



GLENN A. CUNHA
INSPECTOR GENERAL

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Office of the Inspector General

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May 4, 2018

James J. Campbell, Chairman
Board of Trustees
Middlesex Community College
591 Springs Road
Bedford, MA 01730

Re: Renaming the Library on Middlesex Community College's Lowell Campus

Dear Chairman Campbell:

I write to you regarding the Board of Trustees' upcoming vote on whether to remove former Middlesex Community College ("MCC") President Evan Dobelle's name from the library in the F. Bradford Morse Building on MCC's Lowell campus.

As you are aware, my Office conducted a review of Mr. Dobelle's spending practices while he served as president of Westfield State University ("University"). My Office found that throughout his tenure Mr. Dobelle abused his authority, misled the University's board, misspent University and Westfield State Foundation ("Foundation") funds on personal expenses and violated the public trust. Mr. Dobelle wasted hundreds of thousands of dollars of public educational funds with little regard for its effect on the students whom he took an oath to serve. Public spaces should be named after individuals who have selflessly served the public good. Mr. Dobelle's conduct demonstrates that he is not worthy of this honor.

As detailed in a report that my Office issued on July 31, 2014, Mr. Dobelle engaged in the following conduct while serving as president of the University:

- Mr. Dobelle abused his University- and Foundation-issued credit cards, making over \$85,000 of self-identified personal purchases. While Mr. Dobelle eventually reimbursed the school, sometimes months or years after the fact, this practice provided Mr. Dobelle a significant unwarranted financial benefit by avoiding interest charges on his own credit cards.
- Mr. Dobelle spent tens of thousands of additional University and Foundation dollars on personal expenses, which he falsely claimed had a business purpose. For example, Mr.

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Dobelle spent more than \$63,000 on personal travel to San Francisco, submitting false documentation to justify the trips.

- Mr. Dobelle spent donor funds recklessly on various initiatives, such as a \$127,000 trip to Asia and a \$600,000 speaker series, both of which ran over budget and financially crippled the Foundation. Mr. Dobelle made unfounded claims about the “return on investment” for these initiatives. For example, he claimed that his foreign travel attracted 123 international students to the University in 2013; however, most of those “international students” were non-U.S. citizens who were permanent residents of Massachusetts and paid in-state tuition.

This conduct was not unique to Mr. Dobelle’s time at the University. The Office learned that Mr. Dobelle engaged in similar practices at his prior positions as president of the University of Hawaii and president of the New England Board of Higher Education. For example, during his employment at the University of Hawaii and at the New England Board of Higher Education, he frequently traveled to San Francisco, claiming the trips had a business purpose when they were in fact for vacations or social events. Throughout his career, Mr. Dobelle has exhibited a pattern of exorbitant and wasteful spending of public educational funds on himself.

After my Office published the report on Mr. Dobelle’s conduct at Westfield State, the Attorney General sued Mr. Dobelle under the False Claims Act to recover unreimbursed personal credit card and travel expenses that he made during his time at Westfield State. In a consent judgment resolving the case, Mr. Dobelle was ordered to pay treble damages and fees totaling \$185,000. The judgment also barred Mr. Dobelle from “accept[ing] any position, whether paid or unpaid, as an employee, advisor, consultant or fiduciary, at any public institution of higher education within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.”

Despite any contributions Mr. Dobelle may have made to MCC when he served as its president thirty years ago, his subsequent pattern of violating the public trust earned him a lifetime ban on any future involvement with Massachusetts’ higher education system. I hope that the MCC Board of Trustees will approve the proposal to remove Mr. Dobelle’s name from the school’s library.

Please do not hesitate to contact my Office with any questions.

Sincerely,



Glenn A. Cunha
Inspector General

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cc: Linda Banks-Santilli, Trustee, Middlesex Community College Board of Trustees
Alec A. Belanger, Trustee, Middlesex Community College Board of Trustees
Stephanie J. Cronin, Trustee, Middlesex Community College Board of Trustees
Sierra DeWalt, Student Trustee, Middlesex Community College Board of Trustees
Laurie Elliott, Trustee, Middlesex Community College Board of Trustees
Cheryl E. Howard, Trustee, Middlesex Community College Board of Trustees
Steven Iem, Trustee, Middlesex Community College Board of Trustees
Bopha Malone, Trustee, Middlesex Community College Board of Trustees
Anne O'Connor, Trustee, Middlesex Community College Board of Trustees
Kathleen Plath, Trustee, Middlesex Community College Board of Trustees
James Mabry, President, Middlesex Community College