

MINUTES

**South Arkansas College
Board of Trustees Meeting
ADM 309 – Board Room
November 14, 2023 3:45 p.m.**

Trustees Present: Gary Griffis, vice-chair; José Covas; Wayne Gibson; Melissa Jerry

Trustees Present via Zoom: Steve Cousins, chair; Courtney Kelley

Trustees Absent: Crystal Yeager, secretary; Kerri Brown

SouthArk Staff Present: Dr. Stephanie Tully-Dartez; Jenny Sanders; Dr. Tim Kirk; Ann Southall; Gabe Schroeder; Cynthia Reyna; Christy Wilson; Heath Waldrop; Jennifer Schroeder; Cynthia Meyer; Dr. Cassandra Tavorn

Others Present:

- I. Call to Order – 3:47 p.m.
 - a. Steve Cousins, chair was attending via Zoom and requested that Mr. Griffis serve as presiding chair in his place as Mr. Griffis was attending in person.
- II. Approval of Board Meeting Minutes
 - a. The minutes for the regular meeting on September 19, 2023 and for the special called meeting on October 12, 2023 were both presented to the Board. **Jerry/ Gibson – Approved. Roll call vote: Cousins – aye, Kelley – aye.**
- III. Approval of Consent Agenda
 - a. Mr. Griffis asked if any Board member wished to pull any items from the Consent Agenda for a separate discussion and vote. Mr. Griffis requested that the report for Financial Condition and Activities (Policy #5) be pulled from the Consent Agenda and be tabled until the January Board meeting. Upon request, Mr. Griffis allowed Dr. Tully-Dartez to highlight parts of the Hub and Resources (Policy #23 ENDS 2) report. Dr. Tully-Dartez noted that the quantity of partnerships was seeing an increase year over year. She attributed the increase to a post-pandemic mentality as well as an increase in the number of programs being offered by SouthArk.
 - b. The remainder of the Consent Agenda was presented to the Board in its entirety. **Gibson/ Covas – Approved. Roll call vote: Cousins – aye, Kelley – aye.**
- IV. Board Committee Reports
 - a. Real Estate/ Facilities Committee – In Ms. Brown’s absence, Dr. Tully-Dartez reported that the committee did not meet.
 - b. Personnel/ Planning Committee – Mr. Griffis reported that the committee did not meet, but noted that he anticipated a committee meeting to be scheduled for December 2023.
 - c. Budget/ Finance Committee – Ms. Jerry reported that the committee had met and had two recommendations for Board approval.
 - i. The committee recommended that the Board approve a proposal from SouthArk that would award a \$500 mid-year bonus to all full-time faculty and staff, as well as a \$250 bonus to all benefits eligible part-time faculty and staff.

Mr. Cousins noted that the recommendation also included a \$500 bonus to be awarded to the Interim President in addition to the proposal from SouthArk. – **Approved. Roll call vote: Cousins – aye, Kelley – aye.**

- ii. The committee also recommended that the Board approve a proposal from SouthArk to modify Inclusive Access Fees for some classes for the Spring 2024 semester. Dr. Tully-Dartez noted that the proposed changes were either due to changes in cost of the product being used for a class, or due to a new product being needed for a class that was not planned for when fee recommendations were last presented to the Board. She also noted that the new proposal determined fee costs through the following formula: product fee + tax + an 8% markup. The 8% markup will be used to cover overhead for adoption of the product, as that requires staff resources to implement. Furthermore, the 8% markup is still far lower than the previous 20% markup that was used when Inclusive Access materials were managed by the bookstore. – **Approved. Roll call vote: Cousins – aye, Kelley – aye.**
- d. Policy Governance Committee – Mr. Cousins reported that a meeting was scheduled for November 7, but due to the lack of a quorum, the committee had nothing to report.
- e. Nominating Committee – Ms. Jerry reported that the committee, comprising of herself, Mr. Covas, and Mr. Gibson, had met to discuss the nomination of officers for election in January. The nominations by the committee were to re-elect the existing officers of the Board. As such, Mr. Steve Cousins was nominated as chair, Mr. Gary Griffis was nominated as vice-chair, and Ms. Crystal Yeager was nominated as secretary. Mr. Cousins and Mr. Griffis agreed to serve as the respective officer if elected, and the President's office will contact Ms. Yeager to ensure that she will serve if elected.

V. Chair's Report

- a. Board Process and Performance Monitoring – Mr. Cousins noted that having the vice-chair serve as presiding chair when the chair is attending via Zoom has led to a greatly improved experience for the Board.
- b. Statement of Financial Interest Due in January – Mr. Griffis noted that the Statement of Financial Interest was due on January 31, 2024, and that instructions for filling out the form were provided to the Board in their packets.
- c. Harwood Grant Budget – Dr. Tully-Dartez explained to the Board that the Susan Harwood Training Grant is a grant that is received from OSHA focusing on a different topic each year, with a current focus on hazard communication. SouthArk was awarded \$102,018 to offer free hazard communication safety training to independent contractors and small business employees. **Jerry/ Gibson – Approved. Roll call vote: Cousins – aye, Kelley – aye.**
- d. Board Meeting Schedule Revisions – Mr. Griffis read the redlined changes that the President's Office was recommending for the Board Meeting Schedule within the Board Policy Governance Manual. **Covas/ Jerry – Approved. Roll call vote: Cousins – aye, Kelley – aye.**
- e. Board Policy #4 Revisions – Mr. Griffis read the redlined changes that the President's Office was recommending for Board Policy #4. Dr. Tully-Dartez noted that the changes were meant to better clarify the purpose of the so-called "multi-year budget plan" so that in times of turnover on the Board or in the Presidency, its purpose could be more easily understood. **The Board chose to approve item e and item f in a single vote.**

- f. Board Policy #9 Revisions – Mr. Griffis read the redlined changes that the President’s Office was recommending for Board Policy #9. Regarding the additional language allowing the President to withhold information from the Board when required by an external agency, Mr. Covas stated that he would like to have the knowledge of what situations would necessitate that the President withhold information from the Board, noting the responsibilities the Board holds in holding the President accountable. Dr. Tully-Dartez agreed with his request and suggested a workshop for the Board in February 2024, where a representative from the Arkansas Attorney General’s office could present that information to the Board. Motion to approve the edits for both Policy #4 and Policy #9. **Cousins/ Gibson – Approved. Roll call vote: Cousins – aye, Kelley – aye.**
 - i. Ms. Jerry thanked Dr. Tully-Dartez for taking the time to look at the Board policies, noting that many of them likely needed to be reviewed and updated due to the length of time since they were last scrutinized.

VI. Financial Services Report

- a. Dr. Tully-Dartez noted that since the Board had 6 months of financial statements to review, the Board should determine how they would like to review them. Mr. Griffis requested that Dr. Tully-Dartez highlight anything that she thinks would be relevant. She noted that the formatting had been revised upon consultation with the Budget/ Finance Committee and Emrich & Scroggins, whom SouthArk is working with for various accounting matters.
- b. In the Physical Plant Funds Activity as of June 30, 2023, Dr. Tully-Dartez noted the low amounts of activity on various projects, citing difficulties in progressing on active construction projects. She stated that she hopes to see more activity during fiscal year 2023/24.
- c. In May and June 2023, the year-to-date Administrative/Facility/Misc Income was 466% of the budgeted amount of income for the fiscal year. Dr. Tully-Dartez noted that this was due to significantly higher interest income than was expected by SouthArk.
- d. Dr. Tully-Dartez also noted that expenses in June will be higher than other months since June payroll is processed in June before the end of the fiscal year, thus leading to two payrolls being run during that month.
- e. Dr. Tully-Dartez noted that due to the transition from the old bookstore model, to a model utilizing eCampus for textbooks and University Gear Shop for other bookstore purposes, there had been significant changes to the auxiliary revenues and expenses from May 2023 to July 2023.
- f. Mr. Covas asked for an update regarding the technical issues SouthArk was dealing with for reporting. Dr. Tully-Dartez reported that for the purposes of Board reporting, the issues within Jenzabar had been fixed. She also noted that there were still accounting issues and other Jenzabar issues that are being actively worked on.
- g. Dr. Tully-Dartez highlighted that revenues as of October 2023 were at expectation and that expenses were lower than expected based on annual trends.
- h. El Dorado Conference Center Quarter 1 Report – Dr. Tully-Dartez reported that the conference center is moving into the busy holiday season. She also informed the Board that Caroline Callaway, the sales and marketing manager for the conference center, had been busy traveling and working to increase sales. It was also noted that the El Dorado

Conference Center had met with representatives from the Murphy Arts District to ensure that the conference center was offering a good rental experience.

VII. President's Report

- a. Dr. Tully-Dartez thanked the Board for their continued support, not only for her as Interim President, but for the college as a whole.
- b. Dr. Tully-Dartez invited Jenny Sanders, Vice President for Student Affairs, to give an update for her department. Ms. Sanders noted the campus wide effort, led by the recruiting department, to attend community events to help make the SouthArk brand visible, and to build relationships with counselors. She also informed the Board that SouthArk would host a counselor appreciation lunch on November 15 to equip the counselors with the knowledge they need about SouthArk. She also reported that SouthArk's Preview Day had been successful, with many prospective juniors and seniors attending with their parents to have each of their questions about SouthArk answered.
- c. Dr. Tully-Dartez reiterated the importance of building relationships with the influences in the student's decision making, such as with parents and counselors. She shared an anecdote with the Board about a call she received from a local superintendent who wanted to send some high-school seniors to attend SouthArk's diesel program after seeing an ad about the program on Facebook.

VIII. Executive Session (if needed) – No executive session was called.

IX. Announcements

- a. Ms. Jerry informed the Board about her experience at the Arkansas Community Colleges conference in October and noted that many colleges in Arkansas are dealing with similar difficulties that SouthArk is. She also encouraged other Board members to attend the conference if given the opportunity.

X. Adjournment – Covas/ Jerry – 4:41 p.m.