

MINUTES
WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY AT PARKERSBURG
BOARD OF GOVERNORS
August 10, 2021

A regular meeting of the West Virginia University at Parkersburg Board of Governors was held on Tuesday August 10, 2021, in the Multipurpose Room of WVU Parkersburg and via Zoom Video Conferencing, beginning at 3:15 p.m. Board members present were: Steve Hardman, Joe Oliverio, JP Hushion, Donna Smith, Jeff Matheny, Jason Landers, John Denbigh, Ami Shaver, Rose Beebe, Kim McFee, and L.V. Hissem. Others present included Dr. Chris Gilmer and Brady Whipkey.

Guests present included administrators, faculty and staff.

1. Call to Order

Mr. Hardman, Chair of the WVU at Parkersburg Board of Governors, called the meeting to order.

2. Swearing in of New Board Member

Tess Martin, Director of Admissions and Recruiting, conducted the swearing in of new Board member, L.V. Hissem

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:

Good afternoon, Governors. I am thinking today about all of those who have lost their lives to this terrible pandemic and who will not live to fight another day. Worldwide, more than 4 million people have died of COVID-19. That is five times the number who died in the American Civil War. In this country alone, more than 600,000 have died. As a point of reference, the population of West Virginia is 1.8 million. That means in the United States alone, children and grandchildren, parents and spouses and friends, are mourning the equivalent of one-third of the entire population of West Virginia. In this state alone, there have been almost 170,000 cases with 2,965 deaths. Join me if you will in a moment of silence for all of these people and for those who mourn them.

Perhaps your grandmothers shared a little prayer with you that my Mamaw Sarah shared with me, called *The Serenity Prayer*. I share it with you this morning, not in an attempt to force upon you any religious view, but as a metaphor for my current state of mind. "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

Some would say it is the job of a president to present a spirit of unbridled optimism at all times. I say instead it is the job of this president to tell the truth, finding and creating the moments of optimism when he can. I have spoken to this family quite a lot about leadership, what I think it is and is not. Mostly, my views have not changed, even during a pandemic. In the old stereotypes, leadership required a stiff upper lip. Never let them see you sweat. No matter how hard it is, a leader must always make it look easy. Full steam ahead. Never retreat. Never admit when you are wrong. In good times, focus on the leader rather than on those being led. In bad times, shield the leader and find someone else to blame. Well, these have never been my views of leadership, with the possible exception of making it look easy. I believe there are moments when a leader needs to instill confidence in those being led by modeling a confidence he or she or they might not always feel. The rest of it, I summarily dismiss.

I see it more this way. When good things happen on your watch, share the credit because you have the humility to realize you did not accomplish anything alone. When bad things happen on your watch, whether they are really your fault or not, take the blame, because they still happened on your watch. The heaviest burden of leadership is presuming to make necessary decisions for people that they are sometimes unwilling to make for themselves, and this burden is heavy because what happens when the leader is wrong? Leadership is about doing difficult and sometimes unpopular things before the moment has passed, before the doing of them is a moot point, while there is still time for courage to matter. The servant leader is often ahead of trend and is governed by the best interest of others. The unworthy leader is often behind the times and governed by a primary desire to be safe and to be popular. Without exception, a real leader is always willing to accept responsibility for the choices she, he, or they make, always willing to pay whatever price must be paid for the making of difficult choices.

Let's go back to *The Serenity Prayer* for a moment. Serenity has never really been an option for me. My mama said I kicked nonstop in the womb and ripped my way out of it. That has not changed. My earliest memories are of injustices and inequities I saw even as a child and felt compelled to kick and rip against. There has always been some wrong I felt led to set right, and I do not see that changing, so serenity, it seems, is for other people. The wisdom to know the difference in what I can and cannot change also comes hard to me because I tend to believe I can change things, perhaps not by myself, but in partnership with others, which conventional wisdom says I cannot change, if only I try hard enough, persistently enough, humbly enough, and sometimes unapologetically and loudly enough. Really, then, this only leaves me with courage as a daily tool, the courage to change the things I can, and courage has always come easily to me. Mama used to say that she had never known me to be properly afraid of anything, watching me put myself in harm's way more than a few times in pursuit of some ideal, in service to some cause I thought greater than myself. West Virginia University at Parkersburg is such an ideal and such a cause.

Since serenity is off the table for the moment and wisdom feels elusive, I have decided to play to my strength and be brave. COVID-19 is not only a grievous infectious disease, even more infectious as it mutates into the Delta variant and other variants. It

is has become a societal disease which has been made into a political and partisan culture war with science and public health pitted against individual freedoms. At WVU Parkersburg, I ask you today to join me in declaring that such a culture war is not welcome here, by declaring that we will make compromises in a moment of crisis which demonstrate that our concern for each other's health is greater than our concern for correctness, personal liberty, or vindication. Leadership is also sometimes about putting one's very real and vulnerable humanity on display, knowing it could be used against you, and doing it anyway. That is the leadership I hope to model, even as our community represents the full continuum of opinions about how the COVID-19 response should be handled and even as we tackle difficult issues such as salary equity.

We will welcome students back face-to-face for the first day of fall classes on August 16. We will incorporate more hybrid and online approaches into our instructional delivery than we did prior to the pandemic, while honoring the overwhelming request of students for face-to-face instruction. After conferring with the Board today, I will soon release updated COVID-19 protocols which address the wearing of masks, vaccination, instructional plans, testing, and other protocols for the fall semester. Our community tells me that the most difficult thing is changing plans after they have been made. I feel the community's pain, but I would also point out that currently there are 3,372 cases of COVID active in West Virginia. A month ago as we were planning for fall, there were only 1,000 active cases. Average U.S. cases have increased nine-fold since early July. Hospitalizations are at the highest level since February. Child and teen cases jumped 84 percent in one week, including 18-year-olds. The more severe Delta variant now accounts for 93 percent of new U.S. cases. Most Americans now live in areas of substantial or high spread. Things were looking better, and now they are not again, and we must be willing to change quickly with the times. There will be no single trigger which causes WVUP to move back to full remote learning and full remote work assignments short of a federal, state, or local mandate to that effect; however, we are prepared to pivot in that direction if a confluence of events occurs which convinces the administration that such a move is necessary. You will recall that we were the first, or among the first, of the higher education institutions in West Virginia to make this move ahead of trend in March 2020, and the community can expect us to come down on the side of caution moving forward. Still, we are very excited to begin face-to-face instruction next Monday.

Subject to approval by the Board, employees can expect on or before October 1, 2021, that up to \$400,000 and possibly more in additional compensation will be forthcoming to staff and faculty, not to administration. We are preparing to finally and fully implement the statewide salary scale increases, commonly called the "Mercer" project, to hourly employees. We have budgeted up to \$175,000 for this project with the approval of the Board. This project covers hourly employees and following the formula provided, only some hourly employees would receive pay increases. Executive Vice President Alice Harris and I have adjusted the budget, in an attempt to promote equity for all hourly employees, so that each hourly employee will get the greater of either the Mercer adjustment or a three-percent across-the-board increase so that all hourly employees will receive some increase.

This is more than the State of West Virginia requires for compliance, but is WVUP's way of demonstrating that all of our employees deserve recognition of hard work. The Executive Team has also decided to use a significant portion of our COVID-19 relief funds to provide all full-time faculty the option to receive one-time supplemental contracts this fall of \$2,500 each. Supplemental faculty pay is to compensate for the additional efforts necessary to address challenges related to providing instruction during the pandemic. Examples of additional efforts include: 1) Adjusting to different methodology of teaching; 2) additional preparation time necessary due to uncertainty about the course delivery method for the term, and 3) increased support of students who are overstressed by COVID and require additional support to help ensure their persistence. We will evaluate the success of this endeavor and, if funds are available, consider doing it again spring 2021. Over the next month, we will also review the budget for opportunities to shift additional funds to quickly begin rectifying inequities which currently exist in the non-classified employee categories.

The Compensation Task Force which I announced recently will be led by faculty and staff volunteers and supported by the administration in making longer-term recommendations to the administration, subject to Board approval, related to addressing systemic inequities in pay which in some cases are decades old and which occur at many if not most institutions of higher learning. These inequities were not created in the short-term, and they will not be fully rectified in the short-term. Still, the community can count on the beginning of an honest exploration of salary equity with the plan being for the successful implementation of the Strategic Enrollment Plan, post-COVID, to create additional resources to fund implementation. Any employee of WVUP may volunteer or be nominated to the President for service on this task force. As for executive restructuring, recent restructuring has been undertaken with significant cost-savings through the elimination of one executive position, Associate Provost, upon the retirement of the incumbent. Rather than hiring additional administrators, I am committed to restructuring existing executive positions to take on extra duties so that funds which become available for personnel can primarily be directed to faculty and staff. In the vast majority of cases during my tenure, new hires have been hired through the normal competitive process, and it is my pledge that this will remain our normal practice. While we are completing the compensation upgrades outlined earlier, we are also updating procedures and policies to streamline and to improve the hiring process at WVUP, upgrades which we expect to have completed before the end of the calendar year, but which we are already beginning to feel.

Please allow me to share just a few of the many things of which I am WVUP Proud at this moment:

Under the leadership of EVP Harris, WVUP has utilized \$230,000 in COVID stimulus funds to eliminate the debts owed to WVUP by 245 students from spring 2020 through spring 2021, the main COVID-19 period, so that these students can register for classes once again. In other words, we just made returning to college possible for 245 people.

The college is in sound fiscal condition with significant cash reserves. We are one of few colleges which did not downsize or furlough its workforce during the pandemic, and I am pleased to say that no employee of WVUP has missed a paycheck because of COVID-19.

We have seen significant upgrades of our facilities led by Vice President Brady Whipkey and his capable team, most notably the Student Success Epicenter which now brings together the library, advising, tutoring, ASCEND, retention, and other related services in one fantastic new location. Please stop by for a tour if you have not seen it already.

Led by David Creel and three fabulous co-chairs, our 60th Birthday Planning Committee is working hard, although it has been significantly impacted by the pandemic, and we are hoping to host an outdoor public birthday party in October with more details to follow.

We have two more weeks to register students, and we are hoping to buck national trends with level or near-level fall enrollment, and I ask every employee to focus on enrollment, retention, and completion.

WVUP is in the news for receiving the first ever Mark Ivester Innovation Award from the Community Colleges of Appalachia for the Arts Collaborative of the Mid-Ohio Valley led by Dean Senta Goudy. We were one of only nine colleges nationwide selected by the iconic rock band Metallica to participate in the Metallica Scholars Program. Under the leadership of Provost Chad Crumbaker, our ASCEND program is moving the needle exponentially on retention after just one year. For the third straight year, we ranked among the Best Schools for Veterans, this year number seven nationwide, thanks to the efforts of Veterans Advocate Darren Shearlock and others. For the second straight year, we have been ranked the Most Affordable College in West Virginia, and Executive Vice President Torie Jackson and her team continue to do a wonderful job getting the word out about these and other accomplishments.

And finally, let me put a few faces on my WVUP Pride. I am wearing a simple sticker that says, "We love our students." Tom Lemon who runs our print shop designed and printed these stickers and has been sharing them. Nobody told him to do this. Nobody asked him to do this. It is called initiative, going above and beyond. It lives everywhere on our campuses. A former honor student who took a break from college to have a beautiful baby and because she had COVID is returning to WVUP this semester, and she is bringing her oldest daughter with her as a student. So many who take a break never find their way back, so I celebrate with her. Sitting on a bench outside the other day, a non-traditionally-aged student who disclosed that she is transitioning in gender and a younger student stopped by to talk to me. The younger student pointed to the older student and said, "This is my father, and I am so proud." I felt the tears in my eyes. Two generations of WVUP students dealing with heavy stuff, lifting each other up and destined for educational greatness. And these things are happening at WVUP.

Governors, I reaffirm my commitment to this Board and to this community that I will be brave enough to make the decisions which I deem necessary to protect this university community. I continue to respect the authority of and appreciate the support of this Board as we work together in partnership as servant leaders to the WVUP community. Please allow me to recognize some Riverhawks I invited to be present for your recognition today, either in person or by Zoom: Allison Ezell who is the student president of our Phi Theta Kappa chapter, recently elected regional president for the entire West Virginia and Ohio Region; Dr. Steven Smith, Tammy Williams, and Melissa McKinley who are demonstrating leadership and partnership during the transition in our Office of Human Resources; Dr. Alicia Beeson who spent her summer leading the Parkersburg Area Community Foundation's summer leadership fellows program in its first year being overseen by WVUP; and Tom Lemon whom I recognized earlier.

Mr. Chair, unless there are questions, this concludes my report, and I yield to Nancy Harris, Executive Director of Alumni and Career Services, for a special presentation.

5. Approval of Minutes

Chairman Hardman, stated the minutes from the Regular Board meeting of June 9, 2021 are submitted for review. With no corrections to be made, minutes are approved as submitted.

6. Committee Reports

- Executive Committee

Chairman Hardman reported that the Executive Committee met to discuss enrollment, COVID-19, HR restructuring, Board Committee structure and other business.

- Academic and Student Services Committee

Mr. Oliverio reported Provost Crumbaker provide a report to the committee on the importance of assessment leading up to the 2024 HLC accreditation visit. Mr. Oliverio also provided an overview of written reports submitted.

- Administrative Services Committee

Mr. Denbigh reported Executive VP Jackson provided a report on the communication strategy for 2021-2022 academic year.

7. Information Items

- Fiscal Update

VP Harris provided a detailed report on the budget summary as of month ending July 31, 2021. With review and discussion, Ms. Harris answered questions from the members.

8. Action Items

- Proposed Revision of Policy E-39, Assessment, Payment and Refund of Fees

Executive Vice President Harris presented to the Board the resolution for approval of the proposed revision of Policy E-39, Assessment, Payment and Refund of Fees.

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

Resolved, That the West Virginia University at Parkersburg Board of Governors authorizes a notice of proposed rulemaking for revision of Policy E-39, *Assessment, Payment and Refund of Fees*, and hereby authorizes revision of said policy without further action by the Board if no comments are received.

Ms. Smith seconded the motion. Motion passed.

- Proposed Revision of Policy D-51, Admission to West Virginia University at Parkersburg

Executive Vice President Smith presented to the Board the resolution for approval proposed revision of Policy D-51, Admission to West Virginia University at Parkersburg.

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

Resolved, That the West Virginia University at Parkersburg Board of Governors authorizes a notice of proposed rulemaking for revision of Policy D-51, *Admission to West Virginia University at Parkersburg*, and hereby authorizes revision of said policy without further action by the Board if no comments are received.

Ms. Smith seconded the motion. Motion passed.

- Approval in Principle of Lease with Coplin Clinics

President Gilmer presented to the Board the resolution for approval in principle of lease with Coplin Clinics.

After review and discussion, Ms. Smith moved to approve the following resolution:

Resolved, that the West Virginia University at Parkersburg Board of Governors grants authority to President Christopher Gilmer to finalize negotiation and execute on its behalf a lease agreement with Coplin Clinics to open and operate a public primary care health clinic on the Parkersburg campus, pursuant to final approval by local, state, and federal regulatory authorities.

Ms. Beebe seconded the motion. Motion passed.

- Approval of Incorporation of R and D Corporation
President Gilmer presented to the Board the resolution for approval of Incorporation of R and D Corporation.

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

Resolved, that the West Virginia University at Parkersburg Board of Governors invests President Christopher Gilmer with the authority to incorporate a nonprofit Research and Economic Development Corporation on behalf of WVUP to provide an additional nonprofit fiscal agent for the receipt and management of grants and other external funds.

Ms. Smith seconded the motion. Motion passed.

- Approval of MOU with Oil & Gas Museum
President Gilmer presented to the Board the resolution for approval of MOU with Oil and Gas Museum.

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

Resolved, that the West Virginia University at Parkersburg Board of Governors invests President Christopher Gilmer with the authority to finalize and execute on its behalf a Memorandum of Understanding to support the Oil and Gas Museum as a member of the Arts Collaborative of the Mid-Ohio Valley in carrying out its daily operations and to engage in joint planning and private fundraising to support mutual projects. The University does not anticipate expending WVUP's funds in the execution of this MOU.

Ms. Shaver seconded the motion. Motion passed.

- Approval to Extend WVU Parkersburg Proud
President Gilmer and Executive Vice President Jackson presented to the Board the resolution for approval to extend WVU Parkersburg Proud.

After review and discussion, Ms. Smith moved to approve the following resolution:

Resolved, that the West Virginia University at Parkersburg Board of Governors endorses the extension of the WVU Parkersburg Proud Campaign with a new non-binding goal of raising an additional \$5 million in external funds in five years, all in support of WVUP. Further, the Board endorses the widespread implementation and marketing of this campaign.

Mr. Hushion seconded the motion. Motion passed.

- Approval of Salary Scale Adjustments

President Gilmer and Executive Vice President Harris presented to the Board the resolution for approval of salary increases to classified staff in accordance with the West Virginia salary scale as approved by the State of West Virginia for qualified employees, and to promote equity in salary among classified staff.

After review and discussion, Ms. Smith moved to approve the following resolution:

Resolved, that the West Virginia University at Parkersburg Board of Governors authorizes President Christopher Gilmer to implement pay increases on or before October 1, 2021, to bring classified employees in line with the state salary scale, and to promote equity in salary among classified staff, in an amount not to exceed the \$175,000 previously approved in the FY 2022 budget. Should the amount exceed \$175,000, the Board authorizes the President to act on the Board's behalf in implementing raises in consultation with the Chair of the Board and the EVP of Finance and Administration in making any necessary budgetary adjustments which remain within the total of the approved budget.

Mr. Matheny seconded the motion. Motion passed.

9. Board Comments/Announcement

None

10. Next Meeting

Next meeting will be held October 12, 2021.

11. Adjournment

With no further business to be discussed, Chairman Hardman, adjourned the regular meeting of the Board of Governors at 4:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Steve Hardman, Chair

JP Hushion, Secretary