

CONSENT AGENDA NO. 9.1.b.

Approval of the August 16, 2022, Work Session Meeting Minutes

It is recommended that the Board approve the meeting minutes of the August 16, 2022, work session.

A work session of the Board of Trustees of Dallas College was held August 16, 2022, beginning at 10:01 a.m. at the administrative building and was broadcast on the Cisco Webex platform via the streaming link: <https://dccc.new.swagit.com/events/14047>. The meeting was convened by Chair Monica Lira Bravo.

Board Members and Officers Present

Mr. Cliff Boyd
Ms. Charletta Rogers Compton
Ms. Monica Lira Bravo (chair)
Ms. Diana Flores
Dr. Catalina E. Garcia
Dr. Justin Lonon (secretary and chancellor)
Mr. Paul Mayer
Mr. Phil Ritter (vice chair)

Members Absent

None.

1. Roll Call - Announcement of a Quorum was confirmed by Chair Bravo.

2. Certification of Notice Posted for the meeting by Chancellor Lonon.

3. Citizens Desiring to Address the Board

None.

4. Special Presentation

- 4.1. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC): An Overview
Facilitator: Dr. Larry Earvin, Chief of Staff, SACSCOC

Chancellor Justin Lonon introduced Dr. Larry Ervin, chief of staff for SACSCOC, and extended his appreciation to Dr. Ervin and SACSCOC for their support of Dallas College throughout the accreditation processes of consolidation and level change. Chancellor

Lonon shared that Ervin is an accreditation expert who, as a former college president of Houston-Tillotson College in Austin, was also familiar with consolidation and its various stages.

Ervin extended his appreciation to the Board for their service and commitment to higher education and invited the trustees to introduce themselves. Following introductions, Dr. Ervin presented “Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC): An Overview.” The presentation gave an overview of the accrediting body and provided the requirements of the *Principles of Accreditation* as well as the role of the institution’s board in the accreditation process.

SACSCOC evaluates and validates the quality of its member institutions. Trustee Flores asked if all institutions were evaluated by the same standards. Ervin explained that the *Principles of Accreditation* applied to all member institutions, though SACSCOC recognized there were differences in an institution’s mission or purpose and evaluated per type, size, and mission of that institution. Ervin identified SACSCOC as the gatekeeper of the Department of Education’s Title IV funds because without national or regional accreditation, institutions did not have access to Pell and other federal funding for its students. Trustee Ritter asked about the potential impact of a loss of that funding for Dallas College students. In terms of access to loans and grants, Ervin estimated the amount to be two-thirds of an institution’s overall funding. Chancellor Lonon clarified that without accreditation, Dallas College would not have access to Department of Education funds that were used by most of our students. After further discussion related to state and federal funding, Dr. Danielle Valle explained that if we did not have accreditation, we did not have access to Title IV funding, and our students would have to have scholarships or to pay out-of-pocket for their education at Dallas College.

Ervin reviewed the characteristics of accreditation and explained that SACSOC was concerned with institutional outcomes, how well students were doing, and how well the college was meeting its mission. Institutions were reviewed comprehensively, and SACSCOC accreditation verified an institution’s quality. Trustee Compton pointed out that accreditation bestows legitimacy on the organization. Trustee Boyd inquired about what SACSCOC did to familiarize the public with the value accreditation brings to organizations and suggested that future presentations to ISDs and local school boards might include an overview of SACSCOC and their accreditation requirements for Dallas College.

SACSCOC is a member of CRAA, the Council of Regional Accrediting Agencies, which provides oversight to all regional accrediting agencies and meets to ensure all accrediting bodies are compliant with federal guidelines related to accreditation. SACSCOC is reviewed by the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity National Association (NACIQI) and undergoes a rigorous evaluation process every five years to determine if the commission is operating according to approved standards. All accrediting bodies must meet federal standards for operation so while it was historically required for institutions to be accredited according to their geographic region, the Department of Education has enabled institutions to select their accrediting body.

Ervin reviewed the SACSCOC structure to include details about its board membership and executive council. Vice-Chair Ritter inquired about the composition and backgrounds of those serving in these capacities. Ervin shared that there were 11 public members, one from each state, as well as administrators, faculty, CEOs, provosts, and staff who served. Vice-Chair Ritter asked how public members were appointed and who served as the Texas representative. The Texas delegation on the board elects' members and canvases member institutions to seek nominations and the members of the Texas delegation select its members. As part of the process, Chancellors will receive a letter from SACSCOC inviting nominations for those to serve. Chair Bravo shared that many members on the Texas delegation are chancellors, vice-chancellors, presidents, vice presidents, etc., and there was community college representation among this group. There was some discussion of the appeals committee within the structure and Trustee Compton asked about the appeals process. Ervin indicated that very few institutions used the appeals process because the peer review system was intended to allow institutions to adjust and improve their practices without damaging the reputation of the institution or losing accreditation.

Ervin explained that there were standards of eligibility and core requirements within the *Principles of Accreditation* and pointed out that a violation of a core requirement could keep an institution from being reaffirmed in accreditation and subsequently could lose access to Title IV funding.

He gave additional detail about the fourteen sections of the *principles*:

- 1) Integrity
- 2) Mission
- 3) Basic Eligibility Standard
- 4) Governing Board

- 5) Administration and Organization,
- 6) Faculty
- 7) Institutional Planning and Effectiveness
- 8) Student Achievement, Educational Program Structure and Content
- 9) Educational Policies, Procedures, and Practices
- 10) Library and Learning Information Resources
- 11) Academic and Student Support Resources
- 12) Financial and Physical Resources
- 13) Transparency and Institutional Representation.

New principles include regular Board evaluation and ensuring financial literacy for students for debt management and repaying loans.

Vice Chair Ritter inquired whether SACSCOC articulates what was required to assure faculty rights in freedom of speech and academic freedom. Ervin explained that SACSCOC had an academic freedom statement in its *principles* and was convening a committee for further review and possible revisions. Valle read standard 6.4 and explained that as it was not prescriptive, it did not require Dallas College to have a policy and procedures in place to protect academic freedom. She also explained that there was policy revision underway at Dallas College to reflect the current structure and current needs of the college. SACSCOC did not provide a definition of Academic Freedom nor was there a commonly understood definition among SACSCOC institutions. Ervin reiterated the need for the college to define academic freedom and free speech as was appropriate for Dallas College. There would be ongoing discussions with Chancellor Lonon, General Counsel, and the various councils to set the best policy for Dallas College.

SACSCOC defined the roles of the governing board as policy making, hiring, evaluating, and terminating the CEO, and having fiduciary responsibility for the institution. Compliance with SACSCOC guidelines required boards to be involved in policymaking and not in the implementation of policy. The implementation of policy should be left to the CEO and his administrative leadership. The CEO was fully responsible for staffing and managing all aspects of the institution and was to be responsive to the board; thus, one of the most important relationships is between the CEO and the board chair. Communication between the CEO and board chair should be consistent and transparent.

Vice-Chair Ritter asked if members of the board had a duty to keep the chancellor apprised of interactions with staff. Ervin confirmed that they did. Trustee Compton explained the complexity of communicating with employees who were also constituents and said that it required personal integrity and ethics to handle this appropriately. Ervin affirmed that it was an important balance and members of the board should understand that their role was to do what was best for the institution at large and not just for individual employees or constituents. One of the most common reports SACSCOC received was individuals complaining about boards or CEOs not following SACSCOC standards.

Ervin stated that the board should be aware of the fiscal affairs of the institution and be asking appropriate questions; mainly the board needed to be aware if the institution was in financial jeopardy.

There was discussion about SACSCOC standard 4 c., which states “the institution ensures that both the presiding officer of the board and a majority of other voting members of the board are free of any contractual, employment, personal, or familial financial interest in the institution.”

Ervin confirmed that the board chair and a majority (at Dallas College: four of seven members) of the board should not have an active conflict of interest while serving on the board. Texas law and accreditation standards may differ, but the institution was required to meet both the legal and accreditation standards. Rob Wendland indicated that he understood the SACSCOC guideline and would seek clarification and provide further guidance to the trustees on this matter.

Ervin stated that the reaffirmation process, substantive change, or an unsolicited information report to SACSCOC could trigger a SACSCOC review of the institution’s practices.

There was further review of the standards related to the role of the governing board. Ervin reiterated the importance of avoiding conflicts of interest related to undue influence, procurement, policymaking, and personnel. He indicated that the SACSCOC guidelines were intended to support decision-making that is always in the best interest of the institution.

Ervin explained standard 8, student achievement (completion/graduation). Members of the Board had questions about how the historic DCCCD colleges were able to successfully meet SACSCOC requirements given poor student achievement data. Dr.

Valle explained that institutions were responsible for setting and meeting their student achievement goals and that the SACSCOC process was one of self-study and peer-review. She also explained that a potential alternative to this process was the Department of Education setting minimum across-the-board graduation rates regardless of institution type, which would disproportionately affect community colleges. Dallas College's strategic planning process was how the institution was now establishing and tracking its goals for student achievement.

Ervin provided sample scenarios and an article for the trustees to read and availed himself to them should they have any additional questions.

5. Executive Session

The Board went into executive session at 11:48 a.m. and returned to the public meeting at 12:52 p.m.

6. Adjournment was at 1:03 p.m.

Captioned video and transcripts for Dallas College Board Meetings are available at our website, www.dcccd.edu/boardmeetingslive, under the Archived Videos section.