

Minutes of the Southeastern Community College Board of Trustees
Monday, March 25, 2024, at 12:00pm
Nesmith, Room 217

Present: Joe Hooks, Chair; Theresa Blanks, Vice Chair; Emma Shaw, Randy Britt, Henry Edmund, Bobby Ezzell, Dr. Gary Lanier, Dr. Dan Strickland, Dr. Timothy Lance

Others Present: Dr. Chris English, President; Dr. Sylvia Cox, VP/Student Services; Ibreta Jackson, COO, VP/Administrative Services; Ian Callahan, Director, Human Resources; Kaylie Simmons, Director, Marketing; Terrie Priest, Foundation Director; Natalie Hinson, Dean of Institutional Effectiveness; Carol Ann Lydon, Dean of Research; Maurice Simmons, SGA President; Jennie Simmons, Executive Assistant; Tyler Cliff, Tech Support; and Justin Smith, News Reporter

Not in Attendance: Dr. Maudie Davis, Jack Hooks, and Crystal Frink

Dr. Lance asked the blessing, and lunch was served at 12:00 pm.

Open Regular Board Meeting Session

Welcome: Joe Hooks welcomed everyone and called the meeting into session at 12:30pm.

Game Changer Award: Dr. English recognized Valerie Register and presented her with the "Game Changer" award. He said Valerie goes over and beyond what is expected. He read a letter from an SCC student who was trying to sign up for classes and needed help. The letter conveyed just how much effort and work Valerie puts in daily. The student gave Valerie credit for tremendously helping her. Dr. Cox spoke about how Valerie is kind and makes everyone around her feel important. Dr. English thanked Valerie for her fantastic work and told the Trustees that Valerie was a vital part of the truck driver program's huge success.

Ethics Awareness and Conflict of Interest Reminder: Joe Hooks reviewed the Ethics Awareness and Conflict of Interest Statement and asked for any trustee who has a conflict or the appearance of a conflict to recuse themselves from participation in the matter involved.

Approval of Meeting Agenda: Gary Lanier made a motion to approve the agenda, and Bobby Ezzell seconded it. The motion was carried unanimously.

Approval of Consent Agenda: There were no items that needed further discussion; the items were as follows:

- Regular Session Minutes – Monday, January 22, 2024
- New Employees and Personnel Update
- May Board of Trustees meeting date change - May 27th (Memorial Day) to May 20th
- Notification of intent to run for Columbus County School Board - Pamela Jacobs
- Fiscal Monitoring Report – Child Care Services Association
- Policy 1.01 - Board of Trustees
- 2024-2025 Curriculum Fees

A motion to approve the Consent Agenda was made by Theresa Blanks and seconded by Dr. Gary Lanier. The motion was carried unanimously.

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Voting Items: Dr. English noted that the Beth Israel Synagogue Community Room naming opportunity had been approved by the Facilities Committee in October but had to be put on hold until the Beth Israel Synagogue families decided on a dollar amount. The facilities committee voted to renovate A-210 into a community meeting space, and now we need a second from the full board. The renovation will include new carpeting, technology, cabinetry, a serving area, and tables and chairs that can be easily moved around. A portion of the \$200,000 donation from the Beth Israel Synagogue families will be used for this project in the amount of \$75,000. Terrie Priest said the families were excited about this, and we plan to engrave a plaque with the name and display it outside the room.

Dr. Gary Lanier seconded the approval from the facilities committee; all were in favor.

Joe Hooks stated I truly appreciate the Jewish community; these families have done a lot for education in this county for the last 100 years.

Information Items

Budget Update: Ibreta Jackson referenced the state budget report through February 2024. Looking at the 8th out of 12 months, we should be at 67% but are at 68.08%. Our state spending is trending steadily. The footnote shows the state operating budget trending at expected levels. Some prepaid items (service contracts) have been processed, so the spending trend will slow as we move into the 4th quarter.

The county portion is trending slightly higher than the average at 77.29%. We've had an increase in utility costs and had to replace several HVAC units. We will ask the county to reimburse us for some HVAC units. At 77%, we still feel confident about the county spending. We learned that a company charged us more than the state rate, and we anticipate a refund of about \$22,000.

Enrollment Update: Carol Ann presented a PowerPoint focusing on summer and fall FTE and enrollment 4-year comparisons. Summer enrollment steadily increases, and FTE increases between those two summers. When COVID hit, the high schools were not engaged in instruction. Community colleges were given a waiver in testing and a waiver to enroll students. When COVID ended, the test measures were put back in place, so we didn't have that waiver to enroll. The fall FTE and enrollment are continuing to increase just slightly, but when you look around the entire system, almost everyone is flat. We have had excellent growth every semester.

Fall-to-Fall FTE and enrollment comparisons

2020 - 2,831 enrollment & 651 FTEs
2021 - 3,071 enrollment & 715.6 FTEs
2022 - 3,341 enrollment & 832 FTEs
2023 - 3,436 enrollment & 839.2 FTEs

Summer FTE and enrollment comparisons

2020 - 1,521 enrollment & 220 FTEs
2021 - 2,090 enrollment & 264.3 FTEs
2022 - 2,235 enrollment & 384.6 FTEs
2023 - 3,323 enrollment & 374.6 FTEs

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Our overall total for curriculum students enrolled is 1,387. She then pointed out the breakdown of full-time, part-time, programs of study, gender, employment, and age, which is similar to last year. Still, we have had a higher population of 13 to 17-year-olds, so we have more high school students and a higher population of Hispanic students.

Our overall retention is 54.8% from fall to fall, while the state and national average is 50%. Typically, females retain at a higher rate, but we have had a gender flip. Full-time employees always retain better than part-time employees, but our part-time retention rate is very high. The Hispanic population does very well in retention and completion once we get them here; they take it very seriously.

Summer Operating Hours: Dr. English informed the Trustees about the new summer schedule that would begin this summer. The college will operate Monday through Thursday from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm and close on Fridays. This will be used as a recruiting tool, help with utility savings, and will improve morale. Students will still be served on Fridays; Dr. Cox will have a schedule through student services for students to be able to register online or by phone on Fridays; this has been the norm since Covid, anyway.

My Future NC: Dr. English showed a very impactful video presenting 100 high school graduates. In the video, groups of students dropped out of the group of 100 for many different reasons. Based on data, 13 will not graduate high school on time, 39 will not enroll in a post-secondary institution within 12 months, for those 48 who do enroll in a post-secondary institution, 11 do not persist to the second year, out of the 9 who do persist to the second year, but never complete a degree or credential within 6 years. Ultimately, only 28 students completed a degree or credential within 6 years of graduating high school.

In September 2020, the Board of Trustees adopted a resolution to support my future NC. That was the beginning of our process and moving forward to look at those workforce credentials. When looking at programming, so many pieces of the puzzle are connected; from our strategic planning, moving forward on facilities, and moving into a one-college model makes it more accessible for students to earn those credentials.

We need to design our programming to make it stackable. This starts in high school, and we need those high school students engaged. Career College Promise dual credit has been in our system for years. Early college and Career Academy are significant pieces of the early college degree.

In the summer of 2020, the early college moved from Fair Bluff to the campus. Now, those students can walk across campus to take an engineering class, cosmetology class, CNA class, etc. All these things make a difference in what you signed off for that resolution.

The trustees received My Future NC information sheets addressing the data associated with Columbus County Schools and Whiteville City Schools. Looking at the county, our attainment goal is 5,798.

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When the initiative started in 2019, COVID hit, a new president was hired, and everything in delivering instruction was revamped. We had 828 this past year and are on our way to do more. Truck driver training is another credential. If all 90 students pass, we can add 90 to that number. Seventy percent of Columbus County residents have either less than a high school diploma, high school diploma (including GED), or some college but no credentials. We need to focus on that 70%. Sylvia and I will attend an adult learner information session next week through the Belk Center working with NC Reconnect. We are working to join the next cohort of NC Reconnect. After analyzing the data, NC Reconnect becomes the advisor and will reach out to these individuals with resources to help reengage them. The first three cohorts were successful, with 30-40% of students returning and engaging in completing something.

SACSCOC Offsite Approval: Dr. Natalie Hinson reported on the recent SACSCOC visit. SACSCOC spent three days with us to follow up on a request to offer 50 to 100% of a certificate, degree, or diploma. We were looking at welding, electrical, and HVAC certificates at South Columbus, East Columbus, and Whiteville High School.

They were on our campus the first day to do a welcome conference and interview our faculty and staff who were involved. On the second day, they went to the three high schools to interview students, support staff, and our faculty, then had an exit conference. They were impressed with everything they saw and very complimentary. They reported we had no recommendations at the exit conference and that we were unofficially approved. We say “unofficially approved” because it must go before the full SACSCOC board, and technically, that would happen in December. Since we had no recommendations, we were given the option to waive that five months and move it to the June board meeting. We will be officially approved in June.

Capital Project Updates: Ibreta reported that we have \$31,884,000 allocated to capital projects. These dollars are separate from the state and county dollars. We always have smaller projects around campus, but this update is on our large capital projects. The greenhouse will be located directly in front of the pond, right behind the Cartrette Building. Our contractor, Bill Worley & Sons, have finished the foundation. Our greenhouse manufacturer, Atlas, is supposed to be on campus by the end of this week, and the materials should be delivered by then. They will begin erecting the greenhouse next week and anticipate finishing it in four to five weeks. We hope to have the ribbon cutting soon and then move on with our other projects.

College Reports

President’s Report: Dr. English reported on the Statewide Joint Superintendents/Presidents meeting in Greensboro. My future NC was a big topic; we see the need for a partnership between the County and City Schools. One discussion was about heading towards an enrollment cliff due to Baby Boomers retiring, Generation X virtually on the heels of retirement, and Millennials and

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Gen-Zs are not having kids or are waiting until about 32 years old. It is predicted that 2026 enrollment will decline because there is no population to support it.

The system office continues to navigate through many legislative mandates, one being the recent notice of trustee appointment changes.

Dr. English serves on the Bachelor of Science Workforce Learning and Development Advisory Board at UNCW and the 3C Advisory Board for the Doctoral in Educational Leadership with UNCW. He recently had the privilege of being the keynote speaker at UNCW's 3C, Challenging the Paradigm event. Some of the elders were honored and able to tell their stories; Theresa Blanks was a part of this event.

Ibreta will graduate from the North Carolina Community College Leadership Program on April 12th. She has also been accepted into the NC State Doctoral Program. We are excited for her about her and the great career she has ahead.

Executive VP report: Dr. Sylvia Cox said we have been out and about at different schools. Our mobile units have been out quite a bit, and students have been here.

Our career coaches work with different schools and embrace the idea that the whole school system is about career inventory, starting with elementary schools.

We had the fire tower ribbon cutting, which was a great collaboration with the county.

We are in year 3 and super excited about summer camps. Marketing has been working on flyers and getting the word out. Many times, students don't have much to do in Columbus County during summer. Whiteville City Schools and Columbus County Schools logos are on our flyers as part of our Golden Leaf grant. The full scope of working on local articulation agreements for high school credits to college and allowing them to dip their toes into some great summer opportunities. Also, we received some funding from the county for transportation.

Administrative Services Report: Mrs. Ibreta Jackson gave an update on administrative services. In January, they sent out W2s, 1099s, and 1098s to employees, students, and vendors. In February, they completed the first round of financial aid scholarship refunds and foundation scholarships. The first disbursement in spring 2024 for student scholarships and refunds was \$1.5 million. Effective March 1st, the facilities department took over janitorial services. We had a third-party vendor for six or seven years. There were many complaints, so we terminated that contract and are doing custodial services in-house. This 7-member, part-time custodial group will report to Facilities Director Jeff Murphy. The plan is to hire two additional people.

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Foundation Report: Terrie Priest reported on some of the foundation's main events over the last two months.

- Raise the Bell Groundbreaking in February
- Opening Reception for the Henry Wyche Art Show
- Brick Sales progress
- Employee campaign to purchase bricks through payroll deduction
- President's Ball ~ Crown Jewel Sponsorship opportunity (collected \$11,000 so far)
- Silent Auction items ~ trustees were encouraged to donate something big as a whole group

SGA Report: Maurice Simmons highlighted the SGA activities for January and February and some upcoming events. Some activities included biweekly meetings, a Valentine's Day Fundraiser, a Black History Month Presentation, SGA Elections, and an amendment to the SGA Bylaws.

Chairman's Comments

Statement of Economic Intent: Joe Hooks reminded the board of their obligation to fill out and submit the SEI form by April 15th.

Board of Trustees Self-Evaluation: Joe Hooks explained the need to complete the online survey regarding the Self-Evaluation by May 1st. Joe encouraged all trustees to complete them as soon as possible. Jennie Simmons will send these out this afternoon.

Evaluation of President Dr. English: Joe Hooks asked that the president's online evaluation survey be completed by May 8th. Jennie Simmons will send the link out this afternoon.

Bobby Ezzell's Resignation: Joe read a letter from Mr. Ezell, saying with mixed emotions he was writing to formally tender his resignation as a trustee and foundation member from Southeastern Community College, effective June 30th, 2024. He explained that his decision to step down was not easy, but for personal reasons, he believed it was in the organization's best interest. It has been a fulfilling learning experience for which he is grateful. He wished the trustees success in their current and future endeavors. He also said he deeply appreciated the board's cooperation and hoped to cross paths again. He thanked everyone for working alongside him during his time as a trustee and the foundation board member.

Old Business: None

New Business: None

Reminders: Joe Hooks pointed out the reminders and asked the trustees to read over them.

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Request of Closed Session

A motion to go into closed session to discuss a personnel matter was made by Dr. Dan Strickland, seconded by Randy Britt, and unanimously approved.

"Closed Session"

Dr. Dan Strickland made a motion to re-enter the open session, and Dr. Gary Lanier seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

There was no further business to discuss; Randy Britt motioned to adjourn the meeting at 1:45 pm, and Gary Lanier seconded the motion; all were in favor.



Joe Hooks, Chairman
SCC Board of Trustees



Dr. Chris English, President
Southeastern Community College