

**Board of Governors Meeting Minutes**  
**Boyd Conference Room**  
**Thursday, March 5, 2026, 4:00 PM**

**Members Present:** Mr. Bill Cole (Virtual), Ms. Cathy Deeb, Mr. Mike Hastings, Mr. Tim McKenzie, Mr. Randy Price, Mr. Shannon Remines (Virtual), Mr. Jack Sheffler, Mr. Ed Toman (Virtual), Mr. Anthony Tolley (Virtual)

**Members Absent:** Mr. Charlie Cole

Guests: Mr. Luccio D'Alessio, Mrs. Cynthia Higgins-Atwell, Mr. Sam Berry, Mr. Brent Benjamin, Mr. Paul Davis, Mr. Robbie Faulds, Ms. Vanessa Godfrey, Mr. Josh Grubb, Dr. Deirdre Guyton, Mrs. Carolyn Jamkhandi, Dr. Sudhakar Jamkhandi, Dr. Angela Lambert (Virtual), Dr. Ted Lewis, Mr. Richard Livingston, Dr. Darrin Martin, Mr. Ansel Ponder (Virtual), Dr. Sarita Rhonemus, Mr. Brodderick Tucker.

**1. Call to Order and Chair Remarks**

Ms. Cathy Deeb called the meeting of the Bluefield State University Board of Governors to order at 4:00 PM.

**2. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

The minutes from the previous meeting were reviewed and approved. Mr. Bill Cole made the motion to approve the minutes and Mr. Mike Hastings seconded the motion. No changes or comments were noted. The minutes were approved as presented.

**3. President's Report – Dr. Darrin Martin**

**CIAA Tournament and Recruitment**

Dr. Martin reported on participation in the **CIAA Tournament**, noting that the event includes recruitment opportunities and professional meetings beyond basketball competition.

- Approximately **2,500–3,000 prospective students** engaged with the institution at recruitment events.
- Admissions staff conducted on-site acceptances and outreach activities.
- Institutional visibility at the event increased significantly compared to previous years.

**Athletics Recognition**

Several athletic accomplishments were recognized:

- **Golf Team** – Coach Sam Berry was recognized and he noted that the golf team was CIAA Conference Champion last year, also a regional competitor, ranking third in the region.

- **Women’s Basketball Team** – Coach Paul Davis was recognized. The women’s basketball team is regular season conference champions and leading several CIAA statistical categories.
- **Men’s Basketball Team** – Coach Luccio D’Alessio was recognized. The men’s basketball team had a strong performance including another CIAA finals appearance.

Administration praised coaches and student-athletes for their sportsmanship, academic focus, and representation of the institution.

## **Campus Operations**

President Martin acknowledged the campus maintenance team for their work managing snow and ice removal during recent severe winter weather conditions.

## **Giving Day**

The Annual Giving Day will be April 29. All board members were encouraged to give. The goal is to have 100% participation from the board and cabinet members.

## **Legislative Relations**

The administration reported productive meetings with legislators in Charleston to strengthen institutional relationships and advocate for higher education priorities.

## **Enrollment Growth**

The institution continues to experience enrollment growth:

- Approximately **3.5% increase over the previous year**
- Projected **7% increase** for the upcoming cycle
- Estimated **20% growth over two and a half years**

## **4. Standing Reports**

### **4.1 Academic Affairs Update – Dr. Sarita Rhonemus**

Key updates included:

- **Higher Learning Commission (HLC)** site visits scheduled:
  - Visit regarding a **Master’s in Engineering Technology** program.
  - **Comprehensive accreditation visit** scheduled for April 13–14.
- Education program accreditation visit completed with **three recommendations but no findings**.
- Nursing program initiatives and outreach activities continue to strengthen institutional reputation.

- **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)** program assisted **142 tax filers** as of March 2.
- Marketing and entrepreneurship students are partnering with the **Granada Theater** on a project proposal.

A positive letter was received from a patient praising nursing students who participated in a clinical experience, highlighting their professionalism and compassion.

#### **4.2 Finance and Budget – Mrs. Cynthia Higgins-Atwell**

Updates included:

- Budget and cash flow are monitored weekly.
- Opening of the **Student Union** was delayed due to plumbing and freezer issues; opening is now planned after spring break.

#### **4.3 Safety and Security – Mr. Brent Benjamin**

Several safety initiatives are underway:

- Fire alarm testing and emergency preparedness drills.
- Expansion of building safety monitors and training.
- Active shooter training launched for employees.
- Collaboration with **Bluefield Police Department** for campus safety exercises.
- A **\$1.1 million grant** was secured to improve campus safety infrastructure including:
  - Video surveillance
  - Keyless entry systems.

#### **4.4 Enrollment Update – Mr. Josh Grubb**

Enrollment projections remain positive:

- Current application funnel shows strong growth.
- Transfer applications have **doubled compared to last year**.
- New student enrollment could reach **600+ incoming students** if current trends continue.

Admissions teams are conducting **on-site acceptances at high schools** and preparing for **Mercer County Public Schools Days** on campus April 30 and May 1.

#### **Faculty Representative Updates – Mr. Jack Sheffler**

Mr. Sheffler would like to see 100% of faculty participate in giving day.

#### **Staff Representative Updates**

Mr. Tim McKenzie noted that a flex schedule is in discussion for employees for the Summer.

## **Student Representative Update**

There were no student representative updates.

## **4.5 Foundation Report – Dr. Deirdre Guyton**

Upcoming initiatives include:

- **Scholarship Mixer:** April 8 – Will be held at the Student Union
- **Giving Week:** April 27 – May 1
- **Annual Giving Day:** April 29

The annual fund currently holds approximately **\$65,000.00**

## **5. Unfinished Business**

### **Policy BG-102 – Policymaking**

The policy was revised to require an additional **30-day comment period** if a proposed policy is substantially modified after the original comment period.

Mr. Randy Price made a motion to adopt the revised policy. Mr. Mike Hastings seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

## **6. New Business**

### **6.1 Deferred Maintenance – Medical Education Center**

The Board approved using approximately **\$200,000 remaining from previous maintenance funds** to repair sections of the Medical Education Center roof. Mr. Bill Cole made a motion to reallocate these funds and Mr. Randy Price seconded the motion.

### **6.2 Approval of 2026–2027 Tuition and Fees**

Recommendations included:

- **No increase in undergraduate tuition and fees**
- Graduate MBA program tuition set at **\$475 per credit hour**
- Online undergraduate programs proposed at **\$375 per credit hour**
- **Cottage housing rates** to have a slight increase and those students required to take the 100-meal plan.
- **Meal plan costs** increased by approximately **5%** due to food cost increases.

Mr. Randy Price made a motion to accept these recommendations and Mr. Bill Cole seconded the motion.

### **6.3 Metro Rate – Maryland**

The Board approved including **Maryland** within the institution's metro tuition rate to strengthen recruitment partnerships. Mr. Mike Hastings made a motion to accept and Mr. Bill Cole seconded the motion.

### **6.4 Cottage Renaming**

The Board discussed renaming campus cottages, including donor recognition opportunities and regional-themed names. Mr. Bill Cole made a motion to accept and Mr. Mike Hastings seconded the motion.

### **6.5 Post-Tenure Review Procedure**

An outdated administrative procedure related to post-tenure review was officially removed following previous policy changes.

### **6.6 Board of Governors Self-Evaluation**

Board members were reminded to complete the board self-evaluation to support accreditation requirements.

## **7. Announcements**

General announcements were provided regarding ongoing initiatives, recruitment efforts, and campus improvements.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:16 PM and entered in Executive Session.

## **8. Executive Session**

The Board of Governors entered into Executive Session at 5:16 PM. No votes were taken and the meeting adjourned at 5:37 PM.