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SOUTHERN STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

PRESS RELEASE

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Southern State Quickly Responds to State Budget Cuts, Introduces New Partnership with Wilmington College

At its May 8th Board of Trustees meeting, Southern State President Kevin Boys outlined a far-reaching set of actions in response to anticipated cuts of up to 20 percent in state subsidy during the 2020-21 academic year.

“We’ve always been appreciative of the Legislature’s and Administration’s support for its state colleges and universities. Quite simply, it’s the reason we’ve been able to keep our tuition affordable,” said Boys. “As the state is experiencing significant drops in revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we’re planning for a reduction of up to 20 percent, or \$1.6 million in state dollars. Boys added, “These are deep cuts that will impact every employee in the institution but our focus will continue to be providing affordable, accessible, and high-quality education. People in our area know the impact that Southern State has, from preparing health care professionals and police officers, to commercial truck drivers. It’s what community colleges do.”

In response to uncertain fall enrollment and these anticipated cuts, Boys outlined a plan for an across the board reduction in weekly hours worked by nearly all non-teaching personnel and a four-day operating schedule throughout the college. Providing details on the state’s Shared Work Ohio Layoff Aversion program, Boys described its nearly half million dollar financial impact on the College and the state and federal assistance that affected employees can tap into to mitigate the lost wages. “It’s a huge ask of our employees, but I don’t see any other way to meet this significant gap in the budget, Boys remarked. “As you know, salaries and benefits represent approximately 72 percent of our expenditures, so you need to look there first for significant cost reductions.”

Boys also put forward a plan to shrink the physical outlay of Southern State by not reopening the College’s North Campus in Wilmington when face-to-face classes resume. “Due largely to the increase of College Credit Plus classes scheduled in our area high schools, and even before the pandemic, the increasing demand for on-line course offerings, we simply have to look at other solutions for maintaining our mission of accessibility in Clinton County.

“What makes this plan possible,” added Boys, “is a partnership with our friends and colleagues at Wilmington College where classroom space is being made available to us for Southern State courses. The majority of our students attending North Campus are high school students who are taking college courses. Although these students can transfer these credits virtually anywhere, it seems that this move

to the Wilmington College campus will further strengthen the Clinton County Succeeds program that was expanded in 2018. We've traditionally had a significant number of Southern State graduates transfer to Wilmington College to complete their bachelor degrees."

Jim Reynolds, Wilmington College President added "While we share the sadness related to the closing of North Campus, we are proud to work with our partners in education at Southern State to provide opportunities for their students to continue their classes on our campus. We look forward to doing our share to help the residents of Clinton County to retain access to Southern State's catalog of courses."

Boys further explained that the initial partnership will involve a simple agreement of shared space, but hopes that this move will further strengthen the partnership and create energy to find additional ways to collaborate. "It's simply a smart thing to do in days of declining resources and ongoing efforts to make college more affordable," remarked Boys.

In addition to the layoff aversion program and closure of North Campus, Boys outlined additional cuts in athletics, all non-salary line items, and the Federal CARES act institutional support that will be tapped into as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic on Southern State and its students. The Board of Trustees voted unanimously to authorize the President to implement the planned reductions as necessary.

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