

PREL's New CEO Foresees Change and Continuity

With the retirement of Dr. John W. Kofel, the first President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL), the company enters a new era. Kofel was hired in May 1985 to direct federal education services provided to the Pacific through the regional educational laboratory system.

Working under the guidance of the chief state school officers from the 10 U.S.-

affiliated Pacific states and territories, Kofel oversaw the organization's successful bid for the first Pacific laboratory contract and transition from a program within the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory to the independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation that exists today.

At a ceremony July 21 at the Pacific Educational Conference, Kofel passed on a canoe paddle symbolizing his

role as the company's master navigator to PREL's new President and CEO, Dr. Tom Barlow. Barlow has served as PREL's Chief Operating Officer since 2000. In a recent interview (excerpted below), Barlow discussed PREL's mission and its future.

On PREL's Future

"While PREL must continue to grow and change, there will of course be continuity with ongoing work. It's important to remember our history – that's how we know what we have and where we're going.

"As far as the overall direction of the company, PREL's mission statement is as relevant today as it was when it was written. And while no one can see the future, I believe that our goal – to improve quality of life locally, nationally, and globally – will be even more important tomorrow than it is today."

On Federal Funding

"PREL will continue to seek federal funding. However, because federal priorities for education shift as presidents come and go, it's important that we build a portfolio of work that will weather these changes.

"Our goals include widening our range of funding sources to include a variety of federal agencies, philanthropic organizations, and international partnerships, while continuing to develop the quality, breadth, and depth of our relationships with key federal funding agencies.

"I'd also like to see PREL's plan of work expand to include other important areas of education, not just the pieces that happen to be in the federal spotlight at any particular moment."

On PREL's Work

"John has always emphasized that how we do things is as important as what we do, and that we're a family. That won't change. I wouldn't have stayed with PREL as long as I have if I hadn't shared these fundamental values.

"At PREL, the people who carry out the work should feel that it's safe for them to try new approaches. They must be able to take risks, to put their ideas into action, and to do what they know should be done. They should expect – and receive – the support of their co-workers, even when their plans don't turn out as well as they expected.

"Each of us needs to believe that our work is important, that we are important, and that we can make a difference. If we believe it, we can make it happen." ★



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