

CRITERIA RESPONSES

Has the trustee served as an officer of the college's board of trustees?

George Little's tenure on the Sandhills Community College Board of Trustees spans nearly 40 years, with 35 of them as Chair. In that time, the first comprehensive community college in North Carolina has grown from holding classes in a room above an ice cream parlor to a three-campus, 18-building showplace that, in 2021, was named the second safest two-year college and second most beautiful two-year college in the United States. His ability to work cooperatively across political parties has enriched Hoke and Moore counties in immeasurable ways, including unprecedented growth in SCC Foundation funds, which allow the college to serve students in innovative ways.

In addition to service on the board of trustees, in what capacity has the trustee participated in community life, i.e., civic clubs, public office, etc.?

George Little's life has been spent in service to his community. In organizations like the Jaycees, Kiwanis, and Boys and Girls Club, he has been an active member and/or advocate altruist in support of the impact civic groups can have on the "triad community" of Aberdeen, Southern Pines, and Pinehurst, North Carolina. Little has also been actively involved at the leadership level in the fundraising campaigns for Moore Regional Hospital/First Health that have life-saving impact in this region and continue to hire graduates from the Sandhills medical programs from which his own daughter once graduated. In his stints as Chair of the United Way Annual Campaign and the Chamber of Commerce, he has shaped the community that in the past decade defied the poverty pattern of rural North Carolina and saw enormous growth in both social outreach and economic matrices. Small wonder that George Little was also the recipient of the United Way's Man of the Year award in 2015. He was also one of the architects of the Convention & Visitor's Bureau board in the early 1980s that has helped Pinehurst to secure a national image for its hosting of the U.S. Open and the U.S. Women's Open as well as the home to U.S. Kids Golf programs.

Nowhere, however, has he had more impact than with his work at the regional and state levels in guiding five successful bond issues that have changed the educational landscape in both the state and on the Sandhills campus. When George Little joined the SCC Board of Trustees in the early 1980s, the campus consisted of three main buildings and a maintenance facility, with ancillary rental spaces in Hoke County and in Robbins, North Carolina. Today, three campuses are comprised of 18 structures (one of those buildings which houses the Engineering and Computer Technologies programs now bears George Little's name – an honor proposed by a grateful community) and include workforce training in building trades, machining, mechatronics, and public safety. He has impacted virtually every aspect of community life through his leadership.

What has the trustee initiated and helped to develop in the area of innovative programs used in two-year postsecondary institutions?

During his tenure as chair, George Little has shepherded these programs into existence on the Sandhills campus:

- NC Tech Prep/SCC – a national effort to transition high school technical training to college credit
- First Step High School Transition Program – a precursor to College and Career Promise programs
- Sandhills Promise – a guarantee for free tuition for students who earn college credit in high school
- SandHoke Early College High School – a Bill and Melinda Gates funded integrated high school/college program
- Fast Track Transfer Program – an anytime/anyplace online accelerated degree program
- Evening Hybrid College – a two-night approach to a transfer degree
- First Saturday Transfer Program – a weekend Associate in Arts program
- Certified Production Technology – a workforce readiness direct path to industrial employment
- Crosswalk Continuing Education-to-Curriculum Construction Management – a workforce building program that allows transfer to community college and university construction management degrees
- Workforce Career Education-College and Career Promise (WCE-CCP) – high school delivery of career pathways in construction, fire technology, industrial production, and medical careers
- Guarantor’s Scholarship Program – a community outreach commitment of \$1000 per year per donor that funds more than 100 scholarships
- SCC Teaching and Learning Center – a campus-based professional development program for college personnel
- Online University Transfer Program – an online pathway to North Carolina state universities
- First Health/SCC Student Telemedicine Insurance Program – an affordable health insurance program (\$10 per month) that gives underserved populations access to medical care
- Proposed Hoke County Stem High School – a university transfer program in science/math and workforce training for trades-bound high school students

Little’s leadership and fundraising revitalized the fine arts offerings in the region through the development of the Bradshaw Performing Arts Center – a three-venue performing arts center that draws names like Michael Feinstein and Kristin Chenoweth to the BPAC stage. He provided leadership in the development of the Ruth Pauley Lecture Series and the Governor James E. Holshouser Jr. Lecture Series that provide annual events across the political divide.

How has the trustee served on technical or special committees serving two-year postsecondary education?

George Little’s roles at the state level set him on committees with the Secretary of Natural and Economic Resources that resulted in the state’s first “billion dollar year” in tourism and natural resource revenues. He was one of the first champions of the Research Triangle Park growth plan that has since become a signature region of innovation in the Southeast. In addition to serving as

liaison to both Moore and Hoke County Commissions, Little has served in a similar capacity as a voice between the North Carolina Community College System and the North Carolina Legislature, lobbying for essential funding as a finance committee member. This role has been integral to Sandhills' success. His work with the committee to bring the U.S. Open to Pinehurst has since resulted in three stints as host site along with an equal number of U.S. Women's Opens, which paved the way for the USGA to name Pinehurst as one of its home sites.

How has the trustee been a factor in influencing legislation for two-year postsecondary institutions, and how has the trustee been active in communication with state and national legislators?

George Little has a 40-year record of community college advocacy in five successful bond issues and annual engagement with state legislators in impacting available funding for his own and the region's community colleges. Nationally recognized for his innovative approach to foundation funding, he has consulted with colleges throughout the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to provide them with a blueprint for using philanthropy to fund innovative programs. Little's work with the North Carolina Association of Community College Trustees (NCACCT) and the President's Institute offers a constant forum for sharing what works.

What has the trustee contributed overall to the two-year postsecondary concept and how did this affect the total college program in the community, state or nation?

George Little was one of the first to recognize that the key solution to the cyclic downturn in available funds for America's community colleges lies in committing part of the board focus to supporting philanthropic giving as a means to address uncertain financial budgets. He continuously advocates that presidents and board members commit to building a strong foundation as the best way to support the work of a college in lean times. To that end, Little was the architect of a revamped SCC Foundation Directors Board, bringing financial, industry, and philanthropically minded directors on-board. In that way, the college has 20 to 30 advocates among the financially able community members who will hear firsthand the needs and achievements of the college. His advocacy with the foundation directors in Moore and Hoke counties is the reason that the college is confident that the new 60-for-60 Campaign will see the \$43 million SCC Foundation funding grow to a \$60 million goal in 2023 – Sandhills 60th anniversary. He has spent the last 20 years providing sister community colleges guidance on how to establish and grow foundation funding.

How has the trustee provided leadership in helping to solve challenges to two-year postsecondary education?

George Little credits his success as a board of trustee leader to 40 years of lessons learned as one of only three board chairs to serve two presidents:

- Pinpoint the true problem before taking action.
- Success in board action by hiring a receptive president partner who values integrity.
- Build inroads with the agencies that select board members.
- Be ready to promote what is in the best interests of the college AND its service community.
- Never lose focus on implementing measures that help the college help others.
- Work with the community in an open way.
- Share what works with the state trustee organization to build a better system.
- First and foremost, ALWAYS think about our students.

How has the trustee been active in developing, organizing, or supporting state two-year postsecondary associations, and what kind of leadership role has the trustee played in state, regional, or national associations?

George Little's rise in 2002 to the top position in the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) was the culmination of a career of progressive leadership in developing and supporting two-year postsecondary associations. Prior to that role he had already navigated himself to the top of NCACCT as 58 North Carolina board of trustees chairs had recognized him as a natural leader in supporting postsecondary education at the two-year college level. In part, his rise was borne of his long-term commitment to political engagement. As one who had worked first as a Democrat and later as a Republican leader in the state, Little recognized that progress is best gained through a bipartisan approach.

Has the trustee given presentations or published articles on two-year postsecondary education?

In addition to conference leadership public presentations in his years as ACCT and NCACCT leadership member and president, George Little guided the Sandhills Community College presentation at the ACCT national conference in Las Vegas, profiling how a small two-year college can manage to secure the rights to host a TEDx event that engages the "community" in a two-year college event. The program reached a national and international audience and showcased the "globalization" of the modern two-year college.

As a political leader and former candidate for North Carolina governor, his life has been a series of appearances and presentations in the political arena. His work with the President's Institute, a training program for secondary officers in community colleges who aspire to presidencies, has guided hundreds of young academics on the art and science of board of trustees engagement from the presidential perspective. In addition, as part of the Sandhills Community College Video History Project, he wrote and narrated Chapter Three: *SCC Board Roles and Impact* in the college history.