



Academic Affairs Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: Thursday, August 21, 2025
Time: 2:00PM
Location: Boyd Conference Room, Conley Hall

Members Present: Ed Toman (virtual), Sarita Rhonemus (Virtual), Jack Sheffler, Mike Hastings

Absent: William Cole, Rebecca Peterson

Guests: Randall Price, Cathy Deeb, Charlie Cole, Darrel Malamisura, Amy Harrison (virtual)

1. Call to Order:

Chair Ed Toman called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

2. HLC Prep Committee Update – Dr. Sarita Rhonemus (See attached)

- Reported receipt of the HLC Action Letter from July 1, 2025.
- HLC accepted the Focus Visit Team's recommendations on Core Components 2A, 2C, 4A, 4B, and 5A.
- Embedded monitoring required during the April 13–14, 2026 comprehensive site visit.
 - The President and Provost reminded the committee that the site visit in April will be very similar to the site visit from two years ago where the committee meets both in groups and individually with members of the campus community.
- Emphasis on shared governance; evidence must align across board, administration, faculty, and staff.
- Prep Committee meetings will resume biweekly starting September 19, 2025 (with virtual option). A scheduling poll will be sent to members. Dr. Rhonemus will share the members of the prep committee. The committee is the same committee that was created during the initial HLC visit.

3. Enrollment Numbers – Fall 2025 (See attached)

- Headcount up by 116 students compared to Fall 2024.
 - New students: +102
 - Transfers: +35
 - Provisional admits: +12 (20+ more pending entry)
 - Readmits: –17 (task force forming to address issue).
- Full-Time Equivalency (FTE): 1,112.74 (target: 981).
- Final census will be reported October 15, 2025.
- Chair noted improvement was the strongest in 15 years; next challenge is retention and student success. The University has a retention plan that is outlined in the minutes from the Enrollment and Student Affairs committee that met on the same day August 21, 2025.

4. College Updates – Faculty Hires and Declines (See attached)

- Arts, Education & Social Sciences – no positions advertised this cycle.

- Health Sciences – Difficulty filling Respiratory Therapy Clinical Coordinator due to salary competition (candidates declined). Accreditation requires full staffing before program launch.
- Accounting – Finalist declined after spouse refused relocation. Covered temporarily, but another search is needed.
- STEM – Hires included physics faculty and Mining Engineering Technology director. Candidate in Computer Science declined due to low salary offer.
- Concerns:
 - Heavy faculty overloads (e.g., Dean Bennett at 29 credit hours).
 - Adjunct reliance nearly 50% (should be 25%). Both issues pose accreditation risks.
 - Committee discussed pursuing endowed chairs to make salaries more competitive.

The committee discussed the need for the University to focus on hiring these critical positions. The committee suggested that the University create an action plan and hold themselves accountable to doing what is needed to hire the right faculty members to address the concerns highlighted in the minutes. The provost will create the action plan and work with the President. The plan and progress toward meeting the plan will become part of the committee report going forward.

5. Curriculum Changes (See attached)

- Updated Foundational Skills for the 21st Century (general education course).
- Revised Building Successful College Skills course.
- Modified two Special Education courses:
 - SPED 318 – *Methods of Instruction for Exceptional Learners*
 - Reading 364 – *Assessing and Supporting Literacy in Special Education*

6. BOG Training & Membership

- Institution will join Association of Governing Boards (AGB) this academic year, fulfilling HLC recommendations. Once the registration for AGB is completed, the University will share the login credentials and training opportunities with the Board.
- Membership will provide training resources for Board members.

7. Dates & Times for BOG Interaction

- Open Forums:
 - December 18, 2025 – 2:00 p.m., Student Center
 - April 23, 2026 – 2:00 p.m., Student Center
- College Visits:
 - Begin October 2025 with the College of Arts, Education, and Social Sciences.
 - Will rotate through all colleges.

8. Other Business



- Announcement: WV House and Senate Education Committees will visit Bluefield State on November 3, 2025 (following meetings in Pipestem). Focus will be on Teacher Education, Nursing, and STEM programs. Students will be highlighted during the visit.

9. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.