

Minutes
Lowcountry Graduate Center Supervisory Council Meeting
Friday, August 7, 2020
ZOOM Web Conference
2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Supervisory Council Members Present Via Web Conference:

Lisa Saladin – Provost, Medical University of South Carolina

Sally Selden – Provost, The Citadel

Fran Welch – Dean, School of Education, Health & Human Performance, College of Charleston,
for Suzanne Austin, Provost

LGC Staff:

Nancy Muller – Director, Lowcountry Graduate Center (LGC); Visiting Associate Professor,
College of Charleston

Call to Order

The scheduled meeting of the Lowcountry Graduate Center (LGC) Supervisory Council meeting was called to order by Council Chair Saladin shortly after 2:00 p.m. Saladin noted that the meeting notice was in accordance with South Carolina’s FOIA. No one from the media was present.

Minutes

Selden made a motion the minutes of the April 30, 2020, as previously distributed, be approved. Saladin seconded the motion, allowing for approval without correction.

Renewal of the LGC Consortium MOU

Extension of the LGC Consortium MOU was signed by the presidents of all three member institutions, as of an effective date of May 11, 2020, to continue through June 30, 2021. Saladin provided by email to those present the signed document for archiving.

New MOU Agreement between the LGC and Trident Technical College (TTC)

By signatures of the Chief Financial Officers of TTC and the College of Charleston serving as the LGC’s fiscal agent, the Agreement effective August 1, 2020 was executed on August 5, 2020. It was provided by email to those present at the subject meeting.

Muller asked permission to share with the group the status of move-in for perspective on some of the FY2020-2021 Budget assumptions, commenting that TTC has been exceedingly gracious,

accommodating, and expeditious in making this relocation possible. She praised the efforts of Amy Heckle, executive assistant to Scott Poelker, as well as the effort of the College of Charleston's Zach Hartje in working directly with the TTC IT staff to define IT requirements of the space to be used by the LGC. News of the announcement has been shared with the media and appeared in the daily e-news of SC Biz. Muller sent personal emails with the news announcement to over 100 individuals with a connection to the LGC, including the Charleston Legislative Delegation. Muller thanked Selden for notifying SACSCOC and the Commission on Higher Education about the LGC's relocation. Selden complimented Muller on the news release and Muller explained that it was freelance writer Barry Waldman who had written the draft before his appointment ended June 30th. She noted he has his master's degree in journalism and worked for seven years as head of communications for the Trident United Way, in addition to teaching at present as adjunct faculty in the Department of Communications at the College of Charleston.

Move-in is scheduled Monday, August 10th, and Muller pointed out the footnoted details of all moving and temporary storage expenses in the FY 2020-2021 Budget in the meeting packet. Clearance from the state has been obtained for the transfer of classroom furniture from the LGC to TTC to satisfy TTC's liability concerns. All documentation of insurance required by TTC from all institutions using the facility through the LGC has been obtained, with the exception of that from SC State University – which is currently underway. The requirement covers tort liability, worker's compensation insurance, and accident insurance on students. The MOU Agreement calls for payment of rent, utilities, and related expenses to be paid entirely upfront. Muller must execute an Expenditure Authorization with the College of Charleston to initiate this payment in an effort to complete payment by the end of August or soon thereafter. IT training of program directors and select faculty from UofSC and The Citadel has been scheduled August 12, 2020 on the premises, and others were invited. Muller has created a script for an orientation video she is producing for all faculty and students, including coverage of TTC policies during the COVID-19 virus pandemic. In the process of gathering information for the video, she has learned the TTC library is closed, so students will not have access to copiers for printing until it re-opens.

She has applied for a new credit card from Bank of America through the College of Charleston, the process for which has been lengthy and arduous given the organizational changes at the College that have yet to be reflected in authorization names on forms. It has since been approved and is being mailed to her. Muller has also undertaken effort to get delinquent invoices to the LGC paid, again complicated by the recent organizational changes at the College of Charleston. She has undergone training and still must learn fully how to download actual, final figures for FY 2019-2020 for the LGC. There are other requisition requirements, and new training recently associated with those tasks. Muller could not update the LGC web site until the MOU Agreement was signed and the announcement of the relocation made public, but virtually every page of the site needs to be updated – either photographs or text – to bring it in line with TTC as the new location. She has already witnessed students asking about the whereabouts of the LGC.

Saladin stated that Muller had done an amazing amount of work in getting the LGC to this point in a very short period of time. Muller said she did not do it all by herself.

LGC Budget 2020-2021

Muller confirmed that she is the only individual reflected in permanent staff among personnel expenses. She is requesting re-instatement of the PT freelance writer (Barry Waldman) at \$8,402 for 8 hours a week to continue to write blogs for social media posts and to advise her periodically on media relationships and public relations tactics. He has been working in this capacity since early 2017 when recommended by former Provost Brian McGee at the time a full-time marketing manager position at LGC was eliminated. In addition, there is \$31,500 for a full-time administrative assistant. Muller said she has only an elementary working knowledge of WordPress software for the web site, a responsibility that Jonathan Solomon managed with respect to routine updates. The temporary, 12-month positions carry an assumed 16% fringe rate, while a 40% rate is assumed for the permanent position. Welch said that FY 2020-2021 is 41%. Muller explained that without the shared business manager and IT manager from the School of Professional Studies, she needs to spend a full day a week learning new systems, policies, and protocols, time she previously did not have to devote to such tasks.

In the Budget, Muller segregated on-going expenses related to occupancy – rent, utilities, and IT support – from one-time expenses because of the relocation, explaining the footnotes to each. Since the COVID-19 virus pandemic continues, altering the number of in-person classes and even programs, TTC elected to include IT support expenses only for the Fall 2020 term, so Muller added an additional \$23,595 to cover Spring and Summer Terms, pro rata, so that the Budget has a full year's worth of expenses. She noted that the base rent at \$2.50/square foot represents a small fraction of commercial rates in the area, pre-COVID of course. Welch commented that Mary Thornley seemed very pleased to have the LGC move onto its main campus, as this required no negotiating.

To the line item for One-Time Relocation Expenses, Muller explained the footnote illustrating \$57,911 in one-time IT upgrades, \$5,309 for a 3-step moving process (staging, to storage, and finally to TTC), \$1,036 for storage in Summerville, and \$15,735 for a 4-month 100% digital publicity campaign involving mainly social media. The campaign plan, as outlined by ReasonOne, was included in the meeting packet.

Muller has asked the College of Charleston's CFO John Loonan for an updated figure for fiscal agent charges and expects to have that number in hand within a week. She explained briefly the history of this figure and its integration in recent years with a single sum payment of \$400,000 annually to the College for the LGC's share of occupancy of the North Campus, whose annual lease payment was \$1.2 million.

Lastly, Muller explained she included an assumed \$20,000 for a consultant to organize and facilitate the LGC's strategic planning process, noting that a RFP will need to be written and publicly vetted for any amount exceeding \$10,000. She alluded to the outline of the process she created and included in the meeting packet, consulting with Michelle McGrew at the College of Charleston whose yearlong strategic planning process was co-chaired by Welch and participated in by Muller.

Saladin asked about web site traffic. Muller responded she has routinely provided web site analytics generated by the web site administrator, ReasonOne, for LGC Supervisory Council meetings, the last report provided at the April 2020 meeting. She then asked about how many students enrolled in programs at the LGC were the result of the LGC web site. Muller explained

that the LGC does not have student names or contact details. As part of the LGC web site analytics report, she can only explain which programs generate the most traffic to the web site and the percentage of visitors who “click through” to program application pages with its respective institution’s web site. Such a survey of students, she said, has to be conducted by each program’s institution, not the LGC.

Selden asked if Muller personally produces the market report of graduate programs offered – in person or hybrid – across the state. Muller responded this was the work of her administrative assistant, Jonathan Solomon, under her supervision, as is the Metro Charleston higher education “competitive” report. She explained she included \$5,000 for market research in this line item should the LGC have the opportunity to seek customized research, for example, by EAB as a result of its strategic planning process or otherwise. This is in line with previously approved amounts for market research, she pointed out. There were questions about how the relocation campaign marketing effort would differ from ongoing social media activity. Muller explained the campaign is focused exclusively on the new TTC location, attempting to drive web site traffic to the LGC web site, through search engine optimization (SEO), to learn more about the new location rather than leaving the public – and especially prospective students - to wonder about the LGC’s whereabouts or even continued existence.

Selden said she had no further questions about the Budget. Welch stated she wants to look at the Budget spreadsheet, as she had not received this. Muller had sent the packet to staff in Academic Affairs, not knowing Welch would be attending the meeting for Suzanne Austin. During the meeting, Selden forwarded to Welch the entire zipped file of the meeting packet.

Saladin said the FY 2020-2021 Budget cannot be approved without the input for administrative fees from College of Charleston’s CFO John Loonan. At this juncture, at approximately 3:10 p.m., she took the ZOOM meeting into Executive Session and Muller left the meeting.

As follow-up the same day, Saladin emailed the following summary of the Executive Session (copied from email correspondence at 2:36 p.m.):

1. Please move forward with posting and hiring your assistant.
2. Please move forward to contract with Barry for another year.
3. Please put a hold on any plans to spend the \$15,000 on a communications plan regarding the move and new location etc. and a hold on any major updates to the website aside from location.
4. All professional travel at all 3 institutions is on hold right now either related to budget cuts or restrictions on travel due to COVID. Please hold off on planning any professional travel this year.
5. To finalize the budget please get the new fringe rates, await the new administrative costs from C of C and move and additional \$100,000 into the new projects budget
6. For the strategic plan, we want to move forward with an RFP but not necessarily with the process you proposed. I can discuss further with you but we want a heavy analysis of adult learning and a needs assessment as part of this process. We three can discuss on our next call when we finalize the budget.
 - a. For your goals for this year we want to include the following:
 - 1)) Working with the guidance of the advisory council, coordinate and complete the strategic planning process by March 31st so we have time to make decisions based on the outcomes.
 - 2) Coordinate the call for proposals for the new projects budget and work to get proposals from all three institutions to fully fund the \$200,000. That would include working with each of us to

set up a webinar at each institution to educate our program directors and other leaders on the process for submitting a proposal

3) Increase the number of graduate or certificate programs holding classes at the LGC by at least 1 within the next year

4) Complete a survey of all members of all your advisory council members to ascertain their views on their value of their respective council and suggestions for enhancement. Please review the survey with us prior to posting. If there are formal charges to these councils we would like to see them again.

The meeting therefore ended at approximately 2:30 p.m.

Nancy Muller, PhD, MBA

Director, Lowcountry Graduate Center

August 20, 2020

Note to the Files:

The Final FY 2020-21 Budget, after incorporating all of the above noted edits and additions, was distributed by email and electronically approved unanimously on September 10, 2020. It reflects total spending of \$662,937 and a carryover balance of \$127,982.