

'It is everything it's been built to be': HFC educators and officials share thoughts on

Dearborn voters have renewed a millage for Henry Ford College last month, renewing their trust in the school's mission and role in the community.

The passage of the millage coincides with the 80th anniversary of HFC, which the college has been celebrating this year.

The Yemeni American News spoke to top and former officials at the college to share their memories, thoughts, plans and insights on HFC.

The Yemeni American News

Russell Kavalhuna, HFC president

HFC President Russell Kavalhuna says he wants show the value of the institution outside the college, including to state officials, philanthropic donors and the wider community.

"It is everything it's been built to be, that I understood before I took the job. It is a gem of a town called Dearborn where I live and where my kids attend school," Kavalhuna said of HFC. "When the millage was continued that's a significant endorsement for what we're doing here."

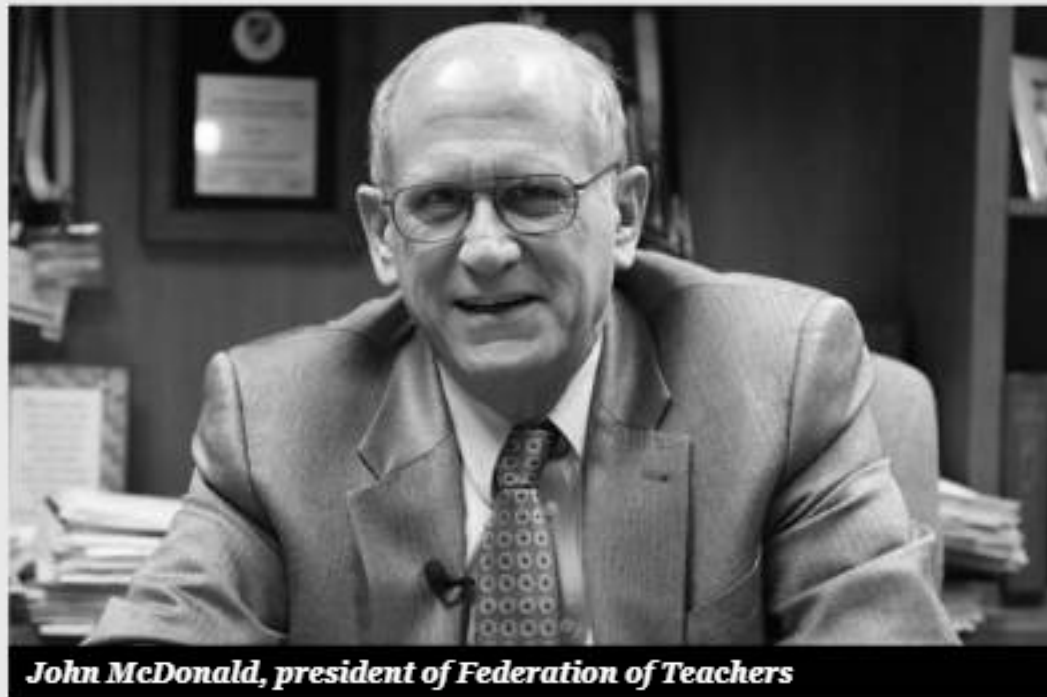
"The educational products are so strong that people outside of Dearborn are willing to come here and frankly pay a premium to get the educational value here."

Kavalhuna, a former commercial pilot and ex-US prosecutor who was the Executive Director of the Western Michigan University College of Aviation, said he would like the local community to stress the importance of college education.

"You could help Henry Ford College by talking about us and what higher education does for their families amongst their social groups," he told the Yemeni American News. "Take a look at Henry Ford College. Talk about how the trajectory, that people who are immigrants like my family, can increase by investing your time and your efforts in higher education."

He added that he wants to get more public funding for the college.

"If you look back about 2008 we were receiving the same dollar amount of state aid that we receive today," he said. "Industry recognizes this, they have invested in



John McDonald, president of Federation of Teachers



Russell Kavalhuna, HFC president

us and we have training agreements with DTE, US Steel, and the Ford Asset Program."

Kavalhuna, who was appointed to lead the college in June, said he is working to figure out why enrolment has decreased over the past year.

"I want to show the community outside of Henry Ford College how wonderful it is on the inside and be a champion of the gem that exists here in our faculty, our staff, and our administrators," he said. "I'm not convinced that we have shown the community outside of Henry Ford College how valuable we are."

John McDonald, president of Federation of Teachers

John McDonald, President of the Henry Ford College Federation of Teachers described some of the changes he witnessed during his long tenure.

"The campus has expanded physically to meet the demands of a growing student population and the concerns and requirements of industry and business," he told YAN. "Dearborn's immigrant community has grown very large and if you go back to the late 60s it was a smaller group."

He added that the college



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Russell A. Kavalhuna

offered a quality, affordable education to people who came here with limited economic resources seeking a better future for their children.

And it wasn't only immigrants who contributed to the diversity of the college, according to McDonald.

"We are also serving a much larger portion of the African American community from Detroit and that has also led us to be very diverse," he said.

McDonald, who has been the president of the union for 40 years, also paid personal tribute to the college.

"The citizens of Dearborn founded this college in the Great Depression, can you imagine that? What insight, what courage, what appreciation of Education? I am a product of this place," he said.

"Someone said, there's a Community College up Evergreen Road. I'd never seen it, I'd never been in Dearborn in 1964. So I wouldn't have had the future I've had were it not for this institution."

McDonald would like to see a stronger bond between employees - "a sense of family where the administration treats all faculty with respect and consideration and views differing opinions as input rather than push back."

n 80-year-old college



Mary Petlichkoff, HFC trustee



Andrew Mazzara, former HFC president of Henry Ford College

Mary Petlichkoff, HFC trustee

Mary Petlichkoff, vice chair of the Dearborn School Board, said in the 1970's HFC was seen as an extended high school. "That was not a very nice representation of what the community college had to offer."

But things have come a long way.

"It is now a reality that all of our community members have that opportunity through our collegiate academies and dual enrollment processes, for a fair price and a challenge that they can then translate all of those credits to a four-year degree," Petlichkoff told YAN.

The Dearborn School Board, which oversees k-12 public schools, also serves as the HFC board of trustees.

On being a member of both boards, Petlichkoff said: "I have never had a problem with switching hats and my decision making has always been, 'Okay, who could possibly be hurt by this decision and who's going to gain the most by this decision?'"

She said the board acts as a liaison to the community.

"Our job is to communicate the mission of our district and our college vision, and also to listen to what the community is asking for, and be sure that we reflect that," she said. "I believe that our biggest responsibility is to hire the right leaders of our district and our college because they

are the ones who then surround themselves with the expertise to make the programs work."

Andrew Mazzara, former HFC president of Henry Ford College

Andrew Mazzara, who led the college from 1990 to 2005, said he is proud of the institution's growth.

"One of the biggest changes has been the scope of the curriculum of the college," he told YAN. "When I first started teaching, there were maybe a dozen different programs, twelve, thirteen different academic programs that a student could select, but today it's far greater than that."

He said financing remains a big issue at HFC, as the state has not been as generous with aid to colleges over the past 10 years, forcing them to pass that cost to the students.

Mazzara thanked the Dearborn community for renewing the millage, urging more support for HFC by putting trust in the college.

"The best thing the community can do is if their family members need a college education and they want something that's quality and affordable, they should come to Henry Ford College and support the college, not only with millage, but also with entrusting their children or family members to this institution," he said.



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