



Minutes
Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center
Board of Trustees Meeting
December 12, 2019

Call to Order

Chairman Israel O'Quinn welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order. Roll call was held. A quorum was present.

Board Members/Designees Present:

Steve Ahn
Senator Bill Carrico
Senator Ben Chafin
Maria Colobro
Joseph Crook (SCHEV) (telephonically)
Joshua Ely
Matthew Frederick (Emory & Henry)
Brian Hemphill (Radford University)
Donna Henry (UVA Wise)
Delegate Joe Johnson (Emeritus)
Bill Nuckols (ODU) (telephonically)
Delegate Israel O'Quinn, Chairman
Keith Perrigan
Ron Proffitt (Virginia Community College System)
Susan Short (Virginia Tech)
Lex Tartaglia (VCU) (telephonically)
Charlie White (VHCC)

Board Members/Designees Absent:

Alex Hernandez (UVA)
Hannah Ingram
Delegate Terry Kilgore
Delegate Will Morefield
David Olive (Bluefield) (Ex-Officio)
Delegate Todd Pillion
Sandy Ratliff

Others Present:

Amanda Baldwin-Estep
Natalie Blankenship
Theresa Burriss
Angela Cvetkovski
Rana Duncan-Daston
Connie Estep
Max Esterhuizen
Rachel Fowlkes
Hannah Hietala
Kathy Hietala
Bart Hill
Adrienne Hood
Brenda Justus
Deb Love (telephonically)
David Matlock
Penny McCallum
Mary Mullins
Steve Patterson
Nicky Rahley
George Santopietro
Courtney Stringer
Adam Tolbert
Sonia Vanhook
Jeff Webb
Sean Webb
Alicia Young

Approval of Minutes

The chairman requested a motion to approve the minutes of the June 13, 2019, board meeting. **The minutes were unanimously approved upon motion by Senator Chafin, seconded by Senator Carrico.**

Acknowledgement of Outgoing Board Members

Departing board member and former chairman Senator Bill Carrico, who is retiring from the Senate, was recognized and extended appreciation by the chairman and Mr. Matlock for his service, and especially for the leadership he provided during the Center's transition between directors. Chairman

O'Quinn also recognized Delegate Todd Pillion for his service on the board, noting that his term on the board will technically end at Noon on January 8, 2020, when he becomes a Senator, having been elected to Senator Carrico's seat in that body. The chairman said that it is thought that Pillion will be appointed to replace Carrico on the Center's board.

HR/Administration Report

Adam Tolbert, Department Director, presented the HR/Administration report, comprised of the following important matters:

New Bylaws

Chairman O'Quinn noted that board members had been provided with the draft bylaws for review via email prior to the meeting. He explained that the proposed new bylaws will closely mirror those of similar institutions as well as more closely conform with the way Center has operated over the last several years. Chairman O'Quinn said that the draft bylaws had been reviewed laboriously by the Center's legal counsel and had also undergone multiple reviews by the Executive Committee.

Mr. Tolbert reminded the board that at the December 2017 board meeting the then-chairman had appointed a committee to review and update the Center's bylaws. That process took some time, but ultimately the proposed revisions were presented for review to the Center's Executive Committee and to its legal counsel in the Office of the Attorney General in May of the current year. The input received was incorporated into the current draft presented for the board's approval. Mr. Tolbert called for questions, comments, or concerns about the proposed bylaws.

Susan Short inquired as to whether consideration had been given to replacing the word *Chairman* with *Chair* and *Vice Chairman* with *Vice Chair*. Mr. Tolbert replied that no debate was had with respect to verbiage, but that the board could propose an amendment if it so desired.

Following brief discussion, Dr. Short made a motion that the language indicating *Chairman* or *Vice Chairman* in the proposed bylaws be changed to *Chair* and *Vice Chair*, respectively. **The motion was seconded by multiple individuals, the first of whom was Maria Colobro, and unanimously adopted by the board.**

Thereafter, the chairman called for a motion to adopt the proposed bylaws as presented and amended. **Upon motion by President White, seconded by Dr. Proffitt, and a unanimous vote of the board, the new bylaws were duly adopted.**

Mr. Tolbert advised that an amended copy of the bylaws would be furnished to all board members within a few days, and posted on the Center's website.

Conflict of Interest Statements

Mr. Tolbert notified the board of the upcoming filing period for Statements of Economic Interest and Financial Disclosures for General Assembly board members, as well as Conflict of Interest Disclosures for citizen members. He said that the deadline for the January 1 to December 31, 2019, filing period will be February 3, 2020, since the normal deadline of February 1 falls on Saturday in 2020. Noting that they could expect to receive notice about filing their disclosures from Kathy Hietala during the next 30 days, he reminded them that a financial penalty could be incurred for failure to file as required.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director David Matlock reported the following significant information:

Noting that the Center would be celebrating its 30th anniversary some 18-19 months hence, Mr. Matlock said planning for that momentous event would get underway in the coming year. Relative to that news, he was also pleased to welcome the Center's previous Executive Director, Dr. Rachel Fowlkes, to the current meeting, extending appreciation to her for the strong foundation she had laid at the Center during her tenure.

To the academic partner representatives on the Board, he acknowledged the outstanding jobs their site representatives do on behalf of their respective institutions for the citizens of Southwest Virginia. He encouraged everyone to review the information contained in the College and University Reports section of their board folders. It has become the Center's practice to feature one of its academic partners at each board meeting, and Mr. Matlock announced that Radford University would be in the spotlight that day.

Financial Report

Mr. Matlock reported that the Center's General Fund Revenue allocation is about \$2.1 million—about the same as in FY14. Although a few increases had been received in the interim, the budget had also been subjected to 5% decreases in both FY16 and FY17, so the overall allocation remains essentially unchanged from FY14.

Mr. Matlock reviewed several key performance indicators for Non-General Fund Revenue:

- Non-General Fund Revenue was up for the past year, finishing at \$938,663, well above the five-year average.
- Tremendous growth was experienced in partner fees as a result of King and East Tennessee State universities having become full partners, increasing that revenue by about \$80,000.
- With the expansion of services to the community, Associate Partner Fees have also increased. That figure is anticipated to exceed \$200,000 for the year.
- Conference Services continues to do extremely well. Overall, non-general revenue is in great shape, with continued growth in all areas.

Mr. Matlock referred the board to their board folders for the Foundation report. He noted that Alicia Young had given a thorough report on all of the current grants at the June meeting, and there have been no essential changes since.

Upon conclusion, Chairman O'Quinn called for questions on the financial report; none were proffered.

Yearly Activity Update

Continuing with his report, Mr. Matlock drew attention to the Conference Services report. Saying that he enjoys the opportunity to talk about conference services, since it is a vital part of the Center's mission, he reported that the Center will have served approximately 203 organizations with an estimated attendance of about 37,000 and total bookings of about 2,391 from June 1-December 31, 2019.

Mr. Matlock said that since his arrival in 2015 he has primarily focused on three things, the first of which was improving operational efficiency. With

the Center currently operating at about the 2014 level in Other Than Personnel and Personnel expenses, he believes operational efficiency has been achieved, but is continually looking for ways to improve.

Another area of focus has been how to provide more citizen-centered services. Initiatives directed toward that goal include expanded Conference Services and creation of the K-5 STEM Academy. The Center is always seeking new ways of providing more citizen-centered services.

His third focus, Mr. Matlock said, has been improving constituent outcomes. Over the last few years, seven new residential programs have been brought to the Center, and three more will be starting in the spring, one of which will be highlighted during Radford's presentation to the board. The Center is excited about the Rural Virginia Apprenticeship Program for IT and cybersecurity, which will be launching in the spring, for which the Center will serve as fiscal agent for 22 counties and 5 municipalities. He promised more information about that program at the board's summer meeting.

Mr. Matlock provided an update on the Center's capital projects. As the board is aware, building expansion and HVAC replacement projects are already underway at the facility. Funding for those projects came through the General Assembly, working with DPB on the Center's strategic plan. These additional projects will be funded from maintenance reserve or revenue generated by the Center:

- Expansion of the administrative and academic office suite to add more offices;
- Conversion of the former culinary kitchen into a STEM gym;
- Enhancements to the patio to increase rent ability;
- Replacement of all windows, at a cost of \$420,000±;
- Replacement of all lobby furniture and some office furniture;
- Replacement of all carpet on the second floor;
- Continued IT improvements, budgeted at \$300,000±.

Mr. Matlock invited questions about planned capital projects; none were forthcoming.

Mr. Matlock asked that anyone in the room who had volunteered to help with the LEGO tournament or the 6th Grade STEM day or Virginia Tech's Kids' Tech stand up so that everyone could see the many folks present who had

participated in those events. He told the board that it takes a lot of people to make those events happen, and he extended his personal thanks to all participants present, who were acknowledged with a round of applause. His PowerPoint presentation included several photographs from the LEGO and STEM workshops events, and closed with a video he had created of Virginia Tech's Kids' Tech University workshops.

Radford University Presentation

Dr. Theresa Burriss, Chair of Appalachian Studies at Radford University, and Director of Academic Outreach for Radford at the Higher Ed Center, gave a presentation highlighting some of the work Radford has been engaged in over the last year.

The Substance Use Disorder Academy was a four-part professional development series held from March to November. It was streamed via Zoom from the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center to nine different locations throughout the Commonwealth, including locations in Northern Virginia, Central Virginia, Southside, and Tidewater. Experts in the field presented on topics related to case management, ethics, trauma-informed care, shame and addiction, mindfulness recovery, and Medicare/Medicaid-assisted treatment. Dr. Burriss said they were particularly fortunate to have a very distinguished presenter, Dr. Mary McMasters, on the last day of the academy. She extended special thanks to Nicky Rahley and Austin Dierks, members of the Center's IT team, who facilitated Zooming to nine different locations.

A \$325,000 grant from the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission, awarded to Radford University's Counselor Education Department in the College of Education and Human Development, has enabled the expansion of the school's counseling program to the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center. Dr. Burriss reported that Counselor Education faculty members have admitted 24 students to the program currently and are excited to begin the journey with the next cohort. A need for additional school counselors throughout Virginia is evidenced through two legislative bills, SB 1406 and HB 2053, that have recently changed the name of the role from *Guidance* Counselor to *School* Counselor. She said these bills provide a framework for improving student-to-school counselor ratios to better support students. Admitted graduate students will begin

their studies in the 2020 spring semester. The program is a 48-credit hour program aligned with national standards. The Abingdon cohort will require a seven semester part-time commitment. The program is designed for working individuals, with courses in the spring, fall, and summer semesters. Courses will be delivered in a combination of face-to-face and hybrid formats. The program will prepare students to become school counselors equipped to contribute to the academic, social/emotional, and career development of K-12 students, thereby directly benefitting communities in southwest Virginia. Dr. Burriss played a commercial created by University Relations that helped with the recruitment of students for the program.

David Matlock interjected to praise Dr. Hemphill who, soon after his arrival as the new president, made a commitment to reestablish Radford's presence in southwest Virginia. Likewise, he extended gratitude to Senators Carrico and Chafin and Delegate Kilgore, legislative members of the Tobacco Commission. They, along with those in the Office of Institutional Advancement at Radford University who authored the grant, were instrumental in obtaining the grant for the program. Since there had been somewhat of a political fight for the grant, Mr. Matlock wished to recognize those present who fought for funding of the program and asked Senator Carrico to comment.

Senator Carrico acknowledged that indeed it had been a fight, but one that the supporters knew was worthwhile. He said that since the Tobacco Commission's inception in 1999, it has tried to fund projects throughout the tobacco blueprint to help diversify the region. Recognizing this project as one that would enhance competitive education for southwest Virginia, the southwest delegation banded together in its support. Carrico said it had been a tough battle that took a roll call vote, but that the hard-won victory was worth it for an outcome that will benefit the region for years to come.

Prefacing his remarks by saying that relationships matter, Senator Chafin explained that the staff of the Tobacco Commission makes recommendations to the Commissioners about the projects they have vetted. Although this project was not one that was recommended, its supporters found it worthwhile to fight for, because they knew the project was important for southwest Virginia, for Radford University and the Higher

Ed Center. He said that with those important relationships and a little bit of work, the victory was achieved.

President Hemphill invited everyone to join him in a round of applause for Senators Carrico and Chafin, as well as Mr. Matlock and Dr. Burriss for their work in moving the project forward. He said that Radford University is proud of the opportunity to be able to bring its counselor education program to southwest Virginia, and promised not to disappoint its supporters for all the fighting they had done to gain approval.

Continuing her presentation, Dr. Burriss reported that, in addition to the successful Substance Use Disorder professional development series, Radford had also hosted several other professional development workshops and offered a wide range of community outreach activities. She pointed out that the grant writing and design thinking workshops that had already passed, as well as the middle school theater performance coming in the next semester, have all been free. Dr. Burriss said that Radford University is appreciative of its partnership with the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center and looks forward to continued collaboration.

Before closing, Dr. Burriss noted that none of what Radford had accomplished that year would have been possible without Amanda Baldwin-Estep who, while undergoing six chemotherapy treatments, continued to work on Radford University's behalf. As Dr. Burriss had accompanied Mrs. Baldwin-Estep to some of those treatments, she was able to display photographic evidence of both of them hard at work on their computers while Amanda was getting her chemo. Burriss said that Baldwin-Estep is an incredible individual who has inspired so many people at the Center and beyond, and that Radford University is so very fortunate to have her as part of their family. This was met with a long round of applause and a standing ovation in tribute to Ms. Baldwin-Estep.

Following Dr. Burriss' presentation, Dr. Susan Short inquired about the 24 students who had been accepted into the new cohort, asking if Burriss could share some information about their backgrounds and where they are in their lives and careers throughout the region. Dr. Burriss responded that all had to have had an undergraduate degree leading itself to counselor education graduate work. She said that some are coming from a school background

and some are coming from a clinical background, but all had to write letters of intent, as the faculty wanted to discover why they wanted to go into the school counseling program. It was learned that all of them demonstrated a sincere commitment to making a difference in young people's lives. Dr. Burriss noted that as those who live in southwest Virginia know, the region has incredible strengths and resilient people, but faces varied challenges. Radford is seeking students for the program whose hearts are in the right place to acquire the skills to make a difference, and she said the students who make up the cohort embody those qualities.

At the conclusion of Dr. Burriss' report, President Hemphill reflected on the comments previously made about individuals who are spending their time in championing southwest Virginia, and said that he would be remiss if he did not take a moment to acknowledge Dr. Rachel Fowlkes, who had been talking with him since his arrival at Radford about the importance of the work the university does for the community, work that she started at the Center and continues on now as a member of Radford's Board of Visitors (and one of his "bosses"). Dr. Hemphill called for another round of applause for Dr. Fowlkes.

Educational Outreach Report

Sonia Vanhook, Director of Educational Outreach at the Higher Education Center, shared a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the activities of her department. Mrs. Vanhook said that the driving force behind the activities of the Education Department is HB831, which requires that curriculum include computer science, computational thinking, and specifically computer coding, for K-12 students, and it is the goal of the Center to help schools in the region meet that requirement. The Center cannot achieve that goal alone, and has partnered with multiple organizations, including Code Virginia, Pennington Gap, Southwest Virginia Public Education Consortium, Tech Splash, UVA Wise, Virginia Tech, the Virginia Highlands Festival, and the William King Museum, among others. Mrs. Vanhook's PowerPoint included slides featuring the following outreach activities:

- The K-5 STEM Academy, which focuses on science, technology, engineering, math. The fall sampler program offers robots that students as young as kindergarten are taught to code; an advanced course is offered in the spring for students who have completed the

sampler program. Celebrating its second anniversary and having generated nearly 450 graduates, the five-week program is offered on Monday nights during the fall and spring. Although some were skeptical that parents would bring their children out to school after they had been at school all day, Ms. Vanhook declared that the number of graduates proves that they will. She expressed appreciation to Delegates O'Quinn and Pillion, who have attended graduation celebrations to present certificates to the students.

- STEAM field trips add the **A**rts component to STEM. Mrs. Vanhook said the field trips, initiated by teachers, are offered on Fridays in the fall and spring for kindergarten through high school.
- In addition to students coming to the Center, the outreach program includes visits to schools. Mrs. Vanhook showed a photo of students at Virginia Middle School learning to code Cubetto in their STEAM after school program. She referred board members to the Education section of their board folders for a complete list of groups served and the number of students involved in each group.
- The Reel Tech Experience offered in the summer was targeted toward Middle School students. Reel Tech was a week-long day camp where students were taught to code LEGO robots, Spheros, and drones. The camp culminated on Friday in a triathlon with all three types of robots, and the team with the most points won.
- The Center applied for and received a Virginia Commission for the Arts grant for \$1,500 dollars that was used to offer a puppet-building workshop in the summer. Mrs. Vanhook said the students were taught how to build life-size puppets in that program, a partnership with the Virginia Highlands Festival.
- Explaining that Toastmasters is an organization that individuals can join and attend meetings that allow them to practice public speaking skills, Mrs. Vanhook said the Education Department conducted a nine-week Toastmasters Youth Leadership program for John Battle High School in the spring of 2019. Approximately 25 students received certificates for participating in that program, which was so successful that the school asked that it be held again that fall.
- The Center partnered with Code Virginia for a multi-day teacher training program. Elementary school teachers from Bristol City, Buchanan and Washington counties participated in four online evening

sessions during the summer, with an in-person follow-up meeting in the fall.

In summation, Mrs. Vanhook asked rhetorically if her department is meeting its goal. Asserting that the training programs combined have served over 5,000 students and teachers in the past two years, she concluded that it is meeting the requirements of HB 831.

Mrs. Vanhook invited questions; none were forthcoming.

Chairman O'Quinn commented that he had been fortunate to witness many of the programs in action and could attest that they are high energy and the students have a great time. He encouraged other board members to visit during the activities, as well, speculating that their reaction would be one of excitement about the future of the region.

SW VA Public Education Consortium and Foundation

Adrienne Hood, Executive Director, shared facts about the Southwest Virginia Public Education Consortium. Ms. Hood said that the Consortium has grown into one of the strongest educational improvement organizations in the Commonwealth. A catalyst organization of educational partners whose mission it is to improve K12 public education in southwest Virginia, its partners are:

- K-12: Bland, Bristol, Buchanan, Carroll, Dickenson, Galax, Grayson, Lee, Norton, Russell, Scott, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington, Wise, and Wythe (16 public school divisions);
- Higher Ed: Bluefield College, Emory and Henry College, Mountain Empire Community College, the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center, Southwest Virginia Community College, the University of Virginia's College at Wise, Virginia Highlands Community College, and Wytheville Community College;
- Legislative (ex-officio) members: Senators include Carrico, Chafin, and Stanley; Delegates include Campbell, Kilgore, Morefield, O'Quinn, and Pillion.

Ms. Hood expressed appreciation to all who serve on the board, saying that it takes a lot of people to do good work, as Director Matlock likes to say.

Ms. Hood went on to say that through her work with the Consortium, she frequently schedules meetings and conferences at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center and interacts with the staff regularly. She said that the Consortium is extremely appreciative of the Center and its staff, without whose work and support those events would not be possible. Ms. Hood stated that the facility is always top-notch, and the staff welcoming, loving and friendly. She said the region is fortunate to have the Center, and on behalf of the Consortium and its partners, extended appreciation for its support of public education in southwest Virginia.

Ms. Hood invited questions; none were forthcoming.

Appointment of Nominating Committee

Chairman O'Quinn addressed the matter of appointment of a nominating committee, explaining that according to the bylaws, it should be made up of a college president, a legislator, and a citizen member, none of whom could be current officers. He said he would like to reappoint President Hemphill to the college president slot, Senator Chafin to the legislator slot, and Dr. Ron Proffitt to the citizen member slot.

Adam Tolbert noted that Dr. Proffitt could not fill the citizen slot, as he is the official designee of the Virginia Community College System to the board. Thereupon, the chairman appointed Dr. Keith Perrigan as the citizen member of the committee. Consequently, the Nominating Committee shall consist of the following board members:

- **Brian Hemphill (College President)**
- **Ben Chafin (Legislative Member)**
- **Keith Perrigan (Citizen Member)**

Chairman O'Quinn went on to describe the odd situation the board finds itself in with the current Vice Chairman, Delegate Todd Pillion, going off the board when he becomes Senator. That would create an untenable circumstance for the board, leaving it without a Vice Chair. In the event something should happen to the chairman, it could create the unwieldy situation of having to schedule an emergency board meeting to elect a new Chair and Vice Chair.

Reiterating that Delegate Pillion would be going off the Board as a Delegate because of his election to the Senate, thereby leaving vacant the board's Vice Chair seat, Senator Carrico made a motion that Senator Pillion resume that position and serve as Vice Chairman, contingent upon the Senate of Virginia Rules Committee appointing him before the next regular Board meeting as a legislative member of the Board. **Senator Carrico's motion was seconded by Keith Perrigan; the motion passed by unanimous vote of the Board.**

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Closing Remarks

During closing remarks, the following announcements, discussions and comments took place:

Mr. Matlock invited everyone to the board reception in the second floor landing area.

Mr. Matlock announced that following adjournment by the chairman, a groundbreaking for the Center's expansion project would take place for those present who would like to participate. Construction is underway, but because of the cold temperature and bad weather, the groundbreaking will only be ceremonial, and allow for a photo op.

Mr. Matlock noted that the *Bristol Herald Courier* and the *Business Journal* plan to run an extensive piece about the Radford University grant, so a photo opportunity was requested with Senators Chafin and Carrico, President Hemphill and whomever else might be appropriate, before departing the meeting room.

Summarizing, Chairman O'Quinn determined that immediately upon adjournment, the photo session with Radford would take place, after which those wishing to participate would meet at the front desk to go outside for the groundbreaking. He said that once everyone was frozen appropriately, they would come back inside to the reception.

The chairman called for any further comments or questions; none were forthcoming.

He reminded the board members to put the tentative date for the next meeting, **June 11, 2020**, on their calendars.

Chairman O'Quinn remarked that he had just been informed that it was his good friend former Delegate Joe Johnson's birthday that day. On behalf of everyone present, he wished Delegate Johnson a happy birthday and congratulated him on another great year. Mr. Matlock advised the chairman that Delegate Johnson's birthday had not been overlooked; that in fact a surprise birthday cake awaited him at the reception. It was decided that following adjournment, everyone would join in singing the birthday song to Delegate Johnson. Delegate Johnson expressed his thanks.

Thereupon, Chairman O'Quinn declared the meeting adjourned.