


SPRINGFIELD TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Ad Hoc Committee / 2024-2025 Presidential Evaluation Process
Monday, April 14, at 5:00 p.m.

Zoom/ Live Streamed via [STCC YouTube Channel](#)

- I. **Call to Order**
- II. **Roll Call**
- III. **2024-2025 Annual Presidential Evaluation Process**
 - a. **Timeline and Methodology (enclosed)**
 - b. **Presidential Self-Assessment (enclosed; *submitted in advance of 5/2 deadline*)**
 - c. **Reference: Department of Higher Education Presidential Evaluation Outline:**
[Presidential Evaluations / About / Massachusetts Department of Higher Education](#)
 - d. **Review Trustees Evaluation Tool (sample attached)**
- IV. **Date of Next Meeting: (TBD: *Monday, June 2nd, or Tuesday, June 3rd*) (virtual)**
- V. **Adjournment (Roll Call)**

Date: 4.9.2025
To: STCC Board of Trustees
Cc: Dr. Noe Ortega, Commissioner, Department of Higher Education
Re: Presidential Self-Assessment/2024-2025 Performance Evaluation
From: Dr. John B. Cook, President 

Dear Members of the STCC Board of Trustees:

As of August 1st, I will have completed nine years as president of Springfield Technical Community College. It continues to be an honor and privilege to lead one of the most unique higher education institutions in both Massachusetts and New England.

With a focus on strategic priorities, this year we have demonstrated once again why our strategic plan carries the title *Momentum*. STCC continues vital work in Western Massachusetts where our mission, access and affordability remain hallmarks for the greater-Springfield region. The past twelve months furthers a trend of positivity given significant legislation that resulted in *MassReconnect/ MassEducate*, which is free community college for the Commonwealth.

For a number of years, goal-setting for the STCC President by the Board of Trustees has consistently included versions of the following:

- Continue to advocate for state, federal and private funding to meet the College's significant deferred maintenance needs;
- Continue to expand engagement with the greater-Springfield community, especially the business community, with a focus on workforce and career education;
- Continue to strengthen the College's connection to traditional sources of new students such as area high schools... to aid recruitment and enrollment, establish comprehensive and scaled Early College;
- Continue to develop and strengthen communication with college shared governance bodies;
- Implement the college strategic plan, with a focus on equity.

In addition to the above legacy goals, guiding my assessment is utilization of the STCC Strategic Plan, *Momentum: 2023 – 2028*, which provides an important degree of clarity and direction not just for myself and senior leadership, but all STCC employees.

Our priorities from the plan include the following:

- *Lead the Educational Ecosystem*
- *Elevate Our Technical Mission*
- *Clear the Path to Student Success*
- *Connect and Support*
- *Reimagine STCC for a Sustainable Future*

Aligned not only with the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE) annual presidential evaluation guidelines, but also recent (2025) Board of Higher Education (BHE) authorization regarding the “Innovation and Economic Mobility Strategic Priorities Framework,” our institutional work and my leadership efforts specifically, continues to be shaped by an earnest enthusiasm for the value provided by a college with two middle names.

Between Trustee goal areas, STCC Strategic Plan priorities, and dovetailing with BHE/DHE strategic priorities, you will find a comprehensive overview of college accomplishments this past fiscal year, including initiative implementation with linking to key institutional performance metrics.

To summarize, FY 2025 has been a remarkable year, with many examples of systematic and structural investment in our students, of our communities, and for our transformation mission. Significant accomplishments and initiatives include the following:

❖ **MassEducate/MassReconnect Implementation & Operations**

It is difficult to describe just how broadly consequential and impactful this Massachusetts policy has been for STCC, with significant implementation considerations that are operational, instructional, and fiscal. The college, without the ability to fully forecast, has studiously navigated free community college with success this past year; Fall-to-Fall growth has included nearly 1,000 students, with the distribution of approximately \$6 million in additional student financial aid. The college remains about 40% online, a redefining outcome from the COVID pandemic, and a form of educational access that students continue to seek. It is a credit to so many across the college that last Fall STCC navigated the largest enrollment increase since the Great Recession, and we have done so with remarkably strong indicators of student retention (data shared via Trustee Committee).

❖ **Opening of the Richard E. Neal Cyber Security Center of Excellence at Union Station**

A \$5 million strategic endeavor, the college extended beyond our greater-Federal Street campus footprint for the first time in our history. This project highlights success securing public funding support from local (City/+ \$500,000), State (\$1.45 million) and Federal (\$3 million) sources. As the only technical community college in Massachusetts, this Center is not only a showcase for the high-demand field of cybersecurity (with growing enrollment showcased for Trustees), it is unique nationally to have a community college lead the establishment of a combined Cyber Range/Security Operations Center.

❖ **Continued Stewardship of the School of Health Major Capital Project**

With initial state funding of \$30 million awarded through a competitive process in 2022 (total state support now equals \$38 million), STCC continues to work closely with DCAMM and Lavallee | Bresinger architects for final design and significant pre-construction preparation that includes a high-degree of faculty and staff conferral. With a groundbreaking planned for Fall of 2025, stewardship of this \$50 million project represents the second major capital project on campus in the past eight years, an unusual feat for any community college. Further, with the philanthropic award last fall of \$1 million from the MassMutual Foundation (leveraged with state endowment matching to be \$1.5 million), there is follow-on funding support that will likely be needed for a project that is slated to be completed in 2027. Importantly, stewardship has required the planning and college funding of “enabling” moves, which included \$1.3 million to relocate the Digital Media program from Scibelli Hall/Building 2 to Putnam Hall/Building 17.

❖ **Programmatic & Curricular Innovation and Investment**

The first Western Massachusetts college or university to welcome Head Start to campus, as of last Fall STCC is now able to more intentionally collaborate on early childhood workforce needs (which compliments our program in the School of Liberal and Professional Studies). We also sought and received approval from the Massachusetts Board of Registration in Nursing (BORN) for an accelerated pathway that as of Summer 2025 allows paramedics and LPNs (licensed practical nurses) to complete an Associate degree in Nursing in about one year (representing an expansion by our School of Health and Patient Simulation). Also achieved just prior to Fall 2024, there are also many proud faculty and staff who helped our SIMs Medical Center achieve accreditation from the Society for Simulation in Healthcare; only a few community colleges in the US hold this distinction.

Specific to the School of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), the college is pursuing, through a review by our Curriculum Committee, a guided pathway (“meta-major”) in STEM Studies. Not only an example of shared governance in action, this pathway compliments our highly successful Health Science degree launched in 2018, and would be the second STCC interdisciplinary meta-major. Designed to equip students with a broad understanding of technical knowledge, specific skill-building, and exposure to software, hardware and equipment, the degree includes lab time in different disciplines; Python coursework, a versatile programming language; completion of OSHA 10 certification, a workforce safety credential; as well as a Capstone. This curricular innovation will no doubt prove important for burgeoning quantum technology investments being made in the region. As a compliment to a quantum computer being built in Holyoke, STCC was a key contributor Fall 2024, where \$40 million was secured in the Economic Development Bill for a quantum accelerator to be located in the “Tech Park” (STCC Assistance Corporation) across from the STCC campus.

❖ Community Engagement, Communication & Diplomacy

As president, I continue to work with determination to amplify STCC, build and maintain relationships with community leaders, and utilize the approach of “quiet diplomacy” that over the course of nine years, amplifies the college as a significant resource in our region, and for our region. This body of work includes a portfolio where I serve as a member of five boards (Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board, Western Mass Economic Development Council, STCC Assistance Corporation, and STCC Foundation), while also participating in five additional forums that convene regularly (Mason Square Transformational District Initiative Leadership Council, Mason Square C3 Forum, Pioneer Valley Quantum Innovation Hub Advisory Council, the Massachusetts Council of Community College Presidents, and the Special Commission to Study Impacts of the Fossil Fuel Workforce).

I have also been serving this year as a member of the statewide management team that is negotiating the “Day” contract with the Massachusetts Community College Council (“MCCC”), which is the union that represents a number of community college staff, as well as all full-time community college faculty across Massachusetts. Given significant changes in federal higher education policy and funding in 2025, my communication and availability for and with stakeholders within the college, including students and employees, has entailed timely campus emails, “Pizza with the President” forums with students, All-College Town Halls with employees, regular union/management meetings, as well as the convening of the STCC Shared Governance Council (SGC) when recommendations for institutional or operational policies have been formalized. Externally, my communication efforts can be seen on social media, television, radio and regional media, as well as through individualized conversations with members of our sizable regional legislative delegation (8 representatives and 2 senators).

❖ Fiscal Acumen & Sustainability

Leadership and facilitation of our annual budget, including fiscal forecasting by our finance team, remains a hallmark of the STCC journey to sustainability. There remains the necessity for our administrators to remain active and vigilant with all-things fiscal. To this point, while \$10 million in reserves was approved by Trustees for use over the past four years to ensure a balanced budget, each year STCC succeeded in managing expenses so those reserve funds have not been required. Our leap forward some years ago with budget planning has been key to the formula. As an example, knowing the importance of IT/cybersecurity investments, this has meant each year, including prior to free community college, that \$1.7 million in IT projects and upgrades would be planned and funded.

Starting in February of 2025 with a federal notice about a funding freeze, STCC like all of higher education, has contended with significant uncertainty. The college has communicated to our stakeholders what we know, when we know it, and we have also described our federal grants outlook for Trustees, and as appropriate with employees. The FY 2026 STCC budget like past years, well advanced in its preparation now in April, is positioned for formal Trustee in May. The anticipated approval however, will

occur prior to the final Massachusetts budget, and without knowing how the next Federal budget will land. Nevertheless, we continue to utilize the collective fiscal acumen of our leadership team, and STCC fundamentals remain strong as indicated by our strong reserves; our unique programmatic assets as a technical community college; and with continued leveraging of *MassReconnect*/*MassEducate*, which invites so many students to return to college, or to persist with college.

Additional: Accreditation & Governance

To close, I am once more pleased to share that senior leadership at STCC continues to be a source of strength for the college. President's Cabinet represents a talented group of leaders who help facilitate our strategic plan, and who also serve as key conduits for shared governance and college communication. Our Shared Governance Council (SGC) is a forum duly authorized by Trustees as the venue for the formalization of high-level operational and institutional policy, and two non-curricular recommendations were moved forward this year (a. Student Graduation Regalia; and b. Credit for Prior Learning). Curriculum Committee (embedded within the All-Unit Congress) is also a key shared governance forum, with the aforementioned STEM Studies program currently under review. This degree represents a significant exemplar when viewed by the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) particular to Standard III (3.13/3.14), given chief academic officer and faculty responsibility for academic quality. A full consideration of Curriculum Committee activities will be available upon the conclusion of Spring Semester. Regarding NECHE, we are also in a strong position to write our "5th Year Report" which will be submitted in 2026; a Working Group has been formed and convened for the purpose of developing our report and includes 20 individuals representing students, staff and faculty. As described for Trustees, we will utilize the Internal/External Committee to keep the Board informed of progress.

As always, I have appreciated the opportunity this past year to work closely with STCC Trustees, and the college is fortunate there are no Trustee vacancies. I will also use this occasion to once more thank all of our STCC employees for their hard work over the academic year; our collective effort to meet community need remains strong. With continued utilization of the STCC strategic plan, and with reference to key institutional indicators provided below, we have momentum to continue our excellent and transformational work. Thank you for your support.

Selected Institutional Strategic Plan Measures/Scorecard Indicators*

	<u>Fall 2023</u>	<u>Fall 2024</u>
Enrollment (full and part-time/credit)	4,561	5,447 (+19%; 3 rd largest % increase)
Latino/a/x Enrollment	36%	40% (2 nd largest %/all CCs)
African American/Black Enrollment	14%	15% (T5 th largest %/all CCs)
Percentage/ Pell Recipients		47% (2023/ 2 nd largest all CCs)
On-time credit accumulation (first year)	38%	42% (CC avg. = 34%)
Transfer to Baccalaureate (1 st time/2019-2020)	20%	24% (CC avg. = 30%)
High-Demand Grads (Healthcare degrees)	30%	TBD/ available Fall 2025
Latino/a/x 1 st year (full-time) retention	60%	61% (CC avg. = 62%)
Af. American/Black 1 st year (full-time) retention	67%	62% (CC avg. = 61%)
On-time credit accumulation (Latino & Black/African American students)		+4 percentage points (29% vs. CC avg. = 25%)
Six-year comprehensive success (VFA)	66%	65% (3 rd best/ CC avg. = 62%)
Six-year completion-anywhere/Pell Recipients	35%	35% (CC avg. = 31%)
MassReconnect full-time student Fall retention		+22.8 percentage points (85.5%)
MassReconnect part-time student Fall retention		+21.8 percentage points (68.3%)
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Total Grant Awards:	\$10.3M ('23)	\$3.9M ('24) \$7.4M ('25)
Unrestricted Net Position:	\$36.3M ('23)	\$49.8M ('24) \$TBD ('25)

* Data Sources:

DHE Performance Measurement Reporting System (PMRS) & STCC Institutional Measures