

FULL BOARD MEETING – Administration Building, Room 107A**April 16, 2025 – 5:00pm****SUMMARY OF ACTIONS**

TRUSTEES PRESENT: Linda Maykel, Eric Goodwine, Mariyam Bhatti (Zoom), Christian Bowlin, Jorgo Gushi, Lori Jones, Lynn Keeley (Zoom), Satya Mitra, Raj Rajeshkumar

TRUSTEES ABSENT: Liz Pape

CABINET PRESENT: President Luis Pedraja, VP Steve Marini, VP Michelle Tufau Afriyie, VP Kathy Rentsch, ED John Holloway, CAO/ED Deb Spotts, AVP Deb LaFlash, Jess Ahrens and Lu Costa - Board Secretaries

Meeting commenced at 5:05pm by Chair Linda Maykel and roll call attendance noted.

The Board of Trustees of Quinsigamond Community College, at its regular meeting held at Quinsigamond Community College on Wednesday, April 16, 2025 took the following actions:

Consent Agenda: *The purpose of the Consent Agenda is to expedite business by grouping routine agenda items together to be dealt with by one Board motion without discussion. Any member of the Board or staff may ask that any item on the Consent Agenda be removed and placed later on the agenda for full discussion. Such requests will be automatically respected.*

If any item is not removed from the Consent Agenda, the action on the agenda is approved/accepted by single Board action adopting the Consent Agenda.

1. Minutes from the February 26, 2025 Regular Board Meeting (approve)
2. Trustee Budget Report – FY25 (accept)
3. Informational Personnel Items (accept)
4. President's Out-of-State Travel (accept)
5. President's Leave Time (accept)

Upon a motion duly made and seconded and a unanimous vote, the Consent Agenda was approved/accepted by the Board.

CHAIR REPORT:

In the interest of time, this agenda item was omitted from discussion.

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:

A. Audit and Oversight (4/9/25) Trustees: Mitra (Chair), Goodwine, Gushi, Jones, and Pape

1. **Fee Increase Request:** VP Marini and AVP LaFlash presented the proposed fee increases based on the final state inflationary rate of 1.93%. They outlined the proposed fee increases, including Educational Service Fee, Student Support Fee, and Program/Lab Fees, as well as the overall impact for FY26 budget. **Upon a motion duly made and seconded and a unanimous vote, the fee increases were approved/accepted by the Board.**

B. Strategic Planning, Education, and Student Success (4/9/25) Trustees: Rajeshkumar (Chair), Basim Bhatti, Keeley, Maykel, Bowlin

1. **Tenure Approval:** The Board of Trustees considered the recommendation to award tenure to the following members of the college community: Effective July 1, 2025: Kristine Campbell; Effective September 1, 2025: Richard Ellbeg, Cheryl DeCoff, Susan Rosa, Michaela Almeida, and Anthony Yeulenski. **Upon a motion duly made and seconded and a unanimous vote, the tenure recommendations were approved/accepted by the Board.**
2. **Emeritus Approval:** The Board of Trustees considered the recommendation to confer the honorary title of Administrative Emeritus/a upon the following administrators following their retirement from the College: Elizabeth “Liz” Woods and Bonnie Coleman. The Board of Trustees considered the recommendation to confer the honorary title of Professor Emeritus/a upon the following faculty members following their retirement from the College: Maggie Crowell-Murray and Steven Rayshick. **Upon a motion duly made and seconded and a unanimous vote, the emeritus recommendations were approved/accepted by the Board.**
3. **Nomination for Trustees’ Citizen’s Award:** The Board of Trustees considered the nomination to present the Trustees’ Citizen’s Award to James “Jim” Griffin. Chair Maykel spoke about Mr. Griffin’s contributions to QCC, including his service on the QCC Foundation and his role as a basketball coach. **Upon a motion duly made and seconded and a unanimous vote, the nomination for the Trustees’ Citizen’s Award was approved/accepted by the Board.**

C. Executive (4/2/25) Trustees: *Maykel, Goodwine, Mitra, and Rajeshkumar*

1. **Chair Report:** In the interest of time, this agenda item was omitted from discussion.

QCC Foundation Report – *Jorgo Gushi, QCC Foundation President*

In the interest of time, this agenda item was omitted from discussion.

Student Trustee Report – *Christian Bowlin*

In the interest of time, this agenda item was omitted from discussion.

President’s Report – *Dr. Luis Pedraja*

A. Ongoing Initiatives/Campus Updates

- President Pedraja reported that the federal administration has taken steps to remove immigration status for many students. Some students, particularly in workforce development programs, have received official correspondence. The College is working closely with legal counsel and the Attorney General’s Office to support impacted students, including providing "Know Your Rights" training. Faculty and staff are also assisting affected students in transitioning to online courses to help them complete the semester.
- Concerns were raised regarding the potential dismantling of the U.S. Department of Education and the potential impacts, including delays in processing student aid, potential changes to student loans, and reductions in SNAP benefits. Additional federal cuts to research funding, including NIH grants, could also affect QCC and its sister institutions.
- President Pedraja also mentioned recent meetings to address these concerns and advocate for higher education support, including Zoom conversation with Senator Elizabeth Warren and College Presidents last week. HECCMA (Higher Education Consortium of Central Massachusetts) is sending a delegation of students and staff to Washington, DC on April 30 to meet with federal legislators and advocate for protecting student financial aid programs. President has meetings with Senator Michael Rodrigues, Chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means, and Senate President Karen Spilka tomorrow, April 18 to discuss FY26 budget requests. The College continues to advocate for increased funding for SUCCESS, MassReconnect and MassEducate, and increased salaries for staff and faculty.

Public Participation

The following individuals notified the President's Office in writing of their intent to address the Board, in accordance with the established requirement to submit the purpose of their remarks at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting. Chair Maykel granted permission for each speaker to address the Board for up to three minutes:

- A. Mark Szymcik:** Mark Szymcik, Adjunct Instructor of English, addressed the board. Professor Szymcik stated that he is a member of the Executive Committee of the union and attended meetings about vote of no confidence, including meeting with President Pedraja. Professor Szymcik expressed frustration with recent actions that do not follow established precedents. Professor Szymcik made the following remarks: Historically, individuals on certain tracks have had three to four years to meet expectations before being let go. Typically, if employment is terminated, individuals are allowed to continue working until the end of their contract. In the current situation, affected individuals were abruptly let go without the opportunity to complete their contracts; they were cut off from the college, losing access to email and all forms of communication. Professor Szymcik shared concern that these actions may set a new precedent, differing from practices upheld for decades.
- B. Jennifer Arner Welsh:** Jennifer Arner Welsh, Professor of Psychology and President of the Faculty Senate, addressed the board on behalf of the Faculty Senate Executive Board. Professor Arner Welsh outlined the union and Faculty Senate roles, noting that the union represents professional staff and faculty at QCC, focusing on contracts and working conditions. The Faculty Senate represents the faculty, addressing issues related to teaching, learning, faculty development, welfare, and morale. Faculty Senate Executive Board is a body that represents Faculty Senate through governance and committee work; Professor Arner Welsh noted that they have not had the opportunity to get input from the entire faculty. Following the union's vote of no confidence and President Pedraja's email to the community on April 15th, the Faculty Senate Executive Board met to discuss the situation. The following statement made by the Faculty Senate President reflects the collective will of the Faculty Senate Executive Board: "We stand in solidarity with our professional staff colleagues. As teachers, scholars, and faculty leaders, we are compelled to address the impact of the sudden dismissal of QCC staff, who have deep relationships with students, and concerns about the patterns of such dismissals appearing to have a racial bias. This has a significant impact on our ability to deliver on the core mission of our college, which is providing high quality educational and training opportunities to support diverse regional and student needs. When students are distressed about the loss of valued staff and worry about the role that identity might have played in that loss, they are less engaged and successful learners. When faculty wonder about the causes of inequitable patterns in our institution's data, without seeing what looks like matching concern from leadership, and worry that this means some employees may be less valued or supported than others, we are a less effectual institution. Restoring confidence and trust in the college's leadership is necessary to ensure a thriving teaching and learning environment in which all members of our community are treated with fairness, respect, and dignity. There's a critical link between QCC's identity as a just and fair workplace, the integrity of our educational mission, and the success of our students."
- C. Margaret Wong:** Margaret Wong, Professor of English, addressed the Board regarding the "recent vote of no confidence in the president, drawing from [her] personal experience as a longstanding member of the QCC community in multiple roles - English Professor, Advisor, Union President, QCC Foundation donor, and informal cheerleader of QCC on various Boards throughout Worcester." Professor Wong mentioned that she sits on seven different boards throughout Worcester and emphasized her deep understanding of the challenges faced by governing boards and the significance of their decisions. Professor Wong made the following remarks: The vote of no confidence is an unusual event at QCC, with only one person having living memory of a previous occurrence at QCC. As the MCCC president, Professor Wong has witnessed votes of no confidence at other community colleges and shared her perspective on the typical administrative response, which she believes often portrays the union president as solely focused on union interests. Professor Wong expressed her unwavering commitment to the college, its students, and the community. She underscored her role as the largest faculty donor to the QCC Foundation, noting her dedication to the institution. Professor Wong recounted the unprecedented dismissal of a unit professional two years ago, followed by the termination of several other individuals, including people of color. She questioned the rationale behind these dismissals and the lack of understanding among the faculty. Professor Wong advocated for immediate harm reduction measures to address the situation before conducting further studies. She stressed the importance of stopping the harm first and understanding the underlying issues.

Executive Session (Closed to the public)

The Board of Trustees entered Executive Session at 5:30pm, and no minutes from the Executive Session are included in these meeting notes. The Board entered Executive Session pursuant to Massachusetts General Law Chapter 30A, 21(a)(1) to discuss complaints brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual. The Board adjourned after Executive Session.

Upcoming Meetings:

Executive Committee – Wednesday, April 30, 2025 – **4:00pm**

Strategic Planning, Education & Student Success Committee – Wednesday, May 21, 2025 – **4:00pm**

Audit & Oversight Committee – Wednesday, May 21, 2025 – **5:00pm**

Regular Board Meeting – Wednesday, June 11, 2025 – **5:00pm**

Respectfully submitted,

Jess Ahrens, Special Assistant to the President