



BOARD OF TRUSTEES Special Meeting

Minutes October 9, 2025

A meeting/retreat of the Ocean County College Board of Trustees was called to order at 11:41 a.m. on Thursday, October 9, 2025, by Mr. Steven Zabarsky, Vice Chair, in Room 102 of the Conference Center on the College campus and via Webex.

Call to Order

The announcement of public meeting was made by Ms. Connie Bello in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act of 1975. This special meeting was announced on October 2, 2025, as required by the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act, by providing adequate notice to the Asbury Park Press, the Atlantic City Press, the Ocean County Clerk, and the College community. The notice indicated this meeting would also be held via Webex, as per New Jersey Public Law 2020, Chapter 11, approved on March 20, 2020, for public bodies to conduct meetings by electronic means.

Public Meeting
Announcement

All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Those in attendance were Mr. Zabarsky, Mr. Frank Dupignac, Mr. Stephan Leone, Mr. Lynn Canfield, Mr. Robert Fall, Ms. DiAnne Gove, Mr. Hunter Mantz, Dr. Pamela Monaco, and Mrs. Connie Bello. Also in attendance were Dr. Lenore Rodicio and Mr. Leon Hill, Achieving the Dream (AtD) coaches.

Attendance

Dr. Monaco introduced Dr. Rodicio and Mr. Hill, who have been on campus for two days in order to meet with a variety of stakeholders, including the College Senate, Cabinet, Deans, AtD Core Team, Data Team, Students, and the Foundation Executive Board. Dr. Rodicio and Mr. Hill will serve as OCC's permanent AtD coaches for the next three years. They shared their professional backgrounds with the trustees and provided an overview of the AtD program, highlighting how it will support efforts to improve student success by focusing on data provided by the College.

Mr. Leone and Mr. Fall inquired whether the coaches work directly with trustees. While it is not typical for the coaches to have a working relationship with trustees as part of the AtD process, Dr. Rodicio explained that they are available to engage with trustees as needed to ensure understanding of the work and how it effectively addresses student needs.

The meeting was suspended at 12:04 p.m. and then resumed at 12:39 p.m.

Dr. Monaco introduced Dr. Alexa Beshara-Blauth, Executive Director of Institutional Planning, Effectiveness, and Compliance, and Mr. James Marshall, Executive Director of Curriculum, who provided an overview of proposed curriculum/degree revisions, which were presented at the September all-schools meeting.

Dr. Beshara-Blauth and Mr. Marshall discussed the evolving direction of higher education, as perceptions of higher education are changing with 22% believing the cost of a four-year degree is worthwhile if loans are required, 47% without loans, and 29% not worth it at all. This reinforces the need to connect academic programs to employment and earnings outcomes.

The majority of OCC students pursue transfer pathways, with Kean, Stockton, Rutgers, and NJIT as the top destinations. The most common transfer majors include psychology, nursing, business, education, and criminal justice. With this in mind, the academic structure would be redesigned around six new “Meta-Majors,” grouping related disciplines to improve clarity, advising, and progression to include Business; Human and Public Services; Humanities and Cultures; Arts, Communication, and Design; Science, Computer Science, Math, and Engineering; and Health Sciences. Each would be guided by a Dean and faculty workgroup. The framework follows the Guided Pathways model, beginning with a shared academic foundation and moving into more specialized coursework in later terms.

Each program track will include two embedded credentials: a 12-credit Certificate of Completion and a 30-credit Certificate of Proficiency, designed to recognize progress and support transfer or career readiness. Certificates will be automatically awarded when requirements are met, providing milestones for students and data for advising and program evaluation.

This Fall, faculty began developing the new tracks and certificates. The revised curricula will be finalized by early 2026 and launched for student registration in April for the Fall 2026 semester. Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, College Relations, Institutional Research, and IT will collaborate to ensure smooth integration across advising, marketing, and technology systems. This initiative reflects a student-centered approach that builds clear, structured, and economically relevant pathways from Ocean County College to four-year universities and the workforce.

The trustees discussed marketing and recruitment efforts, questioning how programs would be promoted to parents and students, including through PTA organizations. They also inquired about strategies to make OCC distinctive and encourage students to choose it over other schools. Mr. Marshall explained that a website redesign would be a key component of the marketing strategy.

The trustees also expressed concern about the discontinuation of programs with low enrollment. Dr. Beshara-Blauth noted that the administration is reviewing the academic needs of all students to ensure they have clear pathways to completion. Dr. Monaco added that trustees will continue to be provided updates and given sufficient time to review any recommendations in order to make informed decisions.

Upon a request for public comments by Mr. Zabarsky, there were no comments from the public Public Comments at this time.

With no further comments from the Board members or the public, the meeting adjourned at 1:32 p.m.

Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,

Stephan R. Leone
Secretary

Jodi Heitmann
Special Assistant, Operations
Office of the President