

## **ACCCA Honors Community College CEO**

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The Association of California Community College Administrators (ACCCA) has announced the winner of its prestigious Harry Buttimer Distinguished Administrator Award. The 2009 award goes to Dr. Helen Benjamin, chancellor of the Contra Costa Community College District.

Benjamin will receive the Buttimer award on February 18 at ACCCA's annual conference in San Diego. She will be recognized for demonstrating integrity, principle, compassion, strength in leadership and contributions to colleagues, the profession, her college and the community.

"Not only is Dr. Benjamin's work appreciated by students, faculty and the staff of the CCCCDC, she is also a key leader among the business community and elected officials," said Joseph Ovick, superintendent of schools in Contra Costa County, who supported her nomination. "She is often sought for guidance and advice and provides it without fanfare or attention to herself. When she accepted the position of chancellor, the CCCCDC was in turmoil. However, in a very short time and in a very quiet manner, Dr. Benjamin was able to move the district in a unified direction to reestablish a shared vision that gained support from all factions of the district and the community at large.

Benjamin has worked in the Contra Costa Community College District since 1990. She began her career at Los Medanos College in Pittsburg as Dean of Language Arts and Humanistic Studies and Related Occupations. Since her early days in the district, Dr. Benjamin has held the following positions beginning with the most recent as President of Contra Costa College in San Pablo; Interim President of Contra Costa and Los Medanos Colleges; Vice Chancellor, Educational Programs and Services and Associate Chancellor at District headquarters in Martinez.

Benjamin has a B.S. degree in English and Spanish from Bishop College in Texas where she graduated magna cum laude and earned her masters and doctoral degrees from Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas. She has never lost sight of her roots as a teacher, having taught high school English in the Dallas Independent School District.

Dr. Mark Drummond, chancellor of Los Angeles CCD; Dr. Martha Kanter, chancellor of Foothill DeAnza CCD; and Dr. Frank Gornick, chancellor of West Hills CCD were also nominated for the 2009 Buttimer Distinguished Administrator Award.

Drummond served as chancellor of the California Community Colleges from 2004 to 2007. He then returned to his roots in Los Angeles to serve as Chancellor of the Los Angeles CCD, a position he held for four-and-a-half years before moving to Sacramento. During his stay in the Sacramento office, Drummond passionately articulated the important mission of community colleges to elected leaders and officials and established a national lobbyist presence in Washington, D.C. His strong relationship with the Schwarzenegger administration led to a significant increase in funding for career and technical education and he spearheaded the first-ever strategic plan for the California Community College System.

Martha Kanter is chancellor of the Foothill-De Anza Community College District, one of the largest community college districts in the country, serving more than 44,000 students. Kanter came to California in 1977 after serving as an alternative high school teacher at Lexington High School in the Public Schools of the Tarrytowns, and later at The Searing School in New York City. In California, she set up the first program for students with learning disabilities at San Jose City College. From there, she served as a director, dean and subsequently as the vice chancellor for policy and research of the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office in Sacramento. Later, she returned to San Jose City College as vice president of instruction and student services. In 1993 she was selected to be president of De Anza College, where she served until becoming chancellor of the district in 2003.

Frank Gornick serves as the chancellor of West Hills Community College District – one of the poorest regions of the nation. With Gornick at the helm, enrollment has increased threefold since 1994 while the total district revenues have been matched with an aggressive federal and state grant program. The district consists of two colleges, as well as centers throughout the 3,000 square mile service area. In 2002, the district was recognized by the Met Life Foundation “For excellence in promoting education and economic advancement for underserved youth and adults.” In 2004, the district was awarded the prestigious California Community College Chancellor’s Diversity Award for Excellence for its work in promoting and hiring a diverse administrative staff.

## **ACCCA**

ACCCA (Association of California Community College Administrators) is the foremost member-supported professional organization for administrators and managers of California's community college campuses. ACCCA provides insurance benefits, publications, professional development opportunities, business partnerships, advocacy, counseling and assistance to over 1200 fulltime administrators, associate members, affiliates and corporate members. For more information on ACCCA, visit the website at [www.accca.org](http://www.accca.org) or call (916) 443-3559.

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