



SEWARD COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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Sports stay the same *SCCC/ATS opts to focus on student success, fiscal discipline*

“We need to make sure that if we add anything, we do it the Seward County Way, and that means we do it right.”

— SCCC/ATS athletic director Galen McSpadden

They could see the numbers. They could see the options. In the end, the Seward County Community College/Area Technical School board of trustees chose to hold the line with the college’s existing sports programs. At its regular meeting Monday night, the board set the addition of a new sports team to the side. Had the board decided to pursue the addition of a new sport, November would be the deadline for beginning the process in time for the next academic year.

“Thank you for the hard work put into studying this,” board chairman Ron Oliver told SCCC/ATS President Duane Dunn and Athletic Director Galen McSpadden. “We should discuss it and think about it on a regular basis.”

For now, however, the trustees agreed that the college should focus its attention and resources on student retention and success. Good stewardship of the community’s money also played into the decision.

In the report he prepared for the board, comparing costs for golf, cross-country, and track, McSpadden said, “there’s a lot of information, folks. You can see the figures. You can see the income. It wasn’t too many years ago that I stood before you and we considered soccer. I don’t think these figures or the information has really changed.”

As before, McSpadden noted, dorm space at SCCC/ATS has evenly matched enrollment. While the situation is ideal in terms of using space and resources effectively, it does not invite growth.

“Where would we put additional student athletes?” McSpadden asked. “We’ve also got to consider the other expenses that go with another large group of students. We need to make sure that if we add anything, we do it the Seward County Way, and that means we do it right.”

Board member Dustin Ormiston echoed McSpadden’s take on the situation.

“In theory, dorms pay for themselves,” he said, noting that theory and reality do not always align.

Trustee Rick Brenneman agreed.

“I’m not sure we want to construct dorms because we want to add a team,” he said.

Even so, all the trustees agreed the possibility for additional sports should remain open for consideration on a yearly basis and be examined in the bigger contexts of what is best for students, for the community, and for the college as a whole.

“It’s important,” Oliver said. “I’m not sure at what juncture we need to move forward.”

“We need to be planning and thinking about it,” Ormiston said.

In other business, the board toured the college's recently-upgraded physics lab. The project cost of \$133,632 for remodeling by a local contractor and \$77,885 for equipment was completely funded by a STEM grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

Agriculture, Business and Personal Services Division chair Kim Zant and Industrial Technology Division chair Larry McLemore presented annual reports on programs in their divisions.

Zant outlined progress and achievements in eight programs — agriculture, accounting, business administrative technology, business marketing and management, computer information systems, criminal justice, cosmetology and health information management. Agriculture, in particular, has experienced challenges because of faculty changes. “We’re still looking for a sustainable agriculture specialist and a livestock judging instructor/coach,” Zant said. “Dr. Dunn and (Career and Industrial Technology Dean) Dr. Thatcher have subbed in to help teach the classes, so that has helped.”

McLemore reported on the Commercial Drivers License (CDL), machine tool technology and automotive business management (ABM) programs. Truck driving is in high demand, he said. “We’re about at capacity, even with the addition of a new instructor,” McLemore told the board.

As part of the college's Title V Grant, the board accepted the low bid of \$181,200 from Greenline Fuel Corp. of Temecula, Calif., to construct a Compressed Natural Gas station on campus. The fueling station will be used to train students to be CNG technicians, and eventually serve to fill the college's CNG vehicles. It will not be designed for public sales or use.

Oliver asked for more information about the college's CNG vehicles. “We’re still in the process of getting those cars,” McLemore said. “Black Hills Energy has committed to donating conversion kits, but those will require newer model cars. We’re looking on auction sites for prospective vehicles and communicating with Black Hills about it.”

The board acknowledged the purchase of new theater curtains by the SCCC/ATS Foundation. The college's humanities department had requested the curtains be replaced for several years, but the budget did not allow for the purchase. The new curtains will not only improve the appearance of the Showcase Theater, they will improve the flame retardant rating for the space. Cost for the curtains, purchased from A to Z Theatrical Supply and Service in Kansas City, is \$12,228.

Dean of Academic Affairs Cynthia Rapp updated the board about events remaining in the fall semester, including the fall play “The Dining Room,” scheduled for Nov. 14 and 15.

“We started spring enrollment today,” she said, noting that the semester has gained momentum and students are already preparing for finals after Thanksgiving.

Dean Thatcher reported on her trip with McLemore to the National Council for Workforce Education, where McLemore presented a session titled “Employee Engagement: This Will Work for You.”

“It was very well received, and afterwards a woman came to tell us that she'd attended sessions all day, and Larry's was the only one that provided information she could take back home and put to use.”

Dean of Student Services Celeste Donovan updated the board on plans to engage with students at Liberal High School by providing a survey designed to help graduating seniors identify their strengths and match a career plan with courses available at SCCC/ATS.

Dean of Finance and Operations Dennis Sander told the board about progress in office restructuring and relocation.

“We’re remodeling office space in T116 (located in the industrial technology buildings at the north end of campus), and that's part of what we call our ‘Domino Effect’ project,” he said. As the Business & Industry offices move to the Area Technical School buildings, that space in the Student Union building will be remodeled to house the SCCC/ATS Foundation and Development offices. Sander also noted, earlier in the meeting, that plans are in the works to re-stripe the parking lot with uniform-sized parking spots. This project will likely be completed during the semester break, weather-permitting.

Dunn provided the board with information about a new employee assistance program designed to offer support for employees who encounter family, financial or health issues and may not have needed information or resources to guide them through challenging times.

“Our human resources director Deb Weilert does an incredible job, but she isn't always qualified nor does she have sufficient time to commit for that kind of advising,” he said. “She's found something that will help fill in the gaps and provide support for our employees.”

The SCCC/ATS board of trustees will meet Dec. 1 with their counterparts from Dodge City Community College and Garden City Community College, and reschedule the December regular meeting for Dec. 3 (a Wednesday). That end-of-semester session will begin at 6 p.m., when the board eats dinner with students, followed by the regular meeting at 7:30 in the SCCC/ATS board room.