



Minutes

Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center

Board of Trustees Meeting

December 12, 2024

Call to Order

In his first meeting as Chair, Senator Travis Hackworth called the meeting to order and requested of those participating in the meeting via Zoom that they mute their lines unless speaking.

The roll was called by Vice Chair Senator Todd Pillion. A quorum was present in person.

Board Members/Designees Present:

Olivia Bailey – in person
Delegate Betsy Carr – in person
April Crabtree – in person
Bret Danilowicz (Radford) – in person
Amy Darragh (VCU) – in person
Lou Fincher (E&H) – in person
Senator Travis Hackworth, Chair – in person
Donna Henry (UVA Wise) – in person
Adam Hutchison (VHCC) – in person
Scott Kemp (SCHEV) – via Zoom
Sarah Jane Kirkland (ODU) – via telephone
Melissa Lubin (UVA) – via Zoom
Allison Mays (VT) – in person
Senator Todd Pillion, Vice Chair – in person
Delegate Briana Sewell – via Zoom
Donna Stanley (VCCS) – in person

Board Members/Designees Absent:

Steve Ahn, Secretary
Delegate Jason Ballard
Esther Bolling
Keith Perrigan
Delegate Sam Rasoul
Karen Shelton
Sophie Chafin Vance

Others Present in Person or via Zoom:

Leigh Ann Adams (Radford)
Ray Barnes (Corporate Marketing)
Crystal Bazyk (SWVHEC)
Shannon Blevins (UVA Wise)
Theresa Burriss (E&H)
Meghan Copenhaver (SWVHEC)
Joy Govertsen (SWVHEC)
Debbie Hensley (SWVHEC)
Hannah Hietala (SWVHEC)
Kathy Hietala (SWVHEC)
Adam Kane (OAG)

David Matlock (SWVHEC)
Delegate Israel O'Quinn
Nicky Rahley (SWVHEC)
Randall Rose (UVA Wise)
Susan Short (VT)
Alicia Smeltzer (SWVHEC)
Rain Smith (Corporate Marketing)
Thatcher Stanley (Del. O'Quinn's ofc.)
Luke Sweeney (Del. Carr's ofc.)
Adam Tolbert (SWVHEC)
Sonia Vanhook (SWVHEC)

Approval of Minutes

Minutes of the June 13, 2024 meeting were unanimously approved upon motion by **Senator Todd Pillion**, seconded by **Delegate Betsy Carr**.

Special Presentation by Delegate O'Quinn and Senator Pillion

Before beginning his report, Executive Director David Matlock welcomed special guest and former board chair Delegate Israel O'Quinn, along with current Vice Chair Senator Todd Pillion, to the podium to make a special presentation. Delegate O'Quinn and Senator Pillion presented a commendation from the Virginia General Assembly and a flag that was flown over the State Capitol to Debbie Hensley, the Center's Senior Director of Finance and a 23-year employee who will be retiring just after the holidays. Delegate O'Quinn congratulated Mrs. Hensley, wishing her all the best and thanking her for her service to the Center, to Southwest Virginia and to everyone who had stepped through the doors and been able to better themselves because of its existence. Mr. Matlock also expressed heartfelt appreciation to Debbie, who accepted the special recognition with gratitude.

Mr. Matlock introduced Alicia Smeltzer, already a member of the Center's finance team, whom he announced had been training with Debbie and would be taking over Debbie's role.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director David Matlock went on to deliver his report, which included the following notable matters:

- Financial Report: A status report on the budget indicated that the Center is continuing to operate fiscally efficiently and effectively.

Mr. Matlock noted that the General Revenue allocation had been increased slightly (\$2,871,813), and an additional state appropriation of just over \$55,000 had been added this fall. As a result, Non-General Fund Revenue will exceed the projected \$785,000, due mainly to an interest adjustment owed to the Center that had not been credited the previous year to the Center's Non-General Fund Revenue. Mr. Matlock explained that the Center contracts with UVA to serve as its fiscal agent in some respects, whereby UVA Finance is the repository for the Center's non-general funds, including carryforward funds generating the interest credit.

On the expense side, in Personal Services (payroll, salaries, benefits, etc.), Mr. Matlock reported that the Center is operating well within and will probably come in a little under budget at the end of the fiscal year.

Other Than Personal Services is running within budget in all areas. The only line item that will exceed the budgeted amount is Marketing, due to the fact that expenses for a new website and some other marketing projects were budgeted for the prior fiscal year but paid in the current fiscal year.

Overall, Mr. Matlock felt confident that the Center would come in over budget in revenue and under budget in expenditures.

- Projects/Center Update:
 - Middle School Energy Academy – A grant was written and funded for the creation of a middle school energy academy; a new employee was hired to manage the academy.
 - Regional Simulation Lab Update – Construction continues.
 - Window Project – Project is 95% complete.

HR/Administration Report

Dr. Adam Tolbert, Senior Director of Administration, wished Debbie Hensley well on her retirement, noting that the two of them had worked closely together, as their respective areas of administration and finance often intersected.

Dr. Tolbert's report included the following topics:

- Personnel Update:
 - New Hires
Meghan Copenhaver, *Marketing & Public Relations Coordinator*
Michelle Block, *Custodian*
Crystal Bazyk, *Energy Education Academy Coordinator*
 - Departures/Changes
Sean Webb, *PR & Marketing Specialist*
Claire Cottrill, *Event Operations Specialist*
Kaylee Jackson, *Event Operations Specialist*
- Remote Meeting Policy Update: Reminding the board of the remote meeting policy that had been adopted at the December 2022 meeting, Dr. Tolbert informed them that the General Assembly had made some changes to the law resulting in the need to update the policy. Dr. Tolbert introduced the Center's counsel in the Office of the Attorney General, Adam Kane, who explained the two substantive changes to the Code Section that pertains to virtual board meetings:
 - Four instances when a board member can virtually participate and **now** be counted for a quorum: 1) if their residence is located 60 miles from the site of the meeting; 2) if they are caring for an individual who is physically disabled or has another medical issue; 3) if they themselves have a medical condition that would prevent physical attendance; or 4) if the board member has a personal matter (which must be identified with specificity, and is limited to two meetings each calendar year or 25 percent of the meetings held per calendar year rounded up to the next whole number, whichever is greater).
 - A minor change that will not affect the Center's board based on the frequency of meetings limits a board's all-virtual meetings to 50 percent of the meetings held each calendar year. The Center's board normally holds two regular meetings per calendar year.Thereafter, upon motion by **Senator Todd Pillion**, seconded by **Dr. Adam Hutchison**, the Board voted unanimously to adopt the updated remote meeting policy.
- Conflict of Interest Filing Reminder.

Marketing Department Update

Hannah Hietala, Senior Director of Events & Operations, highlighted some of the major projects her team has been working on:

- The hiring of a Marketing & Public Relations Coordinator, Meghan Copenhaver – Ms. Hietala expressed her excitement at Meghan's hiring and invited Ms. Copenhaver to speak. Ms. Copenhaver greeted those in attendance, expressed her enthusiasm to be at the Center, thanked the board members, and welcomed suggestions for her in her new role.
- Collaboration with Corporate Image resulting in some new promotional videos and a new website – Ms. Hietala conveyed her gratitude to Corporate Image team members present for their partnership, guidance and all of their efforts to bring the projects to fruition. She introduced Rain Smith and Ray Barnes from Corporate Image, who described the project and process, and treated board members to a preview of the finished products: new website; promotional videos—one highlighting educational opportunities, one highlighting conference and event space, and another focusing on the Rural IT Apprenticeship program.

HirEd Academic Partners Spotlight

UVA Wise

Randall Rose, Associate Vice Chancellor for Community & Economic Development for UVA Wise at the Center since January 2024, spoke enthusiastically about UVA Wise activities at the Center, including plans in the works to offer professional development and workforce training throughout the region.

Announced in a presentation earlier the same day was the university's LEAD SWVA, a 7-month regional leadership program set to launch in 2025.

Chancellor Donna Henry announced a new master's of education program that is enrolling over 60 students from across the region in only its second year. In addition, a new degree program in management and business technology is up for approval by SCHEV in the spring semester, to be rolled out in the fall, totally online. The chancellor acknowledged that it is an exciting time for growth and educational opportunity at UVA Wise.

Virginia Tech

Allison Mays, Director of the Virginia Tech Southwest Center, delivered a PowerPoint presentation updating board members on some of the projects and programs in southwest Virginia that her team has been working on in

the 18 months since she became director. In redeveloping, regrowing and rebranding the Center, she highlighted a number of projects, initiatives taking place either at the SW VA Higher Education Center or in collaboration with colleagues on campus at VT or within the community:

- The first ever Virginia Small Towns Conference, hosted by Virginia Tech Southwest Center, VA Municipal League, VT School of Public and International Affairs, and VT Roanoke Center was attended by 100 elected officials, town managers, economic development directors, town staff, and tourism directors from across the Commonwealth. SWVA, where many towns are closer to half a dozen other state capitals than their own in Richmond, was chosen for the first conference. The event provided excellent networking opportunities, received very positive feedback, and is expected to continue on an annual basis, rotating to different places around the state.
- Wellspring Foundation has funded a study to be led by VT Southwest Center in collaboration with VT's Center for Economic and Community Engagement. The study will consist of research, surveys, and other work to identify areas where VT can help to recruit and retain high quality educators in the SW VA counties of Russell, Washington, Smyth and Grayson; to help reduce and remove any barriers that keep educators from staying within their profession or prevent them from pursuing higher educational attainment for themselves, whether it be as a superintendent or principal, or for doctoral or graduate degrees.
- An Ag STEM Academy pilot camp for middle schoolers is slated to be held at the SW VA Higher Education Center in February, one night each week for 4 weeks, and will subsequently be implemented into a full summer camp where students will take field trips to farms, see STEM; to build & strengthen the pipeline to the agricultural field.
- Virginia Creeper Trail Economic Impact Study supported by Wellspring Foundation is part of an overall Virginia Creeper Trail strategic plan. The resulting report will be used for funding requests, state and federal reporting, and future reporting as the Trail comes back online.

- Drone Soccer, sponsored by the SW VA Higher Education Center, develops soft skills, creates accessible pathways into high-paying, high-demand careers.

Board members were referred to complete reports in the Academic Partner section of the board folders.

Public Comments

No public comments were received.

Closing Remarks

Chairman Hackworth reminded the trustees to add **Thursday, June 12, 2025** to their calendars for the next scheduled full board meeting and said that an email would be circulated during the interim polling the members to determine the best time to hold a meeting that will serve to achieve a quorum.

Noting that on January 29, 2025, the SW VA Legislative Reception would be held in Richmond, Chairman Hackworth invited those present to attend the event taking place at the Library of Virginia from 5:30 to 7:30. He said that it is always nice to see familiar faces from SW VA in Richmond.

Mr. Matlock commended Joy Govertsen on the Center's annual report distributed to the trustees at the meeting. He asked those present who work at the Center to stand and be recognized and applauded for their work on behalf of the Commonwealth.

Everyone was invited to a reception following the meeting.

A motion to adjourn was requested. **Todd Pillion made the motion; the motion was seconded by Delegate Betsy Carr, and the meeting was duly adjourned.**

A complete recording of the meeting may be accessed at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4s_hkIQv_TI