

# sacramento

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### adding it up

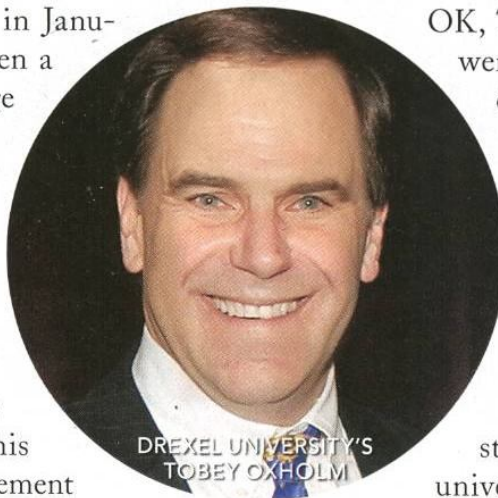
With Kelly Brothers

**D**REXEL EXCELS—Sacramentans love to tout how long they've lived in the area, but sometimes it's the outsider with fresh eyes who can envision solutions to our age-old problems. Case in point: Tobey Oxholm, dean and CEO of Drexel University in Sacramento.

Drexel came to Sacramento in January 2009—a terrible time to open a school. In the depths of a savage recession, students were asked to commit \$40,000 to \$50,000 in tuition to a school with no local name recognition. But Tobey succeeded and soon will be returning to his prior position at Drexel in Philadelphia. Drexel/Sacramento currently has more than 400 students and this month will hold its first commencement outside Philly, at the Crocker Art Museum, where 100 master's degree students will receive their diplomas. At the same time, Drexel/Sacramento is expanding its degree offerings.

When asked what Sacramento needs to fulfill its potential, Tobey is very direct: "If Sacramento is going to break out of its 'cow town' or 'government town' mentality, we need a strong mayor."

Sacramento currently operates with a "weak mayor" system, and by definition, a very parochial and fragmented city council.



OK, Tobey, what would you do if you were mayor? "I would find a way to entice a private nonprofit university downtown," he says. "Every great city has a university downtown. They are an *engine* of economic growth."

Tobey's prior and future hometown, Philadelphia, figured that out years ago, capitalizing on an "eds and meds" strategy that sought to utilize the universities and medical facilities in the core of the city. Imagine if we could get a great university to call downtown Sacramento home. Imagine if we got landlords of half-empty office buildings or shopping malls to donate space for classrooms. Imagine if we converted low-rent apartments into student housing. Downtown would no longer shut down at 5 o'clock every night.

"A city can't depend on a sports team," says Tobey. "A city can't depend on state government. But a university is a 24-hour entity."

He's right. Good luck, Tobey!