

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: Thursday, February 19, 2026
Time: 4:00 PM
Location: Boyd Conference Room, Conley Hall

Members Present: Mr. Charlie Cole (Virtual), Ms. Cathy Deeb, Mr. Randy Price.

Guests: Mr. Bill Cole, Dr. Darrin Martin, Mr. Brent Benjamin, Mr. Josh Grubb,

1. Call to Order:

Mr. Charlie Cole called the meeting to order at 3:57 PM in the Boyd Conference Room.

2. Updates

a. President's Update

- **Enrollment Growth**
 - Enrollment increased 3.5% during his first year as interim president.
 - Increased 9.5% the following year.
 - Currently projecting an additional 7% increase.
 - Overall growth trend reflects approximately 13% growth over the past two years.
 - Bluefield is among very few institutions in West Virginia experiencing sustained enrollment growth.

- **Admissions & Online Programs**
 - Plan to add personnel to the admissions team, including a staff member dedicated to online learning.
 - Institution is restructuring online offerings to create fully online programs.
 - Targeted online expansions include BSN, MBA, and Mining Engineering.
 - Goal to launch enhanced online programs in Fall 2026.

- **Department of Energy Collaboration**
 - A group will visit Oak Ridge, Tennessee to tour and explore collaboration opportunities with the U.S. Department of Energy.
 - Potential collaboration would allow faculty and students to retool DOE innovations for new applications.
 - Opportunity may include patents for faculty and students.
 - Long-term goal includes expanding collaboration to include the Cole School of Business for marketing support.

- Ethan Harvey (recent graduate) has been hired to help lead this initiative.

- **Legislative Engagement**

- Ongoing presence at the West Virginia Legislature (1–3 visits per week during session).
- Proposal submitted for **\$10 million** in funding for Tiffany Manor.
- Meetings held with key legislative leadership including the President of the Senate and committee chairs.
- Emphasis placed on:
 - Being debt-free.
 - Enrollment growth.
 - Institutional stability and momentum.
 - Prior capital investments and balance sheet strength.
- Senator Shelley Moore Capito expressed support and awareness of the Tiffany Manor request.

At the request of Mr. Bill Cole, Dr. Martin will prepare a concise one-page summary highlighting key institutional strengths for legislative use.

- **b. BOG Self Evaluation**

Mr. Charlie Cole discussed the Board of Governors self-assessment required for reporting to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). The HLC site visit is scheduled for April 11–12.

- A document containing “thought starters” and examples of Board actions was prepared to assist members in completing the survey.
- Members discussed whether sharing examples could be perceived as a “cheat sheet.” Consensus was that the document reflects factual actions and serves as a reminder, not direction.
- Committee agreed to circulate the document to the full Board as reference material and request prompt completion of the self-assessment.
- One area acknowledged for improvement: faculty and staffing levels in certain departments.

- **c. University Housing/Expansion Plan – Updates**

Key discussion points:

- Current design includes centralized bathroom facilities with 51 beds in Building I.
- Architect indicated that adding private bathrooms to each room would reduce capacity to approximately 25 beds.
- Committee discussed:
 - Market competitiveness and student expectations.
 - Preference for quality over quantity.
 - Potential design alternatives (Jack-and-Jill configurations, egress considerations).

- Estimated cost remains approximately \$1.8 million.
- Consensus: Dr. Martin will reconvene with the architect to further explore bathroom configuration options and code requirements before proceeding.

d. Cottage Naming Proposal

The Committee reviewed naming plans for campus cottages.

- One cottage will be named in honor of the Paul and Carol Cole family.
- Remaining cottages will receive neutral placeholder names (e.g., East River Cottage, Ridge Runner Cottage, Coalfield Cottage, Bluestone Cottage).
- Naming structure will allow future donor sponsorship opportunities.
- Committee discussed establishing time-limited naming agreements (e.g., 10-year term with renewal option).

e. Post Tenure Review

Dr. Martin noted inconsistencies between the Tenure Policy and the Post-Tenure Review Policy.

- Revision required to align policies.
- Language will be updated to emphasize improvement plans rather than punitive measures.
- Revised policy will be brought forward for Board review and comment.

f. March BOG Agenda Review

- Resolution to reallocate deferred maintenance funds.
- Cottage evaluation update.
- Alumni report (if available).
- Post-tenure policy revisions (pending).
- Discussion of moving Board member comments to the beginning of meetings for efficiency.

3. Board Membership & Legislative Matters

- Four Board members will rotate off in June.
- One nominee (Chaz Cole) is pending appointment by the Governor.
- Committee discussed need to recruit at least three additional candidates.
- Members will circulate potential names for consideration.



- Brief discussion held regarding proposed legislative changes affecting staff/student voting representation; bill remains in committee.

4. Executive Session

No executive session was entered.

5. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made and approved.
Meeting adjourned at approximately 5:04 PM.

