

NASSAU COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Garden City, New York

BOARD OF TRUSTEES' MINUTES

Meeting of June 3, 2015

The five hundred eighty-third meeting of the Board of Trustees was held on Tuesday, June 3, 2015 on the eleventh floor of the Administrative Tower.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Gardyn at 6:40 p.m. followed by a salute to the flag.

Present: Jorge L. Gardyn, Chair
Kathy Weiss, Vice Chair
Arnold W. Drucker, Secretary;
Anthony W. Cornachio, John A. DeGrace,
Wanda Jackson, Edward W. Powers, Jennifer Borzým, Student Trustee.

Absent: Mary A. Adams, Donna Tuman.

Also in attendance: Donna Haugen, Chuck Cutolo.

Chair Gardyn requested to have a discussion on the presidential search and if appropriate consider a motion to go into executive session pursuant to Section 105 of the Open Meetings Law of the State of New York to discuss matters leading to the appointment, employment, promotion, demotion, discipline, suspension, dismissal or removal of a particular person. Trustee DeGrace moved the motion; seconded by Trustee Powers. Motion carried 6-2 (Weiss, Cornachio).

Chair Gardyn resumed the open meeting at 7:30 p.m. followed by a salute to the flag.

Present: Jorge L. Gardyn, Chair
Kathy Weiss, Vice Chair
Arnold W. Drucker, Secretary;
Anthony W. Cornachio, John A. DeGrace,
Wanda Jackson, Edward W. Powers, Jennifer Borzým, Student Trustee.

Absent: Mary A. Adams, Donna Tuman.

Also in attendance: Chuck Cutolo

Chair Gardyn reported that no candidate garnered the necessary six votes to be selected as president of Nassau Community College, and therefore, the presidential search is ongoing and the search committee as well as the search firm will continue interviewing candidates.

Speakers

Evelyn Wortsman-Deluty, Professor of Philosophy and Chair of the Academic Senate, read the following statement:

The Middle States Characteristics of Excellence, Standard 5, stipulates that "The Chief Executive Officer," in our case the President of the College, "reports to the governing body," to you, the members of

the Board of Trustees, and “is responsible for providing institutional vision and leadership.” After one failed presidential search, a second that is still not resolved, an unprecedented series of presidential vetoes to Academic Resolutions, disregard of faculty professionalism and expertise to name only a few of the challenges that we are facing—we are in dire need of “institutional vision and leadership.” Middle States entrusts the President with the responsibilities of “developing and implementing institutional plans, locating and allocating resources and financial support and directing the institution toward attaining its objectives.” We at Nassau Community College cannot move forward to accomplish any of these tasks until a successful Presidential search is finalized. Although the Academic Senate Strategic Planning Committee has worked tirelessly to revise our “institutional plans,” that undertaking is sorely hampered without a permanent President. SUNY Guidelines for Presidential Searches for Community Colleges recognize the problems caused by the transient nature of an interim President when they recommend that “temporary or interim appointees not be candidates for the permanent position.” Members of the Board, the students of Nassau Community College deserve a President who will advocate for the students through innovative fundraising, and will map out a vision of academic excellence for the college that will shape the future of this institution. Middle States Standard 4 “expects this leader to operate in a climate of shared collegial governance”. You are entrusted by Middle States to secure this leadership for Nassau Community College. Members of the Board, we are still waiting.

Kimberley Reiser, professor of biology and president of our college’s AAUP advocacy chapter read the following statement:

In the past I served for 12 years as an officer of the academic senate, most recently as chair. I also served as president of the statewide faculty governments organization, the Faculty Council of Community Colleges, which represents 14,000 faculty around the state. On May 18th, AAUP wrote a letter and appealed to you, our trustees. We asked that you request that SUNY appoint an interim president from outside the college in the event that the president’s search failed. Today you have reported that we have yet another stalled president search. On July 30th, it will be three years since Dr. Astrab was removed as president. That is to say, since Dr. Astrab’s departure, we have had two stalled president searches at a significant financial cost to the students, to the citizens of the county and to the citizens of New York State. From the perspective of the faculty, the loss, of course, is much more than financial. It’s no secret that we are losing ground in terms of our reputation as one of the leading community colleges of the nation. In essence, we have been a college without a leader for the last three years. As if this isn’t bad enough, we have also been without an academic vice president for five years, since Dr. Ostling’s departure. Such a situation is unparalleled at an institution of higher education and puts our college at a significant disadvantage. In fact, there have been an unprecedented number of presidential vetoes to academic senate resolutions in the last five years. The vetoes began with the Astrab-Saunders administration and have continued with Acting President Saunders’s administration. It is unfortunate that the current crisis goes beyond the presidential level. We believe that the breakdown of trust and communication with this administration can only be ameliorated by an outsider who has not been part of the Astrab-Saunders administration or Acting President Saunders’s administration. In brief, we need someone who will assume this role with a clean slate. SUNY has appointed presidents to other colleges in crisis and these appointments have helped to stabilize struggling colleges. Most recently with Sullivan Community College and a decade ago with Rockland. Such a situation even occurred at our own school in the early 1980’s when SUNY appointed James Fitzgibbons to be our acting president. James Fitzgibbons had recently retired from being the president of Hudson Valley Community College and was familiar with SUNY and its processes. Serving as acting president of Nassau Community College, he brought a calming influence and was able to unify the campus community. To quote one of the vice presidents at the time, he, Fitzgibbons, has us talking to each other once again. We hope that SUNY will provide us with a transitional president of the same caliber as President Fitzgibbons, one who can bring an

unbiased point of view and therefore restore communication. We ask that following SUNY guidelines for past practices and presidential searches the transitional president be ineligible as a candidate for the position of president. It is not too late to ask SUNY to appoint an interim president. The faculty is committed to working with you in order to restore stability on our campus. We look forward to starting afresh with a new leader who possesses a vision for the college that embraces our rich culture of shared governance, one in which our dedicated faculty work hand in hand with the administration in a climate of neutral respect, collaboration and consultation. Our students and the citizens of Nassau County and New York State deserve nothing less.

Faren Siminoff, professor of history and vice president for this college's AAUP Chapter read the following statement:

Well, I don't think this is a very happy occasion. I think it's not an understatement to say that I'm sure you all are not particularly happy about circumstances and we are not very happy about things. I think we have to ask ourselves how we've gotten here. Well, I like to think of our college as like a three-legged stool and one of our legs right now is not fitting. In our case a poorly fitting leg is within the administration. I know it's already been stated but from the moment that Dr. Astrab came, arrived here until present, there's been a real breakdown at this college. We don't have innovative programs, we're not moving forward, and I think that the trust and respect that used to be between the administration, the board and the faculty has broken down. I think one of the big problems is we do not have an administration that is doing its job. Is there a time to bring this all together through our structure and shared governance, this administration has done no more than sow the seeds of discord. Instead of pushing Nassau Community College forward presenting a vision for serving its 21st Century student population, and I would note its population now which is predominately comprised of students from un-resourced communities, many who are minorities, children to immigrants, first generation college students. In sum we serve a student body that in the past would not have been attending college but do so today. But this administration has done little more than advocate lowering standards, complains it's too expensive to lift up our students and who I believe would reduce NCC to little more than a training facility. Under the current administration there's been no innovative fundraising efforts, no programs; there's no vision. So what now? First, I think one of the things we need to do is we all need to rebuild the relationship between us, particularly between the board and the faculty. Second, I would reiterate the request for an interim president from SUNY. And last, I think we need to make it clear that the now acting president will not be a candidate. He's been given his chance. He's taken now two bites from that apple. The acting president unfortunately has become a distraction and a deterrent to a successful presidential search. I hope that you're going to commit to finding a president who can fundraise, who has a vision and will lead us into the 21st Century. I believe if we do these things we can return Nassau Community College to its rightful place as a leader in higher education.

Frank Frisenda, NCCFT Vice President said the following:

I don't have anything prepared because I really didn't know what was going to happen today. But listening to my colleagues I'm really impressed with myself that I was thinking the same things without even talking to them about it. The point is this, the dysfunction on this campus began with Dr. Astrab and unfortunately it has continued under Dr. Saunders's leadership. And I understand that it had to be very difficult for this group in the last two years listening to the faculty on this campus but contrary to what some of you might think, that we're just a bunch of spoiled whiners, we have dedicated our lives to Nassau Community College, and we want to see this place become one of the finest institutions in the nation. And unfortunately under Dr. Saunders's leadership, there has been no real leadership, no vision, no guidance, you know, and this became very clear to us. And it wasn't that we were just being obstructionists with SUNY Seamless. We knew it was wrong the way the was--well, first of all,

philosophically we didn't agree with it but having said that, the way it was presented, the way it was unfolded to us we knew it was wrong. And the only assistance we got from this administration was like a bunch of compliance leaks, okay, with no assistance in how to formulate a new curriculum, how to formulate a new policy. We were just given a bunch of out and out fabrications about how the sky was going to fall if we didn't comply exactly the way we were told. And by us waiting for that extra year we came up with a curriculum package that we all believed was a much better package than we would have put together had we been forced to do something a year earlier without getting all the answers that we needed that finally came to us, right? So next week you folks are going to be looking at a lot of good resolutions and I want you to really understand that the developmental ed committee, the college-wide curriculum committee, the P&T committee are all going to be giving you, all right, some very well-thought out rationale of the work that they did and the only reason that the vetoes came along, all right, is because the administration did not participate fully in any of those discussions, okay? And then at the very end just decided to veto it, all right, for whatever reason that we still don't even know what it was about, all right? So the dysfunction and the morale that exists on this campus right now is a result of Astrab to begin with and Dr. Saunders just exacerbated the whole situation. And I don't know who on this board is in favor of Dr. Saunders being the next president, but those of you that are non-concurring that Dr. Saunders should be the next president, I agree with you, and for those of you that don't I hope you can sleep on it and see the error of your ways.

Dr. David Stern, Academic Senate Vice Chair said the following:

Well, first I want to welcome Jenny to the Board of Trustees and I hope it's a more positive experience than what happened today. In spite of your announcement, I want to thank the board for choosing Trustee Drucker and Jackson as chairs of the search committee and maintained as head of the search committee as they move forward. They've done an outstanding job in spite of the result as well as the search firm, right? I personally think the search firm is a really good firm. Now before starting yet another search you really must assess what has occurred here. The most obvious cause that the board has to look at is that you've chosen not to follow SUNY guidelines. Other speakers have said this, it's quite clear you should not have an acting president that goes for the position, and you've done this twice. I mean you really should assess what's going on here. So I urge you, please, fix this problem now before you move forward, get an interim president. Ask the chancellor for an interim president.

Chair Gardyn welcomed Jennifer Borzym, Student Trustee to the Board.

Chair Gardyn announced the next Capital and Finance BOT Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 9, 2015 at 5:00 p.m. followed by the Full Board meeting. 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 Drucker moved the motion; seconded by Trustee Jackson. Motion carried 8-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Arnold Drucker
Secretary