

Minutes
Board Meeting of the Cannon Valley Elder Collegium
3:45 PM, Wednesday, January 20, 2021
Via Zoom, Carol Rutz, Host

Members present: Art Higinbotham, Sue Evans, Carol Rutz, Perry Mason, Dan Van Tassel, Peggy Sheldon, Barbara Crouter, Steve Kelly, Jill Ballard, Bob Nyvall, David Peterson, David Norman, Colleen Vitek, Bill Rizzo

Members absent: Karolyn Bertelsen

Guest present: Rich Noer

The meeting was called to order by Chair, Dan Van Tassel at 3:47 PM.

1. The minutes from the December Board Meeting were presented and approved.
2. Dan called upon Barbara Crouter, Chair of the Nomination Committee, to give a report. Barbara indicated that two new Board members are being sought, that the committee has conducted one interview and will be having a second soon. Barbara expects that the roster of candidates should be ready to present to the Board at the February meeting.
3. Staff reports began with Executive Director Carol Rutz introducing the website revision to the Board. Carol called upon Rich Noer to describe what is different about the new website and why it matters. There is a new “theme” to the website, utilizing block editing, which makes information on the website much easier to update than before. The Board was asked to present questions and feedback.

-Steve Kelly suggested that the Home Page was not as eye-catching as it might be if the photo were placed at the top of the page rather than at the bottom. Rich replied that it is very easy to move photos wherever we wish, and Carol added that Patsy Dew took some photos in classes last year that would be preferable to the more vintage ones currently in use on the site. Colleen will take a picture of a Zoom screen to add to the photo collection.

-Peggy Sheldon suggested that the Registration Page might benefit from some shortcuts, perhaps in the form of buttons at the top of the page allowing users to skip the lengthy explanation of our registration process and jump directly to the end. Rich agreed that we can easily add such buttons if they prove to be desirable. Carol explained that it was important that new students understand the complexity of our registration process. Considerable discussion followed about the registration process itself, and Board members were directed to a statement by former Chair, Dale Summers, explaining why the process unfolds as it does. Perry explained that changes in registration policy would require a Policy Review and were not pertinent to the matter under discussion.

-Perry Mason expressed his appreciation of the new website with regard to course descriptions. It is now much easier to access the expanded descriptions of courses.

-Rich indicated that we can continue to tweak the website at any future time as necessary, but that he was quite comfortable recommending that the Board approve the final payment to the web master.

-A motion was made and seconded to pay the final payment of \$1740, funds to be taken from the Dekker Fund. The motion passed.

3. Carol Rutz updated the Board on interviews which the committee had held on the 19th of January with three prospective candidates for the position of Registration/Finance Director. All three were excellent candidates. The committee has ranked their choices and wishes to offer the position to the person first on their list. Bill Rizzo suggested that the new person begin anytime between Feb. 1 and April 1, though it might well be helpful for the new hire to participate in the spring registration cycle. A motion was made and seconded that Carol be authorized to extend the job offer to the preferred candidate. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Perry Mason, Curriculum Director, briefly updated the Board on the ten courses to be offered for Spring Term 2021. All are excellent courses and quite diverse: 4 in Arts and Letters, 3 in History and Philosophy, 1 Science, and 2 Current Affairs and Law.

5. Bill Rizzo, Finance Director, gave a brief report. The recent fund drive ran behind average with donations received totaling about \$4000, 2/3 of usual income. Larger donations, however, were connected with registration this year, including one gift of \$500. He is not at all concerned about cash flow, and anticipates a positive reckoning of expenses against budget. The Fund balances are good, checking account is healthy, and the Schwab account is growing.

6. Bill Rizzo, Registration Director, spoke to some of the challenges with registration Winter Term. There were three last minute cancellations of classes, two for health reasons and one because of low enrollment. A second section of another class was added because of high demand. There was only one over-subscription this term, and all classes filled nicely.

7. Perry Mason, Curriculum Director, presented a proposal from the Curriculum Committee regarding online classes going forward: (1) There is no reason to stop offering Zoom-based courses in favor of in-person ones until in-person settings are deemed not merely available but also safe from Covid-19, and (2) Even after we resume in-person classes, we should continue also offering some online courses on Zoom. Perry outlined that there is much uncertainty about how comfortable instructor and students will be about meeting in-person through next year, and uncertainty about venues being open to us. David questioned the possibility of hybrid courses and Perry responded that if an instructor should wish at some future date to offer a hybrid experience, we would discuss the issue at that time. Peggy mentioned that an added value of online classes is that an instructor, as well as a student, need not be local to participate. Perry indicated that the Board will be approving Fall Term classes the second week of May, and that classes will be announced publicly the 1st of August. Decisions by individual instructors about online or in-person instruction will need to be made before that time.

8. Art Higinbotham suggested that the Curriculum Committee look closely at Winter Term feedback from students and teachers to see how Zoom is working. Expectations are higher with this second attempt at online instruction, and Art proposes that we may need to hire professional help with training our instructors in the finer points of Zoom. The goal is to help everyone feel comfortable and competent with the platform. Perry indicated that he will check mid-term with instructors to see how things are going, and agreed that instructor training is very important. Carol indicated that we do have money available to hire help with the training as necessary.

9. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned by Dan at 5:18 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Evans, Secretary