

Highland Community College
Board Retreat
December 8, 2021
Highland Community College Student/Conference Center
Robert J. Rimington Board Room
Freeport, Illinois

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mr. Jim Endress, Board Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 8:03 a.m.

Members Physically Present: Mr. Doug Block, Mr. Jim Endress, Ms. Pennie Groezinger (departed 12:47 p.m.), Mr. Shawn Boldt, Mr. James Rhyne, Mr. Craig Knaack, and Ms. Hailey Johnson

Members Virtually Present: Ms. Sarah Kuhlemeier

Members Absent: None

Others Physically Present: Ms. Chris Kuberski, President; Mr. Pete Fink, Director, ITS; Ms. Terri Grimes, Board Secretary

Others Virtually Present: Ms. Jill Janssen, Vice President/CFO, Administrative Services, Board Treasurer; Mr. Scott Anderson, Vice President, Business, Technology, and Community Programs; Ms. Liz Gerber, Vice President/CSSO, Student Development & Support Services; Dr. David Naze, Vice President/CAO, Academic Services; Ms. Karen Brown, Director, Human Resources; and Ms. Christie Lewis, HRIS Administrator/HR Generalist

Mr. Endress asked trustees if they were able to hear him and noted that, due to the continuation of the COVID pandemic, the College will continue to Zoom the Board meetings because in-person meetings are not practical or prudent due to the disaster.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

OPENING REMARKS

Ms. Kuberski provided an update on enrollment. Fall headcount is up 1.7 percent, which is reflective of more part-time and dual credit students, while credit hours are down 2.3 percent, which is reflective of having more part-time than full-time students. Headcount for Spring 2022 is currently down 15.7 percent and credit hours are down 6.4 percent. It is hard to tell at this point how it will fair at the start of the semester, as some dual credit is registered in Spring and some in Fall. Also, some students put off registering until after Christmas. Ms. Kuberski also has concerns about Spring enrollment because of the COVID testing requirement. There are between 33 and 35 students who are not responding to the requirement, and she worries that those students will not come back in the Spring. The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) has scheduled a series of regional meetings with the community

college presidents and the Illinois Attorney General to discuss concerns, and Ms. Kuberski will attend the regional meeting next week. Mr. Endress noted that Rock Valley College has an ad campaign for their online classes, but his impression has been that our students want to be face-to-face. Ms. Johnson responded that the agenda is being pushed more through the media. They want online to start happening due to what is going on with the different COVID variants. Schools are promoting good online classes to recruit students who are scared or to accommodate what is going on. Ms. Johnson is a better learner with in-person classes, and she is sure other students want in-person classes, as well. She had two really good Zoom instructors this semester. Mr. Boldt's son and daughter struggled with online classes, and face-to-face classes have been more beneficial for them. The student survey results regarding student preferences are not back yet, and Ms. Kuberski believes the results will help inform Fall 2022 classes. About 70 percent of Spring classes are in person or hybrid, which is not drastically different from Fall 2021. A social media campaign will be running in the Spring.

DIVISION FOCUS: BUSINESS, TECHNOLOGY, AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Mr. Anderson provided an overview of the division, which includes himself, 13 full-time and 24 part-time faculty, and an Executive Assistant. The division offers 32 certificates, most of which are stackable into an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree. Of the 176 dual credit courses offered College-wide, 75 percent are through the Business and Technology division. An apprenticeship program is currently offered with Honeywell, and there has been communication with area businesses regarding career opportunities. Mr. Anderson highlighted several areas in the division, including the welding lab, auto mechanics lab that includes a dynamometer, cosmetology, nail tech, CNC lab, and childcare. Through a partnership with Tri Star Metals, students were able to create A-frames for the company. Building "E" (the former Wind Tech building) includes a science lab for agriculture, and a building will be built in the future to store ag equipment, due in part to a donation from Representative Andrew Chesney. The donor who owns the land where the building will go has agreed to donate a portion of the land now for the building and then an agriculture center can be built when the land is fully donated. Mr. Block asked about partnerships with businesses where training could be taken to their facilities, such as John Deere, and Mr. Anderson will discuss this with Mr. Justin Ebert and Ms. Monica Pierce. Mr. Anderson was asked what the College was doing to promote internships, and he reported that there are currently more internship openings than we have students. The College currently runs Honeywell's apprenticeship program, which includes four semesters of coursework for a total of 32 credit hours. The new welding facility on campus is being designed in consultation with The Helm Group. Ms. Groezinger toured the welding lab at Lena-Winslow high school and asked if there would be opportunities for Highland, and Mr. Anderson agreed to follow up with the instructor, Mr. Jacob Snook, regarding dual credit. Mr. Rhyne also asked about opportunities through a youth grant that he was aware of, and he will send the information to Mr. Anderson. Ms. Groezinger inquired about opportunities for Spanish-speaking students in CDL, noting that would be a big "win" if Highland could help. Mr. Endress also noted that beginning in February, those who want to get a CDL license must take an approved CDL course to test.

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

Classification and Compensation Market Study

Ms. Christie Lewis provided a review of the history of the compensation study noting that the goal of the study is to help the College remain competitive. A market review was completed on half of the

positions, with proposed adjustments taking effect in January 2022, and a review of the remaining positions will be done in January 2023. Forty-six (46) positions or about 60 percent were included in the study. Ms. Karen Brown reviewed a table listing recent vacant positions and the time to fill each, noting that many candidates decline an interview due to salary. The average time to fill the positions was 91 days compared to 65 in 2019, and the number of applicants per position averaged 10 compared to 20 in 2019. Adjustments as a result of the market study will cost around \$119,000 and will be capped at 5.5 percent each year, so they do not exceed six percent, with most adjustments completed by FY23. Positions will be reevaluated in FY24. Thirty-seven (37) positions had a change in placement, and four positions not in the market study changed due to the minimum wage increase. The current average salary is \$47,445, and 29 non-grant employees will be impacted by in-range adjustments. Ms. Groezinger asked how the first half of positions that were reviewed were determined, and Ms. Brown responded that the Classification and Compensation Review Team (CCRT), which includes the Vice Presidents, made the determination. Positions with a high turnover were also included in the study. If one position in the job family was adjusted, the others in the family were also adjusted. Ms. Groezinger requested a list of positions that will be included in the first recommendation. Ms. Kuhlemeier asked if positions will automatically be reviewed if a person resigns, and Ms. Brown responded that the CCRT reviews positions on an ongoing basis if issues arise. Ms. Groezinger stated that it is one thing to look at salaries, but paid time off, insurance, etc. should also be considered. Ms. Lewis stated that other community colleges were previously surveyed to compare benefits, but that could be done again, and Ms. Brown noted that it would be good to do this on a regular cycle. Job applicants are given information about the whole benefits package, and Mr. Endress agreed that the whole benefits package needs to be considered. Ms. Lewis also explained that some employees working 32 hours per week get health insurance and other benefits, and Ms. Kuhlemeier requested a breakdown of employees working 40 versus 32 hours per week.

Budget Planning: Local Revenue and Tuition

Ms. Janssen reminded trustees that the FY22 budget included significant support of around \$1 million from federal funds, and she does not believe there will be additional Higher Education Relief going forward. Using five-year trend data for revenue and expenses, Ms. Janssen has included a three percent decline in revenue in FY23, FY24, and FY25 projections, and a two percent decline in expenses for the same fiscal years, which results in a deficit of over \$1 million each fiscal year. The fund balance would decrease to about 15 percent by FY25. The President's Direct Reports (PDR) and Cabinet have discussed establishing a total dollar amount for budget stabilization, which could be done through revenue increases and/or decreases in expenses. For example, if adjustments were made of at least \$250,000 in FY23 and that number was increased by \$50,000 over each of the next three years, it would reduce the annual deficit and the fund balance would be around 22 percent by the end of FY25. Ms. Janssen reviewed the list of budget stabilization measures taken between FY20 and FY22, including reviewing and repurposing positions; program updates or changes; reviewing and implementing health insurance plan changes; issuing bonds for campus upgrades, funding technology, and relieving the operating funds from the debt certificates; completion of energy efficiency projects; and improving the budget building process, which included a zero-based, centralized method for conference and meeting expenses. The impact this has had on stakeholders during this same time frame is to keep the overall tax rate the same, no tuition increase for three years, no increase in the technology or activity fee for two years, eliminating the internet fee, distributing \$2.5 million in student emergency grants, implementing a student debt forgiveness plan of \$100,000, significantly reducing the cost of textbooks, and remaining a comprehensive community college.

Ms. Janssen noted that historically the Board's philosophy has been to keep the overall tax rate at the same level from year-to-year. For the past six years, the rate has been around .56. In tax year 2023, our bond payments will begin tapering down as they are paid off, which creates some options to consider moving forward. The College could choose to let the bonds decrease to .063 and not issue new bonds, which would decrease the total tax rate; or keep the tax rate the same as previous years and issue about \$7.9 million in bonds, which would be used to maintain technology and fund capital projects; or increase the operating levy by .07 by shifting .0475 from protection, health, and safety (PH&S) and .03 from bonds. The last option would generate about \$1.4 million annually in the operating funds but would require a successful referendum, and a lot of work and expense. The feasibility study for a new student athletic facility also needs to be considered. The process the College has been using has been stable, and Mr. Block would be hesitant to go to a referendum. Mr. Endress also noted that the PH&S process has worked well, and there have always seemed to be projects that were needed. Mr. Boldt noted the need to see where the City of Freeport "shakes out" with home rule. It was noted that the College receives a lower Equalization grant from the State, which then requires more local support, and Mr. Knaack asked for a comparison of similar colleges and their community support.

Ms. Janssen explained that the timeline begins now to look at tuition, which requires two readings. Fall registration opens on April 8, and the tuition needs to be in the system before that. She provided a comparison of in-district tuition at Rock Valley, Kishwaukee, and Sauk Valley, noting that Highland's tuition is the highest, but the numbers do not reflect per semester or per course fees, or variable tuition at the other institutions. When comparing Equalization funding, Highland receives significantly less due to the funding formulas. Ms. Janssen shared a chart that included the difference in tuition between community colleges and public and private universities, noting that feedback received through the strategic planning focus groups indicated that people feel that the College is very affordable. She explained that, through discussions with PDR and Cabinet, a recommendation is being made to apply tuition to the First-Year Experience Seminar (FYES), which would generate between \$80,000 and \$100,000. A five-dollar increase in tuition would also generate around \$175,000. At the next regular Board meeting, Ms. Janssen will bring a recommendation on tuition. Ms. Kuberski believes most schools charge for FYES, and those courses are also required at universities for first-year degree-seeking students. Mr. Endress noted that around 85 percent of expenses in the budget are related to employees, and the results of the compensation study will cost additional dollars. It will be difficult to increase enrollment and he questioned if we need as many employees with fewer students. Mr. Knaack asked if the Foundation could give the College \$100,000 more, and Ms. Janssen responded that they have indicated they want to fund capital projects. Mr. Block suggested the Foundation fully fund Top Scholars or FYES, and Ms. Janssen noted that the College has access to a donation that covers about \$95,000 of Top Scholars. As part of the compensation study, staffing rates were reviewed by category to see where the College compared with other institutions and, for the most part, the College had equal or lower staffing. Mr. Endress was appalled at the change in salary when taking one person from one salary schedule to another as a result of the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Board (IELRB) decision. Mr. Block stated that for the past several years, he has voted against any tuition increase, but looking at where the College is, the compensation study, and minimum wage issue, the College must look at a tuition increase. He noted that, even with a five-dollar increase, the College is still looking at a deficit of \$800,000.

Mr. Endress announced that there would be a short recess so that Ms. Jane Lethlean could interview Ms. Groezinger and Mr. Boldt for a press release regarding their selection for membership on two of the Association of Community College Trustees' committees.

At 9:43 a.m., the Chairperson declared a recess; the meeting resumed at 9:55 a.m.

Mr. Endress passed around photos of the plaque and tree planted in memory of Dr. Steve Jennings. The tree was donated by the Northwest Illinois Central Labor Council.

Strategic Planning

Ms. Gerber recognized Ms. Kuberski and Ms. Brown for their work on strategic planning, as well as faculty member Mr. David Esch, who was co-chair and did a lot of the work in the initial stages. Several key informants have presented to the Council, including Mr. Aaron Mercier from the Regional Office of Education, economic development representatives, and Highland administrators, and next week Dr. Brian Durham and possibly Mr. Marcus Brown of the Illinois Community College Board will address the Council. Ms. Stacey Moore did a lot of the organizing work for the focus groups, and attendance was a challenge outside of Stephenson County. Council members identified strengths and weaknesses, and there were many comments about the facilities needing to be updated. Opportunities included extracurricular and co-curricular opportunities and building on partnerships. A SWOT analysis is in process, and the next steps include the development of priority areas and goals, and writing, revising, and publishing the plan. Ms. Gerber asked trustees what jumped out and resonated with them. The strong nursing program was listed as a weakness, and Ms. Gerber believes it may have been misclassified. She will look into this and the statement that the Board needs to be more present and aware of issues going on at the College. Mr. Boldt asked if there was any way to equate updated facilities, housing, etc. with increased enrollment. Ms. Kuberski attended a session on affordable student housing at the Association of Community College Trustees Annual Leadership Congress but it was geared at low-income students and it was more family housing, although it did make a difference for the college that gave the presentation. The College would need to determine if housing would be for all students, single-parent students, etc. Ms. Groezinger noted the need to recognize the importance of utilizing community infrastructure and businesses. The strategic plan priorities will be built on the framework of enrollment, finance, accreditation, and culture.

Higher Learning Commission

Dr. Naze reported that the College received the official report from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) and has two weeks to respond to errors. This was a very positive report. Typically, findings identified in reports are in Criterion 4 and 5, but these areas had a "glowing" report. There were a few minor items that had already been self-identified, and there were no surprises in the report. There are three options for each component and subcomponent: met, met with concerns (but this still counts as met), and not met. Out of 30 core components, 29 of the 30 were met, which equates to 98 percent. One area was met with concerns but we had already self-identified that area and will be addressing that in the short term. This final report will be submitted to HLC for review and to their Board for approval in March. HLC reached out to Ms. Kuberski to ask if the College could fill a gap in their annual conference presentations by presenting on budgeting, and Ms. Janssen, Dr. Naze, and Ms. Kuberski will present at the conference in April. Dr. Steph Brzuzy, our HLC Staff Liaison, had indicated that many good things were going on at Highland. The A-Team will meet when the HLC report is finalized and discuss how the College can improve the process next time. Ms. Kuberski recognized Dr. Naze for his

work and ability to see from the Peer Reviewer's perspective, and Mr. Endress thanked Dr. Naze, Ms. Kuberski, and the team for all their work.

CLOSED SESSION

Ms. Groezinger moved and Mr. Block seconded the motion to move into Closed Session for the purposes of discussing the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees, specific individuals who serve as independent contractors in an educational setting, or specific volunteers of the public body, or legal counsel for the public body, including hearing testimony on a complaint lodged against an employee, a specific individual who serves as an independent contractor in an educational setting or a volunteer of the public body or against legal counsel for the public body to determine its validity; collective negotiating matters between the public body and its employees or their representatives, or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees; and the semiannual review of Closed Session minutes and audio recordings, pursuant to the Open Meetings Act, and to return to Open Session for possible action. The roll call on the motion was as follows:

AYES: Endress, Groezinger, Boldt, Rhyne, Kuhlemeier, Knaack, Block, Johnson
NAYS: None

Whereupon the Chairperson declared the motion carried.

Mr. Endress explained that the public attendees through Zoom would remain in the meeting, with the video and audio muted, while the Board was in Closed Session. After the Closed Session is complete, the video stream and meeting would resume.

At 10:47 a.m., the Chairperson declared the meeting in Closed Session.

Ms. Groezinger moved and Mr. Block seconded the motion to end the Closed Session. The roll call on the motion was as follows:

AYES: Groezinger, Boldt, Rhyne, Kuhlemeier, Knaack, Block, Endress, Johnson
NAYS: None

At 12:21 p.m., the Chairperson declared the motion carried.

At 12:22 p.m., the Chairperson declared a recess; the meeting resumed at 12:25 p.m.

ACTION, IF NECESSARY

- A. Appointment, Employment, Compensation, Discipline, Performance, or Dismissal of Specific Employees

No action was necessary.

B. Collective Negotiating Matters

No action was necessary.

C. Semiannual Review of All Closed Session Minutes and Audio Recordings

Ms. Groezinger moved and Mr. Knaack seconded the motion that the Closed Session minutes, which were previously closed, remain closed at this time and unavailable for public inspection. It was further recommended that the audio recordings from the following Closed Sessions be destroyed at this time, pursuant to the Open Meetings Act: January 28, 2020; February 18, 2020; February 25, 2020; March 11, 2020; April 23, 2020; April 30, 2020; May 7, 2020; and, May 21, 2020. The roll call on the motion was as follows:

AYES: Boldt, Rhyne, Kuhlemeier, Knaack, Block, Endress, Groezinger,
Johnson
NAYS: None

Whereupon the Chairperson declared the motion carried.

BOARD UPDATES

Reports from Association of Community College Trustees Annual Leadership Congress

Those who attended ACCT's Annual Leadership Congress in October shared what they had learned from the conference sessions and discussions they had with other attendees. Topics discussed included diversity, equity, and inclusion; shared governance; enrollment; and investing in athletics. Mr. Endress passed around several documents from the conference. All those who attended agreed that it was a great conference and an opportunity to develop comradery among those who went. It was noted that during the February National Legislative Summit, there will be a session on strengthening rural community colleges.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business

NEW BUSINESS

CDL Contract – The CDL contract is up for renewal. In the previous contract, they paid the College \$610 per student but in the new contract, they wanted to drop to \$250 per student. Mr. Anderson submitted a counterproposal of \$450 per student, which was accepted. The new contract will be presented to the Board for approval in January and will be effective for the period February 2022 through December 2022, with an opportunity to extend the contract up to two years. The College will be keeping options open for other vendors. Mr. Endress noted that there is a date in February after which the CDL test cannot be taken unless the person has gone through training.

ADJOURN

Mr. Block moved and Mr. Knaack seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting. The roll call on the motion was as follows:

AYES: Rhyne, Kuhlemeier, Knaack, Block, Endress, Boldt, Johnson
NAYS: None

At 12:56 p.m., there being no further business, the Chairperson declared the motion carried and the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,



Terri A. Grimes, Board Secretary
Illinois Community College District No. 519