

MINUTES
WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY AT PARKERSBURG
BOARD OF GOVERNORS
January 11, 2022

A regular meeting of the West Virginia University at Parkersburg Board of Governors was held on Tuesday January 11, 2022, 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, and Kim McFee. 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. 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. In Shakespeare's last play, *The Tempest*, the characters are living in the aftermath of a great storm which has shipwrecked a number of people on an island inhabited by a wizard prince, his daughter, a fairy sprite who serves them, and an irritable monster. Of course, not unlike most of the worlds Shakespeare creates, sometimes it is difficult to tell who the real "monsters" are when those endowed with the most nobility and power misuse it for selfish or petty ends and those who are characterized by their society as monstrous show occasional moments of compassion and empathy. I will let you draw or not draw your own parallels, but it seems to me quite a lot like our nation as we begin 2022, still haunted by the specter of a relentless pandemic and too often unwilling to consider principled compromise for the greater good.

There is a bright spot in the play, however, just as there are so many bright spots at WVUP and in our world. Young Miranda sees Prince Ferdinand coming ashore after the wreck, falls immediately in love, and utters perhaps the most hopeful line Shakespeare ever wrote: "O brave new world that has such people in it." Her innate trust in the goodness of a person yet unknown, her innocent hope and naïve certainty that he will not harm or betray her, contains a lesson for us all today if we will take it: trust and hope are difficult in the best of times, almost impossible in the worst of times, and yet never more essential than just at the moment when the human spirit has the potential to be forever broken. I believe we are not called to be

naïve, but we are called to be instruments and models of hope and trust to recall our world back from the brink of being irreparably broken. Thus, I announce again today what I announced last week, the WVU at Parkersburg Renaissance, Rebirth and Renewal, which will be our theme for 2022, a time when we will respect our past, take stock of our present, and set a course for a different, but perhaps even greater future. Translated from French, the word “Renaissance” literally means rebirth, and I can remember no time in my 56 years when I have thought our world more in need of rebirth. Let it begin here with us.

At WVUP, I do not have to look far to find people who make me believe in the promise of a brave new world. With professionalism and without complaint, J.B. Skidmore has taken on significant new duties as our COVID-19 officer and liaison to the Office of the President through the Chief of Staff. Lauri Reidmiller has recently been selected as West Virginia’s Higher Art Educator of the Year for 2021. Christi Calvert, David Lancaster, and others worked hard for our early childhood education program to be ranked 11th in the nation, and Uta Hempel officially became an American citizen. For each of these singular accomplishments, I could name a dozen more, so, you see, it is not hard at all to believe in a brave new world when it has such people as these in it, Riverhawks committed to our families, our communities, our students, and our colleagues. If any of those named are here today, please stand to be recognized by the Board.

Let us start with attention to the past. Since July 2018, we have increased our reserve funds, our cash on hand, 54 percent to \$19,992,000 through responsible and conservative budgeting and spending while still managing to provide everything that our community has needed to carry out our educational mission and much of what it has wanted to enhance that mission. Not one employee has missed payroll during the entirety of this pandemic due to layoff, furlough, or COVID-based loss of employment as we found creative solutions to keep everyone employed even when we moved to remote work assignments, and we have judiciously spent reserve funds as needed even while building this unprecedented surplus. This Board and this administration have committed ourselves to fiscal responsibility, and that is a course on which we will continue. Even as enrollment has plummeted at colleges and universities nationally and statewide during the pandemic, and even as our own fall 2021 enrollment saw a significant decline, comparing the last three academic years led by this administration with the three academic years prior, we have seen an increase in overall enrollment across all categories of 5.009 percent. Student retention, a statistic often overlooked, but just as important as recruitment, is up 9 percent over the past three years and stands at about 17 percent above the national average for colleges of similar profile.

Our WVU Parkersburg Proud fundraising campaign sought to raise \$3 million in three years, and in only two years we doubled that goal through private fundraising and proactively winning almost 60 competitive grants. We have won 18 national marketing awards in the past two years, more than any college or university in West Virginia. Our replication of the City University of New York’s research-based

retention model, funded by the largest contribution in WVUP's history and one of only two funded replications in 2020, has resulted in increased passage rates in barrier math and English courses of more than 30 percent on the first attempt. We renovated the Parkersburg courtyard and the library into one of the most functional and attractive student services facilities I have seen. We created a usable, comfortable, inviting, and attractive student lounge and added hundreds of photos of our community, mostly our students, to the walls which surround us. We reintroduced ourselves to the communities we serve through a much-welcomed new location on Market Street in Parkersburg and in many other ways large and small. We have been repaid through a significant increase in enthusiasm about WVUP throughout the Mid-Ohio Valley, including providing instruction at 11 new Early College instructional sites, most of them in the more rural and remote portions of our service area, assertively taking WVUP out into the communities we serve. Most colleges would be thrilled with such a recent past even in the best of times, but WVUP has remarkably made most of these accomplishments while enduring a worldwide pandemic. We might not have been able to sing karaoke at Ricky's Café, dress up for Halloween, have Christmas dinner together, or properly celebrate our colleagues who have retired with the going-away parties they deserved, but we have not been standing still. We have been making difficult choices which for the most part have kept us all safe and healthy, and we look forward to the day when we can once again show the world that having great fun at work enhances rather than impedes productivity.

As for the present, it is no less filled with promise. Regarding spring enrollment projections, on Friday, January 7, we reached 100 percent in overall, across all categories, headcount enrollment and 96 percent in FTE enrollment compared to the same day in the spring 2021 enrollment cycle. On the same day, we were well over 100 percent in Early College students and at 100 percent in transfer students. Compared to final 2021 spring enrollment, we were at 96 percent FTE in an overall comparison across all categories and in the 90th percentile in every significant metric. Particularly of note is the 97 percent comparison to the end of spring 2021 in continuing students, an amazing accomplishment during the pandemic. I want to be clear that these numbers are likely to change significantly. Although classes have begun, we continue to accept late registration which will increase the numbers, and then we will see some erosion of students for non-attendance and other reasons. We will not have firm spring enrollment numbers for some time, but I wanted to share with you that we are making a very encouraging start to the semester.

We are excited to begin the spring 2022 semester offering face-to-face instruction on both campuses. Our faculty and staff are highly creative and committed to student success, and we recognize that face-to-face interaction yields more productive results for our students. Our concern for health and safety has not diminished, and we will be updating our COVID-19 protocols this week after meeting with the COVID-19 task force. We are providing significant opportunity for choice to our students while attempting to balance with the need for faculty autonomy. Many if not most of our courses for spring can be accessed either face-to-face or through

virtual learning options including live broadcasts in which some students are in class with faculty and some are learning remotely, the modality of learning chosen by each student.

Dr. Torie Jackson and I are delighted to inform you that we are in the final stages of preparing to make a public announcement of the first endowed faculty chair in WVUP's history, a chair in entrepreneurship which will be interdisciplinary and to which any faculty member from any department who meets the minimum criteria may be named on a two-year rotating basis. Vice President Brady Whipkey and I are delighted to inform you that we are in the final stages of preparing to begin renovations for the Coplin Clinic to open on our Parkersburg campus fall 2022. This full-service health clinic will serve students and their families, employees and their families, and the community. There have been many hurdles to clear in pursuit of this project, but we are just about there.

Our external strategic planning consultant has met once with representatives of the administration, Board of Governors, and Foundation Board, and we are preparing to take strategic planning campus-wide and community-wide this spring, so everyone should expect multiple opportunities to engage and to be heard. I have tasked each vice president with overseeing the community conversation on one pillar of the plan—EVP Alice Harris will bring a fresh lens to the quality of our educational programs, while VP Whipkey will delve into marketing and branding, EVP Steven Smith will oversee community relations, EVP Chad Crumbaker will oversee workplace culture, and EVP Torie Jackson will bring a fresh perspective to enrollment management. You might be surprised by some of these assignments, but I have deliberately assigned the vice presidents to work outside of their normal areas of responsibility to engage the community in a new and forward-looking approach to strategic planning. This does not mean that the vice presidents will control the process, only that they are tasked with coming up with the best and most inclusive ways to engage the broadest representation possible of our community in the task of developing a stakeholder-informed strategic plan. The community will control the process. Separate of the strategic plan, I have also tasked each of the vice presidents to engage with the community by providing a virtual update on the divisions for which they are responsible this week and next week in which every member of the community is invited to participate. Dr. Jackson's session took place yesterday, and all five should be concluded by the end of next week. The sessions have been broadly advertised on campus, and any of the vice presidents can let you know how to participate by Zoom.

At the October 2021 meeting of this Board, I asked you to approve a transfer from reserves to cover the cost of bringing eight highly qualified outside consultants into our community this semester to deeply evaluate the divisions of the college and the administration as we prepare for our Higher Learning Commission site visit in 2024. Work began immediately on this project, and the first consultant visit is set for next week. You will see a tangible return on your investment by the end of this fiscal year when we hope to have both divisional and comprehensive reports available for

your review, reports which in the fall of 2022 will form the basis of our preparation for the HLC visit.

Later in this meeting, I will ask the Board to approve the release of up to \$1 million from reserves to carry out necessary upgrades to the business office and the Riverhawk Farm, and to fund a planned integration of marketing with enrollment management. When Congress finally approves the Fiscal Year 2022 spending bills which best estimates indicate should occur no later than February, WVUP has a community-directed grant of more than \$500,000 which has been included in every version of the bills and supported by our Congressional delegation. It is everyone's expectation, including staff of our Congressional delegation, that this grant will be funded as part of these bills when passed, but it has been delayed due to the current climate of gridlock in Congress. We propose reserve funds to match a portion of the Riverhawk farm grant as needed and to significantly renovate and expand the business office which is not a physical space conducive to student service and employee productivity, although our team has certainly made the best of it. Finally, if approved, a portion of these funds will be used to enhance functions of the one-stop shop and to stimulate enrollment. We are researching the likelihood of using some of our remaining COVID stimulus funds to cover some of the physical plant upgrades. If this turns out to be possible, we would not spend all of the requested reserve transfer.

Since your last meeting, we have awarded two additional alumni employee awards and I would like to ask Nancy Harris to join me at the podium to help me recognize these dedicated alumni employees, after which, Mr. Chair, unless there are questions, my report will be concluded with due respect to this Board.

4. Approval of Minutes

Chairman Hardman, stated the minutes from the Regular Board meeting of October 12, 2021 are submitted for review. With no corrections to be made, minutes are approved as submitted.

5. Committee Reports

- Executive Committee

Chairman Hardman reported that the Executive Committee met to discuss enrollment, COVID-19, JCC, Ohio Valley University, and receive fiscal and administrative updates.

- Academic and Student Services Committee

Mr. Oliverio reported EVP Torie Jackson and EVP Alice Harris provided updates on the Strategic Plan. EVP Jackson discussed the topic of Enrollment Management and EVP Harris discussed Quality of Educational Programs.

- Administrative Services Committee

Mr. Denbigh reported EVP Chad Crumbaker, EVP Steve Smith and VP Brady Whipkey provided updates on the Strategic Plan. EVP Crumbaker discussed the

topic of Workplace Culture, EVP Smith discussed Community Relations, and VP Whipkey discussed branding.

6. Information Items

- Fiscal Update
EVP Harris provided a detailed report on the budget summary as of month ending December 31, 2021. With review and discussion, Ms. Harris answered questions from the members.

7. Action Items

- Approval of Transfer from Reserve Funds

President Gilmer presented to the Board the resolution for approval of the transfer from reserve funds, for to facilitate funding for upgrades to the Riverhawk Farm, Business Office renovations, and combining enrollment management with marketing.

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

Resolved, that the West Virginia University at Parkersburg Board of Governors approves the proposed movement of up to \$1,000,000 from reserve funds to facilitate funding of physical plant and other upgrades at the Riverhawk Farm and in the Parkersburg campus business office, and to implement a new approach to combining enrollment management efforts with marketing to promote enrollment stabilization and gain over time.

Ms. Smith seconded the motion. Motion passed with Ms. McFee voting against.

- Approval of New Program

Provost Chad Crumbaker presented to the Board the resolution for approval of a new program, Elementary Education area emphasis in Math Grade 5 through Algebra 1.

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 following new program: Elementary Education Area of Emphasis in Math Grade 5 through Algebra 1

Dr. Beebe seconded the motion. Motion passed.

8. Board Comments/Announcement

None

9. Next Meeting

Next meeting will be held March 8, 2022.

10. Adjournment

With no further business to be discussed, Chairman Hardman, adjourned the regular meeting of the Board of Governors at 4:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Steve Hardman, Chair

JP Hushion, Secretary