



Campaign Launch Party
Candidate Speech

My name is Dan Kelley, and today I am announcing my candidacy for re-election as Redwoods Trustee for Area 2. The community trusted me with this role when I was first elected to the board. I am asking for your trust and support again as we continue the important work we started.

Trust. I have thought about that word a lot since I began this journey 4 years ago. Trust is a powerful and fragile thing, and such a significant part of almost every relationship in our lives.

Our pets trust us. They never expect beatings when they roll on their backs for belly rubs. Our friends and loved ones trust us. They expect us to treat them with honesty, integrity, and respect. Our children trust us. They never expect us to feed them something horrible or hurt them with our hugs. Our community trusts us. They expect us to abide by laws, clean up after ourselves, and support each other in disasters and times of need.

The people of Humboldt County trusted the idea that was College of the Redwoods in 1964 when the college was first established under the leadership of President Eugene Portugal and his wife Dottie. It seems strange to trust an idea. But honestly, isn't that what each of us does every time we build something new? Isn't that what is required every time we vote on someone's behalf? But trust means different things to different people.

I heard a story about a guy who wanted to literally die with his \$\$\$, so he trusted a third of his money to his Priest, a third to his Doctor, and a third to his Lawyer and he asked them to bury it with him when he died.

After his death, at the man's funeral, the priest whispered to his dead body and placed a bag in his coffin. The doctor then proceeded to whisper to the body and placed a bag in there as well. Then the lawyer went and dropped off a bag and moved on.

As they were carpooling back from the funeral, the lawyer asked what the priest whispered. The priest — with tears in his eyes — said that he had to confess he spent some money on an orphanage so that some hungry kids would not starve and that he feels bad for what he had done, but that he had no choice. The doctor then admits that he too had to let him know that one of his patients needed a surgery that he alone could not do, that he spent some money to save

the person's life. The lawyer looks at them with scorn and says, "how could you? You have betrayed a man's last and dying request!" The doctor and priest look at the lawyer and asks, "so your bag had all the money he entrusted you with?" To which he replies, "damn right, I wrote the check for the full amount, not a penny less!"

Sometimes we don't really know who we can trust. In politics, we vote for a candidate who will embody our highest ideals because we don't know what issue they will vote on at the next board meeting. We need to trust them to act on behalf of the community that voted them into office.

So today I am asking for your trust, but unlike 4 years ago when I asked you to trust me on my words and passion alone, I am asking you to consider what I have done with my trustee colleagues during the past 4 years.

My first campaign started with a promise that every dollar of board stipend I earned would be donated back to college programs. A promise kept and one which continues today and will continue throughout my next term. Service on the board is exactly that...an act of service.

I educated myself about the role of a trustee, the role of college in our community, and the current challenges and opportunities for college districts in our state and nation. I took the time to earn my Effective Trustee certificate through the Community Colleges League of California.

While serving on this board, I voted to support wage and benefit increases for faculty and staff, create new programs to meet the needs of our local workforce, remove programs that were not beneficial to students, and increase our general fund reserves from 5 to 17%.

I have served on almost every committee of the board, including the audit and finance committee and the Foundation Board, responsible for fundraising for the district and providing valuable scholarship opportunities to students in our community. The board has also continued to support my role as a voting member of the Redwood Region of Economic Development Commission (RREDC), whose charter is to create opportunity through economic and business development.

I advocated with my trustee colleagues for the creation of our newest ad hoc committee on legislative matters where our board, for the first time in history, is defining policy positions and advocacy at the state and federal levels to make sure legislation and budgets reflect the needs of our community. I not only serve on this committee in its second year, but serve as its chair and biggest advocate.

It has been a great honor to lead this board as an officer and I have served as secretary, vice president, and president of the board. I served in these leadership roles as the administration led our college through historic changes to infrastructure on campus, revised facility and education master plans, and navigated its way through a global pandemic.

CR continues to strengthen our partnership with HSU as our local college becomes the newly minted Cal Poly Humboldt. We have opened a CPH advising office on the Eureka campus to directly aid CR students looking for a seamless transfer into the CSU system after graduation. In 2021-22 150 CR students successfully transferred into CPH, and in the last 2 years, more of Cal Poly's new students have been transfer students from CR than even 1st time freshmen.

During my 1st term, the cost of education at CR has decreased, while student success and certificate and degree completion rates have steadily increased. We have expanded programs that directly support students to remove the barriers to access and academic success, such as the Redwood Room and Board Scholarship program that rescues students facing homelessness and food insecurity. In short, I have kept my promise to this community during my first campaign and have worked diligently to protect and support our students, faculty and staff as I hold CR in trust on your behalf.

While those accomplishments are outstanding, I want you to consider the unique and unprecedented challenges that are coming to our community as we face a looming national recession. Our communities are divided by partisan politics and a fundamental difference of opinion in our approach to difficult issues that must be addressed to heal our nation and relationships with our neighbors. CR is suffering from declining enrollments, the direct result of a robust labor market. And while there are certainly low unemployment numbers in our communities, many of our workers are not earning enough to sustain the rising cost of basic needs such as food, fuel, healthcare, and housing. Many are forced to work two jobs or take on the challenges of a gig economy as part-time contractors with companies like Lyft, DoorDash, and others.

We are seeing a significant erosion of trust in our institutions of higher education as families question the value of certificates and degrees offered to them. Despite the very real fact that graduates with an associates degree earn 40% more on average than high school graduates without.

Your vote is important because it represents the trust that I can and will do the right thing on your behalf. The dollars you donate today represent trust that I will run a good campaign for the benefit of our community and CR's students. The time and money you will give this campaign is a commitment of trust that CR is on the right path, that you continue to trust us with the education of your families, the training of your athletes, law enforcement officers, addiction counselors, and nurses.

If I win re-election, I will dedicate the next 4 years of my service to 4 key principles and goals that will guide my conversations and votes with fellow trustees.

First, that students **Learn to Earn**. Second, that students can be supported as much as possible to graduate timely, earning their **Degrees When Due**, with the lowest possible cost. Third, that we **Defend the District** by protecting the college's assets, staff and students and protect against future emergencies and disasters. Last, that we **Boost the Base** of funding for our district and community college districts throughout the state and nation.

Students come to CR to **Learn to Earn**. People aren't coming to college just to kill time. There is a wealth of information available on the internet. Students want face to face instruction from an institution and professors they can trust. Who can confer a degree upon them at matters in the marketplace.

The vast majority of students enroll at CR because they want a better life for themselves and their communities. Students come with a dream about what their life can be when they graduate. Others don't have a vision, but they enroll at CR to find one. We must never lose sight of that fact, and our administration, faculty, and staff must remain sharply focused on creating programs that actually lead to better jobs and higher wages. We are very proud of the fact that 83% of our graduates placed into jobs directly related to their field of study. But I will not stop there, and I will continue to strive to increase that number in defiance of a looming recession.

CR's career and technical certificate programs must evolve to include wrap around education for entrepreneurship. The days of earning a certificate to simply get a job working for someone else are gone. Our communities need students who know how to build a house AND run a business. Graduates who can fix electrical problems AND manage cashflow. We need more services, more choices, fresh and innovative ideas, and new businesses that will solve the new problems of tomorrow.

Our district deserves a board that will do everything in its power to make sure that education is appropriate, relevant, and valuable for our community.

Second, I will make sure that our students earn their Degrees when Due. Two year degrees should never take 4, 6 or 9 years to complete! Our programs should be built on efficiency with the highest quality possible. Students shouldn't be forced to take unwanted and/or unnecessary classes just to hold their place in a lottery system for high demand training programs. Knowledgeable and effective guidance counselors should be available to every student to help them translate their dream job into the best pathway of classes that will get them graduated as quickly and properly as possible, so they can start the career they want. We must remain dedicated to removing waste and barriers to student access and success. Our ability to do this will determine whether CR is a leader in this state or just another junior college going along to get along.

Third, I will fight to Defend the District by protecting the college's assets and its faculty, staff and students. The institutional ecosystem at CR is vast and complex. There are millions of competing priorities every day. Often, two competing priorities are BOTH relevant to student success and completion. Higher faculty salaries can be justified as entirely necessary to retain the best teachers to create the best outcomes for students looking for the best jobs. Should that come at the expense of a new wrestling program, new student housing, or childcare services for single parents looking for a better life? CR is facing challenges like never before. Our buildings suffer from deferred maintenance. Our communities suffer social upheaval, a global pandemic, growing economic disparity, a looming recession, and mass shootings at schools. These things, once considered the stuff of nightmares and fiction, are now very real. I will do everything in my power to keep our students safe and address relevant problems with appropriate solutions. I will do this without distraction and

will draw on my personal network, knowledge, experience and creativity to solve these problems to the direct benefit of students, faculty, staff and our community.

Last, but not least, I will Boost the Base funding for community colleges like CR and others throughout the state and nation. Community colleges are the least funded institutions in higher education? The UC system earns almost \$38K per full time enrolled student. CSUs and K-12 earn \$18-16K per fte. Community colleges earn just \$10,896 per full time student. And yet our costs are on par with the other systems. We pay similar wages, benefits, and pay for the same fuel to operate our fleet of vehicles and equipment. Upon re-election, I will fight to increase base funding for our district per full time student.

Since my election 4 years ago, I have educated myself on state and federal legislation that directly impacts our community and district. I have placed myself on state and national committees to directly influence legislation that supports rural and remote districts like our own. Most recently, I sought and won election to the statewide triple CT board of trustees. That's California Community College Trustees board for those of you with more important things to do than memorize all of our acronyms. These positions and access will be used to advocate that the state fulfill their promise to reduce unfunded pension liabilities and deferred maintenance costs. This power and influence will be used to demand that the federal government change outdated financial grant programs to allow the Pell to be used for short term certificate programs because trades are good career choices too. I will make sure small, remote, rural colleges in our state and nation have an equal seat at the table because our students matter too and the siege on rural communities by our dense urban neighbors (hehehe...dense) will not be tolerated. Our youth have too long been pulled to the cities for "better" educational opportunities and jobs. Sometimes, as a direct result of monies stolen from our district by more densely populated districts. This must stop, and I will fight to make sure the conversation happens over and over until it does.

So today I am asking for your trust. I am asking that you trust me with your vote. I am asking you to trust me with your time, your dollars, and the most important members of your families and communities. Join me as I work to provide timely, relevant, and affordable education to our students. Help me put Community Back in College. My name is Dan Kelley, and I am running for re-election as Redwoods Trustee for Area 2. Thank you for coming tonight, and thank you for supporting College of the Redwoods.