



MEMORANDUM

March 23, 2017

TO: Members of the Board of Trustees

FROM: Nancy L. Zimpher, Chancellor

SUBJECT: Awarding of an Honorary Degree in Absentia by the State University of New York College at Cortland

Action Requested

The proposed resolution authorizes the awarding of an honorary degree in absentia by the State University of New York College at Cortland.

Resolution

I recommend that the Board of Trustees adopt the following resolution:

Resolved that the State University of New York College at Cortland be granted authority to award an honorary degree to Mrs. Therese Sullivan Caccavale in absentia, in accordance with the Guidelines for the Awarding of Honorary Degrees, as last amended August 2016. The initial approval was given by the State University Board of Trustees on November 3, 2016 and formal approval to award this degree was given by the Board of Trustees on January 24, 2017

Background

At its November 3, 2016 meeting, the State University Board of Trustees considered a list of candidates for honorary degrees, including Mrs. Therese Sullivan Caccavale, to be conferred from 2017 to 2020 and granted authority for campuses to extend invitations to those individuals. At its January 24, 2017 meeting, the Board of Trustees considered and approved a list of candidates who had accepted campus invitations, including Mrs. Caccavale. SUNY Cortland was approved to award the honorary degree at a graduation ceremony to take place on May 13, 2017. However, the Chancellor was notified by the campus on March 6, 2017 that Mrs. Caccavale has passed away. The campus requested the authority to grant the award in absentia to the family.

According to the Guidelines for the Awarding of Honorary Degrees, “Honorary degrees may be awarded in absentia, but only upon recommendation to the Board by the Chancellor in the case of extraordinary and compelling circumstances....” The Chancellor, in consultation with the Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor, has reviewed the request and determined that this situation meets the defined criteria.

A widely recognized prominent leader in the field of early foreign language education, Mrs. Caccavale was regarded as the “go-to” authority in this area. Mrs. Caccavale acquired a notable reputation by establishing the cutting-edge blueprint for the development, execution, launch and maintenance of model continuous K-12 foreign language programs. Mrs. Caccavale developed and established a ground breaking and innovative program, Spanish Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES), in Holliston, MA Public Schools. She later founded the first comprehensive K-12 French Immersion Program in that location, an initiative for which the district received the Melba D. Woodruff National Award for Exemplary Elementary Foreign Language Instruction (2011). Mrs. Caccavale is the recipient of numerous awards and accolades including: the Melba D. Woodruff National Award for Exemplary Elementary Foreign Language and the Robert J. Ludwig National Distinguished Leadership Award by the NYSAFLT.