

**New River Community College Board  
(Region 10)  
Meeting Number Three Hundred Sixty-Nine**

***MINUTES***

**March 3, 2025**

Meeting number three hundred sixty-nine of the New River Community College Board was held on Monday, March 3, 2025, at New River Community College, Dublin.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mr. Christopher Calfee (Radford City)  
Mr. Craig Chancellor (Floyd County)  
Mr. Richard Chidester (Giles County)  
Mr. William (Bill) Cunningham (Pulaski County)  
Dr. Margaret (Peggy) Dewald-Link (Floyd County)  
Dr. Richard (Dick) Harshberger (Radford City)  
Mr. Eric Johnsen (Montgomery County)  
Ms. Jessica Littlejohn (Montgomery County)  
Mr. Cameron Peel (Pulaski County)  
Mr. Jonathan Sweet (Pulaski County)

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT**

Mr. Chris McKlarney (Giles County)  
Ms. Bobbie Potter (Montgomery County)

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT**

Ms. Melissa Anderson, Interim Vice President for Finance and Administrative Services  
Dr. Peter Anderson, Vice President for Instruction and Student Services  
Dr. Robert Brandon, President  
Ms. Angie Covey, Executive Director NRCC Educational Foundation  
Dr. Deborah Kennedy, Dean of Student Services  
Mr. Tim Jones, Director of Information Technology and Facilities Services  
Ms. Lori Mitchell, Dean of Business and Technologies  
Mr. Ronnie Nichols, Facilities Services Manager  
Ms. Tammy Parks, Vice President of Faculty Assembly  
Ms. Kathy Ridpath, Administrative Assistant, President's Office  
Dr. Mark Rowh, Vice President for Workforce Development and External Relations  
Dr. Fritz Streff, Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Research  
Dr. Sarah Tolbert-Hurysz, Dean of Arts and Sciences  
Ms. Helen Wolfe, Dean of Health Professions

**AGENDA ITEMS**

**1. Call to Order**

Mr. Bill Cunningham, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. A quorum was present and due notice had been mailed and published.

## 2. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Cunningham welcomed Ms. Tammy Parks, Faculty Assembly Vice President, and all others in attendance.

## 3. Agenda for Approval

Mr. Cunningham asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

**Motion:** Dr. Dick Harshberger made a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Richard Chidester seconded the motion.

**Action:** The motion carried unanimously.

## 4. Minutes for Approval

The minutes of meeting number three hundred sixty-eight, held on Monday, December 2, 2024, were disseminated in the meeting packet. No questions were posed. Mr. Cunningham asked for a motion to approve the minutes.

**Motion:** Mr. Richard Chidester made a motion to approve the minutes. Dr. Dick Harshberger seconded the motion.

**Action:** The motion was approved.

## President's Report

Dr. Brandon expressed his gratitude to the Board for their support. He commented that he has enjoyed meeting everyone at the college and in the community. He stated that the college has an impressive faculty and staff who show their commitment and dedication to doing what is best for the students and community. He provided highlights of the activities he has been involved in as new president. Highlights included:

- Goal is to meet those in the community and to hear about opportunities that exist for the college
  - Has met and will continue to meet individuals in the community
- Met with internal constituents (goal to create a theme and bring back to senior staff to map a strategic vision for the future)
  - Senior leadership
  - Full-time faculty
  - Unit leaders
  - Classified staff
  - Retirees
  - Students

Dr. Brandon provided an update on dual enrollment. Legislation was passed for a zero cost for the minimum UCGS (Uniform Certificate of General Studies) for high school students. The legislation did not pass funding for dual enrollment. NRCC has not charged for dual enrollment in the past, so the impact will not be as great as for other colleges. Dr. Brandon asked if the board members have an opportunity to speak with legislators, he suggested letting them know how important funding would be for dual enrollment. On another note, Dr. Brandon informed the board that legislation was passed requiring the State Board for Community Colleges and each local community college board to appoint a nonvoting, advisory faculty and staff

representative to the board by July 1. A suggestion was made to include a student representative on the local board. More information will be forthcoming on this suggestion.

Dr. Brandon informed the board that the VCCS has a new evaluation process for college presidents. This new process will include a survey given to the local board members. Because of the short time period of Dr. Brandon's presidency, the Chancellor will not require a survey by the full board for his evaluation. Chancellor Doré will have a conversation with the board chair regarding the evaluation of the president. Dr. Brandon encouraged board members to provide feedback to Mr. Cunningham if they have information they would like to relay to the Chancellor.

Dr. Brandon informed the board that Radford University (RU) has decided to close the partnership with NRCC for the NRB2RU Bridge program. The Bridge program allows students who were not accepted into RU to live on their campus and come to NRCC to prepare them to meet RU's academic requirements. This will cost the college some students, but Dr. Anderson and his team are discussing other possible options.

Dr. Brandon provided an update on the budget. There is a general sense across the state that budgets have been tight at the community colleges due to concerns about unfunded dual enrollment, tax revenue and recession. He stated that NRCC is in great shape and continues to be strong.

Dr. Brandon recognized the college's student support services for having the highest graduation rate of first-time, full-time students in the VCCS over the last few years. On a related note, he recognized Dr. Rowh and Workforce Development for the data received for student success in the FastForward program (programs focused on short-term training). 93 percent of students who go into the FastForward programs complete the programs. 75 percent of students earn credentials. The data shows that the average wage increase from the time the students begin the program until they finish is 66 percent. He commented that this is life-changing work Workforce Development is doing and expressed his appreciation.

Dr. Brandon stated that his door is always open. As part of his listening tour, he would love to meet with each board member and hear thoughts about the college. He expressed appreciation to the board for the work each one does for the college.

## **6. Finance and Administrative Services Report**

### Tuition Revenue Deficit Reserve Fund Status

Ms. Melissa Anderson referred the Board to Exhibit C, Tuition Revenue Deficit Reserve Fund Status. No questions were posed.

### 2023-2024 Local Funds Statements of Receipts and Expenditures

Exhibit D, 2023-2024 Local Funds Statement of Receipts and Expenditures, was distributed and reviewed. No questions were posed.

Ms. Anderson presented two items for action. The Budget and Finance Committee met prior to the meeting to discuss these exhibits.

- (1) FY26 Local Funds Budget (Exhibit D) – On behalf of the Budget and Finance Committee, Mr. Cameron Peel discussed and recommended

approval of the local funds budget. Questions were posed and discussed.

**Action:** The FY26 Local Funds Budget was approved by unanimous vote.

- (2) Student Activities Budget (Exhibit E): The sources of funds for the budget are local funds and student activities fees. The total budget request is \$106,000. On behalf of the Budget and Finance Committee, Mr. Peel discussed and recommended approval of the Students Activities Budget. He stated that a discussion was held in the committee meeting to try to get additional women's sports added. A discussion was also held about the possibility of partnering with the Pulaski County Parks and Recreation due to the recreation complex coming in. Questions were posed and discussed.

**Action:** The Student Activities Budget was approved by unanimous vote.

## 7. Technology and Facilities Services Report

### Student Entrance Plaza

Mr. Nichols informed the Board that the contracts have been approved for the student entrance plaza, and the testing proposal should be received soon. Construction of the plaza should be ready to begin in approximately 30 days.

### Covered Walkways

Mr. Nichols provided an update on the covered walkways that will connect all the buildings of the college. Construction has begun; the concrete and bases have been poured with the canopies being installed this week. Once the canopies are installed, brick will be installed around the bases of the metal columns. The work for all the walkways should be completed by mid-May.

## 8. Institutional Effectiveness and Research Report

### Enrollment

Dr. Fritz Streff provided a report on enrollment for the spring semester. The semester shows an increase of 1.29 percent in headcount and 0.64 percent in FTEs from this point in time last spring. Discounting dual enrollment, there is a decrease of 1.89 percent in FTEs and 1.48 percent in headcount. The college was 18<sup>th</sup> overall in the VCCS in terms of FTE change rank.

### Strategic Planning Session Update

Dr. Streff reported on the strategic planning session that was held in January. These sessions occur each year to discuss college goals and ways to achieve those goals. Two of the six college goals are discussed each year. A survey was sent to faculty and staff prior to the session that allowed them to specify characteristics of strategies that were associated with achieving the specified goal. Dr. Streff compiled the results of the focus group sessions by using Copilot, an AI service. The summary will be emailed to the Board.

## 9. Instruction and Student Services

### Rapid Maroons Program

Dr. Anderson reported on a new partnership with Roanoke College, Rapid Maroons.

This partnership establishes a direct path to Roanoke College for students who earn their associate degree at NRCC. Dr. Brandon and Roanoke College President, Dr. Frank Shushok, Jr., signed the agreement on January 30. The program will give NRCC students access to joint advising and student activities. Rapid Maroons students from NRCC who earn a transfer-oriented associate degree and obtain a cumulative GPA of at least 2.0 are eligible to directly enroll in Roanoke College courses without needing to reapply.

#### Dual Enrollment Update

Dr. Anderson provided an update on dual enrollment. NRCC has over 1,000 dual enrolled students which consists of public and private high school students. CH647 of the 2024 Acts of the Assembly is an unfunded mandate from the state that will allow high school students to complete the UCGS at no cost to the student or school division. In the last 20 years, NRCC has reimbursed the public-school divisions 100 percent of the tuition. He stated that the college is well positioned financially without taking a hit of losing income that other VCCS colleges may lose. At present, the college does charge fees but will discontinue charging these fees. He stated that the academic deans are the dual enrollment coordinators at NRCC.

#### Programmatic Update

Dr. Anderson provided a programmatic update. The updates included:

##### Arts and Sciences

- Dr. Sarah Tolbert-Hurysz, Dean of Arts and Sciences, is working with Ms. Bonnie Graham, Professor of Human Services/Early Childhood, to establish a newly redesigned Human Services and Early Childhood development space. The location will be in Godbey Hall, rooms 128 and 129.
- Dr. Tolbert-Hurysz is working with English faculty to redesign English 111 and 112 (English composition classes) to try to come up with the best way to incorporate AI into those courses.
- The Center of Teaching and Learning and Professional Development (CTLPD) provides ongoing professional development opportunities for faculty and staff. Some of the events held included:
  - Financial aid session
  - Navigate session
  - Teaching and learning sessions
  - Excel session
  - Microsoft Teams session

##### Business and Technologies

- Equipment implementation and updates in the Instrumentation and Control Automation Lab
- A Robotic Welding course will be offered in the summer semester. Dr. Anderson stated that the welding program is very busy, so a summer course was needed for this offering.

##### Health Professions

- The nursing department is going through an ACEN (Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing) process. The Virginia Board of Nursing and the VCCS have both required that every associate degree nursing program in Virginia have this accreditation. Each full-time nursing faculty member has one of the five standards to complete. The process should be completed by July 2025. The ACEN site visit is scheduled for February 24-26, 2026.

- A Paramedic and Advanced EMS program will begin in the fall semester.
- NRCC has an Earn to Learn grant specialist, Ms. Linda Tunnel, on campus. This position is provided by the Virginia Department of Health. This grant provides students with income replacement funding and a one-on-one experience with a nurse mentor at one of the clinical facilities. This grant will end in December 2025, but hopes are for an extension to May 2026.

## **10. Workforce Development and External Relations Report**

### Legislative Update

Dr. Rowh provided a summary report of actions in the General Assembly in the 2025 session as they affect the VCCS. He noted that college leaders have visited legislators in Richmond (one visit included three NRCC students) on issues concerning support for the overall agenda of the VCCS. On a related note, Dr. Rowh stated that Senator Hackworth and Delegate Ballard have been particularly supportive of the college and the VCCS.

### FastForward Update

Dr. Rowh reported that over 90 percent of students taking FastForward classes get 100 percent funding. These programs do not qualify for federal aid; they are funded by the state through legislation passed in the General Assembly in 2016.

### SACSCOC Update

Dr. Rowh informed the Board that the college's compliance certification report is due in 2027 with reaffirmation scheduled for 2028. More information will be forthcoming on this process.

### President Emeritus Information

Dr. Rowh reported that the VCCS has a policy for the possibility of naming previous presidents "President Emeritus." This recognizes outstanding service to the system in the role of president and grants an honorary title to retired presidents who meet specific criteria. If the Board chooses to explore this, the recommendation(s) will go to the Chancellor and State Board for approval. Mr. Cunningham noted that he is willing to serve on an ad hoc committee to review this process. He asked for volunteers to assist with this review. Mr. Craig Chancellor and Dr. Harshberger agreed to serve on the committee with Mr. Cunningham. More information will be forthcoming.

## **11. NRCC Educational Foundation**

### ACCE Update

Ms. Covey informed the Board that the deadline to submit the ACCE application was February 1. An accurate enrollment count can be established at a later date.

### Scholarships Update

Ms. Covey provided an update on recently endowed scholarships. They included:

- Bonnie and Cecil Wynn Memorial Scholarship
- Christy Brown Scholarship was endowed by her parents, John and Mary Jean Brown
- Holly King Memorial Scholarship
- Lula Shepherd Waller Memorial Scholarship

- Barbara Day and James Dixon Scholarship
- Dennis and Susan Duncan endowed their fourth scholarship
- Bud Foster and the Lunch Pail Defense Foundation Scholarship
- Joseph Sheffey (NRV Health Foundation) Scholarship
- Patricia B. Huber Scholarship

Ms. Covey informed the Board that the Foundation audit has begun. She noted that the Foundation ended last year with a total of a little over \$3 million that was raised in contributions and \$1.8 million of endowed contributions. The Foundation awarded over \$1.6 million in student funding last year. More information on the audit will be forthcoming.

## **12. NRCC Board Terms of Appointments**

Referring to the chart of appointments, Mr. Cunningham encouraged members to make note of expiration of terms. Three terms will expire this year with two being eligible for reappointment. The college will send letters to the respective localities.

## **13. Appointment of the Nominations Committee**

Mr. Cunningham appointed Dr. Dewald-Link and Mr. Eric Johnsen to the Nominations Committee for 2025-2026. The committee will need to present a slate of officers (Chair and Vice Chair) at the June meeting of the NRCC Board for the board's approval.

## **14. Open Discussion/Q&A Session**

Mr. Chris Calfee opened the floor for discussion. Mr. Jonathan Sweet informed the Board that Radford University will have a public hearing on March 4 from 3:00 – 4:30 p.m. for a budget presentation on tuition. He invited those interested to attend.

Mr. Calfee expressed his appreciation to the board and staff. He commented it is an honor to have the opportunity to represent NRCC in the community.

The next regular meeting of the New River Community College Board is scheduled for Monday, June 2, 2025. The meeting will be held at NRCC, Christiansburg.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. Bill Cunningham, Chair

Dr. Robert Brandon, Secretary