

BRISTOL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES

Monday, December 4, 2023

1. Call to Order

The four hundred and eighth regular meeting of the Bristol Community College Board of Trustees was held on Monday, December 4, 2023, in person at the National Offshore Wind Institute (NOWI) in Room 118 at 198 Herman Melville Boulevard, New Bedford, Massachusetts. The meeting was called to order at 4:06 p.m.

Trustees Present: Joan Medeiros, Chair; Jeffrey Karam, Vice Chair; Valentina Videva Dufresne, Secretary; Renee Clark; Joe Ferreira; Pamela Gauvin; Todd McGhee; Lynn Motta, and Student Trustee, John Morris (remote).

Trustees Absent: Frank Baptista and James Mathes.

Others present: Laura Douglas, President; Lucinda Poudrier-Aaronson, Board Liaison; Joyce Brennan; Emmanuel Echevarria; Andrew Fisher; Steve Kenyon; April Lynch; Jen Menard; Kate O'Hara; Jo-Ann Pelletier; Jennifer Puniello; and Farah Habib.

2. Chair's Remarks

Chair Medeiros welcomed everyone and reminded all that after today's board meeting, the Foundation Board of Directors and the Board of Trustees would gather for a joint meeting at 5:00 p.m.

Chair Medeiros thanked Trustee Morris for attending the meeting via Zoom. She clarified the necessary quorum was met for purposes of board business.

Trustee Videva Dufresne arrived – 4:12 p.m.

3. Consent Agenda

Chair Medeiros asked the Trustees if they had the opportunity to review consent agenda items and then also asked if any questions or items that need to be moved for discussion.

- Consideration of Minutes of Board of Trustees Meeting for November 6, 2023
- Report of Personnel Actions November 2023
- Report of Workforce and Community Education Contracts November 2023

Hearing none, Chair Medeiros asked for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda items as presented. A motion was made by Trustee McGhee to approve the Consent Agenda items and was seconded by Trustee Clark. The motion was approved.

4. FY2023 Annual Audit Report & Approval – *Steve Kenyon*, Vice President, Administration and Finance w/ independent audit partner(s) from Withum

Chair Medeiros introduced Bristol's Vice President for Administration and Finance, Steve Kenyon, to present and seek approval for the FY2023 Annual Audit Report.

VP Kenyon shared each year the college (and the Foundation) retains services for an independent audit of all fiscal year activity. He stated the firm we utilized has a new name. The firm, Withum, performed the FY2023 audit and

VP Kenyon announced that joining us today was Dave Dilulis, a Withum representative, to present an overview of the audit and answer any questions.

VP Kenyon shared the Board has a full copy of the draft report in their board materials made available before today's meeting, as well as previously presented to and reviewed by the Finance Budget Committee.

Mr. Dilulis began by providing an overview of required communications related to independent auditor's responsibility under GAAS as well as management's responsibility. He shared there were no significant communications, findings, or issues to report. Mr. Dilulis began a short discussion of the FY2023 financial statements and audit report with time for trustees' questions and thoughts.

Hearing no additional questions, Chair Medeiros thanked VP Steve Kenyon and Withum representative, Dave Dilulis, for providing the FY2023 Audit Report. She asked for a motion to approve the FY2023 Audit Report as presented. A motion to approve the report was made by Trustee Motta and was seconded by Trustee Gauvin.

5. New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) Discussion on **Standard 7** (Institutional Resources) and **Standard 9** (Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure) – *Steve Kenyon*, Vice President, Administration and Finance and *Joyce Brennan*, Vice President, Marketing & Communications

Chair Medeiros reminded trustees that Bristol will host the college's NECHE accreditation site visit in March 2024. She reminded all that last two months, we have reviewed Standards 1-4. Individual Trustees' notes as well as the summary of the board's discussion of each Standard can be found in your black NECHE folder. Chair Medeiros shared that today, VP Kenyon and VP Brennan will focus on Standard 7 (Institutional Resources) and Standard 9 (Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure) respectively.

In continued preparation of the Trustees, VP Kenyon and VP Brennan provided guided discussions to explore the ways they see evidence of these two standards and how they are tied to the college's strategic plan.

Chair Medeiros thanked VP Kenyon and VP Brennan, and reminded Trustees to leave their black NECHE folder when leaving today. Lucinda will collect as we continue to build an individualized NECHE resource for each Trustee as we move closer to our site visit date in March.

6. President's Report

- Update President's Approved Goals 2023-2024

President Douglas began by reminding Trustees about the layout of the Proposed Key Goals document for 2023-2024. She shared most recent updates were in **bold** format. Progress on the four strategies (listed below) with updates on the objectives provided with each strategy highlight the college's key goals for 2023-2024. She shared outcomes would continue to be updated until completion is reached throughout the academic year.

- **Strategy #1: Academic Innovation:** Advance an engaging holistic teaching and learning environment resulting in a seamless student experience that prepares them to embrace life's opportunities.
- **Strategy #2: Equity and Student Success:** Shared responsibility for the success of our students and employees by improving equity-mindedness and ensuring institutional support that lessens equity gaps.
- **Strategy #3: Organizational Excellence:** Create a culture of innovation through improved processes and collaboration, modern technology and ongoing professional development to support student and employee success.
- **Strategy #4: Partnerships:** Collaborate with educational institutions, alumni, industry and community partners to increase educational attainment and support the talent pipeline to enhance opportunities in the region.

President Douglas presented the four Strategies, as well as the progress of outcomes of the respective Objectives and Key Goals to date. Once the update of the goals was complete, the President invited any additional questions or discussion.

President Douglas introduced Jennifer Puniello and Farah Habib, and asked them to provide some of the highlights of Bristol's partnership with Kinnaird College for Women.

- Community Partnership Highlight: Pakistani Partnership with Kinnaird College for Women – *Jennifer Puniello*, Dean of Arts and Humanities and *Farah Habib*, Associate Professor, Arts & Humanities

Their highlights included:

- a. Sabbatical work on curriculum development in Pakistan helped to establish connections. The college worked with Zubda Zia and Dr. Paul Edleman from Sauk Valley Community College in Dixon, Illinois
 - i. Zubda Zia, professor at Kinnaird College in Pakistan, expressed the desire to establish a cultural exchange.
 - ii. Dr. Edleman secured a Department of State Alumni Ties grant of \$10,000 to support the exchange
- b. Collaborated with administration, faculty and staff at Bristol to organize the 5-day visit including classroom visits, Brown and Harvard campus strolls, and a taste of Bristol (i.e., campus tour, culinary arts demo, and art gallery).
- c. Next Steps: Phase II:
 - i. Faculty to visit Pakistan for cultural immersion
 - ii. American Institute of Pakistan Studies Grant
- d. Alignment to Bristol's Strategic Plan
 - i. Partnerships Pillar – established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Kinnaird College for Women with the agreement to develop collaborative research projects, organize joint activities (e.g. conferences, lectures), and exchange research, administrative, and teaching personnel
 - ii. Academic Innovation Pillar – increase the exposure of High-Impact Practices (HIPs); the APEX Program promotes Collaborative Assignments and Projects and Global/Diversity Learning
- e. Special thanks to the President and her leadership team for their support and advocacy of the APEX Program

To learn more about the APEX experience at Bristol, Trustees were invited to view this [short video](#) created by Bristol's Marketing & Communications team. Lucinda stated she will share the link with all Trustees in a meeting follow-up email.

- Trustee Talking Points

➤ Adult Learner Town Hall Results – *April Lynch*, Chief of Staff and Strategy Development

On November 16th, the college hosted a Town Hall Meeting to discuss and share information regarding the MassReconnect program. The questions and discussions were centered around the needs of Adult Learners. Approximately 200 faculty and staff and administrators attended. We broke up into zoom rooms where discussions were facilitated by student services staff. The results were then reviewed and summarized.

The results are being used to create a workplan of key initiatives needed to better support adult learners. The key points and trends seen in these results are as follows:

- a. Adult learners struggle with technology (there is a broad range of capabilities ranging from not knowing how to access learning materials, sending emails, utilizing college systems, etc.)

Action: Tech support sessions embedded into our college nights, and several being offered at all campuses leading up to and after the beginning of the semester with the idea of getting them prepared to be successful in their classes.

- b. Clearer communication is needed (college speak and language used to explain, modifying and update the webpage, how to videos)

Action: Revamping the existing webpage (checklist, how to videos and reviewing the language)

- c. Better prepare our staff to support student learning – create a greater sense of belonging. Many adult learners struggle to feel connected.

Action: More professional development being offered to staff and faculty (February and March), focuses on more interactive and hands-on learning, trauma informed pedagogy, to name just a few, as well as the expansion of our credit for prior learning programs.

- d. Lastly, we want to establish the purpose and goals of orientation

Action: We are reviewing and revamping the curriculum included in our orientation as well as modalities offered for each student populations. We are also engaging in more student focus groups and activities geared toward capturing student feedback as we further develop our wraparound student service model.

➤ New Student Success Dashboards – *Andrew Fisher*, Vice President, Academic Affairs

VP Fisher shared location and content details for several of the college's new Student Success Dashboards. He shared these dashboards are forward, public facing and can be used for both big picture and detail specific reporting.

Trustees were invited to explore the dashboards. Lucinda stated she will share the link with all Trustees in a meeting follow-up email. See New Student Success Dashboards ([link](#))

➤ MASSGrant Plus Expansion – *Kate O'Hara*, Vice President, Student and Enrollment Services

On November 15th, Governor Healey announced the MassGrant Plus Expansion, a new financial aid program for students attending Massachusetts' public institutions of higher education.

This program will provide much-needed resources for low-income Pell Grant eligible students and will further extend assistance to students from middle-income families with an annual adjusted gross income up to \$100,000.

Like MassReconnect, this program is a "last dollar" grant, to be awarded after federal aid and certain other state aid programs. It will cover the cost of tuition and fees for Pell-eligible students, as well as an allowance of up to \$1200 for books and supplies. Pell-eligible students who are enrolled on a part-time basis will also be eligible for this financial support. For middle-income students (not Pell-eligible) enrolled in at least 12 credits, out-of-pocket costs will be reduced by up to 50% of tuition and fees.

Many of the eligibility criteria are the same for this program as with MassReconnect, including the requirement that students submit a FAFSA. However, students must be under the age of 25 to receive funding through the MassGrant Plus Expansion program.

Bristol Community College received approximately \$727,000 in MassGrant Plus Expansion funding to award directly to students, including retroactively for the Fall 2023 semester. To maximize the amount of funding that we can award, our focus is on increasing the number of students under the age of 25 who complete a FAFSA. We know this population has a lower FAFSA completion rate than our adult learners, and so campaigns around the FAFSA are critical to our ability to award this funding to students.

- Spring Campaign Commercial – *Joyce Brennan*, Vice President Marketing & Communication

VP Brennan shared a newly developed television commercial for Bristol Community College which has recently been aired; she played the new commercial. Lucinda stated she will share the commercial ([link](#)) with all Trustees in a meeting follow-up email.

- Financial Update – *Steve Kenyon*, Vice President, Administration and Finance

VP Kenyon provided the following financial update:

You heard from our auditors today which was all good news. They are also wrapping up the A133 audit which is our audit of federal funds. It is not due until March, but we will try to get them to complete by January.

It is too soon to predict spring revenue but have confidence in the way the numbers are tracking that we will do better than the -8% we budgeted. We beat our budget in the fall semester but even being conservative with spring projections we should be able to stay ahead of our original budgeted enrollment for the year.

We are still waiting for funding for the MCCC raises to come through from the state. It has been tied up in committee for several weeks. The college did start paying the new contractual rates effective 11/24. This group of employees, mostly faculty, are owed retroactive payments for 2.5 years that will be paid on 12/8.

The State Auditors moved in on November 27 and they expect their audit to take about 9 months with about six months being on campus. They are focused on auditing Federal funds with an emphasis on COVID related funding but are also looking at policies. They are examining cyber security training of our employees and also looking at any settlements over the past five years.

We are still waiting to close the \$6.2M loan to the Foundation, hopefully we can get that done in the next few weeks. Those funds will flow to the Foundation so they can relieve the College's receivable from them. Fortunately, we are not experiencing any cash flow issues at this time.

We have started working on the FY25 budget and plan to bring that to you in late winter or early spring. That budget will likely have another fee increase included in it. With Free Community College being proposed, Mass Reconnect growing, the largest increase in Pell ever, and new Mass Grant Plus fund we are seeing our students out of pocket cost go down drastically. If free community college gets funded, student contributions will be mostly eliminated making a future fee increase painless for our students while helping the College fund some much needed technology upgrades and address other budget priorities.

Lastly, our investment account, thanks to a strong November, is in positive territory by about \$230,000 this fiscal year but still behind budget of \$400,000.

At the conclusion of the President's Report, Chair Medeiros thanked President Douglas and all the members of Bristol's team for these updates.

7. Report of Facilities Committee – *Trustee Jeff Karam*

Chair Medeiros asked Trustee Karam to provide a brief report of the Facilities Committee from the November 6, 2023 meeting.

Trustee Karam shared as follows:

The Facilities Committee met in November at our Attleboro campus. We approved the minutes from the prior meeting then discussed each campus location with management.

Taunton:

- We discussed the status of the sale of our Taunton location from the Fall River Diocese to the City of Taunton. While there was no word at the meeting we did learn subsequently that the closing happened on December 1. We have taken steps to be sure the favorable terms on our lease will remain in place for the remainder of our five-year lease.

Attleboro:

- Installed a new style car charging station that is solar powered. The unit was donated to us by a private donor. Value was about \$80K. Can charge two cars at a time. It is a stand-alone unit meaning we could move it anywhere we would like.

New Bedford – Purchase Street:

- The city is interested in acquiring the Acushnet Ave property from the Foundation as part of a larger project to acquire two vacant buildings south of our campus and use it for housing. The College is not interested in selling but the Foundation, who owns the land was going to be discussing this at their December meeting.

NOWI

- The College is working on the permit for the training tank which is the last phase for one of the training programs. There were several variances approved recently by City of New Bedford Public Health Department. The City issues the permit but also needs approval from the State Pool inspector. We are currently waiting for his approval.
- Other than the tank, the facility is fully functional for other programs being offered.

We then received an update from management on numerous facility projects in Fall River. Some of these included the final projects funded by the Federal HEERF funds such as HVAC upgrades in B building, new seats in our Theater, furniture in the cafeteria and HVAC upgrades in Buildings K and L.

We also reviewed other projects that took place or were ongoing in Fall River such as new seats in the amphitheater in C bldg., repairs to the geothermal well system, and new windows in some of the academic buildings.

Lastly, we discussed a new statewide program for electric vehicles. The state has purchased a fleet of electric vehicles that it will sell to the College. The College is interested in obtaining a Chevrolet Volt, four door sedan. The cost would be \$22,000. The College will try to budget this for FY25.

Chair Medeiros thanked Trustee Karam for the report and invited Trustee John Morris to provide the Student Trustee report via the Zoom connection.

8. Student Trustee Report – *Trustee John Morris*

Trustee Morris attempted to share his report but audible/sound challenges within Zoom prevented him from being heard by other Trustees in the room. Lucinda asked Trustee Morris to provide a written Student Trustee report and stated, once provided, she would share it with all Trustees in a follow-up email after the meeting.

9. Old Business

Chair Medeiros reminded Trustees that upcoming events & activities for their consideration were captured in the 2023-2024 Calendar provided both electronically and within the Board's printed materials.

She asked if there was any additional business to discuss. Hearing none, Chair Medeiros asked if there was any new business to bring before the board.

10. New Business

11. Adjournment

Hearing no additional or new business, Chair Medeiros adjourned the meeting at 5:11 p.m.