



**Board of Trustees Special Meeting  
Friday, January 17, 2025  
Executive Office Board Room**

**MINUTES**

**1. General Institutional Functions**

- 1.1 Mr. Gewecke called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.
- 1.2 Mr. Gewecke read the Public Statement: Adequate notice of this meeting specifying the time and location was transmitted via fax, posted to the Sussex County Community College website, and on the main entry doors to the Administration Building on January 15, 2025, pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-8.
- 1.3 Roll Call / Pledge of Allegiance

The following were present: Mr. Gewecke-Chair, Mrs. Smith-Vice Chair, Dr. Crowley-Treasurer, Mr. Santillo-Secretary (via Zoom), Mr. Cable, Dr. Carrick, Mrs. Frank, Mrs. Pepe, Mr. Santonastaso, Dr. Silverthorne, Mr. Yardley, Dr. Connolly-President/Ex-Officio, and Mrs. Fullem-Recording Secretary.

Also present: Dr. Okay-Sr. Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, Dr. Homer-Vice President of Student Success and Institutional Effectiveness, Mrs. Pappan-Vice President of Finance and Administration, Dr. Gallo-Associate Vice-President of Academic Affairs, Mr. Fruge-Dean of Technical Occupations, Mr. Kula-Executive Director of the Foundation, and Mr. Ryan-College Counsel.

Mr. Gewecke explained that the Board is going to move into an Executive Session. He indicated that there may be changes to the agenda, including the addition of new items, most likely resolutions. Once finalized, the resolutions will be posted as part of the agenda, and the public will have an opportunity to provide input on them.

- 1.4 Executive Session – Personnel Matters

Be it resolved that the Board of Trustees will now go into an Executive Session to discuss personnel matters. The matters discussed will be made public if and when the circumstances requiring confidentiality no longer exist. However, it is not presently known if and when that will be.

The Executive Session is expected to last approximately 75 minutes. After the Executive Session, action may or may not be taken.

At 4:02 p.m., Mrs. Smith moved for the Board of Trustees to enter Executive Session. Dr. Crowley seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

At 7:32 p.m., Mrs. Smith moved to adjourn the Executive Session. Dr. Crowley seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Gewecke welcomed the public back after the Executive Session and indicated that there are additional items for the agenda.

## 1.5 Additional Agenda Item

1.5.1 Mr. Ryan read the Resolution: Accept the resignation of Dr. Jon Connolly as President and Chief Executive Officer of Sussex County Community College and to appoint Dr. Connolly as a tenured Associate Professor at a salary of \$82,649. Further, the Board Chairman is authorized to sign, on behalf of the Board, a Separation Agreement and General Release effectuating the foregoing.

Mrs. Smith moved to add and accept the resignation of Dr. Jon Connolly as President and Chief Executive Officer of Sussex County Community College and to appoint Dr. Connolly as a tenured Associate Professor at a salary of \$82,649, and for the Board Chairman's authorization to sign, on behalf of the Board, a Separation Agreement and General Release effectuating the foregoing. Dr. Crowley seconded the motion.

Mr. Santonastaso moved to table the motion/Resolution. Mr. Cable seconded the motion.

Roll call vote to table the motion/resolution: Mr. Cable and Mr. Santonastaso voted yes. Dr. Carrick, Dr. Crowley, Mrs. Frank, Mrs. Pepe, Mr. Santillo, Dr. Silverthorne, Mrs. Smith, Mr. Yardley, and Mr. Gewecke voted no. The motion to table did not carry.

Roll call vote to add the Resolution: Dr. Carrick, Dr. Crowley, Mrs. Frank, Mrs. Pepe, Mr. Santillo, Mrs. Smith, Dr. Silverthorne, Mr. Yardley, and Mr. Gewecke voted yes. Mr. Cable and Mr. Santonastaso voted no. The motion carried.

1.6 Mr. Gewecke opened courtesy of the floor on agenda items. He noted that each speaker is allowed five minutes and that those wishing to provide public comments should first identify themselves.

Mr. Ryan reminded the Trustees that the motion is a personnel matter and, therefore, is confidential, and board members are not permitted to discuss the personnel item.

Jason Boehm, president of the adjunct union at Sussex County Community College, alumni, and former staff member, addressed the Board. He said, "First point, we have four full-time tenured faculty members in science. This institution is constantly in need of money. Constantly. There is no full-time tenured faculty in some departments. At all. As somebody who matriculated from this institution to Rutgers, I had to write extra essays because no PhD was attached to my program.

"You're going to vote up science and give this man who has traumatized people on this campus, students, staff, and faculty alike, \$82,000 a year and tenure. That's what you do for a president who does a good job, and everybody loves. This is an outgoing board, and this is your last decision. The optics on this look

horrific. Absolutely horrific. Everybody knows what you're doing here. We can see it, and it's gross...and it's wrong. It's wrong! But it's like I tell my students all the time, sadly, in the real world, the bad guys usually win. This is a bad decision for this institution, and for the morale of everyone. That isn't personally attached to Dr. Connolly and intends to win out for him getting what he wants. This, I have to say, is without a doubt a decision that is being made not in the best interest of the college. This is personal connections. Your responsibility is to this institution and not a person. Right now, your actions show that you're loyal to a person and not an institution.”

James Gaddy addressed the Board. He said, “I would just strongly encourage the board, as you just added to the agenda, one item that is two different issues. I would strongly encourage the board to separate those votes into two different issues; One for accepting the resignation and one for tenure. So that way the public has an idea of who's supporting which piece of the agenda.”

Mary Ann Sharp, HR, said, “I concur with both of these. It's been said before and I'm very sad that it seems like you guys don't have the guts to do it.”

Rich Linden addressed the Board and said, “I am a recently retired long-term psychology professor here for many, many years, and I wanted to share my perspective...In other words, I'm not here to focus on the optics. I'm here to share with you my perceptions.

“After having worked with Jon Connolly for the last 10 years, I was the president of the Faculty Senate for two years. Jon and I worked very closely and successfully. Not just me, but the faculty did with him. I'm talking now about full time faculty, because that's my experiential base, not adjunct faculty.

...”One thing that really needs to be sacred to full-time faculty is tenure. Tenure is an incredibly important step, and none of us on the full-time faculty who weigh in on tenure view that responsibility lightly. It's a big deal. We all know it's a big deal.

“So, let me, let me just share with you a couple of things about my background. I oversee the Community College Teaching Certificate Program, which is a training and professional development program for our adjunct and full-time faculty on campus. I actually, Jon, with your support, took a sabbatical several years ago, which I am finally about to publish a book on effective evidence-based college teaching. My job as the person who directs the Community College Teaching Certificate is to encourage faculty, both adjunct and full-time, to develop their chops, their clinical, their clinical skills, and their teaching skills in the classroom. One of the interesting things about being a college professor that I think probably many of you know is, most of us receive no formal training whatsoever in terms of classroom management, the dynamics of the group, there's a whole lot of things going on in the classroom that take a lot of experience to manage well.

“Teaching is one of those things you and I all know that we couldn't get behind a commercial jetliner and fly the jet. But when it comes to teaching, most people who really don't know much about teaching, if anybody could do it, just give me the book and put me up there. It doesn't work that way.

“In the time I've known Dr. Connolly, he has attended two sessions, these are five meetings that run the course of a semester. He's attended two times. The Community College Teaching Certificate Program, and frankly, he and one other person in that cohort, those two cohorts, emerged as what I call co-teachers. Why

was he able to do that so successfully in view of use and help to other faculty? It's because he's paid his dues. He is an absolute educator. I've observed him twice. He has also been observed by Dr. Gallo. I observed him twice in what we call a peer observational model where peers observe each other in the classroom and I just want to say from my 40 something years of experience as a college professor, as a teaching professor, he absolutely has the chops. He's great in the classroom.

"I want to also address my understanding, which is that the science department has had a very difficult time finding a full-time professor with the right qualifications to teach the courses that are exactly, in my understanding, the same courses that Dr. Connolly would be teaching. The department needs him. I would not be up here speaking if I didn't know he's got the skills that it takes. He is student-friendly and student-supportive. He teaches from an evidence-based perspective. And when you're teaching hard science courses, what you taught five years ago may now be wrong and obsolete."

Mr. Gewecke reminded Mr. Linden of the time constraint and indicated that he had approximately 30 seconds to complete his comments.

Mr. Linden concluded, "I have no reservations about his ability to be a productive, constructive faculty member. The truth of the matter is, as much as I like Jon, if I didn't feel that, I wouldn't be talking to you. I mean it. He's the real deal. Thank you."

No one else addressed the Board.

Mr. Yardley moved to close the floor. Mr. Santonastaso seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Gewecke reiterated that there is a motion to accept the resignation of Dr. Jon Connolly as President and Chief Executive Officer of Sussex County Community College and to appoint Dr. Connolly as a tenured associate professor at a salary of \$82,649. Further, the board chairman is authorized to sign on behalf of the board, a separation agreement and general release effectuating the foregoing.

Roll Call vote on the Resolution: Dr. Carrick, Dr. Crowley, Mrs. Frank, Mrs. Pepe, Mr. Santillo, Mrs. Smith, and Mr. Gewecke voted yes. Mr. Cable, Mr. Santonastaso, Dr. Silverthorne, and Mr. Yardley voted no. The motion carried.

## 1.7 Additional Agenda Item

### 1.7.1 Resolution to appoint Cory Homer as the Interim President and Chief Executive Officer of the College, contingent on the execution of a contract between Dr. Homer and the College.

Mr. Ryan indicated that the Board needed to vote to add the Resolution to the agenda and could not discuss the Resolution in public.

Mrs. Smith moved to add the Resolution to the agenda. Dr. Carrick seconded the motion.

Roll call vote on adding the Resolution to the agenda: Mr. Cable, Dr. Carrick, Dr. Crowley, Mrs. Frank, Mrs. Pepe, Mr. Santillo, Mr. Santonastaso, Dr. Silverthorne, Mrs. Smith, Mr. Yardley, and Mr. Gewecke voted yes. The motion carried unanimously.

- 1.8 Mr. Gewecke opened courtesy of the floor for general comments and reminded The public that each speaker has five minutes.

David Haislip, SCCC's Veteran's SEO noted, "Going with that man over there (Dr. Homer) is one of the smartest things I believe that this college has done in my personal opinion. He backs veterans and he backs every student that comes in. He tries to help everyone. He would give the shirt off his back. I give my full 100 percent support."

Mr. Linden said, "Cory and I go way back. I've watched him in so many situations, challenging ones over the years. He is absolutely the right person for the job and the right person for the college at this point in its history."

Mr. Gaddy said, "I'd like to thank the board for doing this. I think Cory is the right choice to help the college in its next chapter. I would just strongly encourage the board, now that you have appointed someone to tenure, and essentially put Dr. Homer in handcuffs, that when this becomes an issue, that you back up Dr. Homer. Because mark my words, this will be an issue."

Mr. Boehm said, "...probably the best decision you all have ever made. With Cory, I could not back somebody better. I agree with everything that was said by Dave. To James's point, the last time you gave tenure to somebody, through your own power, it was Dr. Homer, and full-time faculty filed a grievance against you because there is a search process and procedure for hiring full-time faculty. I'm obviously not on the full-time faculty union, but I will be letting the president of the union know tonight the decision that you made so they can move forward with that grievance."

No one else addressed the Board.

Mrs. Smith moved to close the public session. Dr. Crowley seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Smith moved to adopt the Resolution. Dr. Carrick seconded the motion.

Roll call vote to accept the Resolution: Mr. Cable, Dr. Carrick, Dr. Crowley, Mrs. Frank, Mrs. Pepe, Mr. Santillo, Mr. Santonastaso, Mrs. Smith, Mr. Yardley, and Mr. Gewecke voted yes. The motion carried unanimously.

- 1.9 The next meeting of the Board of Trustees is Tuesday, January 28, 2025, at 5:00 p.m., in the Executive Office Board Room

- 1.10 Adjournment

At 7:54 p.m., Mrs. Smith moved to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Crowley seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Approved:



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John Santillo, Secretary-Board of Trustees