

EGCC Student Government Association 2022-2023
Meeting Agenda
Special Meeting: Department of Education Information
Thursday, July 21, 2022

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Madam President McCloud at [time].

Special Orders

None.

Attendance

- **Present:** McCloud, Domagala, Richards, Sanders, Cooper, Fowler, Hulse, Hunter, Morris, Nickell, Rogers, Whitaker
 - **Absent:** De La Cruz (excused) Zhao
- Quorum is: 10 Majority is: 6

Reading of the Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting on July 6, 2022 were provided via email from Advisor Twyford for your review prior to this meeting.

Motion to approve:

Second:

Minutes approved via voice.

Updates from EGCC Cabinet

- **SVP Martin** – an appeal will be filed on Friday morning. We’re fighting for the rights of our students that had been taken away from students through due process. There has to be time for corrective measures, the letter didn’t state any of that. (US Code 1070). This makes it difficult to do an appeal. The appeal allows us to do business, which is serving students. That is what’s important to cabinet members – letting students continue on their educational journey. The appeal isn’t whether we can collect Pell money, its if we can continue to serve our students who are already registered and have already put effort into their degree pathway. Our message is clear that we’re fighting for our students. After this week closes, we will have spent every day since receiving this letter fighting on your behalf. We were given a certain amount of time to answer and send questions, and we have responded. Jeremy Early (?) has already responded to those with his questions. We are doing everything above and beyond to make sure we are fighting for you all to be able to complete what you’ve started. Yes we want to register new students, but we need to take care of the ones who have already started an educational pathway. We have 76 newly registered students we had to turn down in one day, but the bigger number are the students who are already here, are registered, and that we want to be able to tell good news. That’s our goal and we won’t take our

eye off that prize. I wish we had better news right now, but we don't have any other news beyond this, and that we're working hard in your favor.

- **SVP Dr. Crooks:** Echo those statements
- **President Geoghegan:** I was on the phone with our board chair and need to get back on the phone with him. I wanted to let you know the status of things. We are going to appeal this letter from the division chief of the federal student aid in Chicago. You may know we're under a federal audit and have been for several months. We've been totally compliant. This issue of how we run our free college program came out of the blue, and Central State and Paul Quinn received similar letters. We've hired a very good attorney that specializes in Title IV. They believe we have the legal rationale on our side, and we hope we can get this done in timely manner. Its very unfortunate that this is the timing. I find it hard to believe that the US DOE will penalize students in this program. This is a great program and we feel that it has been set up and structured in compliance with all federal regulations. We're hoping to get a stay on this order and get some clarification on this. We know that this is difficult because you're planning to get your classes started again but this truly came out to the blue, but we are reacting and responding to this as quickly as we can.

Questions:

Whitaker: We won't know anything until it totally goes before a judge?

MG: The judge in Chicago will provide guidance of how to proceed. We submitted a full list of all enrolled students. We hope for a response for him hopefully tomorrow, we asked for a meeting with him with our attorneys, and in his previous letter he would provide clarification. Everything is just up in the air right now. If they have issues with the college, that's fine but lets not take it out on the students.

Richards: How is this free college program funded?

MG: Funded with student Pell monies, with other funds that the college has (ex: state subsidy, over \$15 million this year), other grants that come in, and support we provide through scholarships provide support for the college. Its how we set up the expense side of the college, such as technology investments. It does cover all the costs, but we provide our own funds to cover the cost of the tuition in conjunction with the unions.

Whitaker: What are the unions saying about this?

MG: Varies by union. They're confused by this letter, too. They're upset and want to take action. They can apply pressure. We can do that through students, alumni, unions. Their strategy has not been crystallized yet but we will form a plan, its still early on.

Whitaker: Will the college or the unions provide connections? My union has an active political arm. Who will guide this effort?

MG: Work within your union first and we can be supportive however we can.

Cooper: Please explain in layman's terms, exactly what the DOE is accusing EGCC of doing?

MG: Not accusing of any illegalities, but saying we have structured this program not in compliance with Title IV regulations. They're saying if you're a Pell eligible student (which all students have to fill out FAFSA to see eligibility), your Pell is received for tuition and fees. But if you're not fully Pell eligible, the remainder of your tuition and fees is covered by those who are fully eligible for Pell. That's the way the program has run since 2015, it's gone through 8 years of audits. They've been well aware of this program, but now that we're saying it should not be structured this way.

SVP Martin: 20 years ago I was a working mom with bills, but I made too much for assistance. For example now, if I was a working mother but didn't qualify, EGCC has found a way to help me qualify.

MG: We don't feel their rationale is based on any regulations in Title IV, we think it's something coming from one individual.

Hulse: Thank you for taking time to help all of us understand, we want to be able to help communicate better to other students. I'm on a working group with others on social media, and you're probably aware that it has been crazy on social media. Is there something we can quote from tonight that we can give the student body something? There are students who are saying they won't be finishing the semester now. What can we tell other students to help them?

MG: We are going to pursue all remedies to turn this around immediately. We're going into an appeal process tomorrow, and hope to get guidance next week. We are confident that our position on this is the correct position, and whatever it is we need to do, we're going to pursue it until we get the right outcome. We're not doing anything wrong. There is a difference of opinion as to how this program is structured. Our number one concern is the students. Just hang in there for a few more days until we get further clarification on this.

SVP Martin: Students all still can register, you have two weeks to do that without being penalized. This can still give students hope about their situation.

Hulse: If there is anything you need from us as a group please share that so we can help.

SVP Dr. Crooks: your stories are aspirational, and we want to help you finish.

SVP Martin: We're going to continue to work hard for you all. We're still a small college and are going to work together to do everything possible to get through this. We run real departments and we want you to succeed, even sometimes more than you do most days. It really is us reaching out to you, you've come too far to quit now.

Richards: How many dollars are actually given to the college by unions to cover costs?

MG: Just about a million dollars. Those come from two union trusts in Ohio and New York. Other unions may have other tuition reimbursement funds. We don't have the capacity to work with all the unions across the country and want to make it easier for unions from a national level and that is one way we may look at revising the plan.

Cooper: Wanted to go off the social media question. People are scared, nervous, and we want to make sure that we're protected. I want to make a suggestion: someone had posted the other day and said that they sat down with one of the presidents and got to know them and their passion. I suggest that you all make a simple Facebook video or go live and reiterate these

messages and sentiments. The students will feel much better about what's going on, and they'll feel like you have their back. It will make a difference.

MG: That's a great idea and we want to do something like this, and we'll get to work on that. We can't do a live event because we don't have the capacity to do it on zoom, but I promise we will get something out.

Domagala: Question about account ledgers, I've heard different things from other people. I have heard that the account ledger isn't actually paid, that it's a scholarship. Some say the union has paid for it, others say it's a scholarship.

MG: That's what they're questioning. If you enroll at any college, and you don't have the monies to pay for it, you'll apply for financial aid. You have to bring what resources you have first (Pell, grants, scholarships, etc). What the college says you owe is the total bill, then any aid applied, then scholarships – just like ours says union scholarships. The college is paying for that scholarship. The way we account for a student's bill is no different from any other college.

Domagala: So the scholarship I got was paid by the college?

MG: It was paid by all the revenue sources we have coming in. Your account shows the difference between what you're bringing in and the price of the actual tuition and fees.

Domagala: I don't get Pell/FAFSA, its all through the union.

MG: If you don't have Pell you're eligible through the union and that's how it's paid.

Domagala: If this program doesn't clear, what would you foresee happening?

MG: Several options. We may do a redesign, but we think our structure is proper. It's our plan to continue with the free college benefit program. We just need to work this out with the DOE.

Domagala: This may be union specific, but would they pull out of this program?

MG: I don't think so. The unions love this program. They're not backing away from this at all.

Domagala: We're worried how this situation will look on our degree when we try to transfer to a four year. They may think our degree isn't valid.

MG: That shouldn't enter into it at all.

SVP Dr. Crooks: If you complete a degree with us and go all the way through, it's fine.

McCloud: You mentioned Zoom not having capacity, but why not Facebook Live?

MG: Sure, we livestream other events. It's difficult to be interactive at that capacity.

McCloud: Do you think that this could be resolved prior to fall semester?

MG: yes

McCloud: if the worst would happen by some chance, what would the future look like for SGA? A majority of our members are on the union benefit and they wouldn't be able to continue.

MG: I think I referenced this in an earlier response. We will continue with a program, but it may look different from what it is now.

McCloud: Do we have a specific plan for rectification similar to our HLC provisional plan?

MG: yes

Richards: If a student qualifies and was awarded \$6k, but the tuition was only \$2k, what happens to the other \$4k?

MG: It goes back to the student, the Pell grant only covers tuition and fees. They're called different things (student stipends, etc), but we return it to you (over \$3 million this year).

McCloud: We want to help in any way we can, so please reach out to us to let us know how we can.

MG: We will, we have the greatest students. We're all in this together and would appreciate all the help you can provide to us. Need to leave for another call but I will be at other meetings and we will communicate with students. We'll make that meeting.

SVP Dr. Crooks: Wanted to share that Mary Leoson and Ralph Pennell are creating a student literary journal where we'll have student writing opportunities. We have also submitted a completion plan to the state to say how we continue to provide success. As chief academic officer, I wanted to make sure that you know we'll do this as a team.

Whitaker: Should this go south, will you reach out to each individual student or will it be a mass email?

SVP Martin: I'm a positive person and don't think it's going to happen – but—it will probably be a mass email. It would be difficult to contact 20k students individually, but I don't know what that looks like. We do have enough advisors in my opinion to put forth an effort, but you know how the word does get passed around. You get the mass emails because the message goes out at the same time to everyone.

Whitaker: It's a shame this is happening. We're discussing how there are stories behind every student – second start for so many students. It's a good program, I know I'm learning, and I am excited for education again. It's a great experience, I miss the camaraderie of being face to face, and it takes a while to adjust.

Martin: This opportunity is for you, it's meant for you, and this opportunity won't be hindered. Let's stay positive about it. We have to do that to bring ourselves up and pull ourselves up. Until we decide to let go of the negativity and speak positivity into others, we don't understand what we can be. This is one of those times when we should recognize that greatness is meant for all of us. I don't think EGCC did anything wrong to the point of where we will need to close. I think the federal government has a problem with us giving away free education because they haven't figured out how to do it. Other countries do it, but we don't. This country gets billions of dollars from the federal loan program. There are a lot of problems with this letter, we don't know what we've done so wrong by helping people. You'd think the government would applaud us for what we've done but instead we're raked over the coals. There is much we could have done better in our processes – anything that is new, it isn't always done right, but as far as fraudulent, that didn't happen. We may have contracted with outside sources that weren't in the best interest of the federal government (SRC – a third party entity). We know that we're trying to bring everything in house to EGCC so we can serve our students right. Anyone who has called the student resource center knows what I mean. Those students who have had to wait for a callback that never came knows. Those are processes and we learn.

Richards: Some students with accessibility services, we'll send textbooks to them, but if we don't know what's going on before the fall semester, should we wait?

SVP Martin: Accessibilities is a free service to students. You have 2 weeks to drop without penalties.

We should hear soon, but don't get nervous until August 5. Even August 29 could be a date. The appeal letter is going out tomorrow morning, and the judge will need time in addition to the weekend to review.

SVP Dr. Crooks: Once we get through this, we still have work to do to make sure your educational experience as strong as possible (HLC, etc). I'm willing to do more late night chats and I'm sure other cabinet members would be willing to do so as well.

McCloud: I feel better about the situation and I don't feel as uncertain. I appreciate your attendance and openness about this, and your responses to questions.

Adjournment

At this time, I would entertain a motion to adjourn...

Motion: Domagala

Seconded by: Rogers

This meeting is adjourned at 9:11pm EST. ***Our next meeting is Thursday, August 18 at 8pm EST.***