HOLYOKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Holyoke Community College
Tuesday, August 25, 2026, at 8:00 AM EST to Tuesday, August 25, 2026, at 9:30 AM EST
Remote and In Person, Frost 309

Attendance

Trustees Present in Person: Sonia Dinnall (joined at 8:37 a.m.), Charles Epstein, Jessica Heredia, Yolanda Johnson (joined at 8:29 a.m.) Nayroby Rosa, Patricia Samra, Aaron Vega, Ivonne Vidal (joined at 8:10 a.m.), Vanessa Smith

Trustees Present Via Zoom: Todd McGee (joined 8:15 a.m.)

Routine Invitees Present in Person: President Dr. George Timmons, Vice President Narayan Sampath, Vice President Jeffrey Hayden, Vice President Jessica Nicklin, Angela Cardenas, Jennifer Kerr

MEETING

I. **Call to Order the 449th Meeting of the Holyoke Community College Board of Trustees at 8:09 a.m.**

II. **Roll Call:**

Yes: Trustee Epstein, Trustee Heredia, Trustee McGee, Trustee Rosa, Trustee Samra, Trustee Vega, Trustee Vidal, Chair Smith

A. The Chair welcomed **Jessica Heredia**, the new Student Trustee, noting that several Trustees had the opportunity to meet and work with her during the June Board retreat.

B. President Timmons introduced **Dr. Jessica Nicklin**, the College's new **Provost and Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs**. The Board welcomed Dr. Nicklin to the College.

III. **Consent Agenda**

A. **Consideration of the Minutes for the Board of Trustees Meeting of June 23, 2026 and Board of Trustees Retreat of June 1-2, 2026**

B. **Report of Personnel Actions dated August 25, 2026**

To approve the personnel actions listed above for the Non-Unit and MCCC Professional Appointment recommendations.

C. **To empower the President of the College to approve all personnel actions prior to the next meeting**

Chair Smith asked whether any items should be removed from the Consent Agenda for consideration separately, and there were

none.

- A motion was made by Trustee Epstein and seconded by Trustee Heredia to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.
- **Roll Call Vote: YES:** Trustee Dinnall, Trustee Epstein, Trustee Heredia, Trustee Johnson, Trustee McGee, Trustee Rosa, Trustee Samra, Trustee Vega, Trustee Vidal, and Chair Smith.

IV. **Trustee Spotlight - Trustee Epstein**

Trustee Epstein shared reflections on his professional background, his experience serving on the Board, and the importance of the College's mission to **Educate, Inspire, and Connect**. He discussed how his experiences in business, finance, and acting shaped his approach to listening, asking questions, and understanding the needs of others.

Trustee Epstein also discussed his interest in helping students develop an entrepreneurial mindset and emphasized the importance of students taking ownership of their opportunities.

V. Committee Reports

A. By-Laws and Governance Committee Update

Trustee Vidal reported that the Board discussed the work of the Bylaws/Governance and Presidential Evaluation Committee. The committees have been combined, and significant work has been undertaken to compile the information necessary for the President's evaluation.

Chair Smith added that the Board had initially anticipated receiving the Presidential Evaluation report at the September meeting. Following receipt of the survey results and the President's self-evaluation, the Committee determined that additional time would be helpful to complete the report. The report will instead be presented at the October Board meeting. The Commissioner's Office has been notified of the revised timing.

B. Audit and Finance

The Board received an update from the Audit and Finance Committee. Discussion included a financial update and the impact of state initiatives, including MassEducate and MassReconnect, on enrollment and reimbursement.

It was noted that enrollment through these programs had exceeded expectations and that reimbursement during the fiscal year could present challenges. The discussion also addressed changes in the number of Pell and non-Pell students across the Massachusetts community college system.

C. HCC Foundation Board

The Chair reviewed upcoming Board engagement opportunities, including professional development activities and opportunities for Trustees to participate in College events.

The Board was reminded that Professional Day, rescheduled to September 2, will include presentations by President Timmons and Dr. Nicklin. Trustees were invited to attend that portion of the program.

The Board was also reminded of the upcoming Welcome Back Barbecue on September 16, which will include a cake-cutting celebration recognizing HCC's 80th anniversary.

VI. Report of Chair Smith

Chair Smith reported that participation in the Aspen Institute’s Presidents and Trustees Collaborative will kick off in September. Dr. Timmons, Trustee Samra, and Chair Smith will go to Washington DC for the opening convening and hope to bring back lots of information. This is a year-long program that will include some Zoom meetings with the Aspen folks and collaboration with a cohort of colleges to enhance our ability to implement sustainable student success measures. Chair Smith reported that in July she got an invitation to be part of the AGB Community College Advisory Board that will meet four times a year with one meeting in person. Chair Smith will bring back updates to the Board. Chair Smith is looking forward to the opportunity for community colleges to provide information to AGB so that they can stay current in their work, as well as the opportunity to learn from community college board leadership colleagues from across the country.

Chair Smith mentioned the upcoming Board EngagementOpportunities:

- September 2: Professional Day; The Board is invited to attend Dr. Timmons's and Dr. Nicklin's presentations from 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. in the Leslie Phillips Theatre, and the rest of the day will include internal events for staff.
- September 16: Welcome Back Barbecue and HCC 80th Anniversary celebration
- September 17: Community College night at the WooSox

VII. President's Report

President Timmons welcomed Trustees back following the summer break and welcomed new employees to the College.

The President announced that Melissa Mills-Dick will join HCC as the new Vice President of Institutional Advancement and Executive Director of the HCC Foundation. She will transition to HCC from Hampshire College and has already participated in the College's Cabinet retreat and emergency planning tabletop exercise. The President also expressed appreciation to Angela Cardenas, who served as Interim Vice President of Institutional Advancement during 2026 and will return full-time to her role as Chief of Operations.

One HCC

President Timmons discussed the College's One HCC initiative, which is intended to strengthen the College as one connected community and one team serving students, families, and communities.

The initiative is intended to:

- Break down organizational silos;
- Improve communication;
- Promote transparency and accountability;
- Strengthen collaboration; and
- Improve the overall student and institutional experience.

The President emphasized that the initiative is grounded in putting the College's values into action through the way employees work together and serve students.

Strategic Plan 3.0

President Timmons announced that Strategic Plan 3.0: Building Our Future Together has been submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education for review.

The President also discussed ongoing process-improvement work across the College. Examples included the automation of transcript processing, which resulted in an estimated 29 days of effort saved, as well as improvements to financial aid processes. Process improvement will continue as part of Strategic Plan 3.0.

Grants and External Funding

The President reported on several recently awarded grants and noted that these investments, together with the work accomplished during the preceding months, position the College well for the upcoming academic year.

Strategic Plan Metrics Presentation: Assistant Vice President Veena Dhanker presented a final report on Strategic Plan 2.0, summarizing progress on all FY2023-2026 Strategic Metrics. The presentation identified areas in which the College made progress as well as opportunities for continued improvement. Dr. Dhanker also provided a summary overview of the metrics for Strategic Plan 3.0. Two areas specifically identified for continued attention were:

1. Development and institutionalization of non-credit pathways; and
2. Continued development and improvement of data systems demonstrating the impact of workforce and community education programming and its connection to the College's mission.

Both areas have been incorporated into Strategic Plan 3.0.

Integrative Learning Presentation: The Board received a presentation on High-Impact Practices from Irma Medina, Dean of Integrated and Applied Learning**,** and faculty member Raul Gutierrez. The presentation focused on practices that contribute to student retention, student success, and improved student outcomes.

Discussion emphasized that high-impact practices are supported by research demonstrating their ability to enhance student learning and help close achievement gaps, particularly for students from underserved and underrepresented communities.

The discussion also connected high-impact practices to:

- Deep learning;
- Real-world application of academic concepts;
- Student engagement;
- Integrative learning;
- Learning communities;
- Transfer preparation; and
- Creating meaningful connections between students' lived experiences and classroom learning.

The Board discussed the importance of proactively advising students regarding transfer opportunities and ensuring that students understand the pathways and opportunities available to them. It was noted that this work will be an important component of future discussions related to Strategic Plan 3.0, with additional discussion anticipated at the November meeting.

VIII. Board Engagement Opportunities

The Board was reminded of upcoming College activities and opportunities for Trustee participation, including:

- September 2: Professional Day;
- September 16: Welcome Back Barbecue and HCC 80th Anniversary celebration; and
- Additional Board engagement opportunities throughout the academic year.

Trustees interested in participating in Professional Development Day will receive the appropriate calendar information.

IX. Executive Session

The Chair announced that the Board would enter executive session pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 30A, Section 21A(1).

The stated purposes of the executive session were to discuss matters concerning the reputation, character, physical condition, or mental health of an individual; matters concerning discipline, dismissal, complaints, or charges involving a public officer, employee, staff member, or individual; and to review and approve executive session minutes and determine whether certain executive session minutes should remain exempt from disclosure.

A motion was made by Trustee Vidal and seconded by Trustee Johnson to enter executive session for the purposes stated on the agenda.

Roll Call:

Yes: Trustee Dinnall, Trustee Epstein, Trustee Heredia, Trustee Johnson, Trustee Rosa, Trustee Samra, Trustee Vega, Trustee Vidal, Chair Smith

The Chair stated that following the executive session, the Board would adjourn and not return to open session. The Board then entered into executive session at 9:44 a.m.

XI. Adjournment

Following the executive session, the Board adjourned. No further open session was held.

Respectfully submitted,

Angela Cardenas

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