

Blue Ridge Community College

College Board Meeting

November 12, 2025

Board Members Present:

- Dr. Bruce Bowman
- Dr. Robin Crowder
- Mr. Tony Davenport
- Ms. Allison Dugan
- Ms. Janet Ewing
- Ms. Sandra Hernandez-Brown
- Mr. Danny Ledford
- Dr. Drew Maerz
- Ms. Cathy Welsh

Board Members Absent:

- Mr. John Butler, Jr.
- Ms. Vermell Grant

College Staff in Attendance:

- Dr. John Downey, President of the College and Secretary of the Board
- Dr. Dave Urso, Vice President of Academic Affairs
- Ms. Anastasia Triplett, Vice President of Finance and Administration
- Ms. Amy Kiger, Executive Director of the BRCC Educational Foundation
- Ms. Laura Othalik, Executive Assistant to the President

Welcome and Call to Order

Ms. Welsh welcomed the Board and called the meeting to order at 5:53 p.m.

Moment in Mission

Dr. Downey introduced three current students serving as Student Ambassadors and shared details about the recently established student ambassador program, which is funded by the BRCC Educational Foundation. The students spoke about their experiences and the activities they support, including campus tours, college fairs at local high schools, and events such as the Educational Foundation Community Breakfast Series and “Bagels and Empanadas.” Ambassadors commit to a minimum of 45 hours each semester, but can exceed that requirement. The students discussed challenges they faced when starting at BRCC, such as transitioning from a four-year college, overcoming social challenges, and finding support as online learners. They emphasized the importance of scholarships in reducing financial burdens, enabling them to focus on academics rather than working multiple jobs. The ambassadors expressed gratitude for the support provided by the Educational Foundation, faculty, and staff, and shared appreciation for BRCC’s affordable, high-quality education and hands-on opportunities.

Ms. Welsh thanked the students for paying it forward and their presentation.

Allison Dugan joined the meeting at 5:58 p.m.

Approval of September 10, 2025, Minutes of Proceedings

***Dr. Maerz motioned to accept the minutes of the September 10, 2025 meeting. Dr. Bowman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

Reports

A. Finance and Facilities

Ms. Triplett reviewed the financial reports provided in the meeting materials for the period of July 1, 2025 to September 30, 2025. ***Mr. Ledford motioned to approve the Financial Reports from July 1, 2025 to September 30, 2025. Dr. Crowder seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

Ms. Triplett provided updates on current and upcoming facilities projects. The CDL Driving Range is nearing completion; however, occupancy is pending until a few remaining issues in the building and parking lot are resolved. Renovated restrooms in the Houff Student Center are finished but not yet in use due to the ongoing fan coil replacement project, which is expected to be completed this semester. Plans to update the fan coils in the B and J buildings were delayed due to extended approval timelines, resulting in outdated cost estimates and funding shortages. Houff remains one of the most dated buildings on campus, with F Building close behind. The C Building renovation is progressing, with Harrisonburg Construction preparing plans and pricing. Wayfinding projects for vehicular and pedestrian signage have completed the design phase, and a bid package is being assembled. Staff recently participated in space planning meetings to provide input on campus spaces to better support current programs and operations. Interior designers are reviewing ways to re-envision spaces for better usage. This report will assist BRCC in the state's review of facility utilization to justify renovation funding. The Joint Legislative Audit & Review Commission (JLARC) recently raised concerns about increased virtual learning across the Commonwealth and questioned the need for space upgrades, highlighting misperceptions about instructional and non-credit space usage. Plecker Hall has exceeded its capacity for non-credit programs, and older buildings such as D, E, and F lack windows and require renovations to create a more inviting environment to encourage student engagement.

Blue Ridge's tennis courts are in poor condition. Options under consideration include removing them entirely or converting them into pickleball and tennis courts. A full replacement is estimated to cost approximately \$500,000. No decision has been made at this time; however, the administration was pleased to accept the Board's feedback regarding possible options and will keep the Board informed as plans develop.

Academic Affairs

Dr. Urso shared updates on academic program changes, including the addition of several new degrees and adjustments to elective options. BRCC will be the first VCCS school to deliver an Artificial Intelligence learning course in the spring, which will be added to the CSC in Information Technology curriculum. Additional proposed changes included updates to the AAS in Business Management, AAS Business Management Electives – (Agribusiness), AS Science – Transfer Core Electives, AS Science – Transfer Electives Health Science, AS Science – General Studies Electives, Uniform Certificate of General Studies (UCGS), and awarding credit for Early Childhood Development for the Child Development Associate credential.

***Ms. Ewing motioned to approve all action items as proposed. Dr. Crowder seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

Dr. Urso shared that David Shofstahl, the new Dean of Workforce Solutions, is working with a local manufacturer on a new apprenticeship initiative, and expressed enthusiasm about the program's potential impact. BRCC will host its first Advisory Committee Summit on Thursday, January 8, which will consolidate all advisory meetings into a single day.

B. Personnel Report

At the request of Secretary Downey, Ms. Triplett presented the Personnel Report to the Board. A personnel handout was included in the meeting materials.

Enrollment Update

Dr. Downey asked Dr. Urso provide an enrollment update to the Board. A Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Student Enrollment handout was shared, showing a positive trajectory increase across all FTEs from 2021 to 2025.

A handout on FastForward enrollments was also shared. Although FastForward funding has been capped, the program remains a vital resource for students and employers alike.

Report from the Educational Foundation

Ms. Kiger presented her report from the Educational Foundation and expressed appreciation to Board members who attended the Community Breakfast Series events in Harrisonburg, Staunton, and Waynesboro. She acknowledged the Student Ambassadors for their assistance with events this fall and noted that they will also support the upcoming Casino Royale event in the spring. Handouts for the Blue Ridge Fund and All Funds Comparison were included in the Board's meeting materials. The Board achieved 100% participation in this year's Blue Ridge Fund campaign, which was supported by an additional \$1,000 matching donation from a donor. The Educational Foundation has received an additional \$657,000 in donations since November 1, exceeding the \$238,537 total reported in the Board's meeting materials. Over the past five years, the Foundation has consistently exceeded the previous year's fundraising totals.

Old Business

There was no old business to discuss.

New Business

A. Graduation Speaker

Dr. Downey requested that Board members consider potential graduation speakers and email any suggestions to him.

B. Report from the President

Dr. Downey presented his report and invited the Board to attend the annual Legislative Breakfast on December 3rd at 8:00 a.m. Confirmed attendees include Senator Obenshain, Delegate Wilt, Delegate Campbell, and Delegate Runion.

Last year, BRCC received a one-time funding of \$850,000 to support the Aviation Maintenance Technician program. Dr. Downey emphasized the need to make this funding permanent due to ongoing high cost of the program. He highlighted the Chancellor's vision for supporting high-cost, high-demand regional programs, noting that few institutions offer aviation maintenance and dental hygienist programs. BRCC is exploring partnerships with other community colleges across the state as the first FAA-certified distance learning program and aims to continue to serve as a leader in Aviation Maintenance Technician training and related lab support for other colleges in the Commonwealth.

Next week, Dr. Downey will participate in the Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community's Lyceum Speaker Series, which will provide an opportunity to engage with residents and community members on the impact of education on families.

BRCC continues to advance plans for establishing a Career Academy, which will support dual enrollment initiatives with local high schools.

The college recently completed its 19th Annual Hunger Symposium, which featured a hunger simulation with BRCC's nursing students to raise awareness of food insecurity and its impact on patient care. The initiative promotes the concept that "food is medicine" and emphasizes healthy eating. The symposium raised over \$5,000 through donations from the Empty Bowl Dinner and Shenandoah Cabaret performances for the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank and highlighted the challenges faced by college students experiencing food insecurity.

Dr. Bowman emphasized the college's commitment to students, faculty, and staff and recognized Dr. Dave Urso, who was recently highlighted in a nationally known veterinary publication by Bret VanLear for his mentorship of junior members and supervisory-level staff. Dr. Bowman commended Dr. Urso for his leadership and professionalism, noting his positive impact on students and faculty. The Board expressed appreciation to Dr. Urso for his contributions.

Ms. Welsh recognized Dr. Bowman as a veteran and expressed appreciation for his service.

There being no further business or discussion, the meeting adjourned at 7:19pm.

**Items requiring action.*

Respectfully submitted by Ms. Laura Otrhalik