

**MINUTES OF THE
GASTON COLLEGE
BOARD OF TRUSTEES RETREAT
Gaston Country Club
January 10, 2020**

Members Present: Mr. Stephen Campbell, Secretary
Sheriff Alan Cloninger
Mr. John Dancoff, Vice Chair
Ms. Jennifer Davis, Secretary
Ms. Iris Hopper
Mr. Steve Huffstetler
Mr. Tom Keigher
Mr. Brad Overcash, Chair
Ms. Janie Peak
Ms. Suzanne Riley
Mr. James Smith
Mr. Tim Smith
Mr. Randy Vinson

Dr. Patricia Skinner

Members Absent: Ms. Natalie Tindol
Ms. Tyazia Herring, SGA President

Others Present: Mr. Todd Baney, Mr. Sam Buff, Dr. Dewey Dellinger, Ms. Mary Ellen Dillon, Ms. Lynda Ellington, Ms. Cynthia McCrory, Dr. Dennis McElhoe, Luke Upchurch, and Mr. Carl Stewart, College Attorney.

- **Chair Overcash called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m.**
- **Invocation – Mr. Keigher**
- **Ethics Awareness and Conflict of Interest Reminder**

Chair Overcash reminded Trustees of the ethics requirements of public servants and also requested they identify any conflicts of interest or appearance of conflicts of interest present. None were identified.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Overcash welcomed everyone to the Retreat and thanked them for attending. He asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Chair Overcash then took the opportunity to introduce **Mr. Tim Smith**, a new trustee just sworn in prior to the Retreat, to the Board. He relayed that Mr. Smith is a resident of Lincolnton and received his Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from the Citadel. Mr. Smith has been owner and manager of his own tax specialty business, Tim Smith, CPA, for approximately 30 years. He is also a former Lincoln County City Council member. Chair Overcash welcomed Mr. Smith to the Board of Trustees.

Chair Overcash then informed the Trustees that each year the Gaston Regional Chamber, in collaboration with South State Bank, presents the prestigious Athena Award to a community leader in recognition of their business or professional accomplishments in community service. The award especially recognizes those who have been a role model to encourage women to achieve their full potential. Athena honorees exhibit the following values: authentic self, relationships, giving back, collaboration, courageous acts, learning, fierce advocacy, celebration and joy. This year's award will go to Board Trustee, **Ms. Janie Peak**. Chair Overcash commented that the award was well deserved, and the Board congratulated Ms. Peak with a round of applause.

II. Board Survey and Self-Evaluation

Chair Overcash asked the trustees to review with him the results of the Gaston College Board of Trustees Survey and Self-Evaluation questionnaire located in their packets. The survey had a 100% response from the Board members. Overall, Chair Overcash felt the survey regarding the work of the Board was very positive. This year there were 11 questions on which the Trustees totally agreed as they all had attained a 4.0 rating, which was the highest rating on a scale of 0.0 – 4.0. Chair Overcash reviewed with the Board all 11 of the highest rated items that indicated total agreement.

Chair Overcash then reviewed with the Trustees the five items with the lowest scores; however, those scores were not really considered low at all.

Question B-18, with a score of 3.54, concerned trustees identifying solutions to problems presented. In discussion, the trustees commented that identifying an issue is good, but they realize they are not academic experts and do look to the Administration as a resource to find a proper solution. They are mindful of their role as policy makers and not administrators.

Question B-16, with a score of 3.23, concerned all trustees participating in discussions and decision-making. Trustees commented that a lot of discussion/decision making takes place in Committee work; however, they did feel they could ask questions at full Board meetings, but to add their opinion when they agreed with what had already been stated would be redundant. The trustees also commented that they enjoyed the respectful attitude of the Board and did feel free to state their opinion if they had a concern. Newer trustees felt it was better to listen and absorb at first, but would join the discussion when they had a better understanding of

College policies and processes. Chair Overcash complimented the Board's open, and sometimes vigorous, discussions and felt it bolstered the overall strength of the Board.

Question D-32, with a score of 3.5, concerned ways, other than donations, the Board could support the Foundation and fundraising. Chair Overcash noted that Mr. Campbell is currently a Trustee and the Chair of the Foundation Board of Directors. He encouraged all the Trustees to contribute to the Foundation in an effort of appreciation. At certain times, such as the action that recently was taken concerning the Cramerton Firing Range, the Foundation has stepped up to financially assist the College. Chair Overcash would like to have the Foundation provide a presentation at a later Board meeting to elaborate the processes to establish endowments and scholarships. He relayed to the Board that he attends the Foundation Investment and Board of Directors' meetings and was grateful for the invitation.

Question D-31, with a score of 3.38, concerned a plan Trustees could follow to effectively advocate for the College. An advocacy plan for trustees was put into motion a few years ago on a local level and was successful; however, it has lost some momentum. Chair Overcash suggested bringing this topic to a Finance Committee meeting to identify a trustee as an advocacy liaison to re-organize this effort. Mr. Vinson relayed that on a State level, advocacy has improved with the addition of a State lobbyist. Building additional funding for the PAC would allow community colleges to be a more significant negotiator for State funds. Chair Overcash also encouraged Trustees to get to know all the various opportunities available at the College so they can advocate effectively out in the community when they are asked questions by citizens or legislative representatives.

Chair Overcash recognized Mr. Keigher, who encouraged trustees to visit with Gaston and Lincoln counties' Managers and Commissioners often to establish a bond with them and really let them know what Gaston College's needs include related to funding. The College does hold a Legislative Breakfast to inform legislators regarding budgetary needs, but a suggestion was made to possibly hold a Commissioners' breakfast or Town Managers' meet and greet as an advocacy tool.

Question D-34, with a score of 3.33, concerned Board members attending College sponsored events on and off campus. Chair Overcash acknowledged trustees are invited to many events, but encouraged trustees to make an effort to attend when they could.

Chair Overcash asked the trustees to review the comments made at the end of the survey, which included trustees' opinions regarding the College's accomplishments and the Board's and/or College's strengths and those areas needing improvement. A concern raised about College executive staff turnover was discussed. This was viewed as a normal occurrence and not unusual, especially when a President was retiring. Dr. Skinner did note that Dr. Husain, the College's former VP for Student Affairs, had left due to a family concern, and Dr. McElhoe's retirement announcement was not a surprise. As for finding replacements for their positions, she remarked that in her view hiring the right candidate for a position is more important than hiring someone quickly. The College's hiring process has worked well and would proceed as normal.

Chair Overcash thanked the Trustees for their input with the survey and asked Board members for any other comments or items they would like to address. None were identified.

III. Presidential Transition Committee

Chair Overcash relayed that a team at the College was working on a transition plan for the new President. This team would work to introduce the new President to the Gaston and Lincoln communities through events and media announcements. To this end, Chair Overcash appointed three trustees to work with the College Committee. The three trustees will provide feedback and help wherever needed. The Trustees named to the Committee are as follows: Ms. Iris Hopper, Mr. James Smith, and Mr. Steve Huffstetler.

IV. President's Report

Chair Overcash asked President Skinner to come forward for her report. Dr. Skinner relayed that she wanted to inform the Board where the College was related to certain projects and initiatives currently underway, and which items are considered important to future growth and stability of the College. She referred the Trustees to her report in the Board packet.

The first item she discussed referred back to a Presidential Priority in 2018-19 focused on **student success outreach initiatives**. Establishing collaborative learning spaces for students had been an item brought forward during the Strategic Planning Process as needed and will be available in the new café and library. Other student outreach initiatives were also underway and would continue to expand.

The second item in her report focused on appreciating the **College's dedicated staff and faculty**. Her hope was that the State would compensate community college workers whose pay in recent years had not kept up with the cost of living. This lack of compensation was making it difficult to retain and hire qualified people for positions currently open in community colleges. She encouraged Trustees to advocate for pay increases for the College's workers.

Another item she spoke about revolved around preserving the **College's rich history and culture of innovation, creativity, and collaboration**. She urged the Trustees and College administrators to involve people from all over the College in decision-making, as this would create "buy-in", allow innovative ideas to come forward, and foster a sense of belonging. College collaborations among the faculty and staff have enabled the College to apply and receive many grants to begin new programs thereby helping students succeed.

Dr. Skinner brought forward the fourth item, which was centered on implementation of the second Early College High School, which will be known as the **Gaston Early College of Medical Sciences and located at the Kimbrell Campus**. Going forward, once this initiative is approved by the State, many items related to logistics and funding will need to be developed and executed. It will be important to get this project up and running at the earliest opportunity.

Dr. Skinner then discussed the new **space at the Lincoln Campus** that has become available. This was the fifth item within her report, and she wanted to update the Board

regarding the work being done with the architects to determine strategic and viable options to make the best use of the newly available space. There will be room for new programs and, hopefully, a library and resource center.

A question was asked about establishing a satellite campus in Denver. Dr. Skinner responded that the State would not consider it unless a need could be proven and the College had the resources to fund that expansion. Building growth at the Kimbrell and Lincoln campuses is the College's current focus, but there may come a time in the future when the Denver area may be evaluated.

The sixth item in Dr. Skinner's report centered around another one of the President's Priorities for 2018-19 related to **broadening outreach efforts** to raise awareness of and funding for College priorities. Dr. Skinner thanked Mr. Upchurch for his work as Interim Executive Director for the Foundation as she felt he had not missed a beat after the previous Director left. She told the Trustees about the very recent endowed scholarship set up by Mr. Tete Pearson in honor of his wife who had recently passed and the capital commitment made by Mrs. Maureen Tull in memory of her late husband, Bob Tull. Mr. Tull had been Chair of the Foundation Board of Directors and a Board member for many years. Additionally, her report listed several grants and gifts made to the College over the last year.

Trustee Cloninger again requested that Mr. Upchurch come to a Board of Trustees Meeting to provide a presentation concerning the process of setting up an endowed scholarship. This will make it easier for Trustees to advocate for the College in this regard.

Another of the President's Priorities for 2018-19 concerned responding to **regional workforce development needs**. This was the seventh item Dr. Skinner discussed, and it primarily focused on youth-apprenticeships and Apprenticeship 321. She thanked Dr. McElhoe for his leadership with this endeavor and felt it will be important going forward to keep building this program.

The eighth item Dr. Skinner brought forward was related to the President's Priority to identify successful outcomes related to the **2014-2019 Strategic Plan** and incorporate strategic initiatives noted through the 2019-2024 strategic planning process. This work is underway, and a report will be given at a later time.

The final item Dr. Skinner reported on concerned the **SACSCOC decennial review** in 2021. She noted there is nothing more important than a College's accreditation, and the Board is critical in this role. A 15-member team attended the SACSCOC Annual Conference to learn about current areas of particular interest to SACSCOC reviewers, new compliance rules that must be met, and how to avoid mistakes made by other colleges. One area of focus concerned Governance and Administration, which is specifically related to a College's Board of Trustees.

With this in mind, Dr. Skinner directed the Trustees to another handout in their packet, a partial copy of the Resource Manual for The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement. Dr. Skinner reviewed with the Trustees the following sections: The Principle of Integrity, Mission, Governing Board, and Administration and Organization. Dr. Skinner told the Trustees about a recent SACSCOC report dated December 19, 2019, which

listed colleges that had accreditation actions taken against them. Some of the colleges cited for not complying with SACSCOC guidelines were local. Dr. Skinner assured the Board the College is making every effort to comply with the SACSCOC guidelines to assure re-accreditation. Dr. Skinner concluded her report thanking the Trustees for their support of all the faculty and staff preparing for the SACSCOC decennial review.

Career and College Promise Report

At an earlier Board Meeting, a request was made to provide information about the Career and College Promise program to clarify its value to students and the community college. Dr. Skinner directed Trustees to the report in the packet that detailed the educational and cost-saving benefits to students the program provides. She encouraged the Trustees to review the document, and let her know if they needed any further clarification.

Conclusion

Chair Overcash thanked Dr. Skinner for her informative report. He then thanked the trustees for attending and their valuable input regarding the Board Survey and Self-Evaluation. He relayed that there would be a ten-minute break after the Retreat closed, prior to the start of the Called Board Meeting that was scheduled next.

There being no further business to come before the Board, Chair Overcash adjourned the Retreat at 10:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Davis, Secretary

Mr. Brad Overcash, Chair

Mary Ellen Dillon, Recording Secretary

(College Seal)