

**NORTHEAST COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

**STUDENT SUCCESS COMMITTEE**

Thursday, May 13, 2021

**STUDENT SUCCESS COMMITTEE**

Donovan Ellis, Chairperson      PRESENT  
Arlan Kuehn                              PRESENT @ 10:16 a.m.  
Terry Nelson                              ABSENT  
Nicole Sedlacek                        PRESENT  
Steve Anderson, ex-officio          ABSENT

**STAFF**

Dr. Leah Barrett                      Josh Schlote  
Scott Gray                                Dr. Karen Weidner  
Paul Feilmeier                         Heather Claussen  
Amanda Nipp                            Sarah Fuerhoff  
Dr. Michele Gill                        Tara Smydra  
Dr. Karen Severson  
Dr. Tracy Kruse  
Jim Curry  
Diane Reikofski  
Corinne Morris  
Dr. Trentee Bush  
Dr. Michael Cooper  
Dr. Kassie Wessendorf

**OTHER BOARD MEMBERS**

Del Ames                                 PRESENT  
Dirk Petersen                            PRESENT  
Julie Robinson                         PRESENT @ 9:37 a.m.  
Jeff Scherer                              PRESENT  
Carol Sibbel                              PRESENT  
Gene Willers                             PRESENT @ 10:09 a.m.

**MINUTES**

1. Donovan Ellis, Chairperson of the Student Success Committee, convened the meeting at 8:40 a.m. in Suites F & G of the Lifelong Learning Center.
2. Recommended approval of the Minutes of the April 8, 2021 meeting as distributed.
3. Amanda Nipp, Vice President of Student Services, advised that staff do not believe that 2020 enrollment numbers provide a true comparison due to the pandemic. 2021 enrollment comparisons shared this morning are compared to 2019. Summer and fall enrollments are down slightly compared to 2019. Based on applications received, staff are very optimistic about the new student enrollment and anticipate that enrollment numbers will be very similar to Fall 2019.

A review of tuition relief programs that are being offered in an effort to boost enrollment for next year was reviewed by Mrs. Nipp:

- Free summer tuition. Tuition will be paid but students are responsible for paying fees and purchasing books.
- Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF). Fall tuition relief. If a student has an expected family contribution (EFC) of \$15,000 or less, the student will receive a grant of \$2,500.
- Debt forgiveness program. This opportunity is for degree-seeking students with past due balances from January 2020 or later.

**Mission**

Northeast Community College is dedicated to the success of students and the region it serves.

- College Access Scholarship. Mackenzie Scott's donation was placed in an endowed scholarship and the interest from the investment is used to provide this scholarship opportunity.
- Nebraska Career Scholarship. Funds made available by the State of Nebraska.

Concerns were voiced regarding the equity of the Debt Forgiveness Program and what it's teaching students. Inquiry was also made regarding the financial impact from offering the Program. Suggestions were provided to restructure the unpaid debt, even if it is a \$10 or \$15 monthly payment in an effort to recover the payment delinquency.

Amanda Nipp and Scott Gray reported that these are the questions that were asked while the Program was being developed. Due to the pandemic, this is a one-time opportunity to remove the financial barrier so that students can obtain their education. Students must successfully complete their first semester of classes to have the first half of their debt forgiven and successfully complete their second semester of classes to have the second half of their debt forgiven. Students will be required to pay tuition for their courses, prior to previous debt being forgiven. Mrs. Nipp also advised that students receiving financial aid are required to participate in a financial literacy course.

4. Northeast Community College's 2021 commencement ceremony will be held in multiple sessions on May 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>. Two board members will participate in each ceremony and will sit on stage. President Barrett and board members will not be shaking the hands of the graduates.

Following the commencement ceremonies, a reception will be held in Union 73. A hospitality room will be available in the Cox Activities Center for individuals who are participating in multiple ceremonies.

5. Vice President of Educational Services, Dr. Michele Gill, introduced Corinne Morris, Dean of Agriculture, Math, and Sciences and Dr. Tee Bush, Horticulture and Golf Course Management instructor. Dr. Gill reported that while the Horticulture and Golf Course Management program does not currently meet the threshold established by the Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education (CCPE) for Student Credit Hour (SCH) of 275 hours and number of degrees awarded in a five year time period, there are new initiatives and a new degree option that will help boost enrollment in the program.

Corinne Morris reported that when former instructor, Kurt Pytleski, retired in December 2020, Dr. Tee Bush was able to step in and assist with the program and make some exciting changes. Dr. Bush has been able to continue with the spring plant sales as well as the poinsettia sales in December, both of which remain popular.

Horticulture is built into and impacts everyone's lives, but it can be cyclical. Horticulture provides food products, aesthetic appeal, and diversified income for people in various industries. People build homes and require landscaping, people move and change landscaping, businesses require landscaping, etc. An Urban Agriculture option enhances the education for those looking for diversified income based on horticulture and value-added products. The option enhances the skills, food production, and income of those living in small, rural, or urban

settings. Northeast recently applied for a grant and found through the application process that we have strong community support. Northeast is working to have an Urban farm on campus within the next five years. This will allow for outdoor learning spaces and experiential learning that is not currently available and also allow for community and other higher education partnerships to grow.

For a while the program attracted students who were golf course minded. The program is about horticulture and turf and the curriculum has been revised so that it will attract students other than the typical 18-year-old and there are numerous careers in horticulture that are related to the changes made in the curriculum. Industry demand couldn't be supplied until the interest was identified.

Northeast's Horticulture and Golf Course Management program is one of very few remaining in the state. Northeast offers the Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree with instruction in both horticulture and the turf care and has added a General Horticulture program. The one-year option provides a focus on horticulture and can be stacked toward a two-year AAS degree. An articulation agreement exists with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for a smooth transfer to a four-year institution.

Request was made for the data on the new programs that will bolster the program numbers. It was also suggested that landscaping should possibly be part of the program title.

Board members recognize the growing need for employees in all the varied and diverse areas of horticulture in Nebraska and beyond. A consensus was reached by the members of the Student Success Committee to recommend to the Board of Governors the continuation of the Horticulture and Golf Course Management program at Northeast Community College for submission to the Nebraska CCPE.

6. The Veterinary Technology program review was provided by Dr. Michael Cooper and Dr. Kassie Wessendorf.

Admittance into Northeast's Veterinary Technology program is based on a selective process to best utilize resources, meet accreditation guidelines, and ensure best practice while educating future technicians. The program has maintained high standards and incorporated state-of-the-art equipment into the curriculum and in Fall 2021, the program will be moving into the state-of-the-art facility. This will address facility deficiencies identified by program accreditation reviewers. Opportunities will exist in the new facility to expand the program which will require additional faculty in order to maintain compliance with accreditation standards. This future expansion would assist in meeting the workforce needs of a rapidly growing industry.

The program has a 93% pass rate on the Veterinary Technology National Exam. Northeast is one of two programs within the state of Nebraska. Currently there are no veterinary technology programs in the state of South Dakota. Northeast Community College's location allows it to serve a large portion of eastern South Dakota.

Dr. Cooper reported that as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) exists between Northeast and three local shelters, Puppy Love, Animal Shelter of Northeast Nebraska, and Furbaby

Rescue, to take physical control of animals to provide services. Chickens will also be added to the curriculum. Faculty hope to provide increased large animal experiences for students and continue discussions with members of their advisory committee and industry to identify ways to foster student interest in the care of large animals.

The employment outlook for veterinary technicians is better than average. Currently, there are more job openings than graduates. Employers struggle to find qualified licensed veterinary technicians because the demand exceeds the supply.

A consensus was reached by the Student Success Committee that the Veterinary Technology program meets the needs in the 20-county service area and beyond and also exceeds the thresholds established by the Nebraska CCPE and will recommend to the Board of Governors to approve the continuation of the Veterinary Technology program at Northeast Community College.

7. The Health Information Management System (HIMS) program review was provided by Dr. Karen Weidner, Interim Dean of Health and Wellness; Heather Claussen, Director of Allied Health; and Sarah Fuerhoff, HIMS instructor. The HIMS program has hired an experienced full-time HIMS director who will begin employment in July 2021.

Initial CCPE approval of the HIMS program was received in Fall 2014 and full accreditation status by the Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education (CAHIIM) was received on May 24, 2018. The accreditation provides Northeast's students the ability to sit for the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) and the Registered Health Information Technician (RHIT) exams and receive this industry credential.

HIMS professionals gather, analyze, and code patient data for reimbursement from insurance companies. Data supports the growth and needs for HIMS professionals locally, regionally, and nationally and Northeast can help to support health care needs of the service area by offering the HIMS program. HIMS professionals are required to maintain accuracy and completeness of patient data for research and analysis as well as for databases and registries. Medical and treatment history of patients must also be accurately maintained by the HIMS professional.

The HIMS program has a growing community relationship with area healthcare facilities including Faith Regional Health Services, Midtown Health Center, Antelope Memorial Hospital, Clarkson College, Davis & Kassmeier Chiropractor, Elkhorn Logan Valley Public Health, Norfolk Veteran's Home, Norfolk Medical Group, Columbus Community Hospital, Providence Medical Center, and Franciscan Healthcare.

With healthcare facilities having Electronic Medical Records and Healthcare Informatics still being a huge area of focus, there is a large need for the Northeast's HIMS program graduates. The Bureau of Labor Statistics documents that jobs are expected to grow by 15% from 2014-2024 which is faster than average. This will create many opportunities in Northeast Nebraska.

Heather Claussen and Sarah Fuerhoff advised that discussion continues regarding curriculum revisions to provide opportunities for stackable credentials.

Dr. Michele Gill advised that the HIMS program falls below the CCPE thresholds, it is due, in part, that the program has not had a full-time director for the past two years which has impacted the ability to recruit students.

While the HIMS programs fall short of the established CCPE thresholds, committee members acknowledged that it is meeting a need in the 20-county service area as well as regionally and a plan is in place to increase enrollment and retain students. A consensus was reached by the Student Success Committee to recommend to the Board of Governors to approve the continuation of the HIMS program at Northeast Community College.

8. With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 10:31 a.m.