



SEWARD COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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SCCC board to wrap up year with special meeting

Trustees fine-tune finance details for construction

The Seward County Community College Board of Trustees met Monday, Dec. 4 to handle an agenda that ranged from nitty-gritty planning for construction in 2018 to a look at transformational decisions that position the college's academic programs for growth. In regard to the SCCC Foundation's Capital Campaign projects, the Board agreed to a special meeting at noon Dec. 13 to follow up on finance options and reach decisions that will determine a project start date.

"We are tremendously grateful for the trustees' effort and energy to take the most thoughtful and meticulous approach to the campaign finance piece," said SCCC President Dr. Ken Trzaska. "This is an enormous project for the community, and a big investment. It's important that we pay attention to details at every step along the way."

At the special meeting on Wednesday, the board anticipates voting on a bridge finance option to set the construction of the Colvin Family Allied Health Center and the Sharp Champions Center in motion. As semesters end and start, and projects kick off, Trzaska said he finds it particularly important to connect decisions to the College's core values and strategic directions.

"We want to make sure everything we do connects back to those foundations," he said.

The board heard a robust set of reports from Sports Information Director Ian Applegate, an update on the college's Civility & Inclusivity project from Executive Director of Marketing Rachel Coleman, and a review of the Academic Transformation projects from Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Todd Carter. All three reports served as information items only.

French Construction donates softball press box

With basketball in full swing, Applegate said the women's team is ranked in the Top 10 in the country, having a "pretty good season," while the men have continued to make impressive progress in a year that is expected to rebuild the program.

Facilities improvements continue, thanks to local partnerships and donations through the Saints Booster Club. French Construction has agreed to donate construction of a press box for the softball team, and the college's IT department is working to ensure the electrical, sound, and wifi components work with the campus infrastructure. In the Greenhouse, plans are underway for new video scoreboards to replace the old lightbulb-and-number versions.

"These are more dynamic, allow us to sell ad sponsorships, and can be used for graduation and other intramural events," Applegate said. "We hope to bring you a bid with specs at the January meeting, along with funding options."

To date, the athletic department has secured donations totaling \$75,000 of the \$100,000 needed to pay for the new scoreboards.

The Inclusivity & Civility Mover team is currently completing a “Campus Climate” survey of student and employee attitudes and experiences on campus, Coleman reported. Once the 20-question survey, offered in multiple languages, has been tallied, “we will have a better picture of how people feel, and where our team should focus energy to build a stronger sense of community, unity, and understanding,” she said. “Our focus is not on any specific group or ideology, but more on creating a true sense of inclusion, that there is a place for you, if you are a stakeholder at SCCC.”

Academic Transformation projects partner with district, universities

The Academic Transformation Mover team at the college has focused on four priorities, said Carter: Guided Pathways for students to succeed from enrollment at SCCC through the start of a career; Transition to College programs that aim to help students from various pre-college stages through success at SCCC; Instructional Innovation to courses currently offered at the college; and Partnerships with industry and other educational entities.

Many projects in progress address more than one of the priorities, Carter noted, offering the “Meta-Major Pathway” as an example.

“We’re working with our divisions to have clusters of classes that a student who is undecided can take in order to explore various degree tracks,” Carter said. “For example, students in Industrial Technology can take first semester classes that would apply to compressed natural gas, process technology, or corrosion, and get an introduction to each of those trades. These exploratory classes allow them to form a plan without losing time in degree completions.”

Carter also listed several exciting new initiatives. An add-on grant through the Perkins program provides additional funding to attract students to coursework that typically sees one dominant gender — for instance, male students to nursing, or female students to industrial trades. A new partnership with the University of Kansas will create a pathway for students to enter intelligence and national security studies, for eventual transfer to KU. The University of Kansas may expand undergraduate research opportunities for SCCC students, pending acceptance of an additional LSAMP grant application. The new opportunities are not limited to academic areas of study.

“We were approved for a mentor connect grant through the national Science Education program to help us take our corrosion tech program to the national level,” Carter said. As one of only three community colleges in the nation to offer corrosion instruction, SCCC has a unique opportunity, he noted.

Finally, SCCC continues to push the boundaries of partnership with USD 480, through programs at elementary and middle school levels, and a stake in the Liberal High School redesign underway.

“We would like to see high school students able to do independent research through the college,” Carter said.

Partnership with high schools has become a focal point of conversation in Topeka, noted vice-chair Marvin Chance, who attended Kansas Association of Community College Trustee meetings where concurrent enrollment was under debate. The issue is demanding President Trzaska’s time and energy in Topeka, Chance said.

“SCCC has offered a framework for conversation about this issue, which involves quite a bit of funding money,” said Trzaska. “We’re going to fight for it, because we know it offers great value to our community.” Concurrent enrollment has positively impacted students throughout the many rural communities served by SCCC, as well as hundreds of LHS students each year.

“It reflects the very nature of what community colleges do — creating access for people who may not see a clear pathway to college, and helping them move forward,” Trzaska said.

In voting action, the board unanimously approved the academic calendar for 2018-19, which includes a start date one week later than previous years. The change was prompted by the college’s desire to assist students in getting the best possible advising, and to align with the high school schedules throughout the region.

“We have data that shows when faculty advisors make a connection with students up front, those students are more likely to be retained,” said Carter. “Before this change, our faculty were in training and orientation activities just as students arrived on campus to get settled for the semester. This focuses on helping them get a strong start, and we appreciate the faculty being willing to give up some of that instructional time.”

The board also voted 5-0 to approve slight curriculum changes to the Respiratory Therapy program.

“Essentially, we are taking two courses with overlapping content and combining them in a spring class, rather than splitting it between spring and summer,” Carter said. “This allows the students more options to get practical experience during the summer.”

The board also voted 5-0 to approve a first reading of a hiring policy update after discussion with Human Resources Director Tanya Dowell.

“We’ve been working with our attorney, Shirla McQueen, our deans, and others on campus to simplify our hiring process and improve it,” Dowell said. She outlined the proposed changes, which aim to streamline and speed up the often months-long hiring process currently in place, particularly in event of emergencies.

“Probably the biggest change is adding an appointment process,” she said. “In some cases, like a faculty member leaving suddenly, just as the semester is starting, we recommend having a faster process to get someone in place.” The appointment process would rely on supervisors or deans, and would not apply to administrative-level jobs.

“We have had several key positions that lost good applicants because our process was so glacial,” said Trzaska. “We’re asking the board to consider this policy that could simplify the process and help us manage more effectively.”

Trustee Stacy Johnson said he wanted to ensure emergency appointments would be the exception, not the norm.

“I believe in posting jobs,” he said. Vice-chair Marvin Chance agreed, noting that in the 26 years he has served, only twice had trustees disagreed with hiring recommendations brought by administration.

In other business, the board:

- * Gave retroactive approval to purchase \$48,000 of IT storage, a response to an emergency situation that occurred the previous weekend;

- * Engaged in a lengthy discussion about bridge funding options for the Capital Campaign, before setting a special meeting to make a decision; in connection with the funding discussion, the board voted unanimously to table the issue until Dec. 13;

- * Approved the purchase of a \$61,858 metal storage structure from Morton Buildings, a significantly lower bid than the one excluding concrete work, submitted by French Construction;

- * Heard regular reports from the executive team about end-of-semester activities for students and ongoing maintenance and grounds projects.