Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Holyoke Community College
Tuesday, September 22, 2026, at 8:00 AM EST to Tuesday, September 22, 2026, at 9:30 AM EST Remote and In Person, Frost 309

Attendance

Trustees Present in Person: Jessica Heredia (joined at 8:07 a.m.), Yolanda Johnson (joined at 8:28 a.m.), Patricia Samra, Aaron Vega, Ivonne Vidal (joined at 8:14 a.m.), Vanessa Smith
Trustees Present Via Zoom: Todd McGee , Nayroby Rosa ,
Routine Invitees Present in Person: President George Timmons, Vice President Narayan Sampath, Vice President Jeffrey Hayden, Vice President Jessica Nicklin, Vice President Melissa Nicklin, Angela Cardenas, Jennifer Kerr

MEETING

I. **Call to Order the 451st Meeting of the Holyoke Community College Board of Trustees at 8:02 a.m.**

II. **Roll Call**

Yes: Trustee McGee, Trustee Rosa, Trustee Samra, Trustee Vega, Chair Smith

III. **Consent Agenda:**

A. **Consideration of the Minutes for the Board of Trustees Meeting of August 25, 2026**
B. **Report of Personnel Actions dated 9/22/2026** To approve the personnel actions listed above for the Non-Unit and MCCC Professional Appointments
C. **To empower the President of the College to approve all personnel actions prior to the next meeting**

A motion was made by Trustee Samra and seconded Trustee Rosa seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote

Yes: Trustee McGee, Trustee Rosa, Trustee Samra, Trustee Vega, Chair Smith

III. **Committee Reports**

Presidential Evaluation

Chair Smith reported that the presidential evaluation process is continuing. Dr. Timmons's self-evaluation has been received, and feedback has been collected from approximately 30 individuals, including Dr. Timmons's community college presidential colleagues and members of the college community. A preliminary report has been prepared and will be finalized for presentation to the full Board at its October meeting.

Foundation Board Update

Chair Smith reported that the HCC Foundation Board will hold its quarterly meeting on September 29, followed by a reception welcoming Melissa Mills-Dick, the College's new Vice President for Institutional Advancement and Executive Director of the HCC Foundation.

Chair Smith welcomed Ms. Mills-Dick and thanked Chief of Operations Angela Cardenas for her interim leadership during the transition.

The Foundation has begun work to strengthen policies and procedures. The fall donor appeal has been mailed, with early gifts already being received. The appeal features student-centered creative content and emphasizes unrestricted giving.

The Alumni Council has added four new members and is planning several alumni and donor engagement activities. Upcoming events include the Leslie Phillips Theater Festival on October 3 and the Taste of Gratitude Luncheon on October 13. Trustees were encouraged to participate in these events.

V. Chair's Report

Chair Smith reported on the Board's participation in the Aspen Institute Presidents & Trustees Collaborative.

Chair Smith, Dr. Timmons, and Trustee Samra are scheduled to travel to Washington, D.C., later this week for an in-person convening to kick off the work of the Collaborative. Dr. Timmons, Chair Smith, and Trustee Samra recently met virtually with HCC's Aspen coach, Martha Ellis, a former college president, to begin establishing a foundation for their work together.

Chair Smith highlighted the Board's Trustee Compact, noting that Dr. Ellis had expressed interest in the document as a potential model for other boards.

The Aspen work will continue through a year-long series of meetings involving Aspen and the HCC Board. Two upcoming virtual meetings will be scheduled, and Trustees will receive the dates for their calendars.

Chair Smith thanked Trustees who completed the Board assessment. The assessment will help inform the Board's goals and priorities for the work with Aspen.

The overarching objective of the Aspen work is to strengthen student success by aligning presidential leadership, Board governance, and the Aspen student success framework. The ultimate goal is to develop sustainable student success initiatives that will extend beyond the tenure of current HCC leadership.

An Aspen section will be established in OnBoard to provide Trustees with access to relevant materials and updates.

VI. Trustee Engagement Opportunities

Chair Smith reviewed upcoming opportunities for trustee participation, including:

- **October 23:** Trunk-or-Treat
- **October27:** Fall campus tour following the Board meeting
- **November 20:** Governance Leadership Institute, co-sponsored by the Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges and the Association of Community College Trustees
- **November 30:** Fall Graduation and Reception

Trustees were encouraged to participate in these events and engage with students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community partners.

IV. Trustee Spotlight – Student Trustee Jessica Heredia

Student Trustee Heredia provided an overview of her background, HCC experience, and reasons for seeking the student trustee position.

Trustee Heredia shared that she began her HCC journey in 2023 through El Centro and subsequently became involved with TRIO, Student Government Association, and the HCC Bookstore. She progressed through SGA leadership, serving first as a member, then on the student aid board, and ultimately as SGA president for two consecutive years.

She described her decision to pursue the student trustee position as an opportunity to broaden her advocacy and professional development while representing HCC students at the Board level.

Trustee Heredia also shared her personal educational journey, the influence of her family, and her commitment to supporting students and serving the College community.

Chair Smith and members of the Board welcomed Trustee Heredia and expressed appreciation for her leadership and the perspective she brings as a student trustee.

VII. President's Report

President George Timmons provided an update on fall enrollment and institutional activities.

A. Updates

President Timmons reported that, as of the day before the meeting, overall fall student headcount had increased **5.6%** compared with the prior fall.

Additional enrollment indicators included:

- New student headcount: **down 1.7%**
- Continuing student headcount: **up 10.7%**
- Hispanic student headcount: **up 6.6%**
- Hispanic FTE: **up 5.7%**
- Overall student FTE: **up 4.7%**
- Credits registered: **up 4.7%**
- Registrations: **up 5.3%**
- Hispanic students as a percentage of overall FTE: **33.8%**

President Timmons noted that the enrollment data indicate continued strength in student persistence and retention and emphasized the importance of continuing both recruitment and retention efforts.

President Timmons welcomed Melissa Mills-Dick to the Cabinet and noted her extensive experience in fundraising, communications, alumni engagement, and higher education advancement.

He stated that Ms. Mills-Dick will contribute to executive and college communications, strategic planning and marketing, the One HCC cultural initiative, Foundation fundraising, alumni coordination, and federal and private grant activity.

President Timmons provided an update on Strategic Plan 3.0, *Building Our Future Together*. The plan has been proposed for consideration on the Department of Higher Education's October agenda, pending confirmation.

In the meantime, the College continues to develop action plans, with an official strategic plan launch anticipated early next year.

President Timmons highlighted several activities supporting the College's values and One HCC culture, including:

- New Employee Orientation, which welcomed 25 new employees on August 31 and included an employee resource fair.
- Updates to the employee recognition program, including the transition from "Cheers to Peers" to "Living Our Values."
- Participation in the Puerto Rican Day breakfast and Springfield Puerto Rican Day Parade.
- The September 16 Welcome Back Barbecue and HCC's 80th anniversary celebration.
- Community College Night at the WooSox game.
- The launch of Hispanic/Latinx Heritage Month.
- The September 2 Professional Day for faculty and staff.
- The September 19 Student Resource Fair, which served approximately 60 students.

President Timmons also highlighted the College's three new pre-apprenticeship programs and emphasized the College's goal of providing comparable support and wraparound services to both credit and non-credit students.

President Timmons highlighted the upcoming Gold Alumni event on September 24, which will provide alumni opportunities for networking and professional headshots.

He also reported that HCC received a **$250,000 grant from the Urban Research Park** through New Markets Tax Credit funds and recognized the work of Vice President Jeffrey Hayden and his team in securing the funding.

President Timmons also discussed the launch of LEADS, a new initiative bringing together leaders from Western Massachusetts, including Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin Counties, to address regional challenges. Trustees Aaron Vega and Nayroby Rosa are also participating in the initiative.

B. Hispanic Leadership Committee Presentation

Dean Julissa Colon introduced representatives of HCC's Hispanic Leadership Committee (HLC), including Sintique Carrillo and Shakara Acoff.

The presentation covered the history, mission, membership, programs, strategic priorities, data, and future goals of HLC.

HLC was formally established in 2019, following the Puerto Rico Relief Ad Hoc Committee that emerged in response to Hurricane Maria. Faculty and staff came together to support members of the community affected by the hurricane.

Following the immediate response, the group continued its work as a formal leadership committee focused on professional development, advocacy, collaboration, and supporting HCC's role as a Hispanic-Serving Institution.

HLC's work has contributed to initiatives including:

- Bienvenidos
- Latinx Heritage Month programming
- El Centro
- HCC's bilingual "Yo Soy HCC" campaign
- Professional and leadership development opportunities

The committee's work is grounded in HCC's values of Innovation, Collaboration, Kindness, Inclusion, and Trust.

HLC currently has 18 members out of a possible 20. Members represent a range of departments and classifications throughout the College.

The committee meets monthly and seeks to maintain representation from administrative, leadership, student-facing, and faculty roles.

Major HLC activities include Bienvenidos, annual retreats, Latinx Heritage Month programming, the Latinx Employee Fiesta, and collaboration with the Black Leadership Council.

Presenters discussed El Centro as an initiative that originated as an HLC proposal and was subsequently developed into a student support program.

El Centro provides culturally responsive guidance and support to students and has served more than 300 students.

Presenters emphasized the program's role in creating community, supporting student success, and connecting students with campus resources.

HLC reported that Latinx students represented approximately 25% of full-time enrollment in 2022 and approximately 33% in 2026.

Presenters emphasized that HLC does not claim responsibility for the overall increase but noted that its advocacy, programs, relationship-building, and work to strengthen belonging have contributed to the College's ability to serve an increasingly diverse student population.

The presenters also discussed the importance of using data to better understand student experiences and institutional impact.

The presenters discussed HCC's strategic goal of pursuing the Seal of Excelencia, which recognizes institutions demonstrating intentional, mission-driven service to Latinx students.

The presenters emphasized that the Seal is an institutional commitment rather than solely an HLC initiative. HLC will play a role in supporting the College's work through data analysis, practice, leadership development, and documentation of institutional impact.

The presenters indicated that HCC has completed a self-evaluation and anticipates continuing the work toward an application within approximately the next one to two years.

Future HLC priorities include continued professional development for faculty and staff, intentional collaboration with the Black Leadership Council, stronger data collection and storytelling, and continued efforts to support HCC's development as a thriving Hispanic-Serving Institution.

Trustees engaged in discussion with the presenters regarding outreach to immigrant and migrant communities and the College's efforts to create a welcoming and supportive environment.

The discussion included HCC's community-based recruitment efforts, El Centro's outreach, faculty engagement with immigrant communities, and institutional efforts to understand and respond to challenges affecting immigrant students.

Trustee Heredia shared personal reflections regarding the impact of HCC's student support programs, including El Centro and TRIO, on her educational and leadership journey.

Members of the HLC also discussed the committee's impact on employee belonging, leadership development, professional growth, and cross-departmental collaboration.

Trustees and President Timmons expressed appreciation to the HLC presenters for their work and emphasized the importance of representation, belonging, collaboration, and student-centered support.

The Board also discussed the value of access to student success data. A representative offered to provide the Board with a demonstration of HCC's student success dashboard, including data that tracks students through the college life cycle from enrollment through course completion, graduation, and transfer.

VIII. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Trustee Samra and seconded by Trustee Rosa.

Roll Call:

Yes: Trustee Heredia, Trustee Johnson, Trustee McGee, Trustee Rosa, Trustee Samra, Trustee Vidal, Chair Smith

The meeting adjourned at approximately **9:14 a.m.**

Respectfully submitted,



Angela O. Cardenas
Board Professional, Board of Trustees

Approved: Vanessa L. Smith
Chair, Board of Trustees

Approved: Ivonne Vidal
Secretary, Vice Chair, Board of Trustees