



MCCA Convention Awards Recognition

At the annual MCCA Convention in November, two individuals from Jefferson College were recognized with MCCA statewide awards. Board Trustee Krystal Hargis received the MCCA Trustee Leadership Award, presented annually to a community college trustee whose work and leadership has substantially advanced the mission of community colleges. This is Krystal Hargis' 24th year on the Jefferson College Board of Trustees. She has served the College in many ways throughout her tenure on the Board, most notably was her work on the first College Accelerated Program (CAP) through the Fox School District. Also recognized at the conference, Lindsay Steighorst who received the MCCA Excellence in Teaching Award, given annually to a faculty member who exemplifies outstanding instruction and dedication to the students served by Missouri community colleges. Congratulations and well-deserved!

Open Records/Sunshine Act Requests

Although rare, there are occasions where the College is contacted under the Missouri Sunshine Law, seeking information, records, photos, videos, or other information. These requests likely come from the media, general public, or an attorney. I mentioned this as a reminder during last week's Extended Cabinet meeting because state law requires the College to respond to all Sunshine Law inquiries within three business days. I request that if you ever receive a Missouri Sunshine inquiry, please forward that information to Heidi Hogan in my office. As executive assistant to the president and secretary to the Board of Trustees, Heidi is likely the best person to respond. If someone else would be a better fit to respond, Heidi and I will work directly with that employee to ensure the College is meeting the requirements of the law. Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions regarding the Missouri Sunshine Law.

Anonymous Question Responses

"Why did the college not wait until all issues with the new website were fixed and it was operating at optimum performance before rolling it out?"

Our vendor 25th Hour Communications, who have been a phenomenal partner throughout this entire process, recommended rolling the website out and then experiencing what they refer to as "post-launch" clean up, which typically takes 2-3 months for editors to make revisions. 25th Hour also mentioned that there are many issues and processes that can only be fully addressed or fine-tuned after a website has been launched.

Members of the marketing department are continuing to work with 25th Hour to resolve outstanding issues, including updating the Directory and addressing outdated information. Editors have now received WordPress training and they are able to assist in making page updates, which will help speed up the process.

While we're making steady progress, it's important to note that these types of updates are part of an ongoing process that takes time and your patience is very much appreciated. If you have any questions, please contact Liam Ryan or Erin Bova.

"Looking for advice on how to handle a hostile work environment where my supervisor is aware of the situation but refuses to take action. It's been affecting my mental health and productivity, but I'm unsure of what steps to take next since management seems uninterested in resolving the issue."

If you find yourself in this situation, we strongly encourage you to seek support and guidance. Utilize Our Resources: Our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offers confidential support and resources that may be helpful for your mental wellbeing. Please don't hesitate to reach out for assistance.

Please feel free to report to HR: If your supervisor is not addressing the issue, you are welcome to bring your concerns directly to HR. Tasha Welsh and the HR Team are here to listen and work with you to find a resolution. We want our employees to feel supported at work.

"How come we negotiated that emails need to be answered within 24 hours, 48 on weekends but admin and other higher ups don't email back until a week or more later?"

During the 2020-2021 BAT FAT negotiations, the Board Administration Team brought forward an item to address student complaints of untimely responses from faculty. The initial proposal intended to establish expectations for timely responses to student inquiries including emails and phone calls. After negotiating the item, the teams ultimately agreed that all course syllabi will contain the statement "I will strive to provide an initial response to all email messages within 2 business days." Administrator and staff email response times were not brought up by the Faculty Association Team at that time. However, it's reasonable to expect timely responses of all employees. Of course, there are times when faculty and staff are out sick or on vacation; setting a vacation responder is recommended when on leave.

I like to believe everyone is doing their best. Despite all of our best efforts, Chris DeGeare still receives student complaints that their instructor is not responding to them, albeit fewer than in the past. It's easy for emails to get overlooked in our daily workload. It's fairly common to receive over 50 or even 100 each day. If you email an administrator or supervisor and do not receive a response within 2 business days, it is perfectly appropriate to send another email, give them a call, or stop by their office. If this becomes a routine issue, I would recommend reaching out to their supervisor.

"How come most colleges we work with or at least send out information about is a religious institution? And how come we have a deal with a religious institution that recently got sued (Grand Canyon)?"

The College currently has formal partnerships with other community colleges and 15 universities. Of those 15, four are directly affiliated with a religion: Central Methodist University, Lindenwood University, Missouri Baptist University, and St. Louis University. Webster University and William Woods University were originally founded by religious groups, but are not affiliated with any religion. Our remaining nine partners are public and private institutions with no religious affiliation or history.

When establishing and renewing university partnerships, the private institutions have been more willing to develop strong 2+2 agreements and extend tuition discounts to Jefferson College employees, offering major discounts from CMU & MBU, and decent discounts for Lindenwood and William Woods. We recently renewed our partnership with UMSL and they graciously agreed to a 10% discount for employees. You can find our partners who offer tuition discounts on our [Employee Tuition Benefits page](#).

I am not aware of any deal with Grand Canyon University. The College does not have a partnership with that institution. They attended our recent Healthcare Career Fair, but that is open to any universities who sign up.

"How will our jobs look and how will the college look with an American president who wants to dismantle the department of education? I understand this is not set in stone but as the old proverb goes "The best time to plant a tree is 10 years ago, the second best time is now."

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/government/student-aid-policy/2024/11/04/what-abolishing-education-department-could-mean>

"With the new federal administration claims to changes in the Department of Education, what is the College looking out for or plans being made to combat the supposed changes?"

It is hard to predict what changes may be forthcoming. Please keep in mind that the Department of Education was established just 45 years ago and institutions of higher education, many federal grant opportunities, and federal regulations, were around long before the Department of Education existed.

Additionally, community colleges are the backbone of workforce training and college opportunities for low income and first generation students. State government and local taxes constitute the bulk of our revenues, but we do receive funding from federal programs, particularly those related to student financial assistance.

Structural changes do not necessarily mean the discontinuation of programs. For example, there is some speculation that federal grant programs could transition to the Treasury department, but it is just too soon to tell. Community colleges will continue to advocate for federal programs and services that support our students - Pell, Perkins, TRIO grant/Project Success, and so on.

"Can we please acknowledge Adjunct Faculty for years of service if they have taught every Spring and Fall semester for a consecutive number of years?"

Chris DeGeare and I both agree that our longstanding adjunct instructors are worthy of recognition. A few years ago, we established an internal adjunct faculty award, and we follow up by nominating the recipient for the MCCA adjunct award. Betty Boyer was our nominee this year and accompanied us to the recent convention. Last year, we implemented an adjunct promotion system to increase compensation based on longevity. Certain criteria even make them eligible for inclusion in the College Catalog. If employees have other ideas for recognizing adjunct faculty service, I recommend presenting those ideas to the Employee Support Committee for consideration.

"According to the announcements, Mel Carnahan Drive was to be repaved on Wednesday, Nov. 20th with completion of the project on Thursday, Nov. 21st. Mel Carnahan Drive has not been repaved. May we have an update as to why this was not completed?"

As a city street rather than a college owned private drive, the College has been coordinating closely with the city of Hillsboro for several months regarding the repaving of Mel Carnahan Drive. The project was initially scheduled for a start to finish completion during the week of November 18th, with a campus announcement issued to share the details available at the time. However, wet weather on November 18th and 19th delayed the start, pushing the start of the project into November 20th and subsequently the work continued into the week of November 25th. An updated announcement was released on the morning of November 25th to clarify the revised project timeline. As of the morning of November 26th, the repaving was successfully completed.

"Can the menu for the Holiday Party be shared ahead of time or is it a secret?"

Andres, who was originally contracted to provide the Holiday Party meal, did not cater the Employee Holiday Party. I appreciate how hard the entire committee worked on the Holiday Party. Even with the late notice, the committee was able to secure heavy appetizers from The Russell House. The planning committee went above and beyond in trying to find a replacement for Andres. On the rsvp, employees were asked about vegetarian options and/or food allergies and the committee accommodated those requests.

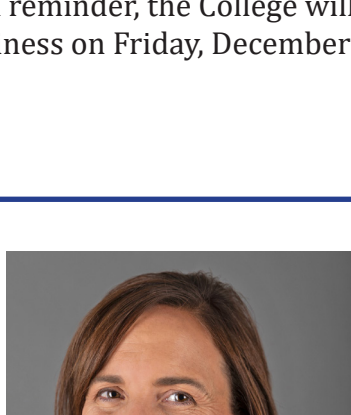
As a reminder, please use the [Anonymous Question Form](#) if you have a question for me or other members of Cabinet. Responses will be shared during Extended Cabinet meetings and then shared in future President's Update.

Important Dates:

- Grades are due at noon on Tuesday, December 19.
- Winter Intersession runs from December 16 - January 7, and
- Spring classes begin on January 13.

Happy Holidays

I hope you and your family have a very restful and enjoyable break. As a reminder, the College will close for the holidays at the close of business on Friday, December 20, and reopen on Monday, January 6.



Thank you for a great semester.

Enjoy your break!

- Dena

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