

**SOLANO COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT  
GOVERNING BOARD**

**UNADOPTED MINUTES**

**APPENDIX A**

5. COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Board President Young recognized Ms. Holi Hornlien of the Solano Youth Theatre who requested students and parents and SYT supporters in the audience to introduce themselves to the Board.

Ms. Hornlien stated, on behalf of the theatre program, how grateful everyone is for the support of the Board and trusts they will be able to continue to offer this program to the amazing people present in the audience, and, of course, those currently involved with the program.

Board President Young thanked Ms. Hornlien for her comments.

Board President Young recognized Mr. Steven Bise, parent and business man in the community, who requested to speak on the budget of the Solano Youth Theatre.

Mr. Stephen Bise works at KUIC, and began by commenting that often times it is easy to target the arts when cuts become necessary because they don't seem as important, but I am a guy who has spent 30 years on the radio. When beginners ask how you get into this business, because there is no career track to follow, I tell them to go to college, major in business, and be sure to take a theatre class or two. Our morning show host was a former student at SCC, as well as our IT guy who took drama. The industry in general has vast opportunities. Mr. Bise spoke of his daughter's love of the theatre program. As a parent, he said, there are many positive aspects of the theatre program that enable children to experience personal growth. Mr. Bise asked the Board to consider doing everything they can to preserve the SYT.

Board President Young thanked Mr. Bise for his comments.

Board President Young recognized Ms. Shelly Kontogiannis, owner of the Athenian Grill in Suisun City, who requested to speak on commerce in Suisun and Fairfield.

Ms. Kontogiannis stated that commerce in the cities of Suisun and Fairfield is brought in by SCT and SYT, which is particularly a vital part of the business plan to downtown Suisun. The money spent by people attending the theatre is tremendous. Ms. Kontogiannis reported that this commerce to her business alone generates 30% of her revenue in the winter time. Ms. Kontogiannis reported on the opportunity given to her daughter, when in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, to participate in the play *Peter Pan*, which introduced her to the college opportunity. Ms. Kontogiannis is president of the downtown improvement district and this group is trying to bring in more cultural activities. Suisun City's city

council feels the SCT and SYT play a vital role in the waterfront district. Suisun City Historic Waterfront District needs the theatre as a component to help improve the cultural environment of downtown. Ms. Kontogiannis suggested that if staff can make it work, that perhaps the community could partner with SCC with additional funds needed to sustain the program.

Board President Young thanked Ms. Ms. Kontogiannis for her comments.

Board President Young recognized Mr. Ralph Muehlenbruch, who requested to comment on the proposed budget cuts to the Solano College Theatre program.

Mr. Muehlenbruch stated he is concerned, both as an educator and as a concerned parent of a former SYT participant and SCC student.

“In both of these capacities, I have seen the value of the theatre program offered by SCC and its adjunct faculty.

I have taught either second or third grade in the Vacaville Unified School District for 13 years, and as an educator, I have had a number of my former students involved with SYT. I have personally seen the positive impact the program had on these children—both in their academic achievements and in their personal growth. Theatre offered these children, many of whom had no other outlet, such as sports, the opportunity to participate in a positive, esteem-building activity. As an educator, I am fully aware of the research that has shown the positive effect music and the performing arts have on academic achievement. I am also fully aware of the fact that there are limited opportunities for these kids to participate in theatre in Solano County—especially of the caliber of the SYT program. Nowhere else in Solano County are children and young adults able to work with theatre professionals with the credentials and experience possessed by these talented and caring individuals. Indeed, this is a program that serves the needs of the youth of the greater Solano County community with dedication, professionalism, and care. You, as a board, should be proud of the staff’s and students’ efforts and encourage its continuation, not gut and dismantle it.

That brings me to my observations as the father of a former SYT participant and SCC student. My daughter participated in a number of SYT productions. Not only did she gain valuable theatrical experience, but she developed a great love of and appreciation for the performing arts through this participation. She continued her education at SCC, won an ARTY for her role as Lisel in *The Sound of Music*, and transferred to Sacramento State and received her B.A., in English with a concentration in Film Theory. In May, she will be receiving her Masters in Theatre Arts and Film. In the fall, she will be teaching two classes in Film and Theatre at Sacramento State.

Needless to say, I am a very proud parent. SYT and SCC played no small role in my daughter’s success. It is where she got her start. It pains me to think that some other talented bright young adult may not have the opportunities my daughter had because by eliminating the theatre program, you will be responsible for limiting the educational choices of the young people SCC is mandated to serve.

Finally, let me be so bold as to remind the Board of the mission of SCC. (Mr. Muehlenbruch read the Mission Statement to the Board members.) Sometimes the

powers that be forget the idea extolled in these words. SCC, through its theatre department, provides Solano County with its cultural and artistic crowning jewel within the creative performing arts community of the area it serves. If Solano College Theatre ceases to exist, you will be depriving the community it serves of the very diversity, academic, cultural, and developmental achievement your Mission Statement espouses. Thankfully, SCC, along with the efforts of Solano College Theatre and SYT, fulfilled its mission for my daughter.

Members of the Board, please get your house in order so that you can continue to fulfill your stated mission. Please don't do it on the backs of one department by gutting that department."

Board President Young thanked Mr. Muehlenbruch for his comments.

Board President Young recognized Mr. Steve Huddleston, who requested to comment on budget cuts in the SCT and SYT program.

Mr. Huddleston began by stating he is a 33-year resident of Vacaville, and in the spirit of full disclosure, a proud father of a veteran actor in Solano Youth Theatre.

"As a journalist for 32 of those 33 years, sometimes the watchdog of SCC, I observed superintendents and board members come and go. Some programs at SCC have risen and fallen. But SCT and SYT have been the constant, an unwavering distinction for Solano College.

The structural deficit, and the mandate to swiftly adopt reforms that will help the College retain its accreditation, are daunting. None of us takes too lightly the task that lies before you. But none believe SCC will be closer to a resolution of this quandary by demolishing an award-winning theatre program.

No other curriculum has higher public awareness and popularity. People associate Solano College with Solano College Theatre. One of the program directors aptly referred to it recently as a "gateway" to the College. It is that, and much more.

A good business plan for SCC's future requires a smart marketing plan. Nothing would be smarter than to maintain, and some day when finances are better, to grow theatre arts. It is what you are good at. In fact, it is what you are great at doing.

There is no better marketing scheme than to have hundreds of youngsters exposed to college at an early age; no better enrollment recruitment than the positive experience these youngsters get by performing on stage on campus; no better ambassadors than these young people extolling the virtues of SCC at home and in their schools.

My 17-year old son struggled from his first day in kindergarten. Three years ago, he was adrift, finding no inspiration to continue his education. But now, he is excited about college. And he has no qualms telling his friends, even those with Ivy League aspirations, that he intends to enroll at Solano College. It's because of SCT.

The financial reality facing the College is not lost on parents and community leaders. Reaching a solid, sustainable financial footing will require sacrifice. Directors of the theatre arts program are committed to doing their part. They understand their future relies on reducing costs and increasing enrollment. They say it can be done.

We, in the community, understand our part, which is stepping up and increasing our support. Just ask. I think you will find the community is behind you if you agree to preserve this recruitment, marketing, public relations asset that you already have.”

Board President Young thanked Mr. Huddleston for his comments.

Board President Young recognized Ms. Karen Blumst, who requested to comment on the Solano Youth Theatre.

Ms. Blumst commented on how the SYT has helped her son grow and develop through the SYT. The SYT is a growing tool for many youth of the community. There is empowerment that comes to a young adult when they walk into a theatre department and try things out. They may never play a leading role, but they may end up backstage learning other things such as lighting techniques, staging, or building props. Students in the SYT have templates they can follow that can allow them to be actors or technicians or learn skills that lead them to different work places. Ms. Blumst stated she would hate to see the SYT not continue to move forward.

Board President Young thanked Ms. Blumst for her comments.