

SPRINGFIELD TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Ad Hoc Committee / 2023-2024 Presidential Evaluation Process
Thursday, May 9, at 4:30 p.m.

Garvey Hall (Building 16), Cabinet Conference Room 235

- I. **Call to Order**
- II. **Roll Call**
- III. **2023-2024 Annual Presidential Evaluation Process**
 - a. **Update and Timeline (including submission to DHE by end of June)**
 - b. **President's Self-Assessment (enclosed)**
- IV. **Date of Next Meeting: Monday, June 3, at 4:30 p.m. (virtual)**
- V. **Adjournment (Roll Call)**

Date: May 1, 2024
To: STCC Board of Trustees
Cc: Dr. Noe Ortega, Commissioner, Department of Higher Education
Re: Presidential Self-Assessment/2023-2024 Performance Evaluation
From: Dr. John B. Cook, President 

Dear Members of the STCC Board of Trustees:

As of August 2024, I will have completed eight 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.

This year, a number of strategic goals have gathered momentum, and STCC continues vital work in Western Massachusetts where our mission, access and affordability remain hallmarks for the greater-Springfield region. Over the past year a good deal of helpful attention has been directed toward our segment of higher education, particularly given the significant legislation that resulted in the implementation of *MassReconnect*/free community college for adults.

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, especially as it relates to Building 20 which houses the distinctive School of Health and SIMs Medical Center;
- Continue to expand engagement with the greater-Springfield community, especially the business community, that can be a new source of job and workforce training opportunities for the College;
- 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;
- Continue to implement the Student Success Plan (Strategic Plan: 2015-2020) especially as it relates to closing equity and achievement gaps for students of color.

Guiding my assessment this year, I am pleased to share that utilization of the new STCC Strategic Plan, *Momentum: 2023 – 2028*, offers a helpful level of clarity and shape. Our approach aligns not only with the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE) annual presidential evaluation guidelines, but also DHE priorities and goals as described in part by the *Equity Agenda*, a strategic initiative that is further framed by the state-wide Strategic Plan for Racial Equity (updated Spring 2023). DHE describes the expectation that “the Massachusetts system of public higher education will enhance economic and social mobility for all citizens, but particularly for those that have historically been underserved and underrepresented, especially students of color, throughout all levels of education.”

Between the five STCC Trustee goal areas (Funding, Engagement, Connection/Communication, Equity, Planning), and with dovetailing from both the STCC Strategic Plan and DHE strategic initiatives, you will find a comprehensive overview of progress this past fiscal year, including our accomplishments and successes, along with key institutional performance metrics. My efforts as president, both directly and as lead facilitator of our strategic plan and college priorities, continues to be shaped by an earnest enthusiasm for the value of our shared work. FY 2024 has been a year with continued and important movement forward by so many at STCC in service to our students and communities.

Focus Area I

- *Lead the Educational Ecosystem* (STCC Strategic Goal)
- *Expand use of Meta Majors & Guided Pathways* (DHE/Racial Equity Priority)
- *Thoughtfully and intentionally expand and enhance Early College programming* (DHE/Racial Equity Priority)

As described in the STCC strategic plan, STCC “will serve as a leader and catalyst to improve access to education, and leverage education for economic mobility” and we describe “utilizing the institution as a hub for a wide range of education and lifelong learning, from childcare to continuing and adult education.” I am pleased to share that STCC faculty and administrators do indeed continue to play a crucial role in fostering conversations about education, equity, access, and affordability in the region. To this point, STCC has some of the most robust Early College-designated pathways in Massachusetts, which includes our partnership with the Springfield High School of Commerce/ Empowerment Zone (also comprising high schools that fall under this umbrella: Discovery High School, Springfield Honors Academy, Rise Prep High School), as well as Veritas Prep Charter School. Both entities have student of color enrollment that exceeds 90%, and STCC now enrolls over 200 high schools students across these programs each semester. STCC is also one of three Massachusetts community colleges participating in the statewide LAUNCH initiative, a multi-segment effort facilitated by the Massachusetts Alliance for Early College.

Notably, our novel Health Science Associate degree continues to be an important Meta Major for so many students attending STCC, with enrollment that now exceeds 500 students

each semester. As an open-access guided pathway providing context for healthcare careers, it remains signature that STCC students in Health Science (over 50% are students of color) take courses with patient simulation and also earn a career credential (EMT, Sterile Processing, Phlebotomy, CNA).

We also continue leading the educational ecosystem by helping establish the Richard E. Neal Cybersecurity Center of Excellence at Union Station in Springfield, which is projected to open later in 2024. A \$5 million project that includes funds secured from local, state and federal sources, the college has played a vital role in establishing this hub for professional development and education. STCC has also signed a memorandum with Head Start Inc. of Holyoke, Chicopee, Springfield, and will welcome them to campus starting Fall 2024. A unique partnership among Massachusetts community colleges, the STCC/Head Start collaboration brings infant childcare to campus for the first time. Moreover, there will be significant avenues for STCC early education students to pursue teaching opportunities, and we anticipate Head Start will function as a quasi “lab school.”

There are many other examples of ecosystem work to point to over the past year including STCC participation in the regional federal/EDA “Recompete” proposal seeking upwards of \$50 million; participation in the regional federal/EDA “Tech Hub” quantum federal grant submission that sought upwards of \$40 million as coordinated by the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative; as well as our engagement with regional clean energy start-up companies that include Clean Crop based in Holyoke. I am also a member of four Boards, which helps amplify STCC as a contributor to regional and state-wide initiatives. My board participation includes the Economic Development Council (EDC) of Western Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, a quasi-public entity with an annual operating budget that exceeds \$100 million, as well as the MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board. I am also a regular attendee of the Springfield Mason Square C3 forum; serve as a member of the Springfield Public Schools Portrait of a Graduate strategic planning workgroup; serve as a member of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission comprehensive economic development strategy workgroup; and serve as a member of the Pioneer Valley Quantum Innovation Hub advisory council.

Focus Area II

- *Elevate Our Technical Mission* (STCC Strategic Goal)
- *Increase enrollment of Students of Color* (DHE/Racial Equity Goal)
- *Increase degree/certificate completion for all Students of Color populations* (DHE/Racial Equity Goal)

As the only technical community college in Massachusetts, STCC describes in our strategic plan that we “will leverage [our] unique position and resources to expand the reach of technical programs (e.g. career-focused, technology-driven, and high-demand) by specifically focusing on high need sectors that include healthcare, cybersecurity, manufacturing, and energy/sustainability.” Related, we are also clear about increasing enrollment of students of color (Black/African American, Indigenous, Hispanic/Latino) with enrollment in our unique programs, as well as renew engagement with adults.

There are a number of institutional measures that show STCC progressing in our effort to engage students of color, ensure their inclusion in our technical mission focus, and also increase their completion of degrees and certificates. Details for those efforts are described in the next two focus areas, and two of our strategic plan scorecard indicators are indicative: for full-time, first-time African American/Black students attending STCC, first-year retention in Fall 2022 was 67% and 71% in Fall 2023; the statewide average across 15 community colleges was 54%. For Latino/a/x students who were also full-time, first-time students at STCC, Fall 2022 retention was 54%, but 61% in Fall 2023; the statewide average across 15 community colleges was 62%. The Department of Higher Education also tracks “high-demand” degree completion occurring at community colleges. Of all degrees awarded at STCC, in 2023 a full 30% were in the high-demand field of healthcare, which ranks our proportion tied for fifth of all 15 Massachusetts community colleges, and #3 in total healthcare degrees awarded in 2023, and we anticipate similar outcomes in 2024.

In this focus area over the past year, I cannot stress the significance of progress made on the School of Health and Patient Simulation (SHPS) major capital project, as well as the achievement of vital legislation/policy that resulted in *MassReconnect*, which is free community college for adults ages 25 and older.

Early in FY 2024, it was Trustee approval of a revised Reserves investment that now totals \$11.5 million that enabled the college to stay on-track with the SHPS project. Combined with a total of \$38 million committed by Massachusetts (for a project total of \$50 million), we have kept our momentum with DCAMM (Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance). It is exceedingly consequential that STCC will relocate our School of Health to Building 2/Scibelli Hall by late 2026/early 2027. With over six years of investment in the advocacy, design, and soon-to-start construction, this project allows STCC to continue elevating our technical mission, particularly given how essential healthcare is for our region, the outsized contribution STCC provides to healthcare workforce needs, and how high those demands will continue in the future.

Second, through great effort this year to engage locally with our legislative delegation, as well as statewide by way of the Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges (MACC), for the first time the Commonwealth funded a version of free community college (MassReconnect), truly a mission-central accomplishment. Representing approximately \$2.5 million investment in additional STCC student financial aid when we also include specific funding for free Nursing, it is a credit not only to STCC staff for implementing such a significant policy change, but also one that came so close to the start of Fall Semester (we had approximately one month from funding to semester start). Notably, and as shared with the Trustee Internal/External Committee, our enrollment increased significantly for the first time in over a decade, and in large part to *MassReconnect*. Our Fall Semester increase was approximately 14%, with the Spring Semester increase closer to 18%, which represents some of the highest proportional increases across the 15 community colleges for the past year. By virtue of this policy and funding, more students of color enrolled at STCC (including an increase to 34% of the total STCC population for Latino/a/x students), and we saw corresponding headcount increases in most degree/programs excluding those in the School of Health that have caps. We had for example, rebounding enrollment in Engineering and Computer Science transfer, Programming, HVAC/Energy Systems, as well as Applied

Psychology and Human Services/Social Work. Within our division of Workforce Development (non-credit/continuing education), we have also benefitted from Education & Training Funds (ETF) that enables personnel hiring, leveraging of existing high school equivalency enrollment, the launch of an IT Academy, and ongoing development for a future “Green Jobs Academy” that we expect for example, could expand training for heat pump technicians.

Focus Area III

- *Clear the Path to Student Success* (STCC Strategic Goal)
- *Increase persistence to a second year for Students of Color* (DHE/Racial Equity Goal)

STCC continues to invest in the attracting and retaining of students of color, first-generation college students, as well as low-income students. Fundamentally, we remain a uniquely positioned point of entry into higher education with approximately 50% on average of all STCC students Pell recipients (Pell grants are federal, and typically awarded to individuals with annual total family income below \$50,000). For comparison, Pell-eligible students are about 32% of the Westfield State University student body, and 21% of the UMass Amherst student body.

STCC describes in our strategic plan that it is “through implementation of signature SUCCESS-funded programs that include MILE & LEAD which have complimented a long-standing TRiO program” that we dynamically reimagined our investment in student success pathways. Vital this year was continued state funding for SUCCESS (*Supporting Urgent Community College Equity through Student Services*) despite the worry borne by “9C” state budget cuts that could have derailed momentum for a set of these initiatives. Notably, and as shared with the Trustee Internal/External Committee, across these three initiatives we engaged approximately 900 students, and all three clearly demonstrate their impact, including how they exceed annual persistence goals (73% for SUCCESS; 81% for TRiO). Also of great importance is that combined funding represents nearly \$1.5 million annually, and supports a combined 20 full-time positions and over 50 part-time positions. MILE (male student focused engagement) and LEAD (female student focused engagement) have grown so much that the Rubenzahl Student Learning Commons/Building 19 was altered to embrace this new functionality. MILE has been relocated to a larger space on the third floor of Building 19, and LEAD is in the process of expanding their footprint on the second floor.

TRiO funding, a federal grant, has been long-standing and stable. SUCCESS funding however, remains a key part of legislative advocacy and was a point of reference at an October/2023 legislative delegation breakfast held at STCC, as well as a March/2024 legislative delegation campus tour of our HVAC/Energy Systems program and building. Our Vice President of Student Affairs has been the point-person for integration and strategic implementation of SUCCESS; we know clearly that without continued funding, STCC will struggle if we must revert back to less personnel for the types of student engagement that we show has a measurable impact on student perseverance.

Looking ahead, a key goal related to the focus area of student success is engagement with faculty and our need to continue dedicated conversations specific to curricular adaptations and the use of “high-impact” practices that include clinicals, labs, project-based learning, and credit-bearing internships/practica. A reality for STCC is that approximately 50% of all courses are delivered online, driven by student registration choice. We also have as an outstanding goal the need to develop a complement to Health Science with a meta-major in interdisciplinary STEM Studies that will also have unique learning experiences.

Focus Area IV

- ***Connect and Support*** (STCC Strategic Goal)
- ***Provide holistic student support*** (DHE/Racial Equity Goal)
(In order to ensure a sense of belonging for Students of Color and champion the whole student.)

In the STCC strategic plan we describe “increasing support for student well-being, including mental health and basic needs services” as well as expanding diversity-equity-inclusion dialogue and fluency among employees as being crucial to creating a more inclusive campus culture. As part of our effort to connect and support students and employees, we have made strides that include implementation of a \$355,000 behavioral/mental health grant that supports employee training and professional development, as well as teletherapy services for students as a compliment to what on-campus personnel provide. Our Ram Mini-mart, part of the STCC Center for Access Services, has expanded services in part by a \$180,000 grant that placed food lockers on campus giving students access to fresh food that is temperature controlled and is combined with digital access. We also have an ongoing partnership with Stop & Shop and their provision of gift cards, including a recent \$15,000 donation, continues to make a difference.

This past fall, and for the first time in college history, STCC secured a formal housing agreement for students that represents a key step toward addressing a persistent area of student need. Through American International College (AIC), STCC students can now live on the AIC campus and utilize a campus meal plan if needed. This intentional approach to student support, albeit with a small first cohort (approximately nine students utilized AIC housing in Fall 2023), is the type of creative outcome we will continue to pursue.

Numerous events and programming also continue: our local communities would point to WTCC, the college radio station, as a key source of connection and information. We also know from CCSSE (Community College Survey of Student Engagement) data, which was again implemented this year, that students do indeed give high praise to their sense of belonging at STCC. Within all of these initiatives, we also use forums like the January Professional Day for faculty and staff, to focus on student retention which included a number of workshops on the subject of connection and support.

Focus Area V

- *Reimagine STCC for a Sustainable Future* (STCC Strategic Goal)
- *Align the appropriate resources and funding* (DHE/Racial Equity Goal)
(Including: evaluate institution budgets and prioritize funding of consistent programs, initiatives, venues, and structures)

Each of the previous four focus areas are bound together by the necessity of the fifth: working to align funding, and reimagining the college to ensure a sustainable financial future. In our strategic plan we frame this focus area in terms of “financial sustainability, campus infrastructure, and advancement efforts at STCC, because sustainability will be defined more by doing different, as opposed to doing more with less.” On the cusp of a finalized FY 2025 budget for Trustee authorization, our work to right-size STCC, and contend with a structural deficit, remains ongoing. Especially since 2020, administration has actively communicated to stakeholders our fiscal status, and we have used all manner of financial strategies to address the challenge. These measures have included offering a retirement incentive on two occasions, reducing full-time positions, and finding efficiencies within operations. Given how long-lasting our enrollment decline was (starting in 2013 and lasting until 2023), as well as the size of the enrollment decline (a Fall-to-Fall loss over that period of time that cumulatively totaled approximately 45%), STCC, like so many community colleges, is still finding our way through such a difficult financial climate.

As part of our suite of fiscal strategies, engagement with the STCC Foundation is also an important sustainability element, and we will assess this summer how our annual campaign has fared. With a kickoff last September 2023 at *The Big E*, we have seen some fundraising success from collateral efforts (mailings in particular) that provide encouragement for the upcoming FY 2025 annual campaign. With the STCC Foundation, we look ahead to 2025, when the \$500,000 commitment to the SHPS relocation will gain prominence. The expectation is that through the Foundation, a focused capital campaign for the School of Health project will also be implemented. We look to the more than 20 members of the STCC Foundation Board of Directors to help champion a renewed effort to fundraise for the college, and our alumni network is particularly invaluable. It bears mentioning that around 2010, when Baystate Health donated \$1 million, was the last time the STCC Foundation received such a significant-sized gift that could be used for operational, infrastructure and program-delivery elements including equipment. More recently, in 2019 the STCC Foundation received a planned gift of \$250,000 from an estate to establish a student scholarship.

With substantial effort at STCC to forecast, for multiple years now we have needed Trustee-approved use of Reserves to arrive at a reconciled (balanced) operational budget. The \$10 million, four-year plan endorsed by Trustees has provided an invaluable safety net for annual operations, and for multiple years we have not needed to access those Reserve funds given active fiscal management. It is also noteworthy that the college has simultaneously built-up our unrestricted net position to now exceed \$36 million. Our budgeting process, now well-established with the Trustee Ways & Means Committee, is admittedly conservative in terms of enrollment projections as well as revenue forecasting from state sources (i.e. base appropriation and collective bargaining funding). But again, with the safety net of Reserves

we have a methodology and sturdy set of budget assumptions that provide space for FY 2025 to see whether and if Massachusetts will continue community college investments by way of *MassReconnect* and SUCCESS funding. As shared with Trustees, and broadly with college stakeholders, with just a single year of enrollment turnaround, we do not yet have a new trend to base changes to our fiscal outlook; we also project fiscal deficits through FY 2027.

Related, it has been helpful to utilize the newly established Trustee Facilities & Capital Improvements Committee to give due attention to campus master planning, facilities projects and deferred maintenance, as well as planning and investments in IT, areas of leadership by our CFO/Vice President of Administration & Sustainability as well as our CIO/Vice President of Information Technology.

Additional: Administration, Accreditation & Governance

Lastly, I am pleased to share that senior leadership at STCC continues to be a source of strength for the college. We successfully on-boarded a new Vice President of Academic Affairs; our new Chief Academic Officer has provided a notable level of access and engagement for faculty over the past year, including with Chairs and Coordinators in particular. We also hired a new Assistant Vice President of Advancement who also serves as Executive Director to the STCC Foundation, and a Dean was promoted to serve as an Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs and Interim Chief Equity Officer. The President's Cabinet at STCC represents a talented group of leaders who help facilitate our strategic plan, and who also represent key conduits for shared governance.

To this point, and significant this year, the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) withdrew the Notice of Concern issued to STCC in early 2022 specific to Standard Three, Governance. After two years of steady work by so many to clarify roles and responsibilities, including codification by the Board of Trustees of a Shared Governance Council, we are in a strong position to write our "5th Year Report" for NECHE which will be submitted in early 2026. As part of renewed governance clarity at STCC, we first point to the development of our strategic plan, and formal approval by both the STCC Board of Trustees as well as Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, as evidence of effectiveness. Again, this foundational document has been invaluable this year. Other formal policy revisions approved this year using shared governance have included those specific to Incompletes and Withdrawals. Trustees also recently voted, based on a governance-generated recommendation, to make the STCC campus smoke/tobacco-free. These governance actions, combined with Trustee authorization to formally discontinue programs that include a degree in Urban Studies and a certificate in CAD/CAM, point to the strides made at the college by which institutional actions are formalized. Again, STCC has made great strides in the name of clarifying how policy is developed and authorized.

As always, I look forward to working closely with STCC Trustees. With use of the STCC strategic plan, and with reference to key institutional indicators, we have momentum to continue the way forward for the college. I have included a selection of those measures as part of this self-assessment, which can be found below.

Thank you for your support.

Selected Institutional Strategic Plan Measures/Scorecard Indicators*

	<u>Fall 2022</u>	<u>Fall 2023</u>
Enrollment (full and part-time/credit avg.)	3,945	4,561 (+14%; 8%/15 CCs)
Latino/a/x Enrollment	33%	34% (T#2 largest of 15 CCs)
Af. American/Black Enrollment	14%	14% (#6 largest of 15 CCs)
On-time credit accumulation (first year)	33%	38% (Tied for #1 of 15 CCs)
Six-year comprehensive success	64%	66% (#2 - 15 CCs)
High-Demand Grads (Healthcare degrees)	31%	30% (#3 total grads/ 15 CCs)
Latino/a/x 1 st year (full-time) retention	54%	61% (62%/ 15 CCs avg.)
Af. American/Black 1 st year (full-time) retention	67%	71% (54%/ 15 CCs avg.)
Six-year comprehensive success/Male	60%	60% (60%/ 15 CCs avg.)
Six-year comprehensive success/Female	69%	69% (67%/ 15 CCs avg.)
Six-year comprehensive success/Pell Recipients	63%	62% (61%/ 15 CCs avg.)
Part-time student retain or transfer	41%	47% (52%/ 15 CCs avg.)
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Total Grant Revenue	\$4.72M ('22)	\$7.64M ('23) TBD ('24)
Unrestricted Net Position	\$27.3M ('22)	\$36.3M ('23) TBD ('24)

* *Data Sources:* DHE Performance Measurement Reporting System (PMRS) & STCC Institutional Measures