

Community turns out for SSCC Adams County Campus meeting

The boards of Adams County Ohio Valley Schools and Southern State Community College co-hosted a Community Meeting Nov. 17 to further explore the possibility of a Southern State campus adjacent to ACOV's central administrative office and career and technical center.

"I'm excited about what we have to share this evening," said Mike Pell, Chair of the SSCC Board of Trustees. "I'm passionate about education and about Adams County, and I am committed to providing our residents with a college facility to give them better access to post-secondary education."

An informational presentation was given by members of the Southern State Community College administration, followed by an opportunity for public comment and questions.

"Bringing a Southern State campus to Adams County is not a new idea. We've long wanted to do it and we're committed to making it a reality," said Dr. Kevin Boys, SSCC President. "We have been working with the Adams County Ohio Valley Schools on a proposal to co-locate our campus adjacent to the Ohio Valley Career and Technical Center in West Union. Throughout the planning process, it became clear that for sustainability purposes, an Adams County campus needed to be centrally located in order to reach all corners."

Dr. Boys outlined three aspects of the co-location proposal: purpose, need, and goals.

"First, our purpose with this project is to deliver on our mission of providing affordable, accessible, high quality education to the people of Adams County.

"Second, the need in Adams County is reflected in these statistics – only 16.8 percent have post-secondary credentials, 23.1 percent do not have a high school diploma, 23 percent live in poverty, and 26 percent participate in public assistance programs. We are confident Southern State can make an impact through education.

"And finally, our goals are pretty straightforward. We want to raise the educational attainment level in Adams County and strengthen the workforce by giving them a competitive advantage," said Dr. Boys.

Dr. Nicole Roades, SSCC Vice President of Academic Affairs, addressed the topic of academic programming considerations for a new campus.

"Of the 326 Adams County students currently enrolled at Southern State, approximately half are high school students participating in the College Credit Plus program," said Dr. Roades. "The other half are enrolled in our Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degrees which indicates to us they're here for transfer purposes and they're using Southern State as a steppingstone to that next destination—a four-year university. Most of our current enrollees are what are considered traditional college students.

“What we see then is a huge opportunity to also capture those who do not fall into that traditional category—the student who still needs to attain a GED, the student interested in a technical degree or workforce training, and the adult student juggling work and home life.

“We also see opportunities to forge partnerships with the Career and Technical Center, to articulate pathways with nearby four-year institutions, and to collaborate with local employers.”

Jim Buck, SSCC Vice President of Business and Finance, presented a schematic of what a site plan for an Adams County campus could look like.

“What we are considering is implemented in two phases, with each building comprised of approximately 25,000 square feet, adjacent to the Career and Technical Center on Lloyd Road,” said Mr. Buck. “This plan approaches a commitment to establish a facility in Adams County, and a way to be well positioned for future growth.

“The project timeline is roughly 24 months start to finish, giving us an optimistic opening for Fall Semester 2018, but the very first step would need to be a land agreement partnership with Adams County Ohio Valley Schools.”

Dr. Boys closed the SSCC’s administration’s presentation by acknowledging legislative support for the Adams County project.

“I want to give credit where it’s due,” said Dr. Boys. “Representative Terry Johnson and Senator Joe Uecker have been extremely supportive of this project all along. State resources are notoriously difficult to land, but in the most recent capital bill we received \$2 million toward the project. That, combined with \$1.25 million from the previous capital bill and more than \$700,000 from the sale of the college’s closed South Campus, brings us to just shy of \$4 million. We are well positioned to build the first phase of this project. Southern State is ready to move forward.”

No formal action was taken during the informational community meeting. The next meeting of the Southern State Community College Board of Trustees will be 12 noon Wednesday, Jan. 25, in the Community Center of the college’s Fayette Campus, 1270 U.S. Route 62 SW, Washington C.H.