



**Essex County College  
Board of Trustees  
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

February 20, 2024 – 4:30 PM

*Essex County College – Main Campus - Smith Hall*

**In Attendance:**

I. Cruz; J. Grimes; L. Guyton; A. Lewis; B. Robinson; J. Wright; J. Zarra; A. Boakye, President; M. Townes, Board Counsel

**Excused:**

M. Bolden

**Call to Order/Roll Call**

Trustee Lewis, Vice Chair of the Board, called the meeting to order at 4:37 p.m. Seven Trustees answered roll call. A quorum was announced for the meeting.

**Open Public Meetings Act Announcement**

Trustee Grimes was asked to read the Open Public Meetings Act Announcement. She read as follows:

Advance written notice of this meeting was filed on January 2, 2024, and written notice for this meeting was provided to the Essex County College Community, indicating that the meeting will be held in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act (P.L. 2020 c. 11) and Board Policy 1-1.

Notice of the meeting was also posted on the College website at [www.essex.edu](http://www.essex.edu). According to records of Essex County College, we have not received written requests or prepayment from any parties for advance notice of meetings.

**Minutes**

Trustee Grimes moved that the minutes of the January 23, 2024 meetings of the Board of Trustees be approved. Trustee Robinson seconded the motion. ***The motion carried unanimously.***

**Communications**

Trustee Grimes announced that there were no communications.

**Public Comments on Agenda Items**

It was announced that written public comments were received and distributed to Trustees for review.

**Samira Rhodes – Tutor**

On behalf of a colleague who wished to remain anonymous, Ms. Rhodes addressed the Board of Trustees with a grievance. She expressed concern regarding the following matters:

- English Tutors for the Center for Adult Transition, as part time workers, are not protected or valued at the college. They receive no benefits, vacation nor personal days. When sick they are not paid for the day; a substantial financial burden since they are paid minimum wage.

- Tutors provide tutorial services and occasionally serve as secretary, social worker and professor. They are expected to create lesson plans for students as well as take assessment notes on their progress. Tutors are expected to go above and beyond their duties but their salary remains the same. That is egregious.
- ECC's motto is Students First: student needs should be prioritized; but if tutors are not guaranteed stability and security how can they focus on students.

Ms. Rhodes then read a statement from her colleague in which she shared, briefly, the circumstances which led to her employment as a 'temporary' tutor, her excitement to take on the challenge, the hundreds of students she serves each semester, the excellent feedback she receives from students and their parents, her witness that struggling students "transformed their perception of subject matter and achieve A's and B's.", her own personal growth as a tutor and hope that her service no longer be considered temporary. Additionally, she expressed, in her statement, her desire that tutoring be made a priority, that tutors be made full-time employees with benefit of union representation, reasonable salaries and other employee benefits.

**Jennifer Wager** – Professor: New Media Technology, Entertainment, Production and Art programs

Professor Wager announced her stance to support Neurodivergent students and workers at ECC. She stated that she sees a step increase in students with neurodivergent issues and that more support is needed for them. She complemented Ladawn (Hall) in the Learning Center and Maria (Mercado) with Disability Services for doing superhuman tasks with these students.

Prof. Wager then shared her support for tutors in the Center for Adult Transition. She said it is a major disappointment that state funding doesn't cover students over the age of 24 and that support services are needed for both students and educators. She then expressed concern that millions of dollars were spent to rebuild the gorgeous and beautiful West Essex Campus, but funds are also needed to support and beautify the Newark campus where the population is Black and Latino. She then shared statistics about the West Caldwell area, public transportation to and from the campus, and the need for renovations and repair in classrooms located on the Newark campus. She invited Trustees to visit the classrooms and talk to students and employees to get their point of view.

Prof. Wager then shared her thoughts concerning:

- the trillions of dollars the government is spending in the Israel/Palestine war
- Those in Essex County being docked, harassed, and threatened for daring to speak out against the genocide of Palestinian workers. She stated that "many of her students come from these same countries; they're traumatized, they've seen genocide"
- Our students being called to fight in wars with the capitalists of Russia, Iran and soon China. She said that if you access YouTube from the school IP you get military ads now.

Prof. Wager closed by asking Trustees to say something with regard to her concerns.

**Catherine Hunt Bey** – Student

Ms. Hunt Bey, on behalf of students, like herself, who have a disability, came to the Board to ask for additional support. She asked for tutoring sessions, especially for older students, quiet settings in which they could study, and help navigating technology. She also indicated that some may need printed books instead of digital because they find it difficult to deal with technology. Her appeal was for the needs of the disabled and older students to enable them to achieve their goals and in life and education.

Mr. Vice Chair thanked the individuals who made comments and indicated that the Board would take their comments into consideration.

## Finance Committee Report

Trustee Zarra reported that the Finance Committee met and reviewed the five items presented for the Board's consideration:

3-1.1/Feb-2024	Authorize the Award for Science Software and Equipment Supertech, Inc., Elkhart, IN Perkins Grant Funded – Operating Expense	Amount not to exceed \$41,000.00
3-1.2/Feb-2024	Authorize the Award of a Contract to Support Remote Learning Zoom Video Corporation, Inc., San Jose, CA College Funded – Operating Expense	\$20,900.00
3-1.3/Feb-2024	Authorize the Award of a Contract for Class of 2024 Commencement Devils Arena Entertainment LLC., Newark, NJ College Funded – Operating Expense	Amount not to exceed \$100,000.00
3-1.4/Feb-2024	Authorize the Award of a Two-Year Contract for Grant Writing Services Bruno Associates, Clifton, NJ The Aubrey Group, Newark, NJ College Funded – Operating Expense	Amount not to exceed \$35,000.00 per year
3-1.5/Feb-2024	Authorize the Award of a Contract for Additional Accounting Services PKF O'Connor Davies, LLP, Woodcliff Lake, NJ College Funded – Operating Expense	Amount not to exceed \$10,000.00

Trustee Guyton moved the Finance Actions for approval. Trustee Wright provided the second. ***The motion carried unanimously.***

## Personnel Committee Report

Trustee Robinson advised that the Committee met and recommended the approval of the following actions:

### Appointments

4-1/Feb-2024	Roderick 'Rod' Jefferson, Comptroller Office of the Comptroller Effective March 4, 2024 Salary \$125,000.00
4-2/Feb-2024	Pierre Paul, Human Resources Representative Human Resources Effective February 26, 2024 Salary \$45,000.00
4-3/Feb-2024	Christine La Para, Educational Opportunity Fund Advisor Community and Continuing Education Effective February 26, 2024 Salary \$54,000.00

4-4/Feb-2024 Maria Falcon, EOF Program Assistant  
Community and Continuing Education  
Effective February 26, 2024  
Salary \$44,000.00

4-5/Feb-2024 Kiswendsida Congo, Teacher Assistant  
Child Development Center  
Effective February 26, 2024  
Salary \$27,537.00

4-6/Feb-2024 Cesar Feijoo, Security Officer  
Public Safety  
Effective February 26, 2024  
Salary \$31,470.00

Retirements

4-7/Feb-2024 Cheryl Newton-Banks, Director Enrollment Services/WEC & Extensions Programs  
Enrollment Services/Extensions Programs  
Effective June 30, 2024  
Salary \$83,773.13

Enrique Colon, General Ledger Accountant  
Accounting  
Effective April 30, 2024  
Salary \$102,334.35

Resignations

4-8/Feb-2024 Matthew Calnan, Police Officer  
Public Safety  
Effective February 1, 2024

Imani Causey, Security Officer  
Public Safety  
Effective February 1, 2024

Trustee Cruz presented the motion to approve the personnel actions. Her motion was seconded by Trustee Wright. ***The motion carried unanimously.***

**Educational Programs Committee Report**

Trustee Lewis indicated that the Committee met and wished to present the following two items for approval:

7-1.1/Feb-2024 Joint Admissions Agreement: Rowan University

7-1.2/Feb-2024 Notice of Award: FY2024 Pre-Apprenticeship in Career Education (PACE) Program

Trustee Zarra provided the motion to approve the action; Trustee Robinson, the second. ***The motion carried unanimously.***

### **Site Facilities and Equipment Committee Report**

Trustee Guyton announced that there were no action items; therefore, the Committee did not meet. He advised that the President would make a presentation on behalf of the Site Facilities and Equipment Committee a little later during the meeting.

### **Policy and Governance Committee Report**

Trustee Cruz indicated that the Committee did not meet and had no items to bring to the Board's attention.

### **Community Relations Committee Report**

Trustee Wright reported that there were no actions to present; however, the committee did meet and received updates and plans for the Hall of Fame, the College's 55<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala and some of the wonderful work of the Foundation Board.

### **Alumni Association Report**

The Alumni Association report was submitted electronically. Ms. Congleton read the report into the record of the meeting as follows:

- ❖ Good evening, board members & fellow ECC Alumni.
- ❖ My name is George Nti, and I am the ECCAA President. I am pleased to provide the following updates electronically on behalf of the Executive Board of the Alumni Association.
- ❖ Since the last BOT meeting, the following activities have occurred.
  1. The board participated in the ECC club fair on January 25.
  2. Ms. Yulanda Spencer resigned from being the president of ECCAA on February 16, 2024
  3. Mr. George Nti assumed the president position on February 17, 2024, per the ECCAA constitution.
  4. The board has scheduled a meeting on February 21, 2024, to discuss the way forward.
- ❖ On behalf of the alumni association, we would like to thank everyone for their continued support!

### **Student Government Association Report**

The Student Government Association (SGA) report which was submitted electronically is attached at Appendix A. The report was read into the record of the meeting by Mr. Mark Anifowose, President of the SGA.

Trustee Lewis complemented the SGA on its accomplishments and robust agenda.

### **Faculty Association Report**

Prof. Alexandre highlighted the following great work of faculty members:

- Dr. Khalfani attended the Afro Caribbean Diaspora Day which was held at the White House. Discussion included the impact of Bob Marley and the influence of Artificial Intelligence on education. Dr. Khalfani had an opportunity to speak with the Secretary of Education.
- The Business Division held their monthly Financial Literacy event; the topic was Investing in Real Estate. The event was well attended by students and faculty.
- Professors Oletowo and Albuquerque represented the College at the Grainger Exhibition held in Orlando, Florida. Grainger is one of the largest supply chain companies in the United States. The

purpose of the trip was to obtain internships, jobs, and field trip opportunities for our students in the Supply Chain program. As a result, a field trip is being planned for the near future.

- Professor Victor Stolberg had an article published in a very important journal and he attended the Marian Thompson Wright Lecture Series at Princeton University. The lecture was about AfroLatino Identities in the United States.
- Professor Alexandre delivers lectures to the EOF students on Money Management.
- The faculty had a nice Meet and Greet, organized by the Office of Faculty Excellence.
- Professor Alexandre also attended a meeting hosted by the Essex County Education Association where they discussed the importance of electing individuals, for state offices, who are pro-education. The association is advocating for more money for education.
- The Faculty Association negotiations team is working very hard to make corrections/amendments to the past contract and to be ready for the new negotiations; ensuring a much better contract going forward.

### **President's Report**

Dr. Boakye began his report with the College's continued efforts to encourage the College community to be informed about the COVID-19 disease. He noted that a number of individuals had tested positive over the last few weeks. Continuing with his report (see Appendix B), he shared the following:

- On January 23<sup>rd</sup>, organized by Dr. Akil Khalfani, Director of the Africana Institute and Center for Global Education, the College celebrated Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with a Memorial Pan Africanism & Peace Today forum. Many dignitaries were invited, participated and presented.
- The College's Leadership met in retreat at the West Essex Campus (WEC) to discuss plans, strategies and best practices for enrollment, especially at the WEC.
- A very successful Student Club Fair was held on January 25<sup>th</sup>.
- Noting his engagements, the President advised that he, Trustees Bolden, Cruz, Lewis and Mr. Bundy, Executive Director of Institutional Advancement, attended the ACCT/AACC National Legislative Summit in Washington D.C. There, they and representatives from other institutions of Higher Education, advocated for more money for students.
- Regarding finances, the Board of School Estimate approved the College's Budget for FY25.
- The President shared that our student athletes are doing very well regionally and nationally as indicated in his report.

In closing the President called attention to the upcoming events also listed in his report.

### **New Business**

Dr. Boakye gave an overview of current and future capital projects. He noted that the presentation was shared with the Site, Facilities and Equipment Committee at its January meeting. Some projects he provided updates on were:

- Cafeteria Renovation
- Maintenance work that was done on the first and second floor ceilings
- Center for Technology Renovation
- Expanded Humanities Department Computer Lab. The lab is equipped with new computers, study areas and faculty spaces
- Updates to the HVAC system
- Martin Luther King Library Renovation
- Plans for the Hall of Fame Digital Interface at the Physical Education Building (PEB)
- Installation of an elevator in the PEB
- Renovation of the PEB locker room(s)

- Installation of a fence to protect the gasoline tank
- PSE&G audit of our energy systems
- Training to maintain equipment and systems at the West Essex Campus
- Barrier gate system for parking lots A, B and C
- Facilities Management Plan 2024 -2029
- Mary Burch Theatre renovation
- Plans for a One Stop Center

### **Public Comments**

No one registered to make public comments.

### **Notice of Executive Session**

Trustee Cruz was asked to read the Notice of Executive Session. She read as follows:

WHEREAS, The Open Public Meetings Act, 1975 (N.J. Law Chapter 231) permits a public body to exclude the public from that portion of a meeting at which certain topics are discussed:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of Essex County College shall hold, following this meeting and prior to its next scheduled meeting on March 19, 2024 at 4:30 PM, an Executive Session to discuss the following topics, the general nature of which is limited to Collective Bargaining Agreements, Pending and Existing Contractual Negotiations, Litigation and Personnel Matters. The discussion of these said topics shall be disclosed to the public as soon as reasonable.

Trustee Robinson provided the motion to conduct an Executive Session as indicated. Trustee Wright seconded her motion. ***The motion carried unanimously.***

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:39 pm by a vote of acclamation.