



PHOTOS BY CHRISTIAN MORROW

**LEADING THE CHARGE**—African American Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Doris Carson Williams gives Black business representatives pointers during the April 5 "How to do business with Community College of Allegheny County" forum.

# CCAC implements contracting diversity plans

by Christian Morrow

Courier Staff Writer

For an institution seeking to diversify its vendor base, the mix of furniture suppliers, IT service providers, financial consultants, property managers, temporary staffing firms and even directors who attended Community College of Allegheny County's minority business fair was a welcome site.

As were all the college's purchasing directors, Interim Diversity Director Ralph Proctor and College President Stuart Sutin to the assembled vendors.

"We're absolutely committed to granting more minority contracts," said Sutin. "If people aren't returning your calls, call me, because Ralph and I want to know that so we can act on it."

The meeting, "How to do Business with Community College of Allegheny College" was facilitated with help from the African American Chamber of Commerce of Western Pa. Business Institute, and was the first of several planned to expand CCAC's minority vendor pool.

"This is about building relationships," said Chamber President and CEO Doris Carson Williams. "Send thank-you notes to the department heads you've met, include your cards and schedule appointments. Then call and let Ralph know so he can follow up, and call the chamber so we can follow up too."

College purchasing director Mike Cvetic said since January, CCAC has issued about \$840,000 in vendor contracts to minority-owned firms out of an

overall total of \$10 million.

"Most of our successes have been in commodities like cleaning and printing services in the under \$10,000, no-bid range," he said.

Proctor, though, said more contracts are available and that the meeting was more than just a 'meet-and-greet.'

"There is business to be had right now. We're trying to learn who's available, what they do, and get them in touch with the right people here," he said. "We're going to have another meeting with Pittsburgh Minority Purchasing Council members and a third for companies that aren't affiliated with either them or the Chamber."

Allegheny Group owner Faye Ritter said she did more business with the college before her company diversified beyond furniture sales several years ago, but said the meeting was good.

"With all the people in the room, I am encouraged that we can get beyond the roadblocks some of us have run into before," she said.

Randall Enterprises owner Greg Spencer said the meeting exceeded his expectations.

"The right people were here, and if they weren't Stuart said the right person is 'X' here's how to reach them," he said. "The board has solid policy for facilitating minority contracting and it sounds like they're really going to implement it."

Williams said, outside of a few glitches—in one instance not getting bid packages to some of her member firms in a timely fashion last year—CCAC has been a solid partner in developing a policy to increase minority contracting.

Fred Tarpley, an account executive with Trilogic, a Washington County-based IT firm, said the college is heading in the right direction.

"There are business opportunities to be had here," he said. "But it's up to us to cultivate those opportunities."

(Send comments to [cmorrow@ncupittsburgh-courier.com](mailto:cmorrow@ncupittsburgh-courier.com).)



**TAKING NAMES**—Flanked by photographer Fred Kenderson, left, and CCAC Purchasing Director Mike Cvetic, Ralph Proctor, CCAC's interim diversity officer, listens to questions from minority business owners about obtaining contracts with the college.