GENERAL MATTERS

Call to Order

Trustee Pinoli, Board President, called the meeting to order at 4:01 PM.

Roll Call - Board Members

President            Robert Jason Pinoli           present
Vice President       Marie L. Myers             present
Clerk                Xochilt Martinez          present
Trustee              John Tomkins              absent
Trustee              Ed Nickerman              present
Trustee              TeMashio Anderson         absent
Trustee              Noel O’Neill              present
Student Trustee      Alejandro Corona          present

Secretary

Timothy Karas, Superintendent/President (present)

Support Staff

Mary Lamb, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent/President

Eileen Cichocki, Assistant Superintendent/Vice President of Administrative Services (absent)

Staff Representatives

Debra Polak, Vice President of Academic Affairs (absent)
Ulises Velasco, Vice President of Student Services (absent)
Nicole Marin, Director of Human Resources (absent)

Constituent Representatives

Academic Senate       Nicholas Petti, President (absent)
Classified Senate     Isabel Lopez, President (absent)
Management Team       Amanda Xu, President (absent)

FINDING OUR TRUTH: CONNECTION, UNCONSCIOUS BIAS AND PRIVILEGE

Welcome, Introductions and Intention Setting

Roseanne Ibarra began the workshop with a self-introduction as well as a recap of her Native American culture. She also acknowledged the feelings of everyone in the room. As part of her introduction, Ms. Ibarra added she holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science, a minor in economics and a Master’s degree in legal studies. She currently works in the Human Services realm with various non-profits in the area.

Our Why and Whose Shoulders We Stand On

Acknowledging everyone and on whose shoulders we stand on Ms. Ibarra began the conversation talking about her family and her heritage. He father is Mexican American, and her mother is Native American. Her grandmother was Elsie Allen who was known across the state as a renowned basket weaver. Elsie didn’t learn to speak English until she was 6 years of age. During her
younger years Elsie only spoke the native Pomo language.

Roseanne’s father capped out of school with a third-grade education. Her grandmother on her father’s side was a genius, but the missed potential for both her father and her grandmother was huge.

Knowing how government regulations had impacted her family, Roseanne’s interest in the political realm and law was piqued. She felt the need to learn how to navigate the systems and the laws which had impacted so many of her family members.

Trustee Pinoli then addressed the group regarding his own family history. When he began thinking about “whose shoulders do you stand on” he came to a clear conclusion. Everything he has done is because of the foundation which has been provided by his parents and grandparents. His parents provided he and his brother with discipline when they needed it as well as the support they needed to succeed in life. His mother is from Mexico. She was born in United States but returned to Mexico as an infant. When she returned to the U.S. as a young person, she was the only Hispanic student in her classes. English and Spanish were both spoken in their home growing up. He added his parents worked hard so their children could have a great life. The family owned a working ranch, so the children were expected to work as needed but to also show respect in all they did. He expressed his feelings of uneasiness when he hears comments such as “you don’t look Mexican”. As a member of the LGBTQ community there are lots of issues surrounding his sexuality. He added we humans seem to have lost a lot of respect for our fellow human beings.

Trustee Nickerman informed the group his dad was a first-generation German descendant born in the United States. His mother’s family came from South Carolina. His father only attended school until 4th grade, then quit school to go to work. When his father was 15, when he inherited a brewery and worked it for several years before going to work for the railroad. Trustee Nickerman shared a letter from then President Truman regarding his brother who was shot down over Germany in 1945. His brother was listed as Missing in Action (MIA). His mother was first person in area where he grew up to receive insulin injections for diabetes. His parents instilled in him the knowledge if a person was capable of doing a job, then he should be hired no matter the color or background of the person. Trustee Nickerman quit high school at the age of 16 and joined Army for 2 years. He started attending Pasadena City College at the age of 17 prior to moving on to Pomona College to study biology. It was there he started teaching classes and learned that loved teaching students how to make a living.

Trustee Martinez shared there is no way she could be where she is without several individuals, her mother in particular. She comes from a single parent household with 7 children living in Mexico. She grew up with a strong work ethic and a lot of respect. She is first generation Mexican American who migrated to the United States. The change for her was very shocking as she was not always embraced and felt marginalized growing up. She had many
feelings of rejection and felt a lot of shame for being different. She did not receive a foundation in her education. She feels her education really began once she was in college. She now possesses two master’s degrees and is someone who worked to pay for her education. She had friends who encouraged her but she was always motivated when someone told her she could not do something which she would then strive to achieve.

Trustee Myers is Italian American and said she is privileged. She comes from a family of four boys and all born at home in Ukiah. Her father couldn’t speak English but studied hard and became a citizen once he took the constitution test. He came to the United States when he was 21 with his father and his brother. Her father came to the U.S. through Ellis Island. He was in the earthquake and fire in San Francisco in 1906 and also worked on the railroad at Irmulco with the Chinese workers. After several years he went to work at the State Hospital where he made shoes for the patients. In addition to many things, her father taught her the necessary work ethic she needed success in life.

Superintendent/President Karas shared both his parents were both immigrants, his father from Greece and his mother from Germany. After WWII there was a civil war in Greece. It was during this time his grandfather was marched into the mountains and killed leaving his grandmother with three small children. His uncle had been living the United States and upon receiving the news about his brother, returned to Greece to bring his father and his uncle back to the United States. His uncle was a grocer in U.S. and worked hard his whole life. His father grew up working in the grocery. S/P Karas’ great uncle (who he considered to be his “grandfather”), instilled in him he needed to go to college in order to have an “easier” life than he had led. Both of his parents were blue collar workers and didn’t really think education was all that necessary, but S/P felt obligated to further his education since his great uncle had felt it to be so important.

Student Trustee Corona’s father came to this country from Mexico. Student Trustee Corona does what he does for his five-year old nephew. He wants to be a role model for him and show him dreams are achievable with persistence and perseverance.

Trustee O’Neal shared a manuscript written by his grandfather who was the second oldest of 7 children born in Germany near Holland. His father was only 14 when his father took him to Holland to take a boat to Canada where he would then travel to Iowa to work. Education was key as Trustee O’Neal was growing up. Every day his father would ask Trustee O’Neal and his siblings “What did you learn in school today?”.

Introduction to Unconscious Bias, Privilege and Tools You Can Activate

When talking about unconscious bias and privilege, workshop moderator Ibarra encouraged the board members to switch the frame of reference as something is being presented to them.
Roseanne Ibarra then introduced the individuals of the panel who will be sharing some of their own experiences with unconscious bias and privilege.

Josanna Kiggins is a Brazilian American woman who was raised in Ukiah. She has an 11-year-old son and is an avid soccer and singer.

Lisa Carreño is the CEO of the United Way of the Wine Country. As a 30-year resident of Sonoma County, she is very invested in area. She is Cuban and identifies as Latina. She is also a member of the LGBTQ+ community and has been with her wife for 31 years.

Ruben Becerra was raised in Covelo. His father is from Mexico and his mother is a member of the Yuki tribe from the Eel River area. He possesses a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Administration and was a member of the Round Valley Tribal Council from 2009-2013.

Waldi Helma is a Senior Program Manager with Mendocino County Child Welfare. She is a European immigrant of Austrian descent. She has been in America over 30 years with 26 of those years being in Mendocino County. She holds a Master’s degree in Public Administration and currently serves on the internal Racial Equity and Justice Committee for Mendocino County.

Ms. Ibarra shared one of her concerns regarding unconscious bias came while watching the television coverage of George Floyd. Her first thoughts were “where did this come from?”.

Ms. Kiggins shared her adoptive parents are white and she did not have a lot of exposure to other ethnicities during her childhood. She also corrected people when they referred to her as African American, telling them she is Brazilian. She now identifies as African American.

Ms. Carreño stated it was shocking to find out she was gay. She came out when she was in her second semester at college in Washington D.C.

Mr. Becerra stated he was not really conscience of it. Growing up he always looked at climate change as something the government was going to fix.

Ms. Helma informed the attendees becoming conscience is difficult. She shared she was still living in San Francisco and was very excited when she realized her friend could “talk” white or “talk” black. It took her quite a while before she began to realize that was not OK.

Ms. Ibarra shared personal things such as hair and skin color is very important. In her family, there is a full range of skin color from dark to light and she grew up hearing family members in her family refer to a baby with lighter skin as more beautiful than the darker skinned babies.

Ms. Carreño added skin color was very important to her parents. Her father had a big impact on her regarding his own racism especially regarding black
people. He believed in white power and male power and projected those values on a regular basis.

Ms. Kiggins shared an experience she had which partnered with racism. She was about 24 years old and had to decide to either pay her rent or pay her car registration. She decided her rent was more important and as a result, got pulled over for expired tags, and had to go before the judge. While the person before her was appearing due to expired tags on his vehicle as well, the judge was laughing and joking with him regarding his expired registration. When it came time for her case to be heard, the judge heartlessly belittled her about not taking care of her obligations, etc. As a result of that experience, she will do all in her power to never have to go before a judge again since it was such a humiliating experience.

Mr. Becerra stated as Native Americans we were taught as children we are inferior. Our own family never saw us that way, but racism was generally expected, and we had to “move through it”. We don’t want to be like everyone else, we want to be ourselves and we like who we are.

Ms. Helma has experienced bias based on her name and accent. Her German name is very long (which she has now shortened). When she would submit a resume, she would never be contacted for an interview even though she was extremely qualified for the positions. Once she changed her name, suddenly her resume was more widely accepted. In job interviews she had similar experiences. If they hear her accent, she’s usually overlooked. Her divorce petition paperwork for the court even stated, “she is not even an American citizen”. Even through this, white privilege has been advantage. She applied for citizenship and when finalizing the process, talked with someone of another ethnicity who had been going through the process 6 years and still weren’t done.

Mr. Becerra talked about economic privilege. White people were impacted by privilege in this area as well. Land was taken from Native Americans and given to white people who became wealthy because of it. Not everyone in this day in age are racist, it’s the institutions left behind. He shared he was privileged during the pandemic as he was available to his community and not confined as many others were.

Ms. Carreño added in the last few years she has come to realize she has lighter skin than many of the members of her family as well as people she associates and works with. She has a law degree and is now a President and CEO and her family was able to buy these advantages.

Ms. Kiggins added in recent years she has come to see more and more of her privilege. She doesn’t have food insecurities, has access to education and have access to many services my ancestors have never had. I’m the first in my family to graduate college. Growing up in a white family, I cannot relate to other minority communities as well as she would like to which has led her to struggle with an imposter syndrome and not being able to have a broader perspective.
Debrief and Final Thoughts

Workshop moderator Ibarra stated to the board hopefully this is just the beginning, and we are hoping to continue these conversations moving forward.

Check In and Closing

Trustee Pinoli thanked the trustees for sharing everything they did about themselves as well as thanking the members of the panel for sharing their various perspectives and experiences.

Adjournment

With agenda business concluded, Board President Pinoli declared the meeting adjourned 6:03 PM.

Submitted by:
Timothy Karas, Superintendent/President Secretary, Board of Trustees