



SEWARD COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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College trustees approve new building names, craft next steps *Capital Campaign projects prompt discussion, careful planning*

Seward County Community College hopes to break ground on two major projects by spring 2018, and trustees discussed how to make the goal a reality at Monday's regular board meeting. The Sharp Champions Center, an indoor practice space for baseball, softball, and other sports, with locker rooms, office, and club house space, will be located on the south side of campus property. The Colvin Family Center for Allied Health, moving all Allied Health programs currently taught in the Epworth Center off campus, will be constructed as an extension of the current Hobbie Academic Building, on the north and northwest side.

"We're coming up on our 50-year anniversary, and I can think of no better way to celebrate that, than the SCCC Foundation's Capital Campaign projects," said SCCC President, Dr. Ken Trzaska. "These facilities are symbolic of our strong academic and athletic culture at SCCC, and the beginning of our future."

Plans for the two facilities date back to 2013, and Trzaska reviewed the history of the Foundation's campaign to raise a starting amount of \$6 million. To date, the campaign has collected pledges for nearly \$4 million, with about half of that as cash in hand. Final costs of the project will include interior furnishings and finishing, as well as upkeep and maintenance.

In a bit of "cross the t's and dot the i's" business, the board officially approved the naming of the "Sharp Family Champions Center" and the "Colvin Family Center for Allied Health."

The Gene and Jo Ann Sharp family "are longstanding members of the Seward County community and longterm supporters of SCCC," the naming committee stated in its presentation. "The Sharps have built a legacy of support for SCCC for many years and have been committed to the college and providing support to SCCC students. Mrs. Jo Ann Sharp served on the SCCC Board of Trustees for 23 years as part of her commitment and service to the college. Over the years the Sharp family has made significant financial contributions to the college including scholarship funds and overwhelming support of the Athletics Department. In addition to their years of service and financial support, the Sharp family has committed one million dollars to the construction of the new champions' center facility."

The Colvin family, too, has built a legacy of support for SCCC "beginning many years ago with Bill and Virginia Colvin and carried on now by their children and grandchildren," the naming committee noted. "Over the years, the Colvin family have made significant financial contributions to the college including scholarship funds and support of the Athletics Department. Kent Colvin continues the family's long tradition of supporting SCCC by being president of the Booster Club as well as continued financial contributions to the college and involvement and support of the students of SCCC. In addition to their years of service and financial support, the Colvin family has committed one million dollars to the construction of the new Allied Health facility."

Architectural drawings and discussions between donors, the SCCC Foundation, and the Campaign Leadership Com-

mittee have explored variations for both facilities' designs. Trzaska said the current strategy is shaped by the original vision.

"Our goal at this point in the process is to move ahead with a design that is aligned with the concepts that were presented to our donors," he said, "and by doing so, we can aim to have these buildings up and ready by Spring of 2019, maybe even sooner."

Trustees engaged in a lengthy discussion about how to maintain momentum and work out the details for next steps. Financing is needed in order break ground this coming spring, and board members looked at options presented by John Haas of Ransom Financial Consultants, LLC. Although Haas included a bond issue as one means of financing the project, all trustees present were unwilling to consider it, citing taxpayer burden and outside financial pressures.

Trustee Dustin Ormiston noted the financial uncertainty created by an ongoing court case between National Helium and the state tax board. Should the court rule in favor of National Helium, many public entities — including SCCC — will be part of an arbitrary repayment schedule for property taxes the corporation is protesting.

"That case alone could increase the mill levy in Seward County," Ormiston said, expressing a reluctance to make plans that could be negatively affected if the corporation prevails.

"I just do not think a bond issue can be part of this project," said Stacy Johnson. "It's not something our taxpayers want." President Trzaska agreed to work with the Campaign Leadership Committee to shape a detailed proposal — including dollar amounts and deadlines — for capital lease financing that will help bridge the gap between cash in hand and a solid start date to break ground.

"It takes three to four months just to process the paperwork to begin construction," Trzaska said, "and we also have to factor in inflation for the cost breakdown. So, for us to be shovel-ready in Spring 2018, we need to list details of how to make it all come together."

Foundation members plan to continue raising money for the campaign through the next calendar year, said SCCC trustee John Engel, who serves on both boards.

"We're committed to raise funds through December 2018," he said. "We have capacity to raise more money, and it's important for the college board and the Foundation board to get on the same page so that we can move forward with what we have."

The board will vote on the project's financial and practical logistics at the September meeting.

"We're so grateful to the families who have contributed to the vision," said Trzaska. "As we look ahead to the college's next 50 years, we know these two beautiful buildings will serve as a testament to all who have helped create Seward County Community College."