

APPROVED MINUTES OF INFORMATION SESSION OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE
COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT OF THE COUNTY OF MACOMB

An open information session of the Board of Trustees of the Community College District of the County of Macomb was held Wednesday, December 18, 2024, at 6:00 p.m., in Room K315/317 of the John Lewis Conference Center, South Campus, 14500 E. Twelve Mile Road, Warren, Michigan.

1.0 CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Lorenzo at 6:18 p.m.

2.0 ROLL CALL

Present:

Katherine Lorenzo, Chairperson

Kristi Dean, Secretary

Roseanne DiMaria, Treasurer

Joan Flynn, Trustee

Vincent Viviano, Trustee, arrived at 6:58am

Absent:

Frank Cusumano, Vice Chairperson

Shelley Vitale, Trustee

Also present:

James Sawyer, President

Libby Argiri, Executive Vice President, Administration

Kevin Chandler, Vice President, College Advancement & Community Relations

Tiffany Goliday, Executive Director, IDEA

Carrie Jeffers, Vice President, Student Services

Leslie Kellogg, Provost, Vice President of the Learning Unit

William Leavens, Chief of College Police

Deb Mende, Executive Director, Office of the President

Jeffrey Steele, General Counsel, Office of General Counsel

Patsy Tannahill, Executive Assistant to the President and Board of Trustees

3.0 APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION by DiMaria, supported by Flynn, to approve the agenda as presented.

ALL IN FAVOR:

AYES: DiMaria, Flynn, Dean, Lorenzo

NAYS:

ABSENT: Cusumano, Vitale, Viviano

MOTION CARRIED.

4.0 AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

None.

5.0 REVIEW OF AGENDA ITEMS AND MATERIALS

None.

6.0 ISSUES AND UPDATES

6.1 President's Report

Closed Session

We do need to have closed session with the BOT pursuant to MCL 15.268.A., MCL 15.268.C. and 15.268.E., to discuss a personnel matter and collective bargaining.

Enrollment Update

As of Monday Winter, 2025 credit hours are up 3.7% compared to last year, headcount is up 4.5%.

"Received" Financial Assistance programs, enrollment for Winter 2025:

- Macomb Tuition Advantage Program: 2172 registered for 12+ credits, current receiving 238
- MI Reconnect: 1548 eligible, 554 receiving
- MI Reconnect 21-24: 865 registered, 519 receiving
- Community College: Guarantee: 1299 registered for 12+ credits , current receiving 535

Personnel

The hiring recommendations include two full-time faculty positions and one administrative role. The faculty positions are for the Licensed Practical Nursing program, which is a new offering, and for Automotive Service. Additionally, the administrative role is for an Associate Dean of Dental Science.

7.3 - 2024/25 Revised Operating Budget

Tonight, Gerri Pianko, director of Budget and Grants, will present the mid-year revised operating budget for 2024/25. We are proud to share that the budget remains balanced. During the presentation, Gerri will highlight the revenue and expense changes that have been incorporated into the budget since its initial approval by the Board last May.

7.4 – Single Audit Report

Rehmann has issued the single audit report, which is listed as agenda item 7.4. As you may recall, the issuance of this report was delayed due to the completion of the student fraud investigation. We are pleased to report that the audit found no issues related to the fraud, and a clean, unqualified opinion has been issued regarding our federal grants.

Administrative – Information Items

None.

Purchases

None.

Administrative – Action Items

Agenda item 11.4 involves the reconstruction of South Campus Parking Lots 2 and 3, with an estimated cost of \$7,500,000. This significant expense is attributed to the large size of the lots and the necessary

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drainage improvements, which will not only support the lots themselves but also address drainage needs for other areas of the campus.

Student Fraud

The college will be launching a new reporting form for faculty and staff to report suspected student fraud to the Fraud Taskforce, which will investigate and take appropriate action based on their findings. Additionally, SAFE, an AI software tool designed to identify potential fraudulent applications, went live on December 10th. This tool adds another layer of protection against student fraud and helps prevent fake students from registering. As of last week, 383 students have been asked to verify their identity.

Lawsuit – Kreck

Some good news. A federal court granted our motion to dismiss one of the counts in the case brought by Madison Kreck, a former police academy cadet, against the college. The ruling limits the college's exposure, as well as the scope of the lawsuit. The lawsuit will now enter the discovery phase. General Counsel Steele is available to answer any questions.

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA) Update

Chairs from strategic plan 2025 strategies 1, 2 and 6 have come together to develop a new objective aimed at improving the educational persistence gap prevalent among Black and African American students at Macomb. Through this collaboration, members across all three strategies will come together to create action plan items for mitigating and improving the persistence rate from fall to fall for this demographic.

In addition, as part of Strategy 6, Objective 1, in collaboration with faculty, students, and staff, new and updated materials have been ordered for the reflection rooms at Center and South campuses. The spaces are being updated with new signage and students and employees are welcome to use these rooms for prayer, meditation, and mindfulness. The reflection rooms are in South Campus J and Center Campus C buildings.

D3C3 Update

Eliminating the focus on Mobility, the colleges have been directed to contribute to a concept paper that Michigan Community College Association (MCCA) is preparing to repurpose the funds under D3C3 for initiatives that add value to the college and focus on middle-skill, middle-wage jobs. Considering the shift in the electric vehicle (EV) space, Macomb is exploring the expansion of apprenticeships in Business and IT to align with these emerging opportunities.

Emergency Management Preparation

On December 2, Chief Leavens led a "Tabletop" Cyber Attack simulation, marking our first tabletop emergency planning session in many years. The session went well, and we were able to identify multiple opportunities for improvement. Moving forward, we will hold additional tabletop exercises to continue enhancing our preparedness.

Healthcare Apprenticeships

On November 21, Health and Public Service hosted "Partnerships for a Successful Health Care Apprenticeship". The event attracted employers and community partners with over fifty attendees and featured guest speakers from the Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship, Michigan Department

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of Labor and Economic Opportunity, Macomb/St. Clair Michigan Works!, and the Health Career Advancement Program (HCAP). The event included an employer panel discussion from eight employers who have established a Registered Apprenticeship Program with the US DOL to share best practices, opportunities to utilize the apprenticeship model as a workforce development strategy, and how employers address challenges & barriers within their workforce. The event concluded with discussion about next steps and pre apprenticeships as a workforce development strategy to prepare the future workforce to engage in a successful apprenticeship.

Dual Enrollment in CTE

The Utica Community Schools Career and Technical Education (CTE) welding Dual Enrollment program has been so successful after its first semester that Utica is doubling enrollment by adding a second cohort of welding students, starting in January. Our program is now up to thirty-eight students, who will be taking a total of 152 credits in the 2025WI semester. We anticipate continued growth in future semesters.

Credentialing Campaign

Records & Registration has launched a credentialing campaign using enhanced technologies to identify students who earned but did not receive a credential before leaving the college. Phase one focused on auditing recent students who had earned Associate of Arts and Science degrees, resulting in over one hundred students opting in to receive their credentials. In Winter 2025, the efforts will expand to target students who stopped attending 3-5 years ago, with this population needing to opt out if they do not wish to receive their degree.

Michigan Maritime Manufacturing Initiative (M3) aka Navy Sub Industrial Base project

On November 12, twenty-four students started the M3 Navy program, with 100% of them registering and attending. The Navy noted that this achievement is significant, as ATDM has not accomplished this level of participation in over three years, despite pulling students nationally.

Art Experience

On November 15, art professor Julie Lambert took thirteen art students on a field trip to the College for Creative Studies, where a wood kiln firing event was held. Ceramic students and artists were invited to participate by having their work fired in the special kiln environment, giving students the opportunity to actively engage in tending the kiln during shifts throughout the firing cycle.

Macomb Expressions (a Capella group)

Todd Moses, Director of Choral Activities and leader of the elite Contemporary A Cappella Ensemble, The Expressions, has once again been selected to compete in the International Competition for Collegiate A Cappella. Macomb is the only community college invited to join forty-nine other universities in this prestigious event. President Sawyer had the opportunity to attend an Expressions performance on December 8 at the home of Donna and Mark Nuytten, the winners of the Comedy & Cocktails auction item. The group performed for about 30 minutes, delivering an excellent show, and even more impressively, stayed afterward to interact with the guests.

MICareerQuest

MICareerQuest, held on November 19, 2024, was attended by over 8,000 students and teachers from 114 high schools across six counties. The event, hosted at the Suburban Collection Showplace in Novi, is

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the region's largest interactive career exploration event. Our interactive demonstrations highlighted real-world applications and careers, inspiring students to consider high-demand, high-skill, high-wage career paths. Additionally, we made valuable connections with faculty from several local high schools, who expressed interest in future outreach opportunities.

Winter Season Celebration

On December 6, we hosted a Winter Season Celebration for all college staff, with approximately three hundred staff members attending. The event received very positive feedback from attendees, highlighting its success in bringing the staff together to celebrate the season.

Holiday Celebration for Trustees

A celebration will be hosted in SK following the regular board meeting tonight.

Commencement

On December 13, we held our 111th commencement at the Sports & Expo Center with approximately 350 students and their friends and family participating in the ceremony.

Anonymous Complaint Letter

Trustee Cusumano forwarded an anonymous complaint letter to President Sawyer and the trustees on December 11 via email.

Chairperson Lorenzo asked President Sawyer if he thought it would be best to wait until Trustee Cusumano was in attendance to hear President Sawyer's response. President Sawyer stated when these issues come to the trustees, trustees do not have individual power other than through the chair. While Trustee Cusumano needs to hear President Sawyer's response, President Sawyer believes it important to respond to the allegations promptly. President Sawyer thought he owed the trustees and the board a timely response. The anonymous letter makes strong accusations, and he wants to go on record to make clear that the accusations are unfounded.

General Counsel Steele added that President Sawyer's comments would be in the minutes, and Trustee Cusumano will be able to read them and ask any follow up questions at the next meeting.

Trustee Flynn asked if it was proper that Trustee Cusumano was not in attendance to hear President's Sawyer's response. President Sawyer stated that is Trustee Cusumano's prerogative. President Sawyer does not want to pick and choose topics based on which Trustees are in attendance, which is inappropriate in his opinion.

The anonymous letter contained several allegations, which President Sawyer addressed by stating:

The letter implies lack of transparency sharing the PACE survey, which includes an assessment of morale. As the board knows, we periodically evaluate employee morale, among other things, with a college-wide PACE survey. The survey was concluded on November 13, 2024, and the results are currently being compiled and finalized. We will be analyzing and sharing the results with the board in the Spring, as planned, just like we did with our last PACE survey in 2018. So, while the complaint letter suggests the Board review the survey

results, you will definitely have that opportunity. We also post the results for the entire college community to see. The 2018 results are still posted on My Macomb.

The letter claims that the sidewalk poured at CJ building was torn up weeks later to pave the parking lot. During the renovation of CJ building, we encountered two issues with the sidewalk. One with poor workmanship, in which a portion of the sidewalk was replaced by the contractor at no cost to the college. The other issue was ADA accessibility and curb height. To ensure safe accessibility for our students and employees, a section of the sidewalk and curb was replaced. This would have happened regardless of the parking lot. The additional cost was \$5,000 and within the project budget.

The letter speculates without evidence that supplies might be at risk because there is "no inventory of supplies in plant operations." It should be noted, however, that we do not keep a large supply of construction supplies on-site. Our inventory is quite small as materials are generally purchased on a just-in-time basis for specific projects. So, it is not like there is this massive inventory of stuff available to steal. Also, the inventory of supplies we do keep are overseen and monitored by skilled trades chiefs and foremen (8 in total) in their work areas. We have conducted an internal investigation, and we have no evidence that materials have been stolen or misappropriated. Requested materials go through several reviews and approvals prior to purchase, including up to the VP level for renovation projects. All invoices are processed and paid through Accounts Payable.

The letter speculates a barn was built at a residence of an administrator from Macomb supplies. An internal investigation was conducted, and it has been confirmed that an administrator is building a barn. The administrator fully cooperated with the college and the design, order and receipts of the construction materials were reviewed in detail. Not only did the administrator pay for the materials, but the construction also included materials that are not typically used by the college such as 2x6 studs (college uses 2x4's) and OSB board (college uses standard plywood). There is no evidence that any materials were sourced from college supplies.

The letter claims a toxic environment at the institution. A college with 1,500 staff will have some unhappy staff. I was hearing concerns related to Human Resources and we reorganized that area to help address the concerns. Anecdotally, we had our winter celebration a couple of weeks ago and there were several hundred attendees and there was no sign of toxic culture. In addition, our turnover is low. If the environment is so bad more staff should be leaving.

The letter claims that numerous qualified employees leave and that it will only increase. Employee turnover remains low. Most employees leaving the college

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do so for retirement rather than another job. Although there are instances of disgruntled/unhappy employees leaving the college.

Contrary to the allegation, the college has not banned the use of the word holiday.

President Sawyer stated to the trustees that requests for information and for the college administration to take action must come through the Chairperson. Administration cannot be directed by an individual trustee via email. Trustees can ask Chairperson Lorenzo to take action, or they can act at the board meeting to instruct us to take action, and we will comply. However, individual trustees do not have the authority to make such requests through email. Regarding complaints, while they do not come up often, it is important to keep an open mind. All credible complaints need to be looked at and investigated. Some complaints are accurate, and we address and fix those issues. Others may not be, and it is crucial to avoid jumping to conclusions before a full investigation is conducted.

President Sawyer emphasized that the leadership is committed to transparency. Since he became president, transparency has been a core value, and it is something the leadership team feels strongly about. He reassured the trustees that there are no "gotcha" moments; if issues arise, they will be communicated and addressed as best as possible.

Chairperson Lorenzo stated that the letter asks for copies of things and wanted to know if anything had been sent. President Sawyer stated nothing had been sent.

Chairperson Lorenzo asks specifically about the police report. President Sawyer stated there is no police report, the college did not seek a police report.

Chief Leavens stated while looking at the letter and the internal review there was no evidence that there was any wrongdoing, or that a crime had been committed. A police department has to have a crime to investigate or some kind of evidence to look into. A police department does not come in and execute internal investigations when there is no evidence of a crime. The organization has to provide evidence that things are missing, misleading or misplaced and that is presented to the agency and then an investigation can begin which may lead to criminal charges. Chief Leavens reiterated there is no evidence in this case to lead to an investigation.

Chairperson Lorenzo stated that no one trustee can make requests, it is in the board of trustee's bylaws. Chairperson Lorenzo was offended by the requests and tone of the email and the liberties that were taken. Chairperson Lorenzo reiterated that the board's name was at the top of letter and all the trustees are included in this now. Chairperson Lorenzo stated she has questions to ask Trustee Cusumano, specifically how he came to receive the letter.

January BOT Meeting

Purchases:

- Ventilator System – Perkins funded
- Syllabus Management Software
- MCPA/LCC Website
- Penetration testing contract renewal

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- Servo-U Ventilator System (Perkins Funding)
- Cisco Network Switches, just over \$2.6 million, which includes hardware, software, licensing, subscriptions warranty and professional services. We are currently analyzing a currently available 0% financing option to spread payment over 5 years.

Administrative:

- College-wide security camera upgrade - \$2.5 million
- Lease for South Campus M building temporary relocation for 3 years during renovation assuming the college receives construction authorization from the State. The cost is estimated to \$2.6 million.
- Tuition and fee recommendation for the 2025/26 academic year

Presentation Tonight

Revised 2024-2025 General Fund Budget – Gerri Pianko, director of Budget and Grants.

6.2 Revised 2024-2025 General Fund Budget

Gerri Pianko, director, Budget and Grants presented an overview of the 2024/2025 revised general fund budget to the board of trustees.

Questions:

Trustee Flynn inquired about the number of current vacancies. Director Pianko responded that there are currently fifty vacancies.

7.0 CLOSED SESSION

MOTION by Flynn, supported by Viviano, to go into closed session pursuant to MCL 15.268 (a), MCL 15.268 (c), MCL 15.268 (e), to discuss personnel matters and collective bargaining.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

AYES: Flynn, Viviano, Dean, DiMaria, Lorenzo

NAYS:

ABSENT: Cusumano, Vitale

MOTION CARRIED.

8.0 ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Viviano, supported by Dean, to adjourn the meeting.

MOTION CARRIED.

The meeting adjourned at 7:41 p.m.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT OF THE COUNTY OF MACOMB BOARD OF TRUSTEES


Secretary