



Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

April 11, 2014

Individuals in Attendance

Trustees: Theressa Alder, Doug Barton, Regan Bolli, Scott Bushnell, Brent Davis, Dan Jorgensen, Leslie Keisel, Jeff Olson, Zach Parker

College Personnel: Gary Carlston, Marvin Dodge, Steve Hood, Marci Larsen (recording secretary), Craig Mathie

Welcome

Chair Alder thanked the trustees for making time to join the conference call and turned the time to President Carlston.

Prayer at Commencement

President Carlston recounted the happenings of the last few days and read the students' letter and petition asking that prayer be included in the commencement ceremony. He said in the beginning of the petitioning activities, there was some misinterpretation of the board's discussion and decision and said Trustee Parker visited with the students and helped them understand the trustees' position on the subject. He said President Parker assured the petition organizers that the trustees had the school's and the students' best interest at heart when deciding to eliminate the expression of choice from the ceremony. President Carlston said he wanted to show support and respect to the concerned students; therefore, he said he invited them to his office and had a very pleasant conversation with them.

During the conversation, President Carlston said he committed to discuss the matter with the Board of Trustees, and he thanked the board for being willing to revisit the topic. The students, he said, were very grateful for the opportunity to let their voice be heard and said they would accept and respect the board's decision.

In trying to help the students understand the process, President Carlston said he told the students the board may receive the petition and not make any changes to their previous decision or they may revisit the decision made. He said the students discussed possible options including offering formal prayers (the students' first choice), an expression of choice, or a moment of silence. The trustees agreed they wanted to hear the students' voice and thanked President Carlston for openly communicating with all involved in this situation. Trustee Olson said he felt it was highly admirable of the students to be professional in their approach and said it would be poor for the board to reject what they've done. After a short discussion, Trustee Barton made a motion to revisit the "Prayer at Commencement" decision made during the March 17, 2014 meeting. Trustee Bushnell seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

With the decision up for discussion again, Chair Alder asked Student Body President Parker to share his opinion on the matter. President Parker said the petition has shown him several things, most of which he expected. He said he wanted the trustees to keep in mind that the petition is not representing the majority of the students, but he said it had gained overwhelming support over the past two days. Trustee Barton asked if there is strong opposition to having a prayer or expression of choice, and President Parker said that viewpoint is difficult to measure because an organized effort in that regard has not taken place. The Trustees had a lengthy discussion and addressed many aspects of all possibilities once again. Chair Alder asked each trustee to share his/her opinion and then entertained a motion for action. Trustee Parker made a motion to include a moment of silence at the beginning of the 2014 commencement exercises. Trustee Keisel seconded the motion, and additional discussion ensued before a vote was taken. Several trustees asked Trustee Parker if this was his preference, and he again said he believed this is the best course of action at this time, given the information collected and the available time frame for a needed decision. A vote was taken, and the motion passed. Trustee Davis and Trustee Jorgensen opposed the motion.

President Carlston again expressed his appreciation to the board for their willingness to receive the petition. He said he believes the decisions made today respect the student voice and recognize there are others who have differing opinions. He said it communicates a positive message to students and others.