A special meeting of the Board of Trustees was held in Room 145/147, Fire Science/Law Enforcement Center building, on the Owens Community College Toledo Campus.

Call to Order - Chair John Moore called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. and directed that the record show that the meeting was held in accordance with the Ohio Revised Code, Chapter 3358, and the policies of the Board of Trustees.

Roll Call - Roll call was taken, and the following members were present: John Ault, David Habegger, Ronald McMaster, R J Molter, John Moore, Rich Rowe, William Takacs and Diana Talmage (8).

Board Chair’s Opening Remarks on the Owens Nursing Accreditation – Board Chair John Moore opened the meeting with his remarks:

“The purpose of the Board of Trustees meeting today is to give you as much information as possible and to tell you what happened, what we know and, perhaps most important, to listen to our students and members of the College community with respect to the nursing program. Because we are in a public meeting, we need to follow Ohio’s Sunshine Law, which means that we are only able to discuss the issues related to our meeting’s purpose, which is the nursing program.

I expect this meeting to run for about an hour. Out of courtesy to all, we are going to limit everyone who wishes to address the Board to one to two minutes. As you come up the center aisle, you will be assisted by Mr. Carl Dettmer, Manager of Program Development for the Workforce and Community Services division. We have passed out note cards, and for those of you who prefer a direct response from us, please write down your question and include your email or phone number on the card. You may give it to one of our helpers who are collecting the cards in a basket. We promise to get back to you directly on your question.

I would like to express my deepest apologies for the situation we’re in regarding our nursing program. I want all of you to know that Owens Community College is committed to our students and to the communities that we serve. I also want to express my confidence in the College’s leadership and in the faculty, as we all work and support each other to regain accreditation from the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLNAC).

Now, I want to briefly tell you what we have learned…

In early 2007, the nursing department chair received notification from the NLNAC Board of Commissioners that accreditation was granted through 2014 with conditions. This required the College to follow up in 2009 on two unmet standards, one of which was an insufficient number of part-time adjunct faculty with Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) degrees. The second pertained to program assessment leading to program improvement. The department was given two years to address these. It’s important to note, that the responsibility for maintaining voluntary and required program accreditations for all of the academic disciplines at Owens lies within the individual academic departments.
In the spring of 2009, the chairperson submitted a follow up report to the NLNAC that did not adequately address the two standards that the program was cited for in 2007. Upon receiving an unfavorable review, the chairperson didn’t inform anyone outside the department about this likely loss of accreditation – until it was too late. As a result of not taking steps to meet the conditions given to us by the NLNAC in 2007, the College was notified in a letter dated July 27, 2009, that we were denied continuing accreditation.

The administration pursued answers and a solution including steps to fully understand and assess the impact on students of the loss of the voluntary accreditation versus a mandatory accreditation. It became apparent in mid-September -- after further conversation with the NLNAC -- that our only alternative was to apply for candidacy to begin the accreditation process from scratch.

To say that this loss of accreditation is disappointing to us is an understatement. We are sorry we disappointed you. And we are now working diligently to resolve this problem and to get it right for you, our students. We expect the following steps will expedite that process:

First, based on our internal review, the person directly responsible for this loss has been removed from that position. We now have a dedicated team of faculty in place pushing for NLNAC accreditation as soon as possible.

In fact, we are hearing nothing but positives from the NLNAC, including …

- We applied for candidacy, and the NLNAC immediately assigned a mentor to us;
- NLNAC provided openings for three of our nursing faculty to attend a self study forum so that they could get started; and,
- Most recently, we have received a communication from NLNAC of the program’s eligibility to participate in the candidacy presentation. This is great news.

We are utilizing our continuous quality improvement model to provide oversight and processes to make sure this will never happen again to any of our programs.

I also want you to know that the Board of Trustees has approved a pool of funds so that we may offer stronger competitive opportunities to attract more adjunct faculty with the necessary credentials. In fact, we’ve already placed an advertisement, and we are actively recruiting additional adjunct faculty with MSN degrees. We are confident that we will be successful in finding qualified candidates.

As you know, a stand-alone School of Nursing is being established. We believe this will help pool resources and provide for additional faculty opportunities. We also hope this sends a strong message to everyone that the College and this Board are committed to our nursing students.

Furthermore, I believe that our partners in the community also share in our commitment. I’m pleased to tell you that a number of area hospitals, including St. Luke’s Hospital, Mercy Health Partners, ProMedica Health System and Blanchard Valley Health System continue to be interested in our graduates, despite the loss of the NLNAC accreditation. They have shared with us that graduation from an NLNAC accredited program is not a requirement of consideration for hire. To our community partners, I want to sincerely thank you for your support.
I am also pleased to tell you that a number of four-year colleges and universities, including the University of Toledo, Mercy College of Northwest Ohio, Lourdes College and Spring Arbor University continue to be willing to consider our students for matriculation, as they have in the past.

Finally, I want to recognize how some of the College’s earlier communications were confusing and seemed to minimize the importance of this accreditation. We were clumsy in our efforts to reassure you, and I can see that clearly now. Believe me; this accreditation is as important to you, our students, as it is to us and our Mission. The College’s Mission is to educate you, help you find jobs and ensure that you thrive in your chosen profession. We are very proud of what we do here. We’re proud of our nursing faculty and the good work they do every day. And, we are especially proud of you, our students, because you will forever represent Owens Community College. Thank you for listening, and I look forward to hearing your comments.”

Statements to the Board of Trustees - Board Chair Moore invited Ms. Denise Spohler, RN, MSN, Professor of Nursing, to make a statement on behalf of the nursing faculty. Ms. Spohler made the following statement:

“Thank you Chairman Moore and members of the Board of Trustees for allowing me to address you today. I am Denise Spohler and I am a Registered Nurse with a Masters in Nursing, an MSN and while I am here to represent the nursing faculty of Owens Community College, my colleagues are present as well.

We recognize that the Northwest Ohio community and our students are disappointed with the recent loss of NLNAC accreditation, a mark of excellence we have held since the 1970s. However, in the course of the reports, members of the faculty have seemingly been maligned and branded as unqualified. Those individuals, designated by the College as full-time faculty, are all MSN credentialed. Many hold advanced certifications in clinical practice; many practice in local hospitals to hone their clinical expertise; and, several are published authors and the recipients of scholarly awards. Of those full-time department members who are designated as Clinical Teaching Associates, several are MSN prepared, and others are enrolled in graduate schools pursing this degree.

Owens Community College employs a significant number of part-time nursing faculty who work as clinical instructors and lab assistants. Many of them, as well, hold MSN degrees, and many more are actively pursuing MSN degrees. However, we fall short of the NLNAC criterion that all full time faculty hold MSN qualifications and, at a minimum, 51 percent of all part-time faculty meet this requirement.

Therein lays the challenge: MSN prepared nurses garner highly competitive salaries, and if we are to recruit and retain these individuals, we must be competitive in attracting them to our College both as full time and adjunct faculty members.

The loss of accreditation was a severe blow to each and every nursing faculty member. We have now mobilized and are pursuing the arduous task of new accreditation and that will require some time. The administration at Owens has been supportive of us, and we are sure it will allocate to the School of Nursing the necessary human and fiscal resources it needs to achieve success.
In conclusion, we wish to remind our current students, prospective students, alumni, employers and consumers of health care that the nursing philosophy at Owens, the caring philosophy, is the cornerstone of our curriculum: competence, conscience, commitment, compassion and confidence. But we go beyond teaching our students how to care for their patients and clients; we lead by example in demonstrating how we will care for them and for each other. Thank you.”

Hearing of the Public – Mr. Dettmer greeted the audience and explained his role in assisting with the questions of members of the College community.

A pre-nursing student asked about the accreditation problems in 2007 and inquired as to when the College would regain the NLNAC accreditation for the nursing program. Dr. Renay Scott, Vice Provost, responded that in 2007, the NLNAC accreditation was granted to 2014 with conditions. She stated that nursing faculty are working diligently. The application for candidacy was submitted on October 28. The next steps are the candidacy presentation, completing a self study in 2010-2011 and then having NLNAC representatives make a site visit to determine accreditation.

An employee asked when the Board of Trustees was made aware of the loss of the NLNAC accreditation. Board Chair Moore responded on September 29.

A student asked why no one was made aware of the loss of the accreditation before the start of Fall Semester 2009. Dr. Paul Unger, Executive Vice President/Provost, responded that program accreditations are maintained within the individual academic departments, and he explained that if he had known then what he currently knows now he would have personally inserted himself into the process of maintaining the NLNAC accreditation. He apologized for the loss and stated that his focus has been on determining the implications of student transfer and employment.

A student asked if the fourth semester students would be eligible to be grandfathered, as the majority of their nursing courses were NLNAC accredited, and he also asked about employment with Mercy Health Partners. Dr. Scott responded that she was advised by Mercy Health Partners administration that they are in the process of reviewing job descriptions with regard to the requirements for registered nursing (RN). She stated that RN applicants in the near future will have the opportunity to apply at Mercy Health Partners. She thanked the College’s community partners for working with the College. She continued with her response and stated that the NLNAC accreditation is a multi-step process, and there is no clause for grandfathering in students who are candidates for graduation this December. She stated that she would be pleased to explain to any employer that the College’s fourth semester nursing students completed three of their semesters in an NLNAC accredited nursing program and that the accreditation status changed during their fourth semester in the program.

An employee inquired as to the publications that the job openings for nursing faculty were posted in. Dr. Cynthia Eschenburg, Vice President of Human Resources, responded that the College is actively recruiting candidates who have MSN credentials. In addition, College administrators are reviewing and making market-competitive adjustments to the adjunct faculty salary schedule in order to attract the best qualified candidates for the nursing program. She stated that the College is recruiting for credentialed nursing faculty through community partners and through state-wide, local and diverse market media resources. Dr. Unger added that he and Dr. Scott have met with the Hospital Council of Northwest Ohio to discuss a partnership to recruit MSN credentialed nurses within those hospitals.
A student asked who was informed in 2007 that the accreditation was granted through 2014 with conditions and why weren’t the conditions met. Dr. Unger responded that College administration fully expected that the conditions would be addressed at the program level. He stated that had he known what he now knows, his office would have been involved and the conditions would have been addressed. The Academic Services division is now putting processes in place to provide oversight of maintaining all academic program accreditations.

A pre-nursing student commented that she comes from a family with two decades in the medical field and that she enrolled in the Owens Community College nursing program because the College produces the best registered nursing graduates in the area. She stated that she felt discouraged with the lack of forthcoming information from the College about the NLNAC accreditation in recent weeks. Dr. Scott responded, apologized and stated that she too shares the students’ disappointment. She acknowledged that the College’s initial communication efforts were clumsy; however, she could not speak to the external sources. She stated that the Board of Trustees meeting today was to invite the College community to learn more. She stated the School of Nursing that is being created will also enhance communication with nursing students.

A student thanked the Board of Trustees for scheduling the public meeting, and she also thanked the nursing faculty for their diligence in regaining the NLNAC accreditation. She then suggested that Dr. Scott provide a letter explaining to employers that the nursing students completed three of their semesters in an accredited program and that it be electronically accessible to students. Dr. Scott agreed with the recommendation, and she stated that she would work with the nursing department to make it accessible.

A reporter from Advertiser-Tribune of Tiffin suggested that the Board of Trustees also sign the recommended letter with College administrators. Dr. Scott acknowledged the suggestion and stated that the letter would be made available prior to the nurses pinning ceremony.

A pre-nursing student thanked the Board of Trustees for the opportunity to address, and she asked for reassurance that College administrators and faculty are doing their part to regain the NLNAC accreditation. Dr. Scott confirmed on behalf of College administrators and faculty, and she then clarified the application process for Mercy Health Partners. She again confirmed that every hospital within Mercy Health Partners is reviewing job descriptions for the RN field and that they are working to change the language to reflect that candidates must be graduates of an accredited college and from a nursing program approved by the Ohio Board of Nursing.

Dr. Unger invited Erin Jaynes, MSN, RN, Chief Nursing Officer of Toledo Hospital and alumna of Owens Community College, to comment on Toledo Hospital’s hiring practices of qualified graduates from an Ohio Board of Nursing approved program. Ms. Jaynes commented that the Toledo Hospital continues to work with nursing graduates of Owens Community Colleges and other colleges. She shared her disappointment of the loss of the NLNAC accreditation, and she stated her personal knowledge of the quality education that the nursing students are receiving at Owens Community College. She stated that this situation is difficult; however, she reassured the nursing students that they are welcomed to apply at any of the ProMedica Health System institutions.
A student asked how the College would assist students with respect to their portfolios. Dr. Unger responded that College administrators are communicating with area colleges and universities to identify admission requirements.

Mr. Dettmer read a question from a student who asked if the College had heard anything about Bowling Green State University’s baccalaureate nursing program. Dr. Unger responded that it is his understanding that Bowling Green State University is in a nursing consortium with the University of Toledo and that the same admission requirements would apply for both institutions.

An employee asked if the nursing positions being posted are full-time or adjunct. Dr. Unger responded that the nursing faculty is currently reviewing what is needed for NLNAC accreditation and after their evaluation, he would be able to fully respond to the question.

Mr. Dettmer read a question from a student with respect to the timeline to regain the NLNAC accreditation. Dr. Scott responded that candidates for NLNAC accreditation must complete the accreditation process in two years. She stated that the nursing faculty are working toward achieving accreditation in less time.

An employee who is an Owens alumna and who graduated in 1973, prior to the College achieving the NLNAC accreditation in 1974, stated that the lack of the NLNAC accreditation never hampered her employment opportunities since her graduation from the Owens nursing program.

Mr. Dettmer read a question from a student asking for clarification of the College’s accreditation status. Dr. Unger responded that Owens Community College is fully accredited as an institution from The Higher Learning Commission. He stated that wherever possible, the academic departments strive to achieve and maintain discipline specific accreditations in Ohio. The College’s registered nursing program is required to have, and it holds full approval by the Ohio Board of Nursing, which enables eligible nursing graduates to sit for the National Council Licensure Examination -- Registered Nurse (NCLEX-RN). Upon passing the NCLEX-RN exam, registered nurses are licensed to practice nursing in the state of Ohio by the Ohio Board of Nursing. The Owens nursing program is working to regain the discipline specific NLNAC accreditation.

A student commented that the College no longer holds her trust. Dr. Scott expressed the desire to regain trust and stated that the nursing faculty are still outstanding and that the nursing program still prepares students to be outstanding nurses. She said that 94 percent of Owens students recently passed the NCLEX-RN, which is an indication of quality education. She continued stating that she is still proud of the students in the program and faculty teaching the program. She stated that process improvements to maintain accreditations are being put into place and that the nursing faculty will continue to provide students with quality education and training that will, in turn, enable the students to care for our families and our communities.

A nursing graduate who graduated from the nursing program on July 31 asked for the official date of the loss of the NLNAC accreditation. Dr. Unger requested that she provide her name so that his office could contact the NLNAC to properly respond to her inquiry. The nursing graduate then stated that she would like to speak to Ms. Jaynes, as she has been searching for employment for the past three months.
An employee thanked the Board of Trustees and stated her concern of the negative publicity being received and asked if the Board had any projections on enrollment. Dr. Unger responded that the College’s community partners are responding, which is a statement on the reputation that the College and graduates have in the communities that the College serves. He stated that he did not believe that there would be an overall negative impact on the institution’s enrollment.

A nursing student shared his personal experience of working clinical preceptor hours at a hospital, and he emphasized to the Board of Trustees the public’s perception with respect to the loss of the NLNAC accreditation. Board Chair Moore responded that he could not personally stop negative media coverage of the College, and that the Board, College administration, faculty and staff are dedicated to improving the nursing program. He stated the need for everyone to work together. He thanked the nursing student for making his statement.

**Statements and Comments by Members of the Board of Trustees** – On behalf of the Board of Trustees, Chair Moore stated that the faculty, administrators and staff are passionate about the nursing program and achieving the College’s vision of providing a superior educational experience through excellence, innovation and collaboration. He also thanked the trustees of Monroe County Community College, Michigan, for attending the meeting.

**Adjournment** – As there was no further business to come before the Board of Trustees, Chair Moore declared the meeting adjourned.