

MINUTES  
WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY AT PARKERSBURG  
BOARD OF GOVERNORS  
August 12, 2020

A regular meeting of the West Virginia University at Parkersburg Board of Governors was held on Wednesday August 12, 2020, via Zoom Video Conferencing, beginning at 3:15 p.m. Board members present were: Donna Smith, Steve Hardman, Joe Oliverio, Sam Winans, Jeff Matheny, Jason Landers, John Denbigh, JP Hushion, Stephanie McCoy, Rose Beebe, Kim McFee, Elaina Segsworth. Others present included Dr. Chris Gilmer and Brady Whipkey.

Guests present included administrators, faculty and staff.

**1. Call to Order**

Ms. Smith, Chair of the WVU at Parkersburg Board of Governors, called the meeting to order.

**2. Swearing in of New Board Member**

Debbie Richards, Director of Policy and Compliance, conducted the swearing in of new Board members, Kim McFee, Rose Beebe, and Elaina Segsworth.

**3. Roll Call**

Roll Call was taken by Brady Whipkey, Chief of Staff to the President and Secretary to the Board of Governors, noting that a quorum was present.

**4. President's Report**

President Gilmer delivered the following report:

Oprah Winfrey said: "Challenges are gifts that force us to search for a new center of gravity. Don't fight them. Just find a new way to stand." While I would never call this devastating pandemic a gift, it has forced us to find a new center of gravity and proven to us as a community and an extended family that together we have the capacity to stand against any challenge. Governors, I could not be more pleased to commend to you the students, employees, and friends of West Virginia University at Parkersburg who have amazed me every day during this time of unprecedented difficulty with their creativity, their perseverance, their generosity of spirit, their versatility, and their love and support for one another. It is beautiful to watch and reassures me of the goodness and invincibility of the human spirit against great odds. I thank each of them for their contributions, too many to name, and each of you for the unwavering support of this Board.

Allow me to start with the most exciting news on a day when I have quite a lot of exciting news. This Board is aware that it has been my goal from the beginning of my tenure to offer high-quality, low-cost, accessible healthcare to the WVUP community. I am delighted to inform you that the Board of Directors of Coplin Health Systems has voted to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with WVUP to explore the likely possibility of opening a campus-based primary care clinic on our Parkersburg campus in the location formerly occupied by the Early Learning Center. Later in this meeting, I will be asking this Board to authorize me to enter into an exploratory MOU with Coplin for

this purpose. Coplin is partially funded through federal grants which allow it to offer deeply discounted primary health services on a sliding scale beginning at five dollars and based on a client's ability to pay. If you approve this request, I will work with the WVU Parkersburg Foundation to develop a pool of funding to meet sliding scale and insurance co-pays so that we can hopefully provide free onsite healthcare to our students and their families, and free or reduced cost healthcare to our employees and their families. Students and employees from both the Parkersburg and Jackson County campuses will be able to receive services, and I judge this potential partnership to be one of the greatest benefits we will ever have the chance to offer to our students and employees. Access to healthcare should be an unalienable right of citizenship, but sadly, it is not, especially in socio-economically challenged and rural locations. This is an opportunity for us to set right that societal injustice, at least for the WVUP family.

Next, when you gave me this opportunity for leadership, I promised you that we would launch the most aggressive and successful grant-writing campaign in the history of WVUP and that we would solicit and secure a significant increase in private donations to the University and to our Foundation. In two years, from July 2018 through July 2020, I am delighted to report that we have secured 57 grants totaling more than \$5.7 million and more than \$600,000 in additional donations to our Foundation. At my inauguration, I announced the WVU Parkersburg Proud campaign and promised that we would raise \$3 million in three years, the most ambitious and specific fundraising campaign in our history. Less than two-thirds of the way to the three-year mark, we have already secured approximately \$6.3 million including the largest single gift from a national foundation in the University's history, \$1.8 million from the Arnold Foundation. There was some legitimate concern in the beginning that a rural community college/university hybrid without a proven history of proactive fundraising would be able to achieve this goal, but we have more than doubled the goal and are ready to take on an even more ambitious one as part of our 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday year in 2021. This accomplishment is nothing short of amazing, and in one way or another, every single member of the University community deserves credit for achieving it, all of which we have done to enhance our services to our students, to build a better work environment for our employees, and to create more service opportunities for the University to reach out to the Mid-Ohio Valley and far beyond. I was always confident that we could deliver these results; however, my next point of WVUP Pride is frankly one I feared not to have in the middle of a pandemic.

I also promised you when I came that we would stabilize and turn the tide on enrollment after a seven-year substantial decline in enrollment. I knew this would be a challenge in a time when the number of high school graduates is declining nationally and statewide, when competition for students is increasing, and when the value proposition of a college education is harder to demonstrate to families than when I was a college student. I also saw immediately that WVUP would offer us many unique tools and competitive advantages, and that has proven to be true. In the first and second years, we stabilized and slightly increased enrollment. We put into place a new Strategic Recruitment Plan which will serve as the basis for a new comprehensive Strategic Plan to be developed this fall, and then in March of this year, COVID-19 came calling. We were forced to immediately shift to virtual instruction and to effectively close our campus facilities for a period of more than four months. If you survey what is happening nationally and statewide in higher education, it might as well have been four years for the amount of

harm it has done to higher education infrastructure and to student recruitment and retention.

Three months ago, I freely confess I was terrified that the horror stories I am hearing from other presidents about the potential for a 25% or even a 50% decrease in summer and fall enrollment might be something we could not avoid at WVUP. I knew we would fight for every student and use every tool at our disposal, but frankly, I was not sure it would be enough. Then I did what I always do. I showed my heart to this community, both my optimism for what we can accomplish as a team and my very real fear about the worst possible outcome, and we went to work harder than we have ever worked before. I am delighted to tell you that summer school saw a 10% overall increase in Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) enrollment, up 82% in Early College students, 149% in new student enrollment, 61% in transfer enrollment, and even a 1% increase in continuing students. This we did in the middle of a pandemic with one hand tied behind our back in that it all had to be done virtually and with campus facilities effectively closed.

While it will be a month before we have accurate and final enrollment numbers for fall 2020, and while I do not want to offer too much specificity with incomplete statistics, we are up 17% FTE in new student enrollment compared to the final new student enrollment for fall 2019. We are at 97% FTE enrollment of continuing students compared to final fall 2019. Overall, we are at 92% total FTE enrollment compared to this day fall 2019 with two weeks in the enrollment cycle still remaining and the vast majority of our Early College students committed, but so far unregistered. I always believe in under promising and over delivering, and there is still time for new challenges to arise including the fact that a significant number of students who have registered have not yet settled their financial accounts for fall, but we are so far ahead of where I feared we might be that I could not pass up this opportunity to share the good news. After the first week of fall classes, we stand a real chance of achieving level enrollment compared to fall 2019, even in the middle of a pandemic and when few institutions of higher learning are within reach of this goal. Vice President Steve Smith and his recruitment team have proven that the new Strategic Recruitment Plan can work, because if it can work in this moment, it can work in any moment. Steve would like to recognize his recruitment team: Tess Martin, Kenna Warren, Austin Grimmett, and the late David Shutts. More offices than I can fully recognize led by Vice Presidents Crumbaker, Harris, Whipkey, and Jackson, including, but not limited to, the Professional Advising Center, the Center for Student Success, the Office of Financial Aid, the Office of the Registrar, the admissions team, the Tutoring Center, the Bookstore, the Business Office, the marketing team, every faculty member and every staff member on both of our campuses, seen and unseen, acknowledged and unacknowledged—these people and more have contributed to what not long ago seemed an unachievable goal. We wrote letters. We made phone calls. We sent text messages. We purchased billboards and created new television and radio commercials. We worked social media like we have never worked it before. The virus threw us a new and unexpected curve ball every day, and every day we found a new way to connect our bat with that curve ball. Now, we are on the verge of a home run with bases loaded, and even if we fall slightly short, no president has ever been prouder of his team. To that team, I remind every member: It's too soon to rest on our laurels. We have several more weeks of opportunity ahead of us, so please keep doing what you have been doing.

In an abundance of caution to protect the health and safety of those who learn and work here and to provide students and faculty with the maximum amount of preparation time, we were the first public institution of higher education in West Virginia to publicly announce our intention to conduct a virtual fall semester. Our virtual town hall meeting and press conference to make this announcement reached 5,221 people. We are actively considering new academic and workforce programs in cosmetology and agribusiness as well as a new program which would prepare graduates to better serve veterans. Overseen by Senta Goudy and supported by many others, we are days from harvesting our first crop of potatoes grown on Riverhawk Farm for Mister Bee potato chips, having proven the concept that appropriate potatoes can be grown locally with the intention of increasing our planting and partnering with other area farmers to become a significant supplier for Mister Bee in future years. Governors, I hope you all received a small sampling of those potatoes and a copy of the summer issue of *West Virginia Living* magazine in which this partnership received statewide attention. Also overseen by Dean Goudy, the Arts Collaborative of the Mid-Ohio Valley finished its virtual season of 12 variety show episodes attracting more than 7,000 engagements. Senta and I had the pleasure of showcasing the new WVUP on Market location in downtown Parkersburg on WTAP last week as we look forward to a physical grand opening whenever the pandemic allows, to which you will all be invited. Director of Special Events and Projects David Creel and the co-chairs are planning our 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration which will be the focal point of 2021 with the full committee and a slate of activities to be announced this fall.

We selected from a highly competitive and large pool our first class of ASCEND scholars who are matriculating this fall, one of only two institutions in the nation chosen by the Arnold Foundation this year to replicate the City University of New York's retention and completion model, under the direction of Provost Crumbaker and his team. Chad wishes to recognize the new ASCEND Director, Jennifer Forster, and everyone who supported this initiative. Both he and I also wish to commend the entire faculty for the thoughtful proposals developed to determine which courses could be offered fully online and which courses would require some face-to-face component. Approximately 25 percent of our students will experience some portion of at least one class face-to-face this fall with all social distancing protocols in place, primarily technical courses and labs. Chad also wishes to commend Chris Fahey, Jonah Fox, and Bill Minear for providing excellent training and consultation on technology-enabled learning over the summer. We hosted a signing ceremony for our first class of Constellium scholars earlier this week in Jackson County, and we have been selected by the Chancellor and Vice Chancellor of the WV Community and Technical College system to take the statewide lead in applying for a large federal Strengthening Community Colleges grant. Vice President Brady Whipkey and I continue to work toward a feasibility study on campus housing to be completed in coming months, and Brady wishes to commend his maintenance, security, and housekeeping teams which have done a stellar job keeping our facilities safe during this crisis. Brady and I have also recently both been named to the Board of Directors of the West Virginia Center for Civic Life. I had the honor of joining a group of about 20 college and educational association presidents convened by the Kettering Foundation for a national conversation on the future of higher education and the local honor of being elected President-Elect of the Rotary Club of Parkersburg. We are in the middle of faculty and staff development week with classes scheduled to start next Monday, and we held a successful faculty-staff virtual kickoff event on Monday

of this week. I will do an open Question and Answer session virtually at 9 a.m. on Friday of this week.

Our a4Media campaign totaled 638,000 impressions in July with a click-through rate of 30 percent compared to a national click-through rate of 6 percent. The video completion rate of this campaign in July was 97.9% meaning that almost all viewers watched the complete videos. Our digital campaign through NCM, America's Movie Network, delivered 1,493,706 impressions with an average click-through rate of 33%, and Vice President Torie Jackson and her team have peppered the Mid-Ohio Valley with exciting new billboards, television, and radio commercials. They have also succeeded at generating significant media placements for the good news of WVUP, evidenced by the media clippings file provided to this Board. Additionally, WVUP was recently named by readers of both the Parkersburg *News and Sentinel* and the *Marietta Times* as their annual Reader's Choice Award Winner for Best in Higher Education. We have won the Parkersburg award multiple times for which we are honored, but are especially pleased to be recognized for this award by readers in Marietta for the first time. Torie wishes to commend her team for their hard work

Through the use of Zoom, Chad notes that Janice McCue and her team in the Tutoring Center have conducted more tutoring sessions this summer than in any previous summer, and this team pulled together to manage the University's switchboard with additional help from student Paige Flanigan and employees Kristina Roberts and Pat Mollohan. Since the last Board meeting, our Professional Advising Center led by Dr. Cindy Gissy and staffed by a very devoted team has logged more than 2,000 advising contacts. Under the direction of Dean Michele Wilson and with partners across the University, our Workforce and Economic Development division submitted four new Learn and Earn grants in July, two already approved and two awaiting expected approval, which will bring our active Learn and Earn total to 15 grants. Most workforce development training has also had to be transitioned online with limited face-to-face training resuming this fall. Executive Vice President Alice Harris and her team are working to keep the Riverhawk Nation fed as more and more employees transition back into face-to-face work duties with the scheduled reopening of Ricky's Café on August 17. Alice wishes to commend her team for their hard work. Governors, all of these dedicated people and every person who was inadvertently not named, but who is equally appreciated, deserve your commendation.

Vice President for Enrollment and JCC Dean Steve Smith was recently elevated to a joint appointment as the Special Liaison to the President for Equity and Inclusion, and as such will lead the OPEN Task Force. Michele Wilson was promoted to Dean of Workforce and Economic Development, and Senta Goudy was promoted to Dean, Center for Civic Engagement, assuming the leadership of WVUP on Market. Bob Cooper was promoted to Executive Director of Facilities Management, and Nancy Harris was promoted to Executive Director, Alumni Relations and Career Services, combining the alumni and career services roles in keeping with national best practices.

As I begin my third year as your President, I thank this Board and the entire Riverhawk Nation for the confidence you have shown in me through a five-year contract extension. I end this report where I started it. Together, in this moment of deep challenge, we have found a new way to stand. If there are no questions and with respect to the Board, Madam Chair, this concludes my report.

## 5. **Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the Regular Board meeting of June 10, 2020 were approved upon a motion by Mr. Denbigh, seconded by Mr. Oliverio.

## 6. **Committee Reports**

- Executive Committee

Chairman Smith reported that the Executive Committee met to discuss the Coplin Clinic, enrollment, phased retirement, COVID-19 updates, campus housing feasibility study, and WVU Parkersburg Proud.

- Academic and Student Services Committee

Mr. Oliverio reported on the fall semester is mostly remote, retention initiatives, Academic Affairs and Support Services update, WVUP Ascend, Workforce and Economic Development updates on short term programs and business and industry, JCC updates and enrollment updates.

- Administrative Services Committee

Mr. Hardman reported on updates finance and administration, purchasing and contracts, financial aid, information technology, renovations to facilities and campus, marketing material, alumni update, Foundation updates, and Civic Engagement and Innovation update.

## 7. **Information Items**

- Fiscal Update

Ms. Harris provided a detailed report on the budget summary for July 31, 2020. With review and discussion, Ms. Harris answered questions from the members.

## 8. **Action Items**

- Approval of COVID-19 Protocols

President Gilmer, presented to the Board the proposed resolution for approval of the COVID-19 Protocols. President Gilmer discussed that WVU Parkersburg's primary commitment above all others is to ensure the health and safety of those who learn and work on our campuses. Toward that end, in consultation with the WVUP COVID-19 Task Force (inclusive of several members of this Board), the President's Executive Team, the leadership of the WV Community and Technical College System (CTCS), and local health authorities, President Gilmer has developed these protocols toward this purpose. The CTCS is asking that each governing board formally approve such protocols at the local level.

After review and discussion, Mr. Denbigh moved to approve the following resolution:

Resolved, that the West Virginia University at Parkersburg Board of Governors approves the proposed COVID-19 protocols which will govern the University for the fall 2020 semester and empowers President Chris Gilmer to enforce them as needed and/or to amend them as needed with any material amendment shared in advance with the Chair of this Board.

Mr. Oliverio seconded the motion. Motion passed.

- Approval to Negotiate MOU with Coplin Health

President Gilmer, presented to the Board the proposed resolution for approval to negotiate an MOU with Coplin Health System. President Gilmer discussed WVU Parkersburg is interested in providing high-quality, no-cost or low-cost, accessible primary healthcare to students, faculty, and staff. Toward that end, President Gilmer has been engaged in preliminary conversations with the leadership of Coplin Health System to open a campus-based primary care clinic on the Parkersburg Campus, which would also be available to students and employees on the Jackson County Campus. Students and employees would be served at low or no out-of-pocket expense. Coplin's Board of Directors has approved a similar MOU. Details of any proposed partnership would be brought back to this Board for approval before being finalized. This resolution empowers only the necessary preliminary discussions and indicates a good faith intent to pursue the partnership.

After review and discussion, Mr. Landers moved to approve the following resolution:

Resolved, that the West Virginia University at Parkersburg Board of Governors authorizes President Chris Gilmer to enter into negotiation to develop a preliminary Memorandum of Understanding with Coplin Health System to explore opening a campus-based primary care clinic available to students, faculty, and staff.

Mr. Oliverio seconded the motion. Motion passed.

- Approval of Phased Retirement

President Gilmer, presented to the Board the proposed resolution for approval of Phased Retirement. Dr. Gilmer discussed WVU Parkersburg, as is the case with most institutions of higher education, might find it fiscally or academic beneficial to enter into phased retirement or one-time retirement incentives with members of its faculty or staff. This is common practice at institutions nationwide. WVUP does not currently have a policy in place on which to build such an option and must appear before a joint committee of the West Virginia Legislature to request permission. Before that step can be taken, this Board must approve a policy. At this time, the administration seeks permission to develop a policy which will then be brought before this Board for final approval. Approval of the policy does not mean that WVUP would utilize this option, but it would provide the option as a tool at the disposal of the administration and this Board.

After review and discussion, Mr. Oliverio moved to approve the following resolution:

Resolved, that the West Virginia University at Parkersburg Board of Governors approves the development and implementation of policies allowing and governing additional retirement options for employees, including phased retirement or one-time retirement incentives.

Mr. Skidmore seconded the motion. Motion passed.

- Adoption of Emergency Policy A-44, Interim Policy and Procedures Regarding Harassment and Discrimination  
Donna Smith, Chair asked for a motion to move this item from Consent and place it in Action Items. Mr. Hardman motion to move the agenda item. Mr. Oliverio seconded, motion passed.

Debbie Richards, Executive Director of Policy and Compliance proposed the resolution for adoption of Emergency Policy A-44, Interim Policy and Procedures Regarding Harassment and Discrimination. Ms. Richards provided an overview of the policy.

After review and discussion, Mr. Denbigh moved to approve the following resolution:

*Resolved, That the West Virginia University at Parkersburg Board of Governors approves Emergency Policy A-44, Interim Policy and Procedures Regarding Harassment and Discrimination, to replace existing Policy A-44, Sexual Misconduct and Other Forms of Discrimination and Harassment, effective August 14, 2020.*

Mr. Matheny seconded the motion. Motion passed.

#### **9. Consent Items**

Chairman Smith asked for a motion to approve the following consent items:

- Adoption of Policy F-64, Operation of Unmanned Aircraft Systems on Campus

Mr. Oliverio made the motion to approve the consent items as presented. Mr. Landers seconded the motion. Motion passed.

#### **10. Board Comments/Announcements**

None

#### **11. Next Meeting**

October 14, 2020; Francis & Nina Phares Board Room or via zoom if necessary.

#### **12. Adjournment**

With no further business to be discussed, Chairman Smith, requested a motion to adjourn. Mr. Denbigh moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Landers seconded. The regular meeting of the Board of Governors adjourned at 4:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brady Whipkey  
Chief of Staff to the President  
Secretary to the Board of Governors



---

Donna Smith, Chair

---

Joe Oliverio, Secretary