



The Peninsula's Community College

Thomas Nelson Community College Board

Special Called Electronic Meeting to address the COVID-19 State of Emergency
Thursday, April 9, 2020
Electronic Meeting using Zoom
2:00 p.m.

MINUTES NO. 432

PRESENT

Ms. Mary Bunting
Ms. Izabela Cieszynski
Mr. Michael Kuhns
Mr. John W. McMillan, Jr.
Ms. Mary Ann Maimone
Mr. Allan Melton
Mr. Augustus Owens

Mr. Jonathan Romero
Dr. Perry Showalter
Ms. Elizabeth Tai
Mr. Scott VanVoorhees
Dr. Vince Warren
Dr. Donna Woods

ABSENT

Dr. Joyce Jarrett

STAFF AND GUESTS:

Ms. Donna Norman (Human Resources)
Ms. Elizabeth Yimer (SGA President)
Ms. Kris Rarig (Student Affairs)
Mr. Patrick Smith (Faculty Senate)
Mr. Steven Carpenter (Finance & Administration)
Dr. Susan English (Academic Affairs / Workforce Development)
Dr. Lynda Byrd-Poller (Human Resources)
Ms. Cynthia Callaway (Institutional Advancement)
Ms. Erica Charity (Office of the President)
Mr. Steven Felker (Institutional Research and Effectiveness)
Mr. Matt Jones (Daily Press)
Mr. Paul Long (Emergency Management Coordinator & Interim Dean of Public Safety, Allied Health and Human Services Health Professions)
Dr. Kris Rarig (Student Affairs)
Dr. Ursula Bock (Mid-Level Managers)
Ms. Beth Dickens (Mid-Level Managers)
Chief Kelvin Maxwell (Campus Police)
Dr. Lauren Williams (Academic Affairs)
Mr. Damond Pope (Information Technology)
Ms. Angela Brightmon (Human Resources)
Ms. Belinda Baker (Institutional Advancement)
Ms. Natalie Keeling (Human Resources)
Ms. Naima Ford (Institutional Advancement)
Ms. Barbara Mason (Academic Affairs)

1. Call to Order

Roll Call

By roll call vote in open session the following members were in attendance:

Ms. Mary Bunting
Ms. Izabela Cieszynski
Mr. Michael Kuhns
Mr. John W. McMillan, Jr.
Ms. Mary Ann Maimone
Mr. Allan Melton
Mr. Augustus Owens
Mr. Jonathan Romero
Dr. Perry Showalter
Ms. Elizabeth Tai
Mr. Scott VanVoorhees
Dr. Vince Warren
Dr. Donna Woods

2. Board Chair Comments

Mr. Kuhns welcomed everyone to this special-called electronic meeting to address the COVID-19 state of emergency. Mr. Kuhns is in constant communication with Dr. DeCinque and was invited to attend a Cabinet meeting via Zoom. It was amazing to see staff working together during these trying times and still serve the students and fellow employees.

Dr. DeCinque emphasized that not only faculty and Cabinet but everyone throughout the college is addressing issues which none of us has ever had to face. The driving model for Cabinet was first to ensure everyone is safe and then how to get our students to the finish line. Dr. DeCinque credits people coming together is what is making this work.

3. Review of impact and actions concerning COVID-19

A. View from each Cabinet member

Dr. Susan English provided an update on Academic Affairs actions during the stay at home COVID-19 crisis.

Dr. English thanked board members for the opportunity to shine a light on faculty and students. We had to take a large percentage of classes and convert them from being face to face to online. Everyone has gone into problem solving mode and it has been very encouraging. Faculty has been proactive and positive in trying to ensure that students get across the finish line.

Both full time faculty and adjuncts, many of whom have other employment, have jumped in, learned new technology and are sharing their content in ways that are engaging students. Our online instruction highlights quality engagement and communication between faculty and students.

Dr. Lauren Williams has been an amazing asset to Dr. English's team. She helped develop frequently asked questions that were specific to what the faculty needed to know, what the students needed to know, and what the whole school community needed to know. Dr. English commended Dr. Williams for her outstanding, creative and timely support for Academic Affairs.

Dr. Williams stated that the library staff was instrumental in making sure that technology was given to the students as soon as possible and that it has been an amazing team effort. Ms. Callaway's office was amazing and helped get emergency funding. Our biggest victory was getting Mac books into the hands of our art students who were about to graduate and would not be able to finish their projects.

Dr. DeCinque informed board members of Dr. English's weekly zoom meetings- Monday Meetings with Susan. This is an amazing way to not only get questions answered but work together to help Dr. Williams and Dr. English solve problems. No one person has the answer it takes a team to come up with solutions.

Dr. Kris Rarig provided an update on Student Affairs actions during the stay at home COVID -19 crisis and relayed the following.

Dr. Rarig described how it was getting staff members set up working off campus and how the leadership team came together and discovered innovative and helpful ways staff could work to help the college. She stated that they could not have done what they did in a really short time without the collaboration of everyone. Dr. Williams was everywhere with resources and information and Information Technology was there with technology, hot spots and laptops. We all did an extraordinary job.

Our dual enrollment partners responded well, and all our students are continuing their instruction online. EAB Navigate has great messaging features so we were able to get messages out to students. Advisors have been able to set up advisory appointments to work with students on schedules for next term. It has been a powerful tool.

Ms. Callaway provided an update on Institutional Advancement and the Educational Foundation actions during the stay at home COVID -19 crisis and relayed the following.

Ms. Callaway stated that although development is not included in our Continuity of Operations Plan as an essential function, now more than ever development has moved to the forefront. Fundraising and the opportunity for private fundraising to support our students and this new normal are important. The loaner laptops and hot spots mentioned earlier were provided by the foundation two years ago through an innovator grant.

We recognize that basic needs are now at the forefront so by using the Student and Employee Emergency Fund we were able to assist financially and monetarily with some of those needs. This week alone we helped 13 students with over \$2700 that was appropriated from emergency funds.

Dr. DeCinque stated that we are moving forward on the Finish What You Start Scholarship that the Board discussed at the last meeting. Ms. Callaway agreed and stated the Educational Foundation Board met in March and voted to appropriate up to \$300,000 for this coming year to provide our dual enrollment students who have earned a minimum of 15 credit hours with Thomas Nelson during their high school year.

Chancellor DuBois will send a letter to graduating high school senior's parents letting them know that they are accepted if they want to attend community college this fall. We are preparing to follow-up with our own letter.

Mr. Felker provided an update on strategic planning and efforts to assist the presidential search subcommittee during the stay at home COVID -19 crisis and relayed the following.

Because our strategic planning summits were cancelled in March, we are planning to have those occur as soon as it is safe for us to gather in person again. The activities that Mr. Robinson our facilitator planned are activities that require people to be there in person and engage in activities.

This shelter in place event is probably going to change some things and how we would plan for the future. Dr. Smith spoke about us thinking about the future of higher education and the future of what we do as community colleges. We will certainly want to build some of what we learned from this experience and what we see as the new future into our strategic planning efforts.

The Presidential Search Survey was sent to employees, students and the Chamber of Commerce on March 30th. College Board Chairman Mr. Kunhs has sent it to a number of individuals around the community. This survey is scheduled to stay open through Sunday, April 12 and as of right now, we have 450 responses. We will keep moving forward with this and report the results to the presidential search subcommittee as quickly as possible.

Mr. Felker updated everyone on commencement plans. We have been considering ways to celebrate our graduates. This year the world has changed but we want to make sure our graduates have the opportunity to celebrate with their families, friends and loved ones. We have been considering two options of doing this. The first option is holding a virtual commencement similar to today's board meeting but in commencement form and in a way that includes different interactive elements. The second option is deferring or delaying an in-person commencement. We sent a survey to our graduates and perspective graduates last week asking them to share their preferences between these two options. We received a strong response in a short time period which tell us that students really care about this. There was a 60/40 split in favor of an in-person commencement once it's safe to do so. Students were very appreciative of being part of the process and being asked about this and personal stories to tell about how important that in person formal commencement ceremony is to them and their families.

Dr. DeCinque stated that we are going to try to please all students and Ms. Rarig described the virtual commencement plans and stated that we will pursue an in-person option to try to please as many graduates as we can.

Ms. Callaway stated that we are trying to do what the students want and not let this incredible event in May go without being acknowledged and celebrated at the appropriate time.

Dr. Lynda Byrd-Poller provided an update on Human Resources and personnel actions during the stay at home COVID -19 crisis and relayed the following.

Our focus has been to maintain employment through temporary telework agreements. This ensures that we can continue employment of our staff and faculty.

Our main idea is to remove people from the college campus and have them isolated at home. Secondly, we are looking to move people to different units to provide them with work that can continue the college mission. We want to continue to support the instructional mission in any way that we can, and we have been very creative in doing so.

We have been monitoring our employee attendance and providing them with the appropriate leave responses. We continue to provide support to our managers who find themselves in a telework situation which they had not expected. There are concerns about how to supervise and provide support in the telework situation. Ms. Donna Norman on our Human Resources staff has come up with Mentoring Moments which she provides to our staff.

We have also been working to forecast our needs and our responses for the future state of operations as everyone continues to say we're going to work in a new normal. We are working with 23 Chief Human Resource Officers and strongly in collaboration with VCCS trying to interpret orders from the governor's office.

Dr. Byrd-Poller stated that she has a great host of people that she is working with and that we are doing as best we can at this moment. Every day is like working on earthquake land because every day there is something new that changes, but we are still standing, and we are still here to help support our faculty provide instruction for our students.

Dr. DeCinque introduced Mr. Paul Long and stated that he played two roles as the Emergency Management Coordinator and the Interim Dean of Public Safety, Allied Health and Human Services.

Mr. Long spoke on his role in advising cabinet and issues dealing with clinical situations during the stay at home COVID -19 crisis and relayed the following.

In December Thomas Nelson began overhauling our emergency planning and reworking our continuity of operations plan and crisis emergency management plan. The plans were updated, and we received feedback from VCCS which was positive and positioned us to be able to move very early during this situation with COVID 19.

We have worked very closely with CNU and their emergency manager in some of our initial messaging and were quick to get information out to our students, faculty and staff. We were able to stand up a web presence that was specific to COVID 19.

Mr. Long continues to work with the Peninsula Covert Operation Center daily, and is in weekly contact with the Regional Hospital Coordinating Center, Peninsula's EMS Council, our Peninsula Fire & EMS agencies and the health care agencies on the peninsula.

Thomas Nelson made donations early in this process by reaching out initially to our fire and rescue partners as well as Peninsula healthcare facilities to find out what they needed and what we had to meet their need. We were able to provide significant amounts of personal protection equipment to them.

Thomas Nelson is putting the "C" in community for community college and trying to do our part. We started tracking our costs, just in case this became a federally declared disaster and we became eligible for public assistance. Mr. Long stated that tracking our cost has helped our finance administration tremendously as they have been trying to get this information back to the state.

Mr. Steven Carpenter provided an update on current and future budget information and relayed the following.

We are waiting for some additional guidance on how the money from the CARES Act funding can be used and whether it's going to be reimbursed money for expenses or if we just get money direct.

The outlook at the state level is grim. We are expecting reductions in our funding from the state. Because there are many unknowns it is difficult to make projections on revenue for the fall.

Thomas Nelson is probably in a better position than other institutions because we were conservative when planning the budget for FY21. We planned on a 2% reduction from the state. This will work to our benefit because now the 3-5% reduction from the state will not be so detrimental. We planned for a 4% reduction in tuition. We have no way of knowing if enrollment will go up or down.

We factored in a 1.1-million-dollar repayment to the state for a loan and 250-thousand-dollar repayment for a local funds loan into our budget. Any assistance we can get from the VCCS as well as from the board to defer or forgive some portion would benefit Thomas Nelson next year.

B. The Faculty perspective – Dr. Patrick Smith, Faculty Senate President

Dr. Smith provided the faculty perspective and thanked everyone for working together and remaining focused on our students. Dr. Smith stated that it is amazing to go from where we started to the degree that we sprang into action. The whole idea was that we continue delivering the package to our students. What's going to help students learn.

Many of our faculty were immediately concerned about students having the necessary technology. Dr. Smith passed this concern to Dr. DeCinque and Dr. English and they immediately were able to get the technology into the hands of students.

Dr. Smith thanked Dr. Williams on behalf of the faculty, within two or three days, faculty had documents informing them on what to do and providing ideas and mentors to guide them.

Dr. Smith noted that while interacting with students, faculty, and the administration, we are moving into an era where we are starting to appreciate what is necessary for learning in a 21st century model.

Dr. Smith has observed that many of his students have come forth to seek attention, interaction, understanding, and wisdom that they might not have gotten in the back of a classroom. Online they are able to bring forth their real needs of what they want to learn and where they see themselves as a part of their future. Dr. Smith asks that we all consider continuing to move forward with 21st century model of learning.

Dr. Smith thanked Mr. Paul Long, Interim Dean and Public Safety, Allied Health and Human Services for keeping everyone informed and keeping us in a good state of mind with the information.

Gregory DeCinque stated that we are going to need to continue keeping this form of communicating going. We are comm now more than we ever did. We try to selectively send you information to keep you informed but it is a great deal of information and we understand board members have jobs.

C. The Student Perspective – Ms. Elizabeth Yimer, Student Government Association President

Dr. DeCinque introduced Ms. Elizabeth Yimer the Student Government President who provided the student perspective. Ms. Yimer stated that everyone has been very quick with providing information and communicating what to do and not do.

This situation is very overwhelming and many of the classes and due dates have been changed. Ms. Yimer stated that it feels as if you are doing everything all on your own and teaching yourself. As Dr. DeCinque said, there is a constant connection and a great deal of screen time. This requires a large amount of self-motivation and this is difficult to do. Ms. Yimer stated that with the amount of screen time, it is hard on her eyes and she gets headaches from looking at screens. There are pros and cons to this situation. There has been a great amount of communication and as Professor Smith said, Ms. Yimer is able to ask more questions and get the help that she needed as compared to what she would get in a face to face setting. Learning has also changed because it is more focused on what you need to know and condensed to cover more work.

Faculty and teachers have made it bearable. The communication of professors has made it better and everything that Thomas Nelson is trying to do to alleviate some stress in the students has been working. Ms. Yimer stated that she appreciates the professors, faculty and everyone at Thomas Nelson.


4. Board Comments, Questions, and Discussions

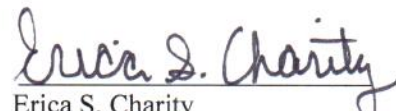
After asking if any members of the board wanted an opportunity to speak, Mr. Kuhns thanked everyone for their efforts and stated that it was great to see the collaboration happening. Dr. DeCinque thanked everyone.

5. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

The meeting adjourned at 3:23 p.m.


Gregory T. DeCinque
Secretary to the Board


Erica S. Charity
College Board Recorder