

STCC Board of Trustees
COMMITTEE ON INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS
Monday, May 3, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.
Zoom Meeting, Live Streamed via STCC YouTube Channel

Present: Committee Chair Jynai McDonald, Student Trustee Alessande Anderson, Trustee Bill Johnson, Trustee Betty Sposito, and President John B. Cook

Unable to attend: Trustee Chair Marikate Murren

Presenters: Eric Warren, AUC Staff Co-Chair
Prof. Francie Riddle, AUC Faculty Co-Chair

- I. **Call to Order** – Committee Chair Jynai McDonald called the meeting of the Committee on Internal and External Relations to order at 5:00 p.m.
- II. **Roll Call** – The following Committee Members were present at Roll Call: Committee Chair, Jynai McDonald, Student Trustee Alessande Anderson, Trustee Bill Johnson, and Trustee Betty Sposito
- III. **Discussion with All-Unit Congress Leadership – “Models of Shared Governance”**
Eric Warren, Staff AUC Co-Chair, and Prof. Francie Riddle, Faculty AUC Co-Chair

AUC Staff Co-Chair Eric Warren began with an acknowledgement of the AUC’s participation in the recent NECHE/accreditation visit. In advance, AUC Leaders shared in an article with the Committee entitled *Colleges with healthy shared governance perform better in crisis than those with top-down decision-making (opinion)* by Marjorie Hass, *Inside Higher Ed. 2020*, President of Rhodes College in Tennessee. Now with an email list in hand, an assessment survey to gather data on how the AUC is functioning and serving our membership will be implemented. A climate survey is also ready to launch. The AUC has recently formed an Ad Hoc Committee focused on End User technology, which provided opinion and information on online tools needed to make our online experience as easy as possible.

Discussion with the Committee, AUC leadership and college leadership included aspects that include the sharing in advance of Committee “packet” details with AUC leadership. Also raised as a question by AUC leadership is personnel changes, and employees leaving the college. It was shared that personnel files are confidential, and despite rumors or innuendo, why people leave, or personnel actions more generally, cannot be shared. Committee Chair McDonald, a Co-Lead of the Antiracism & Inclusion Alliance (AIA@STCC), asked if there is a way to examine aggregate data of exit interviews, and for people of color in particular.

IV. NECHE / Accreditation Debrief – Trustees with Cabinet/Administration

Dr. Cook shared details and process from the April Town Hall meeting. Panelists, and inclusion in the shaping and engagement, was done with representation from AUC, AFSCME, MCCC, and college leadership. The open Town Hall format was well received. Specific to accreditation/NECHE, the process was again described: the visiting team validates the STCC Self Study, and provides a summary to the

Commission itself. The college will receive a draft report over the summer to review for factual accuracy; later in the Fall the Commission will formally address accreditation status. Open conversation with the Committee ensued; Chair McDonald noted that it was a comprehensive process. A question was asked about the effect of having a virtual visit; it was shared that NECHE has been conducting all of their visits virtually and added that one of the NECHE Team Members, Charles Cleary, will be physically visiting in mid-May to tour campus as a final fact check.

Future Conversations: Governance & Strategic Planning

The NECHE visiting team Chair verbalized an outlook on assets, strengths and areas for potential focus. Governance appears to be one such area, and the comment was that STCC function is “Ad Hoc” and siloed, with need for further consideration. Part of the discussion was going forward, how do we build a policy and a practice model together? For example, to become a Smoke-Free Campus, and arriving at that decision is an example that would draw from our governance bodies. The STCC strategic plan has also sunset as of 2020, and this Fall the college has the opportunity to build a comprehensive Strategic Plan, such as we did with the Self-Study.

V. President’s Perspective – Dr. John B. Cook

a) Personnel update:

Highlights: there are no retirees to report. Dr. Cook also announced that Jonathan Tudryn is returning to STCC in the role of Controller. Karen Merrill, who had left for a position at Westfield State, is also returning in the role of Facilities & Contract Manager. We also hired Sean Pettis, Director of Infrastructure and Security, a very important role, and first for us. Appreciation was also noted for Denise Hurst, who has accepted a leadership position with the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts.

b) Innovation Fellowship Announcement

Reform / revision of developmental math – Dr. Vanessa Hill, Professor of Mathematics

Dr. Cook announced that Dr. Vanessa Hill will be the inaugural Foundation Innovation Fellow. In our to be an anti-racist institution, the proposed innovation fellowship will focus intentionally on reform of developmental math. Dr. Cook introduced Professor Hill and she proceeded to provide an overview of the initiative. Given the equity agenda prioritized by Commissioner Santiago, the Department of Higher Education, and the Board of Higher Education, STCC is poised to significantly address an area that disproportionately impacts students of color. With a set of goals that includes decreasing time in remediation, and increasing graduation, Dr. Hill is also looking into building relationships with math teachers in Springfield high schools. Committee Chair McDonald noted her first Trustee Retreat, and the data provided on students of color, and those lacking the GPA needed to be exempt from assessment. She shared how the disparities, and work to address the issue, is highly valuable.

- VI. Old Business - None**
- VII. New Business - None**
- VIII. Next Meeting Date and Time:** TBD (upon approval of FY 2022 meeting calendar)
- IX. Adjournment:** At 5:35 p.m., Committee Chair Jynai McDonald called to adjourn and was unanimously approved through roll call.

Respectfully submitted by Nanette Flores