

New College Institute
Academic Affairs Committee Meeting
October 4, 2016

The Academic Affairs Committee of New College Institute met Tuesday, October 4, 2016 at 10:30 a.m. in the Randolph Board Room at the Hilton Garden Inn in Lynchburg, Virginia.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Emmett Hanger, Dr. Weldon Hill, Ms. Naomi Hodge-Muse, and Delegate Charles Poindexter

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator William Stanley

OTHER PRESENT

Dr. Leanna Blevins, NCI's Acting Executive Director; Mr. Charles Guthridge and Mr. Morgan Guthridge, Public Affairs Consultants; and Ms. Melanie Ingram, Administrative Assistant

WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Hill called the meeting to order and welcomed the group. He thanked Dr. Blevins and Ms. Ingram for arranging the meeting in Lynchburg as this location shortened travel time for the majority of the attendees. All members concurred.

ROLL CALL

Ms. Ingram called the roll and announced the presence of a quorum.

UPDATES

Chairman Hill described the purpose of the meeting to be a discussion of viable and attainable options for NCI's future. He pointed out that higher education is changing very quickly and NCI's future should be viewed in a global context.

Dr. Blevins reported she has spent a considerable amount of time participating in discussions with leaders of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV), Longwood University, other university presidents, community college staff members, House and Senate money committee staffers, and business leaders.

Each member received a handout which included the Mission Statement and legislation of New College Institute, The Institute for Advanced Learning and Research in Danville, the Roanoke Higher Education Authority (Roanoke Higher Education Center) and the Southern Virginia Higher Education Center in South Boston. The state funding provided to each center was also included.

REVIEW OF DATA, OPTIONS, AND OPPORTUNITIES

A discussion ensued concerning current and future funding from the Harvest Foundation as notified by letter dated September 1, 2016. Funding for the 2016 – 18 grant was partially rescinded by the Harvest Foundation for noncompliance of the grant’s Special Conditions as outlined in the Grant Agreement dated June 3, 2016, signatures accepting the terms and conditions dated June 29, 2016, requiring NCI’s board to approve a “proposal for a Branch Campus/College of a Baccalaureate degree granting University by July 30, 2016.” Senator Hanger recommended that the committee and full board develop a new plan for NCI’s future and then approach Harvest Foundation requesting its cooperation.

Committee members also expressed concern of the uncertainty surrounding New College Foundation’s source of funding and how said funds would be spent in the future. Senator Hanger expressed the importance of understanding NCF’s funding plan and requested that an NCF representative attend the next meeting of this committee to answer questions.

Charles Guthridge asked Dr. Blevins to share her professional opinion of the most attainable, sustainable, and viable options for NCI and the citizens of Martinsville-Henry County. Dr. Blevins described the community perception that NCI is “broken” if it is not affiliated with a brand name college or university. Given this perception, she encouraged the committee to seek an affiliation with a reputable institution by using the best of traditional academics, creativity, and innovation to build a unique educational model for Martinsville-Henry County and the Commonwealth. Given that Longwood is a willing partner, Dr. Blevins believes they should at least be given an opportunity to provide NCI with a proposed model. After discussion, Dr. Blevins agreed to compile a list of “critical needs” (requirements needed by NCI) in order to proceed with a Longwood affiliation. This list will be distributed to the Committee members in the next two days.

Dr. Blevins encouraged the committee to identify viable options for NCI’s future and present these ideas at NCI’s next full board meeting on October 27. Below is a list of the options discussed. Numbers one through four are preferred options by the committee.

1. Continue to pursue discussions with Longwood University through the preparation of “critical needs” described above.
2. Further discuss with Peter Blake (SCHEV) shared governance of southern Virginia higher education centers to include The Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (Danville) and the Southern Virginia Higher Education Center (South Boston).
3. Explore VCCS possibility to offer bachelor’s degrees.
4. Develop more information on remaining a multi-university center with a revised business model
5. Partners with Averett University and Ferrum College (both private entities)
6. Merger with the proposed new medical school in Martinsville

Senator Hanger suggested that the following individuals receive an invitation to attend the committee’s next meeting: Peter Blake, SCHEV’s Executive Director; Tony Maggio, House Appropriations Committee Legislative Fiscal Analyst; and April Kees, Senate Finance Committee Legislative Fiscal Analyst.

The group also discussed submitting a proposal to New College Foundation requesting the appointment of two NCI representatives to the NCF Board of Trustees.

Senator Hanger then encouraged Dr. Blevins to seriously consider the idea of the Board appointing her as the Executive Director of New College Institute. He indicated that the Academic Affairs Committee supported her as Executive Director and the Committee would like to make this recommendation at NCI's Board meeting on October 27. Dr. Blevins thanked the group for their confidence and agreed to advise Senator Hanger of her interest.

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 1:53 p.m.