

West Virginia University
at Parkersburg
and
HB 3215

A Briefing Paper



West Virginia University at Parkersburg Briefing

Overview

State-supported higher education began in Parkersburg in 1961 with the development of a branch campus of West Virginia University, evolved to the establishment of a free-standing community college, and completed the circle with WVU at Parkersburg being designated a WVU regional campus in 1989. In responding to the educational needs of its service area, WVU Parkersburg has broadened its scope through continually reinventing itself. Recent state legislation redefines the affiliation between WVU Parkersburg and WVU.

Background

In late 2008, the WV Legislature introduced HB 3215 to create a statewide network of independently accredited community and technical colleges under the jurisdiction of the WV Community and Technical College Council. WVU Parkersburg was included in the legislation. The bill's original wording:

- removed WVU Parkersburg from WVU's governance structure,
- limited WVU Parkersburg's offering of bachelor's degrees to those currently offered, and
- established a separate Board of Governors for the Parkersburg campus

Area citizens, business leaders, students and the Mid-Ohio Valley legislative delegation reacted negatively to the proposed change. Students expressed concern that baccalaureate education would no longer be available at WVU Parkersburg, that the institution's name would change and their diplomas would not reflect the WVU name. Community leaders viewed the change as taking the institution backward. Public sentiment was high. Retaining the WVU affiliation was strongly encouraged.

WV Gov. Joe Manchin assured the Mid-Ohio Valley that Parkersburg's relationship with WVU would continue. The legislation passed, effective July 1, 2008. It created the statewide community college network, including WVU Parkersburg; established community college boards of governors and included enabling language regarding delivery of services from former sponsoring institutions. The legislation's final language related to WVU Parkersburg provided:

- The college is an independently accredited state institution of higher education
- An association with West Virginia University may continue
- Bachelor's degrees may continue to be offered by WVU Parkersburg and additional ones may be implemented; additional degrees may also be brokered from other institutions
- WVU Parkersburg's unique role as a higher education center may continue and expand.

WVU Parkersburg faces the challenges of addressing the changes resulting from the legislation, such as payment for services and the institution's name. WVU and WVU Parkersburg are in discussions regarding the coordination of collaborations/services. At its April 24, 2009 meeting, the WVU Board of Governors approved a Memorandum of Understanding and a Trademark/Licensing agreement for the Parkersburg campus. The WVU Parkersburg Board of Governors met April 27th, 2009 and decided to conduct open forums and make available an on-line survey to collect community opinion regarding the college's name.

WVU Parkersburg's Board of Governors is seeking input from the institution's students, faculty and staff as well as the Mid-Ohio Valley as what direction is in the best interest of the Parkersburg campus.

The College's Evolution

Parkersburg Branch of West Virginia University: 1961-63

West Virginia University-Parkersburg Center: 1963-71

Parkersburg Community College: 1971-1989

West Virginia University at Parkersburg: 1989-

WVU Branch. The citizens of Wood County initiated a campaign in the late 1950s to establish a public-supported higher education institution in the Parkersburg area. The state Legislature authorized the establishment of branch campuses in 1961. Following action by the Board of Governors of WVU, the Parkersburg Branch of WVU opened in September 1961, in an abandoned elementary schoolhouse. With 104 students and six faculty members, the branch offered general education courses for transfer to WVU.

A College Built by Citizens. The college became and remains the only state-supported institution in West Virginia funded by a local initiative as a result of efforts by area residents. A \$3.6 million bond issue was passed by Wood County voters in 1965 to build an educational complex on land provided by the Wood County Court. The institution's name changed to West Virginia University-Parkersburg Center in 1966.

Community College Establishment. The West Virginia Board of Regents established the institution as a comprehensive community college in 1971. Parkersburg Community College offered a range of courses in college-parallel, technical and occupational programs as well as community services. PCC established its Jackson County Center in nearby Ripley in 1974.

Regional Campus. In 1989 the state Legislature renamed the college as West Virginia University at Parkersburg as part of legislation which revamped the state's higher education governance structure. The institution was designated a regional campus of WVU. The Parkersburg campus' president was appointed a regional vice president of WVU.

Future Institutional Role Studied. The promise of baccalaureate degrees being available through WVU Parkersburg and the positive linkage with WVU resulted in a 15 percent increase in enrollment in fall 1989. At the direction of the Legislature, the state's Secretary of Education and the Arts undertook a study to determine the institution's future role. Submitted to the Legislature in 1990, the resulting study recommended that the institution develop and implement selected baccalaureate programs.

Mission Approved. The University of West Virginia Board of Trustees approved the college's mission statement in December 1990. The institution was approved to offer selected bachelor's degrees by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools in 1991.

About the College. Located on a 126-acre tract, the WVU Parkersburg campus is four miles east of Parkersburg. Because of its industrial base, Parkersburg has a high demand for customized training and the college serves as a regional workforce development hub. WVU Parkersburg develops and implements programs to assist area business and industry in nurturing their workforce skills. Close to 4,000 students enroll in courses each semester at the Parkersburg commuter campus with approximately 700 of those students attending its Jackson County Center. The Parkersburg campus offers affordable, convenient higher education opportunities tailored to demand-indicated needs in a student-centered environment. Its community college and baccalaureate tuition is the lowest in the state.

High-Tech Delivery. In responding to service area needs, WVU Parkersburg has sought creative partnerships and collaborations. The Caperton Center for Applied Technology on the Parkersburg campus represents collaboration among the college, Wood County Schools, and area business, industry and labor. Through a one-of-its-kind partnership between public and higher education, the college and the public school system share facilities, faculty, and curriculum. WVU Parkersburg has active articulation agreements with every vocational/technical center in the state's public education system.

WVU Connection. WVU Parkersburg's association with WVU has focused on access. The Parkersburg campus extends WVU's capacity to fulfill its statewide mission by responding to the educational needs of the Mid-Ohio Valley. WVU Parkersburg accomplishes this through delivery of a blend of technical, transfer and baccalaureate programs as well as the availability of WVU graduate offerings. Since becoming a part of WVU in 1989, WVU Parkersburg integrated many back-office operations with WVU resulting in efficiencies, collaborative resources, and shared expertise.

Unique Mission. WVU Parkersburg is the fifth largest public higher education institution in the state. The Parkersburg campus is the only community college in West Virginia accredited to offer baccalaureate programs; it currently offers six bachelor's degrees.

As an open admission institution, WVU Parkersburg serves as a "close to home" entry point to WVU for those area residents who may be geographically, culturally and/or economically placebound. Students have options: they may complete certificate or associate programs and enter the job market; they may complete one or two years at WVU Parkersburg and transfer to WVU or other institutions or they may pursue baccalaureate degrees locally.

Serving the Mid-Ohio Valley. WVU Parkersburg serves the west central counties of Jackson, Pleasants, Ritchie, Roane, Tyler, Wirt and Wood.