

# MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 12, 2024 MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF ST. PETERSBURG COLLEGE

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The Board of Trustees of St. Petersburg College met on Tuesday, November 12, 2024, at the St. Petersburg College EpiCenter, Room 1-453, 13805 58<sup>th</sup> Street N, Clearwater, Florida. The following Board members were present: Chair Jason Butts, Vice Chair Deveron Gibbons, Katie Cole, and Thomas Kidwell. Also present was Tonjua Williams, President of St. Petersburg College and Secretary to the Board of Trustees. Proof of public notice of this meeting is included as part of these minutes. Notices were duly posted.

## NOTICE OF MEETING BOARD OF TRUSTEES, ST. PETERSBURG COLLEGE

The Board of Trustees of St. Petersburg College will hold a public meeting to which all persons are invited, commencing at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, November 12, 2024, at the St. Petersburg College EpiCenter, Room 1-453, 13805 58<sup>th</sup> Street N, Clearwater, Florida. The meeting will be held for the purpose of considering routine business of the College; however, there are no rules being presented for adoption or amendment at this meeting.

A copy of the agenda may be obtained within seven (7) days of the meeting on the [SPC Board of Trustees website](#) at [www.spcollege.edu](http://www.spcollege.edu), or by calling the Board Clerk at (727) 341-3241.

Members of the public are given the opportunity to provide public comment at meetings of the Board of Trustees concerning matters and propositions on the agenda for discussion and Board action. At the Board meeting, in advance of the time for public comment on the agenda, individuals desiring to speak shall submit a registration card to the Board Clerk, Ms. Rebecca Brown, at the staff table. Policy and procedures regarding public comment can be found on the [SPC Board of Trustees website](#) at [www.spcollege.edu](http://www.spcollege.edu)

If any person wishes to appeal a decision made with respect to any matter considered by the Board, he or she will need a record of the proceedings. It is the obligation of such person to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made. Section 286.0105, Florida Statutes.

Pursuant to the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, any person requiring special accommodations to participate in this meeting is asked to advise the agency five business days before the meeting by contacting the Board Clerk at 727-341-3241. If you are planning to attend the meeting and are hearing impaired, please contact the agency five business days before the meeting by calling 727-791-2422 (V/TTY) or 727-474-1907 (VP).

In accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, the following Agenda was prepared:

**AGENDA**  
**ST. PETERSBURG COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
**November 12, 2024**

SPC EpiCenter (Collaborative Labs)  
13805 58<sup>th</sup> Street N  
Clearwater, FL  
**WORKSHOP**

- |      |                                 |                                                                         |
|------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I.   | Call to Order                   | Jason Butts<br>Chair                                                    |
| II.  | Health Insurance Update         | Dr. Darryl Wright-Greene<br>Chief Human Resources and<br>Talent Officer |
| III. | Accreditation Transition Update | Dr. Matthew Liao-Troth<br>Vice President<br>Academic Affairs            |
| IV.  | Adjournment                     |                                                                         |

**Under Item I, Call to Order**

The meeting was convened by Chair Butts at 9:10 a.m.

**Under Item II – Health Insurance Update**

Dr. Williams provided the following introduction to the update: The Florida College System has worked for three years to join the state health insurance plan. The cost won't give the college reprieve, but the employees. Better plan, less cost. The Great 28 will join the state health insurance plan for a minimum of three years. However, it didn't get \$80 million to cover it so SPC responded and provided resources to employees. Nov 1<sup>st</sup> was the deadline to join the state health insurance plan. Florida colleges are going after a joint LBR to receive funding to support going forward.

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Dr. Darryl Wright-Greene, Chief Human Resource and Talent Officer provided an update on the Health Insurance:

- Was 68-95% covered by SPC
- Decision to move to 100% employee only
- Alternatives search began
- Current cost structure: 75/25

State transition update:

- Will begin January 1

Enrollment analysis:

- 1,248 eligible
- 94.8% enrollment completion rate

Strategic changes:

- State led decision making
- Alignment with Florida Department of Management Services
- Robust wellness program
- Chair Butts thanked them for the presentation and the work that went into it, noting that the change will be good for retention and recruitment.
- Trustee Gibbons indicated he is glad to hear morale of employees has gone up. He thanked Dr. Williams, the chair, the board, and the team for their work and support.
- Dr. Williams noted that risk management needed to be considered, now being in the consortium for hurricanes and things of that nature. She has been tasked with an RFP to determine what to do going forward: Stay in the consortium? Look for other opportunities? She hopes to bring back something to the board in February and noted that cost is typically less expensive with the large numbers of colleges participating.

## **Under Item III, Accreditation Transition Update**

Dr. Matthew Liao Troth, Vice President, Academic Affairs provided an update to the accreditation transition:

Background:

- The federal government loosely regulates accreditation. There are six regional accreditation companies across the country. In 2018, the U.S. Department of Education made a change no longer requiring colleges to belong to their regional accreditor. Each accreditor adopted different cultures depending on the membership, a peer approach.
- The SPC Task Force chose Higher Learning Commission (HLC).

SACSCOC 5<sup>th</sup> year report:

- July 1, 2024: received approval

- Asked for SPC's report to be used as best practice report
- No substantial change six months prior to HLC visit

Dr. Williams noted that at some point SPC will be both SACSCOC and HLC accredited.

Next steps:

- Get approval to switch accreditors
- Apply, receive membership, maintain accreditation

Timeline for moving to HLC:

- Estimated timeline to receive final approval from USDOE is 3-6 months (from August 13, 2024)
- Then more submissions and approvals
- Final part: Two-day site visit followed by a 9–12-month HLC review
- Institution wide process involving almost every department

Dr. Liao Troth entertained questions:

There was discussion about payments, overlapping, annual fees, and that the sooner the changeover is completed, the better.

Trustee Cole recalled that legislation said SPC had to move and asked how often the College has to move.

Dr. Liao Troth replied that cleanup was done in the second year after the initial legislation, and once moved, the College is done.

Dr. Williams noted that it is important to realize there are other costs involved, like changing everything on paper, marketing materials, and that the College will work with teams on credentialing, especially faculty. There may be some changes. She thanked Dr. Liao Troth and his team for their fantastic job.

Trustee Gibbons noted it is an excellent move. He asked two things: 1. A statement on the College's website about the reason for the move since SACSCOC has been a gold standard for accreditation. 2. The information being shared now should be put on the website. Meetings aren't linked anymore, and people need a good understanding of why this is happening.

Dr. Liao Troth shared that the College is moving because it's the best decision for the College; it's an accreditation body that emphasizes a more entrepreneurial approach.

Trustee Cole thanked Dr. Liao Troth and his team for a great job showing the pros and cons of each organization.

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Chair Butts thanked Dr. Liao Troth for the update.

Chair Butts opened the floor for discussion regarding the Allstate Center.

Trustee Gibbons provided an update about what led to the day's discussion: Doing what's right. The Allstate Campus has been discussed for the past year based on price only and he has never seen a state college go under; the state always funds them. He feels there is too much building of apartments within a three-block radius of the property, the market is saturated, and what is being built is not affordable. The board is the ultimate decision maker about what becomes of the Allstate property. Today's speakers represent thousands of people who live in this community. They have very large churches here, one is the first black police chief and deputy mayor, and State Senator Darryl Rouson also does not want to see apartments on this site.

He feels SPC should look at more of an economic engine that will provide jobs for the community, noting that the intent of this site was to be an economic engine. The giver of the property had that intent. He feels that now the College is doing what's easy, not coming up with a plan to support the community.

Chair Butts noted that Trustee Gibbons made some great points and that housing pricing is impacting Florida, Pinellas County, and the entire country.

Trustee Gibbons stressed that it is the College's responsibility to ensure people get educated and get to work.

Dr. Williams explained that it is important for the same community members here who I know and value to understand that SPC is not trying to put apartments there, but selling a parcel so to educate and build in Midtown, Clearwater, and to provide the high-end training. The College just got \$7.2 million from Midtown to do manufacturing so they can be there to get the jobs they need. She asked if the College is responsible for what builders put on the properties of what they purchase. She noted that she understands and appreciates the points made and that help is needed in the area. SPC is trying to bring those high-end trainings right there so people can walk out their doors and get it; the five-year master facilities plan is dependent on that. There is agreement with the need there.

## **Public Comments**

Rev. Manuel Sykes noted that a community must have housing, jobs that make that affordable, and leadership in the community that balances that. Developers make money and go, but a community college that keeps people in the city to go to that college requires the ability to remain here. Families are strained both financially and socially because they must find a place

to live. That's a strain both financially and socially. He stressed he doesn't want to create a brain drain where students learn here, but can't afford to live or work here, and that developers shouldn't have the vision for St. Pete.

Dr. Clarence Williams thanked everyone for being great partners in programs for young people. His program is currently housed at the Allstate Center, providing a southside location, making it easy for young people and parents. He asked if SPC will continue a southside presence if this deal is done.

Rev. John Evans joined his colleagues in sentiments of concern. He asked the board to consider that if this deal passes, where the other entities will go, and where the opportunity will be on the southside.

Dr. Clyde Davis commended the board on what they have done and will continue to do to mold minds, bodies, and desires of our young people. He shared that St. Pete's uniqueness is not something that just happened. It's the result of visionary leadership. In his role as police chief with 28 years in law enforcement and as deputy mayor, working with this SPC president and two preceding presidents, he helped to create that uniqueness. The site being discussed was recruited from Allstate and developed because of the desire to anchor 34<sup>th</sup> Street South while providing a facility to train and educate police officers and other criminal justice personnel. That site has proven to be more than ever expected. He has been involved in studies about Midtown and Skyway District in which they hired a consultant to do a complete analysis of what was necessary. The most important piece was residents' responses to "What is it that will make your lives better?" They said first and foremost living wage jobs with benefits, and access to services like healthcare, food, and education. He asked if money is the most important issue, noting that money is the most important issue, but it's most important to the community and those residents being displaced by gentrification because they can't afford to live where they live. Housing is not a prevailing need in the city of St. Pete. What's prevailing is the opportunity for those living there to remain because they have the necessary income to afford the housing. The problem is the developments coming in under "affordable housing" are not affordable. Should SPC have a say so for what the buyer places on the site? If you sell it to the buyer without stipulations, you don't. He suggested that over the years through the board's vision, community interests, and compassion for the community, has resulted in decisions that would dictate what a buyer can and can't do. So I say you do share responsibility on what goes on that site. I don't want to see you step away from your community vision.

Trustee Gibbons noted that this has never happened before; the level of frustration reached. He apologized. He stated that he wants to be assured there's a rubric that shows each proposal has been evaluated on each of those things the board voted to put in there. Was the process followed? The College doesn't need \$25 million. \$18 million would have been fine. Allstate was

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an anchor tenant in this part of the community. This site is especially impactful. He thanked the board for the time.

Chair Butts thanked all speakers for coming today and shared that the board hears their concern and their passion is evident.

#### IV. ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business to come before the Board, Chair Butts adjourned the meeting at 10:24 a.m.

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**Tonjua Williams, Ph.D.**  
**Secretary, Board of Trustees**  
St. Petersburg College  
FLORIDA

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**Jason Butts**  
**Chairman, Board of Trustees**  
St. Petersburg College  
FLORIDA