

College Board Retreat  
October 26, 2020  
Minutes

CALL TO ORDER – Chair of the Board

**Chair O’Neil called the retreat to order at 4pm**

ROLL CALL – Mariella Abanto

**Members present from the College Board: Chair Rosie O’Neil, Vice Chair Zuzana Steed, Dr. Kerstin Carlson Le Floch, Ms. Julie Felgar, and Mr. Rick Pearson.**

**Members participating remotely: Mr. Ron Gill, Mr. Alvie Johnson, Ms. Jennifer McGarey, Mr. Todd Rowley, Mr. Christopher Wade, Mr. John Porter, and Student Liaison Mr. Daniel Christman.**

**Present from the College: Dr. Anne Kress, Mr. Dana Kauffman, Ms. Tykesha Myrick, and Ms. Mariella Abanto.**

**College staff participating remotely: Mr. Steve Partridge**

OPENING STATEMENTS – Chair of the Board

**Chair O’Neil thanked Mr. Allen Sinner and the IT team for their technical support. Also thanked College Government Affairs team, Dr. Kress and Steve P. for setting-up the retreat.**

**Chair O’Neil then made these announcements:**

- *This is an open, public meeting and has been made available for live viewing by the public through a posted Zoom link;*
- *Should our broadcast be interrupted, we will be notified, and we will have to pause the meeting; and*
- *This meeting is being recorded and will be posted for subsequent viewing on the NOVA website.*

**Chair O’Neil noted that this retreat was generated by Board members’ feedback to: “Make better use of us as Board members and give us more opportunities to be active.”**

**1. Best Practice Partnership Development**

- A. Panel Presentation: Networking and Making Connections for the College at the Business, Political and Community Level (40 minutes)  
Zuzana Steen, Todd Rowley and John Porter

- *Who are the types of individuals I should particularly approach to promote NOVA?*  
**Chair O’Neil opened this segment by raising the first question with Mr. Rowley.**

**Mr. Rowley:** Best to approach groups with “large missions” such as chambers and EDAs. Bring pieces (people) together “and get the heck out of the way.” Noted recent success in connecting NOVA leadership with Virginia Tech.

**Vice Chair Steen:** Depends if you run into students, counselors, teachers, or even politicians. Objective is to help them see what NOVA brings to the table. ADVANCE is a great example to share with teachers and seniors in high school. There’s always something that NOVA can bring to everyone. It is a college of opportunities.

**Mr. Porter:** Few people don’t know about NOVA. It’s the extent of their knowledge that is at issue. No one should be excluded. As we move along, we’ll find out the best ways to promote NOVA.

- *What are the best ways to raise NOVA in a conversation and what should I be prepared to do?*

**Vice Chair Steen:** Conversations with kids, at any age. Stress what NOVA can provide to students through dual enrollment classes while in high school, especially now that we are all learning remotely. There are also courses that NOVA offers for professionals who already have 4-year and advanced degrees. NOVA is a great partner to our K-12 systems.

**Mr. Porter:** Depends on each situation, cited example of casual conversation at a carwash. Person’s daughter had just graduated from TC Williams. Porter suggested NOVA as a good option. You take the opportunity when it presents itself, whatever setting it might be, without pushing too much. Porter frequently begins with “I sit on the NOVA Board” to open the door to discussion.

**Mr. Rowley:** First determine their “pain points.” People are looking for someone to help them solve their problems. This holds whether it is parents approaching you at chamber events or business community leaders seeking help for their kids studying at home. Listen and see if it is a problem NOVA can solve. Most of the time, it is.

- *When is it best to approach people and when should I back off? How should I start these conversations and how do I keep their interest?*

**Mr. Porter:** Life and business is about relationships, making connections, developing relationships. Topics may or may not be of mutual interest at the start; look for mutual interests. Timing is important. Allow discussion to continue and leave the door open to follow-up. Also learn how to read people, know when you have shared enough information, but always leave the door open. Very important to be brief at first. Theory is it takes about seven touches before someone will start to listen to you about something. It’s all about making those connections. You should invite people to NOVA events. Few people don’t know about NOVA, our opportunity is to spread the knowledge, spread the word, and provide them a bit more information about the community college, whatever area that may be. Don’t just reach out to

people when you need something. Make sure you are there to support them as well. Relationship and timing go hand in hand, you must play it well and read people.

**Mr. Rowley:** Just because you made a good connection and, strategically, it is a good idea for both the person and the college, you've got to be there and stay with it. If it is a good idea and you make one introduction and then you go away, then how good was the idea and how committed are you to see it all the way through? Don't go away after the first introduction. The key is to recognize that there might be other issues, personally and corporately to keep them from being inspired. You've got to be there and stay with it. Persistence.

**Vice Chair Steen:** Let them see the value proposition. Pass on gently, diplomatically what benefits them. Share stories of individuals who have benefited. Let businesses know how NOVA is helping their bottom line.

- *Where should I guide people to better understand NOVA's value?*

This question was not discussed.

- *Why is it important to make connections for the benefit of the College?*

**Mr. Rowley:** Making connections is why the Board exists. Don't lose the focus on who the client is, which is the students. That's where the connections can be beneficial because we are trying to give them the best opportunities, introductions, education that we possibly can. Community should know what we are doing, because they are paying for it. If we are going to have the counties and cities as advocates, we need to be able to say this is what we are doing with the support you provide us.

**Mr. Porter:** From the business side, it's important because it helps or can help the bottom line for them. However, they also need to be a part of the larger community. It's a way for business to be involved to both benefit and give back to the broader community. It's all for the benefit of the students. We keep bringing it back to that bottom line.

- *Why should businesses care about NOVA?*

**Vice Chair Steen:** We offer business a way to upscale current talent and provide a source of talent. You must help the companies see that NOVA is the feeder to some of the schools you are hiring from. NOVA is a great source of talent. NOVA can put together either a two-year degree or a certification path based on the core needs companies have for positions in their industries. Employers can source talent from these programs and benefit from the relationship. The NOVA Systemic program is in all our school divisions throughout Northern Virginia. It provides support for a lot of our counselors and it also provides professional development training for teachers. That is important. It also provides different stem camps, career talks, robotics events and other activities of interest to students and their families. Finally, it is

important for business to support STEM education if they want to get students excited about going into STEM degrees. They can sponsor programs that lead to pipelines of future employees.

Chair O'Neil asked Mr. Rowley, "Given your time on the Regional Chamber and other work that you are doing, what are you hearing about or what was your experience about why business should care? And the pipeline?"

Mr. Rowley: Steve (Partridge) is a lot more involved with workforce than anybody else from the educational community in this region. When they want to talk to someone on strategy, they reach out to Dr. Kress, because she's someone who has the muscle and connections and experience to be able to say "This is what we do." It is key for the business community to be able to know they can reach out and get a decision. So often when I talk to other education institutions I work with, the answer is always "We'll think about that." They spend so much time thinking that by the time they get around to it, the problem is either solved, gone, or people forget about it. None of those are solutions. The key for the business community and NOVA is that we're solution oriented. We make decisions and then we move forward. The business community appreciates that and they kind of rely on it.

B. Network Mapping Activity (15 minutes)

Ms. Felgar: Lead a short network mapping exercise. Focus was on developing contacts that would help the College find potential IT professors and/or people willing to serve on technical Advisory Boards. For example, Julie frequently initiates a conversation by saying "I serve on the Board of one of the largest educational institution in America." People think of UCLA, Michigan, and she replies Northern Virginia Community College. When Dr. Kress or other members of the College leadership team need help on an issue or initiative, the Board members can map-out a network of potential contacts who can be engaged. How can these contacts be of assistance? You should, if you know the person, make the initial contact and then get out of the way. The purpose is not to give the Board a lot of work, but instead look to the Board for the contacts they have. Ms. Felgar identified four different types of contacts:

**Professional:** Who do members know that might be a good connection for the College to contact? A lot of institutions want their employees to be able to volunteer their time or get their name out as part of a co-marketing effort. Other people would like to be connected to education to "give back." The following were suggestions from members:

Mr. Rowley: Regional Chambers large and small (same needs)

Mr. Pearson: Workforce development (LO) IT specialist "Lemon heads" interact with business development and workforce development.

Chair O'Neil: People working in innovation centers, connected to alumni via LinkedIn.

Dr. Le Floch: For adjunct professors, her first thought was the IT staff at her organization.

**Personal:** Board members know a lot of people that might be a good conduit. They may not be the potential adjunct, but they might have access to them.

**Dr. Rowley:** Reaching out to your social groups, senior officers or executives for companies, casual get togethers for business purposes.

**Chair O’Neil:** Very connected with public schools. Her brother is an entrepreneur tech innovator who worked at Cisco. Has out of the region connections that have an interest.

**Dr. Le Floch:** Friends who are with government agencies in senior positions. Her undergraduate alumni network is very strong in DC, business networking group.

**Institutional connection/ideas:** Are there groups that College leadership should be talking to that could help amplify this message?

**Mr. Rowley:** Trade associations could be great contacts for professors or for student internships.

**Mr. Pearson:** Business incubators, the Center for Innovative Technology, and hub zones might provide some nice connection points.

**Chair O’Neil:** National Science Academy (NSA), K-12 in Arlington, serve on the career tech adult ed committee, these people might be interested in NOVA.

**Strange Bedfellow:** Creative thinking about what should be a good venue, good amplifier, it could be social media account that can help to get the message out.

**Chair O’Neil:** Rotary, professionals that want to do community work but who might not know of the potential pathway for them to teach, career fairs for people who wants to do job transition.

**Ms. Felgar:** Concluded the exercise by noting how the contacts developed on any given initiative can be used to stage a “Pre-Mortem” of what could go wrong and how to deal with those items to ensure the effort succeeds. Use contacts to think through collectively at the beginning.

**Activating Your Network** (5 minutes)

**Chair O’Neil:** Suggested that as the President has items where networking would be of value, she could alert the Board in advance of a Board meeting so that the item and possible assistance can be vetted.

**Dr. Kress:** Added that you can’t have a meeting without a plan. Connections to be activated will require next steps.

\*\*\*10 MIN BREAK\*\*\*

## 2. Approaches to Strategic Messaging

### A. Shifting the Narrative and Amplifying the NOVA Value Proposition (20 minutes)

- Rosie O’Neil – *Amplifying the Community College Value Proposition*
- Steve Partridge – *Shifting the Narrative – NOVA’s Value* (check PPT)

**Chair O’Neil** introduced Vice President Steve Partridge, noting that the understanding of the value of community colleges in general is antiquated and that Mr. Partridge would inform the Board of how his staff is working to shift NOVA’s messaging.

Mr. Partridge presented a PowerPoint with the primary focus being on the College's new narrative:

- We are the largest supplier of talent in northern Virginia
- 15% of our students are veterans (*highly desirable for federal contractors*)
- We know about diversity and inclusion – Our students are the individuals companies want to hire
- NOVA is the largest community college producer of IT degrees and credentials (*which happens to be the top in-demand skill in our region*)
- We are fast acting and adaptive (*Tech apprenticeships, Data Center Operations, Cloud specialization, FastForward/VA Ready*)
- K-12 connections (*Dual enrollment, JumpStart, Tech Pathways*)

B. Presentation: Best Practices in College Board - Foundation Board Relations (10 minutes)

- *Betheny Reid, (Betheny L. Reid & Associates, LLC affiliated with eAddancement) will provide a short overview on outreach that would support increased institutional fundraising.*

Ms. Reid noted that she has “sat in the chair,” having served as the director of a large community college foundation. She shared that the Foundation Board is getting ready for a new phase while emphasizing that the Foundation exists to support NOVA.

Ms. Reid said that philanthropy amplifies the College's message and that Dr. Kress “knows this side of the house” along with the importance of having a seamless partnership. The Foundation Board will be “rebooting” over the next two to three months to be more of an “institutionally related institution.”

Members will be working with Dr. Kress to identify the two or three critical areas where philanthropy will “move the needle.” She emphasized that the Foundation should be bold and declare significant philanthropic goals. NOVA is the vehicle where other people reach their goals, but there are areas we need philanthropic support.

Ms. Reid said that she loved the new messaging that Mr. Partridge shared and that the relationship between the College and the Foundation should be “hand in glove.”

3. Other Important Aspects of Messaging

A. Dealing with Feedback and Responding to “Intelligence (10 minutes)

Rosie O'Neil and Anne Kress

- *What to do when you hear “bad things” from “good people” about NOVA and recognizing opportunities for the Foundation. Good and Bad examples*

Dr. Kress quickly shared a “Guidance” document just prepared to help Board members navigate different situations and requests. Fundamentally, Board members are not intended or required to personally solve any problem or navigate any request. The guidance will help members direct information to the appropriate NOVA staff member for follow-up and action.

B. NOVA's Strategic Plan in Action (10 minutes)

Tykesha Myrick

- *Positioning the College for long-term relationships on Capitol Hill, securing grant support, engaging diverse student ambassadors.*

**Ms. Myrick shared that NOVA received its first-ever US Department of Education Child Care Means Parents in Schools (CCAMPIS) grant. This grant will provide \$496,416 over four years to provide access to childcare for our student-parents. This grant was a team effort, with Dr. Villagran-Glover and Mr. Partridge. NOVA currently has nine federal grant proposals pending which include a consortium with the VCCS for a \$5 million Department of Labor grant.**

**Ms. Myrick noted that the first issue of the NOVA Brief was distributed in April. This monthly newsletter is distributed electronically to all elected officials, community leaders, and staff with updates about our NOVA community.**

**Ms. Myrick is also the only representative from higher education to engage in a weekly call with Senator Mark Warner's office. The purpose of this call is to receive updates on Senator Warner's response to COVID-19 and Congressional updates. The weekly dialogue has afforded her the opportunity to learn more about our community and its varying needs.**

**Finally, Ms. Myrick shared that College Government Affairs, in collaboration with Student Services, is working to create a student advocacy program that will provide legislative training to students and opportunities to participate in General Assembly and Capitol Hill advocacy days.**

Dana Kauffman

- *Strategic Plan and calendar for outreach, the importance of ongoing communications and the development of "Regional Sheets" to equip Board Members.*

**Mr. Kauffman briefly shared the first ever Strategic Plan for College Government Affairs. He noted that it ties directly to the objectives of the College's Strategic Plan.**

**Mr. Kauffman pointed to the recent successes realized in Richmond, thanks to Board Member involvement in reaching out to members of the General Assembly. The combined efforts helped to preserve base-level funding and secure an allotment of CARES Act funds to support one-time VCCS initiatives. Mr. Kauffman concluded his remarks by sharing the first of what will be jurisdiction-specific "regional sheets" for Board Members to use in reaching out to elected officials and other community leaders.**

C. Making NOVA Indispensable (10 minutes)

Anne Kress

- *What I learned and gained by being at every invited table, participating and staying in touch. What I hope Board Members takeaway from presentations by their fellow Members and staff: You are NOVA's connection to the community!*

**Dr. Kress shared what Mr. Porter once said to her, “Everybody knows NOVA, but many people don’t know much about what happens here.” She addressed the importance of building community ownership. Citing that while the Foundation was been successful in raising \$1.4M in total scholarships last year, the college – through its Dual Enrollment program – effectively provided over \$3.2M in scholarships to students in one jurisdiction alone.**

**Dr. Kress noted that having NOVA in the community and at decision-making tables, makes a difference in those discussions. The Board needs to be the added eyes and ears of the College. She concluded by saying NOVA needs to get where the College can activate its own network. The overriding message needs to be that NOVA is indispensable and that the region can’t move forward without it.**

**Chair O’Neil thanked everyone for their contributions, attention and participation during the retreat. She’s inspired by all the networks everyone has and the options and opportunities for NOVA.**

**Dr. Kress thanked Rosie and everyone for their dedication to the Board.**

**ADJOURNMENT – Requires a motion and a second**

**Chair O’Neil will reach out to Board members for their thoughts on whether to hold an in person or remote Board meeting on November 9<sup>th</sup>.**

**Motion to Adjourn was made by Ms. Felgar, motion was seconded by Vice Chair Steen**

**Roll call – Motion was approved unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 5:56pm**

Submitted by:



Ms. Rosaelena O’Neil

Chair

Northern Virginia Community College Board

Anne M. Kress, Ph.D.



Secretary

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