

**Christian Education Activities Corporation  
Stark College and Seminary  
Hand and Dove Legacy Foundation  
BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
April 1, 2021 ~ 1:00 pm**

**Video:** Kathryn Albin, Mark Casanova, Jeanette Gordon, Velma Kemp, Don Leavell, Dr. Karlene Lyn, Andrew Miller, Gary Morgan, Lee Ortegon, Dr. Derrick Reaves, Dr. Albert Reyes, Troy Riggs, Dr. Rusty Waller, Dana Wilson, and Kevin Wood.

**Absent:** Jim Naismith, Kevin Pagan, Nidia Quintanilla, Juan Vega, and Dan Zamora.

**Staff Present:** Dr. Tony Celelli, Dr. Chris Stapper, Vice President Tina Cooper, Dr. Jena Dunn and Rochelle Rocha Roots.

See [4.01.21 Memo of Department Highlights](#) prior to meeting.

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Meeting called to order by Chairwoman Dr. Karlene Lyn at 1 pm.

Invocation given by Dr. Lyn and trustees prayed for Dan Zamora.

Dr. Lyn referred the board to the Consent Agenda items and asked if anyone had any questions or feedback on moving forward on any of the items as proposed.

**Consent Agenda Items (Minutes and [Policies](#)):**

- [November 5, 2020 Board Meeting Minutes](#)
- [February 9, 2021 Executive Committee Minutes](#)
- [Gift Acceptance Policy](#) (no recommended changes)
- [Operating Reserve Policy](#) (no recommended changes)
- [Faculty Handbook](#)
- [Student Handbook](#)
- [SCS Catalog](#)

There were no suggested changes to the consent agenda items and were approved as submitted by the trustees. Dr. Lyn then moved on to the department updates and passed it on to Vice President Tina Cooper.

**Department Updates & KPI's - Student Experience Update**

- [Enrollment Report](#) (with tabs to comparison reports)
  - Highest enrollment of students to date!
- [Retention Rates](#)
- [Student Satisfaction Survey](#)

- [Churches Served Report](#)
- [COVID Impact as of 3/22/21](#)

Vice President Cooper shared the highlights from the past academic year's enrollment, which was SCS's highest ever. The goal is to have 47 new students this summer to reach our overall goal. VP Cooper asked the trustees if they had any questions. Dr. Reaves asked about what SCS is doing to improve retention overall. VP Cooper shared that at the beginning of the pandemic SCS staff called students every week to stay in touch and encourage them. We have learned that the students we've been able to stay connected with, have shared how they feel like SCS is family or "familia." Even when they have to take a semester off because of Covid and other reasons, they know they can come back. Dr. Reaves stated that the retention percentages are fantastic, especially in comparison to other institutions.

Any other questions? Mr. Casanova asked about the Spring 2021 "audit total." VP Cooper shared that "audit" students are those who take a class but do not want credit but rather the knowledge only. Some audit students may have limited ability to take college level courses as well.

Dr. Lyn then passed it on to Dr. Dunn to cover the Academic Update.

### **Academic Update**

Dr. Dunn shared that the rise of student enrollment also affects faculty ratio. From fall 2017 the ratio went from 7 to 1 to 14 to 1 in fall 2020. In a typical university setting that would not be a big deal, but at SCS, we want to be more engaging for our under-served student population. SCS is trying to better manage the increase. One of the ways to help is to add a full-time faculty advisor who would teach and advise full-time but who can also teach at all program levels. This faculty position would also assist us in ATS accreditation so we can offer our own Master of Divinity degree. The Association of Theological Schools application and process is currently being reviewed so we can apply later this year or next year. The application fee is \$5,000 and the application deadline is September 1, 2021. We recently had three full-time faculty who were the main advisors for the programs but in December we lost one full-time faculty. We are in the process of hiring a new Graduate Program Director. Once these positions are filled and the new position added, it would be a total of four faculty members.

Kathryn Albin asked when we would apply for the ATS application? This September or next year? Dr. Dunn shared that it is possible to do it this September because SCS is already preparing for the [ABHE Self Study Process and Reaffirmation Visit](#). However, she suggested waiting to submit the application until after we get the feedback from ABHE so we can use that in preparation for ATS. Mr. Miller asked if we apply with ATS, will we continue to be accredited with ABHE and ATS? Dr. Dunn answered yes. SCS would be dually accredited with ABHE and ATS as ATS only accredits graduate programming. Mr. Wood asked what is the advantage of the dual accreditation for future growth? Dr. Dunn stated that accreditation has been shifting over the last two years at the governmental level. Our ABHE accreditation is a national accreditation and they have the same requirements as any other accreditor but it is not as recognized. ATS is recognized by all religious institutions and it

will make it easier for our students to transfer credits into other institutions. Dr. Reyes inquired as to what does ATS give us besides the transferability with other schools? What about SACS accreditation? Does ABHE accredit graduate programming? Dr. Dunn responded that yes, ABHE does accredit graduate programs, which SCS was recently granted. Yet, the main reason for ATS is transferability of credits for our students to ensure that our students are able to move into whatever doctoral programs they want. Dr. Celelli added that in the past the military required Chaplains to have ATS accredited degrees. Dr. Dunn stated that there is more flexibility now as the organizations, such as SACS, CHEA and the Department of Education, specifically made changes to the nomenclature surrounding accreditation. Regional accreditors had the same standards as national accreditors but had more clout. The Department of Education did away with regional accreditation and now everyone has national accreditation. ABHE should be seen the same as other former regional accreditors. Dr. Lynn asked if there is a difference in the rigor of processes. Dr. Dunn said no. Since SCS was an ATS approved site when we were partnered with Logsdon Seminary we are better prepared than if we were starting from zero. There have been some changes in requirements since then, but Dr. Dunn is confident in our ability to successfully achieve ATS accreditation.

\*\*\*Kathryn Albin made a motion to approve SCS pursuing ATS accreditation and it was seconded by Andrew Miller. No questions. All in favor approved by all.

### **Governance Reports due at Summer Board Retreat**

Dr. Celelli shared that he and Kathryn Albin would touch base prior to the Summer Board Retreat.

Dr. Lynn passed it on to Dr. Stapper who commented that Dr. Dunn was recently re-elected to the commission of ABHE and is an expert on accreditation so SCS is in great hands.

### **Business & Finance Update**

Dr. Stapper referred to the financial reports.

- CEAC d/b/a Stark College & Seminary
  - [SOFA Report](#)
  - [SOFB Report](#)

He highlighted the \$10,000 check from the BGCT and the three distributions from the Borchert Estate. Then we got an email from the BGCT in March that they had made an accounting mistake on the Borchert Estate money they owed SCS, which was \$162,000. There have been many unexpected blessings this past year and as a result, we see a very healthy financial picture. The only item that is behind is the investment line. We have not had to make any transfers from reserves. Our assets have grown year after year. Line 9 of accounts receivable net is high because SCS is now eligible for the ministerial financial aid and is paid in arrears. We have now started to receive those back payments of about \$2,000 every month. We're very pleased that our students are able to receive these funds to help them pursue their ministry education.

- Hand and Dove Legacy Foundation

- [SOFA Report](#)
- [SOFB Report](#)

As for the Hand and Dove Legacy Foundation, we have had an increase of our endowment portfolio. It has been a good year. Increased student enrollment means higher tuition revenue. Questions?

Mr. Wood shared his congratulations on the unexpected blessings. Presuming everything stays the same and we have a good net income year, does the college then transfer surplus funds to the foundation for the future? Dr. Stapper responded that one of the policies that was just approved allows SCS to keep six months of operating expenses in a reserve account held at the foundation. Dr. Stapper shared his finance dashboard. We currently have 7 months of cash on hand. Besides putting the surplus in reserve, we can also invest into endowments to fully fund them. Mr. Wood serves on a different board and Dr. Celelli recommended HighGround to Mr. Wood as HighGround now serves a larger community and has decent fees. Velma Kemp asked what the income from the SOFA includes? Dr. Stapper replied that SCS entered in a partnership with a local church for a residency program that covered the student's graduate classes. Dr. Albert Reyes asked if the scholarships that come from the BGCT are for the students and if the students write thank you letters to the BGCT for the MFA monies? VP Cooper said that we talked with the BGCT leaders to help students understand where that money comes from and have communicated with the BGCT to see how we can make that better known. The Student Experience team is working on a digital BGCT application that better conveys the financial assistance comes from Texas Baptists. There is a thorough application process. We are not sending letters or thank you's at this time but that is a good idea to do that. Dr. Dunn also added that we also have a supervision in ministry class. Students who receive MFA funds are required to do their ministry at a Texas Baptist church. Dr. Reyes suggested that SCS send a short video with some testimonials to the BGCT. Dr. Celelli thanked Dr. Reyes for the idea. Dr. Stapper shared that we had great meetings with the BGCT representatives when they came to visit SCS where they were made aware that most of our students are already serving in local churches.

### **Proposed 2021-22 CEAC Budget**

Dr. Stapper followed a similar format in the [Proposed Budget](#) from last year that included three options of windfall, proposed, and downturn. Our goal is to have a flexible plan that allows for greater resources or for changes and cuts if needed. We are not anticipating a great deal of change from this past year's budget. Revenue income from Borchert Estate are donors are hard to predict. Dr. Reaves verified that we are focusing on the "proposed" column. Yes. He asked if the proposed payroll numbers reflect the requested faculty in the budget? Dr. Stapper responded that even though we are asking for a 25% increase in faculty, the cost is not a big difference because we recently had someone retire and reduced the amount of adjunct professors needed. Dr. Dunn mentioned that the person we're seeking to add is someone who works part-time and would move into a full-time position. Ms. Kemp asked if the number of staff would basically stay the same? Dr. Dunn confirmed it would. Mark Casanova asked the reason for the drop in rental income? Dr. Stapper shared that our rental income comes from three buckets, which include 1) Cell phone tower, 2) Apartment rental from two staff members, and 3) churches who rent space at our facilities. When Covid hit last year, the church rent was impacted and we've not had much interest

lately. Mr. Wood asked about what SCS looked at as a downturn budget. Dr. Stapper replied that when Covid hit, it made us grapple with what would happen if there was a serious decrease in revenue, including furloughing employees. It gave us a certain amount of confidence that we were not emotionally reacting. As for the “windfall” proposal, each of us had a new opportunity to dream, such as adding one of our full-time employees. Mr. Miller mentioned that these varying budgets will come in handy in the future. Dr. Stapper affirmed that despite the volatility in our economy, SCS will continue to live within our means.

\*\*\*Kevin Wood motioned to approve the proposed budget and it was seconded by Velma Kemp. No questions. All in favor approved.

### **President’s Report - Sabbatical Reflection**

Dr. Celelli shared a reflection on his sabbatical time that included rest, spiritual rejuvenation, and coaching by Dr. Enlow. Dr. Celelli was able to draw a line and stay away from work. He expressed gratitude for Dr. Linn Self and Dr. Dunn who was the lead of the cabinet as well as our cabinet leadership. The institution grew and got better while he was gone. Everybody had an opportunity to flourish. SCS has an incredibly healthy team that leads it. SCS is healthy overall as reflected in our highest student enrollment, staff satisfaction, progress in academics, and stability in finances. At SCS everyone wears multiple hats. At SCS we do more with less. Other institutional leaders have started to emulate SCS. Our financial position is second to none. Dr. Self shared that he has never seen an institution as strong as Stark College & Seminary.

### **Health and Grief of Stark College & Seminary**

The last week of the sabbatical was a turning point for our staff, faculty, and students when Christian Pressley took his own life. We’re trying to make logical sense out of an illogical decision. There were several meetings with our staff and students but we’re still hurting. We have ensured that our staff has access to mental health professionals and are doing our best to remove any stigma of seeking help. Because we are strong and healthy, we are able to lean on each other. Truth is that we’re healthy but sad. Dr. Celelli was asked to be the interim pastor at Yorktown Baptist Church (YBC) and it is requiring much of Dr. Celelli’s time at YBC but SCS is in good hands with the VP leadership. Dr. Celelli thanked the trustees for the opportunity to serve as interim pastor for six months. Dr. Lyn asked Dr. Celelli to comment on SCS’s relationship with YBC. Dr. Celelli shared that he came to the decision after YBC asked him after being gone on sabbatical. Dr. Celelli did run the decision by the board chair. Dr. Celelli expanded that the interim role does interface with his role of being a pastor to pastors. He wants to be an advisor, encourager, and support to churches. Dr. Lyn agreed that one of the parameters did include that he could not be considered as a pastoral candidate and that he would tithe in proportion of the honorarium from YBC.

### **Hand and Dove Award Nomination**

Due to the pandemic, we did not have a scholarship banquet last year but we are hopeful that we will this coming year. Dr. Celelli’s recipient nomination for the Hand and Dove award is [Rev. Harry Williams](#). Rev. Williams has been a student at SCS and graduated with his bachelor’s from Howard Payne University. Dr. Celelli asked Dr. Reaves to share some feedback on Pastor Williams’s connection with Dr. Harold T. Branch. Dr. Reaves mentioned

that Pastor Williams began his preaching ministry under Dr. Branch, that he is well known in the community and that he would be an excellent nominee for the Hand and Dove award. Pastor Leavell and Dr. Lyn concurred.

\*\*\*Andrew Miller motioned to approve Rev. Harry Williams to receive the 2021 Hand and Dove award and it was seconded by Dr. Derrick Reaves. No questions. All in favor approved.

### **Pillar of Light Award**

SCS was unable to award the Pillar of Light award last year due to Covid but plans to award it this year to Dr. Julio and Monica Guarneri as previously planned. The McAllen Graduation is on **Thursday, May 20, 2021** at BT Church at 7 pm. Dr. Reyes confirmed that Dr. Guarneri serves as a trustee and Vice Chair of Buckner as well as First Vice President of the BGCT and is a worthy recipient. Additionally, SCS is having Pastor Ray Brown of Resurrection Baptist Church as the keynote speaker at the Corpus Christi Graduation on **Friday, May 21, 2021** at Corpus Christi Christian Fellowship at 7 pm.

### **Additional Thoughts**

Troy Riggs shared some thoughts on what the church at large looks like after Covid and referenced a USA Today Gallup poll, which revealed that less than 50% of Americans affiliate with a church. Americans who do not affiliate with any religion is now at 21%. We need to realize how important Stark College & Seminary is to the future of the church in America.

Dr. Reyes mentioned if SCS has considered the implications of the Equality Act? Dr. Celelli shared that SCS has been able to remain exempt so far because SCS does not receive Title IV funds. Dr. Dunn mentioned that ABHE is having conversations on how it affects accreditation in the future. Pastor Leavell asked if we can have a time of dialogue before we come up with some concrete answers. Dr. Celelli agreed that we will need more time to research and have this conversation in person.

Dr. Reyes asked if there is any conversation about the George Floyd trial with our students and faculty. Dr. Celelli shared that we have worked very hard for several years and have made a concerted effort to understand and reflect the students we're serving in all facets of SCS from staff to faculty to trustees. Most recently, when the George Floyd incident occurred, the faculty wrote this [response to social injustice and the death of George Floyd](#). SCS did not take a political stance but intentionally made this statement as well as included racial reconciliation as our main theme for the Bible Self Symposium event with Dr. Bill Blocker, our keynote speaker. Additionally, we have read books together as a staff. Dr. Dunn highlighted that our curriculum has included classes this semester and previous semester on ministering to the marginalized and the history of the Black Church. These classes have helped our students have those conversations from a variety of theological perspectives. Dr. Dunn went on to say that VP Cooper has been helping our students cope with the many layers of what our students are going through emotionally. VP Cooper mentioned a variety of emotional support events to help our students cope and have conversations regarding grief but could also do more. Dr. Reyes shared how Buckner created a cultural intelligence committee and perhaps SCS could conduct an organizational assessment survey to ensure



there are no blind sides on the issues of equality, diversity, and inclusion, which may already have been done. Dr. Reaves asked if SCS could repost the previously posted response letter and leadership agreed. Trustees who notified SCS could also add their names to the letter.

Dr. Lyn reminded the trustees about the prayer schedule and that everyone has a day to pray. She also thanked the Vice Presidents for their reports.

### **Executive Session**

Dr. Celelli shared how pleased he was with the Vice Presidents who did such a great job. Taking a sabbatical reminded him that Christ is the leader and not him. It also gave people an opportunity to step up and lead and they did. This team is an incredible team and he has decided to give some team members a cash bonus. I want to be very generous to our team. Because of the \$162,000 mistake, I am going to give a team wide increase of pay as of May 2021. We're not taking away from anyone's contribution. The bonus will be the same across the board. Trustees agreed that it was a good idea.

\*\*\*Dr. Lyn led the board into an executive session at 3:14 pm and resumed at 3:48 pm.

Dr. Lyn mentioned that they discussed some items regarding compensation but will be doing further research before addressing it. They also had other ideas, such as adding an element of highlighting trustees in future board meetings in an effort to know each other better.

Dr. Celelli said that we hope to have our Summer Board Retreat in person and hopefully in San Antonio, Texas.

Dr. Lyn reminded trustees to fill out the [Board Meeting Evaluation](#).

The benediction was given by Don Leavell and the meeting adjourned at 3:54 pm.

FYI: [CEAC Board Directory as of April 2021](#)

*\*Items underlined are linked documents on the trustee website at <https://ceacboard.org>.*