



**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Special Meeting**

**Minutes
August 15, 2024**

A meeting/retreat of the Ocean County College Board of Trustees was called to order at 1:03 p.m. on Thursday, August 15, 2024, by Mr. Jerry Dasti, Chair, in Room 102 of the Conference Center on the College campus and via Webex.

Call to Order

The announcement of public meeting was made by Ms. Connie Bello in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act of 1975. This special meeting was announced on August 1, 2024, as required by the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act, by providing adequate notice to the Asbury Park Press, the Atlantic City Press, the Ocean County Clerk, and the College community. The notice indicated this meeting would also be held via Webex, as per New Jersey Public Law 2020, Chapter 11, approved on March 20, 2020, for public bodies to conduct meetings by electronic means.

Public Meeting
Announcement

All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Those in attendance were Mr. Dasti, Mrs. Linda Novak, Mr. Stephan Leone, Mr. Robert Fall, Ms. DiAnne Gove, Mrs. Joanne Pehlivanian, Ms. Cheyenne Severin. Also in attendance were Mr. Mathew Thompson, Commissioner Virginia Haines, Vice President Jerry Racioppi, Vice President Joseph Konopka, Dr. Pamela Monaco, and Ms. Connie Bello. Special guests were Mr. Michael Citta, Superintendent of Toms River Regional Schools; Dr. Thomas Farrell, Superintendent of Brick Schools; Ms. Nicole Pormilli, Superintendent of Jackson Schools; Ms. Susan Naples, Interim Executive Superintendent of Ocean County Schools; and Mr. Thomas Gialanella, Educational Partnerships Associate.

Attendance

Mr. Dasti and Dr. Monaco welcomed the superintendents to the Board meeting and introductions were made. Dr. Monaco thanked Mr. Gialanella for his assistance in coordinating this meeting and noted the goal was to learn from the superintendents the demographic changes they are experiencing within their school districts and to explore ways in which the College and the school districts can work closer together to meet the needs of the Ocean County community.

The superintendents shared that there has been a significant paradigm shift in their districts in the past several years. The number of English Language Learners (ELL) has dramatically increased in Brick Township schools from 90 four years ago to over 690 this year. The very significant decrease in state and federal funding to public schools is especially burdensome given that it costs three to four times the average per-student cost to ensure that ELL students receive the resources they need to succeed.

Many challenges need to be addressed to serve ELL students, the first of which is to break the stigma about community colleges, as many parents are unfamiliar with two-year colleges and need to be made aware of the many benefits available to their children and themselves. It is imperative that more emphasis be placed on identifying ways to reach the parents, especially before the students leave high school. Significant other challenges are having the ability to correctly determine the level of instruction the students require; employing bilingual instructors who can create a welcoming and supportive environment in the classrooms; and assisting the students with funding college through scholarships, grants, and work programs.

It is also extremely important to recognize the responsibilities of these students. Many live in transient environments or multi-family and foster-family homes. They are very often responsible for younger siblings because their parents work, they are working part- or full-time jobs, and they do not begin their homework until after midnight.

It was suggested that a committee be formed to continue brainstorming to develop creative solutions to promote student and parent interest in college. Some of the suggestions were:

- Share data as needed
- Discuss joint recruitment efforts
- Offer college work programs
- Partner with local Chambers of Commerce
- Offer professional development for high school and College instructors and employees
- Lobby the Governor for additional Title III and state funding for ELL students
- Determine with Commissioner Ginny Haines how the County can support these efforts
- Bring events for parents and students to campus, such as OCC Hispanic Heritage Day
- Reach out to high schools with more exciting programs to unite the school and College communities

Mr. Citta, Dr. Farrell, and Ms. Pormilli thanked the trustees for inviting them to meet. The superintendents and the trustees are united in their desire to collaborate in any way to alleviate the burden on ELL students. The public schools and the College share the goal of preparing these students for productive adult lives.

The superintendents noted that Mr. Gialanella attends all of the County superintendents' monthly meetings, so he has kept them apprised of OCC's programs and projects. They have enjoyed his expertise as a former superintendent and as a College administrator.

Mr. Dasti requested comments or inquiries from members of the public before moving to a closed session, and none were received.

Public Comments

At 2:00 p.m., a resolution was introduced and unanimously adopted by the trustees to move into a closed session to discuss personnel issues. It was estimated that the closed session would be no longer than ninety minutes, after which the public meeting would resume and adjourn.

Resolution Adopted for Closed Meeting

At 2:45 p.m., the public meeting resumed. The next meeting of the Board was announced to be Thursday, August 22, 2024, at 3:30 p.m. in the Conference Center, Building 10, and via Webex.

Public Meeting Resumed

With no further comments from the Board members or the public, the public meeting adjourned at 2:46 p.m.

Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,

Stephan R. Leone
Secretary

Connie Bello
Assistant to the President and
Secretary to the Board of Trustees