

SOLANO COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT
GOVERNING BOARD

UNADOPTED MINUTES
Governing Board Retreat
February 20, 2009

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Board Meeting Retreat of the Solano Community College District Governing Board was called to order at 1:35 p.m., on Friday, February 20, 2009, in the Administration Building, Room 626, Solano Community College, 4000 Suisun Valley Road, Fairfield, California 94534-3197, by Board President A. Marie Young.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

At the request of Board President Young, Dr. Barbara A. Beno, President of ACCJC, led those present in the pledge of allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.

3. ROLL CALL

Members Present:

A. Marie Young, President
Denis Honeychurch, J.D., Vice President
James M. Claffey
Pam Keith
Phil McCaffrey
Stephen Murphy, J.D.
Rosemary Thurston
David R. Brannen, Student Trustee
Tom Henry, Special Trustee
Lisa J. Waits, Ed.D., Interim Secretary

Members Absent:

None

Others Present:

Barbara A. Beno, Ph.D., President, ACCJC
Ross Beck, Director of Public Relations, Marketing and Communications
Richard Christensen, Ed.D., Director, Human Resources
Jay Field, Vice President, Technology and Learning Resources
Don Mourton, Ph.D., Interim Vice President, Student Services
Robin L. Steinback, Ph.D., Vice President, Academic Affairs
Judy Spencer, Executive Coordinator, Superintendent/President and Governing Board

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved by Trustee McCaffrey and seconded by Trustee Murphy for approval of the Agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

5. COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Board President Young recognized Tom Grube, CTA President, who requested to comment on informational items for the campus.

Mr. Grube announced that the faculty union and Academic Senate held a productive forum discussing accreditation and the recommendations, with valued information coming from Dr. Lamb. The emphasis of the forum was how the faculty can help to improve our accreditation standing. Mr. Grube extended kudos to Dr. Lamb for all the work he put forth to make the opportunity for faculty get their questions answered.

Mr. Grube invited the campus community and Governing Board to hear Joe Colton, CTA attorney, on Monday, February 23, 2009, from 11:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m., in Rooms 402/403. Mr. Colton will address the faculty on what the law, CTA contract, and Education Code say relative to faculty reductions in force.

Board President Young thanked Mr. Grube for his comments.

6. BOARD RETREAT (NO ACTION REQUIRED):

(a) **“Accreditation”**

Board President Young introduced Dr. Barbara A. Beno, President of the Accrediting Commission for California Junior Colleges (ACCJC) of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Dr. Beno stated she has come prepared to do a workshop on what the Trustees should know about accreditation, because one of the deficiencies has been Board behavior, and also to talk about the condition of the commission.

Dr. Beno began by stating she is not the person who makes the decisions on accreditation, but rather represents the commission. She indicated that she been with the commission for seven years, and prior to that served for twelve years as a president in the community college system.

Dr. Beno came prepared with a PowerPoint presentation, *Accreditation and Trusteeship: What Every Board Should Know*, which was presented to the audience and will be made available on the Solano College Web site. Distributed by Board President Young was a color annotated version of the Accreditation Standards, which will also be made available to the campus via the Solano College Web site under Governing Board – Minutes – Attachments – February 20, 2009 Board Retreat. Dr. Beno stated the Accreditation Standards are also available on the ACCJC Web site for anyone to download.

Dr. Beno commented that the three topics to be covered in the Board Retreat would be as follows:

1. An Introduction to Accreditation and ACCJC
2. **The Role of Trustees in Assuring Quality and Educational Effectiveness** (*the key point*)
3. The Role of the President in Assuring Quality and Education Effectiveness

1. **An Introduction to Accreditation and ACCJC**

Dr. Beno reported that Accreditation is the U.S. higher education practice of reviewing and certifying the educational quality of an institution. Accreditation is a non-governmental, peer-review process, in which an institution is compared against a set of standards that describes “best practice” and is expected to meet or exceed those standards. Accreditation is voluntary, but is used by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) to determine eligibility for federal funds for higher education.

The commission is self-regulating because the evaluators are peers from other community colleges or other two-year colleges, and sometimes trustees serve on the accreditation teams, and occasionally commissioners who don’t have personal employment relationships with the college. Every institution that joins the commission promises to uphold the standards at all times and apply those standards to the operation of the college.

The *first priority* of accreditation is to provide quality assurance to the public so that students and others will know the institution is of sufficient quality to meet the standards. The *second priority* is to provide stimulus for continuous improvement in educational quality through periodic comprehensive evaluations, mid-term reports, and other interactions with the institution. Support for success is provided by making available training sessions on best practices in education, self-study training and special workshops (such as a Board Retreat), conferences, and advice and references from institutions.

Dr. Beno referred to the Accreditation Standards previously distributed to the Board members. It was noticed that the handout was color coded as follows: (1) **Blue type** references (self) assessment, research, planning, and continuous quality improvement. [Dr. Beno clarified that assessment is always linked to planning and improvements.] (2) **Violet type** references responsibilities of the governing board, and (3) **Yellow highlights** reference focus on teaching (instruction) and learning and Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) – as defined by faculty. Dr. Beno referred to her September 2008 memo to the community colleges stating the commission had established a deadline of 2012 when the work of SLOs must be completed. Dr. Beno emphasized the importance of the Board members getting the communications from the ACCJC because of their responsibility for quality of learning.

The action letter from the commission to SCC gave a deadline of June 2009 to come into compliance with their deficiencies. In 1998, Congress reauthorized the Higher Education Act, which requires an accreditor recognized by the Department of Education (e.g., the ACCJC) to require an institution to come into compliance with all standards within a two-year period, or the commission must act to terminate their accreditation. The one-year rule is if any accreditor (e.g., the ACCJC) is found to be out of compliance with its regulations, the DOE can terminate their recognition.

Tom Grube asked if there is a place between being completely off of sanctions and being terminated in June 2009. Dr. Beno stated there is some wiggle room under certain circumstances, and that circumstance is the fact that the Board hired an outside agent to assist them, i.e., Mr. Tom Henry,

Special Trustee, who will work with Solano College through their deficiencies in meeting the eligibility requirements and recommendations as identified by the 2008 evaluation team. Dr. Beno stated this was a very good move on the part of the Governing Board.

Trustee Murphy referred to an article in the Chronicle of Higher Education, which stated that California Community Colleges have had a lot more accreditation problems than other regions of the country and asked why that was the case. Dr. Beno responded by stating that the California colleges simply haven't been paying attention to the standards and reiterated the importance of staff participating in accreditation activities and training, especially since they are free.

Trustee Claffey asked what the source of funding is for the ACCJC, and Dr. Beno responded by stating membership dues and interest on their fund reserves.

Special Trustee Henry referred to the inherent conflict between the two-year rule to recover and the state of collapse of an institution over a four to five-year period, which would infer it would take four or five years to recover. Dr. Beno referred to the small amount of wiggle room referred to earlier, which would infer the outside entity or agent may result in the College getting a grace period. She also stated that, "once you get into trouble with the ACCJC, it is paramount that you move quickly and right the ship."

Accreditation is based in the values of American higher education. Dr. Beno highlighted the most important values as being honesty and integrity. When colleges spiral down, they aren't looking at the standards or having dialogue collectively to sort out the real direction that the college needs to go. Dr. Beno stated that Dr. Waits has repeatedly talked about the need for dialogue. It is important to have meaningful conversations collectively. Dr. Beno referred the Board to the standards which are full of honesty and integrity.

The ACCJC and WASC are a common corporate structure. WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges) is a corporate entity with three divisions. The two other accrediting commissions that are part of WASC are The Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities (ACSCU), and the Accrediting Commission for Schools (ACS). Dr. Beno stated that WASC and its three divisions are regional accreditors and accredit institutions.

The ACCJC/WASC operates in the Western Region: California, Hawaii, Republic of Palau, Guam, Saipan, Federated States of Micronesia, The Republic of the Marshall Islands, and American Samoa. ACCJC member institutions are public, private, secular, faith-based, non-profit, and for-profit. All are eligible for U.S. federal financial aid for students when accredited.

Dr. Beno identified who the commissioners are. The ACCJC/WASC is composed of 19 Commissioners selected from the member institutions of the ACCJC and from the public as follows: 5 public, 5 faculty, 3 administrators; 1 Hawaii community college system, 1 PPEC (Pacific Post-Secondary Education Council), 1 California community college system; 1 ACCJC, 1 ACS, and 1 private institution. These are the individuals who make the decisions on the accreditation or quality of the institutions.

Dr. Beno briefly described the standards. They are the statements of institutional good practice that, if followed, lead to educational effectiveness and quality. They are minimum conditions that must

be met to gain and retain accreditation—they are not aspirational goals, and they are a blueprint for sound educational, administrative, financial, and governance practices. Dr. Beno asked for a show of hands from the Board that had read all the standards. Not all Board members have read the standards and were encouraged to promptly read them before the team visit, especially the color annotated responsibilities of the Board.

Dr. Beno identified the four standards as follows:

Standard I: Institutional Mission and Effectiveness

The Institution demonstrates strong commitment to a mission that emphasizes achievement of student learning and to communicating the mission internally and externally. The institution uses analyses of quantitative and qualitative data and analysis in an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, implementation, and re-evaluation to verify and improve the effectiveness by which the mission is accomplished.

Standard I (A) *Mission* was identified as follows:

The institution has a statement of mission that defines the institution's broad educational purposes, its intended student population, and its commitment to achieving student learning (SLOs). Dr. Beno stated, "How do you focus on your mission? You have collaborative dialogue."

Standard I (B) *Improving Institutional Effectiveness* was identified (in part) as follows:

The institution demonstrates a conscious effort to produce and support student learning, measures that learning, assesses how well learning is occurring, and makes changes to improve student learning. The institution also organizes its key processes and allocates its resources to effectively support student learning. The institution demonstrates its effectiveness by providing (1) evidence of the achievement of student learning outcomes, and (2) evidence of institution and program performance.

It is the Board's responsibility to be sure the President follows through with continuous improvement.

Standard II: Student Learning Programs and Services (in part)

The institution offers high-quality instructional programs, student support services, and library and learning support services that facilitate and demonstrate the achievement of stated student learning outcomes.

This standard identifies the responsibilities of academic leadership.

Standard II (A) *Instructional Programs* was identified (in part) as follows:

The institution offers high-quality instructional programs in recognized and emerging fields of study that culminate in identified student outcomes leading to degrees, certificates, employment, or transfer to other higher education institutions or programs consistent with its mission. Instructional

programs are systematically assessed in order to assure currency, improve teaching and learning strategies, and achieve stated student learning outcomes. The provisions of this standard are broadly applicable to all instructional activities offered in the name of the institution.

One of the Trustees' responsibilities is to receive and review reports on whether or not the college has evaluated itself. Where are the strengths and weaknesses of the college? The Board is also responsible for decisions on resource allocations in supporting the strengths, and which priority order the weaknesses will be dealt with, and then ask the college where they have made improvements in areas judged weak. Dr. Beno reaffirmed the importance and benefit of the Trustees knowing the Accreditation Standards because of two primary responsibilities of trustees: (1) Assure the quality of the institution, and (2) Assure the fiscal integrity and stability of the institution. Dr. Beno stated if you the Trustees know the standards, and know the College is implementing the standards, which you are getting regular reports on, you as Trustees will be doing your job.

Dr. Beno referred to Standard II. B. *Student Support Services* (in part) as follows:

The institution recruits and admits diverse students who are able to benefit from its programs, consistent with its mission. Student support services address the identified needs of students and enhance a supportive learning environment. Dr. Beno stressed the importance of, "if you admit them—your had better serve them well." Standard II is a road map of serving students and how to do it well.

Dr. Beno read Standard II. C. *Library and Learning Support Services* (in part) as follows:

Library and other learning support services for students are sufficient to support the institution's instructional programs and intellectual, aesthetic, and cultural activities in whatever format and wherever they are offered.

Dr. Beno emphasized the importance of offering legitimate resources for students, i.e., Information Competency, etc.

Standard III: Resources

The institution effectively uses its human, physical, technology, and financial resources to achieve its broad educational purposes, including stated student learning outcomes, and to improve institutional effectiveness.—

Dr. Beno referred to first of four resources in Standard III - A. *Human Resources*. Human Resources are huge. Dr. Beno asked the Board if they are approving personnel to support student learning programs and services in the appropriate way, and how they know without assessment. Dr. Beno highlighted the Board's responsibility in Standard III. A. (Human Resources) 3. (page 15 of Accreditation Standards)—The institution systematically develops personnel policies and procedures that are available for information and review. Such policies and procedures are equitably and consistently administered.

Dr. Beno identified the second resource of Standard III - B. *Physical Resources* (in part) as follows:

Physical resources, which include facilities, equipment, land, and other assets, support student learning programs and services and improve institutional effectiveness.

The third resource of Standard III – C. *Technology Resources*, was identified (in part) as follows:

Technology resources are used to support student learning programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness. Technology planning is integrated with institutional planning.

The fourth resource of Standard III – D. *Financial Resources*, was identified (in part) as follows:

Financial resources are sufficient to support student learning programs and services and to improve institutional effectiveness.

Dr. Beno commented that when the commission reviews the financial report, they aren't just interested in whether or not the budget is in balance, but that the college has sufficient resources freed up to make improvements each year. It was noted that the college has a 5% reserve, which is a requirement by the commission.

Trustee McCaffrey requested clarification on an act of the Board to say no to a request from administration after the budget had been adopted.

Special Trustee stated it would be a unique circumstance after the Board adopted their budget to later say no to something they said yes to earlier. If there is no compelling reason to say no, then the Board is micromanaging.

Dr. Beno added that the budget is the plan to spend allocated money, which is the plan that should reflect the college priorities—what is a necessity, what is on the priority list for improvements, what is low on the list and should it be in the approved budget for the academic year. The Trustees should not be making decisions on how the money is spent after the budget is adopted. That is the job of administration.

Standard IV: Leadership and Governance

The institution recognizes and utilizes the contributions of leadership throughout the organization for continuous improvement of the institution. Governance roles are designed to facilitate decisions that support student learning programs and services and improve institutional effectiveness, while acknowledging the designated responsibilities of the governing board and the chief administrator.

Standard IV - A. *Decision-Making Roles and Processes*, was identified as follows:

The institution recognizes that ethical and effective leadership throughout the organization enables the institution to identify institutional values, set and achieve goals, learn, and improve.

Standard IV – A. 1. was read (in part) as follows:

Institutional leaders create an environment for empowerment, innovation, and institutional excellence. The above is the commission's description of what good leaders will do.

Dr. Beno brought the Board's attention to Standard IV – A. 3. (page 23 of the Accreditation Standards) and asked the Trustees to look carefully at this section and contemplate their role as a Board member, which reads as follows:

Through established governance structures, processes, and practices, the governing board, administrators, faculty, staff, and students work together for the good of the institution. These processes facilitate discussion of ideas and effective communication among the institution's constituencies.

Dr. Beno stated it is sometimes difficult to understand the different roles of leadership. When the roles aren't clear, conflict and confusion exists.

Standard IV - B. *Board and Administrative Organization*, was identified (in part) as follows:

In addition to the leadership of individuals and constituencies, institutions recognize the designated responsibilities of the governing board for setting policies and of the chief administrator for the effective operation of the institution.

What's New in the Standards?

Dr. Beno commented that Accreditation Standards published in 2002 (2001 for ACSCU) have new requirements that:

- Institutions engage in ongoing assessment of educational quality and improvement.
- Institutions identify and use student learning outcomes as a key indicator of their educational effectiveness in addition to other measures.
- Institutions provide evidence of their effectiveness.
- Institutions demonstrate an ongoing culture and practice of assessment, including institution-wide dialogue about quality and how to improve it.
- The Standards specify the role of the president/chancellor in assuring institutional quality.
- The Standards specify more precisely the role of the governing board and include one prohibition on governing board behavior.
- The Standards integrated the previous ten standards into four, and require institutions and teams to do integrated, holistic analyses of institutional quality.

2. The Role of Trustees in Assuring Quality and Educational Effectiveness

Dr. Beno asked the Trustees to refer to her PowerPoint handout and discussed two of the 21 eligibility requirements (E.R.) which refer to the Governing Board:

E.R. 2: Mission is adopted, reviewed by the governing board.

E.R. 3: Institution's governing board functions to assure quality, integrity, and financial stability of the institution and achievement of mission. Board is an independent policy making body.

Dr. Beno identified challenges of Board members who run for a Board. Sometimes they promise they will make changes when elected and later find that they cannot follow through on a promise because they are not in compliance with the college priorities. Upon being elected to the Board, it is the Trustee's responsibility to support the institution's quality, integrity, and financial stability.

Dr. Beno identified the eligibility requirements that the College has had trouble meeting, as identified in her February 3, 2009, letter to Dr. Waits as follows:

E.R. 3 – Governing Board – The Board disagrees on how the mission of the college is being carried out and is divided on most major issues brought to it. The Board's dysfunctions are contributing to the dramatic fiscal and administrative instability of the college. (The college does not comply with this E.R.)

E.R. 4 – Chief Executive Office - There has been a high turnover of chief executives. (While the college technically complies with this eligibility requirement, the extraordinary turnover in the last three years has contributed to the instability of the college.)

E.R. 5 – Administrative Capacity – There have been many interims and some have been placed in positions where their experience or background did not fully qualify them to adequately perform the work at hand. (The college does not fully comply with this eligibility requirement.)

E.R. 17 – Financial Resources – The college has not had adequate controls in place to be able to account for certain items in the budget. (The college does not fully comply with this eligibility requirement.)

E.R. 18 – Financial Accountability – There are recurring audit deficiencies that have not been addressed by the college. (The college does not fully comply with this eligibility requirement.)

E.R. 19 – Institutional Planning and Evaluation – The type of planning processes required are not currently in place at the college. (The college does not fully comply with this eligibility requirement.)

E.R. 21 – Relations with the Accrediting Commission – The visiting team did not feel the college's relationships with the commission were adequately demonstrated.

The eligibility requirements are similar to the standards and are not entirely separate things. Dr. Beno stated when you meet the recommendations of the commission, the eligibility requirements go away.

Dr. Beno continued with her PowerPoint presentation on Standards on Board, Standard I: Mission Statement is approved by the governing board. Using the institution's governance processes, the institution regularly reviews its mission statement. Standard III: The institution relies on its mission and goals as the foundation for financial planning. Dr. Beno referred the Trustees to page 24 of the Accreditation Standards, Standard IV: Leadership and Governance, B. Board and Administrative Organization, Section 1. and 1.a. The Board needs to hold discussion with the college about the vision statement and mission of the college, as well as entertain possible changes to the mission if

appropriate. It is important these statements reflect current issues surrounding student learning outcomes.

Standards on Boards – 2. Standard IV: Leadership and Governance (Standard IV. A. Decision-Making Roles and Processes). “Ethical and effective leadership throughout the organization enables the institution to identify institutional values, set and achieve its (educational) goals, learn and improve (the quality of its educational programs).” Governing Board members are leaders.

Standards on Boards – 3. Standard IV B. Board and Administrative Organization. “The governing board is responsible for establishing policies to assure the quality, integrity and effectiveness of student learning programs and services and the financial stability of the institution.” Again, Dr. Beno reiterated the importance of maintaining a 5% reserve in the budget.

Standards on Board – 4 – a. “The governing board is an independent policy-making body.” b. “The governing board establishes policy consistent with its mission statement to ensure quality, integrity, and improvement of student learning programs and services.”

Dr. Beno continued to highlight the standards through her PowerPoint presentation.

Standards on Boards – 5 – c. The governing board is responsible for educational quality, legal matters and financial integrity. e. The governing board acts in a manner consistent with its policies and bylaws. It evaluates its policies and practices and revises them as necessary. f. and g. The governing board has a program for board development and a process for self-evaluation. Dr. Beno commented that the problem with the standards is that they don’t say how the board should do this.

Standards on Board – 6 - h. The governing board has a code of ethics and a means of enforcing it—a means of dealing with unethical behavior. i. The governing board is informed about and involved in accreditation of the institution. j. The governing board selects and evaluates the chief administrator and delegates full responsibility for operation to him or her (without interference by the board).

Dr. Beno clarified that the Board has a policy on the role of the board and behavior and an ethics policy, together with a means of enforcing them. Dr. Beno encouraged the Board to review their policies on a regular basis, referring to the Community College League of California and other agencies for updated guidance information.

Dr. Beno stated that the Board should always get the information from the ACCJC. Past teams gave warning signs to the College that were not adhered to. Letters are usually issued about a month later after the review.

Trustee McCaffrey inquired about the feasibility of sitting on a self-study team. ACCJC does not recommend that board members participate in the writing of the self-study report as it is a conflict of interest.

Dr. Beno relayed the observation from the commission’s point of view relative to the hiring of a president a few years ago and then the ultimate termination of that president’s contract. The Board conducted a search, which from the Board’s point of view was unsuccessful, and then you hired an

interim from within and then made that person permanent. When you look for a president, you need to be looking for the best president you can find. You have had presidents that you did not permit to be strong, and presidents that were not strong. When distrust and lack of confidence enters into the scenario of things, the Board gets into “details” and “decision making” which should rest with the president. That is a prerequisite to micromanaging. Dr. Beno advised the Board to delegate full responsibility for the college to the president.

What Boards Can Do To Support Student Learning—Dr. Beno referred the Board to pages 24 and 25 of the Accreditation Standards. Adhere to the standards regarding boards. Create and review the mission and goals that establish the central purpose of the institution. Establish policies on planning, resource, allocation, and budgeting strategies—inclusive of analysis of impact on student learning. Establish policies on faculty and staff evaluations—inclusive of information on SLOs. Set expectations for quality and review institutional progress through reports to the Board. Support the faculty and academic staff work necessary to implement SLOs and for assessment and continuous improvement.

Dr. Beno commented that faculty and staff have a lot of work to do and they need the support of the Board. Dr. Beno suggested that staff development funds might be appropriately dedicated to learning more about SLOs.

Trustee Murphy left the meeting at 3:20 p.m.

Protect the college from undue influence—from those that would divert the institutions’ mission, resources, and attention. Set expectations that the president will support and improve institutional effectiveness, student achievement, and student learning and include institutional performance in the president’s evaluation.

Dr. Beno reported that she has spoken with the S/P Search Consultant. The next few months are very important so that when the new president comes, most of Solano’s problems will be on the way to being solved.

Dr. Beno distributed to the Board for their information a copy of a training exercise for the governing board for their review at a later time. The exercise contains examples of real board behaviors. Boards have similar problems throughout the region.

3. The Role of the President in Assuring Quality and Education Effectiveness

The Board and the President each have a very important role to play. Dr. Beno equated it to a marriage—one cannot work without the other. E.R. 4 states the institution has a chief executive officer appointed by the governing board, whose full-time responsibility is to the institution, and who possesses the requisite authority to administer board policies. Neither the district/system, chief administrator nor the college chief administrator may serve as chair of the board. Dr. Beno clearly stated that when the board doesn’t recognize the CEO’s authority, it is out of compliance.

Standards on the President – Standards IV B.2, preamble. The president has primary responsibility for the quality of the institution. He/she provides effective leadership in planning, organizing,

budgeting, selecting and developing personnel, and assessing institutional effectiveness. It is the president's job to use staff in developing a quality institution.

Standards on the President – 2 – a. The president plans, oversees, and evaluates an administrative structure organized and staffed to reflect the institution's purposes, size and complexity. He/she delegates authority to administrators and others consistent with their responsibilities, as appropriate. The president is the chief operational officer of the college. You hire and evaluate the president. The president hires and evaluates everyone else. Example given: If HR is not functioning well, you go to the president—not to HR, or any other department that may be in question. That is your (the board) job.

Standards on the President – 2 – c. The president assures the implementation of statutes, regulations, and governing board policies and assures institutional practices are consistent with the mission and policies. The president effectively controls budget and expenditures. The president communicates effectively with communities served by the institution.

Shared Responsibility and Accountability. Presidents and governing boards are both responsible, in their specific ways, for institutional quality and improvement. Dr. Beno stated, as previously noted, that it is a marriage. The president and board must work together to be effective.

All other staff share responsibility. While the board and the president are largely responsible for mission, institutional direction, policy development and oversight, institutional direction and organization, the rest of the staff of the institution share in the responsibility for assuring institutional quality and effectiveness.

Standards on the President – 3 – b. The president guides institutional improvement of the teaching and learning environment by: (1) establishing a collegial process that sets values, goals, and priorities, (2) ensuring evaluation, planning, and research, (3) ensuring educational planning is integrated with resource planning, and (4) establishing procedures to evaluate overall institutional planning and implementation.

Dr. Beno concluded her PowerPoint presentation and opened the meeting to questions.

Vice President Honeychurch asked if anyone of the eight recommendations were more important than the eligibility requirements. Dr. Beno asked the Board, "What seems more critical to you?" The Board needs to address all of them. Dr. Beno stated the college's fiscal stability and integrity most likely should be the number one priority because if the college is going to collapse, there is no reason to address the other concerns. It is important, however, to work on everything. Bringing Dr. Jensen to the college was a very good move. He will tell the Board where the limits are and Dr. Beno suggested that the Board listen carefully to his recommendations.

Special Trustee Henry stated it would be extremely difficult to fully meet all the requirements relative to the strict timelines given by the commission, and that our charge is to show that we (the College) have the will and capacity and evidence that we are moving in the right direction. Is it a true statement that if we show due diligence and in fact move in the direction of recovery that it might put Solano in a position to buy more time, or does "fully" mean "demonstrate fully" by April 1? Dr. Beno responded that a lot of colleges make progress, and that Solano has made progress for five

years, and yet the issues have not been resolved. Progress should be eliminated from our vocabulary. The fact that the College agreed to the intervention of a state agency and hired Mr. Tom Henry as a special trustee was a smart move and definitely will be taken into consideration.

Student Trustee Brannen inquired about the two-year rule that comes from Congress and if this will be the focus of the new administration. Dr. Beno responded the new Education Secretary has served on national committees and in the Democratic Senate. Dr. Beno stated that the current democratic leadership wants more intervention—everyone wants more accountability. In the end, all institutions must live the standards on a perpetual basis.

Ms. Terri Pearson-Bloom thanked Dr. Beno for her clarity about SLOs and assessment in front of the Board because faculty are working hard on them to meet the established timeline. Ms. Bloom asked for clarification about summer school classes because they will be in progress before the letter is received from the commission in late June. “In order to relay correct information to students, will summer school classes be accredited?” Dr. Beno responded by stating that summer school would be secure, but that she couldn’t comment on anything further.

There was discussion about the worst case scenario of the actual closing of Solano College. Dr. Beno stated that the commission is obliged by federal law to ensure that its students with substantial work in progress be able to complete their degrees and certificates. In the closure report these issues are addressed on dealing with students, and a substantive change report is required reflecting these changes. These decisions are not made by the ACCJC, but rather by the college in question, the state, and neighboring institutions.

Mr. Tom Grube commented that the public needs to be aware that the questions and concerns raised in the letter do not have a lot to do with the quality of teaching and learning that is going on in our classrooms, and that we all need to encourage the public not to lose confidence in us. What can we do as faculty to help save our accreditation status when the problem was not of “our” (faculty) making, and we only have limited control over those things we do control. We might disappear as an institution, so what can we do to help?

Dr. Beno stated if you have a structural deficit, you will have to make changes to address that deficit. If you block efforts, then you will have a fiscal collapse. In the area of quality and program review and planning, you should play a stronger role in bringing forward your program review assessments and get them built into planning and changes to the College. Sometimes when you have a fiscal emergency, more is required, and the College needs the capacity to support improvements that will need to be made to continue recovery.

Dr. Beno commented that in terms of the public, the team heard from several sources that some of your faculty told students that Solano is a crummy place to be—so don’t come here. Our team heard these comments directly from students. Or, some faculty are saying, “I am so mad at the college, I am going to get it and tell the students not to come here.” Dr. Beno said, “If you want to stab yourself in the jugular, that is a good way to do it.” Napa Valley College has told us (the ACCJC) that they have students entering saying, “I was told over at Solano that the college is no good and I should leave.”

Special Trustee Henry stated during the development of his EdMAC Report that he heard similar stories and that people saw their interview as an opportunity to vent. Mr. Henry said he walked away thinking if people were as candid with the Accreditation Team as they were with him that it would be very problematic, and indeed they were. Mr. Henry stated, “In a way, we self-destructed.” We took dirty laundry and put it out there for all sorts of reasons. This can’t happen. I think there was great frustration at Solano within the campus community—the Board, faculty, staff and students, and they got a chance to share frustration. We need to be better about this in the future.

Trustee McCaffrey left the meeting at 3:55 p.m.

Trustee Keith stated again that she has made a concerted effort to share with the public that our current situation is not about faculty and staff and quality teaching and learning. She went on to say that she brags on faculty and staff at Solano all the time. The quality of teaching the students are receiving in the classroom is not in question, and we need press on this issue.

Trustee Thurston stated that we need good press on the good things that are happening at the College. We need to look at our policies to be sure we have created an atmosphere where people feel they can vent internally and get some results from their frustrations and then they won’t be doing it with anyone else. We have some work to do in this area.

Dr. Beno gave a response to the comments on good teaching. She said, “Show me the evidence. This is what the ACCJC wants to see. If the press were to call me and ask where the College is educationally, I would have to say, I don’t know. They don’t have the evidence.”

Ms. Terri Pearson-Bloom commented on how great it was for the opportunity of the campus community (faculty, and staff, and administration) could hear the same information. We learned things we should have known and there is more to learn. Ms. Bloom thanked Dr. Beno for her PowerPoint presentation and taking the time to come to Solano.

Board President Young thanked Dr. Beno for coming and sharing valuable information. Dr. Beno responded that it is very important that the Board listen to Dr. Jensen and Mr. Henry.

There was applause from those present.

7. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Board Retreat was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

LJW:js

APPROVED

A. MARIE YOUNG
PRESIDENT

LISA J. WAITS, Ed.D.
INTERIM SECRETARY

SCCD Board minutes are summarized per *SCCD Board Policy 1045 and 1046*. To listen to the full deliberation of the Board, please contact the Office of the Superintendent/President within thirty (30) days.