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School Board Talks ROP

by Dani Anguiano

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Major changes are underway in the Chico Unified School District ROP program.

At a Chico Unified School District board of trustees meeting Wednesday, district staff spoke at length about the changes and how those changes are currently impacting and shaping the program.

For the first time in 40 years, the district is coordinating its career technical education program mostly independently from the Butte County Office of Education. The county office of education oversaw ROP on the county for more than 40 years, but handed control of the programs to local school districts after a change in school funding allowed the county office to use ROP funds elsewhere.

The county offered local districts such as Chico Unified support for required elements of career technical education programs or a share of the \$500,000 funding allotted in its budget for such programs.

Chico Unified elected to take its share of the funding and because the district represents more than 40 percent of ROP classes offered in the county, that amount is about \$230,000. With the new changes, the county will provide staff, funding and evaluation of staff and funding for the administration of the program. Chico Unified will provide and cover the costs of supervision, class budget, equipment, travel and professional development.

With the funding, the district has hired staff members to handle career technical education courses in district schools, including longtime CTE teachers Priscilla Burns and Anita Homesley who will work with Kristin Lower, program manager for the Butte-Glenn Career Pathways Consortium Expansion.

Staff say that the transition will allow the district to align its career technical education courses and help students be more successful.

"I really thank the district for this opportunity to align all of our dynamic career tech ed programs and to leverage all three grants to benefit staff," Burns said to the board. "I think we can bring a lot a lot of equitable services to students across all of our campuses."

Homesley and Burns have worked on sequencing of courses, alignment of curriculum, and are also putting together an advisory board for the district and utilizing work-based learning documents from the county.

“We’re excited about the CTE changes and its importance for students and their futures,” Lower said.

Their work so far has been successful, CUSD director for state and federal programs John Bohannon said, adding that two local districts have reached out to Chico Unified to learn more about how the district is handling its CTE programs.

That agenda item was information only, and the board did not vote on the matter.

The board also learned about ROP governance and how changes to the program might affect the board. Board member Gary Loustale is currently an ROP teacher at Chico High, employed by the Butte County Office of Education.

The district’s attorney John Yeh discussed how changes to the program will affect Loustale’s ability to vote on matters that impact him. Yeh told the board that to protect the board’s decision making process on matters that could affect Loustale, he should recuse himself, disclose his role as a BCOE teacher, leave the room and not discuss the vote with other board members.

Yeh and Superintendent Kelly Staley emphasized that the district chose to present information as a proactive measure in response to changes to the ROP program.

“I would just emphasize that the chronology of how this happened really underscores the fact that this is something we are responding to,” Yeh said. “This is more of a self-identified, proactive measure to ensure that the board feels confident in its process when it entertains any item in the future.”

“We do not believe to date nor in the future have we been out of compliance with the law, but it is our belief as a district and the board’s belief as a board that we’re very transparent so we want to make sure that we avoid any misperception on how we’re making decisions,” Staley said.

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