

WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY BOARD
OF GOVERNORS

December 17, 2021

The one hundred ninety-eighth meeting of the West Virginia University Board of Governors was held on December 17, 2021 in Morgantown, WV in person and via zoom. Board members in attendance/participating via zoom included David Alvarez, Marty Becker, Bray Cary, Charles Capito, Elmer Coppoolse, Kevin Craig, J. Thomas Jones, Dr. Patrice Harris, Dr. Stanley Hileman, Amaya Jernigan, Dr Ashley Martucci, Taunja Willis Miller, Richard Pill, Ed Robinson, and Benjamin Statler. Board members Alan Larrick and Lisa A. Martin were absent and excused.

Note: With this meeting being conducted in person and via zoom, there was no way to ascertain all attendees but the following WVU officers, divisional campus officers, representatives (and others) participated:

President, E. Gordon Gee;
Vice President for Strategic Initiatives, Rob Alsop;
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Maryanne Reed;
General Counsel, Stephanie Taylor;
Vice President and Executive Dean of Health Sciences, Clay Marsh;
Dean of Students, Corey Farris;
Associate Vice President and Executive Director of the Office of
Global Affairs, Amber Brugnoli;
Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Meshea Poore;
Vice Provost, Paul Kreider;
Associate Provost for Budget, Facilities and Strategic Initiatives, Mark
Gavin;
Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, Paula Congelio;
Senior Associate Vice President for Finance, Anjali Halabe;
Associate Provost of Undergraduate Education, Evan Widders;
Associate Vice President, Auxiliary Business Services, Ted
Svehlik;
Director of Transportation, Jeremy Evans;
Associate Vice President for HSC Academic Affairs, Louise Veselicky;
President, WVU Potomac State College, Jennifer Orlikoff;
President, WVU Tech, Carolyn Long;
Deputy General Counsel, Gary G. Furbee, II;
Director of Communications, Office of the Provost, Kimberly Becker;
Executive Director for Strategic Initiatives, Erin Newmeyer;
Assistant Vice President for Academic Planning and Implementation,
Amanda DeBastiani;
Administrative Assistant to the Associate Provost for Undergraduate
Education, Shirley Robinson;
Executive Officer and Assistant Board Secretary, Jennifer Fisher;

Executive Director of Communications, University Relations,
April Kaull; and,
Special Assistant to the Board of Governors, Valerie Lopez.

Members of the Press also participated.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairman J. Thomas Jones at 9:45 a.m.
A roll call was taken to determine who was in attendance and a quorum established.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Chairman Jones requested a motion to move Executive Session, under authority in West Virginia Code §§ 6-9A-4(b)(2)(A), (b)(9), (b)(10) and (b)(12) to discuss:

- a. Potential strategic initiatives relating to academic and administrative priorities; personnel matters; the purchase, sale or lease of property; and other deliberative matters involving commercial competition which, if made public, might adversely affect the financial or other interest of the University;
- b. Approval of Honorary Degree Candidates; and,
- c. Confidential and privileged report by General Counsel.

The motion was made by Ed Robinson, seconded by Dr. Ashley Martucci, and passed. Following Executive Session ~~By~~ Statler moved that the board rise from Executive Session. The motion was seconded by Elmer Coppoolse and passed.

Chairman Jones reported that during today's Executive Session the board reviewed names of individuals submitted for Honorary Degrees from West Virginia University. Each year nominations are received and reviewed by a committee of faculty, staff and students. Those selected by the committee are then forwarded to the Faculty Senate for approval, and then to the governing board. The WVU Faculty Senate has endorsed the names discussed during today's Executive Session, as required by University policy.

Chairman Jones requested a motion for Approval of the Honorary Degree Candidates discussed during today's Executive Session - with a notation that the persons to be honored will be announced at a later date. This motion was made by Dr. Stanley Hileman, seconded by Kevin Craig, and passed.

Chairman Jones also noted for the record that Board members David Alvarez, Ashley Martucci and Amaya Jernigan abstained from the vote on today's Honorary Degree Candidates – since they were members of the Honorary Degree Selection Committee involved in this process.

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS UPDATE

Provost Maryanne Reed provided the following Academic Affairs Updates:

Commencement

Starting tomorrow at 10 a.m., nearly 27-hundred graduates are expected to take the stage during two ceremonies at the Coliseum (our first in-person ceremony since December 2019).

Tomorrow will be a celebration, not just for our graduates, but for all of us who have successfully navigated another very challenging year living with COVID-19.

COVID-Updates

The good news is that the University's COVID-19 rates among students and employees remain relatively low. Last Thursday, we reported a total of 104 people in either quarantine or isolation, which represents just a tiny fraction of our population. Meanwhile, our vaccination rates remain steady, with approximately 92 percent of faculty and staff and 82 percent of students reported having at least two doses of the vaccine.

But because we are heading into the holidays and holiday travel, and because the threat of the Omicron (OH-mi-cron) variant remains unclear, the University plans to maintain many of its COVID-19 restrictions heading into the Spring 20-22 semester, including requiring masking in the classrooms.

As we get closer to the January 10th start date, we may make further adaptations, depending on the current science and latest data — something we have done consistently throughout the COVID crisis.

STEAM-TAC at WVU

Last week, we announced a new partnership with the West Virginia Department of Education and the West Virginia Public Education Collaborative.

A new STEAM Technical Assistance Center is being created that will be housed at WVU but work closely with the Department of Education to provide outreach and support to teachers throughout the state – beginning with grades 6 through 8 in the first year. STEAM Specialists, hired by WVU, will travel to the schools across West Virginia to share the latest and best practices in STEAM education, along with teaching materials and hands-on lessons that teachers can use in their classrooms. The goal is to prepare students for both college and STEAM-related careers — ideally for job opportunities right here in West Virginia.

This Center is being funded by the Department of Education but will utilize the research and knowledge of our own faculty, who have expertise in both STEAM and STEAM education. (STEAM stands for “Science, Technical Engineering, Math and the Arts.”)

We are very excited to partner with the state in this endeavor as part of our land-grant mission – and because improving education remains one of the University’s four pillars of excellence and top priorities.

School of Nursing Update

I also wanted to provide an update on another exciting initiative. We shared earlier that the School of Nursing is opening a new campus in Bridgeport, West Virginia.

The nursing school will occupy approximately 5,000 square feet of space in a new addition at the WVU Medicine United Hospital Center. The space will include classrooms, labs, a conference room, a student lounge area and offices. UHC is covering the cost of construction and will lease the space for only 1-dollar per year. The new accelerated bachelor’s program in Nursing will welcome its first cohort in spring 2023.

Academic Transformation

Program Portfolio Review:

We have nearly completed our first full year of Academic Transformation, a process we began in January following President Gee’s charge that we transform our academic programming and practices to position our students — and the University — for success in a changing world.

In my office, we are referring to this first year as “Phase One.” It’s the first phase of what we believe will be a three-year effort. During this first year, we accomplished a lot – and we learned a lot. Some people on campus may have been unnerved by the pace of change; some on our Board may think we may not have moved fast enough.

As part of Phase One, we continue to work with our colleges and departments on the results of this year’s Program Portfolio Review process.

“Programs of concern” that we recommended for “continuation,” but with specific action, have been given targets for growth, as well as a timetable for achieving those targets. Upon the request of several academic units, we have removed the names of all “programs of concern” from our Academic Transformation website to help these units with recruitment and meeting their enrollment targets.

We are also currently working with several of our academic deans to address “programs of opportunity.” Through that process, we have identified between 8 to 10 current or new degree programs that we believe show the most immediate promise for future growth — with some additional investment, restructuring or re-branding. We hope to announce those, as well, in early Spring.

CPASS/CEHS Merger Update:

The colleges of Education and Human Services and Physical Activity and Sport Sciences have made amazing progress toward merging their two units into one college. I'd like to give a huge shout-out to the deans, faculty and staff in both units who are facing the future with a sense of possibility and promise.

Last week, we officially launched our search for the founding dean of the new College of Applied Human Sciences. Our goal is for the search committee to begin reviewing applications the end of January or beginning of February and to have a new dean in place by July 1st.

Phase Two:

We will be announcing our Year Two (or Phase Two) Academic Transformation priorities in January. One of those we know already is going to be a ramped-up focus on Student Success.

Student Success

I've asked Dr. Evan Widders, our Associate Provost of Undergraduate Education and a leading architect of the University's retention efforts, to give the Board a short update on what we've accomplished to date and where we need to go in the future.

Dr. Evan Widders provided the following Student Success Roadmap Update

Building on several years of data collection and academic policy revision, the Provost's Office implemented a coordinated effort to improve our student success metrics in Fall 2020. We are currently working on year two of implementation.

- WVU has seen increasing momentum in student success outcomes.
- In 2019, the University set an aspirational goal of a 62.5% 6-year graduation rate by 2025. We surpassed that goal this year.
- Our 4-year graduation rate has held steady at about 43% for three years, a significant improvement over past numbers, although I believe we can do better. To put this in context, the national four-year graduation rate for public institutions is around 35%.
- Dr. Widders showed a slide that depicted six-year graduate rates at a number of peer or near-peer institutions with similar student profiles. A challenge we face at WVU is that we are nearly open enrollment institution for in-state students. We accept resident students with almost any combination of test scores and HSGPA. This means, inevitably, that some students are not as prepared as we would like for the rigor of our studies.
- As many of you have probably heard, institutions of higher learning are facing a demographic shortfall due to a decrease in high school graduates in nearly every state, and in WV, PA, and Ohio particularly. This demographic shortfall is continuing to worsen and will for the next decade, undermining our recruiting pipelines.

- What this trend effectively means is that we must do everything we can to keep the students we have already recruited. In 2019, the University set an aspirational goal of improving First Time Retention by 1% a year through 2025. Despite COVID, we are well positioned to meet this aggressive timetable.
- Future budget projections were made based on a more conservative .5% improvement through 2025. We are currently outpacing that number. So, if we can increase retention at a faster rate than .5% a year, we will see some positive budgetary outcomes.
- Another slide showed that WVU had a higher retention rate than anticipated for the 2019 COVID cohort of students. This was also true of our peer institutions. We attribute it to relaxed academic policies, uncertain economic outlook in the job market, and increased federal aid. This outlier appears to have corrected but we remain above 80%, the highest retention rate ever achieved at West Virginia University.
- I think the most important thing to remember about retention is that by improving our University retention rate, we are not only doing the right thing by our students, we are contributing to the University's financial health.
- We developed this momentum by modifying many of our academic practices and policies with the goal of improving how students progress through their studies and reach graduation.
- For example, some wins over the last year of the Students Success Roadmap have included
 - Adopting student-centered course scheduling practices to provide improved access to courses.
 - Reworking our academic probation and suspension policy to create more transparent, predictable, and fair suspension practices. Without lowering our standards, we have seen far fewer students get suspended.
 - Implementing groupings of similar majors for undecided and pre-major students called academic pathways. Among other benefits, this practice introduces students to new majors that may suit their talents and career goals better than the major they had initially considered.
 - And we revised our tutoring practices, documenting tutoring visits in the student systems and improving our tutoring data collection so that we can better evaluate tutoring efficacy.
- Another slide illustrated our data-driven student success process. In 2019, we surveyed students who were close to graduation as to their most significant challenges to academic success. Once we knew what the student challenges were, we were able to address the issues identified.
- For instance, we found out that our Pell-Eligible and URM students often work in excess of 25 hours a week and needed flexible academic schedules. The student-centered scheduling practices mentioned previously were implemented to address

- this issue. And we received positive feedback from any number of students as to course availability.
- We made similar inroads with most of other items on this list.
- Academic advising is the most significant remaining unaddressed issue for our students. As a result, Provost Reed has added it to the Academic Transformation agenda for the next year.

- Over time, academic advising has become increasingly complicated and technology driven due to federal aid compliance, the complexity of degree offerings, and increased student and parent expectations.
- Our current system relies on any number of combinations of staff, faculty, and professional advisors and is predicated on the financial resources of the academic unit. As a result, the model varies widely from academic unit to unit. This results in an uneven experience and uncertain academic outcomes for our students.
- EAB Consulting conducted a detailed audit of our current advising practices and documented our strengths and weakness. In their view, our greatest weakness is our lack of consistency in following best advising practices across the many academic units. EAB noted that Universities that have implemented full-time professional advising have generally seen a significant improvement in student success outcomes.

- Dr. Widders' last slide illustrated that student success is not just the right thing to do. Increasing the freshman retention rate has an immediate and substantial effect on the University budget. Most retained freshmen remain at the institution through graduation, benefiting their lives, the State, and the University as a whole.
- We have been able to improve our retention and graduation rates to this point without making significant financial commitments to advising centrally. However, to realize the benefits of higher retention rates, it is likely that we will need more concrete investments in our academic advising practices. We should have a more detailed plan of our proposed advising model at the February board meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Tanjia Willis Miller moved that the minutes of the October 29, 2021, Regular Board meeting be approved. The motion was seconded by Kevin Craig and passed

COMMITTEE REPORT

December 17, 2021 Joint Finance and Facilities and Revitalization/Strategic Plans and Initiatives Committee Meetings: Chairman Marty Becker provide this committee report - stating that a variety of topics were covered in Executive Session and that no actions were taken as a result of said discussions.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Gee offered the following remarks:

As we come to the end of this year, I find myself reflecting on all we have accomplished under often difficult circumstances.

We have had a rich, full academic experience on campus this semester while maintaining best practices for preventing the spread of COVID. I am grateful to faculty, staff and students for recognizing the importance of vaccination and enabling us to achieve a better than 82 percent vaccination rate among students and nearly 92 percent among faculty and staff.

I am also grateful to all for patience and flexibility in coping with an ever-changing public health landscape. While students enjoy their holiday break, our health sciences experts will be helping us prepare for the omicron variant and plan for a safe spring semester.

I am also thankful to our teams who are responding to the mental health challenges that students here and nationwide are facing in these turbulent times. And I am grateful to our students for continuing to advocate for mental health services ensuring it remains a priority.

Students, faculty and staff have also been wonderful advocates for advancing diversity and inclusion on campus. We created opportunities for Mountaineers to experience and promote diversity through such programs as a system-wide Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council; an on-going series of messaging videos; and digital “badges” that undergraduates can earn by becoming more culturally competent.

These and other programs helped us earn the Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award for the sixth consecutive year.

We know we have more to do in these areas, and with such strong advocates leading the way, I know we will continue to advance these initiatives. We have also made tremendous progress on academic transformation over a short period of time.

Change is disruptive and, therefore, will not be universally popular. But the changes we are making are long-needed and will have a positive impact on our institution as a whole.

Looking forward to 2022, I know West Virginia University will face challenges, but we will also be poised to seize new opportunities. I want to share my appreciation to our board members who continue to serve this University with great commitment and lead us during this transformative moment. And I look forward to all of us—faculty, staff, students, administrators and board members—working as one West Virginia University to achieve even greater success in the coming year.

Chairman Jones added two additional notes following the report by President Gee. Senator Manchin recently brought the Secretary of Health to visit the Blanchette Rockefeller Neurosciences Institute. The visit was a huge success – targeting the exciting work done by faculty and staff here at WVU. Also, President Gee recently went to the White House for a meeting to discuss how to revitalize communities – particularly in Appalachia.

INFORMATION ITEMS

There were no questions or concerns expressed by any board member pertaining to the Information Items contained within today's agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA

Chairman Jones called for any discussion of today's Consent Agenda items and asked whether any items needed to be pulled for a separate discussion/vote. There being no such request made David Alvarez moved that today's Consent Agenda be approved. This motion was seconded by Marty Becker and passed.

Thereupon, the following Consent Agenda items were approved:

- 1. Approval of New Program: BS Bachelor of Science in Sustainable Design and Development in the College of Agriculture Natural Resources and Design**
Resolved: That the West Virginia University Board of Governors approves the creation of a new BS degree in Sustainable Design and Development in the College of Agriculture Natural Resources and Design
- 2. Approval of New Major: AA Human Nutrition and Foods (Potomac State College)**
Resolved: That the West Virginia University Board of Governors approves the creation of a new AA major program in Human Nutrition and Foods.
- 3. Approval of new Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Social Work degree program in the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences**
Resolved: The West Virginia University Board of Governors approves the creation of a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Social Work degree within the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences.
- 4. School of Dentistry Master Plan**
Resolved: That the West Virginia University Board of Governors approves design and pre-construction services for the School of Dentistry Master Plan, as presented.
- 5. WVU Athletic Performance Center/Natatorium Name Change**
Resolved: That the West Virginia University Board of Governors approves changing the name of the Natatorium to the WVU Athletics Performance Center.

6. Acquisition of Real Property on Spruce Street

Resolved: That pursuant to BOG Governance Rule 5.1, the West Virginia University Board of Governors authorizes the acquisition of 633 and 647 Spruce Street in accordance with the terms and conditions discussed during today's Executive Session.

7. Reconfiguring Intersection of Campus Drive and Beechurst Avenue

Resolved: That pursuant to BOG Governance Rule 5.1, the West Virginia University Board of Governors authorizes the transfer of necessary real property interests to City of Morgantown ("Morgantown") or the West Virginia Department of Transportation ("WV DOT") for purposes of reconfiguring the intersection of Campus Drive and Beechurst Avenue.

8. Approval of the West Virginia University Personal Rapid Transit Agency Safety Plan

Resolved: That the West Virginia University Board of Governors approves the West Virginia University Personal Rapid Transit Agency Safety Plan, as presented.

**GENERAL DISCUSSION AND
ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Jones announced that the Board will conduct its next regular meeting on February 18, 2022. There being no further business to come before the board, Richard Pill moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Dr. Stanley Hileman and passed. The meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

Richard Pill, Secretary