



## SEWARD COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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### With early enrollment numbers strong, board approves budget

Strong early numbers indicate enrollment for the 2014-15 academic year at Seward County Community College/Area Technical School is likely to increase, and the dorms are nearly full already, based on reservations received. The good news came in a report to the SCCC/ATS board of trustees during the August meeting on Monday.

A budget hearing at the meeting — open to the public — passed quietly, without comments. The board approved the budget as presented with a vote of 4-0. Chairman Ron Oliver, John Engel and Sharon Hobble were present. Dustin Ormiston, who was out of town, participated via speaker phone in order to establish a quorum. Board members Marvin Chance and Rick Brenneman were absent.

The 2014-15 budget includes a 3.99 mill levy increase that will enable the college to stay on course in the aftermath of stagnant state aid and declining property values. Trustees discussed the increase at length during the July meeting, and concluded that the mill levy increase was unavoidable in order for the college to thrive and play a significant role for education and economic development in Seward County and the region.

Dean of Finance and Operations Dennis Sander reported in July that the new budget reflects a \$200,000 total increase. This is due to rising utility fees and rates, personnel compensation and inflation. Total General Fund budget for the college comes in at \$14.44 million.

Ormiston, a Certified Public Accountant who serves on the Board's finance committee, indicated that nearly 2 mills of the proposed budget are needed to offset a decline in assessed valuation and potential reduction in state aid due to declining state revenue. Additionally, nearly 1.5 mills would be needed to offset the deficit from previous years' projected revenue. That essentially results in less than 1 mill required to address increasing operating costs.

"It's either cut something more, or find an additional source of revenue," Ormiston said in July. "We've used about \$600,000 in fund balances over the past three years. I'm not comfortable with more." Over the past nine years, the college board of trustees fought hard to prevent mill levy increases. For four subsequent years from 2006 to 2010, the board succeeded in reducing the mill levy.

During Monday's meeting, the board moved rapidly through a short agenda.

Larry McLemore, division chair of industrial technology, introduced three new instructors: Clemente Torres, truck driving; Chris Russom, auto mechanics; and Randall Levings, auto body repair. Dean of Student Services Celeste Donovan introduced Travis Boyd, education specialist in Student Support Services.

The board voted 4-0 to approve the SCCC/ATS Foundation's request for "naming rights" for the circle drive on the central campus. Naming rights will be offered in the Foundation Auction Sept. 20, for a minimum bid of \$500. The winning bidder can name the drive, pending board approval, for the 2014-15 academic year.

The board also voted 4-0 to approve a correction to the college's organizational chart, in order to clarify the lines of authority between the Dean of Career and Technical Education and the students, and the Dean of Student Services and the students.

Food Science and Safety instructor Chris Guyer attended the meeting to present a request for equipment for the food science laboratory. The equipment will allow students to perform studies in food science, food and water analysis, food microbiology and food chemistry. The board voted 4-0 to buy the equipment from low bidder Fisher Scientific of Hanover Park, Ill., for \$47,725. Funding for that equipment is provided through a U.S. Department of Education Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math grant.

Dean of Academic Affairs Cynthia Rapp reported on preparations for the quickly-approaching school year. Enrollment is ongoing and classes will begin Aug. 18 and 19.

Dean of Career and Technical Education Janese Thatcher reported on progress in transforming the Liberal Learning Jet into a classroom for local and area students. She anticipates more volunteer workers once high school and college students return to classes.

In addition to higher enrollment, Dean of Student Services Celeste Donovan presented plans for welcome activities for new students. These include an opportunity for students to meet members of the community and become familiar with local businesses at the Welcome Fair at 5:30 p.m. Aug. 18.

Dean of Finance and Operations Dennis Sander reported that the dorms are move-in ready. The parking lot project should wrap up with stripe-painting completed in the next week.

SCCC/ATS President Duane Dunn reported that outreach enrollment with area high school students continues. The Lady Saints volleyball team arrived on campus, moved into the dorms, and has begun practice. Former Saints baseball player Brent Williams is playing on the NJCAA All-Star team in the national tournament. Athletic Director Galen McSpadden said Williams "is having an unbelievably good tournament."

Dunn updated the board about plans to invite Dr. Mirta Martin, the recently-installed president of Fort Hays State University, to visit SCCC/ATS.

He also asked for board approval to explore the possibility of a collaborative insurance plan that could include the City of Liberal, Seward County, USD 480 and possibly other entities. The possibility became a topic of discussion at a recent Seward County Council of Governments meeting, as local governing bodies look for more options to provide healthcare coverage for employees at an affordable price. The board voted 4-0 to approve Dunn's request.

The next board of trustees meeting will be Sept. 4 (a Thursday) because of Labor Day.