



SEWARD COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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Trustees tour updated facilities on campus

Sound system in the Greenhouse, Mansions rehab complete

The Seward County Community College Board of Trustees handled a light agenda at its monthly meeting Monday, including an update from the Kansas Board of Regents, citizen comments, approval of college strategic priorities for the 2017-18 academic year, and a tour of recently updated areas of campus.

Scott Smathers, a KBOR representative, complimented the college on its teamwork and achievements. His purpose in attending the meeting, he said, was to improve communication between the two boards. Smathers focused on upcoming changes spearheaded by KBOR, including efforts to combine adult education with career technical education programs, increased help for military veterans who want to pursue higher education, and delays in Perkins grant funding, “which is still trying to work its way through the Senate,” he said. “If it makes it through, we will hold state-wide meetings and we hope you will participate.”

Vice-chair Marvin Chance Jr. reminded Smathers of the request by community colleges that funding returned to them from KBOR be treated as a “restoration of funds,” rather than new money.

“It creates a disparity of funding, and it affects community colleges more than it does universities,” Chance said. Smathers responded that, “unfortunately, KBOR has said it will treat this as new money,” does not intend to debate the issue, and will simply follow its understanding of the law.

The trustees and Smathers briefly discussed the ongoing tax-refund lawsuit between National Helium and the state of Kansas, which continues to hinder financial confidence. Until the court issues a decision, SCCC, like Seward County and USD 480, must be prepared to repay National Helium for taxes paid in the past.

SCCC Foundation Capital Campaign donors Kent and Molly Colvin and Gene and Jo Ann Sharp spoke to the board about their vision for the building projects slated to bear their names. Both families have contributed \$1 million in cash or pledges to the campaign. Colvin said he is impatient to see ground-breaking for both the proposed Colvin Family Allied Health Center and the Sharp Champions Center.

“As lead donors, we are concerned today about how to regain momentum and move forward with the project,” he said. Gene Sharp also expressed a desire to get things moving.

“We’re anxious to see progress being made to bring this project to a close,” he said. “It’s something the community needs, and the college needs, and it’s important that we have facilities where good athletes can be recruited to come and play and get their education.”

Jo Ann Sharp suggested bringing in other community entities to explore options to collaborate and create a center that would serve schools and community members, as well as SCCC athletes and the Liberal Bee Jays semi-pro baseball team.

“We can do this, as a community,” she said. “I’m interested in setting up a time frame and getting it done.”

With recent meetings designed to improve communication between the SCCC Board of Trustees and the Foundation Board that has spearheaded the project for several years, noted Foundation chairman Duane Bozarth, “we’re working as hard as we can.”

“There’s an enormous commitment to getting this done,” agreed SCCC President, Dr. Ken Trzaska, noting that the college has assigned its grant-writer, Charity Horinek, to spend fully half her time this year to seek funds through grants and foundations to aid in the project.

Chance added that some of the challenges have come from the state of Kansas itself, which has changed funding numbers and created fiscal pressures for the regular operations community colleges.

At present, the capital campaign has around \$2 million cash in hand, \$4 million in pledges with \$2 million in asks on the table, and a minimum budget of \$6 million for the facilities as originally presented. The current plan envisions ground-breaking in 2018, hopefully in the spring.

Interim Athletic Director Roy Allen presented a brief report about community service projects completed by various athletic teams.

“I challenged our coaches and staff to get involved in community service, and since the start of the academic year, our department has put in more than 300 hours of community service,” Allen said. Among the projects: Men’s and women’s basketball teams helped assemble the playground equipment at McKinley Elementary School, and moved classroom furniture and supplies throughout USD 480; the dance and cheer team did a community scavenger hunt that focused on acts of service to random strangers, first responders, and senior citizens; and multiple teams participated in relief efforts for Hurricane Harvey victims.

The board took a walking tour to view recent improvement projects on campus: new lockers in the men’s and women’s locker rooms, renovations in the Mansions student housing, and the new sound system in the Saints Greenhouse gym.

In new business, the board voted unanimously (with trustee Casey Mein absent) to approve the administration recommended for FY18 Strategic Priority Goals, known as “Mover” projects. Each year, the College focuses on annual strategic mover team projects that address opportunities across campus to improve process, programs, or other aspect of campus operations. All mover teams link to at least one of SCCC’s five key directions, which guide thinking and organizational decisions.

In mid-August, the Executive Team provided a survey to all employee team members seeking those annual strategic mover team projects most important to Moving Seward Forward for the 2017-18 academic year.

The Executive Team recommends that the Board of Trustees adopt four annual strategic mover team projects for this academic year: digital transformation, academic transformation, enrollment management, and inclusivity and civility. The Executive Team also requests the continuation of our Safety Mover team as an ongoing mover team priority.

In a follow-up discussion to the previous month’s capital planning session led by John Haas, the board provided input to the executive team about various projects on campus including buses, tennis courts, public restroom facilities, and more. At this point, the board said adding more payment or debt service to the college’s current normal expenditures was undesirable.

“Right now, it’s a case of doing the best we can with what we have,” said Chance. “At least until we hear a final answer about the National Helium case.”