

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MEETING MINUTES  
KASKASKIA COLLEGE - COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT 501  
NASHVILLE EDUCATION CENTER  
TUESDAY – JULY 9, 2024**

**WELCOME**

President George Evans opened the meeting at 11:54 a.m. and welcomed everyone to the Community Engagement Meeting.

Trustee and KC Foundation Liaison Craig Finke and Student Trustee Connor Wademan were in attendance. Karen Droste from the Kaskaskia College Foundation Board of Directors was in attendance.

Kaskaskia College employees in attendance included Cheryl Boehne, Mike Christensen, Cary Day, George Evans, Joy Fitts, Jessica Foster, Steven Foutch, Chris Holloway, Tommy Henegar, Kellie Henegar, Colton Leidner, Traci Masau, Julie Obermark, Karol Potter, Fran Windler, and Amy Zanton.

Community members in attendance included Melinda Bock, Senator Terri Bryant, Dee DeMoss, Karen Droste, Craig Finke, Lori Fox, Kim Gill, Brad Haege, Mayor Raymond Kolweier, Terri Kurwicky, Steve Lounius, Danny May, Brian Monsma, Fisher Overstreet, Tricia Schleifer, Karianne Schnitker, Sheriff Ross Schultze, Hunter Shirley, Will Summers, and Linda Summers.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

President Evans led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**INTRODUCTIONS**

Those in attendance introduced themselves.

**STATE OF KASKASKIA COLLEGE UPDATE**

**ENROLLMENT UPDATE**

Vice President of Student Services Amy Zanton shared the current Enrollment Credit Hour Report and reported the College is doing very well enrollment wise. The College has rebounded from the pandemic and continues to see increases in both head count and credit hours above pre-pandemic enrollment numbers. The College met its goal to surpass the 2019 (2018SU, 2018FA, 2019SP) total credit hours of 68,982 by reaching 70,554 credit hours in 2024 (2023SU, 2023FA, 2024SP).

**NEW PROGRAMS UPDATE**

Dean of Career & Technical Education Traci Masau presented information on two recent programs added at the College.

- The Precision Agriculture Certificate is a new 25-credit hour certificate program that will be offered beginning with the Fall 2025 semester (August 2025). This two-semester certificate was developed in response to identified industry need

for skills and training specific to the growing field of precision agriculture. Students will gain knowledge and skills in computer technology, global navigation satellite systems, agriculture mapping software, precision agriculture equipment, unmanned aerial systems, and agronomy.

- The Hybrid and Electric Vehicle Technology Certificate program began last year with two students. This certificate was developed not only for students who have already taken several automotive college courses, but also for individuals who are already in the automotive workforce who need training with hybrid and electric vehicles. The program requires prerequisites. With funding assistance provided through the Illinois Green Economy Network, the Workforce Equity Initiative grant, and the Rev Up EV grant, the College has been able to renovate the Automotive Technology lab to a state-of-the-art facility to train students in automotive technology and in hybrid and electric vehicle technology.

## **REVIEW OF THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY**

President Evans shared highlights from the President's Report to the Community provided to attendees and available on the College website under "From the President."

- The College did exceptional in the mid-cycle review and visit by the Higher Learning Commission, the College's accrediting body.
- In 2021 the Board approved the issuance of bonds at a low interest rate of 2.25% locked in for 17 years. With additional assistance from grant funds, Protection, Health, and Safety funds, and institutional funds, the College has been able resurface almost every parking lot on the main campus and has modernized classrooms with state-of-the-art technology, modern student-friendly furniture, new flooring, new lighting, and new HVAC systems. The College is approaching the final phase of the renovations on main campus. The Science and Technology Building which houses the science labs and classrooms is currently under renovation. These areas are receiving new HVAC systems, lighting, and ceilings. The building renovations will be completed and ready for the start of the Fall semester in August. This completes the planned renovations except for the new Gymnasium.
- Mental health issues among students have increased substantially since the pandemic. The College offers students access to an onsite licensed clinical professional counselor. The College also offers students mental health assistance through TimelyCare, an online platform that provides students with virtual mental health counseling and resources with self-guided tools to help students with mental health issues. The platform also offers students access to peer committees through an online venue.
- The College waives all tuition for dual credit courses which equated to \$2.6 million in waived dual credit tuition last year for high school students in the district.
- The Kaskaskia College Mobile Manufacturing Lab is a mobile trailer that brings education and training to the communities in the College district. The trailer has been equipped with tools and machinery for the trades and will be transported to junior highs and high schools in the district to introduce students to the different vocational trades such as industrial technology, welding, and HVAC. Industry partners can also use the trailer to train their workforce on skills specific to their industry. The College has employed a full-time facilitator who will collaborate with schools and industry partners in developing programs for using the trailer for their students and workforce.

- The construction of a new state-of-the-art gymnasium is expected to be completed by late 2025. The gymnasium is the last phase of the planned renovations in the 2021 levee process. The College's current gymnasium was built in 1965 as a practice gymnasium with the plan to build an additional competition gym. The second gymnasium was never built due to the lack of funding. After an analysis was completed by the architects and engineers, the cost to tear down the current gymnasium came in at \$1.2 million. The original plan was to renovate the current gymnasium; however, the decision was made to maintain the current gymnasium at a cost of \$60,000 for utilities annually and \$30,000 for annual maintenance and put the additional funds available toward the construction of a new gymnasium. The addition of a new gymnasium will provide additional practice locations for the College's athletic teams who are having to share one gymnasium. The new gymnasium will provide the College with additional facilities and venues for the community to host career fairs, blood drives, tournaments, program competitions, and other types of events on the College's main campus.
- President Evans recognized members of his Senior Leadership Team. Provost and Vice President of Instructional Services Julie Obermark has been selected to serve as President Elect of the Illinois Council of Community College Administrators. Vice President of Student Services Amy Zanton has been chosen to serve on the Illinois Community College Diversity Commission and the Higher Education Futures Table, a committee appointed by the Governor, alongside President Evans. Vice President of Institutional Support and Technology George Kriss was selected to serve as an Honorary Commander for the 375<sup>th</sup> Air Mobility Wing at Scott Air Force Base.

## **GRANT SUCCESSES**

The College has been successful in receiving \$16,000,000 in state and federal grants in the last several years. President Evans spoke about two of those grants specifically.

- Through funding provided by the Workforce Equity Initiative (WEI) Grant, the College can offer free tuition and resources to minority students within the College district. Over fifty individuals have earned a certificate under this program. The WEI program provides life-changing education in a short length of time (one year or less) and equips these individuals with the training needed to enter a career field making a wage 30% above the living wage.
- The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) Trades Grants provides tuition assistance to students enrolled in the industrial trades under the Aspirations in Manufacturing (AIM) and KC Now programs. Students were offered courses in welding, manufacturing, HVAC, carpentry, and residential and commercial electricity during the first year of the grant. The College has received the grant for a second year and will be adding courses in automotive technology, science technology, and engineering this year.

## **COMMUNITY FEEDBACK**

President Evans opened the floor to the attendees to ask any questions and to provide feedback on issues related to the College. No questions were asked nor were any comments offered.

President Evans provided attendees with an update on the Nashville Education Center building and the exposed flooring and flood cut areas in the building. Construction of the

building began in 2014 and the grand opening was held in 2015. There have been HVAC concerns, humidity concerns, and leak concerns from day one which have not been addressed by the contractor and architect. An analysis completed by a third party identified defects in how the building was constructed. The College is finally close to reaching an agreement with the contractor and architect to rectify the building. President Evans assured attendees the College plans to continue operating the Nashville Education Center. Opportunities are being considered to grow evening enrollments and add more KC Now courses at the Education Center. Additional opportunities to use the building for regional institutions are also being discussed.

### **INTRODUCTION OF MIKE CHRISTENSEN – KC FOUNDATION UPDATE**

President Evans introduced Executive Director of Development Michael Christensen who provided an update on the Kaskaskia College Foundation. In calendar year 2023, the Foundation raised a record \$2,073,000 in support of Kaskaskia College students which allowed the Foundation to offer \$50,000 more in scholarships than previous years. In the 2023-2024 academic year, the Foundation awarded over \$361,000 in scholarships to Kaskaskia College students. The Foundation partners with the College in support of the KC Now program by covering 50% of tuition costs for students in this program. The Foundation offers wraparound support for students to address financial barriers they may encounter and provides funding to the college for vital equipment needed in the classrooms to train students to enter the workforce of local employers. Michael announced the annual Gala hosted by the Foundation is scheduled for November 16, 2024, on the main campus.

### **KC NOW PROGRAM AND AIM PROGRAM**

Provost and Vice President of Instructional Services Julie Obermark presented information on the KC Now program. The KC Now program involves dual enrollment courses that high school students can enroll in now for courses that are not offered by their high school. The classes are scheduled in the morning or afternoon during the student's regular school day and are taught by College faculty. Courses are offered in a variety of trade fields such as electrical wiring, and HVAC as well as courses such as childcare, nursing assistant, and business management. The KC Now program started with the 2021 academic year with four students and two schools participating in the electrical program offered at the Trenton Education Center. The program has grown every year. This Fall twenty-five KC Now students will be studying residential and commercial electricity. Automotive Technology and Cosmetology courses have been added to the KC Now program this year. High school students participating in KC Now this past academic year had a 100% success rate with 50% of those students enrolling at the College to continue their higher education. Of the remaining 50% of students, many of those students were juniors in high school who will be starting their senior year of high school this Fall.

Dean of Workforce Engagement & Industrial Career Services Joy Fitts introduced the Aspirations in Manufacturing (AIM) program. In advisory board meetings and meetings with manufacturers, local industry partners expressed concern over the lack of interest of high school students to enter careers in manufacturing and asked the College for help in addressing this concern. In response to this request, the College developed the AIM program which is a one-year program which introduces high school students to the trades. Industry partners in the district assisted the College with identifying courses a student would need to get an entry-level position. Industry partners felt the students need to know the

manufacturing process from start to finish and need to be aware of all the careers available in manufacturing. As a result of this collaboration, students take four manufacturing courses and one technical math course that focuses on measurements during the program. Students also tour local manufacturing facilities and receive mentoring from manufacturing representatives. At the end of the program the students are issued a manufacturing technology certificate and earn their OSHA 10 certification.

### **KC REGIONAL IMPACT AND REVIEW OF 2024 ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY**

President Evans presented highlights of the Economic Impact Study recently completed on FY2022-2023 data by Lightcast, a third-party entity, and provided handouts of some of the data used and the resulting analysis of that data. The Economic Impact Study is available on the College website.

- From an investment analysis point of view, for every \$1.00 invested in the College, the taxpayer receives a return on investment of \$1.10 in added tax revenue and public sector savings. For every \$1.00 students invest in their education, they receive a return of \$6.40 in higher future earnings. For every \$1.00 invested in KC in FY2022-2023, people in Illinois will receive \$5.60 in return, for as long as the College's FY2022-23 students remain active in the state workforce.
- Manufacturing, health care, agriculture, and retail (retail, fast food, storefront service) were the top four employers in the region. The study identified manufacturing to be the largest employer in the area with an average wage in five years of \$80,000. This information is used to correlate educational offerings in the planning process.
- During the review period, the College served 5,715 credit students and 572 non-credit students and employed 348 individuals.
- The average cost per semester at the College is \$2,600-\$2,800 resulting in a cost just under \$12,500 for a 2-year college degree providing substantial savings to the student and the student's parents.
- The impact of expenditures for the ongoing construction projects at the College was reported as \$2.8 million in added income or 41 jobs being supported by the College.

In closing, President Evans recognized Senator Terri Bryant and the representatives from Senator Severin and Senator Bryant's offices. President Evans commended the senators and other legislators in the College's district who have been advocates on behalf of community colleges and helped to secure funding for capital projects and budget allocations on behalf of the College.

Discussion ensued regarding future challenges to include the stigma of higher education, the differences of opinion with regard to the value of a 4-year degree and the cost of that education versus a career in the trades making a high wage with a 2-year degree; the value both community colleges and high schools provide individually to the education system; and the discrepancies in the appropriation of funds to higher education with the majority of funds being appropriated to universities versus community colleges.

Provost Obermark thanked the high school partners in attendance for their collaboration in meeting the educational needs of the students from the area high schools.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 1:08 p.m.

---

Chair, Board of Trustees  
Kaskaskia College

---

Secretary, Board of Trustees  
Kaskaskia College