Newsmaker | Carl ‘Tobey’ Oxholm

WHO IS HE?
Dean and chief executive officer, Drexel University Center for Graduate Studies

THE ESSENTIALS
• Age: 56
• Native of Philadelphia, lives now in Sacramento. His wife, Kimberly, is wrapping up her consulting business in Philadelphia and will join him later this year. They have two sons, Geoffrey, 26, who is acquiring a master's degree in computer science and is an artist, and Ted, 24, an aide to a congressman in Washington, D.C.
• Education: B.A., Amherst College; master of public policy, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University; juris doctorate, Harvard Law School

HIS FAVORITE THINGS
• Vacation spot: A secluded mountain lake where blackberries are eaten, not answered
• Music: A capella singing
• Hobbies: Playing squash, hiking, digital photography, reading “Calvin and Hobbes”
• Quote: “When you come to a fork in the road, take it.” Yogi Berra
• Heroes: Actor-singer-activist-lawyer Paul Robeson, U.S. District Court Judge Louis H. Pollak
• Pet peeve: People who hit “reply all” when they respond to an e-mail

WHAT DO YOUR NEW FRIENDS IN SACRAMENTO NOT KNOW ABOUT YOU?
For the four years I was in college, I was the first tenor soloist with the Amherst (College) glee club. We took two world tours. I’ve sung before kings and presidents, I’ve sung in front of the Great Sphinx in Egypt and on the plantation of Jomo Kenyatta.

BOB SCHMIDT | CORRESPONDENT
Drexel University may be the largest and most prestigious American university that many Californians have never heard of. That’s changing, at least in the Sacramento region.

The 118-year-old Philadelphia school has opened a Center for Graduate Studies in downtown Sacramento and is considering an undergraduate campus in south Placer County on 1,100 acres donated by the Angelo K. Tsakopoulos family and several other partners.

Given the job of making it all work is Carl “Tobey” Oxholm, executive vice president of Drexel and dean and chief executive officer of the Sacramento school.

“We have invested $1 million converting 20,000 square feet in the building at 1 Capitol Mall into a completely wireless facility that will eventually accommodate more than 300 students,” Oxholm said. “We have an option on additional space.”

Drexel offers four master’s degree programs and will add six master’s degree programs and a doctorate in education in September.

What was it like, moving from the City of Brotherly Love (Philadelphia) to the River City (Sacramento)?
Philadelphia and Sacramento are a lot alike. I’ve been coming out here since about May, when the trustees decided to go ahead with this new campus. I’ve found that there’s a network in Sacramento of those who are engaged in the life of the city, exactly the same as in Philadelphia. It’s a city, but it’s a neighborhood. The people who are committed to this region, and the health and vibrancy of what’s here, all know each other and talk to each other.

But I do think people here are looking backwards instead of looking at what’s coming. For instance, everybody agrees that an educated workforce is the key to attracting new business. How many employers out there have tuition reimbursement programs for their own employees so they can get an advanced degree?

I believe people in this area should assume that the present economic crisis is part of a cycle that’s going to end, and if they were thinking two years in the future when the economy turns upward, they might be making different choices about how they invest their current assets to get them ready for when the boom comes.

What was the genesis of Drexel’s decision to open a campus in Sacramento?
I understand that the president of my university, Constantine Papadakis, and (Sacramento-area developer) Angelo (K.) Tsakopoulos had met and talked about how important higher education is to a civilization.

We’re here because the Tsakopoulos family, the Prim family, the Cummings family and some other partners had the selflessness to offer 1,100 acres to Drexel as part of a regional plan in Placer County. That’s what made us snap our necks when we were looking at Atlanta (for a possible campus). If we can establish ourselves here, and get people to understand what Drexel is and the quality we bring, and have parents and high school students include Drexel in their planning, then it would make sense to be thinking about establishing an undergraduate campus here.

We have been given five years by the donors to make that decision. They have made the offer, and now it’s up to us to decide whether to take advantage of it and spend anywhere from $200 million to $400 million to build a campus for undergraduate studies.

The building we’re in now is independent of the Placer County opportunity. We’re paying market rate rent to AKT for this building.

... The programs we offered were chosen after many months of intense research to ascertain the fields that would provide the educated people to help this region get to where it has said it wants to go.