Aug. 2, 2016

College Trustees focus on safety at Monday meeting
Board votes to add parking permits, adopts FY 2017 budget

At its regular August meeting Monday, the Seward County Community College Board of Trustees focused on campus safety, starting with a quick tour of the College's new security office located in the Hobble Academic Building. The shift to the building where the largest number of traditional academic courses and administrative offices are located represents an approach to security that focuses on everyday best practices.

Director of Safety Dennis Mulanax emphasizes personal responsibility in regard to handling potentially dangerous situations. If all team members and students on campus practice paying more attention to people and circumstances around them, he says, there is less opportunity for problems to develop. In addition, having the main Security office in the Hobble Building will enable college security officers to interact with students and team members more naturally.

As Academic Year 2016-17 begins, the College will adopt two key safety measures on campus, Mulanax reported.

"Our Safety Mover Team determined that SCCC needs to implement two common strategies to enhance safety and security," he noted in his report to the board. "The first is mandatory identification cards, which have previously been optional for students. The second is a parking permit system for all current students and employees."

Updated ID cards will roll out starting August 9, when second-year nursing students begin studies. The new cards include color coding, so everyone on campus can immediately recognize whether a person is a student, concurrent high school student, or team member. Bar codes on the ID cards will serve a dual purpose – they keep the individual's identification number confidential, preventing identity theft, and speed the processing of library materials and cafeteria meal charges. In the future, the College hopes to upgrade the cards so they can be used to access and record who is entering or exiting buildings on campus.

During the meeting, the board voted to establish a parking permit system on campus, in order to better manage student and employee vehicles. Using an outside contractor, Rydin PermitExpress, the college will now issue parking permits for $10 per academic year, "less than $1 a month," Mulanax noted. Rydin will retain $4.81 and the College will receive $5.19 from each permit sold.

"A standardized process of parking enforcement and violation notice will be established," Mulanax explained. "Upon student registration a written notice detailing driving and parking rules, along with a fine schedule, will be provided." The same information will be covered at student orientation meetings as each semester begins.

Although the College and Rydin will issue routine violation notices and collect fines, the system does not replace outside law enforcement in the event of crimes or law infractions.

"Any victim has always and will still have the option to bypass SCCC Security and deal directly with law enforcement," Mulanax noted. In terms of the more routine matters, like driving outside campus roadways, unauthorized parking

in handicapped spaces, or identifying and handling abandoned vehicles, the system will enable campus security to problem-solve more efficiently. By accessing Rydin's data base, Mulanax said, campus officers can search for car registrations, and even access lists that sort vehicles by color, make and model.

"The best way to keep track of who is on campus is through the vehicles," Mulanax said. "This is not something we will do for visitors who come to campus for our theater, or to the bookstore – just our faculty, staff, and students. If we get 80, 85 percent of the vehicles identified with permits, that will help us."

"Our goal is not to give tickets or burden students, but to manage things on campus," said SCCC President, Dr. Ken Trzaska. "Especially in light of things happening in this world, we need to keep track of what's happening here."

Board counsel Kerry McQueen recommended that the motion to approve the permit process be amended to include due process procedures. Trustee Sharon Hobble made a motion to adopt the safety and security parking permit system, subject to the development of a due process policy, and vice-chair Marvin Chance Jr. seconded it; the motion passed 5 to 0, with board member Rick Brenneman absent.

The board also unanimously approved Trzaska's recommendation to establish a crisis management committee that will continue to set up specific processes and procedures related to safety on campus. Trustees Brenneman and John Engel agreed to serve on that committee, which also includes the college president, Vice President of Finance and Operations Dennis Sander, Mulanax, and Director of Facilities Roger Scheib.

Vice President of Student Services Celeste Donovan addressed the most current enrollment figures, and focused on what appeared to be a decrease in returning student numbers. Enrollment figures typically change dramatically as the semester begins, which means the current figures might be lower than in the final tally. However, Donovan said she will work to find out what has contributed to the apparent drop in enrollment among students who have passed the first-year mark. Enrollment for incoming freshmen has remained steady.

"Five years ago, when we noticed downward trends among our Hispanic student population, we put together some initiatives that reversed the numbers and won awards," she said. "It looks like we need to get back on the train again, and figure out what's happening and what's not happening."

Donovan and Trzaska told the board the administrative team will work with the data and research office and the retention committee to dig into the causes of lower enrollment figures, and report to the board regularly over the next two months.

In other action, the board:

— Accepted the personnel report, which included resignations by library director Matthew Pannkuk and STEM Transfer Coordinator Rachel Taylor; those positions are open until filled. Other open positions include adjunct instructors for the humanities division, Allied Health part-time secretary, KSBDC associate regional director, nursing instructor/simulation lab facilitator, and an education specialist for Student Support Services.
— Approved the naming of the circle drive as "Jo Ann Sharp Drive," in keeping with the Foundation Auction fundraiser, which offered naming rights to the highest bidder.
— Heard a brief report from Vice President of Academic Affairs, Dr. Todd Carter, who noted the return of 11-month faculty to campus this week, with the 9-month faculty to return Aug. 9.
— Reviewed the latest numbers on budget allocations from state funding sources from VP Sander. The board also voted unanimously to adopt the published budget Sander presented at the July meeting.
— Heard an update from President Trzaska about the new website, which now has a delivery date of October 1. "We've had some issues with the vendor, which put us behind schedule," Trzaska said. Trzaska also reported progress on the campus pathways project, which is designed to offer recreational walking and bike paths for community use. A new grant will seek funding for expansion of the existing pathway. "We want to continue to build an atmosphere of invitation to the community," he said.