

Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center
Board of Trustees
Minutes
June 27, 2005

Board Members/Designees Present: Chairman Senator Phillip Puckett, Vice-Chairman Delegate Joe Johnson, Senator William Wampler, Delegate Bill Carrico, Delegate David Nutter, Jackson Barker, Deborah Icenhour, Ron Jessee, Rebecca Scott, Lorraine Turner, Tom Daley (SCHEV), Marcia Gilliam (Virginia Community College System), Edie Barnett (ODU), Carole Seyfrit (Radford), Linda Phillips-Madson (UVA), Gil Blackburn (UVa-Wise), David Wilkin (VHCC), Michael Puglisi (VA Intermont), John Dooley (VT), and Paul Blaney (Emory & Henry)

Others Present: Dr. Rachel Fowlkes, Scott Bevins, Gerald Blankenship, Deborah Bourne, Ms. Christine Fields, Blue Gotham, Kathy Hietala, Roy Jones, Penny McCallum, Mary Quillen, Cindy Reed, Eddie Sproles, Doug Viers, Jeff Webb, Janet Williams, Brenda Wilson; Curtis Stein, Denise Stanley, Jennifer Smith, and Candi Arnold

Welcome and Introductions

Senator Phillip Puckett, Chairman, called the meeting to order.

Members and guests in attendance introduced themselves. David Wilkin introduced Curtis Stein, the new manager of Follett bookstore, which was previously owned by VHCC. Dr. Wilkin also noted that Michael Puglisi was in attendance “wearing a new hat”—that of President of Virginia Intermont College; Stephen Greiner recently resigned that position.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes for the December 2, 2004 meeting were approved as written.

Legislative Report

Legislative members of the Board discussed House Bill 2422, approved by the General Assembly on March 22, 2005, which will go into effect July 1, 2005. The approved legislation will allow the Higher Education Center to increase its Board from 21 to 23 members; citizen membership on the Board was revised to consist of one school division superintendent, one public school teacher, two business and industry leaders, and one member each from the fields of technology, tourism and healthcare. Acquiring the guidance of such members in developing programming in the areas of technology, tourism, and healthcare will be most beneficial to the Center. Vice-Chairman Joe Johnson reported that the legislation was signed and sponsored by all the members of the southwest Virginia delegation.

Financial Report

Ms. Fields presented the Financial Report, beginning with the current Fiscal Year 2005 Operating Budget, which she reported was also an accurate projected year-end budget. According to the report, total state revenues for the year were \$2.15 million, which Ms. Fields said was 2% above earlier projections. She was pleased to inform the Board that two departments exceeded their revenue targets; Conference Services exceeded their target for room rentals by 22%, and the College for Older Adults exceeded its target by 50%. Ms. Fields congratulated them and expressed the Center's gratitude for their hard work. Non-General Fund Revenue was exceeded by 7%, for a total of \$648,000. On the expense side of the ledger, Ms. Fields explained that the Center exceeded budgeted amounts in Conference Services and Marketing Support by 5%. This was due to the need for additional staff at the Information Desk for all of the special events that were held in the building. Overall, 100% (\$1.224 million) of the budget for Personal Services was expended, with 15 fulltime state staff, 6 part-time wage employees, 12 fulltime and 10 part-time management employees—a total of 27 full- and part-time employees. In the category of Administrative Support, 98% (\$135,000) of the budget for the year was spent. Ms. Fields pointed out a new line item under Contractual Services and Fees was added for the VHCC Parking Lot Fund. She explained that the HEC began contributing \$5,000 annually to Virginia Highlands to help maintain VHCC's parking lots in front of the HEC. Under Facility Supplies and Equipment, the Center spent more money than was budgeted for Custodial Materials, again because of more event and participants using the HEC than expected. As a result of the additional revenue generated by Conference Services and Marketing Support, the Center was able to channel some of those funds back into printing and marketing. Only 91% of the amount budgeted was utilized for Program Support; this savings resulted from the need for fewer tutors for ODU students this year. Ms. Fields informed the board that \$186,000 of the Center's Contingency Fund was moved to Building Improvements and Special Projects, and related that the money was used to purchase new chairs for conferences and classrooms, additional lighting for the Grand Hall, expenses involved in closing out the culinary arts renovation project, a new keyless lock system for the building, and furniture for the IT suite.

Vice-Chairman Joe Johnson had a question about an item listed as "Town of Abingdon - \$13,000," and Ms. Fields explained that it was an appropriation from the Town to cover additional expenses involved in upgrading the grease pit for the culinary arts kitchen to comply with the Town's recommendations and suit its needs and the future needs of the Center. Since the cost exceeded what had been budgeted, the Center asked and the Town agreed to provide that money.

Ms. Fields continued, reporting that the Center had spent 99% of the budget to date, and pointing out that the bottom line on expenses did not match the revenue. She explained that the Center would ask for a re-appropriation of the balance of approximately \$77,000 on July 1.

Ms. Fields presented the proposed budget for FY06 and informed the board that the Center had received no additional appropriation; therefore, the General Fund would remain the same. Under Non-General Fund Revenue, Ms. Fields told the board about the recently concluded renegotiation of resident fees. As a result, the five resident institutions' fees

increased from \$45,000 to \$49,000 per year; in addition, Virginia Intermont will pay \$60,000 per year due to its dedicated space in the culinary kitchen.

Senator Wampler commented that it had been a number of years since there had been an increase in Resident Fees, and thanked the institutions for their willingness to participate in this modest raise in rates.

Ms. Fields explained that the proposed budget included 7% increase in personnel costs for the 27 full- and 10 part-time employees due to upgrades to a few classified positions, the employment of one additional IT staff, and increases in classified benefits. This increase accounted for the difference in last year's projected year-end of \$1.2 million and this year's \$1.3 million.

Ms. Fields reported a 6% decrease in Total Administrative Support due to some cost-saving measures in Office Supplies and Contractual Services. Under Contractual Services and Fees, she explained that the slight 3% increase is due to the additional maintenance contracts needed to keep the building running in its current condition as it ages. For the same reason, there was a 4% increase under Facility Supplies and Equipment; with an increased number of events in the building, and due to its aging, more supplies are needed to maintain it. Under Conference Services and Marketing, there was a 2% increase for Technology Support and 3% for marketing. The Higher Education Trust Fund remains the same for the biennium at \$55,209. There was a 5% increase in Program Support Funds to help support academic tutoring and additional expenses for the College for Older Adults. Other increases included \$85,000 in building improvements and special projects, and \$83,000 represented the remainder of the balance in the contingency fund. Total expenses for the year were projected at \$2.2 million.

Vice-Chairman Joe Johnson inquired as to whether any building improvements were being delayed, and Ms. Fields replied that there are no planned building improvements currently "on hold."

Chairman Phillip Puckett noted that the board needed to vote on the budget. Joe Johnson moved that it be approved; the motion was seconded, and the budget was unanimously approved.

College Reports

Chairman Puckett prefaced the college and university remarks by explaining to those in attendance that the board had asked the institutions to talk about any plans for expanded academic programs, either at the HEC or elsewhere in the region, what benefits their partnership with the Center, and for their recommendations for its continued growth, quality of service and continuous improvement. He spoke of the importance of the partners' active engagement and the vital role they play in the continued success of the Center, and the value of and need for their input.

Speaking on behalf of Old Dominion University, Edie Barnett announced some new programs that ODU would be launching. She said that one program is an online RN to BSN program set to begin statewide this fall. A new Certificate in Earth Science program

was made possible by Tobacco Commission funds allowing the development of online courses for teachers who need certification in Earth Science. A new Ph.D. program in English is planned for Fall '06. Dr. Barnett discussed the University's plans to embark on delivering courses to the hybrid market, which will allow them to offer more sections in the various programs, in addition to synchronous delivery. She spoke positively about the benefits of partnership with the SVHEC from a faculty perspective, stating that having students from all over the state has greatly enriched their classes. It has given ODU a presence in Abingdon, and students the opportunity not only to take classes at the community college level, but an array of choices among other institutions, all under one roof. She recommended a continuous improvement survey to be disseminated to the partners, site directors and students annually in order to ascertain need and levels of satisfaction. She also recommended that the partners meet annually in an open forum to look at issues, challenges and opportunities, as well as services provided by the HEC and potential services that could be offered as a group to the entire region.

Carole Seyfrit spoke on behalf of Radford University, telling them about the new President, Penny Kyle, a native of Galax, Virginia, who joined the University June 1st. Radford is currently conducting an investigation to determine the level of interest and the amount of preparation involved in bringing an MBA program to the Center. Because such a program requires a lot of prerequisites, they must find a way to ensure that prospective students have access to the prerequisites so that they will be prepared to begin the program. If those issues and logistics can be worked out, the program would be slated to begin during the fall of 2006. Radford also has new cohorts starting in their existing programs—Social Work, Counseling and Human Development, and Educational Leadership—here at the Center. In addition, they have begun a Master's program in reading with the Tazewell County School Division which, although not actually at the Center, still serves this area. Due to the difficulties sometimes encountered in trying to deliver entire degree programs, Radford has offered some single courses for people who need particular things such as special education and science. They delivered a series of biology courses, and hope to be able to continue those. Dr. Seyfrit concurred with Dr. Barnett's observations and recommendations in regard to Radford's partnership with the HEC, as well as the value of collaboration among the partners and the Center for future initiatives.

Linda Phillips-Madson represented Sondra Stallard on behalf of the University of Virginia, telling the board about a proposal for a collaborative program at the SVHEC for pre-medicine health professionals and a collaboration to enhance the nursing education programs available. She mentioned that their K-8 Math Specialist EDS degree would be finishing a summer institute at the Center on July 1st, and that they are also working with a Master's program in Math Education at the HEC. An earth science collaborative is another initiative UVA is working on along with a number of the partners. They are very proud of the reading academies that UVA in collaboration with Region 7 leadership and their sister institutions are bringing to Emory & Henry and UVA-Wise this summer and Dr. Phillips-Madson explained that over 100 teachers at each site would receive additional training in reading education in those academies. In addressing the benefits derived from being a partner with the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center, Dr. Phillips-Madson cited the ability to leverage resources collaboratively, the support staff at the Center—administratively and technically, not only on weekdays, but evenings and weekends, as

well—and support from the General Fund. In terms of continuous improvement, Dr. Phillips-Madson reiterated the need for more classroom space.

Gil Blackburn, Provost, spoke on behalf of the University of Virginia's College at Wise, mentioning their chancellor search and the self-study currently being conducted by the college. As part of that study and their desire to improve the services they offer through the Higher Ed Center, they have decided to add a site director specifically for UVA-Wise. In the past, one site director has represented both UVA and UVA-Wise at the Center; however, beginning July 1st, Scott Bevins will take over that position for UVA-Wise at the Higher Education Center. In the area of improvement, they are also in the process of analyzing programs, both old—such as nursing, education, criminal justice and business--and potentially new programs in areas such as international business, and their ability both to improve the programs and to deliver them well; they also have plans to adopt a more proactive approach in recruiting efforts. By making these efforts part of a strategic plan, UVA-Wise hopes to be a much more vital presence at the HEC.

David Wilkin, President of Virginia Highlands Community College, reported that maintenance of the roadway into campus, VHCC Drive, has been taken over by the Town of Abingdon, which will also be maintaining French Moore Drive, the road leading into the new business and Technology Park. Dr. Wilkin also talked about the new greenhouse funded by the Tobacco Commission which is currently under construction, thanking the legislators for approving that funding and the building, and Virginia Tech, who helped design the greenhouse and the curriculum and will be a presence in the operation. Another new building project at Highlands is the new facilities building, which will house a garage as well as desperately needed storage space. Dr. Wilkin said that the college had taken over the previous garage space for use as a manufacturing tech lab and a music studio. Programmatically, Dr. Wilkin reported that as part of the college's focus on health-related programs, they have hired their first Dean of Nursing and Allied Health. Virginia Highlands participates in the Appalachian Tri-College Nursing Program, typically admitting 156 nursing freshmen each year, and will continue to do so. In addition, they are starting an evening/weekend nursing program to which they expect to admit another 50 students per year. Tobacco Commission funds have enabled this program, as well as allowing an emphasis in other allied health programs, such as radiology tech, physical therapy, and dental hygiene. In closing, Dr. Wilkin stated that the benefits of collaboration with the Higher Ed Center were too many to enumerate, but listed Highlands' strengthened enrollment and access to SVHEC facilities as chief among them.

Vice-Chairman Joe Johnson commented that Delegate Terry Kilgore, who could not be at the meeting, had been instrumental in securing the Tobacco Commission funds.

Michael Puglisi, speaking on behalf of Virginia Intermont College, reported on the significant areas of VI's participation with the Higher Ed Center—their culinary program and the adult degree studies program. The Food City Culinary Classroom at the Higher Ed Center is the main teaching center for Culinary Arts, the home of the faculty who teach in the program and the showpiece that VI likes to bring prospective students to when they're considering the program. Partnering with the HEC in their adult degree studies programs has been most beneficial to the college and the students. These programs attract students—

most of whom are working adults--from a wide geographic region, and although VI is the closest of the partner institutions in proximity to the HEC, the savings in time and distance make it much more convenient for students such as those from Russell and Smyth Counties, for instance, to come to the HEC. Dr. Puglisi called attention to the fact that adult learners have different expectations than traditional students, and that the quality of the facility and the technology available here make the Higher Ed Center a tremendous draw for adult students. During the past year, VI has begun offering courses online, both in the culinary and management leadership programs. This fall, they will expand the offerings in their Management Leadership program, adding new cohorts in the Social Work program. He reiterated how their partnership with the Higher Education Center allows VI to reach out to more students in southwest Virginia and more effectively use their resources. Dr. Puglisi added that the Appalachian College Association--of which both Virginia Intermont and Emory & Henry are members--has begun using the HEC regularly for a variety of functions, and that, when the representatives of those 33 colleges are here, they always exclaim at the fantastic resource the Center is for the region.

Representing Virginia Tech, John Dooley first expressed appreciation to Roy Jones for his leadership as Interim Director at the Center. In discussing the issues addressed by the other partners, Dr. Dooley talked about Virginia Tech's future plans at the Center, including a redesign of their MBA program. He said that the current program takes an unusually long period of time to finish, and that they are looking at ways to improve the program so that it does not take as long to complete. They are also looking at ways to more effectively market the Commonwealth Graduate Engineering program, a master's-related program. With the completion of the greenhouse at VHCC, Virginia Tech is also interested in exploring the possibility of developing both bachelor's and master's programs in horticulture in partnership with some of the other institutions. Other future plans include bringing more not-for-credit continuing and professional education opportunities to off-campus centers. With the success of Bud Robertson's recent one-day program on the Civil War, which was attended by nearly 600 people at the SVHEC, Tech is looking at other ways to bring high-profile professors' expertise for short-term experiences, either for non-credit-related education or simply education for the general public. They will also be exploring certificate programs versus master's programs. Dr. Dooley also reported that, along with Dave Nutter and a council gathered primarily in Planning Districts 1 and 2, they are working on a distributive research model to determine program needs and create research agendas to identify key areas where they could provide programs to address those needs. Virginia Tech's plans at the Center are all contingent upon the willingness of faculty to travel to Abingdon, and they have recently revised their promotion and tenure documents to encourage greater activity outside of Blacksburg and recognize teaching outside the traditional classroom as being valued in the promotion and tenure process. Citing benefits derived from being associated with the Higher Ed Center, Dr. Dooley included the opportunity to meet with everyone twice yearly, the good work done by Dr. Fowlkes and the HEC staff, and having the Virginia Tech Cooperative Extension District Office located in the building. As had been mentioned by other partners, he recommended a greater engagement of the academic partners in determining and responding to critical educational needs in southwest Virginia, using their combined strengths to achieve results. He closed by expressing Virginia Tech's continued support and commitment to the Center.

Chairman Phillip Puckett thanked the partners for their remarks, saying that the common theme seemed to be the desire for greater interaction between the partners and administration of the Center in identifying and responding to the educational needs of southwest Virginia and greater participation in determining its direction for the future. He encouraged that process.

Dr. Fowlkes suggested that meeting with the partner institutions on future board meeting dates prior to the board meeting to exchange ideas and work with onsite staff might be a practical way to address this issue.

Long-Range Planning Committee Report

Vice-Chairman Joe Johnson reported that this committee would have its first meeting in the near future. He commented that there had been abundant testimony illustrating the need for the Higher Education Center to grow and expand in order to continue to serve the educational needs of the southwest Virginia region.

Conference Services & Marketing Report

Before Deborah Bourne began her report, Dr. Fowlkes told the board members about the International Rural Conference which was held the previous week. This six-day conference brought approximately 320 participants from 46 countries to the Center, the first time it had been held in the United States. The three previous conferences were held in Canada, Scotland and Australia. She explained that the HEC became the host for the conference by virtue of the fact that a participant from Missouri who attended the Appalachian Regional Commission conference held here in 2003 was so impressed by the many resources available to them in a rural area that they contacted the Center to ask if it would be interested in hosting the International Rural Conference. Debbie Bourne and her staff spent a year and a half planning and executing this conference.

Ms. Bourne began her presentation with an overview of some advertising highlights, which include press releases, magazine and newspaper advertising in support of the partner institutions. In addition, they coordinate information sessions, visit businesses and industries, and aggressively market the Higher Ed Center website. She shared information about a training program implemented for the staff through the American Hotel and Motel Association's Education Institute of America on hospitality/guest services, and a program on hosting the international guest. Collaborating with the Information Technology Department, they also provided complimentary Smart Board training for over 15 regional businesses. The HEC also sponsored the ServSafe Food Safety Training program, a nationally-recognized program, which had 39 participants in the four classes held during the past six months, greatly benefiting many restaurants throughout the region. The Center has realized a significant increase in events coordinated, as Ms. Bourne reported that she and her staff had coordinated 1,500 for the fiscal year to date compared to 836 events for the same time frame in the year 2000. She explained that many are multi-day events, positively affecting the local and regional economies. A new hotel has opened near the entrance to the campus, and Ms. Bourne related that, according to the Abingdon Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Higher Education Center has been a major contributor to the increased need for accommodations in the area. Nearly 700 different organizations have held events in the building, resulting in just fewer than 100,000 participants attending events at the Center in a

12-month period, not including classrooms. Consequently, the Center has also expanded its list of caterers for events. Percentage-wise, Higher Ed accounts for 43%, state agencies account for 11%, and corporate accounts for 18% of the usage of the Center. Ms. Bourne was extremely pleased to report that the Conference Services Department had exceeded their revenue goal by 22% this year. Illustrating the diversity in usage of the building, Ms. Bourne listed events held for tobacco farmers; a high school fundraiser for the Heart Association that brought over 350 people into the building; a two-day autism conference that attracted attendees from throughout the state; multiple events for the Virginia State Bar; a record number of jazz lovers for the Jazz Festival; Johnston Memorial Hospital's Red Dress Luncheon—a national event to increase women's awareness of heart disease; Washington County Library's fundraiser, "A Tisket, a Tasket, a Literary Basket," which was very successful; various churches; Chamber of Commerce events with many regional businesses and industries represented; the Attorney General's office; the multi-day Garden Faire, which once again garnered record attendance; the Virginia Department of Corrections annual awards banquet for 550 employees; "Take Your Son or Daughter to Work Day," hosted by the HEC and VI's Culinary Department, a fun and informative event for the children of staff members; finally, Ms. Bourne elaborated about the 4th International Rural Conference Dr. Fowlkes had spoken of earlier. With 300-350 people in attendance from over 46 countries, the range of diversity was broad. A multitude of languages could be heard and various forms of traditional dress could be seen in the halls of the Higher Ed Center during the course of the conference. The Convention and Visitors Bureau reported that the conference generated tremendous revenues for the community. Ms. Bourne recognized and expressed appreciation to the Information Technology Department for the tremendous job they did in handling an incredible number of technology needs, including PowerPoints, movie files, DVDs, web casting, etc. during the conference. She also recognized Janet Williams, a member of her staff who was instrumental in facilitating the conference, as well as Brenda Wilson, Chris Fields, and Eddie Sproles. Ms. Bourne reported that the Center had converted a downstairs storage area into a meeting room seating approximately 100 people theater-style.

Dr. Dooley asked Ms. Bourne about the revenues, which appear to be disparate with the number of events held. She explained that many of the events are considered higher education events, which are basically complimentary, and state agencies and not-for-profits receive a half price rate. These factors account for the seemingly inconsistency in the number of events held versus revenues generated.

Ms. Bourne concluded her report, introducing the subject of a recent staff retreat and inviting Dr. Fowlkes to elaborate on that. Dr. Fowlkes explained that the Center traditionally holds an annual building-wide retreat, and that this year's retreat was held at Raven Ridge Retreat Center. Two groups from the Center, a morning and an afternoon group, traveled to Raven Ridge, located in the Clinch Mountain range on the border of Russell and Washington Counties. Bob Martin, MerchantPoint Director, and other Center staff developed the website for Raven Ridge. The morning group participated in a nature hike, identifying native plants, herbs and wildlife, while the afternoon group hiked over two miles to explore the "Great Channels of Virginia." The Channels are a series of intertwining walkways created by huge, mostly rectangular boulders of sandstone. Located at an altitude of 4200 feet and covering several acres, they have been described by many geologists as the

most important geological formation in Southwest Virginia. The retreat was a great opportunity for team-building, as well as enjoying exercise in the out-of-doors. Dr. Fowlkes highly recommended Raven Ridge to anyone who hasn't been.

College for Older Adults Report

Blue Gotham, Director of the College for Older Adults (COA), explained that the program is open to learners age 50 or older who wish to enroll in a variety of non-credit courses of interest taught by volunteer faculty. For \$35, students may take as many courses as they wish each term. Blue informed the Board that the newly-renovated classroom mentioned by Ms. Bourne is used by COA students enrolled in courses such as yoga, Tai Chi, and meditation. Enrollment in COA continues to grow each term.

Executive Director's Report

Dr. Fowlkes told the Board that an international education has been the focus at the Higher Education Center this year. The Tobacco Scholarship program, with George Hiller's expertise and that of the Export Initiative, conducted workshops last year on study abroad opportunities for students in southwest Virginia. The Center applied for a U. S. Department of Education Business and International Education (BIE) grant, and received a two-year award of \$186,000. UVA-Wise, E&H, VA Intermont, and VHCC are the Center's BIE partners. She said that the Center has been working with faculty and students to broaden their knowledge about the global marketplace. Dr. Fowlkes introduced students who had recently traveled to Mexico with George Hiller, Amelia Harris (UVA-Wise) and Denise Stanley (E&H) to observe what southwest Virginia businesses are doing there, and how it corresponds with the economy of the region. Before turning the program over to the guests, Dr. Fowlkes briefly mentioned that the Higher Education Center continues to be a model for others, both inside and outside the state, as evidenced by the fact that it regularly attracts visitors seeking to learn more about its mission and operation. The HEC recently hosted a group from Rocky Mount, North Carolina. She closed by updating the board about the economic study the Center had commissioned Chmura and Associates to complete, explaining that a full report would be presented to the Board in December.

Special Guests

Dr. Denise Stanley, Assistant Professor of Business Administration at Emory & Henry College; Jennifer Smith, an Emory & Henry senior; and Candi Arnold, a recent Virginia Highlands Community College graduate, gave a moving presentation about their recent trip to Mexico with George Hiller, Amelia Harris and others, telling the Board what a profound experience it had been. Students from Emory & Henry, UVA-Wise, Virginia Intermont and Virginia Highlands went on the trip. They visited an air-conditioner manufacturing facility in Monterrey, Mexico, that imports compressors from Bristol Compressors, and another facility for which Strongwell in Bristol is the exclusive supplier of fiberglass for use in the manufacture of aluminum ladders. One of the students, Jen Smith, shared that she worked over the summer for the Nicewonder Group in Bristol, which owns a sand plant in Tennessee called Short Mountain, and that sand from Short Mountain is used by Strongwell for their fiberglass. Strongwell fiberglass, in turn, is exported to a company in Mexico called Escalerus, which makes 10,000 ladders each day, some of which are sold to U. S. companies such as Home Depot and Lowes! The group was also impressed by their visit to Tec de Monterrey, a university of about 22,000 students. They reported that the campus is

completely wireless. Candi Arnold said that prior to her trip to Mexico, she held a preconceived notion that there was a lack of emphasis on education, but that staying on the campus at Techno Monterrey definitely shattered that belief. It was an eye-opening experience for her to see how important education is to the Mexican people. As an older student returning to school, she dispelled the misconception of those whom she met in Mexico who thought she must be a faculty member, since it is uncommon there for adults to pursue higher education. Their focus is on getting their young people educated.

Jen Smith said that flying for the first time, visiting another country, experiencing their openness to receive American students, seeing how seriously Mexican value education, learning how they do business, discussing NAFTA and trade agreements, all served to broaden her perspective. Although she is majoring in business with an emphasis in accounting, she felt that the trip would be beneficial for any student regardless of their major. She expressed her gratitude to the Board for helping provide this opportunity, which she said was a wonderful experience.

Candi Arnold spoke movingly about how the experience affected her. Having left college 26 years ago, at the age of 47 she decided to return to school to pursue a degree. She was thrilled to be selected for this trip, which proved to be somewhat of an epiphany for her. During the course of the trip, the group took several tours and had the opportunity to see a little more of Mexico outside of Monterrey, and she was struck by the poverty that exists in the little tent cities out in the countryside, and how different the lives of those people would be if they had jobs. She gained a different perspective about NAFTA, and the realization dawned on her that it can and should be a joint effort worldwide to eradicate poverty. She expressed appreciation to the Board for helping George Hiller organize and implement the trip, agreeing with Jen Smith that it was a wonderful opportunity, and would be enlightening and beneficial for any degree-seeking student.

Dr. Stanley added that one of the things that impressed her most was the number of small entrepreneurs, such as all the street vendors, and that she was shocked that Mexico's equivalent of the IRS does not worry about collecting taxes from those vendors--most of which are family-owned--since they say that they do not make enough money to worry about paying taxes. She thanked Dr. Fowlkes for inviting them to share their experiences with the Board, George Hiller for writing the grant, and Amelia Harris for helping him organize the trip, which she also felt was an eye-opening learning experience and beneficial to everyone who went. She said that some of the students had talked about going back to Monterrey or somewhere else abroad to study, and she hoped that the SVHEC would continue to support the idea.

Dr. Fowlkes asked how students were selected for the trip. Dr. Stanley said that the criteria included recommendation by faculty, a written essay, and consideration of students' grade point average (GPAs).

Phillip Puckett commented that having heard about the trip, he now had a greater understanding of how such an experience would be beneficial to students and had his wholehearted support.

Other Business

In other business, Chairman Puckett said that a nominating committee, to be made up of an elected official, a citizen and a representative from the colleges and universities, was needed for the purpose of appointing new board members. He asked that Senator Wampler serve as the elected official, Debbie Icenhour as the citizen member, and Dr. Tom Morris of Emory & Henry College as the college and university representative, to report to the Board at the December meeting.

Linda Phillips-Madson took a moment to congratulate Mary Quillen, UVA's new site director, for an outstanding year, and to express the University's gratitude for her leadership and management of their programs at the Higher Ed Center.

Dr. Fowlkes recognized Paul Blaney from Emory & Henry College. He briefly stated that Emory & Henry is experiencing an enrollment boom, with an expected 20% increase from last year in students living on campus, and in excess of 150% in the number of first-year students this year as compared to 2003, so the college has been focused on serving the needs of that increased number of students.

Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned, and the members moved to the upstairs lobby for a reception.