

REGULAR MEETING
BOARD OF ILLINOIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT NO. 519
Counties of Stephenson, Ogle, Jo Daviess and Carroll

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The regular meeting of the Board of Illinois Community College District No. 519 was called to order by Mr. Jim Endress, Board Chairperson, at 4:03 p.m. on August 27, 2024, in the Robert J. Rimington Board Room (room H-228) in the Highland Community College Student/Conference Center, 2998 West Pearl City Road, Freeport, Illinois in said district.

The following members were physically present: Mr. Doug Block, Mr. Jim Endress, Mr. James Rhyne Jr., Ms. Sarah Kuhlemeier, Ms. Mary Kaufman, and Mr. Daeshon Verner (departed 4:55 p.m.)

The following members attended virtually: Ms. Pennie Groezinger (departed 5:20 p.m.), and Mr. Shawn Boldt

The following members were absent: None

Others physically present: Ms. Chris Kuberski, President; Mr. Steve Mihina, Faculty; Ms. Melissa Johnson, Faculty and Early Childhood Education Program Coordinator; Mr. Pete Fink, Director, ITS; and, 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; Mr. Jim Phillips, Vice President/CAO, Academic Services and Dean, Humanities, Social Sciences, and Fine Arts; Mr. Dan Dick, Executive Director, HCC Foundation; Ms. Pam Harrison, Executive Assistant to the Vice President of Business, Technology, and Community Programs; Ms. Jeniece Smith, Director, Marketing & Community Relations; Ms. Karen Brown, Director, Human Resources; Mr. Kurt Simpson, Director, Facilities & Safety; Ms. Jodi Rogers, Office Coordinator, Athletics & Physical Education; Mr. Pete Norman, Director, Athletics & Physical Education; Mr. Jeremy Bradt, Director, Enrollment & Records; and, Dr. Andy Dvorak, Retired Faculty

MOMENT OF SILENCE IN MEMORY OF FORMER TRUSTEE CARL FAIRBAIRN

Mr. Endress asked for a moment of silence in memory of former trustee Mr. Carl Fairbairn, who recently passed away.

APPROVAL OF TRUSTEE(S) ATTENDING MEETING VIA ELECTRONIC MEANS

Mr. Endress stated that Ms. Groezinger and Mr. Boldt requested to attend the meeting virtually, and he asked them to state for the record the reason for their request. Ms. Groezinger and Mr. Boldt indicated they were requesting to attend the meeting virtually due to illness. Mr. Block moved and Ms. Kuhlemeier seconded the motion to allow Ms. Groezinger and Mr. Boldt to attend the meeting virtually. The vote being unanimous, the motion carried.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Ms. Groezinger moved and Mr. Boldt seconded the motion to approve the agenda, as presented. The vote being unanimous, the motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Kaufman moved and Ms. Kuhlemeier seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the July 10, 2024, special meeting and the July 16, 2024, budget work session and regular meeting, as presented. The vote being unanimous, the motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Melissa Johnson, faculty member and Coordinator of the Early Childhood Education program, provided an overview of the written memorandum she distributed to the trustees about her concerns regarding the Early Childhood Education Program classroom and YMCA Early Learning Center. (See attached memo to the Highland Community College Board of Trustees.)

INTRODUCTIONS

There were no introductions.

CONSENT ITEMS

A. Academic (None)

B. Administration

1. Appointment: Assistant Local Election Official
Recommendation: That the Highland Community College Board of Trustees approves the following Resolution:

Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Highland Community College District #519 appoints Ms. Paige Klever as Assistant Local Election Official. The Assistant will act as the Local Election Official for Highland Community College for the nonpartisan election if Ms. Terri Grimes, Local Election Official, is not available during the filing period. The filing period will be November 12 – 18, 2024, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

2. Appointment: Voting Delegate to the Association of Community College Trustees 2024 Leadership Congress
Recommendation: That the Board of Trustees approves the appointment of Trustee Pennie Groezinger to serve as the voting delegate for the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) 2024 Leadership Congress in Seattle, Washington, October 23 – 26, 2024. It is further recommended that Trustee Jim Endress serve as the alternate delegate, if Ms. Groezinger is unable to fulfill her responsibilities at the meeting.

C. Personnel

1. Part-time Instructors, Overload, and Other Assignments

Recommendation: That the Board of Trustees approves the list of part-time instructors, overload, and other assignments, as presented.

D. Financial (None)

Mr. Rhyne moved and Ms. Kuhlemeier seconded the motion to approve the consent items, as presented. The roll call on the motion was as follows:

AYES: Endress, Groezinger, Boldt, Rhyne, Kuhlemeier, Kaufman, Block, Verner
NAYS: None

Whereupon the Chairperson declared the motion carried and the Resolution adopted.

MAIN MOTIONS

A. Academic (None)

B. Administration

1. Plan to Maintain Accessible Features on Public Highland Community College Websites and Social Media Accounts

Mr. Block moved and Ms. Kaufman seconded the motion to approve the plan to maintain public website and social media accessibility, as presented. The roll call on the motion was as follows:

AYES: Groezinger, Boldt, Rhyne, Kuhlemeier, Kaufman, Block, Endress, Verner
NAYS: None

Whereupon the Chairperson declared the motion carried.

C. Personnel

1. President's Contract

Mr. Block moved and Mr. Verner seconded the motion that the Board of Trustees approves the Resolution authorizing the approval of the Contract of Employment for the President, as presented. The roll call on the motion was as follows:

AYES: Boldt, Rhyne, Kuhlemeier, Kaufman, Block, Endress, Groezinger, Verner
NAYS: None

Whereupon the Chairperson declared the motion carried and the Resolution adopted.

2. Appointment: Student Advisor (Grant Funded)

Ms. Groezinger moved and Ms. Kuhlemeier seconded the motion to approve the appointment of Ms. Kerstin Curry as a full-time Student Advisor, Project Succeed beginning September 2, 2024, at an FY25 salary of \$46,336, plus appropriate fringe benefits. This is a full-time, exempt professional, grant-funded position and is within the FY25 budget. This position is dependent on continued grant funding. The roll call on the motion was as follows:

AYES: Rhyne, Kuhlemeier, Kaufman, Block, Endress, Groezinger,
Boldt, Verner
NAYS: None

Whereupon the Chairperson declared the motion carried.

D. Financial

1. Acceptance of Proposal: Building “M” (Marvin-Burt Liberal Arts Center) Project Succeed Renovation Project

Ms. Kaufman moved and Mr. Boldt seconded the motion to authorize acceptance of the proposal from Scandrol Construction of Rockford, IL of \$46,008.00 for the Building “M” (Marvin-Burt Liberal Arts Center) Project Succeed renovation project. This proposal is within the projected budget for the project. The roll call on the motion was as follows:

AYES: Kuhlemeier, Kaufman, Block, Endress, Groezinger, Boldt,
Rhyne, Verner
NAYS: None

Whereupon the Chairperson declared the motion carried.

2. Use of Agency Fund for Sports Center Repairs and Replacements

Mr. Rhyne moved and Mr. Block seconded the motion to approve the use of Agency funds for the cost of repairs to the Sports Center, including replacement of the air handler controller, removal and replacement of the boiler, and air conditioning repairs in an amount not to exceed \$33,499. Funds for this purpose are available through the Agency funds. The roll call on the motion was as follows:

AYES: Kaufman, Block, Endress, Groezinger, Boldt, Rhyne,
Kuhlemeier, Verner
NAYS: None

Whereupon the Chairperson declared the motion carried.

3. Use of Agency Fund Interest

Mr. Block moved and Ms. Groezinger seconded the motion to approve the use of Agency funds interest in the amount of \$102,250 to replenish the Agency Fund reserve,

which supports the cost of repairs to the Sports Center. The roll call on the motion was as follows:

AYES: Block, Endress, Groezinger, Boldt, Rhyne, Kuhlemeier,
Kaufman, Verner
NAYS: None

Whereupon the Chairperson declared the motion carried.

4. Interfund Transfer from the Educational Fund to the Auxiliary Enterprises Fund to Support Expenses in Excess of Revenues in the Auxiliary Enterprises Fund
Ms. Groezinger moved and Mr. Block seconded the motion to approve the transfer of funds from the Educational Fund to the Auxiliary Enterprises Fund in the amount of \$60,000 to support expenses in excess of revenues in the Auxiliary Enterprises Fund.

Mr. Block asked if this transfer was more or less than had been done in past years. Ms. Janssen stated that this was similar to and was not out of balance with what had been done previously, but she could double-check to make sure. It is a one-time transfer per year. Mr. Block asked if the fund was gaining or losing or staying about steady, and Ms. Janssen stated it was staying about steady. For FY25, the College increased the activity fee, which increases revenue in the Auxiliary Fund, so that was one way to try to reduce what the Operating Fund needed to do in terms of support for that fund. The roll call on the motion was as follows:

AYES: Endress, Groezinger, Boldt, Rhyne, Kuhlemeier, Kaufman,
Block, Verner
NAYS: None

Whereupon the Chairperson declared the motion carried.

6. Interfund Transfer from the Educational Fund to the Restricted Purposes Fund to Support the Adult Education Program
Mr. Block moved and Ms. Groezinger seconded the motion to approve the transfer of funds from the Educational Fund to the Restricted Purposes Fund in the amount of \$25,000 to support the Adult Education program.

It was noted that the item regarding Summerset (Item IX-D-5) had been skipped and would be presented for approval following this item.

Ms. Kuhlemeier noted that there were multiple transfers presented today, but she was unsure what the funds were for. It would be great to have that laid out so she would know the history of what the funds are for. Mr. Endress explained that these transfers are done once per year. He also asked Ms. Janssen if the \$60,000 amount of support the College provides the Adult Education programs, which was listed in the background of the item, was correct, or if it should be \$25,000. Ms. Janssen noted that it was incorrect and should be \$25,000, but it was explained that since the correction was in the background, it does not affect the recommendation.

In response to Ms. Kuhlemeier's questions about the various funds, Ms. Janssen reviewed several slides from her budget presentation explaining the funds.

The roll call on the motion was as follows:

AYES: Groezinger, Boldt, Rhyne, Kuhlemeier, Kaufman, Block,
Endress, Verner
NAYS: None

Whereupon the Chairperson declared the motion carried.

5. Interfund Transfer from the Educational Fund to the Restricted Purposes Fund to Support Summerset

Ms. Groezinger moved and Mr. Boldt seconded the motion to approve the transfer of funds from the Educational Fund to the Restricted Purposes Fund in the amount of \$60,291.45 to support Summerset. The roll call on the motion was as follows:

AYES: Boldt, Rhyne, Kuhlemeier, Kaufman, Block, Endress,
Groezinger, Verner
NAYS: None

Whereupon the Chairperson declared the motion carried.

7. Interfund Transfer from Operations and Maintenance Fund to Operations and Maintenance, Restricted Fund to Support Campus Deferred Maintenance, Repairs, or Improvements

Ms. Kaufman moved and Mr. Verner seconded the motion to approve the transfer of funds from the Operations and Maintenance Fund to the Operations and Maintenance, Restricted Fund in the amount of \$400,000 to support future campus deferred maintenance, repairs, or improvements. The roll call on the motion was as follows:

AYES: Rhyne, Kuhlemeier, Kaufman, Block, Endress, Groezinger,
Boldt, Verner
NAYS: None

Whereupon the Chairperson declared the motion carried.

8. Resolution Authorizing Transfer of Interest from Working Cash Fund to Educational Fund for General Purposes

Mr. Boldt moved and Ms. Kuhlemeier seconded the motion to approve the Resolution, as presented, providing for the transfer of interest from the Working Cash Fund to the Educational Fund for general purposes, in the amount of \$379,473.88 for FY24, under 110 ILCS 805/3-33.6 of the Public Community College Act of the State of Illinois. The roll call on the motion was as follows:

AYES: Kuhlemeier, Kaufman, Block, Endress, Groezinger, Boldt,
Rhyne, Verner
NAYS: None

Whereupon the Chairperson declared the motion carried and the Resolution adopted.

9. Acceptance of Proposal: Building “H” (Student/Conference Center) East Entrance Repainting Project

Mr. Block moved and Mr. Rhyne seconded the motion to authorize acceptance of the proposal from Gitz-Meier Remodeling Contractors, Inc. of Freeport, IL of \$39,667.14 for the Building “H” (Student/Conference Center) east entrance repainting project. This proposal is within the budget for campus painting projects. The roll call on the motion was as follows:

AYES: Kaufman, Block, Endress, Groezinger, Boldt, Rhyne,
Kuhlemeier, Verner
NAYS: None

Whereupon the Chairperson declared the motion carried.

10. Resolution Identifying Work Contracts to an Installment Purchase Agreement Heretofore Entered Into by Community College District No. 519, Counties of Stephenson, Ogle, Jo Daviess and Carroll and State of Illinois – 2014 Bond
Ms. Groezinger moved and Mr. Rhyne seconded the motion to approve the following Resolution:

RESOLUTION identifying work contracts to an Installment Purchase Agreement heretofore entered into by Community College District No. 519, Counties of Stephenson, Ogle, Jo Daviess and Carroll and State of Illinois.

The roll call on the motion was as follows:

AYES: Block, Endress, Groezinger, Boldt, Rhyne, Kuhlemeier,
Kaufman, Verner
NAYS: None

Whereupon the Chairperson declared the motion carried and the Resolution adopted.

11. Resolution Identifying Work Contracts to an Installment Purchase Agreement Heretofore Entered Into by Community College District No. 519, Counties of Stephenson, Ogle, Jo Daviess and Carroll and State of Illinois – 2020 Bond
Ms. Kaufman moved and Ms. Kuhlemeier seconded the motion to approve the following Resolution:

RESOLUTION identifying work contracts to an Installment Purchase Agreement heretofore entered into by Community College District No. 519, Counties of Stephenson, Ogle, Jo Daviess and Carroll and State of Illinois.

The roll call on the motion was as follows:

AYES: Endress, Groezinger, Boldt, Rhyne, Kuhlemeier,
Kaufman, Block, Verner
NAYS: None

Whereupon the Chairperson declared the motion carried and the Resolution adopted.

12. Resolution Identifying Work Contracts to an Installment Purchase Agreement Heretofore Entered Into by Community College District No. 519, Counties of Stephenson, Ogle, Jo Daviess and Carroll and State of Illinois – 2023 Bond
Mr. Block moved and Ms. Groezinger seconded the motion to approve the following Resolution:

RESOLUTION identifying work contracts to an Installment Purchase Agreement heretofore entered into by Community College District No. 519, Counties of Stephenson, Ogle, Jo Daviess and Carroll and State of Illinois.

The roll call on the motion was as follows:

AYES: Groezinger, Boldt, Rhyne, Kuhlemeier, Kaufman,
Block, Endress, Verner
NAYS: None

Whereupon the Chairperson declared the motion carried and the Resolution adopted.

13. Payment of Bills and Agency Fund Report – July 2024
Ms. Groezinger moved and Ms. Kuhlemeier seconded the motion to approve the Resolution authorizing and directing Ms. Jill Janssen, Treasurer, to make payments or transfers of funds for the July 2024 bills, including Board travel, amounting to \$1,624,117.21, Automated Clearing House (ACH) debits W0000657 amounting to \$29,406.69, and Electronic Refunds of \$60,507.88, with 7 adjustments of \$782.00, such warrants amounting to \$1,713,249.78. Transfers of funds for payroll amounted to \$687,211.98. The roll call on the motion was as follows:

AYES: Boldt, Rhyne, Kuhlemeier, Kaufman, Block, Endress,
Groezinger, Verner
NAYS: None

Whereupon the Chairperson declared the motion carried and the Resolution adopted.

REPORTS

Treasurer's Report

Statements of Revenue, Expenditures, and Changes in Fund Balance

There was no report.

Budget Update

There was no additional report.

Foundation

Mr. Dick reported that there was tremendous support for the Foundation's upcoming golf outing, and he thanked everyone for engaging. The Foundation Scholarship Awards Ceremony will be held on Sunday, September 29, at 2:00 p.m. and the Foundation office is working with Ms. Grimes to send invitations to trustees. The Distinguished Alumni nomination process is coming to an end point, with nominations due September 1. Past recipients of the award may be found online. A groundbreaking for the ag pump house was held to acknowledge the funds from Senator Andrew Chesney, and Mr. Dick thanked the College for coordinating the event. The Foundation will receive roughly \$1 million for ag from the Switzer estate, and Ms. Kuberski will be working with faculty and staff on how to use the funds. At Opening Days, Mr. Dick shared information on the Switzer family, and he reported that the total gifts from the family to the Foundation are between \$1.5 and \$2 million. The Foundation board is working on renewal and prospective board members, and Ms. Jolene Bohnsack is chairing the Nominating Committee. Mr. Dick concluded his report by noting that the Foundation is "not quite there yet" for one member of the Foundation team to be "promoted to retirement." No retirement date has been set yet, but he expects it to be within the next three to 10 months. The Operations and Program Manager position was posted this week in order for the successful candidate to have transition time with Ms. Pat Dunn.

Student Trustee

Mr. Verner reported that Student Senate is planning to meet this week for the first time. Mr. Endress noted that Welcome Week activities were ongoing this week and were well attended.

Audit & Finance Committee

There was no report.

Illinois Community College Trustees Association (ICCTA)

ICCTA has not met during the summer.

Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT)

The ACCT committee of which Ms. Groezinger is a member will meet within the next month, and she will have a report at that time.

Board Chair

Mr. Endress reported that there was a lot of media coverage for the groundbreaking for the ag pump house. Several trustees helped serve lunch during Opening Days, and Mr. Endress had some favorable comments from the faculty and staff. The meal and ice cream were a big hit and efforts were appreciated. The mobile medical unit arrived yesterday. Mr. Endress attended the Pearl City Boulevard Bash and there was a 160 Driving Academy truck in the parade. He noted that had the parade been a few days later, the mobile medical unit could have been in the parade, as well.

President

Ms. Kuberski reported that the mobile medical unit will be in at least three local parades. She went inside the unit yesterday and it looks amazing. Dr. Stephanie Eymann and Ms. Alicia Kepner will do a walkthrough of the unit with their phones during Campus Connection this week. Enrollment numbers are fluctuating because dual credit has not always been done at the same time of the semester. At this point, headcount is down .7 percent, while credit hours are up 3.6 percent from this point last year, and Ms. Kuberski anticipates the numbers to increase once all dual credit is entered.

At 4:59 p.m., the Chairperson declared a recess; the meeting resumed at 5:04 p.m.

CLOSED SESSION

Ms. Groezinger moved and Ms. Kuhlemeier seconded the motion to move into Closed Session for the purposes of discussing the appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees of the public body or legal counsel for the public body under Open Meetings Act exception 2-C-1; and, collective negotiating matters under Open Meetings Act exception 2-C-2, 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: Rhyne, Kuhlemeier, Kaufman, Block, Endress, Groezinger, Boldt
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. The video stream and meeting would resume after the Closed Session.

At 5:06 p.m., the Chairperson declared the meeting in Closed Session.

Mr. Block moved and Mr. Rhyne second the motion to end the Closed Session. The roll call on the motion was as follows:

AYES: Kuhlemeier, Kaufman, Block, Endress, Boldt, Rhyne
NAYS: None

At 5:51 p.m., the Chairperson declared the motion carried and the Closed Session ended.

ACTION, IF NECESSARY

No action was necessary following Closed Session.

OLD BUSINESS

Potential Athletic, Learning, and Event Center

Ms. Kuberski received responses from the YMCA to questions the Highland Board had regarding a potential athletic, learning, and event center. The responses will be sent to trustees following the Board meeting, and this will be a discussion item during the September 12th Board retreat.

Ms. Jeniece Smith, Ms. Gerber, and Ms. Kuberski are working on a communication plan regarding athletics, facilities, and the partnership with the YMCA. There is a lot of misinformation circulating, and some is coming from YMCA employees. There is a rumor that the College wants to open our own child care center, which is not the case. The communication plan will be very important to make sure information is being shared that no decision has been made and to make sure that both entities are successful at the end of the day.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

DATES OF IMPORTANCE

The next quarterly Board retreat is scheduled for Thursday, September 12, 2024, at 11:00 a.m. A budget work session will be held at 3:00 p.m. on September 24, 2024, prior to the 4:00 p.m. regular meeting. The Northwest Illinois ICCTA meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 1, at 5:00 p.m. at Rock Valley College's Advanced Technology Center in Belvidere.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Kaufman moved and Mr. Block seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting. At 5:55 p.m., the vote being unanimous and 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

MEMORANDUM

To: Highland Community College Board of Trustees

From: Melissa Johnson, Faculty and Coordinator of Early Childhood Education Program

Date: 8-26-2024

Subject: Concerns Regarding Early Childhood Education Program Classroom and YMCA Early Learning Center

I am writing to express significant concerns regarding recent discussions within the Highland administration and the Board of Trustees that will have a profound impact on the Early Childhood Education (ECE) program. As the faculty and coordinator of the ECE program, I am disappointed and frustrated that I have not been included in these conversations, especially given their direct relevance to our program. It has come to my attention that there have been discussions about reallocating Building I to the athletic department, which would displace the ECE classroom and the YMCA Early Learning Center.

ECE Classroom

1. Grant Funding and Renovation

Our ECE Program received a federally funded grant for FY 23 and FY 24 totaling \$622,000, specifically designated to address the teacher shortage and improve the quality of early care and education. Through this grant, Rachel Stewart (ECE mentor/coach) and I undertook a comprehensive redesign and renovation of the ECE classroom in Building I (Room 33), also known as the YMCA Early Learning Center. Prior to this renovation, the classroom had not been updated since its construction, aside from essential repairs due to a ceiling collapse in 2021. The renovations included new cabinets, carpeting, an interactive panel, upgraded tables and chairs, a mobile computer lab, and various other materials and equipment. These upgrades were made with the explicit approval of the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) and are critical to the mission of our program.

2. Inappropriate Reassignment of Resources

The federal funds used for these renovations were specifically allocated for early childhood education, and it is both inappropriate and unethical to consider repurposing these resources for any other use. Every piece of equipment and every update to the classroom was made with intentionality and aligned with the mission of improving early childhood education. The reassignment of this space and its resources would directly contradict the purpose of the grant and the commitments we made to the ICCB.

Partnership with YMCA Early Learning Center

1. Critical Collaboration

The partnership with the YMCA Early Learning Center is essential to both Highland Community College and the ECE Program, particularly in supporting our ECE CareerTEC program. This program, which began in the fall of 2019, provides high school juniors and seniors with hands-on learning opportunities in early childhood classrooms. The YMCA Early Learning Center plays a crucial role in the success of this program, offering our students the opportunity to gain practical

experience in a real-world setting. Without this partnership, the effectiveness of the CareerTEC program would be severely compromised, especially for students who rely on campus-based learning due to transportation constraints.

2. Impact on Program Success

The success of the CareerTEC program is evident, with all Year 1 students returning for Year 2 in FY 25—a first since the program’s inception. This success is directly tied to the experiences provided by the YMCA Early Learning Center. The program’s capacity was filled by February 5th, and there is was a waiting list, underscoring the need for more classrooms within the Center to accommodate additional students.

Community Impact

1. Addressing the Teacher Shortage

The federal grant awarded to Illinois was intended to help alleviate the teacher shortage and improve early care and education. The teacher shortage, particularly in our community, is severe, with families struggling to find childcare, especially for children aged birth to three. The YMCA Early Learning Center, along with Amity Early Learning Center, is one of only two centers in the area that provides care for children aged 6 weeks to 2 years, with a combined capacity of just 28 spots. Both centers currently have extensive waiting lists, highlighting the critical need for these services. Our efforts have successfully established a robust pipeline for early childhood educators, crucial for addressing the needs within Highland’s district. However, the proposed changes threaten to dismantle this pipeline, which could severely impact our ability to provide adequate early childhood education and care in the future.

2. The Importance of Continued Operation

It is imperative that the YMCA Early Learning Center continues to operate within Building I, not only for the benefit of our community and families but also for the continued success of the Highland Early Childhood Program. The partnership between the College and the Center is foundational to our program’s strength and growth, and it plays a vital role in addressing the childcare needs of our community, including those of Highland employees and students.

Conclusion

As the representative of the Early Childhood Program at Highland, I believe it is crucial that we work towards solutions that address the childcare challenges in our community, rather than exacerbating them by displacing the YMCA Early Learning Center. The decisions being made have far-reaching implications, not only for our program but for the broader early childhood community and the families we serve. I strongly urge you to consider these implications carefully before moving forward with any actions that would negatively impact the Early Childhood Education Program and the YMCA Early Learning Center.

Melissa Johnson

Faculty and Coordinator, Early Childhood Education Program
Highland Community College