

NASSAU COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
Garden City, New York

BOARD OF TRUSTEES' MINUTES

Meeting of February 9, 2023

The six hundred sixty-second meeting of the Board of Trustees was held on Thursday, February 9, 2023 on the eleventh floor of the Administrative Tower. The meeting was called to order by Chair Gardyn at 6:05 p.m. followed by a salute to the flag.

Present: Jorge L. Gardyn, Chair  
Kathy Weiss, Vice Chair  
Wanda H. Jackson, Secretary;  
Lynne D'Agostino, John R. Durso, Ronald J. Rosenberg,  
George Siberón, Donna M. Tuman, Aniruddh Patel, Student Trustee.

Also in attendance: Acting President Conzatti, VP Kornbluth, Interim VP Alvarez-Ortiz and Langdon

Chair Gardyn 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 purposes: 1) matters relating to negotiations involving the NCCFT; and 2) the review of 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 Rosenberg moved the motion; seconded by Trustee Patel. Motion carried 9-0.

Chair Gardyn resumed the open meeting at 8:30 p.m.

Present: Jorge L. Gardyn, Chair  
Kathy Weiss, Vice Chair  
Wanda H. Jackson, Secretary;  
Lynne D'Agostino, John R. Durso, Ronald J. Rosenberg,  
George Siberón, Donna M. Tuman, Aniruddh Patel, Student Trustee.

Also in attendance: Acting President Conzatti, VP Kornbluth, Interim VP Alvarez-Ortiz and Langdon

1. Approval of Minutes

Chair Gardyn requested a motion to approve the minutes of January 10, 2023. Trustee Durso moved the motion; seconded by Trustee Siberón. Motion carried 9-0.

2. Trustee Jackson introduced the following resolution:

**RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Nassau Community College Board of Trustees Finance and Capital Committee, the Nassau Community College Board of Trustees hereby approves the pending college procurement agreement with Shenker, Russo & Clark, LLP in the annual amount of \$60,000, as requested by Vice President of Community and Government Relations, Dr. Jerry Kornbluth.

Chair Gardyn requested a motion to consider this item. Trustee Weiss voted against the agreement because Acting President Conzatti shared that the New York State Community College Presidents and the New York State Association of Community College Trustees are working together on an entire lobbying campaign.

Trustee Rosenberg moved the motion; seconded by Trustee Durso. Motion carried 8-1 (Weiss) -0.

3. Trustee Durso introduced the following resolution:

**RESOLVED** that Nassau Community College Board of Trustees authorize NCC administration to amend residency requirements for tuition purposes to students that have been granted Temporary Protected Status, who would not otherwise qualify based on any other established NYS residency requirement. The amendment would apply to current students with non-immigrant visas, making them eligible for Nassau County resident tuition for the Spring 2022 term and the 2022/23 academic year.

Chair Gardyn requested a motion to consider this item. Trustee Patel moved the motion; seconded by Trustee Weiss. Motion carried 8-1 (Rosenberg) -0.

4. Trustee Tuman introduced the following resolution:

**RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Nassau Community College Board of Trustees Personnel, Affirmative Action & Labor Committee, the Nassau Community College Board of Trustees hereby approves that in recognition of distinguished and meritorious service to Nassau Community College, and upon the recommendation of the president of Nassau Community College, the following named retired faculty members of Nassau Community College, who retired after attaining the academic rank of professor or associate professor, are hereby granted the permanent academic title of professor emeritus with all the privileges and rights accruing thereto.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Department</u>	<u>Retirement Date</u>
Noreen Lowey	Professor	Healthcare Admin, Coding, Medical Assistant	1/19/2023

Chair Gardyn requested a motion to consider this item. Trustee Durso moved the motion; seconded by Trustee D’Agostino. Motion carried 9-0.

5. Trustee Weiss introduced the following resolution:

**RESOLVED**, upon the recommendation of the Nassau Community College Board of Trustees Personnel, Affirmative Action & Labor Committee, the Nassau Community College Board of Trustees hereby authorizes and approves a onetime honorarium of \$5000 to professor Robert G. Costello as the recipient of the SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professorship Award.

Chair Gardyn requested a motion to consider this item. Trustee Weiss moved the motion; seconded by Trustee Siberón. Motion carried 9-0.

Chair Gardyn made a motion under Article VIII section C(6) of the Rules of Procedure to allow for the consideration of an item that does not appear on the Calendar. Trustee Weiss seconded the motion. Motion carried 9-0.

6. Trustee Patel introduced the following resolution:

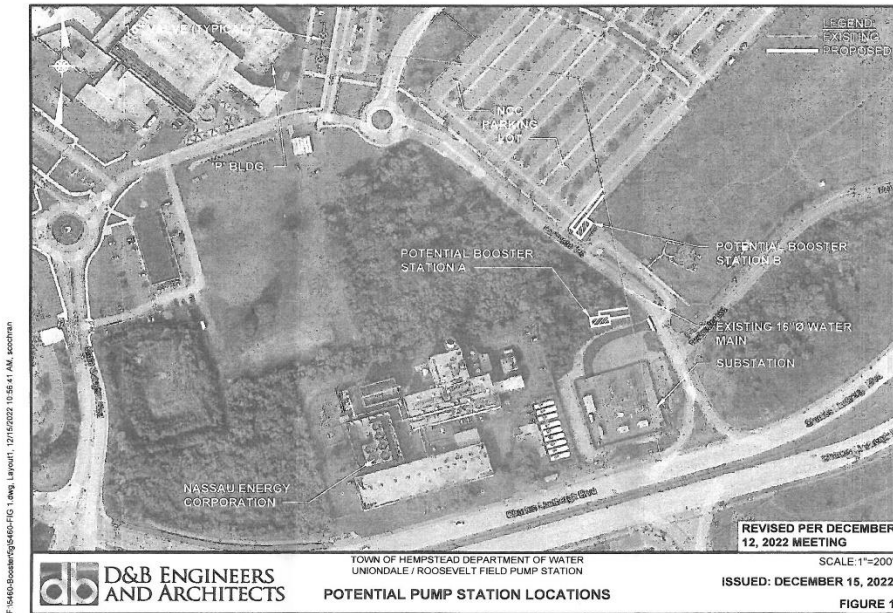
**WHEREAS**, Town of Hempstead department of water (Town) has requested that they be granted an easement on land adjacent to Charles Lindbergh Boulevard for installation of a booster pumping station, and

**WHEREAS**, a resolution from the Nassau Community College Board of Trustees is required as part of the County’s approval process for an easement agreement, and

**WHEREAS**, state and federal water quality regulations have forced the Town to remove several of its water supply wells from service, and

**WHEREAS**, the booster pumping station will allow the Town to continue to provide Mitchel Field service area including NCC with a supply of clean drinking water while the Town is in the process of designing and constructing a state-of-the-art treatment facility to address contaminants,

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** Nassau Community College Board of Trustees does hereby approve of the easement to Town of Hempstead Department of water as described in the enclosed map as station A.



Chair Gardyn requested a motion to consider this item. Trustee Rosenberg moved the motion; seconded by Trustee Durso. Motion carried 9-0.

7. Trustee D’Agostino 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 Tuman moved the motion; seconded by Trustee Rosenberg. Motion carried 9-0.

Dr. Conzatti reported on the following items:

NCC was awarded 2.1 million in a NYGEAR UP Grant to will work with Freeport and Roosevelt high schools. The goal is to increase the high school graduation rate and participation in postsecondary education for students by offering enrichment activities that ignite interest in students going to College that leads to concurrent enrollment and Guided Pathways awareness. In addition, to increase the educational expectations for students,

tours and workshops on FAFSA, Athletics, Guided Pathways, Workforce Development and completion of NCC applications will be offered.

NCC is the lead SUNY Community College receiving approximately \$100,000, as part of a SUNY Consortium for the Google Career Certificate program.

Budget Advocacy - 3 major themes

1. Approval of The Floor funding for SUNY Community Colleges to 2022-2023 levels.
2. Additional Operational Aid of 4% addition to the floor to mitigate inflationary impacts.
3. Enrollment Investment: continue \$60M in funding to enhance student support services, develop high-needs programs, increase enrollment investments, and improve campus facilities.

Honors Program

Two NCC Honors students, Amber Nunez and Cerwin Ramirez, have been accepted for the 2023 Northeast Regional Honors Conference. The conference will explore the theme "Building Resilience from Tragedy: Understanding Hate, Violence, Loss, and Reconciliation" and will take place in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania from March 30-April 2, 2023.

Speakers

Mary Lannon, Professor, English Department, shared a snapshot of one class of 24 students from last semester, with issues ranging from death and illness in the family to food insecurity in order to underscore the challenging psychological component of the learning environment. Her students inspire and humble her. While she did not become a teacher to make a high salary, a pay cut is demoralizing. The faculty could have asked for additional money for the budget from the County Legislature, she questioned why it would be necessary when there is a surplus? She lamented how NCC students are under-resourced and could use smaller classes, more counselors, better facilities, and new faculty to bring fresh ideas and energy to the College. Her department has not hired a new professor in at least eight years. She asked the Board to please value her students and how she tries her best to serve them.

Faren Siminoff, President, NCCFT, decried what she perceives sadly as the Board's disinterest in the faculty and in engaging what its members have to say at the monthly meetings. Echoing Prof. Lannon in stressing the value of our students and how they need a full-time faculty, she expressed satirical concern about faculty families potentially struggling to pay rent and needing to avail themselves of The NEST. Faculty do not expect to get rich, but do want a fair contract, decent working conditions, and more student resources, including smaller classes so they are not packed like sardines into classrooms. It is a Board's duty to provide our students an opportunity to learn and to grow and, hence, to give the faculty a fair contract to support this mission. She added that doing so will save the expense on outside counsel. She urged the Board to pay the faculty better and to hire more full-time faculty to serve our students.

Liz Hynes-Musnisky, Chair, Academic Senate, extended an invitation to all to move forward as a cohesive community with a shared goal of student success. She cited the Class of 2020 freshman address by Yale University President Dr. Peter Salovey, who illuminated how we are bombarded daily by false narratives that distort or neglect crucial facts in ways that serve to fuel distrust, particularly when we are strongly predisposed to accept accounts that align with established opinions and to dismiss those that undermine them. Shared governance does not mean that there will always be agreement, but, rather, it expects productive exchanges that search for common ground amidst the most challenging situations. She suggested that we take some chances on believing that we can find ways to collaborate, that we all want the College to succeed, and that none of us takes our responsibilities lightly. She hopes Dr. Conzatti and all feel similarly about NCC faculty.

Ariel Lann, NCC student, pleaded again for the College to commit to procuring adequate funding from the County to support all programs; our faculty who expect the best from students; and our clubs, which are as diverse as our student body. She asked: How can professors teach effectively when they have been without the security of a contract since August? Why are they being asked to pay for healthcare coverage, which amounts to a salary cut? Why aren't they paid enough to live in the County in which they work? The students who benefit from their dedication will suffer if faculty are unable to afford to stay. The College has witnessed cuts in staffing in the student Health office and reduction in the number of dedicated technologists staffing our math and writing labs, which directly hurts the most vulnerable students, which she knows firsthand as a student with a disability. She argued that the rationale for not having an increase in County funding for 15 years because we have fewer students is misguided, and that, on the contrary, NCC must not back down in order to stay competitive with other colleges. The Theatre Department, a shining gem of the College, has helped nurture some truly outstanding talent, which only happens if those who lead our College push for the funding to help students flourish.

Suzanne Kaebnick, Secretary, NCCFT, and Professor, English Department, focused on the financial crisis confronting junior faculty following the January 11, 2023 announcement that faculty would begin to pay an increase in health insurance premiums. Our hiring process, in contrast to other SUNY colleges, has no room for negotiating salary, a job with partner healthcare, or financial support for professional conferences. Junior faculty, who must begin as low-wage Instructors regardless of experience and professional achievements, would take this annual \$5,000 pay reduction for their Empire family plan on top of the 15% they currently already contribute towards premiums, effectively paying about \$10,000 in total for health insurance out of as little as \$60,000 salaries. For those on the Blue Cross Blue Shield family plan, the pay reduction would be \$7,000 per year on top of their contribution. Junior faculty enrolled in the NYS Teachers Retirement System also have mandatory contributions of 6% of their salary. Dr. Conzatti stated at the first-generation panel that our NCC students who will be first-generation college graduates can expect to earn an average of \$90,000. Our middle-aged junior faculty who hold a Masters or Ph.D. and work for one of the NY's wealthiest counties have not yet broken that threshold.

Christine Tuailon, Chair, Biology Department, spoke again about the need for full-time lines and in particular for her department. She reminded the Board that, since August 31, 2022, her department will have lost five faculty members, including one who died and another who will retire this upcoming August, adding to the two who retired in 2020. She was fortunate to have been authorized to hire two lines, but one declined upon learning the salary, which would have been a \$14,000 pay cut. The College and the AFA agreed to give her waivers for four adjuncts to teach nine contact hours; otherwise, she would have had to have canceled four classes. The adjunct day classes could be taught by six full-time faculty, and she is requesting to reopen the line from the unsuccessful search. She has learned that the State gave community colleges \$5.4 million specifically to hire full-time faculty, and wonders where has this money gone when she has been unable to hire desperately needed full-time faculty?

Ricardo Santos, Professor, English Department, and one of the five Latino classroom professors at NCC, made an earnest plea for the Board to appreciate the faculty's need for fair compensation through a tongue-in-cheek apologetic confession that he prayed to Our Lady of Fátima (aka, the Virgin Mary) for guidance after having had unkind thoughts about all but the Student Trustee when he learned that faculty would have to pay for health insurance. She reassured him not to think bad things about good, responsible people who care about the College and its money, and that, as an educator, it behooves him to help them understand the value of the faculty. Faculty members do not simply teach a 1:15 class and go home to play or take sabbaticals to watch telenovelas. If the Board has the generosity to pay for a \$10,000 bond for our hard-working attorney, it surely must recognize how the faculty has to buy books and to write grants for students and how its members must stay focused to keep them engaged to study. He will continue to pray for them to support education.

Tracyann Ayala, Professor, Economics Department, outlined her personal story to illustrate the broader plight of junior faculty. She had made a lot of money for over 20 years in the banking industry before having decided that she prefers to teach. She returned to school and incurred a lot of student loan debt, no less feeling very fortunate to join NCC, where her students inspire her every semester. During the pandemic, she talked privately for at least 5 minutes to every student because she wanted to ensure that they got a solid education and passed with good grades. The best compliment that she receives has come in the form of 15% of her current semester students returning from other classes because they recognize how she cares about them. She realizes that many people pay for healthcare, but her income combined with her husband's is not comparable to what those who are able to afford healthcare are making. Her second salary is needed to maintain her household. The added requirement to pay for healthcare constitutes a pay cut. As much as she loves teaching at NCC, she will not be able to continue if compelled to pay another \$10,000 for healthcare on her modest salary. She pleaded for the Board to take into consideration that, although the junior faculty are here because they are passionate about their profession, they will be unable to afford to stay at NCC even if their hearts wish otherwise.

Chair Gardyn announced the next Board of Trustees' Committee meetings are scheduled for Tuesday, March 21, 2023 at 5:00 p.m. followed by the opening of the public session between 6:15 and 6:30 p.m.

Chair Gardyn requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. Trustee Weiss moved the motion; seconded by Trustee Rosenberg. Motion carried 9-0.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Wanda H. Jackson  
Secretary