



Illinois Community College Faculty Association

Friday, February 28, 2025, 8:30 – 10:00 am, Via Zoom

Members Present: Mary Rojas-Carlson, Carla S Presnell, Joseph Przybyla, Jean-Marie Taylor, Jeremy Bachelor, David Lewis, Christine Brooms, Melanie Eddins-Spencer, Melissa Grunow and Hong Fei

I. Call to Convene.

II. President's Report by Mary:

Welcome everyone. Reiterate our meeting time as every second and fourth Friday from 8:30 am, running through the spring semester.

Joe moved to approve the last two meeting minutes. Melissa abstained. The minutes are approved.

Introduce a business collaboration software. Unlike Zoom, it is a bit like Team, movable, easily controlled by anyone member of the group. It doesn't have to be the host. It would be good for brainstorming, spontaneous conversation, offline casual discussion, and virtual informal meeting like Slack's huddles feature, a built-in video conferencing tool. It is also for document sharing.

Conference Update: Mary is making a Save-The-Date card. During the upcoming March 21 ICCB meeting. We will make a presentation, and hopefully the new faculty liaison can help us to use our materials such as the card to spread the ICCFA conference information.

We need to start a Teaching and Learning Initiative Committee and look for people who are interested. Julia will be in it because she knows the whole process.

About the faculty representation on ICCB. Mary spoke with Patrick and Marcus. As we know, Bradley's tenure will end this June.

Jean-Marie: We need to start working on ensuring that we will have a voice in the ICCB member appointment. We should let our intention being known well before the June change of guard. She expressed her willingness to vote for actions that are more provocative, asserting our wishes.

But the answer from Patrick is always that the nomination and appointment processes are carried out by the Governor alone.

To solve the problem that the ICCB faculty member did not participate in our meetings or talk with us, Jeremy looked into our Constitution and Bylaw. He is seeking to incorporate a language into the Bylaw, defining the responsibilities of the

ICCB faculty member. During his/her tenure, one will automatically become a member of the ICCFA executive committee.

Melanie reminded us that by our Constitution, any changes in the Bylaw must be approved by the faculty assembly during our annual conference.

For the March 21 ICCB meeting, we will have a chance to speak for about 15 minutes. We need to create a statement by Jeremy centered around the faculty representation issue. Carla will speak on our behalf. We will also participate in the June 6 ICCB convention as well.

Mary proposed a motion to approve the reimbursement of travel expenses, mainly for traveling to and from the ICCB meetings which are not via Zoom. The members debated if lodging should be included. They discussed whether one must fill up a form to be pre-approved, if a guideline should be in place such as limiting of the hotel stars. Finally, we decided that we will approve the expenses on a case-by-case basis. Since Carla is not seeking reimbursement for the March 21 meeting, this matter was tabled.

III. Vice President's Report by Jeremy:

Jeremy likes to see us play a more active role as the advisory council to the Illinois Board of Higher Education. He drafted an ICCFA position and white paper submission process for all to review. The stated purpose is the following. "The ICCFA encourages its members to contribute position papers, white papers, and research-based reports that align with the Association's mission and priorities. These papers should serve as valuable resources for advocacy, professional development, and policy recommendations relevant to Illinois community college faculty."

It is a way for faculty to have their voice heard. And each statement will be read by us. We can check this position statement for aligning with ICCFA priorities and the mission of the community colleges. Check if the language is appropriate. And then we will publish these statements on the website, as the collective position of all faculty.

For the old documents in our website under "Statements and Resolutions", we will re-visit them periodically for evaluation. Christine suggests that we should archive old documents.

Jean-Marie moves to prove the position paper submission process, using manual written by Jeremy as a review guide. All voted for approval. The motion carries.

Jeremy submitted two such position papers.

1) Addressing the Challenges of the Tier 2 Pension System for Illinois Community College Faculty.

It summarily stated the challenges facing younger faculty members. "ICCFA advocates for comprehensive reforms to the Tier 2 pension system implemented in 2011. While intended to address fiscal challenges, the Tier 2 system has inadvertently created disparities affecting community college faculty, leading to recruitment and retention issues, and potentially jeopardizing retirement security. Reforming Tier 2 is essential to ensure equitable retirement benefits, maintain a robust educational workforce, and comply with federal standards."

This would be a paper showing our support for efforts to fix the tier two system for our faculty members, making retirement more secure and equitable.

2) Supporting Community College Baccalaureate Degrees.

It summarily proposed to expand the availability of a full college education to marginalized students who are often discouraged with the college experience. "ICCFA supports the authorization and expansion of Community College Baccalaureate (CCB) degrees in Illinois. CCB degrees provide affordable, accessible, and workforce-aligned education opportunities that meet the needs of Illinois residents, particularly in underserved regions. Expanding baccalaureate degree offerings at community colleges will address workforce shortages, increase educational attainment, and uphold the mission of community colleges as institutions that serve local and regional needs."

It particularly points out the traditional role of community colleges as to reach those who otherwise would not pursue a 4-year degree. The demography of this student population is overwhelmingly women, minority, and non-traditional students. It is demonstrated that it will not compete with the traditional colleges; and demonstrated that there is a work force need. It aligns with the national trend.

The proposal has a long process for getting both ICCB approval and the Illinois Board of Higher Education approval to ensure that any proposed degrees do not conflict with any of the degrees that are offered by the local universities.

Christine: Will this position be authored by individuals or as the position of ICCFA?

A: If we prove it via the new submission process, it is the position of ICCFA.

Fei: Have you considered some majors that were first approved by other states for community college Baccalaureate programs, such as wind technology and childcare?

A: Did not consider majors.

Christine: The other question that I have is specifically about the community college baccalaureate degrees. It is like the dual credit situation in which it diverts students to high schools. We could anticipate that the CCB will create tensions between community colleges and the universities.

A: The key difference here is that with the high school students, most are not community college material. They are high achievers and not marginalized. For the latter, it is where we come in.

Christine: A lot of our students are not necessarily prepared for college, academic rigor, of course, but more so the softer skill, e.g. the knowledge of how to navigate the college environment. I worry about their preparedness.

A: I understand the concern, but these would be students who would go through our entire four-year program at our campuses. So, I think that they would be a lot more prepared than the dual credit students are. But I do understand your concern. I think that in terms of a hot new degree, the four-year universities would win because they don't have to go through the two different bodies (ICCB, IBHE) to demonstrate the need.

Melanie: It is important the body of the ICCFA committee knows about these position papers. The same question as Christine had.

David: There were some statistics and some background information that worked into this topic. You mentioned the statistics about who would be taking the courses and how they can match up to four-year schools. Having a clear understanding would be a good place to be working from. It is not just opinion versus opinion. We could have factual foundation and position our paper in a stronger way.

A: I think that when we consider these papers, we will want to make sure that they include specifics.

Jean-Marie: I support it.

Terri: It's such a difficult topic that the ICCB and IFT would not even take sides on it. They remain neutral on CCB. I think we must think about how we represent all our schools. The student needs are very different between the northern regions and the southern or center regions. We must take all of this into consideration.

A: Brian, ICCB director, came out strongly in favor last week. So, I know that the ICCB and the trustees are on board. Everyone is coalescing around the idea now. But you are correct that it has been controversial.

David: I have another comment. We are being challenged by outside educational programs such as Purdue Global or Southern New Hampshire University, and some private institutes. And then there is this narrative that college education isn't worth what it used to be. But the value of a college education is significant. One would be in a very different situation if you do not have a college degree.

Melanie moves to approve the two position documents. All voted the approval. The motion carries. We will post these two position statements on the website and take down the older ones.

IV. Treasure's Report and Scholarship Report by Carla:

No activity since last time, with the same balance.

Patrick informed us some due checks are coming in.

Checked out ways to add Mary to the account. Mary should be able to do that at any branch near her. If the bank manager has questions, they can contact the Bloomington branch manager to straighten it out. Only if that didn't work would Carla have to go to Bloomington, but Mary could probably still be at a branch near her and we could do it virtually or over the phone.

US Bank offered service that allows us to accept credit card payments by swiping the card through a device on a phone or tablet, or by entering the card numbers into the app. It is like the Square devices being used everywhere now. There will be a fee. The advantage is that there is no waiting period to access the funds, because the device is through US Bank. That will allow us to receive credit card payments for dues, conference fees or t-shirt sales.

The additional fund we discussed before is held by ICCSF in the balance of \$76,300, in a temporary account that we can access. There is also a permanent account through ICCSF for ICCFA that has a balance of \$38,000. But we need to figure out what that is and if it can be used for anything. It is the reason Carla want to meet with Barry Hancock, co-president of ICCSF.

Barry lives in southern Illinois and sometimes stays in Springfield. Carla plans to meet him next week hopefully.

Jean-Marie: We can think about using some funds for faculty professional development.

Fei: We should invest any of the windfall funds as an endowment instead of looking at it as spending money.

An additional scholarship has been worked out with help from Melissa.

V. Secretary's Report and Faculty Grant coordinator's Report by Fei:

We are sending letters asking for grant proposals. We have one application received.

There will be many reminders before the deadline.

Melissa: In addition to the research and workshop, why not include a category of creative projects? It should include creative, artistic majors.

A: It is a great idea. In the past, we did try to award diverse colleges and individuals. We have not awarded two colleges in one year. And we also try to balance STEM and humanities. In the past we awarded disciplines in fine art, music, literature, and history. If we want a new category, then we should have one. When we consider a grant, we always look for student participation. Therefore, I hope the title of this category reflects it.

Jeremy: Topics specific to faculty are also good.

A: Yes. Wellness and work-life balance were always hot topics at the conference.

Melissa will propose a title for a new category of grant.

VI. Legislative Affairs Report by Joe:

Emailed updates on the bills. Three people, Joe, Jean-Marie, and David are monitoring the bills and their passage through the committees.

Jean-Marie: I did look at some of the bills. I am focused on dual credit. But I did see the community college presidents apparently have a placeholder bill out there that doesn't yet have any language in it. We're expecting to see that it will appear at some point. I keep checking for it.

The two dual credit bills will move quickly.

There are three campus free speech bills out there. This is significant progress. It might be for countering the effect of an education department notice to schools nation-wide encouraging informants to tell on classroom DEI activities. The fact that there are three such bills speak to the importance of defending free speech and the first amendment right.

Other notable bills include the following.

- Free community college tuition
- About the AI Instructor
- About the SURS
- Minimum higher education employee salary
- About mental health actions
- About instructor evaluation

VII. Adjourned