

**Minutes of the  
Gaston College Board of Trustees Meeting  
Lincoln Campus, Cochrane Science Building, Room 117  
September 27, 2021**

**Members Present:**

Mr. John Dancoff, Chair  
Ms. Jennifer Davis, Vice Chair  
Mr. Jonathan Fletcher  
Mr. Steve Hall  
Ms. Resa Hoyle  
Mr. Steve Huffstetler  
Ms. Janie Peak  
Mr. Tim Smith  
Ms. Julie Stroupe  
Mr. Randy Vinson  
Mr. Joseph Wittmer, SGA President

Dr. John Hauser, President

**Members Absent:**

Sheriff Alan Cloninger, Secretary  
Ms. Iris Hopper  
Mr. Tom Keigher

**Others Present:**

Ms. Shelly Alman, Ms. Eleanor Armstrong, Mr. Todd Baney, Dr. Dewey Dellinger, Ms. Mary Ellen Dillon, Ms. Guyann Howe, Mr. Kendrick McDowell, Dr. John McHugh, Chief Talmadge McInnis, Ms. Christian Mendoza, Dr. Jennifer Nichols, Mr. David Nutt, Ms. Julie Ostrowski, Ms. Allison Shaw, Mr. Greg Smith, Mr. Sid Sowers, Mr. Eddie Taylor, Ms. Debora Thibeault, Mr. Luke Upchurch, Ms. Linda Vespa, Ms. Tanisha Williams; and Mr. Carl Stewart, College Attorney.

**Chair Dancoff called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting. A quorum was present for the meeting.**

- **Invocation – Ms. Stroupe**

After the invocation, Chair Dancoff relayed that Sheriff Cloninger would not be attending the meeting due to the death of his brother. He asked the Board for a moment of silence.

- **Ethics Awareness and Conflict of Interest Reminder**

Chair Dancoff reminded the Trustees of the ethics requirements of public servants and requested they identify any conflicts of interest or appearance of conflicts of interest present. No conflicts were identified.

**A. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

**Chair Dancoff asked if there were any changes, additions, or corrections to the agenda. None were identified.**

**Ms. Hoyle moved to approve the agenda; Mr. Hall seconded the motion. The motion carried.**

**B. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE AUGUST 23, 2021, BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING.**

**Chair Dancoff presented the Minutes of the August 23, 2021, Board of Trustees Meeting and asked if there were any additions or corrections. No changes were identified.**

**Ms. Davis moved to approve the Minutes of the August 23, 2021, Board of Trustees Meeting; Ms. Peak seconded the motion. The motion carried.**

**C. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

**1. Welcome Guests and Introduce New Employees**

Dr. Hauser welcomed everyone to the Lincoln Campus. He commented that there have been a lot of exciting changes going on, and the Lincoln Campus is involved in those changes.

He also welcomed and recognized Mr. Sid Sowers, Faculty Senate President, and Ms. Tanisha Williams, Staff Senate President, to the meeting.

Dr. Hauser invited Mr. Baney, Mr. Smith, and Dr. Dellinger to introduce the new employees in their divisions:

Mr. Baney, Vice President for Human Resources, Organizational Development & Safety introduced:

Mr. Eddie Taylor, COVID/Special Projects Coordinator

Mr. Smith, Vice President for Economic and Workforce Development introduced:

Ms. Ida Duncan, WIOA Youth Specialist-Life Skills (Did not attend.)

Dr. Dellinger, Executive Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs introduced:

Ms. Allison Shaw, Academic Advisor, 12-Month

Ms. Eleanor Armstrong, Research Assistant Academic Affairs

Ms. Christian Mendoza, Instructor-English, 9-Month

Ms. Debora Thibeault, Secretary-Career and Technical Education, 12-Month

## **2. Introduction of New Board Member**

Chair Dancoff welcomed Mr. Joseph Wittmer, SGA President, to the Board of Trustees; he had been appointed to the Board by the SGA.

### **Mr. Joseph Wittmer**

A resident of Mount Holly, Mr. Wittmer is a student at the Gaston Early College High School. He previously served as the Vice President of the Student Government Association. Mr. Wittmer is passionate about serving and leading within the community, and he is excited about being more involved in Gaston College's community and leaving a lasting impact on the student body. He plans to graduate from Gaston College with an Associate in Science degree and transfer to a four-year university to study chemistry.

Chair Dancoff warmly welcomed Mr. Wittmer to the Board of Trustees.

## **D. PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Dr. Hauser's activities, since the August 23, 2021, Board of Trustees meeting were provided in the Board packet. Also, Dr. Hauser called on: Dr. Dewey Dellinger, Executive Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs; Mr. Todd Baney, Vice President for Human Resources, Organizational Development & Safety; Mr. Greg Smith, Vice President for Economic and Workforce Development; Ms. Shelly Alman, Vice President for Finance, Operations, and Facilities; Mr. Luke Upchurch, Chief Development Officer/Executive Director of the Foundation; Mr. David Nutt, Athletic Director/Head Coach Men's Basketball; Dr. Jennifer Nichols, Vice President for Educational Partnerships; and Ms. Julie Ostrowski, Executive Director for Marketing and Communications, for verbal updates on their divisions/departments.

After the reports, Ms. Peak asked to address the Board; Chair Dancoff complied. Ms. Peak wanted to thank Mr. Upchurch and the Foundation as she was aware of their quick responses to donors with thoughtful thank-you notes when contributions were received. She felt that type of customer service was very much appreciated.

SACSCOC Re-Accreditation Visit - The eight members of the SACSCOC re-accreditation team were on Gaston College's Campus the week of September 20-23. They reported zero findings. The College will look for official notification of its re-accreditation in June of 2022 after the SACSCOC Board reviews all the pertinent documentation.

After the re-accrediting team had left Campus, Dr. Hauser relayed the good news to the faculty and staff and a celebration was held where everyone enjoyed lunch, which was provided. Dr. Hauser thanked everyone for their hard work.

DOD Grant - The Textile Center has received a Department of Defense grant of \$820,000 in partnership with NC State to support equipment for the textile center for developing new textile products for defense applications. Dr. Hauser thanked Mr. Luke Upchurch and Ms. Robin Phillips-Hauser for their hard work on obtaining this grant.

Techtextil North America 2021 Conference - The Techtextil North America Conference took place in Raleigh August 23 through 25, 2021. This conference encompasses all vertical aspects of the technical textile industry.

Patriotic Employer - On Thursday, July 29, Ms. Phyllis Davis-Brown, Project Director for Gaston College's Upward Bound program, was recognized as a Patriotic Employer by the ESGR. The Patriot "Boss" Award reflects the efforts made by individual supervisors to support citizen warriors through a wide range of measures, including flexible schedules, time off prior to and after deployment, caring for families, and granting leaves of absence if necessary.

Gaston College Baseball – The Gaston College Baseball team kicked off their Fall season with two games the weekend of September 11. The first home game was September 15, at the Sims Legion Park.

Gaston College Cross Country - The women of Gaston College laced up for the Monarch Cross-Country Classic on Saturday, September 11, held in Fayetteville, NC.

Gaston College Educator's Breakfast - The Educator's Breakfast is a yearly event held on the Dallas Campus where local high school administrators and school counselors are invited on-campus to learn about the many opportunities Gaston College offers our local high school students and graduates. This year's event was held on September 17, 2021.

Gaston College Rhinos 2021 Golf Outing - The Gaston College Rhinos Golf Outing that was planned to take place on September 22, 2021, at the Verdict Ridge Golf & Country Club in Denver, NC, was postponed until Wednesday, October 20, due to weather.

Upcoming Fiber Innovation Center Groundbreaking - The Fiber Innovation Center at Gaston College's campus in Belmont, North Carolina will be a world-class facility focused on the future of the textile industry. The groundbreaking ceremony for the facility will take place on Wednesday, October 27, 2021, at 1:30 p.m. Save-the-Date notices have been sent out.

CaroMont Health / Gaston College Nursing Cohort - Dr. Hauser reported that Gaston College's Health and Human Services Division Dean and Director of Nursing are working closely with CaroMont Health to set up a possible Nursing Apprenticeship Cohort.

Chair Dancoff thanked Dr. Hauser for his report and asked if there were any questions for Dr. Hauser; there were none.

## **E. SGA PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Mr. Joseph Wittmer, SGA President, provided the SGA report of events since the last meeting in August.

Welcome Back Events - SGA planned various Welcome Back events during the first three weeks of class on all three campuses. There was a total of 1,794 students who participated in the events.

Student Success Expo - The annual Student Success Expo was held on September 9, 2021. This year's expo was modified and set up as a "meet and greet/open house" type of event in the various student service focused offices and programs.

National Hispanic Heritage Month - National Hispanic Heritage Month began on September 15, 2021, and will end on October 15, 2021. SGA provided a virtual bulletin board on social media for students to learn about the achievements, culture, and history of the Hispanic and Latinx Americans.

Constitution Day – Annually, on September 17<sup>th</sup>, the US celebrates Constitution Day. SGA provided a list of resources via email for the campus community to gain more awareness about the constitution. The Gaston County Board of Elections held voter registration on the Dallas Campus during the event.

Chair Dancoff thanked Mr. Wittmer for his report.

## **F. FACILITIES**

As Facilities Chair Cloninger was not present, Chair Dancoff called on Ms. Alman to guide the Trustees through the Facilities items for review.

### **1. Proposed Lease Agreement for Sims Park**

The City of Gastonia owns Sims Legion Baseball Park located at Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Way, Gastonia, North Carolina, and has determined that the park will not be needed by the City for its exclusive use.

Gaston College desires to lease the baseball stadium from the City for periodic, but not exclusive use. The proposed lease agreement between the College and the City includes the baseball stadium, its facilities, and parking area, but does not include the Little League fields and a BMX installation.

This lease shall be effective October 1, 2021, and continue up to and including September 30, 2029.

The proposed lease includes the installation of synthetic turf, which the City agrees to pay the College \$37,445 each year for a period of eight (8) years as part of its participation in the purchase of the turf. Payment to the College begins July 15, 2022.

The turf shall be maintained by the College during the term of the agreement and any extensions pursuant to the manufacturer's specifications and warranty.

A *Summary of Key Provisions* for the proposed Sims Park Lease was provided and a copy of the full lease was available for the Trustees review.

In the basic rental for the premises during the initial term of the Lease, and under its condition of nonexclusive possession, Gaston College shall pay to the City of Gastonia the sum of Twenty Thousand Dollars (\$20,000) per year, payable each year on or before the 5<sup>th</sup> day of March beginning in 2022. For all other payments or fees required, the City of Gastonia shall invoice the College one time per year.

**Upon the recommendation of the Facilities Committee, and on behalf of the Committee, Chair Dancoff moved that the Gaston College Board of Trustees approve the Proposed Lease Agreement for Sims Legion Park as presented.**

As this motion came from Committee, a second was not required. Chair Dancoff asked if there were any questions or comments.

Ms. Peak stated that she had recently been to a Honey Hunters game where several members of the City Council were attending; she had taken the opportunity to thank the them for their willingness to work with the College on the Sims Park lease. The members of the Council expressed their excitement to be working with the College, and Mayor Reid commented on how proud he was to be a Gaston College graduate. She was glad to have had the opportunity to thank the Council; she felt thanking them was important.

A concern was raised as to whether the hoped-for funding from Gaston County Schools for the project would come through. Dr. Hauser was hopeful, but the Board of Education had not had their meeting to discuss the project. He will keep the Board apprised.

**The motion carried.**

**Upon the recommendation of the Facilities Committee, and on behalf of the Committee, Chair Dancoff moved that the Gaston College Board of Trustees authorizes the President of Gaston College to finalize the synthetic turf agreements with A Perfect Game and Gaston County Schools and execute any documents necessary in the finalizing of said agreements. The President is to notify the Board of Trustees of any and all material changes to the original synthetic turf agreement and report the final payment agreements with A Perfect Game and Gaston County Schools to the Board of Trustees.**

As this motion came from Committee, a second was not required. Chair Dancoff asked if there were any questions. There were none.

**The motion carried.**

## **2. Capital Reports**

### **CAM Electrical Upgrade**

Because the CAM project is under \$500,000, three informal bids were solicited for the project. The lowest bid was received from Dallas Electrical for \$156,645. Delivery of the electrical bus for the machinery was delayed but did arrive and was installed in August. All CAM machinery should be powered and ready for use by the end of September.

### **Lincoln Campus Space Renovation**

The College has initiated the project description with the community college system and submitted the 3-1 capital improvement project approval form, which was approved by the State Board on September 18, 2020. An architect's contract dated September 30, 2020, was signed and returned to the State Construction Office and NCCCS on October 7, 2020. Schematic design and design development documents were reviewed by State Construction, and Construction documents were submitted to State Construction July 12, 2021. Construction document comments were received at the end of August and the final documents will be submitted in early September. Next steps include obtaining a county building permit.

### **Fiber Innovation Center**

The College recently received two separate \$1,000,000 pledges. These pledges have allowed for an increase in the scope of the project to a 39,000 square foot building. The schematic design package was approved in early July by State Construction with minor comments. Shelco will provide an updated construction cost estimate with new square footage added.

A new equipment floor plan was reviewed and passed along to the architect at the end of August. Parkdale Mills has supplied a collection of inspirational images to aid in the design for the building entry and will need to review the new concept designs before moving further into the Design Development phase.

The revised 3-1 budget has been approved, and Shelco will revise their budget once the final layout has been confirmed. WHN has increased their architect fee by \$180,000 as a result of the increased project scope. The new project fee is \$635,800.

A groundbreaking is scheduled for October 27, 2021.

### **Flagpole Project**

The flagpole project at the entrance of the College is complete.

### **Digital Sign Project**

The Electronic Sign project is complete, and Ms. Ostrowski has completed the training necessary to control its screens.

### **Volleyball Courts**

A new concept rendering of the volleyball courts has been created as the courts have been expanded to five and will include two locker rooms and lighting. This project will come before the Board soon.

### **Water Line Break**

The water bill came in for the month and was quite high, which indicated there is a leak in a water line. The leak has been narrowed down and repairs will take place. Once the repair is made, the Town of Dallas will reimburse the College for the over charge.

These items were presented for informational purposes; no action was necessary.

## **G. FINANCE**

Chair Dancoff called on Ms. Alman to present the Finance Items for review.

### **1. Financial Audit – Gaston College Foundation**

Cherry Bekaert has completed the financial audit for the Gaston College Foundation for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2021.

The net position of the Foundation increased \$4.247 Million or 42.96% to \$14,132 Million during fiscal year 2020-21, primarily due to a decrease in spending due to pandemic restrictions and an increase in investment earnings, capital gifts and endowments compared to prior year. Total assets were reported at \$14.1 Million.

Cherry Bekaert issued an unmodified (or “clean”) audit report for the Foundation, citing “All significant transactions have been recognized in the financial statements in the proper period.” and “In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Foundation as of June 30, 2021...”.

There was one uncorrected misstatement related to the recognition of unearned revenue (scholarships) received in prior years. Auditors requested that the Foundation not show unearned revenue in FY 2021 and it was shown in FY 2020. Auditors did not require restatement for 2020.

Regarding internal controls testing, Cherry Bekaert’s report stated that “...during our audit, we did not identify any deficiencies in internal control that we consider to be material weaknesses.” There were no corrected misstatements of the financial statements.

The auditor’s opinion letter, governance letter and internal control letter were reviewed by the Trustees.

This item is presented for informational purposes.

## **2. Pension Spiking Agency Report**

During the 2014 General Assembly session, contribution-based benefit cap (CBBC) legislation was enacted effective January 1, 2015, to control the practice of “pension spiking” in which a retirement system member’s compensation substantially increases, resulting in a monthly retirement benefit that is significantly greater than the member and employer contributions would fund. As part of this calculation, a minimum average final compensation (AFC) amount is established before the calculation would apply, which is indexed for inflation each year. The current AFC threshold is \$110,404. This rule as established will only impact a few members of the retirement system. The legislation requires the member’s last employer to pay the additional contribution required to fund the member’s benefit in excess of the cap.

Gaston College receives monthly reports from the State Treasurer’s office identifying two members who are close to the AFC threshold. The members identified may or may not actually reach the CBBC at the time of their actual retirement.

At the current time, the members’ calculated AFC falls below the minimum threshold established by the State Treasurer. The College will continue to monitor the calculation in the future.

This report was presented for informational purposes; no action was necessary.

## **3. Audit Results – Federal Compliance Audit**

The Federal Compliance Audit findings were reported to the Board of Trustees in March 2021. The auditors reviewed all aspects of student financial aid eligibility related to the administration of federal Title IV financial aid funds, including verification, timely drawdown of funds and return of funds, reconciliation, student disbursements, enrollment reporting and satisfactory academic progress monitoring. The auditors did not “identify any deficiencies in internal control considered to be material weaknesses or any instances of non-compliance” for the period July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020.

The Federal Compliance Audit was included in a single audit report prepared by the Office of State Controller and submitted to the U.S. Department of Education for review along with the corrective action plan and management’s response.

Because Gaston College had no deficiencies identified, the college was not included in the corrective action plan or response.

This item was presented for informational purposes; no action was necessary.

## **4. Supplemental State Budget Allocation**

Following is the Supplemental State Budget Allocation received in July 2021.

#1	Regional Trainer 360	\$ 131,347
	Customized Training	58,132
	BioNetwork	917,325
	Career Coach	92,358
	Minority Male Mentoring	35,000
	Golden Leaf	23,860
	Longleaf	81,577
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,339,599</b>

**5. Financial Reports**

A summary of expenditures for month-end July 31, 2021, for State, Gaston, and Lincoln operating budgets and proprietary accounts in comparison to the previous year was provided for the Board’s review and information.

**H. REPORT FROM NCACCT**

Mr. Vinson relayed that he, Mr. Keigher, Mr. Fletcher, and Ms. Stroupe attended the NCACCT Leadership Seminar in Wilmington, NC, From September 22-24, 2021. There were 250 people registered for the event, and he felt it was one of the best seminars to date as he viewed the sessions as excellent.

Mr. Vinson reported:

The morning NCACCT session on Thursday, September 23, centered on *DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion)*, presented by Dr. Helen Benjamin, an ACCT Trustee and former Chancellor of Contra Costa Community College District 89, Presidents of Mitchell and Piedmont Community Colleges, and the Vice President of Durham Technology. Each person relayed what their colleges are doing related to this topic. Mr. Vinson told the Trustees about a booklet available through ACCT on DEI they may want to read. He would send them the link through Ms. Dillon.

During the Attorneys session, the topic focused on Title IX. Mr. Vinson asked the Board if Mr. Baney might present this topic to the Board sometime in the future. It would be scheduled.

*Finance 101*, presented by Ms. Elizabeth Grovenstein, NCCCS Vice President/Chief Financial Officer, was one of the topics on Thursday afternoon. This session explained how colleges are funded and what role various entities play in the funding process. The reporting period for FTEs is summer, fall, and spring; one FTE is equivalent to 512 student hours in classes. All colleges receive a common base amount of funding. The remainder of the budget that a college receives is based on its FTEs earned and on its performance measure results. For the 2020-2021 year, the State Appropriation for Education was \$14.4 billion. This amount was distributed as follows: public schools – \$10 billion, UNC System - \$3.2 billion, and NCCCS \$1.2 billion. The funding percentage that comes to the NCCCS is of concern and judged unfair as the UNC System had 200,000 students and the NCCCS had 525,000 students.

Another session topic was *Community College Performance Measures*, presented by Mr. Bill Schneider, from the System Office and Mr. Dale McInnis, President of Richmond Community College. Currently, there is a Task Force to review and make changes to the Performance Measures. There are Performance Measures for Basic Skills, College English Success Rate, College Level Math Success Rate, First-Year Progression Success Rate, Curriculum Completion, Licensure and Certification, and College Transfer Performance; there is also one sigma performance measure. Mr. Vinson will send the links so the Trustees can review the College's current performance measures.

The Friday, September 24 Breakfast General Session focused on myFutureNC. The myfutureNC President, Ms. Cecilia Holden, the Executive Director of the Belk Center at NCSU, and MC Belk Pilon President and CEO of the John M Belk endowment made presentations about filling the worker skill gap. There is a goal to have 400,000 people obtain degrees or certificates above high school level by 2040. There are five Community Colleges who have been selected to do trials to address strategies for accomplishing this goal. Two of those presidents from Pitt and Blue Ridge community colleges discussed some of their work, challenges, and successes in working with adult learners towards the goal. Ms. Deanne Ballard, Senator and Education Chair for the NC General Assembly, joined the discussion as one of the panelists.

Mr. Vinson concluded his report after relaying he had met with the NCCCS Lobbyist, Jim Harrell, and Mr. Harrell said the percentage for salary increases may be 2% for each of the next two years; however, negotiations are still underway.

Chair Dancoff thanked Mr. Vinson for his report.

## **I. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT / ANNOUNCEMENTS**

1. Chair Dancoff stated that **Baseball games** and **Cross-Country** meets have started. He encouraged the trustees to come out and support the College's teams when they can.
2. The **Fall NCACCT** event in Wilmington took place September 22-24, with four trustees attending. Chair Dancoff referred back to Mr. Vinson's report and hoped everyone had a beneficial time.
3. **SACSCOC Visit Complete** – Chair Dancoff thanked the Trustees who had met with the Re-accreditation Team. He added his thanks also to the Faculty, Staff, and Students who helped and participated in the various meetings. He extended a special thank you to Dr. Heather Woodson for her leadership in coordinating the visit along with a crew of supporters.
4. **Events Coming up** –

September 28<sup>th</sup> – Gaston Early College Medical High School Ribbon Cutting at 2 p.m. at the CET Building

October 2<sup>nd</sup> – Inaugural “Stampede for Student Success” 5K run / 2K walk – Gaston College Campus at 8 a.m.

October 2<sup>nd</sup> – Gaston College Open House at 10:30 a.m. at the Dallas Campus

October 20<sup>th</sup> – Golf Scholarship Tournament – Verdict Ridge – was postponed due to weather

October 27<sup>th</sup> – Fiber Innovation Center Groundbreaking at 1:30 p.m. at the Kimbrell Campus

November 8<sup>th</sup> – Next Finance and Facilities Committees Meeting at 3 p.m. in the Myers Center Auditorium, Section B at 3 p.m.

November 15<sup>th</sup> – Next Board of Trustees Meeting at 3 p.m. in the Myers Center Auditorium, Section C

## **5. AJOURNMENT**

Chair Dancoff thanked the Lincoln Campus Administration for hosting the meeting and relayed that if the Trustees would like to take a tour of the Campus Dr. John McHugh would be glad to be their guide. He then asked if there was any further business to come before the Board. There was none.

**Chair Dancoff entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Davis moved to adjourn the meeting; Mr. Hall seconded the motion. The motion carried.**

Chair Dancoff adjourned the meeting at 4:28 p.m.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Sheriff Alan Cloninger, Secretary**

**Mr. John Dancoff, Chair**

**Mary Ellen Dillon, Recording Secretary**

**(College Seal)**