

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MEETING MINUTES  
KASKASKIA COLLEGE - COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT 501  
GREENVILLE EDUCATION CENTER  
TUESDAY – JULY 16, 2024**

**WELCOME**

Provost and Vice President of Instructional Services Julie Obermark opened the meeting at 12:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone to the Community Engagement Meeting. Provost Obermark then turned the meeting over to President Evans who participated remotely.

Student Trustee Connor Wademan was in attendance.

Kaskaskia College employees present included Cary Day, George Evans, Sandi Laurent, Colton Leidner, Julie Obermark, Staci Palm, Karol Potter, and Byron Shanks.

Community members in attendance included Kathy Hanke, Amanda Hustedde, Mark Jenner, Paul Johnston, Jeff Leidel, Elaine McNamara, Tonya Roberts, Laura Stine, Bailey Tate, and Bill Walker.

Media present were Jeff Leidel and Elaine McNamara of WGEL Radio.

**INTRODUCTIONS**

Those in attendance introduced themselves.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Provost Obermark led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**STATE OF KASKASKIA COLLEGE UPDATE**

**ENROLLMENT UPDATE**

President Evans 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).

President Evans reported a two-year degree at Kaskaskia College currently costs a little less than \$12,500. A large portion of degrees earned at the College transfer to over 30 institutions in the multi-state area with over 200 articulation agreements in place.

## **NEW PROGRAMS UPDATE**

Provost Obermark presented information on two new certificate programs being added at the College. Feedback received from Community Engagement Meetings, advisory board meetings, and industry partners identified a need for training in these two areas.

- The Hybrid and Electric Vehicle Technology Certificate program began last year as a trial period with two students. The program will be open to all students with the Fall 2025 semester (August 2024). 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 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.

Both certificates can be earned in a year or less which is what industry has requested. The certificates can also be coupled with a degree. Students earning an Automotive Technology degree can add the Hybrid and Electric Vehicle Certificate and students earning a Plant & Soil Science degree can add the Precision Agriculture Certificate to their credentials.

- Provost Obermark and Professor Byron Shanks also provided highlights of the Megatronics certificate program which is offered to the female population at the Greenville Federal Corrections Institution (FCI) through a partnership between the College and the FCI. The program allows female residents to receive a certificate in Megatronics which is similar to industrial technology. The certificate assists the residents with rehabilitation and with procuring employment upon release. A success story was shared regarding a student of the program who was offered a position with a manufacturer within one hour of her interview due to her familiarity with the CNC blades used in the program.

## **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.
- President Evans reported the renovations on the main campus continue to progress. The main campus was in dire need of an upgrade from a student-centered aspect as well as from a heating and cooling and safety aspect. Contractors are finalizing renovations to the classroom-centric areas with final work in the Science and Technology Building to be completed by the start of the Fall semester in August. The last project will be the Gymnasium. The College will host a ribbon cutting once the renovations are completed.
- Mental health issues among students have increased substantially since the pandemic. The College now offers students and staff 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.

- President Evans referred to page 15 of the Report which provides a snapshot of the College's economic impact to the district. Rarely is there a positive net return on an investment for a publicly funded education. Based on data analyzed for the year 2022-2023, from an investment analysis point of view, for every \$1.00 invested in the College, the taxpayer received a return on investment of \$1.10 in added tax revenue and public sector savings.
- President Evans explained the differences between dual credit courses and dual enrollment courses. The College is committed to helping high school students achieve their academic goals by offering dual credit and dual enrollment courses to area high school students. Statistics show one in five high school students in Illinois are enrolled in dual credit courses. The College waives all dual credit tuition which represents substantial cost savings in tuition for students and parents in the district.

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

- Provost Obermark presented information on the KC Now Program which is the dual enrollment program offered by the College. Through this program students in their junior or senior year of high school can take college courses with College faculty. Some courses are available online, some are offered on the main campus, and some are offered at the Education Centers. The KC Now Program started in the Fall of 2020 with the Residential and Commercial Electricity Program at the Trenton Education Center with four students from two different high schools. The KC Now Residential and Commercial Electricity Program is full for the Fall semester with twenty-five students enrolled. The KC Now Program has been expanded this year to offer additional programs in criminal justice, cosmetology, healthcare courses, and college-level general education courses such as English and History. Approximately seventy students from eleven of the seventeen high schools in the College district are enrolled in KC Now courses for the Fall semester.
- The Aspirations in Manufacturing (AIM) Program is part of the KC Now Program. The AIM Program started last year. 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 courses during the program: three manufacturing courses and one technical math course that focuses on measurements. 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.

## **GRANT SUCCESSES**

The College has been successful in receiving \$16,000,000 in state and federal grants in the 2023-2024 academic year. President Evans spoke about two of those grants:

- 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. The College received almost \$600,000 for this grant during the 2023-2024 year. 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) Program 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.

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

- President Evans advised Michael Christensen has served as the Executive Director of Development overseeing the Kaskaskia College Foundation for the past year. In Michael's absence, President Evans provided an update on the Kaskaskia College Foundation. The Foundation partners with the College in support of the KC Now Program by covering 50% of tuition costs for students in the program. The Foundation also offers wraparound support for students to address financial barriers. The Foundation provides the funding for the unrestricted fund from which students who may not qualify for financial aid can receive financial assistance in the form of scholarships. Specific information on the amount of funds raised the total dollars given in scholarships can be found in the President's Report to the Community.
- The annual Gala hosted by the Foundation is scheduled for November 16, 2024, on the main campus.

## **RECOGNITION OF SENIOR LEADERSHIP**

- 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.

## **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.

- Attendees thanked the College for partnering with the Greenville FCI to offer the Megatronics program as it has been a successful program for the female residents graduating from the program. The graduation ceremony hosted by the College and

services offered by the Cosmetology Program prior to the ceremony were very meaningful to all involved.

**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. The study assesses the district’s economy and the benefits generated by the College to the student, taxpayer, and society.

- Manufacturing, health care, agriculture, and retail (retail, fast food, storefront service) were the top four employers in the region. The Manufacturing sector is the largest employer, supporting 6,600 jobs or 10.9% of total employment in the district, with an average wage in five years of \$80,000. This information is used in planning process to correlate educational offerings. There has been a higher emphasis by the institution on manufacturing and introducing individuals in our district to manufacturing. This is an example of how the College is meeting the needs of the communities it services.
- The Economic Impact Study is available on the College website. President Evans encouraged attendees to refer to this data for information on the makeup of the region and when trying to track new business.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 12:58 p.m.

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Chair, Board of Trustees  
Kaskaskia College

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Secretary, Board of Trustees  
Kaskaskia College