

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, June 21, 2023 at 6:00 p.m., in Room 315/317 of the John Lewis Conference Center, South Campus, 14500 E. 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/Acting Secretary
Roseanne DiMaria, Treasurer
Joan Flynn, Trustee
Shelley Vitale, Trustee
Vincent Viviano, Trustee (arrived at 6:45 p.m.)

Absent:

Kristi Dean, Secretary

Also present:

James Sawyer, President
Kevin Chandler, Vice President, College Advancement & Community Relations
Joline Davis, Vice President, Human Resources
Carrie Jeffers, Vice President, Student Services
Leslie Kellogg, Provost, Vice President of Learning Unit
Sharon Kowal, Assistant to the President
William Leavens, Chief of College Police
Deb Mende, Executive Director, Office of the President
Kathi Poindexter, Director, Finance and Investments
Jeffrey Steele, General Counsel, Office of General Counsel

3.0 APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

ALL IN FAVOR:

AYES: DiMaria, Flynn, Cusumano, Vitale, Lorenzo

ABSENT: Dean, Viviano

NAYS:

MOTION CARRIED.

4.0 AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

None.

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5.0 REVIEW OF AGENDA ITEMS AND MATERIALS

None.

6.0 ISSUES AND UPDATES

6.1 President's Report

Closed Session – Need to go into closed session pursuant to MCL 15.268(e) to discuss collective bargaining.

Macomb Tuition Advantage Program (MTA) – Dr. Sawyer said that after announcing the MTA program on May 16 we had good media coverage and to date we have 1,941 students registered for Fall using part of the program to pay their tuition and expenses.

Enrollment Update – As of June 19, 2023 – Spring/Summer 2023 and Fall 2023

- Spring/Summer credit hours are up .08 percent compared to last year and head count is up 1.1 percent.
- Fall credit hours are up 0.1 percent compared to last year and head count is up 0.5 percent.
- Futures for Frontliners – 128 students have registered to date for the Spring/Summer 2023 term.
- MI Reconnect – 487 students have registered to date for the Spring/Summer 2023 term.

New Hires – Recommending five full time faculty to be hired. All positions are replacements or reallocations from other disciplines.

IDEA Update – Dr. Sawyer reported that the objective leads for Strategy 6 of the strategic plan continue planning training and professional learning for students and employees of the college. Currently in the process of scheduling training specifically for President's Council upon T. Goliday's recommendation. The IDEA link for the Macomb.edu website is near completion. There will also be a presence in the portal for students and employees to access IDEA-related information. The IDEA Council continues to work on the IDEA Plan that will serve as a tool and document outlining IDEA components of the strategic plan and other IDEA initiatives at the college, providing a high-level overview.

D3C3 Grant Update – Dr. Sawyer said he recently attended a meeting with the other colleges participating and the philanthropic organizations (Ballmer and Wilson Foundations) in the D3C3 program. We heard from Representative Samantha Steckloff, the chair of the higher education and community colleges appropriations committee. She gave an update on the budget and is an advocate for higher education. We were also updated on the other programs associated with D3C3.

This summer there are four academies running for students of grades 6 - 10:

- Camp Scrubs (through the health area), June 19-22
- Public Service/Dental, June 26-29
- Architecture/Construction, July 17-20
- Culinary, July 31 – August 3

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Our student mental health case manager had seven new cases in May. On June 8 the Student Success Cluster met with mental health organizations from the region to hear from the seven colleges about our mental health challenges. The cluster would like to make student mental health a focus area. In our case we would also want to look at it from an employee perspective in addition to the initial support offered through CARE and the employee assistance program. The Detroit Regional Chamber is going to organize next steps.

The Mobility Cluster is holding an in-person convening with industry partners on June 27. This is the third cluster of the D3C3 program and the furthest behind. We have been doing a lot in the electrical vehicle arena curriculum wise through other initiatives, so we are anxious to see this come together as well.

College Academic Boost & Learning Experience (ABLE) – Dr. Sawyer shared that this program is part of a statewide initiative administered by the MCCA to help combat learning loss among recent high school graduates who experienced interruptions to in-person learning due to the pandemic. We call this a “bridge” program and it was funded by the legislature. It affords students the opportunity to better prepare themselves for math and English courses and connect them with valuable support knowledge and tools to have a successful college career. Macomb is offering three 4-week sessions this summer with hybrid, in-person, morning and afternoon sessions at both our center and south campus locations. The May session had 10 students enrolled. The session that started Monday, June 19 has 39 students enrolled. The July 17 session currently has 33 students registered.

Capital Outlay – Dr. Sawyer stated that we were informed that our Mobility & Sustainability Education Center will not receive funding through capital outlay this year. That isn't too surprising as capital outlay projects seem to run in a cycle, and we are wrapping up the Skilled Trades and Advanced Technology Center (T building) project now. The overall cost of the Mobility project is \$59 million. We are seeking \$29 million through the capital outlay program. We are continuing to work on having our \$11 million Public Service Institute project added somewhere in the budget this cycle. Representative Denise Mentzer has been a strong advocate and we appreciate her efforts. The grand opening for the Skilled Trades and Advanced Technology Center will be on August 11, please mark that on your calendars. More details to follow.

Envisioning Discussion – The board of trustees Envisioning Discussion is scheduled for the evening of Tuesday, August 29 and will be held at the University Center in Room 125. This is a casual event to share your thoughts and what you see for the future of the college.

July Meeting Agenda – Dr. Sawyer said the July board meeting will hopefully include a tentative agreement with the MCCFO union. Potentially there will be a recommendation to replace all mediated classrooms that are eight years and older. The project is still being worked on and this will be a high-ticket item. There may be additional faculty hire recommendations.

Dr. Sawyer shared that Don Hutchison, dean of Engineering, Advanced Technology, has earned his Ph.D. from the Ferris State Community College program.

6.2 [Trustee Discussion regarding contributions to Macomb Community College Foundation in memory of past trustees](#)

Dr. Sawyer started the discussion saying that over the last couple years we have had instances in which the board has authorized donations to the MCC Foundation in memory of former trustees who passed away. This follows a past practice of the board.

Dr. Sawyer continued that both General Counsel Steele, legal counsel for the board of trustees, and an outside attorney have offered opinions that such donations are permissible as long as there is a benefit to the college. They believe these donations satisfy those criteria. Trustee Cusumano has researched this as well and has shared that he disagrees with their opinion.

At the May meeting, Dr. Sawyer said we discussed if the trustees want to continue this practice. Administration would like to have consensus from the board so in the future we handle such situations appropriately. We have set this time aside for the trustees to discuss and offer guidance to administration.

Board members shared their thoughts on the practice.

Chairperson Lorenzo said that our legal counsel said that this practice is okay, so it isn't a legal discussion anymore, and now it's more of a discussion about if we feel this is the right thing to do. Trustee Flynn said it is a good thing to do.

Trustee Cusumano said he is opposed for the reasons why he stated that the Michigan Constitution, in his mind, precludes it unless there is a benefit to the public institution. The only benefit is that a student, through the Foundation, will be able to access the college. He thinks that is a private benefit to the individual student or their family to have. It has been analyzed, so if it is within the parameters of the discretion of the board, he would argue that the process itself should be an individual board member should instigate that process rather than have administration put it on the agenda and make it an affirmative step by an elected member of the board to do so. He said he will probably vote no on these actions as he has done consistently with the last few. He disagrees and his position hasn't changed.

Trustee DiMaria said she is very comfortable continuing this practice, it is a beautiful honor.

Trustee Flynn said she feels we should go forward but it doesn't have to be brought out to the open for one vote.

Trustee Vitale shared although it is legal, and it is nice, she thinks there are better ways we can recognize our trustees other than to move money around. She said it seems a little empty, it is not something over and above, it is something nice to do, and it's not a lot of money (\$1,000) so that is not the issue. Chairperson Lorenzo asked if she had something in mind? Trustee Vitale said she is not thinking about the legality of it. She agrees that General Council Steele's legal opinion is okay, but she doesn't think moving the public's money around is a benefit and she doesn't see the reason behind it.

Chairperson Lorenzo said everyone has valid points. In the response to the question about it not being a benefit to the college, she repeated what she was told when she questioned the marketing strategy - that we don't have to have any metrics on whether it brings students in, it is a benefit to the college because

we are putting it out there, it is enhancing our ethos. She thinks it is a benefit to the college and it speaks highly of us. She agrees with Trustee Vitale in that she wishes we could do something more personal. Her fear is that this has been a practice for a long time, and she thinks it would be extremely offensive for the next person who would be up for this scholarship, if we didn't go ahead with what we have been doing. If we up the ante and make it a more personal gift, then you are offending all the people in the past. Another thing that troubles her greatly is that this is a board decision and what if a new board wants to reinstate it? There would be a group of people who aren't acknowledged, what then, do you grandfather them in?

Trustee Vitale said putting a brick in a wall memorializing someone or planting a tree is not benefiting the college as much as donating money to a scholarship.

Trustee DiMaria asked what other colleges do in this situation? There wasn't a clear answer on what other colleges do, but VP Davis said while at Eastern there was a donation, either to a scholarship or a service. The money originated from the college but additional funds were contributed by individual trustees. Dr. Sawyer said we could look further into what other colleges do in this situation.

Chairperson Lorenzo said there is a circular argument that we could make, although she doesn't know the statistics of how many of our graduates stay in Macomb County and become public servants and nurses, but that is a benefit to the people of the county and to the college because it speaks well of us.

Dr. Sawyer said the board doesn't have to vote on this but what we are trying to address is when this happens again and if we bring it forward we want to believe there is support for it, otherwise we do not want to bring it forward. Each time one of these is brought forward the board has to vote on it and we'd like to avoid having this discussion every time.

Trustee Vitale said she will give her consensus and support this until there is another way to do this.

Trustee Cusumano said that Eric Smith (former prosecuting attorney) was given the opportunity to do a plea bargain, and this was his exact argument that giving money to non-profits and churches was a benefit because it stopped crime and supported young people. This idea that somehow or another there is a generalized benefit that can come to the college or the people of the county by handing out.... Trustee Flynn argued that the prosecuting attorney's actions were altogether different, that was county money. Trustee Cusumano respectfully asked how that is different. Chairperson Lorenzo said because this is our money. Trustee Cusumano said this is the public's money.

Dr. Sawyer said what he hears Trustee Cusumano saying is the contention of this agreement would directly benefit the college. He respects Trustee Cusumano's thoughts, but this is money going to the college supporting a student who is attending the college and is used to pay tuition. If we were using the money to pay for a scholarship at Wayne State it would be more analogous to the Eric Smith situation because it would be going to an outside agency. This money circles back to the college and if it didn't that would be an issue.

General Counsel Steele said he agrees with Trustee Cusumano that this is public money and these are public funds. The issue is, is the money being given to an entity that is distinct from the college and

therefore we don't quite know what the benefit to the college is or is it going to entity where we know that the college is getting the benefit. The Foundation exists to support the college, we are giving the money to an entity where we can say with certainty that the college is benefiting.

General Counsel Steele said one thing we could consider is writing the resolution in a manner that would give a clear directive to the Foundation on exactly how the trustees intend the money to be used. It will also more clearly articulate the benefit the college would be getting in return for the expenditure. It bridges the gap, and states how the money can be spent.

Trustee Vitale said the question is we are honoring someone's public service to this institution and what is the best way to honor that legitimately? The allocation isn't in question it is how do we honor someone's service to the organization? We want to do that, but it is hard to think of a better way to do that than by helping a student. Trustee Cusumano said he thinks he has thought of the best way, he has written checks from his personal account in honor of these people and their contributions.

Chairperson Lorenzo said there is something symbolic about the institution they served honoring them. The board, their closest connection to the college, making the contribution to recognize these people for the work they have done.

Trustee Cusumano said sans Trustees Dean and Viviano and assuming they were not in favor of this, the majority of the board is in deliverance of it. The board is going to continue to bring it forward as in historical precedence for purposes of action by the board.

Dr. Sawyer said the current practice will continue and the resolution will be written with more specific directions on how to money will be spent. Dr. Sawyer thanked everyone for their thoughts and comments.

7.0 CLOSED SESSION

MOTION by Vitale seconded by DiMaria to go into closed session.

8.0 ADJOURNMENT

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

Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT OF THE COUNTY OF MACOMB BOARD OF TRUSTEES



Acting Secretary