

MINUTES  
WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY AT PARKERSBURG  
BOARD OF GOVERNORS  
October 14, 2020

A regular meeting of the West Virginia University at Parkersburg Board of Governors was held on Wednesday October 14, 2020, via Zoom Video Conferencing, beginning at 3:15 p.m. Board members present were: Donna Smith, Steve Hardman, 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. 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.

**3. President's Report**

President Gilmer delivered the following report:

Good afternoon. As Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us still today: "Start by doing what is necessary. Then do what is possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible." Governors, I submit to you that the West Virginia University at Parkersburg family has done and continues to do just that during this trying moment in the life of our community. Some estimate that up to 1,000 colleges and universities nationwide will close due to COVID-19. Some are laying off employees or reporting record enrollment declines, yet WVUP is moving solidly and ambitiously ahead, demonstrating to its internal and external constituents that we will emerge on the other side stronger and even more resolved to student service and student success. Furthermore, many universities are reporting tragic campus-based outbreaks of COVID-19, and while we recognize that we are in no way immune to the possibility, so far I am pleased to tell you that our prevention protocols are working and no outbreak has been reported on either of our campuses. I thank everyone who is working unselfishly and prudently in the hope we will be able to continue this record, while I also assure you that we have protocols in place should such an outbreak arise.

This community knows that I talk a lot about enrollment, but it is because enrolling and retaining students is the core of our mission and the core of our fiscal sustainability. I am delighted to report that final new traditional college student enrollment for fall 2020 significantly increased to 116 percent of fall 2019, and that overall enrollment of traditional college students for fall 2020 stands at 99 percent Headcount and 98 percent FTE of fall 2019, a statistically insignificant change of 28 students. Our only significant enrollment change is in Early College high school students. In the middle of the pandemic, despite the Herculean efforts of our Early College team and partnering school leaders, schools and parents simply have found it challenging to prioritize the

importance of Early College amid competing priorities. We expect to build back the small change in this student pool post COVID-19, and the good news is that the new and retained Early College students have statistically increased the number of courses taken per student. Full-time Equivalent enrollment, therefore, is minimally affected, and fiscal resources are minimally impacted since Early College courses are offered at a deep discount. The number of new applicants for spring 2021 is currently up 11 percent thanks the perseverance of Vice President Steven Smith and his team. Overall, the enrollment and retention news for fall 2020 is excellent and the result of the hard work of many people.

*University HQ* has recognized WVUP as the “Most Affordable College in West Virginia.” The published rankings help students discover the colleges that best match their budget and career path by comparing tuition rates, the number of degrees offered, and graduating salaries. We are honored and delighted by this recognition, and I have been quick to remind the entire community that we pair this important rating with numerous recent recognitions of the high quality of our programs as well. Taken together, price and quality are perhaps the two most important indicators considered by new and returning students.

I am delighted to recognize the staff of the business office, buttressed by everyone in our community, for achieving four consecutive unqualified annual audits with no reportable conditions or concerns about internal controls, including our most recently completed audit, a major accomplishment indicating our foundational commitment to fiscal accountability and stability. Executive Vice President Alice Harris and her team have done a commendable job, and I invite Alice to add her thanks to mine during her upcoming report. Representatives of the business office team are with us today to receive your recognition. Brent Dotson also led the business office’s automation of the student payment plan process making it more efficient for students and staff because all tuition and fee payment plans are now available to students through our online system. Separately, I commend WVUP Foundation President Torie Jackson and her team for achieving an unqualified audit for the Foundation in the recently completed audit cycle.

I am also delighted to recognize the Fine Arts Committee for their leadership of Poorhouse Week which includes a clean-up of the cemetery, publication of the *Poorhouse Rag* literary magazine, and a virtual reading and art show of selections from this year’s *Poorhouse Rag*. The arts are thriving at WVUP, and representatives of the Fine Arts Committee are with us today to receive your recognition. Further, WVUP’s librarian, Stephen Hupp, has partnered with the Wood County Library for an online discussion of his fifth novel, *Wings in the Night*, which can be viewed on the Wood County Library’s Facebook page and which was just recognized with an excellent article in the *Parkersburg News and Sentinel*. Stephen is with us today to receive your recognition. Governors, while these are only a few of the members of our community who are doing excellent work, will you take a moment to join me in recognizing them and the colleagues they represent?

This week we are beginning state-mandated COVID-19 random surveillance testing of a 10 percent randomized sample of employees and students who are employed or learning face-to-face this semester on our campuses. Those working or learning entirely remotely are excluded from the sample. Our pool includes 570 people, so our target

sample each week is 57. This activity will be completed weekly until further notice by state authorities. These saliva-based tests, approved by the Food and Drug Administration and considered by state health authorities as comparable in accuracy to the more invasive nasal swab tests, will be self-administered by those persons selected, will be completed in the presence of a proctor, and persons selected may choose to be tested on either campus. Specimens will be sent to an approved lab for testing with any positive results reported to state and local authorities. While making every reasonable effort to maintain appropriate confidentiality, WVUP's administration will use this information to promote the health and safety of our community. This process is being led by Vice President Smith and his team, and I express my appreciation to them and to everyone who is helping get this process started. Since the beginning of the pandemic, Vice President Brady Whipkey and Vice President Smith have been our designated COVID-19 weekly reporters to the Chancellor's Office, and I appreciate their efforts to ensure our compliance.

Since your last meeting, in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce of the Mid-Ohio Valley and Downtown PKB, we held a virtual ribbon cutting for WVUP on Market, our new downtown Parkersburg location led by Senta Goudy, Dean of Civic Engagement and Innovation. An extension of the Office of the President and the Office of the Vice President for Facilities and Chief of Staff, Senta Goudy, Billie Shutts, Michelle Young, and David Creel are now assigned to the downtown location, and I hope you are hearing the same enthusiasm in the local business community that I am hearing about our expanding presence downtown. Led by our Veterans Advocate Darren Shearlock and others, we held a very engaging virtual panel discussion to commemorate the 9/11 tragedy. Dr. Dorothy McGill, a nationally certified mental health counselor and Bahiyyah Walker, Esquire, an attorney whose consulting group specializes in cultural diversity training and facilitation, were in socially-distanced residency with us for a week during which they provided training and facilitated discussion to the OPEN Task Force on cultural diversity, to the Student Government Association on peer mediation, and to the Office of the President on change theory and communication skills. I am especially delighted that the SGA proactively requested peer mediation training to promote their desire to serve as peer advocates for other students, and Dr. McGill will continue to follow-up with them throughout the year to provide encouragement and additional information. The largest portion of this residency was funded by a diversity grant from the State of West Virginia, applied for and received by the Office of the President.

The annual Think Tank of the National Institutes for Historically-Underserved Students will be held November 5-7, 2020. All events will be online, and as usual, we expect to attract leaders from education, business, and industry, as well as students, from across the nation. Major funding for the National Institutes comes from a generous donation from The Erickson Foundation, although costs will be especially low this year due to the virtual nature of the events. As in the past, no state or student tuition dollars are being expended on the National Institutes which is funded entirely from private donations secured by the Office of the President. Particularly of note to this group will be a statewide facilitated conversation among students from all nine member institutions of the West Virginia Community and Technical Colleges system (WVCTCS). Students will discuss rebuilding the economy locally, statewide, and nationally. This session is being offered in partnership with the National Issues Forums (NIF) and the West Virginia

Center for Civic Life and is thought to be the first time the NIF has facilitated a discussion with students from an entire statewide community college system. I thank Professor Andrew Rochus for agreeing to serve as our local facilitator for this event. The closing ceremony will include a presentation from acclaimed photographer and oral documentarian John Noltner who will be culminating a month-long residency in the Mid-Ohio Valley and will showcase his local conversations on resilience. John's residency is being sponsored by the Parkersburg Area Community Foundation, The Arts Collaborative of the Mid-Ohio Valley, FirstEnergy, Judy Sjostedt-Ritchie, and The Ross Foundation. Other events of interest are also planned over three days, and the Board will receive information to participate in the sessions. I thank everyone who is working hard, under the direction of David Creel, to bring this event of state and national prominence to the WVUP community, and I particularly thank the IT team and the Center for Instructional Innovation who will be handling all of the technology needs for the Think Tank, a heavy lift since all of the events will be online and must be coordinated with entities from coast to coast. Joining David with primary assignment to plan this event are Senta Goudy, Michelle Young, and Billie Shutts. The entire marketing team under Vice President Jackson's leadership, and especially Tom Lemon in the print shop, are helping with printing and marketing needs. Next week Vice President Smith and I will further our dialog with one of the largest foundations in the United States about becoming the principal underwriter of the National Institutes.

We were honored to be designated by Chancellor Sarah Armstrong Tucker and Vice Chancellor Anthony Hancock to take the lead for the State of West Virginia in preparing a grant to the U.S. Department of Labor's Strengthening Community Colleges competition. That \$5 million application was submitted last week with WVUP as the fiscal agent and, if funded, would create and enhance a statewide workforce development system with a special focus on healthcare. Many people assisted in the complex preparation of this application which has nine partnering colleges, but I especially commend the team of Dean Senta Goudy, Dean Michele Wilson, and Chair and Professor Kathy Frum who led this effort for us, supported by the Vice Presidents and DByers and Associates, principal Dorinda Byers, who was our consulting grant writer.

A grant secured by Vice President Jackson will provide \$149,000 over the next five years in in-kind services for the development of a WVUP APP which can be accessed by telephone. It will also feature an Artificial Intelligence response on the website. The first phase of development will focus on connecting with our Banner system to answer student questions related to admissions, registration, and financial aid. Executive Vice President Harris and others have been working with Vice President Jackson, and we are able to use a portion of our CARES stimulus funds to pay our cost which is only \$19,000 this year and less than \$7,000 each year for the subsequent four years. We believe that our students, who are part of the technology generation, will be thrilled that WVUP is joining much larger state flagship and national universities in embracing APP technology, and frankly, your president just hopes that email will hold on for as long as he remains relevant since it is about as technically evolved as he is, and he hopes that there will always be younger and smarter people around to advise him on technological innovations.

First Friday with Marietta Main Street was a great success thanks to WVUP volunteers too many to mention. We “Rocked through the Decades” to get the community in the mood to celebrate our 60<sup>th</sup> birthday year in 2021, and we modeled the wearing of masks and social distancing to the communities we serve. The outreach for that Facebook sponsorship was more than 18,000 viewers. We delivered 905,699 impressions/ads in a single digital campaign. Click-thru rate was three times higher than the national average with a watch completion rate of 97 percent, and perhaps you have noticed the recent flurry of creative new television and radio commercials with a new round of billboards set to begin this fall. The Chat Bot we are using has a 96 percent opt-in rate of our current student body, providing updates on upcoming events and important dates, as well as wellness checks and brokering of services. The Chat Bot is both reactive and proactive. Executive Director of Alumni and Career Services Nancy Harris, assisted by her colleagues, hosted an alumni online painting party last weekend which was well received by alumni and friends and which demonstrated to the community and to me that I have absolutely no talent for painting, but that we can still have safe fun in the middle of a pandemic. I commend the Institutional Advancement team for their many accomplishments.

The Office of Academic and Student Affairs has re-energized the use of Early Alerts and has confirmed the importance of Early Alerts for our retention efforts. Executive Vice President and Provost Chad Crumbaker has led this work and wishes to commend Bob Boyter and Jeremy Starkey for their efforts. The launch of the ASCEND program has increased the already high demand for tutoring, and our Tutoring and Testing Center has long documented the enhanced academic success of students who participate in our tutoring activities. Executive Vice President Crumbaker and I would like to recognize Jennifer Conrad-Miller and Jennifer Forster for their hard work in meeting tutoring needs for our students. In a time when almost all of our academic instruction has moved to technology-enabled instruction, Chad and I would like to commend the Center for Instructional Innovation and the IT department for providing the technology, training, and support to make this mammoth undertaking such a success, as well as all faculty and staff for their continuing commitment to excellence. In addition, the CII will be working with faculty to implement new virtual test proctoring which was identified as a need by faculty and is a need to which the university is quickly responding.

Vice President Whipkey and Executive Director Bob Cooper report that the renovations to the current library and tutoring and testing center are scheduled to begin November 2. This Board graciously released reserve funds for the completion of this major endeavor, and we will also be able to use CARES stimulus funds to help underwrite the costs of our traditional library into a 21<sup>th</sup> Century Learning Commons bringing together our library, advising, tutoring, testing, ASCEND and additional academic support functions in a centralized location designed with student access and student support in mind. We appreciate the patience of the employees who will be temporarily relocated to other work locations and of students, faculty, and staff who will need to access library, tutoring, and testing resources during this time, which will continue with the minimum disruption possible. This project is a major undertaking, and we cannot yet accurately estimate how long it will take to complete. I am pleased that one outcome of the transition will be that some of our book stacks will be relocated to the Jackson County Campus and to the WVUP on Market locations to ensure that we

now have lending library access in all three of our physical locations. Details of this transition are still being planned, and this Board will be further briefed in future.

I remain active in community and scholarly pursuits. My work as Vice Chair of *Discovery World*, the downtown Parkersburg children's museum being funded and planned by The Ross Foundation, is intensifying with our bold goal to have the museum up and running in two years. I also recently completed Pollock-a-Person, a fundraiser for the Parkersburg Art Center fashioned after the work of artist Jackson Pollock, in which we raised \$10,000 for the PAC and \$2,000 for other area nonprofits. I thank those who donated to help me raise over \$1,000 and who made me the "winner" of the first milestone which resulted in me being splatter painted in public. I am now focused on raising funds for the local chapter of the American Cancer Society through their Real Men Wear Pink campaign with a personal goal of raising \$2,500 between now and December 1 for ACS. I believe that my role as President of WVUP involves not only ensuring adequate fiscal resources for this institution to thrive, but also being a citizen of the communities we serve and helping to ensure adequate fiscal resources for our many important nonprofits to thrive. I am honored to have a book chapter co-written with colleagues from Florida State University and Alcorn State University forthcoming in a peer-reviewed anthology from Information Age Publishing entitled *Imagining the Future: Historically Black Colleges and Universities—A Matter of Survival*. Additionally, Vice President Whipkey and I will present next week at the Society for College and University Planning's annual conference, scheduled to be held in Chicago, but now to be held virtually. Our peer-reviewed presentation, *Making Colleges Student Ready—It's About Time!*, will be presented in collaboration with colleagues from Florida State University, Alcorn State University, and Philander Smith College.

Finally, WVUP is engaged in developing our next Strategic Plan. Tentatively entitled WVUP CORE, Creating Opportunities to Renew Education, the three-year plan for 2021-2023 will be built on a foundation of equity and inclusion, and I thank the OPEN Task Force, under Vice President Smith's leadership, for agreeing to serve as the conscience of the planning process and the final product by providing thorough review. Additionally, while COVID-19 dictates a less traditional planning process, every stakeholder, internal and external, both individually and through shared governance constituency groups, who wishes to have a voice in the planning process and the final product will be invited this fall to offer feedback in a number of ways with the ambitious goal of having a final plan ready for this Board to consider in January 2021.

I will be out of the office October 19-26, 2020, both for university-related business and for personal leave, and I leave the day-to-day operations of the university in the very capable hands of our Executive Team. I expect to be available to this Board and to the Executive Team during the entirety of my absence, in case of emergency or when routine consultation or guidance might be needed. An emergency plan understood by the Executive Team is in place should a significant emergency occur in my absence. Chair Smith, with respect to this Board and unless there are questions, this concludes my report.

#### **4. Approval of Minutes**

Chairman Smith, stated the minutes from the Regular Board meeting of August 12, 2020 and Special Board Meeting of August 27, 2020 are submitted for review. With no

corrections to be made, minutes are approved as submitted.

## 5. **Committee Reports**

- Executive Committee

Chairman Smith reported that the Executive Committee met to discuss enrollment, COVID-19, contracts, audit, grants, and National Institutes updates.

- Academic and Student Services Committee

Mr. Landers reported on updates of advising, technology enable instruction resources, retention initiatives, 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.

## 6. **Information Items**

- Fiscal Update

Ms. Harris provided a detailed report on the budget summary as of month ending September 30, 2020. With review and discussion, Ms. Harris answered questions from the members.

## 7. **Executive Session**

Chairman Smith asked for a motion to move into Executive Session under the authority of WV Code §6-9A-4(b)(12), to discuss confidential, legal and deliberative matters relating to the AVI Contract and the preliminary report from the US Department of Education audit. Mr. Denbigh moved to adjourn to Executive Session. Mr. Matheny seconded the motion. The motion passed and the Board moved into Executive Session, at approximately 3:58 p.m. Chairman Smith requested President Gilmer and Executive Vice President Harris remain in Executive Session with the Board.

Chairman Smith announced the Board would return to regular meeting at 4:36 p.m. Mr. Denbigh moved to return to regular session. Mr. Matheny seconded the motion. Motion passed.

## 8. **Board Comments/Announcements**

None

## 9. **Next Meeting**

January 13, 2021; Francis & Nina Phares Board Room or via zoom if necessary.

## 10. **Adjournment**

With no further business to be discussed, Chairman Smith, requested a motion to adjourn. Mr. Matheny moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Denbigh seconded. The regular meeting of the Board of Governors adjourned at 4:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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

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Donna Smith, Chair

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Joe Oliverio, Secretary