



Pillar & Post

Board Chair Message—Getting to Know Our New Chair, Dick Compton

Dick Compton's association with Trinidad State 'officially' began in 1965, when he first enrolled as a freshman. But his ties to Trinidad started at the very beginning.

"I was born and raised here," Dick said. "My family had a ranch just outside of town for the first 3-4 years of my life. But then my dad decided to sell it and move the family into Trinidad. And wouldn't you know—he started working at TSJC."



As he grew into his high school years, attending college at Trinidad State was a natural decision. Dick would graduate with an AA Degree in Education, before matriculating to Western State where he'd earn a Bachelor's Degree in Recreation.

After two years of military service in the U.S. Army, Dick returned to Trinidad in 1971.

"My first job was with the City, in the Parks & Recreation Department. Shortly after starting, I met Mike Maestas, who ran the college intermural program at Trinidad State. We put together a plan to utilize park space for the intermural activities."

These conversations would also provide a helpful introduction to Reuben Gutierrez at Trinidad State, who would hire Dick as the Director of Student Activities in August of 1972.



"I'm excited for what lies ahead. Our Centennial Celebration is coming in 2025, and there are lots of plans in the works. I remember walking onto campus as a freshman in 1965. After all these years, it's a privilege to continue serving Trinidad State."

– Dick Compton

“In addition to working with traditional students,” Dick added, “I also served as Trinidad State’s Veterans Counselor—helping our vets secure their educational benefits, helping them get their needs cared for.”

After a couple of years, Dick would be promoted to Director of Student Financial Aid in 1975.

“I’d head out on the road with Pete Deluca, our Director of Admissions. We’d recruit students together from all across Colorado and northern New Mexico. We also worked hard to recruit Native American students, encouraging their interest in Trinidad State. We knew we had something to offer.”

Trinidad State Invitational Basketball Tournament

Founded in 1935, the Invitational Basketball Tournament has always been a huge part of Trinidad State.

“The basketball tournament was such a big part of the fun!” Dick said. “It’s one of the longest running tournaments in Colorado—maybe second only to the state tournament itself. We’d invite 16 high schools over three days. It gave area teams a chance to compete in front of a capacity crowd.”

“Charlie Latuda, Athletic Director at Trinidad State, asked me to become the Director of the Basketball Tournament,” Dick continued. “Charlie was nearing his own retirement. He sort of groomed me for a bit, and I became Tournament Director the following year.”

“Back in the 1960s and 70s we’d have packed houses—standing room only with people sitting in the window sills at Scott Gym. The referees would have to clear people for an in-bounds pass! The local fire chief would stop by to check the crowd and say, ‘I think you’re full.’ But he never asked us to remove anyone. The environment was electric—wall-to-wall people, with everyone loud and crazy.”



Continued Service

Although Dick left for six years to finish his career at Adams State as its Director of Student Financial Aid, he would return to Trinidad immediately after. And with retirement came new responsibilities.

Dick would serve on the Board of the Trinidad State Booster Club. He later accepted a role on the College Advisory Committee, which included a stint as its Committee Chair. After moving off the Advisory Committee in 2018, Dick was asked to serve on the Trinidad State College Foundation Board.

“As soon as I joined the Foundation Board, Toni DeAngelis asked if I’d help review scholarship applications,” he explained. “I started at TSJC as a student in 1965—and with only a couple brief periods,

I've enjoyed a 55-year relationship with this institution. Reading those applications, it was wonderful to see the interest and enthusiasm from today's students."

Looking Forward

Commenting on his new role as the Foundation's Board Chair, Dick said, "I was just a local boy, but I worked hard and became successful. I started volunteering and enjoyed those roles, too. Part of it was about giving back, but another part was about showing others they could contribute too. I'm excited for what lies ahead."

With the Centennial Celebration coming in 2025, there are lots of plans in the works. Trinidad State is very well-positioned to serve its future students.

"We've always provided outstanding educational opportunities," he said. "Our trade programs help students gain a skill and enter the job market. We partner with the business community, adjusting our curriculum to changing economic needs. Our flexibility helps match educational opportunities to the economies of southern Colorado, northern New Mexico—and beyond."

"The College also helps those who pursue 4-year degrees," he explained. "Many area students come from high schools with small class sizes. Walking into a 150-person freshman class at a university can be difficult for some, and we help build the bridge. Students get their general education requirements with us, and in two years they're prepared and ready to succeed elsewhere."

"We've always maintained that culture of excellence—always," Dick added. "Again, I can remember walking onto campus as a freshman back in 1965. That's a lot of years. And after all this time, it's a privilege to continue serving Trinidad State."