

APPROVED MINUTES OF INFORMATION SESSION OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE COMMUNITY
COLLEGE DISTRICT OF THE COUNTY OF MACOMB

An open information session of the Board of Trustees of the Community College District of the County of Macomb was held Wednesday, September 15, 2021 at 6:00 p.m., in Assembly Hall, University Center, Professional Development Center, Center Campus, 44575 Garfield Road, Clinton Township, Michigan.

1.0 [CALL TO ORDER](#)

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Lorenzo at 6:08 p.m.

2.0 [ROLL CALL](#)

Present:

Katherine Lorenzo, Chairperson
Frank Cusumano, Vice Chairperson
Kristi Dean, Secretary
Roseanne DiMaria, Treasurer (arrived at 6:15 p.m.)
Joan Flynn, Trustee
Shelley Vitale, Trustee
Vincent Viviano, Trustee (arrived at 6:10 p.m.)

Absent:

None

Also present:

James Sawyer, President
Elizabeth Argiri, Vice President, Business
Kevin Chandler, Vice President, College Advancement & Community Relations
Sharon Kowal, Assistant to the President
James Matheney, Chief of Police
Nicole McKee, Director of Government and Institutional Relations, Office of the President
Deb Mende, Executive Director, Office of the President
Don Ritzenhein, Provost, VP for the Learning Unit
Jeffrey Steele, General Counsel, Office of General Counsel

3.0 [Approval of Agenda](#)

MOTION by Flynn, supported by Cusumano, to approve the agenda as presented.

ALL IN FAVOR:

AYES: Flynn, Cusumano, Dean, Vitale, Lorenzo

NAYS:

ABSENT: DiMaria, Viviano

MOTION CARRIED.

4.0 [Audience Participation](#)

None.

5.0 [Review of Agenda Items and Materials](#)

There will be a closed session during the Information Session.

6.0 [Issues and Updates](#)

6.1 [President's Report](#)

Covid Protocols – Dr. Sawyer said regarding President Biden's remarks last week for employers with 100 or more employees mandating vaccines or requiring weekly Covid testing, we have been closely watching and waiting for the details on the requirements. We will be compliant with the Federal mandates, but we are going to wait until those are specified before we try to abide by them. We will wait for the rules to be set and then react accordingly. Our Health & Safety Office is doing some exploratory work looking at testing kits and testing agencies that are available. There will be a rush on these types of materials when this goes into effect, so we are doing our diligence now. The college's mask wearing mandate was set to expire on September 17. Today we extended the requirement to October 15. We are watching the daily reports on the status of Macomb County; what the positivity rates are, what the cases per million are and when we see a trend in the positive direction, we will eventually revert to encouraging masks, not requiring them. But we will wait until we see an improvement in the situation.

Enrollment Update – Dr. Sawyer said credit hours are down 3.2 percent this fall over last and our head count is up .6 percent. We are a little below the state average, but local colleges, like Henry Ford College and Oakland Community College are experiencing similar declines as well.

Higher Education and Emergency Relief Funds (HEERF II and III) Update – Dr. Sawyer said the first allocation of funding was the HEERF II for almost \$16 million. To date we have outstanding purchase orders for almost \$200,000, leaving about \$8,000 remaining. The most significant expense from the HEERF II fund was the distribution of \$750,000 to almost 8,000 students to pay for their online fees for spring and summer courses. We are beginning to work on the HEERF III funding. Expenditures to date are a little over \$300,000. We have purchase orders for another \$1.7 million, leaving about \$16 million remaining in that allocation. We have identified projects for about \$8.5 million at this point. We continue to monitor and guide our decisions based on what is in the long-term interest of the college and our students as far as expenditures.

Information Items – Dr. Sawyer said there are several information items on the agenda and as we did last month, the recommendation is to discuss them now, address any questions and at the board meeting make a single motion to receive and file all of them.

- 10.2 WCE-EAT Equipment Purchases – Equipment for the Engineering and Advanced Technology Area driven by creating a redundancy in equipment to improve social distancing for our students, so they will not be working as close together.
- 10.5 Door Security Installation Expansion – External door security by installing a proximity card system providing centralized control over access to buildings and doors. They can be opened and closed remotely.

- 10.6 – MERV 13 Air Filters - Filters intended to improve indoor air quality and a mitigation strategy to control the spread of Covid-19.
- 10.1, 10.3, 10.4 – Purchases related to the delays in the renovation of Advanced Technical Center facility, temporary location for the Engineering and Advanced Technology program. Dr. Sawyer said last month the Fire Marshal raised concerns about three rooms needing a fire sprinkler system. The good news is they provided occupancy permits for the building with the exception of those three classrooms. Given the situation, that was the best-case scenario. We are proceeding with the sprinkler installation while operating in the rest of the facility. As we looked at how best to serve our students this term, we made the decision to buy some equipment and install it in our existing T building so students can use it to complete their classes and will not be impacted by the sprinkler situation. We knew we were going to need this equipment when we renovated the facility and planned on buying it at that time, but by buying it now and using it in T building we avoid any further delays to students and their degree completion. After this term that equipment will be put in storage and reinstalled following the renovation. It is not an additional expense, it is an expense sooner than when we might have otherwise planned on.

Facility Action Items – Dr. Sawyer said last month, B. Simonson and L. Argiri gave the board an overview of our facility plans for the next couple years. There are two action items on the agenda tonight that are related to those plans.

11.4 - Architectural engineering services for Phase 3 of the multi-year renovations, specifically the renovation of the CJ science building at center campus and the SQ power plant building at south campus as well as several parking lots. Dr. Sawyer said although they are not the low bid in this case, we are recommending Integrated Design Solutions (IDS). He explained to the board that IDS is a firm the college has worked with previously. Over the last several years we have shifted our work to Hobbs + Black and while we have been satisfied with their work, what differentiated IDS is their use of BIM – Building Information Modeling system. We see that as being advantageous to the college going forward. As part of the design process, they create 3D models that better enable us to assess what we are designing, assess any clearance issues and ultimately cut down on change orders and after the fact changes. We intend to adopt the BIM software and IDS is willing to train our staff how to use it. The other thing attractive about IDS at this time is they have just completed a couple of very similar projects for Oakland Community College. They are the architect of record for OCC. Pertinent to us is that IDS recently renovated a science building as well as a power plant at OCC, so it invites an opportunity for us to visit and tour those buildings to help guide our design process as we proceed.

11.5 - Audio-Visual equipment for Lorenzo Cultural Center and Macomb Center for the Performing Arts. Dr. Sawyer said we have discussed several times the criticality of the current A/V equipment. It is very antiquated and in many cases the parts needed to maintain it are no longer available. That leaves us at risk of a catastrophic failure with an audience full of people. This is a significant investment for the college but one that will serve us well and more importantly serve our community. This will be a significant improvement for all the events held there.

Purchase – Athletic Training Services - Dr. Sawyer said this contract will provide athletic trainer support for our athletes.

Collective Bargaining Agreement – Dr. Sawyer was pleased to inform the board that a tentative agreement has been reached with AFSCME Local 128 (STA) for a one-year extension. This extension is consistent with the board of trustee’s guidance provided previously to the administration. The tentative agreement is on the agenda for your approval. He thanked the negotiating team for the STA union - Lynda Goins, Guy Hait, Dan Robertson, Tom Zalewski and Gary Shimer from AFSCME. On the administrative team he thanked D. Williams and L. Willey.

Health Care Benefit Recommendation - Dr. Sawyer said the Health Care Coalition met today to decide on the health care recommendation, 80/20 or Hard Cap, option to make to the board of trustees. Unfortunately, Blue Cross Blue Shield didn’t provide the rates until last week, which didn’t leave us enough time to meet with the Coalition to review rates and develop a recommendation for the board prior to the deadline for board material, which was last Wednesday. The Coalition has agreed to recommend the Hard Cap, which is consistent with previous recommendations as we try to minimize the impact on our employees, particularly our lower paid employees. There will be a formal write up on the October agenda for the trustees to approve.

Foundation Naming Policy – Dr. Sawyer said over the past several months we have revisited revising the Naming Policy for buildings, conference rooms, and for different aspects of our facilities. We worked on this a couple years ago but were unable to come to an agreement. The policy has a lot of specifics on giving levels and types of naming opportunities. We are proposing the revised policy be more generic and provide much more discretion to the board. We will bring the revised policy to the board in October for a first reading and in November for a second reading and hopefully approval at that time.

DEI Consultant Update – Dr. Sawyer said we have selected Kennedy & Company as our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion consultant. Last month he and J. Thomas-Little conducted reference checks with four people who have used this firm in the past for similar type of work and they were all very satisfied. We had nine firms respond to the RFP and prices ranged from \$32,000 to \$127,000. Our cross-functional group on the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access committee (IDEA) narrowed down those nine firms to four. Another committee with some of the IDEA committee members, as well as President’s Council interviewed the final four firms. We were unanimous in thinking Kennedy & Company was the best. The contract is still being finalized and the cost is \$43,515. The contract is below the purchasing policy threshold, so it does not require board approval. But he did want the board to know about the selection we made given the effort we put into it and the process we have gone through. After the contract is final, we will begin meeting with Kennedy & Co. and develop an implementation plan which will include, at some point in time, engaging with the trustees.

Lawsuit: Green vs Macomb Community College – Dr. Sawyer said the court granted our motion for summary disposition and dismissed the case. This case was a trip and fall that occurred in the Sports & Expo Center. We raised two grounds for dismissal; 1) governmental immunity and 2) open and obvious defense that the impediment the person tripped over was open and obvious. The court agreed with our governmental immunity claim. Given the ruling on immunity, the court did not rule on the open and obvious defense. Green still has time to appeal. That has not happened yet, but if it does, we will let you know.

Lawsuit: G. Bowles Filed State Claim in State Court – Dr. Sawyer said last year faculty member, Glenn Bowles, sued the college in federal court. A couple months ago the federal judge dismissed all the federal claims against the college and dismissed the case from federal court but didn't address Mr. Bowles state claim, leaving Mr. Bowles the opportunity to file a state claim which he has now done with the accusation that he was discharged without cause. He has named both the college and Denise Williams personally in that suit. We feel we have a very strong case. We are looking at arguments to try and get the case dismissed quickly and if not, we will vigorously defend it.

Detroit Zoo – Great Lakes Nature Center – Dr. Sawyer said the Detroit Zoological Society continues to be interested in property at the college for their nature center. They are working with their architect to develop renderings and plans of the facility. As we talk about next steps, the Zoo would present their thoughts and ideas to college administration and if we are comfortable, we would begin talking about a potential agreement. That would come to the board of trustees for approval before it became official. At some point in that process, we would bring the Detroit Zoo team to the college to make a presentation to the board, giving you a chance to hear from them first hand, ask questions and see what their thoughts are. He does not have a firm time table, but there was a sense of urgency to try and get this done in the next few months. He did want to alert the board that the person we started working with on this project, Ron Kagan, the zoo's current CEO, is retiring at the end of October. The board did select their new CEO, Hayley Murphy, she comes from the Atlanta Zoo. He has not met Dr. Murphy yet, but all indications are that the transition will have no impact on this project.

Agenda Item 11.6 - Local Strategic Value – Dr. Sawyer said the Local Strategic Value report is shared with the board on an annual basis because it requires a board resolution and approval for the record. One element of our appropriation in Public Act 265 is Performance Funding which requires the board to approve this resolution indicating Macomb meets the standard, which is four out of the five best practices. We routinely exceed all five categories, so it is not an issue, but it is required for the performance funding portion of our allocation.

Veteran Friendly School – Dr. Sawyer announced that for the sixth consecutive year the college has been awarded the gold-level recognition by the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency (MVAA). We are very proud of this recognition. MVAA identifies that we are a veteran friendly school, recognizes us for our commitment to supporting veterans, their families and their pursuit for educational opportunities. They specifically pointed out our extensive network of relationships with local, state and federal assistance programs. Hats off to our entire team in the Veterans Area led by Kara Fields. We appreciate all the work they do, they are serving a very important group, our veterans who have done so much for us.

Dental Program Announcement – Dr. Sawyer said this week we are excited to have our program announcement for the Dental Science Program. You have all received invitations and if you are available to join us, we would love to have you. Chairperson Lorenzo is going to serve as our emcee. There will be a few additional speakers. He knows that Trustee's Vitale and Flynn are planning to join us, which is great. The announcement is Friday, September 17 – it will begin at 1:00 p.m. with a short program outdoors and at about 1:35 p.m. we will start the guided tours. This facility is located in the former College Annex, now the dental building, on the south side of south campus on the other side of Martin Road. We are very excited about this. He knows the board is looking forward to this too because of your emphatic endorsement of the Dental Science Program.

Fall Great Pumpkin Festival – Dr. Sawyer said we have scheduled a fun, family-focused event, the Fall Great Pumpkin Festival for October 16. There will be some focus on science with demonstrations and

hands on type of activities for children. It will be at south campus, primarily by the Sports and Expo Center but with other locations around south campus. The Festival will run from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. on October 16th. There will be food trucks and music. There is no charge for participants. We are paying for this event through sponsorships. Any additional proceeds will go to benefit the Macomb Student Immediate Relief Fund.

6.2 [Strategic Plan 2025 Update](#)

Dr. Sawyer presented an update on the Strategic Plan informing the board what has been happening over the past year and a half on the strategic plan and the work being done around the college.

Questions:

Trustee Flynn asked why Dr. Sawyer focused on the Black student population? We have other ethnic groups that need help too. How many Black students do we have? Dr. Sawyer said about 13 percent of our students are African-American . What we know, from our own data is their success rates are much lower. As we talk about improving the success rates for the overall college, we have to look at the different groups that we have and identify where we think there are opportunities to make a difference that will have a broader impact on the college.

Trustee Flynn shared that at the SEMCOG meeting the topic was that without computers it is so hard to find out what is going on, not only for older people, but students, children, that is why a lot of times the students will say they have a hard time understanding what is going on at the school. So, she wanted to know why he was zooming in on them. Dr. Sawyer said that is data driven, the data spells out that is an area we need to focus on.

Trustee Flynn asked what is the staff portal? Dr. Sawyer said it is similar to a webpage that has a lot of information but is only available internally to our staff. The staff portal is the place we communicate things we want to share with staff, there are resources staff can access, etc. Trustee Flynn said so the students can't get in. Dr. Sawyer said there is also a student portal and that is where we communicate with students and have tools available to them.

Trustee Flynn asked if the tuition waivers for employees included the trustees? Dr. Sawyer said no, but that raises a fair question. Chairperson Lorenzo said that would be considered compensation. Trustees cannot use waivers for academic classes or workforce continuing education courses.

Trustee Cusumano made a comment on the tuition waiver point. He said as the board has been aware from previous sessions over the years, he questioned whether tuition waivers were appropriate given the fact the statute has banned them, and the response was because of Kowalski v. Macomb Community College that the college board had total and complete autonomy under the Michigan Constitution to make decisions on tuition waivers. He asked General Counsel whether the statement that continuing professional education is compensation, is applicable to what the board can and cannot do. If General Counsel doesn't have an answer available and it requires research, he would accept that as an answer to look at it in the future. General Counsel Steele responded that just so he has the precise answer he will research that and report on it next month.

Addressing the segment of the student population that is not achieving student success by our definition, Trustee Cusumano said, we don't get to ignore that segment of our student population. He applauds the administration for addressing it head on that we haven't performed well in regard to establishing metrics in student success in that minority population. He doesn't think we should bury our heads in the sand and ignore it, we should address it head on. He thinks he mentioned that in a meeting recently with the president of the college and he appreciates him including it in the presentation.

Trustee Vitale asked Dr. Sawyer to tell the board more about the five councils on the strategic planning council organization chart, as far as 1) were people appointed just for this process, 2) how many people on the councils, 3) how often do they meet, and 4) are they solely meeting for the purpose of carrying out the strategic plan initiatives? Dr. Sawyer responded that each council is focused on their specific strategy, but they are supposed to interconnect as well. That gives us a place to go as these strategies inevitably cross over. Strategies one and two will certainly have interaction with each other which is why we made the council the same for both. Looking at some of the other strategies you will see there are opportunities to cross over and the councils serve as the conduit. Each council is geared toward that specific strategy. The councils meet a minimum of four times per year. They are reviewing the action plans and objectives that are currently in place, but also offering ideas on new ones that fit within that particular strategy. Trustee Vitale asked how many people are on the councils? Dr. Sawyer said it varies, but the average is 20-25 people. We have very consciously tried to pick staff in different positions such as administration, faculty, administrative support staff, etc. As well as different areas of the college, like Arts & Sciences, Career Resources, Business Office, etc. We tried very deliberately to make the council members a cross functional group. Trustee Vitale was impressed. Dr. Sawyer said it is going well, it is still in it's infancy but he thinks it has been very positive for us. Trustee Vitale said she would love to be kept up to date on that to see how it goes. Dr. Sawyer said absolutely.

7.0 [Closed Session](#)

MOTION by Cusumano, supported by DiMaria, to go into closed session for the purpose of discussing the president's evaluation in accordance with MCL 15.268 subsection (a) of the Open Meetings Act.

ROLL CALL:

AYES: Cusumano, DiMaria, Dean, Flynn, Vitale, Viviano, Lorenzo

NAYS:

MOTION CARRIED.

RECESS

The meeting recessed at 6:52 p.m.

RECONVENE

The meeting reconvened at 7:29 p.m.

8.0 [Adjournment](#)

MOTION by DiMaria, supported by Flynn, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT OF THE COUNTY OF MACOMB BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Secretary