

NASSAU COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Garden City, New York

BOARD OF TRUSTEES' MINUTES

Meeting of November 9, 2021

The six hundred forty-ninth meeting of the Board of Trustees was held on Tuesday, November 9, 2021 via Zoom. The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Weiss at 5:46 p.m. followed by a salute to the flag.

Present: Kathy Weiss, Vice Chair
Edward Powers, Secretary;
John A. DeGrace, Linda H. Green, Wanda H. Jackson,
George Siberón, Donna M. Tuman, Carl Denaud, Student Trustee.

Absent: Jorge L. Gardyn, John R. Durso

Also in attendance: President Williams, VPs Conzatti, Izquierdo, Kerrigan, Lausch, AVP Wright, D. Haugen

Vice Chair Weiss requested a motion that pursuant to Section 105 of the Open Meetings Law of the State of New York, the Board of Trustees shall enter Executive Session for the following purposes: 1) to discuss matters relating to negotiations involving the Nassau Community College Administrators Association; and 2) of reviewing the medical, financial, credit or employment history of a particular person or corporation, or matters leading to the appointment, employment, promotion, demotion, discipline, suspension, dismissal or removal of a particular person or corporation. Trustee Siberón moved the motion; seconded by Trustee Tuman. Motion carried 8-0.

Chair Gardyn resumed the open meeting at 6:49 p.m.

Present: Jorge L. Gardyn, Chair
Kathy Weiss, Vice Chair
John A. DeGrace, Linda H. Green, Wanda H. Jackson,
George Siberón, Donna M. Tuman, Carl Denaud, Student Trustee.

Absent: John R. Durso, Edward Powers, Secretary

Also in attendance: President Williams, VPs Izquierdo, Kerrigan, Lausch, AVP Wright

1. Approval of Minutes

Chair Gardyn requested a motion to approve the minutes of September 14, 2021. Trustee Weiss moved the motion; seconded by Trustee Green. Motion carried 8-0.

Chair Gardyn made a motion under Article VIII section C(6) of the Rules of Procedure to allow for the consideration of two items that do not appear on the Calendar. Trustee Green seconded the motion. Motion carried 8-0.

2. Trustee Jackson introduced the following resolution:

WHEREAS, New York State Education Law Section 6303(6) permits community colleges to set a reduced rate of tuition and/or fees, or to waive tuition and/or fees entirely, for students participating in any dual or concurrent enrollment program;

RESOLVED, that pursuant to Section 6303(6) of the New York State Education Law, the Nassau Community College Board of Trustees hereby authorizes the President of Nassau Community College, or the President's designee, to set a reduced rate of tuition and/or fees or to waive tuition and/or fees entirely for students participating in any dual or concurrent enrollment program effective Winter 2022.

Chair Gardyn requested a motion to consider this item. Trustee Tuman moved the motion; seconded by Trustee Green. Motion carried 8-0.

3. Trustee Weiss introduced the following resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees hereby authorizes the president of the college and the chair of the Board of Trustees to execute the settlement agreement and general release to cause the implementation of the terms set forth therein, and be it further

RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees accepts the irrevocable letter of resignation of the employee who is the subject of said agreement, subject to receipt by counsel to the college of a letter of resignation.

Chair Gardyn requested a motion to consider this item. Trustee Weiss moved the motion; seconded by Trustee Jackson. Motion carried 8-0.

Dr. Williams reported on the following items:

Student Highlights

- He attended the Veterans Luncheon and expressed appreciation to all those who serve in the U.S. military.
- Last week, President's Cabinet met with the Student Government Association (SGA) President and her executive team. These meetings are occurring in an effort to enhance our connection to the student voice as we continue to endeavor to make student-centered decisions at the College.
- He met with three of the ten Nursing students who were each recipients of a \$1,000 scholarship. He thanked the United Way of Long Island for its generosity in providing the ten \$1,000 DREAMS for Youth Scholarships that NCC identified. He also expressed gratitude to all the staff and faculty who helped coordinate the event, with a special thanks to Colleen Langon in the Development Office.

Preparing for Winter and Spring - Health and Safety Update

- In planning for the Spring 2022 semester, which has been ongoing, the College will continue to focus on meeting the needs of students for academics, support services, and overall operations. Beginning January 1, 2022, all faculty and staff will be expected to be back on campus in order to fulfill their respective roles. We need to embrace what we have learned during the pandemic and to utilize our resources to address student need and equity challenges: student support areas will continue to offer online and/or remote services; and academic offerings that are more suitable, based on student need, will be offered online and/or remote. Given this approach, all academic areas will offer at least 75% of each course as a face-to-face modality, as well as will ensure that at least 75% of the total course offerings in any department are offered face-to-face. We will continue to keep health and safety paramount. Plans are subject to change based on new developments.
- He welcomed and congratulated Dr. Faren Siminoff, the new NCCFT President. Administration looks forward to partnering with her. Administration's goal is to productively work with all unions, from NCCFT, AFA, CSEA, to NCCAA, in efforts to best support students and to advance the College.

Budget

The College will continue to engage elected College leadership and the entire community in discussions on how to best optimize the College's budget situation while endeavoring to provide our students with a high-quality education and excellent support services that enhance equitable opportunities for student access, completion, and post-completion success – an approach that must be measured and phased in. Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds (HEERF) provide short-term support, and we need to work together to create a long-term solution that will provide fiscal solvency needed for the future and to advance the College during these uncertain times.

Updates

- He thanked the individuals involved in the Guided Pathways teams as we develop and redevelop our present and future. As shared previously, Guided Pathways is an institutional framework that holistically changes how we operate, which is to say how we equitably support students. While we remain in the beginning years of Guided Pathways, it is great to see the strides that have been made, and he is grateful for the efforts of many.
- Aligned with data-informed approaches to enhancing student access, completion, and post-completion success, the College is one of 27 institutions (two-year and four-year) nationwide accepted to be part of the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice First Institution Capacity Building Cohort (ICBC). The Cohort will create an ecosystem to develop solutions to complex problems, empower leaders to impact organizational change, and build connections with other colleges. Member institutions will increase their capacity for assessment, analysis, and social support systems for students.
- He thanked the work of the Institutional Planning Committee (IPC) and its efforts to frame and to create a strategic plan for consideration. Progress is made during each meeting, and the draft is really starting to take shape.
- The NCC Virtual Gala has been scheduled for Wednesday, November 17, 2021. Tickets are still available. This will be an exciting event dedicated to supporting students. He shared his appreciation for the NCC Foundation Board for all of its support, as well as for the Executive Director of the Foundation, Joy DeDonato and her team, for all of their efforts.

He thanked the Trustees for their continued support of the College and all the individuals at the College who work hard to support students and advance the College. He remains excited and thankful to serve as President of Nassau Community College.

Speakers

Helen Rice, Sharon Masrour, and Valerie Fasanello, Executive Director, Associate Director, and Assistant Director, respectively, of The NEST, the College's food pantry in North Hall basement, shared a brief history of the 501(c)3 100% volunteer operation since its inception in 2013. The NEST, cited by the Governor's office as a model for all colleges in the State, provides personal hygiene items, school supplies, and clothes in addition to groceries, distributes more than 4,000 lbs. of food to nearly 1,200 people weekly and \$10,000 in grants annually, and has continued serving the campus community during the pandemic, including through \$40,000 in gift cards. They requested support to expand services by amending the MOU.

Christine Knight, Clerk-Typist I, Human Resources, advocated for the Trustees' support for approval of long-awaited promotions for five Clerk-Typists, which their already increased workload would justify.

Faren Siminoff, NCCFT President, expressed concern that the evening Nursing program may be discontinued if an issue threatening its viability is not resolved, noting that the matter is emblematic of the larger underlying problem that ails the College, which is the failure to engage productively with the faculty in shared governance.

Administration's plan for all employees to return to campus in January is unwise before rectifying issues including bathrooms without exhaust systems, windows that barely open, inadequate ventilation, ineffective HVAC systems, leaks, and corresponding rampant mold. A healthy learning environment must be provided in order to attract and to retain students.

Noreen Lowey, Chair of Chairs and Chair of the ABT/HIT Department, voiced her distress with the current troubling trends including but not limited to those in enrollment, the budget, and facilities. The lack of collaboration and of clear timely communication, the disregard of long-established process in which academic decisions were left to the academic side of the College, and the return of an "us versus them" atmosphere are causes for alarm. However, she believes it is not too late to turn things around by working together to ensure that current and future students have the chance to participate in the outstanding educational and social opportunities that prior students have experienced at NCC.

Liz Hynes-Musnisky, Academic Senate Chair, reminded all of the Mission of the College, which the Board approved earlier this semester, and which promises high quality, flexible, and equitable educational opportunities as a solid foundation to prepare students for future success that will enrich our community, economy, and society. When SUNY Chancellor Malatras recently visited NCC, he expressed his support for liberal arts education in general and as integral to workforce development. She shared that in April 2021 the Association of American Colleges and Universities published *How College Contributes to Work for Success*, which reports that employers identify a liberal arts education as providing knowledge and skills that are important for career success by preparing students for more than a specific job. Top attributes for which employers look on the candidate's resume are: the ability to work on a team, and problem solving, analytic, and written and verbal communication skills – all of which are fine-tuned during the acquisition of a liberal arts education. She is hopeful that all stand behind the mission of the school and that NCC can reclaim its standing as a premier community college committed to providing its students opportunities that will enhance their lives.

Cheryl McBride, Professor in the Department of Art and President of NCC's advocacy chapter of the AAUP, conveyed her concerns that COVID-19 has exposed existing problems which have since been exacerbated by the campus shut-down. Mold that developed while the HVAC system had been turned down or off for more than a year is now being further spread by its reactivation. The mold is such a severe work hazard that the Art Gallery and the ceramic classrooms have been closed. She teaches eight classes per week face-to-face in classrooms with no windows and with evidence of mold on the ceiling. She developed nodules on her vocal cords from having to lecture over the loud, aged HVAC system. The poor air quality in a Building G basement lecture hall sickens faculty and students. She pronounced that health and safety are human rights that we need to make priorities.

Stef Krompier, AFA President, expressed support for the comments by Profs. Siminoff, Hynes-Musnisky, and McBride on health and safety. Also underscoring Prof. Siminoff's concern about administration not involving faculty in decision-making, he is dismayed to have learned in a recently issued email that all faculty will be required to teach Distance Ed/remote classes from their offices. This policy was a heated topic of discussion at the Reinventing Task Force meeting, leading to many unanswered questions, including: how will faculty members who share offices manage the potential distraction of teaching class at the same time; will there be an assessment of office computers to determine whether they are equipped to handle all technological needs; and does this policy extend to adjuncts, many of whom do not have offices? He agrees that faculty input was not sought when the option for nursing students to take courses after 5:30 p.m. was eliminated, ignoring the consequences for those who work full time. These matters represent missed opportunities for faculty advice for resolution. He referred to the tireless efforts of various campus leaders to bring the College into compliance with Middle States, revising the Academic Senate's Bylaws to clarify the advisory function of the faculty, and concluded that we must do a better job with shared governance.

David Stern, Professor in the Department of Physical Sciences and Co-Chair of the NCCFT Health and Safety Committee, requested a reassessment of the current policy of requiring faculty and staff to maximize their time on campus. He cited the College's long history of inadequate heating ventilation and air conditioning reminding the Board that 20 years ago, faculty and staff were relocated from one of our buildings after a faculty member in their 30s died from a respiratory illness, and yet the mold-inducing conditions that caused the relocation have remained and are still evident in many buildings. He displayed some photos of the unhealthy workspaces and unsafe conditions, revealing leaks and mold in offices and classrooms in D, F, and G, and the Student Services Center. CSEA employees have done their best at cleaning, but the College has failed to address the core cause of these conditions: inadequate HVAC, and, more specifically, the lack of adequate air exhaust systems which results in limited air exchange. CARES and HEERF Act funds were specifically provided to allow NCC to upgrade its ventilation systems to ensure our safety. Merely announcing that the campus is safe without evidence is a stop-gap measure irresponsible to our faculty, staff, and students. He wondered where is the data-informed decision-making and asked for anyone on the Board to respond.

Katherine Cho, Professor in the Department of Criminal Justice, reported that many of her students do not have computers, or computers with cameras, or appropriate space essential for remote learning, and so are compelled to use our Library, often arriving when its doors open at 8 a.m. Informed by a librarian that the third floor is full of mold and that mold can be found everywhere else in the building. She asked the following questions; 1) for the administration to provide information about pre-pandemic and current mold issues and how they have been addressed? 2) does the College have recent ventilation records for all rooms? and 2) is a minimum of six air changes occurring within the HVAC system happening every hour?

Chair Gardyn proposed that President Williams should investigate the issues raised by the speakers and should report back to the Board at the next meeting. He wished all a very Happy Thanksgiving with friends and family

Chair Gardyn announced that the next Board of Trustees' meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 14, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. The Board will open the public session between 6:15 and 6:30 p.m. and resume the public session approximately 7:30 p.m.

Chair Gardyn requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. Trustee Weiss moved the motion; seconded by Trustee Jackson. Motion carried 8-0.

Meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy B. Weiss
Secretary Pro Tem