

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, April 19, 2023 at 6:00 p.m., in Room K257 of the John Lewis Conference Center, South Campus, 14500 East Twelve Mile Road, Warren, Michigan.

1.0 [CALL TO ORDER](#)

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Lorenzo at 6:00 p.m.

2.0 [ROLL CALL](#)

Present:

Katherine Lorenzo, Chairperson  
Frank Cusumano, Vice Chairperson  
Kristi Dean, Secretary  
Roseanne DiMaria, Treasurer  
Joan Flynn, Trustee  
Shelley Vitale, Trustee

Absent:

Vincent Viviano, Trustee

Also present:

James Sawyer, President  
Elizabeth Argiri, Executive Vice President, Business  
Kevin Chandler, Vice President, College Advancement & Community Relations  
Joline Davis, Vice President, Human Resources  
Tiffany Goliday, Executive Director, IDEA/Title IX  
Carrie Jeffers, Vice President, Student Success  
Leslie Kellogg, Provost, Vice President of Learning Unit  
Sharon Kowal, Assistant to the President  
William Leavens, Chief of College Police  
Jeffrey Steele, General Counsel, Office of General Counsel  
Audrey Takacs, Director, Marketing  
Michael Williams, Director, Financial Aid

3.0 [APPROVAL OF AGENDA](#)

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

ALL IN FAVOR:

AYES:

ABSENT: Viviano

NAYS:

MOTION CARRIED.

4.0 AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

None.

5.0 REVIEW OF AGENDA ITEMS AND MATERIALS

Trustee Cusumano requested an explanation as to why the resume of the applicant for the NBU executive director position in the Provost Office was not included in the board packet that he received on April 13, 2023. It was emailed on April 14, 2023, but when reviewing the posting materials, the position opened on March 13, 2023 and closed on April 2, 2023 that means either the resume was available since April 2, 2023 or the position had closed and the resume wasn't available to be transmitted to the board of trustees. Dr. Sawyer answered that the hiring process was not complete in time to be included in the board packet. There were two positions with that issue this month. When the board packet was mailed to the trustees it was noted that the board would receive that information prior to the April 19 meeting because we were still working through the selection and acceptance with the final candidates.

Trustee Cusumano asked when was the resume received, when were the applicants interviewed and by whom? Dr. Leslie Kellogg, provost, responded the interview committee was Dr. Nara Mirijanian, Dr. Marie Pritchett, Mr. Bill Simonson and Dr. Sue Boyd. The committee conducted the interviews on Tuesday, April 11, 2023. Moments later in the meeting, Vice President of HR, Joline Davis, responded that the individual selected for the position applied on March 27, 2023. VP Davis confirmed for Trustee Cusumano that the resume was available for the interview.

Trustee Cusumano asked if there is a current position that performs most of these duties at the college? Dr. Kellogg responded no. Trustee Cusumano asked if the CBA agreed to the elimination of a position and be replaced with an NBU? Is there a letter or memorandum of understanding? Dr. Sawyer said that per the contract, administration has the right to reorganize, and our obligation is to notify the union, which we did.

Trustee Cusumano asked how the salary for the new position was determined? VP Davis said to determine the salary we look at the applicant's years of experience and the salary range and base that off the compensation of other individuals in that same classification. Trustee Cusumano asked if the compensation was decided after the interview to fit the individual applying for the position? VP Davis said yes, a range is put on the application and when she receives the recommended applicant, she reviews the information to make a determination after the position has been submitted to be built.

Trustee Cusumano asked who wrote the job description that was included in the packet? VP Davis said the job description was written in conjunction with the provost office and human resources. Trustee Cusumano understands that the compensation is recommended at \$110,800 and is that still the rate for this new position? VP Davis said yes, it is.

Trustee Cusumano said there is an expenditure for \$800,000 for media and buying placement service on the agenda. For many years that number was at \$480,000. He recommended and asked the college to consider increasing it and again he goes back to how do we measure the

performance for the dollars? Are we tracking the enrollment decline in some way of a metric to determine whether we are being effective with this use of tax dollars for media buying? Dr. Sawyer responded that Director of Marketing, Audrey Takacs, will be giving a presentation on advertising and discussing the different metrics we currently have. She will be able to answer your questions and if not, let us know if you need additional information.

## 6.0 ISSUES AND UPDATES

### 6.1 President's Report

Dr. Sawyer said at the request of Trustee Flynn, we prepared a resolution designating April as Community College Month. On the stanchion by the door is the resolution the board will be approving tonight. He thanked Trustee Flynn for encouraging Mayor Fouts to write a resolution in Warren as well and for mentioning April is Community College month on her cable show.

Enrollment – Dr. Sawyer gave the enrollment update for the **spring/summer semester**:

- Compared to last year – credit hours are down 6.4 percent and headcount is down 4.8 percent. The forecast decline for spring/summer was 5 percent.
- Futures for Frontliners – 122 students have registered to date.
- Michigan Reconnect – 533 students have registered to date.

Hiring Recommendations – Dr. Sawyer said there are three hiring recommendations on the agenda.

Information Item– 10.1 2023 Ford Transit 250 Cargo Van - Dr. Sawyer said there continues to be supply chain issues in the new vehicle market. The college has a 22-year-old cargo van that needed to be replaced. But over the past few months we have been unable to obtain quotes or any commitments from several dealers that they could deliver a van meeting our specifications any time soon. Recently the college mechanic was at a local dealership picking up parts for service and discovered a 2023 Ford Transit van on the lot that was available for sale. The information was forwarded to Purchasing and Administration for review resulting in the decision to purchase the van. The dealer would not hold it for the college until we could get approval from the board, so Dr. Sawyer and the Executive Vice President for Business, Ms. Libby Argiri, finalized the purchase.

Action Item – 11.4 Macomb Center for the Performing Arts Roof Replacement – Dr. Sawyer said the existing roof has been in service for 27 years and replacement is necessary. The cost is \$914,100 but the good news is the bids came in lower than anticipated, the initial projection was \$1.3 million.

Purchase Authorizations – 11.3A Media Buying and Placement Services – Dr. Sawyer said Director of Marketing, Audrey Takacs, will be giving a presentation on this item to hopefully answer any questions the trustees may have, and this is also the opportunity to ask additional questions.

IDEA Update – Dr. Sawyer stated that under the direction of Executive Director Tiffany Goliday, the IDEA work is starting to pick up steam. Executive Director Goliday has been spending her time acclimating herself to the college, getting out and meeting with different areas and building important relationships. She is doing a great job; he has received positive feedback from several people that have enjoyed their interaction with her. A couple of specific issues underway are:

APPROVED Minutes, Information Session, April 19, 2023

- The development of a student survey that will assess the level of student belongingness at the college, from a retention perspective. Plan to issue the survey in the fall.
- Developing a survey for faculty to be sent to them prior to the end of this term, giving us a chance to assess those results over the summer. The focus is on the areas of inclusion, diversity, equity and what assistance we can provide faculty. Based on the survey results, a plan will be developed to address faculty needs for the start of the new academic year.

D3C3 Grant Update – Dr. Sawyer said it took some time to get this grant, so we allocated strategic funds to be able to hire the success coaches sooner. That was a good move because they have been very engaged this term. Over the past month they have had over 800 contacts with students and since January over 2,300 contacts. As we talk about persistence, we know this relationship building with the college is key and that is the point of our success coaches, and we are happy to have them in place. We are also making good headway with our K-12 Relations. We hired Michael Baysdell several months ago as our director of K-12 Relations and he has done a great job connecting with our K-12 districts. Our dual enrollment number is up significantly from winter by 27 percent. The Early College cohort for 2023 is between 190 and 200 students. Our relationships with K-12 schools are important as we vie for students with other universities. The decision to support a student mental health case manager was well timed. They currently have 18 new cases this past month. Six cases have been closed out. Most of the cases are people feeling a heightened amount of emotional distress and difficulty dealing with a variety of things. This manager is playing a very important role in helping support our students.

Bowles Lawsuit – Dr. Sawyer stated that the Bowles lawsuit, both the federal and state cases against the college, have been dismissed with prejudice. There is no longer any possibility of appeal. Neither the college nor our insurer paid Mr. Bowles any money to get the cases dismissed

Consolidation of Cashier's Offices – Dr. Sawyer said as part of our Strategic Plan and to reduce costs and streamline operations we are closing the Cashier's Office at center campus G building. Cashiering services will be available at the MAC building on Hall Road, if necessary for people at center campus. The south campus Cashier's Office will remain open. The move will begin after April 25 and be completed by June 30. We have very few students, and the number is decreasing, paying by cash so as we look for more efficient operations these are changes that need to be made. We need that available space for other operations.

Hosted Senator Gary Peters (March 20) – Dr. Sawyer said the college hosted Senator Gary Peters for a press conference to announce the MAP+ congressionally directed spending project of \$610,000. The goal is 160 students to be impacted by 2025 with a focus on manufacturing and construction.

Healthcare Apprenticeship Kickoff (March 20) – Dr. Sawyer said the college held our kickoff event for our healthcare apprenticeship congressionally directed grant. There were close to 60 attendees who were very interested in participating in the program.

Career Fair in Partnership with the City of Warren (April 13) – Dr. Sawyer said the college hosted a large career fair in partnership with the City of Warren. He thanked Trustees Flynn and Dean for attending.

There were 205 employers that participated, and 700 job seekers attended. He thanked director of Career Services, Bob Penkala and his team for leading this effort.

Macomb Innovates: College Reimagined – A Student Pitch Competition (April 17) – Dr. Sawyer said the college held a community event celebrating innovation and entrepreneurship featuring students from Macomb Community College and Chippewa Valley and Dakota High Schools. This was a competition for students to pitch their creative ideas about the future of college. They presented in front of live judges and competed for prizes and bragging rights. Thirteen \$500 tuition awards were presented to student participants. It was very successful and gave us the opportunity to highlight a couple of our former Innovation Awards – the hot dog cart and Makerspace. These were things the college supported in the past and requested as learning aids/opportunities for our students as well. There were over 200 students, faculty, staff, and community members in attendance. Nice job to our Business and Information Technology team for putting together this great event.

Men's Basketball Team Runner-Ups at NJCAA Division II Championships – Dr. Sawyer said the men's basketball had an outstanding season. They finished second in the nation in the NJCAA Division II championship. He congratulated Coach Nizam and the entire team. Dr. Sawyer is appreciative of Coach Nizam's comments in recent press about his focus on the academic success of student athletes. It's not only about them doing well athletically but performing well academically and preparing them for their future education and life.

Donation to Trustee Endowment Fund in Memory of Former Board Member James F. Kelly – Dr. Sawyer said there is a resolution to authorize a \$1,000 donation to the Trustee Endowment fund in memory of former board member James Kelly. This practice was established by the board many years ago.

Board of Trustees Envisioning Discussion – Dr. Sawyer and Chairperson Lorenzo had a conversation about the Envisioning Discussion. Dr. Sawyer appreciated your response to the survey and sharing your thoughts and availability. Unfortunately, there was not a common date/time of the week that worked for everyone, but Tuesday evening seems to be the best. We are planning a Tuesday evening at the University Center. More information/details to follow.

Communication Update: Showed video highlights about the college that have appeared on TV over the past month. Dr. Sawyer thanked Trustee Flynn for sharing the news on her cable show that April is Community College Month. He commended Dean Don Hutchison and his team on the MAP+ program. He also wanted to take this opportunity to point out the fine work of our communications area. With the board's support we made a significant investment in this area, and these are examples of the good work they do in getting the word out about the college. It's important to point out that this doesn't just happen, it happens by having good relationships and developing great stories to share. These are things the board should feel good about because this is why we developed the communications area.

Upcoming Events:

- MCCA Summer Meeting Traverse City, Travel Day is Tuesday, July 25, Conference is Wednesday, July 26 to Friday, July 28.
- Institutional Development Day (IDD), Tuesday, May 9, 2023, at the Macomb Center for the Performing Arts. The morning starts at 8 a.m. with coffee and networking and the program begins at 9 a.m. Dr. Sawyer gives the State of the College Address. Trustees are invited to attend.
- Social Gathering after May 17, 2023 Board Meeting – We are planning a social gathering for the board and a guest after the May board meeting. More details to follow.

May 17, 2023 Board of Trustees Meeting:

- Presenting the Initial Fiscal Year 2024 Budget
- Purchasing Authorizations for several IT items
- Administrative Item-Replacement of the UC1 rooftop units and cooling towers

Tuition Guarantee/Free College - Dr. Sawyer said he is excited to share information with the board about a new program we want to put in place. This program does not require formal action by the board of trustees, but he does want to get the trustees thoughts and feedback on it. The Foundation board will have to make a formal resolution for this program because the Foundation will be funding it.

Dr. Sawyer said they've had conversations about the recent demographic changes in high schools, particularly the decrease in the number of high school graduates in Macomb County and many of them choosing not to go directly to college, but instead to work. Because of this the college is in a much more competitive environment and recently some universities have announced tuition guarantee programs. The University of Michigan announced their program last year and most recently Wayne State University announced theirs. At Wayne State if you are a new student and your family has an annual household income under \$70,000 and assets less than \$60,000 you can attend Wayne State for free. That is a challenge for us, because if a student can go to Wayne State for free why should they come to Macomb?

The program we are recommending for Macomb pays for tuition and fees for any family with income levels below \$70,000 and assets below \$50,000 and is available to all students, not just new ones.

In Macomb County, 57 percent of households have a household income less than \$75,000, that is a big percentage of our population. Part of what makes us and other universities able to have this program is the advent of the Michigan Achievement Scholarship (MAS). The MAS is a new scholarship that provides \$1,750 per year, up to three years to high school graduates. When we talk about making this a tuition and fee free program, we see minimal impact on the costs the college has to cover because the income limits we set enables students to draw on federal financial aid, Michigan Reconnect and Michigan Achievement Scholarship. Michael Williams, director of Financial Aid, did an analysis to get an idea how much this would cost the Foundation. Director Williams applied the rules using the fall class of 2022 and determined the Foundation would need to contribute \$650,000 which would impact about 600 students. There are approximately 7,700 students who qualify for the program, but they have federal financial aid, the MAS and Michigan Reconnect paying their tuition and fees for them.

Dr. Sawyer said we view this as a very important step in increasing enrollment but a completion effort as well because a requirement of the program is that the student must attend full-time. It is a struggle for us to increase our students class loads, but from our own data and national data, we know one reason students aren't completing is because they aren't taking enough credits and it is taking too long. To maximize the financial benefits and help our students achieve their ultimate goal we see this program going a long way to help accomplish them.

Where is this money coming from in the Foundation? There was a year in the early 1990's the state didn't make a payment. They did make it later, but it crossed over the college's fiscal years. In essence the college was shorted one year and received an extra payment the following. When the extra payment was received, the board of trustees, at the time, recognized that we didn't need that money, knew it was not sustainable and decided to set this money aside in a rainy-day fund. The money remained there until 2006, when the board of trustees, at that time, made the decision to move it to the Foundation. The money has been with the Foundation since and now accounts to about \$9 million and that is where we intend to pull the \$650,000 from for this program. As we talk about the long-term sustainability, we see that with our existing resources we can run the program 12 to 14 years and do fundraising for it as we go forward.

Eligibility requirements:

- Income – Household income of \$70,000 or less and assets of \$50,000 or less as confirmed on the FAFSA
- Full time enrollment (12 or more credit hours per semester)
- A Michigan resident
- Meet all Satisfactory Academic Progress requirements
- File FAFSA each year and continue to meet the family income requirements

This is a program to help improve student success and make college more accessible to students with a lower socioeconomic status. Frankly, it is also a defense measure in terms of what other universities are offering and pulling students away from Macomb. For this program to happen, the Foundation board will need to take formal action to provide the funds to support it.

Dr. Sawyer opened the discussion for the trustees to ask questions or express concerns.

Questions:

Trustee Cusumano asked Dr. Sawyer if he remembers when he floated the idea of grandparents or parents purchasing two years of tuition at Macomb Community College and investing the money. If the grandchild or child decides not to go to Macomb Community College, they would be refunded the face value and whoever is holding the funds would gain the interest. Dr. Sawyer said he does recall that but not the specifics. Trustee Cusumano said the response he was given at the time was that the State has a 529 program and he retorted that he saw nothing barring us from proceeding in that direction. He mentions this to come up with creative solutions to the quandary we are in. He has this same problem with the Foundation getting honorariums for deceased trustees or presidents. He thinks it runs directly contrary

to the legislation of the Community College Act that says we are not to waive tuition for any person unless...and the exceptions are listed, that is the only wrinkle he sees. For him to vote for that, he would need to have a legal opinion from General Counsel saying that we are not skirting the prohibition against tuition waivers for individuals that would be recipients of that program. Dr. Sawyer responded that this money resides in the Foundation and the Foundation routinely provides money to students to pay for their tuition at Macomb. This is like our standard practice but opening it up in a different perspective. Trustee Cusumano understands that and appreciates it, but the Michigan Constitution says that public funds cannot be used for private credit. He is appreciative of Jim Kelly's service to the college and the community, but he will be voting against the \$1,000 honorarium in his name, because he has a problem with directing public funds from the tax paying district to individuals where there is a specific prohibition in the Michigan Constitution and also the statutory framework about tuition waivers, which substantively is the end result of that, and he knows it took place in 2006 before any statute of limitations. As an example, could you direct money from the general operating fund, if the board of trustees approved it, to give a tuition waiver to any specific individual or would that be different? Dr. Sawyer said the line of decision making is the board giving that control to the Foundation. The Foundation solely exists for the purpose of benefitting Macomb Community College. It's not a community foundation where the money could go to some other resource, it is designed, set up and obligated specifically to support the college. If you turn the money over to them you are ceding the responsibility of how to spend that money to the Foundation, but the security or safety is, by its own bylaws, the Foundation is obligated to only spend that for the good of the college and students. Trustee Cusumano said it is a non-profit and he always goes back to Eric Smith's case where he was directing money to non-profits. As he understands it, if you have a contract with the non-profit for services its fine, but without that you want to follow the constitutional prohibition. He mentioned this when the board was voting to transfer the funds in honorarium of Connie Bolanowski. He asks for this practice to be discontinued. He would like Legal Counsel to write an opinion and if he can be convinced that he is wrong he is willing to revisit it, otherwise he will be voting no and he will be voting no on the honorarium for Jim Kelly to the Foundation for those reasons.

Chairperson Lorenzo said she doesn't understand the conflict because we are giving it to ourselves. We aren't giving it to a non-profit, we are giving it to ourselves, it's our money. Trustee Cusumano said he will defer to counsel, it is a separate entity, a non-profit, that is why he votes no on accepting the donations. The money ultimately gets directed to independent third parties, if it is not going directly to expenditures of operations, it is going for tuition waivers, to pay the tuition fees and costs to individuals and that is indirectly directing public funds to individuals, albeit through a non-profit, the Foundation that has bylaws and articles of incorporation which state its purposes are for philanthropic purposes to benefit the college. He has been unable to build that bridge that we aren't doing, in a roundabout way, what Eric Smith was doing with the forfeiture funds. Dr. Sawyer said the distinction, he would suggest, was that Eric Smith was spreading the funds to a variety of non-profits. Through our own incorporation we are required to turn that money back over to the college. If we were to start sending that money to other non-profit organizations that would be more like what E. Smith was doing.

General Counsel Jeff Steele said yes, the Michigan Constitution prohibits the State, and therefor by extension a community college, like Macomb, from giving money to a private entity except when it is authorized by the Constitution. The courts have interpreted that to say the State can spend money, give



it to third parties, give it to institutions provided it has a benefit to the institution. If we, the institution, believe that a donation or contribution benefits the college, hereby giving us a service or what have you, the courts have been very deferential in saying that is an authorized expenditure under the Constitution. The college can give money to other entities if we reasonably believe that the college will benefit. With respect to the Foundation, that is a different entity, so that Constitutional prohibition doesn't extend to the Foundation. The Foundation can spend money as it wishes. The Foundation's duty and purpose really is to promote the college and when it spends money to promote the college it is not disputing the Constitution.

Trustee Cusumano said if the college donated \$100,000 to purchase a corvette for an individual and they were to write a resolution to say that we believe it is in the interest of the college. General Counsel Steele said you would have to be able to convince a court that you reasonably believe this was an expenditure that would benefit the college. If you came up with a scenario where someone is getting a free corvette and not doing a service for the college, he thinks Trustee Cusumano would be right.

Chairperson Lorenzo asked if General Counsel Steele was talking about the honorarium donation or the tuition program. General Counsel Steele said he was talking about both. Chairperson Lorenzo said an easy fix would probably be to call it a scholarship. Have families that make under \$70,000 a year apply for a scholarship. It would serve two purposes, it would serve the legal aspects but it would also promote a sense of honor – the difference of “I have this money because my family isn't well off” and “I won a scholarship to Macomb Community College.” General Counsel said you are probably right, but he defers to Dr. Sawyer and EVP Argiri because they are more versed in how this program works. Dr. Sawyer said while he agrees with the positive aspect of that, it could also be perceived as a hurdle. We want this to be as easy as it can. We certainly want to promote this in a positive light, so don't dismiss that thought, but we have to think through how to make this as easy as possible for the student to apply to the college.

Trustee Vitale said the analysis was done on the 2022 year, which was a crazy year so that was a warning that may not pan out in the future. Her thought is that the full-time requirement is a barrier for a lot of students and isn't going to force the issue for people who have it in their minds that they aren't going to go full-time. It is taking everyone a lot longer to complete their degrees, so might want to go easy on the full-time requirement. Her children didn't get federal financial aid assistance because they lived in a home that had an income above the threshold and had to do it the hard long way and that is a barrier too. The students who have to pay their own way through college while living at home would be penalized. Dr. Sawyer said the \$70,000 threshold is a federal financial aid threshold, not a number we're setting, and the full-time status is a requirement of the Michigan Achievement Scholarship. We want to be consistent with them and it does maximize the aid, thereby reducing the potential exposure to the college. This has a dual purpose, to incentivize students to take more classes and complete sooner and the financial benefit to the college because we maximize the use of other sources of aid, federal financial aid and the Michigan Achievement Scholarship.

Trustee Dean asked if a student attends full-time will their classes be offered? One of the issues as to why it is taking so long to get through a two-year program is courses aren't being offered. Will the courses for every degree these students are looking for, regardless of how many students are registered for the class, be offered? Dr. Sawyer said he can't guarantee that, but the college makes every effort to run courses,

particularly advanced courses, with low enrollment. Our target enrollment is 15 students and we run many classes below 15. We do everything we can to make that happen. One of the tools we use in those circumstances is Independent Study. Faculty are very gracious working with us to provide independent study to those students so they can complete their degree. It is an enrollment situation as well as a scheduling issue for the students. We may be able to run one advanced course, but that date/time may not be suitable for that student and that is understandable. He doesn't want to mislead you to think we can make that guarantee but there are other tools we can use to help meet students where their needs are to get them to completion.

Trustee Dean asked if students would be disqualified from the program if they didn't meet the minimum requirement due to a course not being offered or cancelled due to low enrollment. Dr. Sawyer said yes, they would need 12 credits. Trustee Vitale said they would have to take a class they didn't need. She wonders with the way people's lives are now how that would play out, it's something to think about.

Trustee Vitale asked if this program must be aligned with the other programs and take off the full-time requirement? Dr. Sawyer said if the students are not full-time, they cannot take advantage of the Michigan Achievement Scholarship or full financial aid. Trustee Vitale said it would be interesting to see how many classes were canceled because of low enrollment for the past two semesters to see where we are at with how these classes are dropping off.

Dr. Sawyer said the board entrusts administration to run the college fiscally responsible and we can't afford to run a lot of classes with five students, but we work with faculty to balance schedules as best we can. We don't like to cancel classes. We start with meager offerings and add classes when we need to, but it is a difficult situation in a declining enrollment environment. Trustee Vitale said we are in a period when college, students, classes, etc. are all changing drastically. When she first became a trustee, the board was voting for all things brick and mortar. The students were going to have these beautiful facilities and now we are ramping up for, almost across the country, an online learning environment, that is kind of a contradiction. As a board, we must at least address it and what that means for us. We trust that Dr. Sawyer and administration is taking care of it, but we, as a board, responsibly should know what is happening. Dr. Sawyer commented that we are judicious with renovations. The T building renovation is a \$45 million renovation that was badly needed, it was an out-of-date facility and there will always be a segment of hands-on machining and mechatronics classes. We also have an obligation to maintain the facilities we have, and the board has been very good about that, we've had some buildings in rough shape we do need to come to grips with what our capacity utilization is from a facility perspective.

Dr. Sawyer said he didn't hear negative feedback, but very thoughtful questions and concerns, concerns that will be there if we have this program or not.

## 6.2 [Financial Aid Update](#)

Director of Financial Aid, Michael Williams, provided an overview of financial aid, a review of funding totals, traffic at the college, and some new upcoming challenges. He showed the department's *FAFSA First* YouTube video produced in-house by the college's marketing department.

Trustee Vitale asked for examples of the Student Aid Index (SAI) and how it works. Director Williams said as it stands right now, the SAI can go as low as -1500. If a student hits that number, they are eligible for the maximum Pell grant. This is a brand-new tool, and the Department of Education hasn't released all the documentation yet, but there are almost daily updates and a series of webinars coming in June to educate financial aid staff across the country. This is the biggest overhaul for them in the last 30 years. Trustee Vitale asked how is it going redoing all the programs and how are you doing that? Director Williams said they have partnered with the college's IT department and are putting a plan together to strategize and make sure we have the staff and timeframe to put this all together. We are currently doing some small things but are really waiting for the Department of Education to provide the specifics of the changes, and once we have them, we will immediately get to work.

Trustee Flynn asked why we are getting less money in federal awards this year compared to 2021-22? Director Williams said the federal award amount from 2021-22 includes the CARES and HEERF funding we received from the federal government. The funding from those programs has ended so our federal awards overall will decline for this academic year going forward. The State awards have declined because new rules have been put in place for Futures for Frontliners and Michigan Reconnect students. We now run the Satisfactory Academic Progress of those programs and some students are losing their eligibility because they are not maintaining the GPA and Pell requirements for those scholarships. When those awards first came out students got a jump start in utilizing them without having those components factored in but now that they are monitored you will begin to see a trend down. Director Williams added that the numbers on the presentation slide are year to date as of April 7, awards are continuing to happen for spring/summer so that number has definitely changed.

### 6.3 Advertising Update

Marketing Director Audrey Takacs thanked the board members for all their support given to the marketing department over the past several years. Director Takacs provided a perspective of the marketing department's role at the college.

Director Takacs said our strategic focus in Marketing is to drive awareness and consideration for the college when a person is thinking about whether they should go to college. We advertise throughout the student's journey, when they are thinking about it, researching it, become interested and come to the website where we try to drive them to take some action and make the decision to apply. We stop at the application component. Our job is to get students in the door and take that next step. Going to college is a huge decision and it doesn't happen overnight. When you see the clicks that we are driving, someone could be at a different phase of their student journey, they might click on an ad, think about college, and look around our website. Another person might be further into the decision process, more interested and click on ad and decide they are going to talk with a faculty member. Or someone has done their research and is ready to apply, they hit our ad, go to our website, and click on the application. We are all about trying to get them to engage with us in some way shape or form, but once they hit that application they move into the admissions funnel and the admissions area takes over. It is Admissions responsibility to help them apply, get admitted and become a student. We try to drive that awareness and consideration and move them through that journey to become a student at Macomb. It might take a while; they may see our ad but it could be six months to a year before they take the next step because it is such an

important decision to make. That is the context of our role at the college. She knows it was brought up earlier in the meeting the question of how does marketing impact retention. Well marketing's goal is to bring students in to Macomb and the recent numbers of new students enrolling for spring/summer and fall are both up, so we are having an impact. It is a team effort; Marketing works very closely with Admissions.

Director Takacs continued to present information about the media buying and placement services request for proposal.

Questions:

Trustee DiMaria asked Director Takacs if she realized what she had with SMZ before issuing the request for proposal, and if so, what was she trying to achieve? Director Takacs said she did know but wanted to substantiate that SMZ was the right agency and while she has a great working relationship with them, she wanted to make sure she was being objective about them. She also wanted to see what was out there and make sure we weren't overlooking other opportunities. Once she saw all the responses to the RFP, the decision was without a doubt SMZ.

Chairperson Lorenzo said with a lot of work done in-house, what does SMZ do other than placement? Director Takacs said we write the ads and do the creative. Placing the ads sounds minimal, but ad placement, especially in the digital world is very complicated. We tell SMZ our target audience and they use ad servers to find those people online. SMZ regularly watches how our ads are performing and if they aren't performing well, they will find another platform, site, or channel to place them. They do a lot of managing and optimizing, to make sure our ads are having the impact we want them to. Chairperson Lorenzo asked if her expectations of SMZ are that they would be able to increase enrollment? Director Takacs said we work at the top of the funnel to introduce people to Macomb and take an action. Once they apply the Admissions area takes over. We do support retention activities.

Trustee Vitale inquired about the college's chat bot. Director Takacs said on Macomb.edu, right now, we have live agents that are Macomb employees. Down the road we are looking at a bot we would turn on after hours, it would identify itself to users as their virtual assistant and be able to answer some questions. Trustee Vitale said companies are contracting that service out to save a lot of money, but we should not do it that way at the college, we need to have a person available who can answer questions.

Chairperson Lorenzo asked if we have a bot now? Director Takacs said not on our public website. Vice President Kevin Chandler added that there is a bot on My Macomb but it is virtual, a brain that scours the information that is already there to hopefully provide an answer. Trustee Vitale asked if there is a way to get out of it and talk to a real person? Director Takacs thinks the bot will have the capability for the user to ask to talk to a live agent.

Trustee Cusumano asked if the same data sets from FY21-22 are available for the previous fiscal year and have phone inquiries remained constant or been improved? Director Takacs said she would have to look at those numbers to tell whether they have gone up or down.

Trustee Cusumano asked what argument or discussion you have that we shouldn't be spending a million dollars or \$600,000. How do we measure whether we are getting the bang for the buck? Director Takacs said you can look at it from FY 21-22, the ads delivered had about 59 million impressions and the cost per ads delivered is minimal. Adding more dollars are going to get more impressions, more clicks on ads, video ads and to our website and more people into the funnel. She said banner ads are the most cost effective. With paid ads, every time someone clicks on it, we pay for it. We try to keep those pay per clicks at a lower fee, so we have to be very strategic about what paid ads we create. We have specific ad groups, for example financial aid and promoting programs for the academic area.

7.0 CLOSED SESSION

There was no need for a closed session.

8.0 ADJOURNMENT

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

Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT OF THE COUNTY OF MACOMB BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Secretary