



Board of Trustees Half-Day Retreat Meeting Minutes

Holyoke Community College

November 5, 2024 at 8:00 AM EST

In Person, Frost 309, The Learning Collaborative

Attendance

Trustees Present:

Julius Dixon, Ted Hebert, Ivonne Vidal, Interim Chair Vanessa Smith, Sonia Dinnall, Charles Epstein, and Nayroby Rosa

Trustees Absent:

Evan Plotkin and Todd McGee, and Yolanda Johnson

In Person Guests:

Sharale Mathis, Mayra Diaz, Amanda Sbriscia, and George Timmons

MEETING

Call to Order: Trustee Vidal called the meeting of the Holyoke Community College Board of Trustees Half-Day Retreat to order at 8:19 am.

I. Introductions

Trustee Vidal explained the purpose of the retreat: to address challenges and enhance trustee participation, ensuring the Board's strengths are aligned. The goal is to foster a cohesive and active approach to governance.

II. NECHE 5th Year Interim Report

Dr. Sharale Mathis, Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, presented the presentation below on the NECHE 5th Year Interim Report, focusing on Standard 3: Organization & Governance.

ACADEMIC
AND STUDENT
AFFAIRS

ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS

Board of Trustees Retreat - 11/05/2024
NECHE 5th Year Interim Report
Standard 3 Organization & Governance

ACADEMIC
AND STUDENT
AFFAIRS

HOLYOKE
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE

ACADEMIC
AND STUDENT
AFFAIRS

NECHE: 2020 Self Study

- By statute, the BOT is charged with **four** broad categories of authority and responsibility: **personnel, fiscal, academic, and general authority**.
- The BOT approves all appointments and dismissals, as well as tenure, promotion and sabbatical decisions and personnel actions as part of every BOT meeting.
- The BOT carries out its fiduciary responsibilities primarily through the BOT Audit and Finance Committee, and through its approval of monthly finance reports and annual approval of the budget and student fees. The BOT Audit and Finance Committee is charged with balancing the College's annual budget.

HOLYOKE
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE



NECHE: 2020 Self Study

- The BOT conducts its work through standing committees that include: Advocacy; Audit and Finance; Bylaws and Governance; Nominating; Presidential Evaluation; Strategic Plan; and Equity, which was added in AY2019-20.
- The BOT chair has authority to create committees of the BOT when warranted. In order to promote accountability and dialogue, beginning in FY2020 all committees are required to report out at every BOT meeting.
- The Bylaws Committee has been recently charged with reviewing and making recommendations for revisions to the bylaws, which have not been updated since 1981.



NECHE: 2020 Self Study

- The BOT created a new Strategic Plan committee. In spring 2020, the Strategic Plan committee approved a purpose statement to: "Monitor the progress of the FY2019-22 Strategic Plan, and provide guidance and/or support to the Strategic Plan implementation teams when requested, in areas of funding, partnerships and policy."
- Similarly, an Equity Committee was convened in January 2020 to promote conversations between the BOT and the campus community about equity.





NECHE: 2020 Evaluation Team Report

- In interviews with members of the BOT, we found a **shared understanding** of the roles that the BOT plays in the governance of the institution.
- Interviews also show how the “**organizational structure, decision-making processes, and policies are clear and consistent** with its mission and support institutional effectiveness.”
- In interviews with board members, they report that the professional development of board members includes statewide training that highlights trends in higher education *but there is no formal program for the local board.*



NECHE: 2020 Evaluation Team Report

- In regards to self-evaluation the board feels that while no formal process currently exists, but stated, “they are doing a good job”. **Assessment of their effectiveness is on the agenda for an upcoming board meeting.**
- There is “**robust intentional communication**” between the board and chief executive with a focus on key metrics and data. Weekly zoom meetings with the chief executive and board chair are part of a “great working relationship”.





NECHE: The College's Response

- The total overhaul of the HCC Foundation and Alumni Council's internal governance processes will serve as models for the newly established governance committee of the HCC Board of Trustees.



NECHE: The Commission's Letter

- We look forward, through the Fall 2025 interim report, to receiving an update on the College's success in this area along with evidence that "[t]he effectiveness of the institution's organizational structure and system of governance is improved through regular and systematic review" (3.19).
- Our standard on Organization and Governance will further guide this portion of the report:
 - The institution's organizational structure, decision-making processes, and policies are clear and consistent with its mission and support institutional effectiveness.
 - The institution's system of governance involves the participation of all appropriate constituencies and includes regular communication among them (3.2).





NECHE: Standard 3 Governing Board

- 3.3 The governing board is the legally constituted body ultimately responsible for the institution's quality and integrity. Where the institution's ownership or affiliation structure or other circumstances or requirements may involve more than one legally constituted body with authority, the institution demonstrates that the governing body with direct responsibility for the institution's quality and integrity has sufficient autonomy and control to be held accountable for meeting the Commission's Standards and to ensure that it can act in the institution's best interest and that the legally constituted bodies with authority have an aligned understanding of their respective roles.
- 3.4 The board assures representation of the public interest in its composition and reflects the areas of competence needed to fulfill its responsibilities. Two-thirds or more of the board members, including the chair, are free of any personal or immediate familial financial interest in the institution, including as employee, stockholder or shareholder, corporate director, or contractor.



NECHE: Standard 3 Governing Board

- 3.5 Members of the governing board understand, accept, and fulfill their responsibilities as fiduciaries to act honestly and in good faith in the best interest of the institution toward the achievement of its educational purposes in a manner free from conflicts of interest.
- 3.7 The board has a clear understanding of the institution's distinctive mission and exercises the authority to ensure the realization of institutional mission and purposes. The board approves and reviews institutional policies; monitors the institution's fiscal condition; and approves major new initiatives, assuring that they are compatible with institutional mission and capacity. These policies are developed in consultation with appropriate constituencies. The board assures that the institution periodically reviews its success in fulfilling its mission and serving its students. The Board is effective in helping the institution make strategic decisions and confront unforeseen circumstances. It regularly reviews the institution's systems of enterprise risk management, external audits, regulatory compliance, internal controls, and contingency management. The board assures appropriate attention is given to succession planning for institutional leadership and, where applicable, the composition of the board itself.





NECHE: Standard 3 Governing Board

- 3.8 The board systematically develops, ensures, and enhances its own effectiveness through orientation, professional development, effective self-assessment, and regular evaluation including an external perspective. The board addresses its goals for diversity within its membership. Its role and functions are effectively carried out through appropriate committees and meetings.
- 3.9 Utilizing the institutional governance structure, the board establishes and maintains appropriate and productive channels of communication among its members and with the institutional community.
- 3.10 The board appoints and periodically reviews the performance of the chief executive officer whose full-time or major responsibility is to the institution.



NECHE: Standard 3 Governing Board

- 3.11 The board delegates to the chief executive officer and, as appropriate, to others the requisite authority and autonomy to manage the institution compatible with the board's intentions and the institution's mission. In exercising its fiduciary responsibility, the governing board assures that senior officers identify, assess, and manage risks and ensure regulatory compliance.





NECHE: How are we doing? Evidence

- Is there a formal onboarding and training program for new Board members? Training for current board members? If not, what are the plans to move forward?
- Has an assessment plan been developed for Board self-evaluation? If not, what are the plans to move forward?
- Have the bylaws been reviewed, revised and approved by the Board? If not, what work is still to be done?
- Is there still a “robust intentional communication” between the Board and Chief Executive with a focus on key metrics and data? Are there still weekly zoom meetings with the Chief Executive and Board Chair? If not, what is the new format? Is it as effective & robust as emphasized by the evaluation team?



NECHE: How are we doing? Evidence

- Is there a strategic plan for the Board guiding its goals and work? Is the Strategic Plan Committee monitoring the college's plan?
- Is the work of the Equity Committee progressing?
- Is the current process for evaluation of the chief executive consistent, effective and inclusive?



**ACADEMIC
AND STUDENT
AFFAIRS**

NECHE: How are we doing?

- Let's review the recent survey...

HOLYOKE
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE

AND STUDENT
AFFAIRS

**ACADEMIC
AND STUDENT
AFFAIRS**

HOLYOKE
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE

ACADEMIC
AND STUDENT

III. Trustee Expectations and Discussion

Board Visibility and Engagement

- Trustees discussed strategies for increasing visibility on campus.
 - Clear instructions for new board members, including required trainings (e.g., conflict of interest, annual statewide trustee meetings).
 - A proposed yearly schedule of events for board members to attend outside of Commencement.
 - A calendar view showing trustee participation in events, which could be incorporated into the agenda.
 - Suggestions for board members to attend classes, participate in student interviews, and engage with the student radio station.
 - Professional photos (headshots/group shots) of board members for the website, with an option for students to interview trustees to create profiles.
 - Consideration for joint meetings between the board, cabinet, and student senators, including an end-of-year meeting with the student senate.

HCC Committee Participation

- The Board discussed the value of trustees actively participating in committees. Trustees should receive a detailed list of committees with descriptions and yearly schedules, allowing them to choose committees based on their skills or interests. Trustee Hebert highlighted the value of serving on the scholarship evaluation committee as an opportunity to learn more about the student body.

Meeting Modality and Times

- A discussion took place regarding the current meeting modality and times. Several options were considered, with the idea that shifting the meeting times and modalities could help with recruiting new members.

Transitioning Board and Communication

- A plan was discussed for transitioning the board due to the upcoming election of a new Chair and President. Robust communication strategies were emphasized, with suggestions to implement annual assessments, along with smaller periodic evaluations, to measure the Board's effectiveness and ensure they are on the right path.

Board Vision and Consulting Firm

- The Board discussed the importance of developing a clear vision, which could be refined with the assistance of a consulting firm. This would help establish a process for both new and existing trustees and provide a roadmap for continuous improvement, with periodic reviews to adjust best practices as necessary.

Summer Retreat

- It was proposed that the next summer retreat be held off-campus, with a focus on engaging students and attracting new board members. Trustees agreed that a consulting firm could assist in

developing the Board’s vision, enhancing its function, and improving its visibility on campus.
Proposed summer retreat for June 2025.

IV. Trustee Assessment Results Discussion

- Trustee Vidal provided a quick overview of the assessment results, which will be discussed in detail at a later date.

V. Topics Not Covered

- Trustee Committee Work
- New Trustee Orientation Discussion

VI. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:01 pm and lunch was provided to go.

Respectfully submitted,

DocuSigned by:
Mayra Diaz 1/28/2025
0560806476274DC...
Mayra Diaz for Karen Desjeans, Board Liaison

Mayra Diaz

Executive Assistant

DocuSigned by:
Vanessa L. Smith 2/2/2025
59C67665F5494E3...

Vanessa L. Smith

Interim Board Chair