

Meeting Minutes

MECC Local Advisory Board

Tuesday, January 16, 2024, 4:30 p.m.,

Via Zoom due to weather conditions

MEMBERS PRESENT

SCOTT COUNTY	WISE COUNTY	LEE COUNTY	DICKENSON CTY	NORTON
Adrienne Hood	Mike Abbott	Emily Kinser		Carol Caruso
Keith Wilson	Betty Cornett	Joyce Williams		
Rodney Baker	Teresa Adkins	Scott Napier		
Freda Starnes		Kristi Taylor		

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mike Hatfield (Wise)
Roy Munsey (Wise)
Carolyn Strouth (Dickenson)

Others Attending:

Dr. Bill Brownsberger – Vice President, Academic Affairs and Workforce Solution
Dr. Kristen Westover - President
Peggy Gibson – Executive Assistant to the President
Mr. Phil Edwards – President, Faculty Senate
Vicki Middleton – President, Association of Classified Staff

CALL TO ORDER

The Mountain Empire Community College Advisory Board met on Tuesday, January 16, at 4:30 p.m. via Zoom due to weather conditions. The meeting was called to order by chair, Mr. Mike Abbott.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Keith Wilson made a motion to accept the November 14, 2024, minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Rodney Baker and passed unanimously. **(Exhibit 1)**

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Mr. Abbott reported on the following information items:

-  Mr. Abbott reminded Board members that the 2024 Conflict of Interest must be completed by February 1, 2024.

President's Report – Dr. Kristen Westover

Dr. Westover reported on the following items:

Enrollment

- The 2023 Fall Semester point-in-time headcount is 2,016 compared to last year's headcount of 1,929: an increase of (4.5) percent. The College's FTE is 1,340 compared to last year's 1,217, reflecting an increase of (10.9) percent.

Total students for Fall 2023 were 2,015 of which approximately 46% were full-time and 54% were part-time: 61% female and 38% male. Dr. Westover also shared that students are taking more credit hours; Fall 2023 was 9.97 compared to Fall 2022 which was 9.46.

- The 2024 Spring Semester point-in-time headcount is 1,727 compared to last year's headcount of 1,580: an increase of (9.3) percent. The College's FTE is 1,109 compared to last year's 965, reflecting an increase of (15) percent. Students again are taking more credit hours per student this semester. (Exhibit 2)

Other Updates

- Dr. Westover shared that Mr. Ron Vicars has resigned from his position of VP of Finance and Facilities and that Ms. Kristy Hall is currently serving as interim in that role.

Legislative Updates

Dual Enrollment – Defining DE compared to concurrent enrollment – DE is defined as a class taught in the high school by high school instructors credentialed by the college whereas concurrent enrollment would be a high school student taking a college course on a college campus with a college instructor.

Dr. Westover made Board members aware of some other DE recommendations that was a result of Joint Legislative Audit Review (JLARK) study that took place several years ago and may not necessarily be a good thing.

Recommendations are:

1. Virginia Department of Education and VCCS to administer College and Career Ready Virginia.
2. All public high school students to have the opportunity to enroll in Passport or UCGS courses.
3. All public high school students able to enroll in Passport/UCGS courses at no cost to them or their families.

Dr. Westover shared that there is also a bill that Senator Hackworth is sponsoring around increasing the percentage of nursing clinical hours performed across state lines. She mentioned that a lot of our students have to go to Ballad facilities in order to obtain their clinical hours and right now are limited because only 20 percent of their clinical instruction can be taught out-of-state. This legislation is to remove that barrier.

Budget update:

She mentioned that the VCCS had originally put together an ask in the 6-year Plan of about \$300M. The identified need was approximately \$291M and would deliver almost 36,000 additional degrees and credentialed employees within the next 6 years. She mentioned that none of this funding was in the Governor's budget.

Since none of the \$300M was in the Governor's general budget, the VCCS has been working frantically to get bills back into consideration on both the House and Senate in order to get us more funding. However, there were some colleges that received line items appropriations that were included.

Highlights for VCCS:

1. NEW: Provides \$3.9M ongoing funding for regional career placement centers.
2. Adds an additional \$9.2M to support FastForward (funding that supports non-credit instruction and workforce training and credentials).
3. Adds \$24M in one-time (FY25) funding for umbrella projects to address deferred maintenance and \$13.2M in additional Maintenance Reserve funding for the biennium.
4. Employee Compensation & Benefits – Increase employee compensation through a 1% bonus in FY25 (on Dec. 1, 2024) and 1% bonus in FY26 (on Dec. 1, 2026), plus 1% salary increase in FY 26 (on June 1, 2025; includes full-time faculty, staff, and adjuncts)
5. Health insurance premiums will increase by 6.3% in FY25 and 4.0% in FY26.

Dr. Westover mentioned that the emphasis right now is on growing the Talent Pipeline and are seeking alignment with GO Virginia Regional Industry needs.

- Region One Priorities are:
 - Healthcare
 - Skilled Trades
 - Transportation
- Current Funding
 - VCCS receives \$0.57 on the dollar when compared to four-year institutions in Virginia.
 - Virginia is in the 23rd percentile when compared to funding two-year colleges nationwide (77% of community colleges spend more per student than Virginia)
- Six-year Plan Endorsements
 - Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association
 - Virginia Chamber of Commerce
 - Identified need = \$291M to deliver 35,662 additional degreed and credentialed individuals employed by 2030
- First Installment through the upcoming Biennium Budget
 - Year 1 = \$124M
 - Year 2 = \$74M
 - Total for biennium = \$198M
 - Nearly 20,000 of the 35,662 additional degreed and credentialed individuals employed by 2030.

Rebranding Discussion

Dr. Westover shared that rebranding is a strategic decision aimed at keeping the College relevant, competitive, and in line with its evolving goals and the changing landscape of education. She mentioned that with the rapid advancement of technology and the increasing importance of digital presence, colleges might rebrand to better integrate and present themselves in the digital world, ensuring their websites, social media, and online learning platforms are up-to-date and user friendly.

As the demographics of potential students change, institutions may need to update their branding to appeal to new generations of students with different values, interests, and perspectives. The higher education sector is highly competitive. Colleges may rebrand to differentiate themselves from other institutions, highlighting unique programs, facilities, or campus culture. Dr. Westover mentioned that over time, an institution's mission, values, or priorities might evolve. Rebranding can help align the institution's public image with its current goals and ethos. In 1972, before opening our doors, MECC chose its "mountain" logo. The VCCS (at that time known as the Virginia Department of Community Colleges) created the "dusty lavender" and "rusty red" image of mountain ridges that continues to represent the "basic philosophy or attitude of the institution it represents."

In the early to mid-2000's, MECC distributed a survey to stakeholders concerning the color palette to be utilized in marketing and publications. At that time, it was decided on red/blue and blue/green palettes.

Our logo was developed and has gone through some reiterations since 1972 but has remained fairly consistent with the "M". We began a discussion on updating our branding because we wanted to capitalize on the need to update our website and signage for renovations on campus. Cumberland Marketing was contracted to review our marketing efforts and found there was not a consistency in branding and color palette usage across campus, to include signage, print materials, merchandising, and facilities, not a clear directive of using our mascot and when to use it, inconsistent tag lines and messaging and voice. Students interviewed as part of a branding brainstorming session indicated they had no connection to our logo – it was generic and not reflective of our campus or our community. The branding study found that our logo no longer reflects how our community sees MECC, that our logo has not kept up with the progressive academic, workforce, and programming of our college. Our logo needs to reflect the current way that individuals see our college and future growth for the college. Dr. Westover shared several logos with the same color scheme and did not reflect MECC or differentiate us from other colleges in our area. She encouraged Board members to participate in the survey if they receive it.

Vice President, Academic Affairs and Workforce Solutions – Dr. Bill Brownsberger

Dr. Brownsberger reported on the following items:

- Dr. Brownsberger reported on the following grant opportunities:
 - Carry over Perkins funding from 2022 in the amount of \$14,500 that we are eligible for.
 - Reach Deep Grant – This grant is for \$28,500 from the Lumina Foundation. This is an additional part of a grant that we have received before. He mentioned that funds could be used for our prison education programs such as Project Weld at our Camp 18 facility. He reported that the program is going well and is hoping to expand offerings beyond welding once a new superintendent has been named. A bigger space is also needed at that location. More updates later.
 - G3 Workforce Grant - Dr. Brownsberger reported that the System office has received a \$7.7M dollar workforce grant of which the College will receive \$261,000. He mentioned that the application will need to be completed by January 19th and funds must be spent by July 31. He mentioned that these grants are centered around Career and Technical education and can help purchase items such as a second ventilator for respiratory therapy, machining, dental hygiene, cyber splicing, and others.
 - Childcare grant - \$57,000 over the course of two years through Davenport Institution.

Position Changes:

- Dr. Brownsberger mentioned that Ms. Angie Lester was recently hired to fill the role of Dual Enrollment Coordinator. He mentioned that this role is especially important since approximately 33% of our credits are dual enrollment.
- Dr. Ted Booth is now the new Dean of Arts & Sciences. Dr. Booth was previously a history professor here at MECC.
- The Dean of Business and Information Technology – search has been extended until end of February.

Other updates:

- Dr. Brownsberger mentioned the upcoming renovations to Godwin and Phillips Taylor Hall. He stated that it is not going to be an easy process, however, there is ongoing discussion on how to move forward with the least interruptions to offices and for our students. He mentioned his priority is that we are not sending students home and that the projects do not interfere with classes. They are currently looking at available spaces and will update at our next meeting.

Action Item(s): none

Interim Vice President, Financial and Administrative Services – Ms. Kristy Hall

Ms. Hall was on annual leave during today's meeting. Dr. Westover reported the following items on her behalf:

- Local Funds Expenditure Report – Dr. Westover reviewed with Board members the Local Funds Expenditure Report ending December 31, 2023. **(See Exhibit 3 with details)**
- Personnel Report – Dr. Westover reviewed the personnel report through December 2024 **(See Exhibit 4 with details)**

There were no questions or comments regarding the reports.

Dr. Greear was on annual leave during today's meeting. Dr. Westover reported the following items on her behalf:

2023 Recap for the Foundation:

- Launched the MECC Promise Program
- Endowment Reached a Record \$34.8M
- Raised \$1.3M in 2023 thanks to private gifts, events, and grant awards
- MECC Foundation will fund more than \$892,200 in scholarships in 2023-2024
- \$50,000 in Governor School Tuition Support
- \$12,000 in support for Dual Enrollment students
- \$75,000 Support for Career Coach Program
- \$20,000 Support for Student Emergency Needs
- \$25,000 for Parallel Tutoring Program

Grant Updates:

- \$50,000 Solar Training Grant – contract is in place and project is moving forward.
- \$200,000 VCEDA Workforce Training Grant
- \$92,705 Virginia Tobacco Commission Heavy Equipment Operator Grant
- AMLER grant for the renovation of the CWIA is in the RFP stage for project engineering services.

Upcoming Events

- John Fox Jr. Festival: April 17, 2024, featuring Adriana Trigiani and Barbara Kingsolver.
- Employee Giving Campaign begins April 8-12, 2024.
- Golf Tournaments scheduled for May 31 (Lonesome Pine in Big Stone Gap) and July 12 (Cedar Ridge in Lee County)

Dr. Westover previously mentioned in her report that the College is currently working on a rebranding and logo design. The last logo and rebranding took place in late 2010. Dr. Greear's report mentioned that Ritchie Deel is in the middle of a website redesign as well. The content management system for the website will be changed from an open-source program to a VCCS approved website management system. That process will require a new face for the website structure and will also result in new signage. Dr. Greear mentioned that since we have to do something for the website and new signage this may be the time to do a rebranding and logo design as well. A logo and rebranding committee were formed and included several employees as well as students and are currently working with Cumberland Marketing out of Kingsport to help with guidance through the process. She shared that what we have heard from our students is that our logo is generic and does not reflect the College and is not reflective of the progress that we have made over the years. Part of the logo and rebranding process is to survey our faculty, staff, students, and community members asking what MECC means to you. The survey results will be used to produce a couple of designs that are reflective of who we are and what we do. Amy encouraged all to complete the survey.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

- Executive Committee:

Action Item(s):

- *2023 Emeritus Nominee Recommendations:*

Mr. Mike Abbott mentioned that the Executive Committee met prior to this meeting also via Zoom and unanimously voted to present the following 2024 Professor and Support Staff Emeritus nominees for full Board approval. **(Exhibit 5 with details)**



Mr. Chris Allgyer – Professor Emeritus
Mr. Tim Bartley – Support Staff Emeritus

After some discussion, the motion from the Executive Committee was unanimously approved by the full Board.

These individuals will be asked to participate in the 2024 Graduation Ceremony scheduled for May 10.

- **Curriculum and Student Affairs Committee** – (did not meet)
- **Finance and Facilities Committee: (did not meet today but will plan on meeting via Zoom at a later date to approve the FY2025 Local Funds Budget)**
 - As a follow-up of the Finance and Facilities Committee – Ms. Kristy Hall met with the Finance and Facilities Committee via Zoom to present the FY2025 Local Funds Budget. The Budget was approved and presented to the full Board via email for full Board approval. The FY2025 Local Funds Budget received full Board approval on 2/26/24. See attached email for details.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

OTHER COMMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 5:40 p.m. Next meeting date will be March 19, 2024.

Peggy Gibson, Recorder

MECC Advisory Board Chair

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristen Westover, President & Secretary to the Board

APPROVED:

Mike Abbott, Chair

3/19/24

Date