President's Advisory Council

Thursday, January 29, 2026
4 p.m. – 6 p.m.
Room 1508

Present: Brenda Burnside, Erica Valliant, JP Holwerda, Dana Krueger, Matt Lindgren, Tamara Mattison, Khalique Rogers, Greg Rathert, Scott Wilson, Wendy Roberson, Paula Kinney, Austin Calhoun, Sarah Carrico, VA Hayman Barber, Carla Gonzalez, Pepe Wonosikou, Drew Manke.

Absent: Ling Becker, Anika Bowie, Ryan Caulfield, Karin McCabe, Dee Dee Peaslee, Kay Francis Garland, Raji Geneti, Sonya Zuker.

Welcome and Land Acknowledgement

Dr. Calhoun commenced the meeting at 4:18 p.m. She noted that Dr. Peaslee was unable to attend as she was chairing the Minnesota State College Southeast presidential interviews.

Hot Topic Conversation—Impact of Federal Activity

Dr. Calhoun opened the discussion by acknowledging the impact of recent events and encouraging conversation on how the council member's respective organizations can support one another during this period. She said the College recently learned that a student was detained off campus and is currently being held in El Paso. She noted that this is the first known incident involving a Saint Paul College student. Dr. Calhoun shared that some students have chosen to shelter in place, and have either transitioned to online courses or withdrawn from classes. Mr. Rathert added that the College continues to balance varying expectations regarding its response, with some seeking a more active approach while others favor a return to more normal operations.

Mr. Lindgren asked if there had been any federal enforcement activity on campus, and if classes have continued to operate as scheduled. Dr. Calhoun said the College is not aware of any federal enforcement activity occurring on campus, although there have been reports of activity in the surrounding area. She noted that Saint Paul College has established clear communication protocols for any relevant activity. Mr. Wilson added that the Public Safety team actively monitors campus visitors and is trained to engage with individuals to identify the purpose of the visit, assess whether legal documentation such as a warrant exists, and manage interactions appropriately. He added that faculty and staff have been notified not to engage directly in such situations and instead contact Public Safety. Ms. Carrico said that classes continue to operate as normal, and that at the start of the semester faculty were encouraged to notify Pathway Advisors if a student was not attending class. This has allowed advisors to proactively reach out, assess student needs, and connect students with resources.

Mr. Holwerda asked what resources are being provided, particularly to impacted students, and how the College is serving as a trusted source of information. Ms. Wonosikou said the College has experienced a significant increase in food distribution, and noted that approximately 200 pounds of food was distributed in a single day. She added that communication to students have included links to resources available, including rapid response services, legal assistance, and mental health support. Ms. Wonosikou said the Student Affairs team also conducted an audit earlier in the academic year of software platforms to remove any nonessential student information while maintaining compliance with FERPA policies. She added that staff are being

purposeful in what information they collect to ensure the needed support is provided to students without asking excessive details. Ms. Roberson said that the recent events have also affected employees. The Minnesota Management and Budget's state Employee Assistance Program has facilitated programs and listen sessions for college employees. Additionally, supervisor training sessions have been provided to help leaders support their teams during this time.

Mr. Rogers asked if the college has shared ways to support the greater community. Dr. Calhoun said Saint Paul College established a Linktree resource that includes opportunities for those interested in supporting emerging community needs. She added that the College has not initiated a specific fundraising effort, and noted that state and federal policies limit the college's ability to raise funds on behalf of specific individuals or demographic groups.

Mr. Rogers asked how the College is responding to the culture shift and increased polarization within the community. Dr. Calhoun said that Saint Paul College has historically maintained a heightened level of awareness and preparedness due to its proximity to the State Capitol. She added that the Public Safety team continuously monitors potential threats or concerns, and the Marketing team also monitors social media channels for any mentions of the college. Additionally, the International Student Coordinator has been meeting with international students to discuss best practices for social media use and strategies for protecting themselves online. Ms. Roberson added that the Mental Health Director recently launched a student wellness campaign focused on overall wellbeing and healthy social media habits.

Innovation Fund Presentation

Mr. Wilson provided an overview of the College's Innovation Fund, which was established a year ago to encourage Saint Paul College employees to propose and implement bold, innovative projects. The College has committed $50,000 annually to the fund, and employees can apply as individuals, or as part of a team or department. Applications are first reviewed by the applicant's supervisor, and then evaluated by the Comprehensive Planning Committee, which provides recommendations to Executive Cabinet for final approval. In the project's inaugural year, the full $50,000 was awarded to four projects. Dr. Kinney said proposals were evaluated based on their innovative potential, and noted that funding may not be used for personnel costs. Award recipients will provide a progress report each semester to the Comprehensive Planning Committee to monitor outcomes. Mr. Wilson added that projects demonstrating positive outcomes may be considered for ongoing support. The four awardees provided an overview of their respective initiatives.

<u>Certified Messaging Initiative</u>

Mr. Manke, a Pathway Advisor who primarily works with Associate of Arts students, provided an overview of the Certified Messaging Initiative project. The evidence-based project is designed to transform traditional academic warning communication into a proactive intervention. He said by utilizing certified mail to ensure delivery and notification, and incorporating supportive, resource-rich messaging, the initiative aims to ensure that students not only receive important academic information, but also understand the resources available to support their success. The reframing of academic warnings as opportunities for improvement rather than punitive measures may contribute to improved academic performance, increased grade point averages, and higher rates of student persistence and completion.

<u>In/Place</u>

Dr. Calhoun provided an overview of the In/Place project, a multi-faceted residency program designed to embed community voices, creativity, and histories into the daily life of Saint Paul College. Potential residents may include advocates, artists, alumni, or archivists, who would partner with an academic program for a two-semester commitment. The project is intended to create stronger connections between Saint Paul College and the greater community, expand learning opportunities for students, and create interdisciplinary learning. Funding was awarded to support two to three residents, with the first residency cohort anticipated to begin in the fall semester.

Mr. Lindgren asked for the application information to be shared with council members once it becomes available. Dr. Calhoun said she would share the link following the program's launch.

Embedded Academic Support for Trades and Technical Areas

Dr. Gonzalez provided an overview of the project, which was developed in collaboration with V.A. Hayman Barber, Dean of Trades and Technical Education. The initiative aims to expand tutoring in the Trades by creating a satellite tutoring location within the Trades area. Ms. Hayman Barber noted that the idea was sparked by Trades and Technical faculty. Dr. Gonzalez said an initial pilot in Electrical Technology demonstrated that peer tutors could effectively provide support across multiple areas. The project plans to recruit six to eight peer tutors who will be recommended by faculty. Recruitment is currently in progress, with plans to launch the program in April. Ms. Hayman Barber noted a dedicated tutoring space has been identified within the Trades area and needs only minor renovations and furnishings before opening. Dr. Gonzalez said goals for the project include peer-to-peer learning, creating experiential learning opportunities, and developing future educators and trainers.

Voices to Action: From Barriers to Breakthroughs

Ms. Wonosikou provided an overview of the project, which focuses on closing the equity gaps and improving retention and completion rates for students of color, with a particular focus on Black and Hispanic students. She said the project will utilize a participatory action research model to move beyond traditional analysis by directly engaging both students who have stopped out and graduates to identify barriers and factors to success. Dr. Gonzalez added that planned activities include recruiting peer research assistants, focus groups with former and current students, and qualitative student interviews. Findings from the project will inform equity-driven interventions, as well as provide the student research assistants experience in project scheduling, data collection, and coding.

Miscellaneous Item

Dr. Calhoun said the next President's Advisory Council meeting will be rescheduled to April 16 to coincide with the College's Open House. A pre-open house reception will be held, and the College's local state legislators will be invited to attend. The reception will not have a formal agenda, but will rather be an opportunity to engage with legislators and share how Saint Paul College has made an impact on your community. Dr. Calhoun added that council members were welcome to attend the Open House event after the reception.

Meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.
Minutes submitted by Jennie Lewis.