

Board of Governors Meeting Minutes
Basic Science Building, Room G08
Thursday, November 6, 4:00 PM

Members Present: Mr. Bill Cole, Mr. Charlie Cole (Virtual), Ms. Cathy Deeb, Mr. Mike Hastings, Mr. Tim McKenzie, Mr. Shannon Remines, Mr. Luke Roberts, Mr. Jack Sheffler, Mr. Anthony Tolley.

Members Absent: Mr. Randy Price, Mr. Ed Toman

Guests: Mr. Ryan Bailey, Mr. Josh Grubb, Dr. Deirdre Guyton, Mrs. Cynthia Higgins-Atwell, Mr. Steven Jarvis, Dr. Darrin Martin, Dr. Amanda Matoushek, Dr. Sarita Rhonemus, Ms. Christina Sammarco, Mr. Ron Shidemantle, Mr. Andrew Vance.

Virtual: Ms. Lisa Brooks, Mrs. Karen Grogan, Dr. Sudhakar Jamkhandi, Mr. Johnny Jenkins, Mrs. Marviene Johnson, Dr. Angela Lambert, Ms. Marsha Lawson, Mr. Earl Lee, Jr.; Ms. Julie Orr, Mrs. Gabby Ponder, Ms. Terene Stiltner, Mr. Brodderick Tucker, Mr. Darrel Malamisura, Ms. Melisa McGuire, Mrs. Terry Thompson, Mrs. Angie Wassum

1. Call to Order and Chair Remarks

Vice Chair Cathy Deeb called the meeting to order and welcomed attendees. She extended appreciation to the **College of Arts and Sciences** for their presentation highlighting student learning and engagement initiatives. She also thanked Board members who attended the HEPC Board of Governors retreat in Charleston, West Virginia, noting the valuable sessions on AI, Policy, and Leadership.

President **Dr. Darrin Martin** shared a video featuring **Bluefield State student Kelly Williams**, who attended the **Afro Tech Conference** in Houston representing the University. Dr. Martin praised Williams' accomplishments and also noted that **four other Bluefield State students** won a **\$10,000 Disney on the Yard Innovation Challenge** scholarship.

He also recognized recent **legislative visits** from the House and Senate Education Committees, highlighting student-led presentations demonstrating Bluefield State's academic excellence and hands-on learning.

2. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

The minutes from the previous meeting were reviewed and approved. No changes or comments were noted. A motion was made by Mr. Bill Cole and was seconded by Mr. Mike Hastings. The motion carried unanimously.

3. President's Report – Dr. Martin

President Dr. Darrin Martin emphasized the University's ongoing commitment to showcasing student success stories and expanding statewide visibility. He cited the Chancellor's

encouragement to share Bluefield State's achievements beyond the region through media and public engagement.

Mr. Anthony Tolley commented that he likes the presentation about the BSU students. Mr. Bill Cole asked what the follow up will be and whether the University would prioritize communication about BSU student success and highlights through PR, social media, and other means. President Martin affirmed the board's sentiments and reiterated the University's commitment to showcasing student success stories.

4. Standing Reports

Academic Update – Dr. Sarita Rhonemus

Dr. Sarita Rhonemus noted the following:

- Registration days were held last week. Successful **registration events** with an increase in continuing student enrollment with a total of more than 200.
- Participation in **House Bill 3024** committees, focused on improving **transferability of academic credits** across West Virginia institutions.
- Work toward implementing campus safety and infrastructure initiatives.
- Reported progress on faculty-led initiatives and upcoming academic program reviews.

Finance and Budget – Mrs. Cynthia Higgins-Atwell

- Mrs. Cynthia Higgins-Atwell presented the **annual budget report** and announced that the **University received a clean audit** for the fiscal year. There were no questions or comments.

Safety and Security – Mr. Brent Benjamin

Mr. Brent Benjamin reported on the following:

- Reported the appointment of Mr. Tony Palmer as **Campus Police Chief** and the addition of **private security**.
- Addressed issues of unlocked exterior doors and campus speeding.
- Expressed appreciation to **faculty and staff volunteers** serving as **building monitors** for safety drills.
- Discussed plans to explore a **dedicated campus safety and training officer**, potentially in partnership with **Concord University**.

Mr. Jack Sheffler reiterated the importance of having drills and reminded Mr. Benjamin that Concord University has had success with safety drills and encouraged BSU to borrow ideas and tactics from them.

Enrollment Update – Mr. Ron Shidemantle

Mr. Ron Shidemantle reported current **enrollment is at 1,400 students**, with an **FTE of 1,045** representing growth over last year.

- Applications for Fall 2026 are up **45%** from the prior year, and student acceptances are up **87%**, noting that we have received 574 applications with 152 of these accepted.
- Housing remains strong, with students in **A and B cottages** and temporary housing at the **Quality Inn**. Cottages C and D will be ready in the Spring Semester.

Mr. Hastings asked for an update on how many students are staying at the Quality Inn overflow housing. Mr. Shidemantle confirmed that 47 students are currently there. Mr. Shidemantle confirmed that there would be approximately 35 more students in overflow housing once cottages C and D are online for Spring. Mr. Shidemantle reminded the board that there is attrition through the Fall and Spring and that the final number of students remaining in Quality Inn overflow will change as students come and go leading up to the Spring semester.

5. Faculty Representative Updates – Mr. Jack Sheffler

Mr. Jack Sheffler noted improved **class sizes and engagement** across departments and praised the institution's positive classroom atmosphere.

6. Staff Representative Updates – Mr. Tim McKenzie

Mr. Tim McKenzie shared appreciation for student collaboration and staff involvement in campus projects. Mr. McKenzie reiterated his excitement and pride for the four students recognized recently with scholarship awards for the Disney on the Yard Innovation Challenge.

7. Student Representative Updates – Mr. Luke Roberts

Mr. Luke Roberts reported on the following:

- Announced that the **student food pantry** has a new dedicated room in the Student Center, supported by community partners.
- Reported SGA's ongoing initiatives, including **Pizza with the Provost (November 12)**, new **student events** (eight were held this semester), and the **Clock Tower Project** location. Currently planning the clock tower be placed near Mahood Hall.
- Proposed forming an **ROTC chapter** on campus and expanding **alumni spotlight programs**.
- Discussed potential **class gift** for 2025 and a **student game room** in the MEC building.

8. Director of Community Outreach – Mr. Garry Moore

No report.

9. Foundation Report – Dr. Deirdre Guyton

Dr. Deirdre Guyton confirmed the Foundation's financial report and clean audit. There were no questions or comments.

10. New Business

Approval for 30-Day Notice – Policy Updates

The Board reviewed four policies submitted through Dr. Sarita Rhonemus as either new policies or revised policies. Mr. Bill Cole made the motion to approve the following for **30-day public comment** prior to final adoption at the **December 18, 2025 meeting**. Mr. Anthony Tolley seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

- **New Policy:** Academic Objectives
- **New Policy:** Title IX
- **Revisions to:**
 - BG-102 – Policy Making
 - BG-60 – Credit for Prior Learning

Approval of Strategic Plan

The Board unanimously voted to approve the Strategic Plan. The University will develop a rollout plan to all University stakeholders. Progress related to strategic plan priorities will be reported the Board at least semi-annually.

Approval of CM-302 – Naming or Renaming of Buildings and Organizational Units

- Mr. Brent Benjamin shared from the public comments related to CM-302. The comments mainly expressed concerns about the University renaming buildings at the University which have significant historic significance.
- The policy requires the **President to consider historical significance** before recommending name changes. Mr. Charlie Cole shared that he thinks the revised policy has enough safeguards built in to ensure historic significance and preservation is maintained.
- Board members affirmed that **only the Board has authority to rename facilities**, with provisions to reverse decisions if future issues arise.
- Mr. Bill Cole made a motion to approve the policy revision, Mr. Anthony Tolley seconded the motion, and The Board unanimously approved **Policy CM-302**, aligning with other state institutions, ensuring the **preservation of historic and heritage sites** on campus.

11. Announcements and Comments

- Members discussed historical building preservation and donor naming considerations.
- Chair Charlie Cole commended the administration for enrollment growth, fiscal stability, and student engagement.

12. Executive Session

Mr. Anthony Tolley voted to move the board to executive session, Mr. Jack Sheffler seconded the motion, and the Board entered **executive session** at 4:51 PM to discuss personnel, real estate, and legal matters permitted under **W.Va. Code §6-9A-4**. The Board exited Executive Session at 5:21 PM.

13. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:22 PM.