We just started it. You guys get to contribute to it, help to build it, and finish it. That’s the key. It’s the basis for anything and everything a community must have in order to be successful.

“We know that we have a tremendous challenge in this part of the state, in this region, to survive, let alone thrive, because there are so many obstacles in front of us. This is not the end of anything. It’s the beginning of more.”

Toney said she feels honored for the opportunity to serve. “This school has helped so many people that I know need help. I just want to thank everyone for the opportunity to play a part in it. When I started last June, I had no idea this would be the last Board (of Trustees) meeting that anybody would chair.



“To see Dr. Fenter’s name and to see Dr. Baxter’s name on the resignation list was really hard. I know things change, and I truly do believe that we’re changing for the better. I think that everything will grow, and I think that Dr. Fenter will be a vital part of it. And I think that we cannot see what the Lord has in store for us.”

Dr. Fenter presented Toney with a plaque of appreciation for her service.

“Certainly this tenure for Ms. Toney has been a little unique, filled with some challenges and opportunities that her leadership, with support of the board, has been instrumental in navigating,” Dr. Fenter said.

“We want to thank her for her service. I assume history will reflect that under her leadership we made one of the wisest choicest that we’ve ever made for the institution. We believe it’s a great, visionary move.”

Toney presented the outgoing president and executive vice president with gifts from the board.

“It has been a pleasure for us as a board to have Dr. Fenter and Dr. Baxter work with us,” she said. “In my opinion, they have excelled at making this school what it is. And it’s not just my opinion because we have received awards from other community colleges who say that we’ve done a good job. I instigated this (gift presentation) because I wanted them to know that we, as a board, appreciate them.”