

SUFFOLK COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
SUMMARY MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
BOARD ROOM, LEARNING RESOURCE CENTER
GRANT CAMPUS, BRENTWOOD, NY
SEPTEMBER 17, 2026

The meeting was held on Thursday, September 17, 2026, at 4:00 p.m. in the Board room of the Learning Resource Center, in Brentwood, NY.

PRESENT:

Shirley Coverdale	Chair
Priscilla Zarate	1 st Vice Chair
Jerome Bost	2 nd Vice Chair
Michael Arens	Secretary
John Dolan	Trustee
Wayne Horsley	Trustee
Belinda Pagdanganan	Trustee
Kevin Peterman	Trustee
Nova Ventura-Rios	Student Trustee
Dr. Edward Bonahue	President
Ashley Pope	General Counsel
Mary Lou Araneo	V.P. for Institutional Advancement
Shady Azzam-Gomez	V.P. for Information Technology Services
Dr. Patty Munsch	V.P. for Student Affairs
Dr. Lauren Tacke-Cushing	V.P. for Academic Affairs
Angelica Rivera	V.P. for Human Resources
Sara Gorton	Interim V.P. of Business and Financial Affairs
Kaliah Greene	V.P. for Planning and Institutional Effectiveness
Christina Vargas	A.V.P. for Opportunity & Belonging
Dr. Mary Reese	Interim Executive Dean, Eastern Campus
Dr. Donna Ciampa	Interim Executive Dean, Grant Campus
Sean Tvelia	Executive Dean, Ammerman Campus

The meeting of the Board of Trustees was convened at 4:00 p.m., with a quorum of nine Trustees physically present. Trustee Gordon's absence was formally excused due to personal circumstances consistent with Board bylaws.

President Bonahue recognized Trustee Gemma deLeon-Lopresti for her ten years of dedicated service on the Board of Trustees. Appointed in 2016 and reappointed in 2019, she brought extensive expertise in labor relations, mediation, collective bargaining, and organizational leadership through her professional background as a Long Island labor leader and senior officer with the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.

During her tenure, Trustee deLeon-Lopresti served in numerous leadership roles, including:

- Member of the Facilities & Technology Committee and Governance Committee.

- Chair of the Personnel Committee.
- Member of the Executive Committee.
- Board Secretary (2023-2024).
- Second Vice Chair (2024-2026).

President Bonahue highlighted her commitment to social justice, thoughtful leadership, and data-driven decision-making. She was also recognized for her ongoing support of the Suffolk Foundation, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, when she remained actively engaged in virtual fundraising and student-support initiatives. President Bonahue thanked Trustee deLeon-Lopresti for her decade of service, dedication to the College community, and unwavering commitment to students, noting that her contributions have left a lasting impact on the institution. The Board presented her with a commemorative memento in appreciation of her service.

Trustee deLeon-Lopresti expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve on the Board of Trustees for the past decade, describing it as an honor and noting how quickly the time had passed. She reflected on her appointment through the recommendation of organized labor and spoke about witnessing the College community navigate significant challenges, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, while remaining steadfast in supporting students' academic, financial, and personal needs. As a first-generation immigrant, Trustee deLeon-Lopresti emphasized her belief that higher education should remain accessible to anyone willing to work toward a better future. She praised Suffolk's students for their resilience and highlighted the college's commitment to helping students overcome obstacles. A major theme of her remarks was the strong relationship between the College and its unions. Drawing on her background in labor relations and mediation, she noted that disagreement is a natural part of any organization and that the strongest relationships are built through mutual respect, listening, and a commitment to shared goals. She encouraged continued constructive dialogue and cautioned against questioning the integrity or motives of others during disagreements. Trustee deLeon-Lopresti also commended the accomplishments achieved under the leadership of President Bonahue, the executive team, and College employees. She cited the College's improved financial position, enrollment and retention successes, significant grant funding, and strengthened educational pathways through partnerships with institutions such as Stony Brook University and Binghamton University. In closing, she expressed confidence in the future of the College and encouraged continued collaboration among trustees, administration, faculty, staff, and unions. She voiced strong support for Board Chair Shirley Coverdale's leadership and expressed hope that Suffolk would continue to build upon its tradition of mutual respect, shared responsibility, and dedication to students and the community.

Chair Coverdale requested a motion to enter in Executive Session to discuss the proposed acquisition or lease/license of real property, and to seek and receive legal advice, which is made confidential by law. Trustee Dolan so moved; Trustee Pagdanganan seconded. The motion to enter Executive Session was approved unanimously (9-0). Whereupon Executive Session was entered from 4:12 p.m. to 5:05 p.m.

Chair Coverdale asked Carol Wickliffe-Campbell, Chief of Staff, and Interim Associate Vice President for Workforce Development, for the recognition of guests. She introduced and welcomed Ray Weber, representing Legislator Bergin; representatives from Long Island Pro Soccer, Mitchell Rechler, and Peter Zaratini; and Ben Zwirn from the Suffolk County Association of Municipal Employees (AME).

Ben Zwirn, Director of Government Relations for AME and a former Suffolk employee delivered public comments concerning the following agenda items: College budget and financial reports.

Ben Zwirn expressed support for the proposed acquisition of the Culinary Arts Center, noting that it would provide a permanent home for the program and create additional AME positions. He raised concerns about ongoing staffing shortages, particularly among public safety officers and custodial staff, citing more than 40 vacant positions and operational impacts resulting from understaffing. Mr. Zwirn questioned the College's hiring of new exempt employees. He then thanked the college and Human Resources for securing upgraded classifications for public safety officers. Lastly, he expressed concern about enrollment trends, particularly projected declines in the Beacon dual-enrollment program, and suggested that credentialing issues may be contributing to those challenges.

Chair Coverdale requested a motion to approve the minutes of the August 13, 2026, Board of Trustees meeting. Student Trustee Ventura-Rios so moved; Trustee Peterman seconded. The motion to approve the minutes was approved (9-0).

Chair Coverdale then introduced Interim Vice President of Business and Financial Affairs, Sara Gorton, to present the College's financial report.

Ms. Gorton reported that the College ended FY 2025-26 in a strong financial position, with revenues exceeding budget and expenditures generally under control. FY'25-26 financial results were as follows: tuition revenue exceeded budget by approximately \$1M (1.1%), even after accounting for uncollectible accounts. Overall revenues exceeded budget by approximately \$3.5M (1.6%). Personal services costs were about \$1M over budget, primarily due to enrollment-related staffing needs and retirement payouts. All other expenditure categories were at or below budget, generating approximately \$2.2M in savings. The College projects a modest operating surplus despite having budgeted the use of \$4.5M in reserves. The College's projected fund balance as of August 31, 2026, is approximately \$27.7M, representing 12.7% of annual expenditures, which is within the Board's target range of 10-15%. She noted that the College's efforts to increase enrollment, improve retention, and manage spending have helped strengthen its financial position. Fiscal year-end numbers remain preliminary pending the annual audit. The College will officially close its books with SUNY on October 31st. A new GASB accounting requirement will change the presentation of some revenues and expenditures in future financial statements.

For FY' 26-27 Ms. Gorton reported SUNY has approved the College's budget and tuition schedule with no further adjustments required. Early enrollment and tuition revenue trends are positive. Fall tuition revenue is currently running approximately \$350K (1%) above budget, and overall revenue is on track to meet or exceed projections. Part-time enrollment remains under review, with additional registrations expected during late-start sessions. Revenues are trending slightly ahead of expectations.

President Bonahue provided an overview of College Resolutions 2026.51 to 2026.57.

Chair Coverdale called for approval of College Resolution No. 2026.51. Trustee Peterman so moved, and Trustee Zarate seconded; Trustee Arens abstained. The motion to approve College Resolution 2026.51 was approved. (8-0-1).

RESOLUTION NO. 2026.51 – Accepting a Grant from Stony Brook University (SUNY) for an Innovative Instruction Technology Grant (IITG)/OER Impact Grant Entitled “A Community of Practice Approach to AI Academic Integrity”

WHEREAS, Suffolk County Community College has received a grant in the amount of \$12,000, from Stony Brook University (SUNY) for an Innovative Instruction Technology Grant (IITG)/OER Impact Grant entitled “A Community of Practice Approach to AI Academic Integrity,” for the period of August 20, 2026 through June 30, 2027, and

WHEREAS, the project will provide a collaborative expansion of SUNY’s Community of Practice (CoP) model to support faculty in addressing academic integrity and pedagogical challenges emerging in the GenAI era, and

WHEREAS, matching funds are not required, be it therefore

RESOLVED, that a grant, in the amount of \$12,000, from Stony Brook University (SUNY) for an Innovative Instruction Technology Grant (IITG)/OER Impact Grant entitled “A Community of Practice Approach to AI Academic Integrity,” for the period of August 20, 2026 through June 30, 2027, is hereby accepted, and the College President, or his designee, is authorized to execute and empowered to execute any necessary documentation, including a contract with the administering entity, in such form as shall be approved by the College General Counsel, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the 2026–2027 College operating budget is hereby amended as necessary to reflect the applicable portion of this grant award.

Project Director: Dr. Joshua Wolfson, Professor, Physical Education

Note: No full-time personnel

Chair Coverdale called for approval of College Resolutions No. 2026.52 through 2026.57. Trustee Bost so moved, and Trustee Zarate seconded. The motion to approve College Resolutions No. 2026.52 through 2026.57 was approved (9-0).

RESOLUTION NO. 2026.52 – Accepting a Grant Award Increase from the New York State Education Department Funding for Public High School Equivalency (HSE) Test Administration

WHEREAS, the 2025–26 and 2026–27 College operating budgets included anticipated grant funding from the New York State Education Department Funding for Public High School Equivalency (HSE) Test Administration, for the period of January 1, 2026 through December 31, 2028, and

WHEREAS, the grant award has been increased by an additional amount of \$52,615.23, bringing the total amount of the grant award to \$90,397.23, and

WHEREAS, the program will provide for a coordinated, comprehensive, standards and community-based adult literacy education program and adult secondary education/high school equivalency test preparation programs, and

WHEREAS, matching funds are not required, be it therefore

RESOLVED, the grant award, as increased, in the amount of \$90,397.23 from the New York State Education Department Funding for Public High School Equivalency (HSE) Test Administration is hereby accepted, and the College President, or his designee, is authorized and empowered to execute any necessary documentation, including a contract amendment with the administering agency, in such form as shall be approved by the College General Counsel, and be it further

RESOLVED, the 2025–2026 and 2026–2027 College operating budgets are hereby amended as necessary to reflect the applicable portions of the grant award, as increased.

Project Director: Jeanne Durso, Professional Assistant II, Continuing Education

RESOLUTION 2026.53 – Approving Monthly Sponsor Services for Suffolk County Community College

WHEREAS, the State University of New York Regulation No. 602.7 requires Suffolk County Community College Board of Trustees to review and approve all Sponsor provided services and their estimated value in advance of the service being rendered, and

WHEREAS, the regulation also requires the approval of the payment of each Sponsor Service satisfactorily performed, and

WHEREAS, health insurance is considered a Sponsor Service, be it therefore

RESOLVED, that the health insurance payment to the County of Suffolk in the amount of \$3,561,208.73 for the month of August 2026 (*Attachment I*) is hereby approved by the Board of Trustees.

RESOLUTION NO. 2026.54 – Awarding a Contract for the Design Services for the Partial Renovation of Caumsett Hall on the Grant Campus (CP 2205)

WHEREAS, the design phase of Capital Project No. 2205 has been approved by Suffolk County and the State of New York for funding, and funds have been appropriated by the Suffolk County Legislature, and

WHEREAS, following the receipt and review of proposals in response to a Request for Proposals for design services, the College design committee determined that the proposal submitted by LiRo Architects & Planners, P.C., Mineola, NY best meets the needs of the College, be it therefore

RESOLVED, that the College President, or his designee, is authorized to enter into a contract with LiRo Architects & Planners, P.C., Mineola, NY, in the amount of \$642,741.69 for the design of the Partial Renovation of Caumsett Hall Project, upon such terms and conditions as shall be approved by the College General Counsel.

RESOLUTION NO. 2026.55 – Making a SEQRA Determination for the Acquisition of the Culinary Arts Center (CP 2210)

WHEREAS, in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding between the County of Suffolk and Suffolk County Community College, dated April 16, 2009, the College Board of Trustees serves as Lead Agency for determinations issued pursuant to the State Environmental Quality Review Act (“SEQRA”) (NYS Environmental Conservation Law, Article 8) and its implementing regulations at Title 6 NYCRR Part 617, and

WHEREAS, under Capital Project 2210, the College, through its local sponsor the County of Suffolk, will be acquiring the real property currently leased and in use by the College as the Culinary Arts Center, located at 20 East Main Street, Riverhead, New York 11901, and identified on the Suffolk County Tax Map as No. 0600-128.00-06.00-066.006 for educational programs and activities (the "Property" or "Culinary Arts Center"), and

WHEREAS, acquisition of the Property is contingent on receipt of all necessary approvals, satisfactory completion of due diligence, and sufficient funding in the County Capital Program and the New York State Budget, and

WHEREAS, in accordance with 6 NYCRR § 617.6(a)(3), a Short Environmental Assessment Form (SEAF) was prepared by the College, as shown in *Attachment II*, attached hereto, to systematically consider environmental factors involved with this action to make a reasoned determination regarding the likelihood that the action may have a significant adverse impact to the environment, and

WHEREAS, this review has indicated that the acquisition of the Property will not have a significant adverse effect on the environment, and

WHEREAS, accordingly, the College recommends that this project be considered an "Unlisted Action," pursuant to 6 NYCRR § 617.2(a), be it therefore

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees hereby finds and determines that acquisition of the Culinary Arts Center constitutes an "Unlisted Action" pursuant to 6 NYCRR § 617.2(a), and be it further

RESOLVED, that pursuant to 6 NYCRR § 617.7(b), after due deliberation, review, and analysis of the information contained in the SEAF and other relevant information, the Board of Trustees hereby determines that acquisition of the Culinary Arts Center will not have a significant adverse environmental impact and issues a negative declaration for the following reasons:

1. The action will not exceed any of the criteria contained in 6 NYCRR § 617.7(c), which sets forth thresholds for determining significant adverse impacts on the environment;
2. The action will not result in a change in the use or intensity of land;
3. The action does not adversely impact air quality, surface or groundwater, traffic or noise levels, public water supplies, public wastewater treatment utilities, nor increase, erosion, flooding, or drainage problems;
4. The action will not result in any adverse change to natural resources or impact;
5. The action does not conflict with the College's Master Plan;
6. The action does not impair the character or quality of important archeological, historical, architectural or aesthetic resources;
7. While the site is located in an archeological sensitive area, this is solely acquisition of existing property already in use by the College, with no proposed disturbance of the land or alteration to the existing building or improvements, and therefore the action does not impair the character or quality of important archeological resources;
8. The action does not create a hazard to human health;
9. The action is consistent with the current use of the property for community college, culinary, and educational purposes;

10. The action does not attract a large number of people to the property compared to the number of people who would come to the property absent the action;
11. The action does not create a material demand for other actions that would meet one or more of the criteria in 6 NYCRR § 617.7(c);
12. The action does not result in changes to two or more elements of the environment that when considered together result in a substantial adverse impact on the environment;
13. There are no related actions to this action that when considered cumulatively would meet one or more of the criteria in 6 NYCRR § 617.7(c);
14. All necessary State and County approvals will be obtained.

RESOLUTION NO. 2026.56 – Authorizing the Execution of a Purchase and Sale Agreement for the Acquisition of the Culinary Arts Center in Downtown Riverhead and Related Due Diligence Activities (CP 2210)

WHEREAS, Suffolk County Community College (the "College") currently utilizes the property known as the Culinary Arts Center, located at 20 East Main Street, Riverhead, New York 11901, and identified on the Suffolk County Tax Map as No. 0600-128.00-06.00-066.006 for educational programs and activities (the "Property"), and

WHEREAS, the College has determined that the acquisition of the Property, together with all buildings, structures, fixtures, permanent additions, and improvements located thereon, will further the College's educational mission and support the continuity and long-term sustainability of College programs that support workforce development and deepen the College's impact on Riverhead's downtown revitalization, as well as result in significant operating budget savings to the College by eliminating recurring lease payments, and

WHEREAS, NYS Education Law § 6306(4) and State University of New York (SUNY) Regulation 603.5 authorize the College to acquire real property suitable for carrying out the programs and purposes of the College, provided the SUNY Board of Trustees has approved the selection of the site, the educational value of the property, and a capital budget which includes the acquisition costs, such that acquisition of the property will be submitted to the Suffolk County Legislature and SUNY Board of Trustees for approval in accordance with applicable law and regulation and for eligibility for state match/reimbursement, and

WHEREAS, the proposed transaction contemplates the purchase of the Property by the County of Suffolk in trust for College use and purposes pursuant to a Purchase and Sale Agreement among the College, the County of Suffolk, the Suffolk County Industrial Development Agency, and Culinary Arts Riverhead, LLC, together with execution of such ancillary agreements and documents as may be necessary to complete the transaction, and

WHEREAS, in connection with the proposed acquisition, the College must undertake and, as necessary, fund such due diligence reviews and investigations as may be required by the State University of New York, the County of Suffolk, and the parties to the transaction, including, but not limited to, inspections, surveys, environmental site assessments, title reports, and appraisals, be it therefore

RESOLVED, the College President, or his designee, is authorized to negotiate, execute, and deliver, on behalf of the College, a Purchase and Sale Agreement with the County of Suffolk, the Suffolk County Industrial Development Agency, and Culinary Arts Riverhead, LLC, and any related agreements,

documents, certificates, amendments, and instruments necessary or appropriate to effectuate the acquisition of the Property known as 20 East Main Street, Riverhead, New York 11901, Tax Map No. 0600-128.00-06.00-066.006, together with all buildings, structures, fixtures, permanent additions, and improvements thereon, subject to review and approval as to form by College Counsel and such other approvals as may be required, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the College President, or his designee, is authorized to conduct and fund any and all necessary due diligence activities and investigations related to the proposed acquisition, including but not limited to physical inspections, boundary and title surveys, environmental site assessments, title examinations and reports, appraisals, engineering reviews, and such other studies, reports, investigations, and professional services as may be deemed necessary or advisable to evaluate and complete the transaction and to satisfy applicable requirements of the State University of New York, the County of Suffolk, and the parties to the transaction, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the President and such officers, employees, and agents of the College as the President may designate are authorized to take all actions and execute all documents necessary or appropriate to carry out the intent and purposes of this resolution.

RESOLUTION NO. 2026.57 – Authorizing the College President to Negotiate and Enter into an Agreement at the Ammerman Campus in Selden, New York with Long Island Pro Soccer for Donation and Use of a Synthetic Turf Multisport Field and Temporary Tension Structure

WHEREAS, the principals of Long Island Pro Soccer have proposed to enhance Suffolk County Community College’s existing athletic facilities through a public-private partnership, at no cost to the College, whereby Long Island Pro Soccer will repurpose the existing ten tennis courts and a portion of the adjacent field on the College’s Ammerman Campus to construct and donate to the College a synthetic turf multisport field and seasonal temporary tension structure on the existing footprint, with shared use of the enhanced facilities for a period of ten years, and

WHEREAS, Long Island Pro Soccer has also proposed to ensure the maintenance and associated operation expenses of said field and temporary tension structure during the period of shared use, and

WHEREAS, Long Island Pro Soccer’s use of the enhanced facilities would be for the purpose of offering expanded youth-focused soccer training, player development opportunities, and team/club soccer programming and play opportunities, including MLS NEXT Academy programming in Suffolk County, not for the purpose of spectator sports, and

WHEREAS, such facilities enhancements and use will materially enhance and support the College’s mission by providing modern, multi-season and multisport athletic facilities available to the College’s athletic programs and curricular programs such as physical education, at significantly reduced cost to the College, now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, the College President, or his designee, is authorized to negotiate an Agreement with Long Island Pro Soccer will repurpose the existing ten tennis courts and a portion of the adjacent field on the College’s Ammerman Campus to construct and donate to the College a synthetic turf multisport field and seasonal temporary tension structure on the existing footprint, with shared use of the enhanced facilities for a period of ten years, upon such terms and conditions as shall be approved by the College General Counsel, with an option to renew such shared use for two five-year terms thereafter upon the mutual written consent of both parties, and be it further,

RESOLVED, the Board of Trustees hereby finds and determines that adoption of this resolution constitutes a Type II action pursuant to the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and its implementing regulations, requiring no further review or action under SEQRA.

Chair Coverdale called for the Committee reports.

Student Trustee Ventura Rios reported for the Student Success Committee. The Committee received a presentation from the Campus Activities and Student Leadership Development team regarding its role in advancing student success through engagement, leadership development, and a strong sense of belonging. They learned that student engagement begins early through orientation and peer mentoring and extends across a broad range of opportunities, including student government, more than 100 student organizations, leadership programs, student employment, recreation and wellness initiatives, multicultural programming, volunteer service, student media, and campus-wide events. The presentation emphasized that leadership development is intentionally designed to foster self-awareness, productive relationships, and social responsibility through initiatives such as leadership retreats and the Shark Leadership Certificate program. The team also highlighted the importance of collaboration among faculty, academic departments, student affairs offices, and community partners in providing experiential learning, career exploration, wellness programming, and community engagement opportunities. Student involvement contributes significantly to academic success, well-being, career readiness, retention, and persistence. The team also described its ongoing use of assessment data and student feedback to enhance programs and services. The committee discussed opportunities to strengthen engagement between trustees and students through student government partnerships, informal meet-and-greet events, and networking opportunities.

Trustee Arens reported for the Governance Committee. The Committee met August 20th to discuss some policy changes and policy updates, and the trustees received a memo from Legal Affairs; Trustee Arens asked for the trustees to review it and provide feedback.

Chair Coverdale reported for the Personnel Committee. The committee met on September 16th; VP Rivera reviewed with the Personnel Committee that the results of the Presidential Evaluation Surveys for Academic Year 2025-2026 were received for committee discussion and Board of Trustees review in accordance with the guiding principles for the Presidential Evaluation Process Policy. Following a discussion regarding the timeline and process, VP Rivera and Deputy General Counsel Brodsky left the meeting, and discussion continued amongst Trustees, after which the meeting was adjourned.

Trustee Pagdanganan reported for the Foundation. The Foundation hosted an orientation luncheon to welcome a fourth cohort of Knapp-Swezey student scholars. This year, 19 students will receive \$20,000 each to support their education and related expenses over a two-year period. The Foundation also organized a press event with the County Executive Romaine in order to receive a \$10,000 donation to the cybersecurity program from Sentinel-1, a leading national cyber security company. This contribution will help strengthen student educational opportunities, as well as provide support for cybersecurity program needs. The Foundation also held a second press event to recognize Stop & Shop for its generous \$10,000 donation to the College's campus food pantries. In addition, Genesis donated a vehicle and equipment gift valued at \$46,000, and

Amazon donated \$10,000 as a sponsor for the upcoming Education Without Limits luncheon scheduled for Tuesday, November 17.

Trustee Pagdanganan reported for the Association. The Student Association Board of Directors met on August 25th. The Board approved the Child Care Center Behavior and Enrollment Transition Policy, and tabled resolutions concerning the donation of retired vans and holiday pay for certain part-time employees pending additional information. The Board also reviewed financials, high-yield investments, the Association treasurer's transition, and plans for electing new board officers.

Student Trustee Ventura-Rios reported that all three Student Government Associations on the Ammerman, Grant, and Eastern campus are looking for senators. Ammerman campus SGA has filled their treasurer vacancy. Brandon Pocasangre has joined Ammerman's SGA Executive Board. Ammerman SGA is looking to do research and draft a resolution to formally request the College to have recycling options on the Ammerman campus. There are a couple of concerns regarding campus accessibility that they will also be looking into. Eastern campus SGA will be reviewing the public safety initiative, and will hopefully vote on it by the end of the Fall semester. Grant campus SGA has also filled their Chief Financial Officer vacancy, Michael Ostorga will be joining the SGA Grant team.

Chair Coverdale offered remarks at the start of the academic year, noting that the Board serves as a governing body entrusted with a fiduciary responsibility to the College. She emphasized that all stakeholders, including trustees, administration, faculty, and unions, share a commitment to the institution and that trustees must exercise independent judgment in carrying out their duties. Chair Coverdale stated that Board decisions should be guided by the best interests of the College, its integrity and effectiveness, and the success of its students

Chair Coverdale moved to the President's report. President Bonahue welcomed trustees to the fall semester and reported that enrollment has strengthened since the last meeting. Full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment is running at approximately 99-100% of last year's levels, placing the college close to budget projections. Additional enrollment gains are anticipated through late-start courses and high school dual-enrollment registrations. To help trustees better understand enrollment data and finances, a reference document was provided explaining key enrollment terms such as headcount and FTE and their financial implications.

Enrollment and SUNY Reconnect

SUNY Reconnect continues to benefit adult learners, with several hundred students participating. While some new students may have enrolled regardless of the program, Reconnect has helped attract additional students and provides approximately \$3M in tuition support. Pell Grants and TAP remain the largest sources of student financial aid, but Reconnect has reduced students' reliance on loans while ensuring tuition reimbursement to the college.

Academic Affairs

The College has resumed work on its major student success initiatives, including the Academic Momentum project, which focuses on improving course success, gateway English and math completion, retention, and graduation outcomes. A comprehensive report on Spring 2026 student success metrics will be presented to the Board in the near future.

This semester also marks the implementation of SUNY's new AI literacy requirement for all students. The requirement has been incorporated into the College's general education curriculum, and faculty are beginning to explore discipline-specific applications of AI through pilot course initiatives. Strong participation in an upcoming faculty professional development program reflects significant interest in addressing AI use, academic integrity, and best practices for teaching and learning.

In the High School Dual Enrollment Office, leadership has expanded staffing and strengthened operational processes to support continued growth of the Beacon Program. The team successfully completed required certifications and reporting for 64 partner school districts and has taken steps to improve communication and collaboration with high school partners. To further enhance the program, the college plans to survey participating districts to gather feedback from students, teachers, and administrators on communications, curriculum, and overall partnership effectiveness.

Middle States Accreditation

Vice President Lauren Tacke-Cushing provided an overview of the Middle States accreditation standards and the College's ongoing self-study process. The self-study addresses all accreditation criteria and requirements of affiliation, including governance, policy review, student outcomes, assessment practices, retention, graduation and transfer rates, and institutional effectiveness. The review focuses heavily on evidence demonstrating how the college measures student learning, evaluates performance, and uses data to improve programs and services. The self-study also examines the impact of major initiatives over the past four years, including student success programs and support services. Beyond demonstrating compliance, the process serves as an opportunity to highlight institutional strengths and identify areas for improvement. The self-study report is nearing completion and must be condensed into a 100-page document. A draft will be shared with the campus community in October, followed by a review visit from the evaluation team Chair in November. After incorporating feedback, the final report will be submitted early next year. The full accreditation team is scheduled to conduct its campus visit April 2-4, 2027, with the Middle States Commission expected to make its accreditation determination in Summer 2027.

During discussion, trustees learned that the College was successfully reaccredited in 2018 without any required follow-up actions. Administrators also explained that Middle States monitors institutional health through annual reporting on enrollment, retention, completion, finances, and other key metrics to identify significant trends and ensure colleges remain financially and academically sustainable between accreditation cycles.

Facilities, Operations

Suffolk County approved the college's joint proposal with AME to upgrade the classification of public safety officers. The change is expected to strengthen recruitment and retention efforts across all three campuses and is being implemented immediately. The County legislature approved funding for three capital projects, including infrastructure improvements, major equipment purchases, and the final phase of the Caumsett Hall renovation. The board also approved design services for the renovation project, allowing work to move forward. Progress continues on the planned purchase of the culinary building, with authorization expected to be considered by the County Legislature later this fall. To enhance student services, the college is partnering with Aramark to open a Starbucks-branded café at the Grant Campus. The new location will build on the success of the existing Starbucks at the Ammerman Campus and provide students with additional dining and beverage options. The administration is exploring a significant campus-wide safety and security modernization project. Early planning includes standardizing locks and keys across all campuses and potentially implementing advanced access control systems such as card-swipe entry and automated building access.

Grants and Institutional Advancement

Trustees received a report on FY 2026 grant activity. Although the number of grant awards decreased compared to the previous year, the total value of grants under management increased significantly. The College now oversees more than \$8.5M in grant-funded projects, reflecting continued growth and the effectiveness of the grants office.

Personnel Recognition

President Bonahue recognized and thanked for her service Executive Dean Donna Ciampa, who is retiring after more than 22 years of service to the College. Throughout her career, she served as faculty member, Department Chair, Associate Dean, and Executive Dean across all three campuses.

Closing Remarks

President Bonahue addressed concerns regarding repeated public comments made by a former employee at recent board meetings. While acknowledging and supporting the public's right to raise concerns with the board, he noted that the individual's comments, despite being presented as supportive of the College, have often been perceived as negative and have had a detrimental effect on employee morale. He emphasized that such criticism has been hurtful, and has created anxiety among faculty, staff, and administrators, who remain deeply committed to the College's mission and to serving students. President Bonahue reaffirmed the institution's focus on continuous improvement and student success; while encouraging anyone with concerns about the College to engage in direct, constructive dialogue with college leadership and the board so issues can be addressed productively through appropriate channels.

Chair Coverdale called for Roundtable: None

Opportunity for Public Comments on Matters Pertaining to the College:

Ben Zwirn delivered his second public comment. Mr. Zwirn commented on trustee attendance via videoconference due to extraordinary circumstances and Open Meetings Law requirements, expressing a desire for greater transparency regarding the reasons for videoconferencing participation. He expressed concerns regarding enrollment trends and the long-term sustainability of enrollment gains associated with the SUNY Reconnect program. Lastly, Mr. Zwirn also stated that he was the only individual who spoke and advocated on behalf of the College before the Education Committee recently, concerning three College resolutions relating to infrastructure.

Trustee Bost commented on Mr. Zwirn's public remarks. Trustee Bost emphasized his dual perspective as both a trustee and a labor leader, noting that his work in government affairs and union representation informs his approach to governance and advocacy. He expressed concern about Mr. Zwirn publicly raising issues related to trustees, administrators, or matters that may involve personal circumstances. He encouraged individuals with concerns about college operations to utilize established channels, including direct outreach to trustees, college leadership, and legal counsel, before bringing complaints to public meetings. He noted that he had not received any direct communication from Mr. Zwirn regarding the issues being raised. Trustee Bost also questioned whether Mr. Zwirn was representing the views of the Suffolk County AME or expressing personal opinions, stating that the distinction should be clear when presenting concerns publicly. He further indicated that some of the sponsors had expressed disagreement to him with Mr. Zwirn's public approach. Trustee Bost reiterated his commitment to open communication and invited direct dialogue to discuss concerns and work collaboratively toward solutions, emphasizing that private engagement and constructive conversations are often more productive than repeated public criticism.

Chair Coverdale requested a motion to enter in Executive Session to discuss the employment history of a particular person and to seek/receive legal advice, which is made confidential by law. Trustee Pagdanganan so moved, Trustee Dolan seconded. The motion to enter Executive Session was approved unanimously (9-0).

Chair Coverdale requested a motion to adjourn the meeting after the executive session, as no further business would be conducted. Trustee Zarate so moved; Student Trustee Ventura-Rios seconded. The motion to adjourn the meeting was approved unanimously (9-0). The meeting adjourned to executive session at approximately 6:10 p.m.

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees is October 15, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. in the Media Room, of the Culinary Arts Center, Riverhead, New York.

Respectfully submitted,
Michael Arens
Secretary