



CEDAR CREST COLLEGE

2019-2020 Board of Trustees

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Dear Faculty and Staff,

Last Thursday, June 18, the Board of Trustees held a special session to discuss the report issued by the Campus-Wide COVID-19 Task Force. In total, the five Working Groups made 144 recommendations to guide the College moving forward. The full report will be made available to faculty and staff on June 24.

Please note that all ideas submitted by the Working Groups are included in the report; it lays out any possible steps we might choose to take to address the COVID crisis and the resulting financial pressures. The fact that all ideas are listed does not mean we will move forward with every suggestion. The Board and administration will make available the full range of actions to be adopted as the financial situation of the College evolves.

What follows is a summary of recommendations discussed by the Board on June 18.

The Board affirmed the plan to resume in person instruction in the fall, following recommendations for Academic Year 20/21 from Working Group I. In accordance with this plan, in person instruction will resume, but a course schedule will be developed that follows CDC guidance on social distancing. A mix of in-person, hybrid and online courses will be used. The fall semester will follow a 15-week format, but with Fall Break eliminated and all courses fully online after Thanksgiving break. Students will return to the residence halls, with appropriate social distancing and sanitation measures, and be grouped into pods or cohorts. Athletics is also expected to resume.

The remaining four Working Groups were charged with focusing on various solutions to address the enormous financial uncertainties the College faces as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As events unfold and the 2020/21 budget develops, actions will need to be taken to balance the budget. The severity of the crisis will determine the depth of the actions. All groups were asked to consider three questions as they developed recommendations: Will it reduce expenses? Will it increase revenue? Will it follow our mission and make the College stronger?

The second Working Group, Business Operations, was charged with examining our business operations to find efficiencies and reduce expenses. Through extraordinary hard work and difficult conversations, this group identified over \$2.9 million in potential reductions. The impact of these

reductions will be felt by the entire campus community and hit every area of operation, academic and administrative. The potential reductions include significant reductions to all College budgets, and may well include a reduction of the College's contribution to the 403(b) plan, and salary reductions ranging from 3% for those making over \$75,000, to 2% for those earning \$50,000-\$74,999, and 1% for those earning \$40,000-\$49,999. Please note that the President and the Cabinet already accepted salary reductions as part of the plan to balance the 2019/20 budget. President Meade requested that her salary reduction of 20% be continued through the 2020/21 year.

Working Group 4, Academic Operations, took an expansive look at the content, design and delivery of our academic programs. The Board affirmed a number of recommendations that would achieve greater cost efficiency in the delivery of academic programs. These recommendations require a fuller costing out before a decision can be made about implementing them.

The Revenue and Investment Working Groups made many promising recommendations about ways to increase revenue over the next several years. These recommendations have been affirmed in principle, but also require time to develop and funds to invest in them.

Cedar Crest is unique among the Lehigh Valley colleges and universities not to have implemented furloughs and layoffs thus far. Because of our responses to the Great Recession of 2008 we are already a lean and efficient organization. The operational and academic review procedures established after 2008 have positioned us well to respond to the current crisis. Therefore, it is the position of the Board and the President that initiating furloughs and layoffs would be a last resort. The President will use every measure approved by the Board, including those measures detailed above, prior to considering furloughs or layoffs. A balanced budget must be presented to the Board by the end of the summer.

We all owe a debt of gratitude to the seven trustees, 14 faculty, 18 staff, one student, the President and the entire Cabinet who served on the Task Force under enormous pressure to provide a plan to navigate the still evolving COVID-19 crisis. Often their discussions were difficult, but the health and welfare of our students and campus community, and the short and longer-term viability and distinctiveness of our College were always the highest priorities. In four short weeks, they not only provided a plan for the 2020/21 academic year, but a strategic guide to strengthen Cedar Crest for the future. All of the trustees who participated in this process have expressed their profound admiration for the dedication, hard work and collaborative spirit of these teams. As we move forward and adapt to the known and the unknown challenges ahead, may we do so with that same spirit of optimism and clear focus that has preserved and strengthened our College for the past 150 years.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sylvia Betz Gardner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sylvia" being the most prominent.

Sylvia Betz Gardner '71
Board Chair