

**Minutes of a Committee of the Whole Meeting
Oakton Community College Board of Trustees
October 2, 2020**

A Committee of the Whole meeting of the Board of Trustees of Oakton Community College, District 535 was held in a virtual format on October 2, 2020. Dr. Joianne Smith, president of Oakton Community College, was physically present at the Des Plaines campus, 1600 E. Golf Road for the meeting.

Open Session and Roll Call

Chair Stafford called the meeting to order at 11 a.m. All trustees attended virtually.

Trustee Toussaint called the roll:

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| Mr. Stafford | Chair | Present |
| Mr. Kotowski | Vice Chair | Present |
| Ms. Toussaint | Secretary | Present |
| Dr. Bush | | Present |
| Dr. Yanow | | Present |
| Ms. Burns | | Present |

Chair Stafford asked Secretary Toussaint to provide an update to the Board on the Board's retreat initiative on community communications. Secretary Toussaint noted that at two previous Board meetings, one of the issues that came up was trustee participation in the community, as well as how trustees can be more active in recruiting students to Oakton. Trustee Toussaint has gathered information from the Board and she will put together a report that will include all of the ideas, thoughts and suggestions that she will send out to the trustees for their edits and feedback. Chair Stafford said that one of the suggestions from the retreat was having Board members talk to elected officials from various governments to get Oakton's message out. Chair Stafford thanked Trustee Toussaint for her work on the report. Dr. Smith will provide a draft of a template that the College Advancement team put together that can be tailored to specific events that the trustees can use when they are in their ambassadors role. Secretary Toussaint asked that it be included in a future packet for the Board, so when she sends out the report, they will already have an idea of how that information will be utilized.

Chair Stafford turned the meeting over to Trustee Burns to start the Evanston Task Force portion of the meeting. Trustee Burns thanked everyone for taking the time to attend the meeting. Trustee Burns asked Trustee Kotowski to provide a brief review of the Task Force meeting that was held on September 18, 2020. Trustee Kotowski began by noting that at that meeting, Trustee Burns reviewed the charter that Dr. Ileo Lott, Vice President of Academic Affairs, had provided and that she made no edits or changes. Dr. Lott pointed out that the Evanston Task Force will have external members. There was also a discussion which included Dr. Karl Brooks, Vice President of Student Affairs, about the concept of a task force versus program initiatives and that it does not have to be one or the other. Dr. Lott did stress the importance of modifying or examining our existing programs through a cultural lens to help disadvantaged young Black men. There was a lengthy discussion about the organizations and individuals that the Task Force is going to reach out to. Dr. Lott once again reiterated the importance of how we approach these individuals, what questions we ask them, how we negotiate with them. There was a discussion about whom we might approach and whether to include elected officials. Dr. Smith pointed out that reaching out to elected officials might be premature at this time. Trustee Burns suggested Chair Stafford's input would be needed at some point to discuss the financial aspect and ramifications because obviously this initiative is going to involve funding. The Task Force discussed the importance of having a tight timeline and decided to meet every two weeks. Those were the highlights of the topics that were discussed at the September 18 meeting.

Trustee Burns commented that it was noted at the meeting on September 18, that she and Trustee Kotowski would talk to the entire Board about the identified stakeholders. She sent the trustees an email asking if they could provide her with names of people that they could contact about their successful experiences and initiatives

that related to African American males. Trustee Burns said that she did not receive any feedback on that email. She asked the trustees to provide her with those names as soon as they could. Also, Dr. Smith drafted a letter explaining the purpose of the Evanston Task Force, which she sent Trustee Burns. Trustee Burns noted that since this is a public meeting, she asked that individual names of people who were not in attendance not be mentioned. A number of trustees said that they did not receive the email that Trustee Burns mentioned earlier. Trustee Burns apologized and said that she would resend the email. Besides names that trustees would like to see on the list, Trustee Burns also asked them to look at the charter that she would forward with the list of names, names that they think could provide some insight into what we are trying to accomplish with African American males.

Chair Stafford commented that regarding the draft of the charter, which the trustees did receive, a couple of trustees contacted him and voiced their concerns on the charter. He asked if the charter will be refined later, and could we do the interviews and discussion right away with questions, or do we have to have a final version of the charter before we go out and talk to the people on the list. Chair Stafford suggested to Trustee Burns that she should provide a timeline when she is requesting information back from the trustees. Trustee Bush had a question about the charter and the Task Force. She asked if the only mission of the Task Force is to engage and have conversations. To Trustee Bush, that is a very specific initial step, but is that the end goal, no action beyond the conversations. What do we do with the information that we gather from those conversations? Trustee Burns commented that this is an evolving, organic document. Originally, going in, she thought that what we were doing was having conversations with a group of individuals, but then it was decided that could get out of control if we did not put parameters on those conversations. That is how this charter came to be. Dr. Lott talked about the charter stating that it is two-fold. Initially, his intent and thought was that the draft was first for the Board of Trustees to see and to provide feedback. He mentioned that the process for similar type groups has been to draft the charter, invite external stakeholders who would be part of the task force to come in, comment, and help review the charter to finalize it. Not giving the task force a charge, rather helping and inviting them to be part of creating the charge. This is very much a working draft at this point. Chair Stafford voiced his concern that one of the things that we were going to do, that the Task Force was going to do, was go out, interview key people, and get their thoughts relative to education, training, etc., to help us come up with a series related to Oakton. In addition, to question them on areas, resources, people, and groups that we can contact and interview, then come back to the Board with that information. Chair Stafford said that he understands the structure that Dr. Lott is talking about, but the concern is there are political issues relative to all the people that we are talking to. Chair Stafford thinks we need to talk to a lot of different key players and do that on an individual basis and then come back to the Board because it is one thing to talk to the people and get input, It is another to say now all of a sudden we have defined these people as allies and they are on a working team with us. He did not know that that was originally the concept and he has some concerns, not so much on the substantive basis because we will get a lot of substantive information, he has concerns politically that this does not get out of control of the Board. This is a Board initiative and it needs to be Board driven.

Dr. Lott voiced his concern that we would invite people to a meeting that did not have a clear direction. Dr. Smith said that it is a two-part process, we do the individual interviews first and when we have that meeting, it is clear that people know what we are inviting them to or want them to be a part of. One of the things that we want to be clear about is that if we are inviting anybody to be engaged in something, that they know what the overall goal is so that there is some structure. Chair Stafford said that his concern is that he thinks we should go out and interview those people, then come back to the Board and have the discussion where we go from here. Not necessarily decide that we are going to invite people to a meeting, as he is not sure they are there yet. Dr. Smith said that Chair Stafford is correct, it is a two-part process and that the meeting would be the second part. Dr. Brooks commented that these things could become politicized quickly. It has been said that the idea was to let people know what direction we are going in. This is where the Board can state that direction, what are we inviting folks to and what our intention is as an educational institution led by the Board. There is a lot of outside interest in many different ways, and we do not want to create any confusion about what our role is and what we are trying to do. Trustee Toussaint commented that maybe she is looking at this a bit too simply, but what is it that we really want, what are we trying to do? To her, the mission and goal of the Task Force was to find ways, people, organizations, individuals, and groups, with suggestions on how we can recruit African American males. This is not to exclude anyone else, but African American males are the ones who are the least in attendance at

Oakton. Evanston only has a nine percent attendance when it is the largest community in the district, and if that is narrowed to African Americans, you have a small percentage, and if you narrow it down to African American males, it is an even smaller percentage. Trustee Toussaint said that she thought the Task Force was to focus on talking to people who have expertise in working with and communicating to African American males. Trustee Burns said that is what we were thinking and the charter piece is where people are getting confused. She suggested pulling back on the charter; go forward with the letter that Dr. Smith has drafted. The language of the letter is an invitation to a conversation that goes back to originally what we wanted to do. The thought was that the charter would help to create some type of order. Trustee Burns said that if she understands Dr. Smith, we are not going to use the charter right away, but instead we will just go with our letter and we will have the individual conversations with two board members and administration. Trustee Burns talked about besides herself and Trustee Kotowski sitting in on the conversations, perhaps if other trustees have the time, they can also sit in on some of the conversations. Chair Stafford suggested that he thought Trustees Burns and Kotowski should attend all of the conversations for consistency, and to be able to compare, contrast, and then come back to the full Board with their report.

Trustee Yanow said that to Chair Stafford's point, there is an unnecessary complexity in politicization that can take place here, but as she sees this, the problem is two-fold. One, we have not communicated effectively with the population that we would like to have coming to Oakton, that is an issue. Once we are able to get these folks into Oakton, do we have programs, plans, supports, and processes in place that make this an environment in which they will stay and successfully complete a program. To her that is the issue, and that is her understanding of why we need community members. Trustee Yanow said that she did send Trustee Burns names of people within our community who understand and have had success communicating with the population we would like to come in, African American men in a variety of age groups. The role of those people would be to help us identify, not to create strategy, not to create educational programs, not to create processes, simply to help us engage with those learners, maybe to vet the strategy and strategic direction that we along with the experts at Oakton would design. Dr. Smith said that is exactly what we are trying to do. We know that we have not done an adequate job as an institution at reaching the community that we know that we should be serving. The initial discussion was who do we need to be speaking with to learn what they know. We do not want to design a program that is not of interest, does not meet the need, and so we want to talk with those individuals who we believe can help inform how we reach African American men. We need to speak to the Black men in the community to make sure that we are developing the appropriate programs and then find out what are the barriers, what kinds of supports do we need to put in place. As a Task Force, we are concerned about creating a program not as a one off, but a thoughtful, concerted, demonstrated long-term commitment to serving the African American community, particularly Black men. When we get to a point where we have stakeholders that are invested enough to want to come and meet with us regularly, maybe once a semester, to continue to help us engage, support, create the programs that make sense. The charter was based off a workforce charter where periodically you bring companies together to make sure that we are offering the right programs that meet industry needs. We want to have a group of appropriate community stakeholders who understand how to work most effectively with Black men in the community to help continue to ensure that we are meeting those needs effectively. Trustee Yanow said that we already know how to create academic programs at Oakton, what we have not done well is engage a portion of our community and serve them in the ways that they needed to be served. We need some input from the community on how to do that better.

Trustee Burns said that yes, the college knows how to create certification programs and pathways. That is not the issue, we need these conversations and hopefully out of each one of these conversations comes additional ideas that will help us to be successful in the end. Trustee Yanow stated that we do have the programs, what we do not have is the knowledge, experience, and success in engaging these people and then understanding what is meant by inclusion when we are talking about being able to serve people over the long haul. There are probably thousands of men who could benefit from the programs that we already have that are brilliant and based on market needs, etc. The question is how do we engage them and how do we serve and support them through completion or stepping into the next level that is the model she hopes we will be able to have.

Dr. Lott said that one of the things that was talked about was actually speaking to those affected populations and asking them, the ones who have gone to Oakton, what was their experience here, and if you left, why did you leave; and then to the ones, who do not come, asking them why they don't. We have not conducted that type of research; we do not have the answers to those questions. Dr. Brooks said the whole idea of this initiative and interest from his understanding is to fill the gap that we have not addressed before more intentionally and more directly. He hopes the charter does not get folks distracted. He suggested that the Board might want to make a statement of interest in this initiative; a clear statement might suffice instead of a charter, which would eliminate any confusion. Trustee Bush said to Dr. Brooks' point, she would like to see Dr. Smith's letter and assumes that is going to fulfill exactly what that purpose is. She agrees about having an intentional statement. Trustee Bush said that when she was a fellow for an institute for collaborative leadership, they used to go to different towns and did work with all of the social service agencies and all of the education agencies in the area. They did all this collaborative work so that organizations were not duplicating what other organizations were doing. Evanstonians know that you cannot walk down the street without tripping over an organization that is trying to work with the population. There are so many that are doing such good work. The Evanston Collective, Empower Evanston, the Moran Center, we have so much happening but there is no educational partner, there is no educational piece. We do not need to reinvent any wheels that are already going on in Evanston, but to have the conversation in a more holistic way. How do we become the educational partner for good work that is happening in our community? Trustee Bush talked about the Evanston Public Library that received a \$150,000 grant from IMLS (Institute for Museum and Library Service) for workforce and they are going to talk about education programs. There is so much happening in Evanston that is what Evanston is, but there are many ways she thinks in which they, Oakton does not come to mind. Oakton does not come to mind as a natural education partner being in the Evanston community. She thinks that is something that we are also trying to change with this process and she wants to see us extending ourselves not just being a receptacle for all of this, but how can we be the educational partner in work that is already ongoing and productive. Trustee Burns said she also heard about the \$150,000 that the library was going to receive, but she does not want us to get specifically involved with the Evanston library because of the money. Trustee Bush said that she understands, but her point is that she assumes that a number of the people that the Task Force will be having conversations with are engaged in different ways in Evanston in these areas that are just not the educational piece of what they are doing. Trustee Burns agreed. People know about Oakton, but they need to really know about and think about Oakton. Referring to what Trustee Bush has said in the past, Districts 65, 202 and 535.

Dr. Smith said that one of the things that we have been doing strategically not through this Task Force work, but having more of a strategic presence in Evanston. Ruben Howard, Director of Workforce and Strategic Partnerships, Marc Battista, Associate Vice President of Workforce Education/Dean of Business and Career Technologies, and Dr. Lott are very active in the Evanston Mayor's Workforce Advisory Committee. Every Wednesday morning Dr. Smith has been participating in calls with the not for profit organization leaders in Evanston. We go to the Evanston Cradle to Careers where a number of those individuals are present, so Oakton is increasingly becoming more a part on people's minds as a key leader for both educational and workforce programming. That is something that we have been strategically focused on because we have not historically done that as well as we could have so that has definitely been a focus of not just this Task Force but just in general at the College. We have definitely been intentional about making sure that we are keyed in to key Evanston groups so that we are known in Evanston as a key partner. Dr. Smith said that she thinks that the fire department apprenticeship program with the the city is an example of that. Chair Stafford said that this might take the form of two phases. First we go out and interview some of these leaders and they help us identify this at risk group. He said to Dr. Brooks' point, maybe we go in and get a focus group, get someone in there to run a focus group, but we do not even know whom those groups are and that is why we are asking the leaders to suggest whom we should talk to.

Trustee Burns asked Dr. Smith when she would be able to get a draft of the letter to the trustees. It was suggested that the letter be emailed to the trustees as well as put in a weekly packet. It was decided that the next meeting of the Evanston Task Force will be on Friday, October 16 at 12:30 p.m., Trustee Burns asked that any comments or feedback on the letter get back to her by October 13. Trustee Kotowski commented that as he read the initial draft of charter, which he agrees with, it occurred to him that we cannot or should not limit our efforts just to

Evanston because there are not insignificant numbers of young African American males who live in District 535, just not in Evanston. He knows that most of the numbers are in Evanston and proportionately that is where our focus is, but there are many African American males that would be shut out, they need to be part of our efforts too, specifically in unincorporated Maine Township. He feels that as the only Board member representing Maine Township he felt compelled to point that out. Trustee Bush said that the way that she is looking at this, it is a pilot; it is a first step to serve our unserved. She feels the same way he does, having been in Maine Township for a long time, specifically at the high schools for years. There are so many areas within District 535 that are not being served but in different kinds of demographics. Trustee Bush is interested in the intellectually challenged students who are not being served. She sees this as a first step to unserved and underserved, this is a beginning. Trustee Toussaint added that this is a pilot in Evanston so maybe the charter should reflect African American males in District 535 so that people do not think that we are only focusing in Evanston, but Evanston is where we are going to focus the pilot program.

Adjournment

At noon, Trustee Burns asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Trustee Kotowski made the motion, which was seconded by Trustee Bush.

Trustee Toussaint called the roll:

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| Dr. Bush | Aye |
| Dr. Yanow | Aye |
| Mr. Stafford | Aye |
| Mr. Kotowski | Aye |
| Ms. Burns | Aye |
| Ms. Toussaint | Aye |

The motion carried.

Dr. Smith said that we are all on the same page; it is just figuring out the process moving forward. We all have the same interest; it is just mapping the path forward and how to do that thoughtfully.



William Stafford, Chair



Marie Lynn Toussaint, Board Secretary

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10/2/2020

A video recording of the meeting was made and may be viewed by calling the Media Services office at (847) 635-1998.