



**Minutes of the August 31, 2021 Special Meeting of the  
Board of Trustees of Community College District 535**

A special meeting of the Board of Trustees of Community College District 535 was held on Tuesday, August 31, 2021 at Oakton Community College, 1600 East Golf Road, Des Plaines, Illinois.

**Closed Session – Call to Order and Roll Call**

At 3:21 p.m. in room 1610, Chair Martha Burns called the meeting to order.

Trustee Kotowski called the roll:

Ms. Martha Burns	Chair	Present
Ms. Marie Lynn Toussaint	Vice Chair	Present
Mr. Paul Kotowski	Secretary	Present
Dr. Gail Bush		Present
Mr. William Stafford		Present
Mr. Benjamin Salzberg		Present
Dr. Wendy Yanow		Present
Mr. Akash Patel	Student Trustee	Present

Chair Burns asked for a motion to go into closed session under the exceptions to the Illinois Open Meetings Act, with the purpose of considering self-evaluation, practices and procedures or professional ethics when meeting with a representative of a statewide association of which the public body is a member.

Student Trustee Patel made the motion, seconded by Trustee Yanow.

Trustee Kotowski called the roll:

Ms. Burns	Aye
Dr. Bush	Aye
Mr. Kotowski	Aye
Mr. Salzberg	Aye
Mr. Stafford	Aye
Ms. Toussaint	Aye
Dr. Yanow	Aye
Mr. Patel	Aye

Also present in room 1610 at 1600 East Golf Road, Des Plaines, Illinois were Dr. Joianne Smith, President; and Mr. James Reed, Executive Director of the Illinois Community Colleges Trustees Association (ICCTA).

At 5 p.m., Trustee Toussaint made a motion to adjourn the closed session, which was seconded by Trustee Salzberg. A voice vote was called.

**Open Session and Roll Call**

Chair Burns called the special meeting of the Board of Trustees to order at 5:20 p.m.

Trustee Kotowski called the roll:

Ms. Burns	Chair	Present
Ms. Toussaint	Vice Chair	Present

Mr. Kotowski	Secretary	Present
Dr. Bush		Present
Mr. Salzberg		Present
Mr. Stafford		Present
Dr. Yanow		Present
Mr. Patel	Student Trustee	Present

Also present in room 1610 at 1600 East Golf Road, Des Plaines, Illinois were Dr. Joianne Smith, President; Dr. Kelly Iwanaga Becker, Assistant Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness and Strategic Planning; Dr. Jennifer Latino, EAB Senior Director of Research Advisory Services; Ms. Katherine Sawyer, Chief Advancement Officer; Dr. Andrea Lehmacher, Director of Marketing; Ms. Beatriz Sparks, Special Assistant to the Board of Trustees; and Mr. Philip Cronin, Senior Media Services Technician.

### **Strategic Planning Process** (Jennifer Latino from EAB and Kelly Iwanaga Becker)

Dr. Jennifer Latino from EAB is working with Oakton on the next strategic planning process. Her presentation focused on the role of the Board in strategic planning. Kelly Becker talked about the work that has been done this past year; SPARC and the College's senior leadership team have been developing a vision and are bringing big ideas to the Board for their input.

Dr. Latino shared information about EAB (Education Advisory Board), a company which supports institutions from pre-K through graduate and adult education. In the higher education space, EAB focuses on three areas: enrollment success, student success, and institutional success. Dr. Latino indicated that the strategic planning process requires the Board's input. Dr. Latino gave a brief definition of what strategic planning is and its bigger focus, and how it differs from operational planning for each department. Strategic planning in higher education often considers information from external environments (e.g. recruiting, competition in the field, changes in market). There can also be internal motivators like institutional values, efficiency and effectiveness. Currently, there are many threats in the environment that affect the academic model. The population of traditional students is declining, working adults are leaving education for work, there have been cuts in state support, and demand for bachelor degrees is decreasing, among others.

Across the nation, 97% of strategic plans have a focus on academic excellence, 94% on student success, 94% on secure finance, 88% on student satisfaction, 78% on community ties, and 59% on research.

In higher education, we think a lot about bringing everyone's voice to the table. However this can keep us from getting too in-depth in our discussions, especially about important topics that get lost in a flood of ideas. Not everybody's perspective is a good perspective. The planning team should be kept at a reasonable size, and to be capable of representing all stakeholders. It is not realistic to create a strategic plan that is a list of everyone's hopes and dreams. It is important to remember to move forward despite personal feelings.

Once the plan is public it is important to keep an annual "scorecard" of objectives, steer effort towards most critical challenges and be transparent, adopt a realistic initiative framework, agree to long-term and interim KPIs, hold leaders accountable, and distinguish self-improvement from competition.

The president needs to cast a broad vision for the institution. The role of the Board is to consider the interests of the community. Institutional data must be provided in a manner that allows the Board to make informed decisions. In order to establish this trust between the Board and the senior leadership, an institutional budget model needs to support its vision and priorities. Groups like SPARC are key to provide feedback that is reflective. The Board of Trustees can monitor the alignment of the strategic plan and the College's mission and vision; this can be part of the regular meetings agenda to make sure the institution is moving the right direction. The Board should also ensure that the allocation of funds is aligned with the properties of the plan.

## Key Takeaways



©2021 by EAB. All Rights Reserved. [eab.com](http://eab.com)

Student Trustee Patel indicated he is part of the SPARC Team whose members have been focusing on equity. Mr. Patel believes there needs to be more action to follow the talk. He asked Dr. Latino for tips and best practices. Dr. Latino shared that if equity related work emerges as a big idea for the institution, the strategic plan can be broad and not formulated step by step. Once the plan has been created, it will be important to look at what role every department/group would play in bringing big ideas to life. Ideas like equity are widely cross-institutional and there are different departments which will be responsible. There should be evidence of support of a big idea in all of the departmental plans that are supporting the strategic plan. The plan should be about what is important, and which direction should be followed; operational plans then take on how things are going to be done.

President Smith indicated that the new strategic plan takes into consideration the Aspen Institute’s Community College 3.0 framework, a document that was provided to the Board of Trustees in preparation for the special meeting. Community College 1.0 framework was focused on access (history and origins of community colleges). Community College 2.0 focused on student success (goal completion) and equity. Community College 3.0 is focused on post-completion outcomes and providing students with meaningful opportunities for career engagement.

The College is also looking at information prepared by EAB, and considering the post-COVID environment. Other local context tools include the latest District 535 Environmental Scan, the ICCB Economic Impact Study, and workforce data. Internal data includes progress on Success Matters, Strategic Planning kickoff survey, employee strategic conversations, enrollment data and student outcomes data. All this information is regularly shared with the Board.

Oakton’s mission and vision set the frame for the strategic plan. They were revised in 2017 during the developing of the 2018-2022 strategic plan, and to coincide with the 10-year accreditation visit. The mission sets the direction for decision-making. The vision outlines what Oakton aspires to be. The strategic plan also focuses on the values as guiding principles (who we are, how we act, how we operate).

The team working on this process has asked different groups about how Oakton’s mission, vision and values really articulate what we do to attract and retain students. How does it help us differentiate our institution from others? Internally, people were given an opportunity to weigh in, and people inside Oakton feel that there is no need to change the mission, vision and values.

Trustee Bush indicated that she has expressed her opinions regarding Oakton's mission in regard to its being "the community's college." She shared that her work in the Maine Township community and high schools, and in ETHS makes her feel this statement is not true for the entire 535 district. Based on her experience, Dr. Bush said Oakton does not feel like the community's college in Evanston like it does in Des Plaines. We have a very large district, and Oakton creates the community that it serves around it. President Smith said that she believes that if we are supposed to be the community's college, we must recognize if we haven't served certain parts of the population that needs to be part of our strategic work.

President Smith reiterated that Oakton is a values driven institution but data informed, and the goal is to create a just community through education. It is a bold vision, but it is future-oriented. Three-year strategic plans seem to be more important now given how rapidly the landscape changes. The new strategic plan would be 3-5 years with an annual operational plan with key metrics and goals, and feedback from the internal and external community.

#### Vision 2030 – Building Just Communities through Education

- Big Idea #1: Change lives by creating clear pathways and alignment from P-12 into Oakton, through Oakton, and into a career with family sustaining wages and benefits. Create a pathway and alignment into Oakton for returning adults.
- Big Idea #2: Use an equity-minded and anti-racist framework/lens in all of our work and be known as a community leader/resource for economic and social justice.
- Big Idea #3: Serve as a talent pipeline for industries in our district, be known as a destination employer ourselves, and be a key partner in regional/district economic development.

The goal of establishing just communities is to reduce the wealth gap, provide access to health care, lower poverty rates. Our role in creating a just community will be through education to ensure that students who come to Oakton are getting careers with sustaining wages to help their families and their communities. Raj Chetty has presented data on social mobility measures, and how institutions have made an impact on students from low-income communities. 4-year institutions and community colleges do a much better job at economic and social mobility than elite institutions.

Evanston and Des Plaines are the communities within district 535 with the highest rates of poverty, and the biggest wealth gap. Oakton's goal is to offer programs that align with the local economy and provide livable wages. Oakton also needs to track students who transfer because there's no clear data on bachelor degree completion. There are companies where there are jobs available, but they can't fill them because they can't find people with the necessary training. It is important to establish agreement with institutions and companies that will offer opportunities to Oakton graduates. In order to establish these relationships, people need to know what product Oakton offers, and the College needs to attract students and provide them with the right opportunities to continue their education.

It is also important to support students with disabilities in achieving their goals. Dr. Bush would like Oakton to provide universal services to all district residents.

#### Next Steps:

- Engage college community in refining "Big Ideas" and identifying strategies to reach the goals
  - Learning Day – October 27, 2021
- Engage external community and stakeholders to refine goals and strategies
- SPARC will utilize input to draft the plan
- Board of Trustees will see progress reports in September, November, January, and March
- Board of Trustees will vote for approval in May 2022

Chair Burns indicated the Board would email their comments to Dr. Becker in the interest of time.

### **College Name Change – Options to Consider** (Katherine Sawyer and Andrea Lehmacher)

In August 2021, Trustees adopted the following resolution: “Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Community College District 535 adopts the resolution to change the College’s name from Oakton Community College to Oakton College, and directs the Administration to work with a subcommittee of the Board of Trustees to develop a timeline and transition process.”

The College Relations team provided a document to the Board identifying all the places where the College’s name appears in order to determine how to launch the name change process. The team also identified potential timelines for the transition and other ideas for the Board to consider. Trustees Kotowski and Salzberg will be working with the College to lead these efforts.

Director of Marketing, Andrea Lehmacher did an overview of Oakton’s identity, and talked about the current logo that was created in 2005-2006. The logo is a visual representation of the College’s brand; it’s about inspiration, growth and community that is focused on students — the logo is a representation of the Oakton Experience. The Oakton logo is also about consistency. The name change is an opportunity to strengthen the current brand.

Four options were presented for the Board’s consideration going from a passive approach through a full overhaul of Oakton’s logo and brand.

**Option 1 – Passive Change.** Modest logo/identity modification and phase in quietly with signage and physical asset changes as operational opportunities allow.

Estimated Budget Impact: low budget investment to support transition (\$5,000-\$20,000 consulting and outsourced design transition/updates); absorb change operationally on permanent structures and other instances with end-of-life renewal.

**Option 2 – Synchronize Change/Maintain Logo Elements.** Modest logo/identify modification, change campaign with messaging synchronized to strategic plan launch, and synchronized signage and physical asset updates.

Estimated Budget impact: \$5,000-\$20,000 consulting and outsourced design transition/updates in FY22; \$400,000 in additional budget commitment in FY23 (\$200,000 for physical identity transition and an additional \$200,000 for brand messaging campaign); supplemental brand messaging investment to continue in FY24 and FY25.

**Option 3 – Evolving with the Leaf.** Brand and logo identity refresh while retaining the leaf in some form, change campaign, and signage synchronization.

Estimated Budget Impact: \$20,000-\$40,000 consulting, brand research and identity refresh options/selection, and outsourced design transition/updates spread across FY22-FY23; \$400,000 budget in FY23 (\$200K for physical identity transition and \$200K for brand messaging campaign); bolstered brand messaging to continue in FY24 and FY25.

**Option 4 – Full Overhaul/Leave the Leaf Behind.** Complete a full brand and logo identity review/refresh that moves on from the leaf, change campaign, and full signage synchronization.

Estimated Budget Impact: \$50,000-\$70,000 consulting, brand research and identity refresh options/selection, and outsourced design transition/updates spread across FY22-FY23; \$1.3M budget in FY23-FY24 (\$1M for physical identity transition and \$300K for brand messaging campaign); bolstered brand messaging to continue in FY24 and FY25.

### Comments

Trustee Kotowski shared some of the feedback he received from some community members who believe this means the College will begin to start offering 4-year degrees and asked if Oakton would get rid of trade programs. Mr. Kotowski expressed his concern, and suggested that the name change process

includes making sure the community knows that the College's mission will not change. Trustee Kotowski also indicated that he would support a mixture of options 3 and 4, as long as it clear that the public knows Oakton is still a community college, and it is not getting rid of trade programs.

Trustee Salzberg shared that some members of the Evanston community are excited about the change, and how he believes changing the name could mean that students would be more motivated to enroll at Oakton.

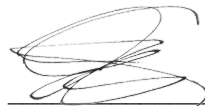
Trustee Toussaint indicated that she leans toward option 2, which makes good sense, and it would maintain Oakton's identity. Trustee Bush shared that she sees the benefit of evolving with the leaf, and she would like the strategy to keep students first instead of focusing on monuments. Trustee Bush indicated that she thinks the logo and the font of the logo are important. Trustees Yanow, Salzberg, Burns, Stafford and Kotowski supported the idea of a combination of options 2 and 3 to keep the leaf. Trustee Stafford indicated the College needs a new seal to modernize it and symbolize trade schools in a bigger way.

The next step will be to work with the College team and Trustees Kotowski and Salzberg to move forward with the process.

### **Adjournment**

Trustee Salzberg made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Student Trustee Patel. A voice vote was called and the meeting was adjourned at 7 p.m.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Martha Burns, Board Chair

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Paul Kotowski, Board Secretary

bs  
9/2021