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Stockton Presidential and Trustee Performance Review Earns High Marks

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Galloway Twp., NJ –Richard Stockton College of NJ President Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr. and the Board of Trustees, which is the governing body of the College, received high marks in a recently completed performance review.

The review was launched last June under the auspices of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB), which is based in Washington, D.C. Consultant and AGB President Emeritus Richard T. Ingram met with the president and Board of Trustees recently to discuss his final report and recommendations.

Confidential interviews were conducted with 45 members of the internal and external communities of The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey to seek their candid views of how the College was faring under the Board's and president's leadership, including their joint and distinctive responsibilities to advance the College's mission. The process was requested by the president and overseen by an ad hoc committee of the Board of Trustees led by Board Chairman Dr. Clarence C. Hoover.

"We value the informed views of members of the College community and its many publics and expect to learn from them," Dr. Saatkamp said when the performance reviews were announced. The Board of Trustees and I value this process as part of its accountability to those who care deeply about the progress of the College."

Interviewees included local and state civic and elected officials, community leaders, College foundation leaders, faculty members, union leaders, College officers and Deans, student leaders, and all members of the governing board among other groups and individuals. Participants were asked for their suggestions on how the president and Board of Trustees could strengthen their effectiveness in the service of the institution and New Jersey's citizens.

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In his report to the Board and president, Dr. Ingram said that all persons who accepted the invitation to meet with him were very forthcoming in their observations and suggestions.

According to Dr. Ingram, the surveys indicated a very strong consensus that the College was much more visible and appreciated, especially in South Jersey, but increasingly across the State. Its stature has grown significantly over the past four years. Student/faculty ratios have improved considerably through the addition of new faculty. Residence hall capacity has been increased to attract more full-time students. The College's use of technology has set a very strong pace for other colleges and universities, and there is a strong commitment division-by-division to strengthen the quality of academic programs.

Further, the report stated faculty development is a priority and the faculty members appreciate the president's and administration's efforts to strengthen communication and relationships with them. Many interviewees praised the transparency of the annual budget process and the administration's decision-making process generally, especially in recent years.

At the same time, many interviewees expressed concern about the adverse impact of New Jersey's revenue picture on the College's urgent need for a new science facility and its implications for the institution's future debt load. There is widespread recognition that private gifts and grants, especially through the College Foundation's initiatives, will have to fill the gap in the years to come.

With regard to the Board of Trustees, there was very strong consensus among those interviewed that it and the president were effective advocates for the College's needs as well as effective stewards of the public trust with regard to accountability and transparency at the College and that their relationship was built on a high measure of trust and confidence in one another. The Board received very high marks for its competence and commitment.

Some suggestions for strengthening its work were offered by several interviewees most familiar with the Board, and these suggestions were shared with the Trustees and president at their recent meeting -- in addition to some ideas generated from a self-study workshop conducted over the better part of two days last August. The Board is moving forward with increasing its membership to eleven.

With regard to the president and the presidency, Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr. is seen by a majority of those individuals who were interviewed as a very effective leader who brings enormous energy, experience, and sophistication to his work. He is commended for making a positive difference at Stockton on several important fronts including:

- Improvements in the College's academic and service reputations with lawmakers in Trenton and in the larger academy
- Growing the numbers of students and faculty with emphasis on moving the College to more of a residential institution with higher academic standards as a clear priority

President Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr. has earned a reputation for being a superb thinker and speaker who is devoted to diversity and strong community relationships and more.

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Furthermore, many interviewees noted, President Saatkamp has been called upon by his peer presidents within New Jersey to be one of their key spokespersons on a wide range of pressing public policy and funding issues, a testament to his leadership statewide. Several good suggestions for his consideration were captured by the consultant and were also shared with the president and the Board of Trustees.

Commenting on the process and its results, Board Chairman Clarence C. Hoover said, "The trustees, the president, and I are gratified to learn that there is confidence in our work together, but especially for the helpful insights and suggestions received from those who made themselves available in the review process. We pledge to consider them seriously and through our continued commitment, we pledge to be accountable to the College and its many constituencies."

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