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SCCC/ATS Board Meets, Hears Overviews

The Seward County Community College/Board of Trustees met Monday to hear an overview of accreditation process and to review policies.

Board member John Engel reported that the annual phonathon that raises money for scholarships has pledges of over $37,000. The phonathon is in its last week of events and has a goal of $38,000.

As part of the college's North Central Association accreditation through the Academic Quality Improvement Program, the college submitted its second systems portfolio for peer review. The reviewers have challenged the college to create new projects that will address its new challenges. SCCC/ATS is advancing the maturity of its approach to continuous quality improvement by focusing on management information, communities of practice, planning and effective meetings and decision-making processes.

The college will take the information received from the peer reviewers and determine projects that need to be addressed in the next five years, said Cynthia Rapp, SCCC/ATS dean of academic affairs.

The reviewers are a lot tougher on the institution with the second portfolio, said Dr. Duane Dunn, SCCC/ATS president. "We need to identify those things where we can step it up."

One of the challenges is to rewrite and strengthen the distance learning processes so there is not a big a gap between online and face-to-face instruction, Dunn said.

The college has revised its Drug Free Institution of Higher Education policy that will include a prevention plan for the college. Federal law requires all colleges and universities, as a condition of receiving federal funding, to prepare and annually distribute a written drug and alcohol policy, complete a biennial report on the effectiveness and enforcement of their policy, and to keep a report on file in case of a U.S. Department of Education audit. The board approved the first reading of the policy.

The board approved removal of the Computer Information Systems and Automotive Business Management programs from administrative review for the 2014-15 academic year. Program enrollment numbers, program concentrator numbers and expansion of the current marking/recruiting efforts will be monitored during the upcoming year.

The CIS program has increased the number of courses offered to high school students to encourage future interest in the CIS program. The program also finalized a 2+2 program with Fort Hays State University in Computer Science and a transfer agreement with Oklahoma Panhandle State University.

Automotive Business Management has shown an 11-student net gain from the fall 2013 semester to the spring 2014 semester. Larry McLemore, division chair, is optimistic that the numbers will be even larger during the fall 2014 semester.

The Agriculture program will remain on administrative review for the 2014-15 academic year. Instructors are working to improve the recruiting efforts and consequent numbers in four agricultural areas: Livestock, Crops and Sciences, Sustainable Agriculture Resources and the newest Food Science and Safety program that will begin in the fall.

Dunn gave an overview of the 2014-15 budget process and legislation that may affect that budget. The state aid for high school students to enroll in a career or technical education program should be fully funded, Dunn said. This is a part of the governor's initiative to increase workforce training.

In addition, the college may not have to suffer the 1.5 percent budget reduction from state, which had been designated for FY2015.

To encourage more students to live in student housing, the college is requiring students who are on scholarship to apply for a waiver if they do not want to live on campus. This has been a policy for scholarship recipients but an improved process has been implemented for FY2015.

Other things that may affect the budget will be a reduction in Blue Cross and Blue Shield rates, an increase in high school enrollment and an increase in utility costs.

Dunn also said there is legislation with the state to encourage more individuals to take the GED tests once they have completed the instruction. The legislation would help pay for the student's cost to take the test.

Celeste Donovan, dean of student services, said the college has acknowledged 16 presidential scholars for the 2014-15 school year.

Black Hills Energy would like to assist in the conversion of one of the cars in the college fleet to compressed natural gas, said Dennis Sander, dean of finance and operations. The initiative will allow this to be a part of the natural gas instruction program at SCCC/ATS while also working closely with Black Hills Energy on promotion of compressed natural gas for automotive vehicles.

The board voted unanimously in support of the USD480 Bond Issue and Sales Tax question. During discussion, the trustees indicated the importance of the bond toward addressing the immediate and future educational needs of the community.

In other action, the board

1. Approved the current fee schedule for the Facilities Use Policy and

2. accepted the proposal from B&H Paving of Scott City to chip and seal streets and parking lots in an amount not to exceed $50,000.

April events include the spring musical “Into the Woods,” 7 p.m., April 10-12 in the theater; The Compressor Institute, April 22-23 at the Seward County Event Center; Poetry Reading/Coffee House, 7-9 p.m., April 23, in the music room; All Saints Day, April 26; Sunday Fiesta Brunch 11:30-1:15 p.m. and Spring Fiesta, 1-5 p.m., April 27, courtyard; and Time Management and Organizational Skills workshop, 1:30-4:40 p.m., April 29.

The board will meet Monday, May 5 for its regular board meeting.

May events to close the spring 2014 school year include Spring Concert, 7 p.m., May 1, theater; Car Show, 10 a.m., May 3, tech school parking lot; Nursing Capping/Pinning, 7:30 p.m., May 9, gym; Commencement, 10 a.m., May 10, gym; and GED Graduation, 3:30 p.m., May 10, gym.

SCCC/ATS Press Release