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**TEXAS SOUTHMOST COLLEGE DISTRICT**

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees

**January 21, 2021**

The Board of Trustees of the Texas Southmost College District convened in open session via videoconference and in person on January 21, 2021 at 5:31 p.m. Board Members present were Mr. Ruben Herrera, Chair; Dr. Tony Zavaleta, Vice Chair; Ms. Eva Alejandro, Secretary; Ms. Alejandra Aldrete; Ms. Eva Alejandro; Mr. J.J. De Leon; Mrs. Adela Garza; and Mrs. Delia Saenz. Also present was Dr. Jesús Roberto Rodríguez, President of Texas Southmost College, Mr. Frank Perez, Legal Counsel and Mr. Ruben Peña, Legal Counsel.

**REGULAR MEETING  
AGENDA**

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Herrera at 5:31 p.m.

**2. Pledges of Allegiance**

Secretary Zavaleta led the United States Pledge of Allegiance and the Texas Pledge of Allegiance.

**3. Public Comment**

Chair Herrera asked if there were any speakers signed up for public comment. There were no public speakers.

**4. President's Report**

Chair Garza called on President Rodríguez to give his report. President Rodríguez reported on the following items:

**Spring 2021 Enrollment**

Preliminary enrollment numbers for the Spring 2021 semester include the following: 3,761 on-campus students, 3,418 dual enrollment students, and 1,839 early college high school students. This brings the total spring enrollment to 9,018 students, down 3.3% from last spring. President Rodríguez said he would continue to provide the board with spring enrollment updates. Census day is February 2, 2021.

President Rodríguez thanked the Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, administration, and community partners for their hard work and unwavering support. He provided a special recognition for Student

Services and Student Life staff, who have been working long hours over the past three weeks assisting students with registration.

### **Registration Rally**

TSC held its first virtual registration rallies on January 6 and 13. The *Virtual Registration Rally at Home* events were conducted via Facebook Premiere on TSC's main Facebook page. The rallies generated more than 4,000 views.

Rally participants learned about the enrollment process, which included information on advising, financial aid, and registration. They also received an overview of college programs, services, and resources. Viewers could interact with TSC staff to set up appointments and submit questions through the event comment section.

In addition, TSC held extended Student Services hours from January 4-16 and extended registration through January 21 to better serve students.

### **Holiday Video**

TSC produced a holiday video on behalf of the TSC Board of Trustees and college community. The video aired on all local TV channels and social media during the week of December 20, 2020. President Rodríguez thanked all involved in the video production, especially the Board of Trustees and TSC Multimedia team.

### **Angel Tree**

The Scorpion family continued its tradition of providing gifts to children at Rosa E. Del Castillo Elementary School. This year the distribution was conducted as a drive-through event. President Rodríguez, Chair Herrera, Student Life staff, and Student Government Association representatives distributed toys to more than 270 pre-k through first grade students.

### **CJI Graduation**

The TSC Criminal Justice Institute graduated 38 cadets during a socially-distanced graduation ceremony on December 12 at the TSC Performing Arts Center. The ceremony was also livestreamed. Cadets completed TSC Basic Police Officer Certification courses that comprise 752 hours of instruction mandated by the State of Texas and received preparatory training to complete the State Peace Officer Exam. President Rodríguez thanked board members who attended the event, including Chair Herrera, Past Chair Garza, and Trustees De Leon and Aldrete.

### **Fall Commencement Ceremony**

TSC held its second virtual commencement ceremony on December 12 to celebrate graduates from the summer and fall semesters. The event premiered via Facebook Live on TSC's Facebook page and on YouTube, receiving 8,478 views.

President Rodríguez thanked the Board of Trustees, faculty, and staff for their collaboration in producing an exceptional virtual event to celebrate this important milestone for students.

### **Spring 2021 Convocation**

Spring convocation was held virtually on Monday, January 11 and included presentations on facility buildouts, enrollment, dual credit growth, and safety updates. President Rodríguez thanked Chair Herrera, Past Chair Garza, and Trustee Aldrete, for participating and providing faculty and staff with words of encouragement during the event.

**Introduction of Director of Technology & Online Learning**

President Rodríguez introduced the new Director of Technology and Online Learning, Dr. Sara Baber, who joined the TSC family on January 18. Dr. Baber brings more than two decades of experience to her position at TSC, serving most recently as Director of Online Learning for the College of Geosciences at Texas A&M University at College Station.

Dr. Baber received her doctorate from Nova Southeastern University and master's degree in instructional psychology and technology from the University of Oklahoma. She earned her bachelor's degree in administration and management from Oklahoma State University.

Dr. Baber said she is pleased and honored to be at TSC and is eager to get to work. She thanked the board for the warm welcome.

**Video Presentation**

President Rodríguez concluded his report by sharing a video highlighting recent TSC events including: Angel Tree Drive-Through Toy Distribution, two Registration Rallies, and an alumni video.

Chair Herrera noted the board had been bracing for a 20% decrease in enrollment, however, the college currently has a decrease of approximately 3%. He thanked President Rodríguez and TSC employees for their hard work in reaching this achievement. President Rodríguez said the strong enrollment numbers are evidence of TSC's authentic care for the community and students. He thanked the board for their support in ensuring the college is able to move forward in providing opportunities for the community.

Mrs. Garza noted that the Student Services team is working from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. day after day. She said because of these efforts, TSC has not had to furlough any employees. She said TSC is faring well financially because the board pays close attention to the numbers. She said the efforts to maintain enrollment have been phenomenal, while other colleges and universities have been experiencing deep enrollment decreases. She said because the college community is working together, TSC is doing well.

**5. Consideration and possible action on the minutes of the following meetings:****a. Regular Meeting – November 19, 2020**

Vice-Chair Zavaleta made a motion to approve the minutes for the Regular Meeting on November 19, 2020. Mrs. Garza seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**b. Special Meeting – November 23, 2020**

Mr. De Leon made a motion to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting held November 23, 2020. Ms. Aldrete seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

## 6. Academic Committee

Chair Herrera called on Mr. De Leon to make the report.

**a. Consideration and possible action on the addition of language to a Board-approved agreement for dual credit between TSC and school districts within TSC's service area**

Dr. Joanna Kile, Vice President of Instruction, was called on to present the item. She stated that the MOU presented for consideration included two additions to TSC's existing agreements with dual credit school district partners. First, new requirements by the Texas Higher Educating Coordinating Board (THECB) add credit hours in an active field of study curriculum or program of study curriculum to the list of eligible dual credit courses that may be submitted for THECB funding, as per Senate Bill 25. This revision is addressed in section three, Eligible Courses. The second revision was made to section ten, Provision of Student Learning and Support Services, to take remote operations into account.

**A motion was made by Mr. De Leon to approve the revised academic agreement for dual credit between TSC and school districts within TSC's Service area and authorize President Rodríguez to enter into the agreement with partnering school districts. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Saenz and carried unanimously.**

**b. Consideration and possible action on creating a new Associate of Science in Engineering (AS.ENGR) with initial implementation in fall 2022**

Dr. Joanna Kile, Vice President of Instruction, was called on to present the item. She introduced Dr. Murad Abusalim, Dean of STEM/CTE, to provide information on the proposed degree program. His presentation included a thorough overview of job demand, comparable Texas degrees, proposed degree plan, personnel and physical resources, and projected budget.

**A motion was made by Mr. De Leon to approve the new Associate of Science in Engineering (A.S. ENGR) for AY 2022-2023. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Garza and carried unanimously.**

**c. Consideration and possible action on approval of MOU between Workforce Solutions Cameron (WFSC) and Texas Southmost College (TSC) regarding WFSC's grant application to Texas Workforce Commission Apprenticeship Texas Expansion grant program**

Dr. Joanna Kile, Vice President of Instruction, was called on to present the item. She introduced Dr. Joseph Fleishman, Associate Vice President of Instruction-Workforce Development, who reported out on the apprenticeship program and the proposed MOU. He said the MOU addresses a second cycle of the program, which would allocate an additional \$185,100 to fund training for 30 plumbing apprentices and 40 pre-apprentices in commercial roofing. The new commercial roofing program resulted from an industry partnership WTCE has cultivated. Dr. Fleishman said training participants will complete employment applications while in the program so they may enter directly into employment upon graduation. He noted TSC successfully met the requirements of the first year of the apprenticeship program, and he is confident the college will meet year two requirements.

A motion was made by Mr. De Leon to approve the MOU between Workforce Solutions Cameron and TSC to fund thirty (30) individuals in the new Electrician apprenticeship program, thirty (30) individuals in the existing Plumbing registered apprenticeship program, and forty (40) new pre-apprentices in its new Commercial Roofing pre-apprenticeship program, pending funding from Texas Workforce Commission. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Garza and carried unanimously.

d. Update on EMS Certification Exam Pass Rate and Plan of Action for Success

Dr. Joanna Kile, Vice President of Instruction, was called on to present the item. She provided an update on a notice of deficiency from the Commission on Accreditation for Emergency Medical Services Professions (CoAEMSP), which stated the TSC Emergency Medical Science (EMS) program did not meet the required certification exam pass rate and enrollment rate of 70% for the last reporting year, which was 2018. She introduced Mr. Scott Nelson, EMS Program Director, to provide a plan of action and intended student outcomes.

Mr. Nelson said EMS students must pass two exams issued by the National Registry of Emergency Medical Transitions to become eligible for certification by the Texas Department of State Health Services, the cognitive and psychomotor exams. He reported that TSC received a letter on September 17, 2020 stating TSC students were not meeting the pass rates and job placement rates required for certification. Programs may be recommended for accreditation probation if programs do not meet the threshold for three consecutive years. If TSC meets the threshold next year, no further action will be taken by CoAEMSP.

The EMS program has implemented several actions to improve student success rates. For example, the program of study was modified to better align with National Registry requirements, the final exam was reviewed and updated by program faculty and approved by the medical director, and students received additional instruction on best practices for test taking. Additional actions that will take place this academic year include: providing students with Student Services presentations on how to lower test anxiety, providing customized faculty-led remediation for graduates who do not pass the exam, and implementation of a flipped classroom model to increase student understanding of key concepts. Mr. Nelson said he continues to closely monitor graduation and employment rates, which are improving.

As a long-time educator, Ms. Alejandro congratulated Mr. Nelson on implementing a flipped classroom approach. She asked Mr. Nelson a variety of questions and offered input from her experience with local students taking high stakes tests, including strategies for taking timed exams, best practices in providing benchmarking opportunities, and assisting students with reading comprehension.

Mr. De Leon noted that Mr. Nelson was concurrently serving as interim dean and EMS instructor during the time period cited, but has now returned to full-time instruction and continues to reach out to graduates to assist them in test preparation.

Vice Chair Zavaleta shared strategies that have been used in the past to increase student success rates on national exams: increasing qualifications for program entry to ensure qualified students enroll in the program, ensuring faculty members have current knowledge of material that will be testing, and cross referencing areas students are not passing with instructor qualifications.

This item was for information only, no action was taken.

**e. Consideration and possible action on creating a new Associate of Arts in Psychology (AA.PSYC) with initial implementation in spring 2022**

Dr. Joanna Kile, Vice President of Instruction, was called on to present the item. She introduced Dr. Brian McCormack, Dean of Humanities, to provide an overview of the proposed program. He discussed the proposed program, the field of study, top majors and transfers, enrollment trends, faculty, occupational projections, and resources needed.

**A motion was made by Mr. De Leon to authorize the creation of a new Associate of Arts in Psychology (AA. PSYC) with initial implementation in spring 2022. The motion was seconded by Ms. Alejandro and carried unanimously.**

**f. Consideration and possible action on approval of MOUs contingent on grant funding between Texas Southmost College (TSC), Brownsville Independent School District (BISD), and Communities in Schools (CIS)**

Dr. Angelica Fuentes, Associate Vice President of Instruction-Academic Success, was called on to present the item. She said the proposed MOU would support an \$8.5 million grant application TSC will submit to the Nina M. Lowey 21<sup>st</sup> Century Communication Learning Centers Grant Program, Cycle 11. TSC currently manages a grant under the previous cycle, through which TSC partners with the Brownsville Independent School District and Communities in Schools (as the nonprofit partner) to provide enrichment activities for students at 10 BISD schools. This grant would add 10 additional sites.

Vice Chair Zavaleta asked which additional schools would be served. Dr. Fuentes replied that the current grant serves all five BISD high schools and five middle schools. The new grant would serve the remaining BISD middle schools and three feeder elementary schools.

**A motion was made by Mr. De Leon to approve the MOUs between TSC, BISD, and CIS for the Nina M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers Cycle 11 program, contingent on the grant being awarded. The motion was seconded by Ms. Aldrete and carried unanimously.**

**7. Finance Committee**

Chair Herrera called on Mrs. Garza to present the report.

**a. Monthly Financial Statement Report for the Month Ending of November 30, 2020**

Dr. Gisela Figueroa, Vice President of Finance and Administration, was called on to present the agenda item. She introduced Mr. Carlos Pecero, Controller, to report on the monthly financial statement report for the month ending November 30, 2020.

The item was for information only. No action was taken.

**b. Update on grants awarded to Texas Southmost College for the month of December 2020**

Dr. Angelica Fuentes, Associate Vice President of Instruction-Academic Success, was called on to present the agenda item. She reported on the grants awarded to Texas Southmost College in December.

The item was for information only. No action was taken.

**c. Annual Financial Report and Audit for Texas Southmost College District for Fiscal Year Ending August 31, 2020**

Dr. Gisela Figueroa, Vice President of Finance and Administration, was called on to present the item. She introduced Mr. Amado C. Sanchez, Cascos & Associates, PC Audit Manager, to present the report.

Financial records for TSC's fiscal year ending August 31, 2020 were audited by Cascos & Associates, PC. TSC earned an unmodified opinion, which is the best type of opinion an entity can receive from the auditors. Mr. Sanchez said the opinion was resulted from the college enacting its due diligence throughout the year and providing all of the necessary documentation for Cascos & Associates, PC to complete the audit. He reviewed the college's income statement, federal awards, and the summary of auditor's report for the board. He said the firm also determined TSC did not have any findings regarding compliance or lack of controls, and the college qualified as a low-risk audit.

Chair Herrera asked Mr. Sanchez to clarify whether the District was in good standing. Mr. Sanchez said that was correct. Chair Herrera asked if Cascos & Associates, PC identified anything the board should be concerned about. Mr. Sanchez recommended the board continue to review and to make any necessary adjustments to the budget on a regular basis.

The item was for information only. No action was taken.

**d. Annual Investment Report for Fiscal Year Ended 2020**

Dr. Gisela Figueroa, Vice President of Finance and Administration, was called on to present the item. She introduced Mr. Carlos Pecero, Controller, to present the Annual Investment Report for Fiscal Year ended 2020.

There were no questions from the board. The item was for information only. No action was taken.

**e. First Quarter Investment Report for Fiscal Year Ended 2020**

Mr. Carlos Pecero, Controller, was called on to present the First Quarter Investment Report for Fiscal Year Ended 2020.

There were no questions from the board. The item was for information only. No action was taken.

**f. Consideration and possible action on contract extension for Investment Advisor Services**

Dr. Gisela Figueroa, Vice President of Finance and Administration, was called on to present the item. She reported the college had conducted a bidding process for investment advisor services three years ago. This proposal requests a contract extension to align with the college's fiscal year, August 31, 2021.

Mrs. Garza said there was extensive discussion during the committee meeting, and she recommended the item for approval.

**A motion was made by Mrs. Garza to approve contract extension with Valley View Consulting, L.L.C until August 31, 2021 and authorize President Rodríguez to execute the contract as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. De Leon and carried unanimously.**

**g. Consideration and possible action on award RFP 21-03 for Campus Vending Machine Services**

Dr. Gisela Figueroa, Vice President of Finance and Administration, was called on to present the item. She reported this was the first time the college has gone out for bid for vending services. She noted this was an unusual year, with few students on campus, thus the revenue from vending services has been much lower than previous years. The college received only one proposal, which was from the current vendor. She reviewed the RFP criteria as well as the budget and financial impact.

Mrs. Garza said the committee noted that there was only one vendor who submitted a proposal. Dr. Figueroa said the vendor requested an 18-month contract, noting there is a 60-day cancellation clause. She said the vendor has a number of vending machines invested on the campus.

Mr. De Leon asked which newspapers were used to advertise the RFP. Dr. Figueroa said advertisements were placed in the Brownsville Herald twice. In addition, invitations to submit proposals were sent to vendors registered in the college system and with the State of Texas who provide vending machine services. The notice was also posted on the college website and Facebook page.

Vice Chair Zavaleta asked if there is a clause in the contract that holds the college harmless if there are lawsuits as a result of vending services. Mr. Pena, college legal counsel, said the college has protections under Texas law, however, he would ensure there is a hold harmless clause in the contract.

**A motion was made by Mrs. Garza to award RFP 21-03 for Campus Vending Machine Services to Central Vending Services and authorize President Rodríguez to execute the contract, as presented. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chair Zavaleta and carried unanimously.**

**h. Consideration and possible action on award RFP 21-04 for Windstorm and Hail Insurance.**

Dr. Gisela Figueroa, Vice President of Finance and Administration, was called on to present the item. She introduced Mr. Jaime Salazar, Executive Director of Environmental Health, Safety and Risk Management, who reported on the RFP timeline, description of services, evaluation committee, and evaluation criteria. Two proposals were received.



The committee recommended to award the RFP to Cameron Investment Company, DBA Shepard Walton King Insurance Group, in the amount of \$604,365.

**A motion was made by Mrs. Garza to award RFP 21-04 for Windstorm and Hail Insurance to Cameron Investment Company, DBA Shepard Walton King Insurance Group, in the amount of \$604,365 and authorize President Rodríguez to execute the purchase order contracts, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. De Leon and carried unanimously.**

**i. Consideration and possible action on award RFP 21-06 for Medical Simulation Manikins.**

Dr. Angelica Fuentes, Associate Vice President of Instruction-Academic Success, was called on to present the item. She said the manikins requested will support instruction in the Associate Degree Nursing Program. Dr. Fuentes reported out on the RFP timeline, scope of work, proposed equipment, evaluation criteria, budget and financial impact. The equipment will be purchased with funds from the Nursing Innovation Grant Program awarded to TSC from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

**A motion was made by Mrs. Garza to award RFP 21-06 for Medical Simulation Manikins to CAE Healthcare in the amount of \$61,910 and authorize President Rodríguez to execute the purchase order contracts, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. De Leon and carried unanimously.**

**8. Student Services Committee**

Chair Herrera called upon Vice-Chair Zavaleta to present the report.

**a. Presentation of U.S. Department of Education's Office of Federal Student Aid Program Review**

Mr. Luis Villarreal, Vice President of Information Technology, was called on to present the item. Mr. Villarreal reported that the DOE conducted a review of TSC's activities related to Title IV, Federal financial aid distribution during an on-site review in March 2019. The report was issued to TSC 18 months after the review. The DOE examined how TSC's Financial Aid department processes financial aid and reviewed operating procedures regarding disbursements of financial aid awards and other requirements under Title IV.

The reviewers identified a sample of files from FY 18 and 19, and Mr. Villarreal said the DOE was complementary of the college's cooperation during the review. He reviewed the process students use to apply for financial aid and the automated disbursement system TSC uses to disburse funding. Villarreal said the program review process is useful for evaluating internal processes.

Mr. Villarreal said 12 findings were issued in the report. TSC will provide a response for 11 of the findings by February 15, 2021. He said one of the findings required more time and effort, and the DOE extended the deadline for reporting on that finding to March 15, 2021. TSC convened a cross-divisional task force to research and assess the findings. The task force has been in contact with DOE and the National Clearinghouse to clarify aspects of the findings and ensure the college's responses are complete. He feels confident the narrative responses will be deemed acceptable by the DOE.

Vice Chair Zavaleta told fellow board members he has asked President Rodríguez to have the findings available for review by the board.

The item was for information only. No action was taken.

## 9. Policies Committee

Chair Herrera called on Ms. Alejandro to give the report.

**a. Consideration and possible action on adopting (CLA) Local – Naming and/or Renaming of College Properties and Entities**

President Rodríguez was called upon to present the item. He noted the policy has been under development for several months, during which best practices from other college and university naming policies were reviewed.

Ms. Alejandro complemented the administration for developing a comprehensive policy.

**A motion was made by Mr. De Leon to adopt (CLA) Local – Naming and or Renaming of College Properties and Entities. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Garza and carried unanimously.**

## 10. Executive Session

The Board convened in Executive Session at 8:26 p.m.

The Board reconvened in Open Session at 8:40 p.m.

## 11. Action on Executive Session Matters

**a. Consultation with Attorney on Pending or Contemplated Litigation, Section 551.071 Texas Government Code**

No action was taken in open session.

**b. Consultation with Attorney on Pending Real Estate Issues, Section 551.072 Texas Government Code**

- Update on Real Estate matters

No action was taken in open session.

**c. Deliberation on Personnel Matters, Section 551.074 Texas Government Code**

- Consideration and possible action on the FY 2020-2021 Salary Schedule

**Mrs. Garza made a motion to accept the job description and job title in the salary schedule as recommended by administration. The motion was seconded by Mr. De Leon and carried unanimously.**

**12. Announcement of Proposed Meeting Dates**

- a. Regular Board Meeting – Thursday, February 18, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.

**13. Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mrs. Garza. The motion was seconded by Ms. Alejandro and carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:42 p.m.



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Mr. Ruben Herrera  
Chair, Board of Trustees



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Ms. Eva Alejandra  
Secretary, Board of Trustees

The video recording of the Regular Board of Trustees meeting held on November 19, 2020, is available on the TSC.EDU website. These minutes were taken and transcribed by Dr. Angela K. McCauley, Director of Special Instructional projects. Videotaping of the Board of Trustees' meetings began on April 11, 1996.