

# **L&C Board Says Goodbye to Longest Tenured Trustee**

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GODFREY – Lewis and Clark Community College’s longest tenured trustee ended his final term serving Community College District 536 Tuesday night and looks forward to retirement.

Trustee Robert L. Watson has been serving the L&C Board of Trustees since 1977, including a stint as board chairman from 1983-2019.

“The college has been in existence for 50 years, and Mr. Watson is our longest tenured trustee, having served the board for most of that time,” said L&C President Ken Trzaska. “His commitment to the college is remarkable, and it has certainly been a pleasure to work with him over the last six months.”

Throughout his tenure, Watson advocated for many new programs at the college. His leadership on the board saw the college through a remarkable period of growth in both student enrollment and capital expansion. He oversaw roughly \$150 million in capital projects that created jobs for the local economy and helped support students in their quest for higher education.

The Robert L. Watson Math Building on the college’s Godfrey Campus was dedicated in his name in September 2007.

“His knowledge of the college’s history and existence has been a tremendous asset to the Board and college community,” Trzaska said.

Fellow trustees Brenda Walker McCain and Dwight Werts spoke about Watson’s influence on their leadership.

“It has been my pleasure and privilege to work with Bob and see him in action, and I certainly look up to his example,” McCain said. “When I think of him, the words that come to mind are determination, vision, excellence, commitment, strength and leadership. His service has been exemplary.”

Werts served two terms with Watson and credited Watson with getting him involved with the college.

“I wish him the best in his retirement,” Werts said.

Watson said he has enjoyed his time with the board and the college.

“I made every effort I could to improve and bring about the best education available for those attending community colleges with very little funds,” he said. “We have a real obligation and a duty to represent the people of this district.”

In addition to his service on the L&C Board of Trustees, Watson served on the Southwestern Community Unit School District Board of Education for six years, and held the office of president for three years prior to joining the L&C board. He has served as legal counsel for several communities, was appointed to the Illinois Downstate Leadership Circle, has served on the Macoupin County Courthouse Committee, the Brighton Picnic Association Board of Directors, President of the Brighton Khoury League, and on the Southwestern Museum Board of Directors.

He performed pro bono legal work creating the Brighton-Betsey Ann Fire Protection District, served on the Board of Directors and provided the legal work to establish the Southwestern Area Ambulance Service. He also performs pro bono work for Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation. Watson has served on the First National Bank of Brighton Board of Directors, the Board of Directors of the Wedge Bank in Alton, the Southwestern Community Unit School District Strategic Planning Committee, and the Lewis and Clark Foundation Board of Directors.

Watson was elected to be a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 1984 and 1988. He is a member of the Bar Association, the Southwestern and Bunker Hill Chambers of Commerce, Odd Fellows, Elks, Eagles, Moose, Alton-Wood River Sportsmen’s Club, and Tri-County Rod and Gun Club. He is a member of St. Paul’s United Methodist Church and has served on the Administrative Board.

At the end of his first year of elementary school in Brighton, Watson was blinded when he kicked a can of lye and the contents entered his eyes. He continued his education at the Illinois Braille and Sight Saving School in Jacksonville, where he graduated from high school. He completed his undergraduate work at Millikin University, and received his law degree from the University of Illinois.

Following his graduation, Watson began working for the U.S. State Department in Washington, D.C. He later worked in the Illinois Attorney General’s Office. In 1967, he returned to Brighton and opened the law office of McGrady, Madden & Watson. He later formed his own practice, and opened his second office in Bunker Hill in 1972. He also operates Prairie State Title & Escrow, which has an additional office in Godfrey.

Watson married his wife, Julia, while he was attending Millikin University and she was enrolled at Illinois State University. Their children are Dale, Dr. Linda Patterson and her husband Sean, Jeff and his wife Amy, and Jennifer Gushleff and her husband Chris. They have seven grandchildren.

Watson thanked all the board members he's been able to serve with throughout his tenure and said the college is in a good place.