



SEWARD COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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January 12, 2015

Board prepares for faculty retirements at SCCC/ATS

Four longtime employees request early retirement

Even as Seward County Community College/Area Technical School says hello to a new year, the board of trustees prepared to say goodbye to four longtime employees requesting early retirement.

The board of trustees approved the early retirement requests from Mark Merrihew, Director of Information Technology; Richard Miller, Maintenance; George McNitt, Auto Mechanics Instructor; and Veda King, Allied Health Division Chair/Director of Nursing.

Dunn expects the number of retirements to accelerate in coming years.

“This is a situation that’s occurring throughout the academic world,” he said.

The board also welcomed two new instructors to campus: David Coltrain, Sustainable Agriculture Resources, and Amanda Schwab, Cosmetology. Interviews are underway for several open positions, including a Director of Outreach, Assistant Registrar and Dean of Academic Affairs.

Library Director Matt Pannkuk brought the board a report about the increasing cost of subscription databases, which provide a vast array of research resources for students. Some of the expensive databases are paid for through a consortium arrangement. Another, once operated by the state of Kansas, changed hands and increased in price.

“Governor Brownback’s office pledged \$800,000 to cover the gap created when the databases changed hands,” Pannkuk said, but now, “the remainder is not there. Budgets get cut ... and it’s possible we won’t have the database at all.”

Pannkuk brought the report in order to keep the board apprised of the situation, and no action was required.

“It’s amazing, the information that’s available,” trustee Ron Oliver observed, “but it does cost money.”

Director of Business & Industry Norma Jean Dodge also brought a report to the board, outlining the programs her department offers. Dodge, who’s beginning her fifth year at the college, said “People say, ‘boy, your job sounds like a lot of fun,’ and that’s true.”

Dodge summarized a year’s worth of events sponsored by B&I. The upcoming Job Fair in partnership with the Liberal Area Chamber of Commerce brought more than 900 people to the community last year despite bad weather. The fair is set for Jan. 21 at the Seward County Event Center.

The Southwest Energy Institute might sound new, but the event is a hybrid of the Gas Measurement, Pipeline and Corrosion Institutes, which enjoyed a 63-year run in the community, will replace the longstanding Gas Measurement and Pipeline Institute. While industry changes have sometimes decreased attendance at the individual Institutes, “People on the community still believe it’s a huge benefit to our region and to the industry to have this institute,” Dodge said.

The SEI will run three days and offer a golf tournament, social, exhibitors, two days of full training and ample opportunities to learn and network.

Like other longstanding favorites, the B&I Kids College event will try a new approach this summer.

“It’s very popular, and we’re expanding it this year to include children in the upper elementary and intermediate grades,” Dodge said. Under the direction of Education Program Designer and Manager Alaina Sill, Kids College will also move to an earlier slot in the summer.

“We’ll offer it in June, which overlaps with teachers who are still in town for the summer,” Dodge said. “We’re hoping to increase our class offerings.”

Other B&I projects include the NACE corrosion rectifier school, which brings more than 300 industry people to town for continuing education.

“It’s a win-win situation, because our students are able to benefit from the teaching, at no additional cost,” Dodge said. “Our instructor, Bob Speck, actually dropped a similar course he taught at Purdue, and kept us. He says SCCC is like family.”

The B&I office also provides contract training for companies and local groups and professional and community enrichment.

Director of Development Tammy Doll updated the board about her office’s relocation to the Student Union building.

Thanks to a gift from a private donor, the office of development will be able to renovate and furnish the space at no cost to the college. The board voted unanimously accept the bid of \$23,120 from Southern Office Supply of Liberal for office furniture and fixtures.

Dean of Academic Affairs Cynthia Rapp reported on activities scheduled for the beginning of the spring semester, and progress on the college’s accreditation process with the Higher Learning Commission, called AQIP which stands for academic quality improvement program. A group of eight college representatives, including board member Rick Brenneman, will attend a training and work event Feb. 17-20 in Chicago designed to determine the College’s next improvement projects toward continued accreditation.

Dean of Career and Technical Education Dr. Janese Thatcher updated the board on plans to work with Garden City Community College and, possibly, Colby Community College, to expand SCCC/ATS’s programs in Medical Laboratory Technology, Surgical Technology and Medical Coding

Dean of Student Services Celeste Donovan told the board she is in the process of interviewing for an assistant registrar. Students will move into the dorms Jan. 10, and three new international students arrived on campus at the beginning of January.

Dean of Finance and Operations Dennis Sander told the board a component on the heat system boiler had broken and required replacement. This resulted in a cold night at the Greenhouse as the Saints basketball team played.

“It has been fixed, but in the meantime, it was pretty cold,” Sander said.

College president Dr. Duane Dunn reported that federal efforts to regulate and “score” colleges appear to be gaining momentum.

“We knew at some point that No Child Left Behind idea would move up to colleges and universities,” he said. “The feds are now looking at a performance-based evaluation, and it will be a challenge.”

SCCC/ATS brings considerable strengths to the table, Dunn noted, and has been highly ranked by a variety of groups.