

NCC Board of Trustees
Academic, Student Affairs & Enrollment Committee Meeting Minutes
September 8, 2020

The meeting of the Academic, Student Affairs & Enrollment Committee of the Board of Trustees was held via Zoom. The meeting was called to order by Chair Green at 5:33 p.m.

Committee Members Present: Linda Green, Chair
Kathy Weiss
Jorge Gardyn (ex-officio).

Committee Members Absent: Donna Tuman

Also in Attendance: John DeGrace, Wanda Jackson,
Edward Powers, George Siberón
President Williams, VP's Conzatti, Kerrigan, Lausch

1. Chair Green requested a motion to approve the minutes of June 9, 2020. Trustee Weiss moved the motion. Trustee Jackson seconded the motion. Motion carried 3-0.
2. Report on Enrollment Efforts

Dr. Williams opened discussion on the report of the decline in enrollment occurring nationally and locally amidst the global pandemic. It shares in greater detail than usual how resources from different areas are being utilized to advance the College's efforts on access, recruitment, retention, and completion. While Board members were considering questions, he asked VP Kerrigan to address highlights of our NCC marketing campaign.

VP Kerrigan noted what a challenging time it had been to have launched the new Fall 2020 marketing campaign that ran mid-May through the end of August. Given this incredible time of uncertainty in our personal and professional lives, and certainly within higher education, we tried to devise new creative strategies that would break through to our potential students, and would engage and ask them to take control of their future, their education, and the possibilities in front of them, all while pushing our key positioning messages of high quality academics and student experience at an affordable tuition with flexible paths of class schedules and transfer-friendly opportunities. We used some traditional tactics, such as print media, and, hopefully, you all were able to see our ad in *Newsday* or in your local community newspaper. We also placed ads on radio, including on *KJOY*, and on streaming platforms such as *Pandora* and *Spotify*. On TV, we unveiled our first new television commercial in quite a while, which was featured on *News12* and also on digital platforms such as *Hulu*, *YouTube*, *TicToc*, etc. We additionally targeted our key audiences through social media and our digital channels. As indicated on the report, we were very effective in getting more impressions on our campaign and in converting those views into the next step, which is clicking on the ad, which would subsequently take people to our landing page, after which we would then turn over these leads to Admissions and others on the Student Services team. While he believes that the campaign was effective from this perspective, we were disappointed that it did not have a greater impact on enrollment, and so, as we go forward towards our Winterim and Spring initiatives, we are looking carefully at how to better maximize the conversion from views to registration.

Trustee Weiss stated that she had seen the print ad, which she believes conveyed the message successfully. She recognizes that we are working with a limited budget, and so are trying get the most for our money. She believes in most cases that our campaign was effective and appreciates the effort.

Chair Gardyn asked what kind of efforts are we making to go directly to the source to recruit students, which is to the high school district superintendents and school counselors? The report captures a great “shotgun” overview of the numbers: 31M views, 137K clicks, and 105K landings; but these numbers basically reflect how we are campaigning in cyberspace rather than honing in on the student supply from Nassau and Suffolk high schools. We need to look more closely at having direct access to what we would identify as “point of service” through a liaison with these area high schools.

VP Kerrigan replied that we have made significant efforts with our Long Island Superintendents to make sure they understand NCC and our opportunities. Dr. Williams engaged the Superintendents through several videoconferences, and then our enrollment team members followed up with the high school counselors. We have worked hard and closely with the high schools to ensure that they are aware of our course offerings, and specifically of our late start programs in case students missed the onset of the standard semester.

Dr. Williams concurred with Chair Gardyn about the potential in direct appeal to high schools. Dr. Williams reiterated that he held several meetings with superintendents throughout the summer, and prior to these we had sent out messages addressing the uptick in high school enrichment options that were available over the summer. These efforts represent more than we had made last summer, but we need to do more to tap into this huge opportunity.

VP Conzatti remarked that Dr. Gardyn may be alluding to Dual Enrollment, which is a program that requires a different, more targeted means of collaboration with the high schools. She asserted that it was important to supply the Superintendents with data on our number of applicants. We conducted specific outreach to superintendents of districts where we typically have had a very high applicant rate, but in which we did not meet those levels for this semester. When we contacted them to discuss possible reasons for the drop-off, we received a lot of responses that some students simply are not interested in remote learning and/or do not feel that they are well-enough equipped for remote learning. She suspects that there are many districts with students who feel that they will wait for the pandemic to subside, and so have opted to take off the Fall semester and to return in the Spring when the situation hopefully has become more manageable. A significant proportion of all of this past Spring’s 14,000 students whom we called, and with whom we continue to communicate, confirmed a preference to skip a semester until able to resume face-to-face classes in their respective majors. We currently are registering a number of students in our Late Start programs, so the enrollment picture is not complete: some students had chosen schools that had initially intended to go face-to-face and are now converting to mostly remote, and these students are realizing from our marketing campaign efforts that NCC would be a better fiscal choice if indeed all schools are mostly remote. She and VPs Muscarella and Izquierdo had another conversation this afternoon as we witness some regional schools shutting down from COVID-19 outbreaks, which may present an opportunity for us to offer a mid-semester program for 7-1/2 weeks. Still, there is additional work to be done.

Dr. Gardyn clarified that, while many of the challenges involve students who are already enrolled or are trying to finish their Associate's degree, he is referring to new students on whom barriers to enrollment are placed.

VP Conzatti acknowledged that the Senate Executive Committee understands that these barriers to enrollment exist and need to be removed as part of a number of charges this semester. Over the summer, as a Senate body we did work with committee members and with some of the Chairs to get relief from some of those policies, changes to which must go through the governance structure. The results of these actions are reflected in a 4-1/2 percent bounce in summer enrollment, but we need to continue to look at long-term improvement. We have dual enrollment, multiple measures, and other opportunities on the ground which need to be explored this year in order for us to be on competitive ground on comprehensive enrollment with other community colleges.

Dr. Gardyn emphasized that these challenges are not new: he has heard them this year, last year, the year before, and so on. He underscored that it is the height of foolishness if we keep doing the same things over and over again and expect different results. He hopes that this time we will be motivated by decreasing revenues and student enrollments to finally eliminate the barriers that we keep inflicting on ourselves. Whatever our marketing campaign to bring in more students, if we continue to erect barriers to enrollment, we are just defeating ourselves. He urged the Senate and whomever else at the College must be involved to resolve the problem this year.

Chair Green asked if there were any other items for the Committee to consider. There being none, the meeting adjourned at 5:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Maria P. Conzatti

Maria P. Conzatti

VP Academic Student Affairs