

# Blue Ridge Community College College Board Meeting January 14, 2026

## Board Members Present:

- Dr. Bruce Bowman
- Mr. John Butler, Jr.
- Dr. Robin Crowder
- Ms. Allison Dugan
- Ms. Janet Ewing
- Ms. Vermell Grant
- Ms. Sandra Hernandez-Brown
- Mr. Danny Ledford
- Dr. Drew Maerz
- Ms. Cathy Welsh

## Board Members Absent:

- Mr. Tony Davenport

## 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 Otrhalik, Executive Assistant to the President
- Pamela Monger-Storey, Associate Professor of Biology

## Welcome and Call to Order

Dr. Downey greeted the Board and acknowledged Ms. Welsh's request to proceed with the Moment in Mission portion of the meeting.

## Moment in Mission

Dr. Downey introduced Pamela Monger-Storey, Associate Professor of Biology and the head of the Strategic Planning subcommittee. Last year, BRCC was reaccredited for ten years through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The Virginia Community College System (VCCS) adopted the *Accelerate Opportunity* strategic plan two years ago, which guides Virginia's community colleges in five key areas, developing Virginia's talent, reaching more Virginians, delivering education to today's learners, supporting today's learners, and investing in Virginia's workforce. Colleges across the Commonwealth align their goals with these system wide priorities. BRCC held a college wide retreat in September, supported by the Educational Foundation, to collect employee input that will help inform the College's strategic planning efforts for the next five years.

Ms. Monger-Storey emphasized the importance of the Board's input in the Strategic Planning process, noting that each member contributes a vital piece to the overall vision of how BRCC will serve the

community over the next five years. Guided by the VCCS *Accelerate Opportunity* framework, the Strategic Planning team is gathering information from five key groups, College staff, the Local College Board, the Occupational Technology Advisory Boards, the Educational Foundation, and student focus groups. She reviewed the project timeline, noting that the Strategic Planning process began in September 2025. The Board is scheduled to review the updated Mission, Vision, Values, and Strategic Directions in May 2026, prior to final review and approval by the Chancellor on behalf of the State Board. Board members were asked to reflect on the five questions included in their meeting materials and to submit their input within two weeks via a Google Form.

Ms. Welsh thanked Ms. Monger-Storey for her presentation.

## Approval of November 12, 2025, Minutes of Proceedings

Ms. Welsh welcomed the Board and called the meeting to order at 6:19 p.m.

**\*Dr. Maerz motioned to accept the minutes of the November 12, 2025 meeting as presented. Mr. Butler 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 December 31, 2025. **\*Ms. Ewing motioned to approve the Financial Reports from July 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025. Mr. Crowder seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

Ms. Triplett provided updates on current and upcoming facilities projects. The CDL Driving Range is occupied, with a few punch list items remaining. The facility is fully operational, classes are underway, and the space is being used as intended. The fan coil project has been completed in the Houff Student Center and fan coil work will soon begin in F Building. Wayfinding signs have been designed, and a rendering will be shared with the Board at the next meeting. In the fall, BRCC held a space planning analysis session to gather staff input on ways to better utilize space across campus. A follow up session is scheduled for February to continue the discussion. Next week, a meeting will be held to discuss the renovation timeline for C Building. The drawings and pricing have been finalized, and Harrisonburg Construction will complete the renovations. The interior work, which includes new carpeting, painting, and finishes, is expected to be completed quickly; however, repairs to the hole beneath the building will take longer due to the area needing to be stabilized.

### Academic Affairs

Dr. Urso noted that the handout included in the Board's meeting materials listed the Curriculum Committee's next meeting as Tuesday, January 13. He shared that this date fell the day before the Board's meeting due to a gap between the deadline for submitting materials and the date of the meeting. The Committee's January agenda included minimal items that did not require immediate action. A significant number of curriculum items will be brought to the Board for consideration in March.

BRCC continues to prepare for the launch of the Career Academy next fall. The Career Academy is designed to support high school enrollment and will offer students morning classes five days a

week. Five exploratory programs have been identified that will allow students to earn a Career Studies Certificate (CSC). These programs will take approximately one year to complete. The current plan is to begin offering the program for juniors, with additional program options for both juniors and seniors in Fall 2027. The curriculum will align with Department of Education standards, and the program is expected to be fully staffed by August. A unique feature of the Career Academy is its weekly structure, four days will be dedicated to curriculum instruction, with each Friday designated as a facilitated student support day. Harrisonburg City Schools has responded positively to the proposed program offerings, and there is potential for additional schools to enroll their students as the program continues to grow. Career Academy courses will be open enrollment and available to community members interested in attending.

Once a year, the Local College Board approves the members of BRCC's 18 Advisory Committees. These committees meet throughout the year to support program development and provide feedback. For the first time last week, all of the committees were brought together for an Advisory Committee Summit. During the event, attendees heard remarks from Dr. Downey and received a Strategic Directions presentation from Pamela Monger-Storey. Advisory members were encouraged to actively participate, offer insights, and help guide curriculum development rather than simply receive information. The summit was well received, and members expressed interest in holding a similar event next year. A follow up meeting will be scheduled to consider the next iteration of the summit, including opportunities for cross cutting curriculum.

The deadline for Faculty to propose curricular changes for inclusion in the 2026–2027 Catalog is scheduled for the February Curriculum Committee meeting. Beginning with this catalog cycle, the process will follow a more prescriptive timeline, resulting in approximately a year and a half lead time for catalog modifications. Faculty will be submitting their proposed changes to their local curriculum groups by February so that items may be reviewed in advance of the Committee's March meeting.

In addition to the Career Academy, BRCC will support a Lab School in collaboration with Rockingham County Public Schools (RCPS) to expand dual enrollment opportunities for students in nontraditional class settings. Beginning in Fall 2026, RCPS high school students will be bused to Memorial Hall, where BRCC faculty will provide instruction. This program is funded by a grant initiated two years ago and originally spearheaded by James Madison University.

## **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 over the past five years. Dr. Urso reported that overall enrollment continues to perform well, noting that after an increase of in-person classes during the fall, the trend has shifted back toward more courses being delivered online. Dr. Downey requested that Dr. Urso provide the Board with final enrollment numbers from the VCCS at the next meeting.

An additional handout on the FastForward program was distributed. Dr. Urso reported that funds are expected to remain in the negative for the remainder of the year. Funding is currently frozen as the General Assembly limits expenditures across the VCCS system to appropriated levels, with FastForward funds projected to run out in February. BRCC continues to review pricing and delivery cadence, emphasizing the use of FastForward as a last dollar resource. The Educational Foundation supports dual enrollment students by covering a portion of tuition costs and contributed \$45,000 of its \$70,000 allocation this past semester. Students pay a portion of the cost, and scholarships cover the remainder. FastForward payments are issued in three parts, one third at enrollment, one third upon successful course completion, and one third when the credential is earned; however, BRCC is not always notified when students earn credentials, which can result in lost payments.

### **Report from the Educational Foundation**

Ms. Kiger presented her report from the Educational Foundation and noted that the handouts were not included in the meeting materials, due to end of the year funds being finalized at the time the report was due. She provided updates on current totals for the Blue Ridge Fund, All Funds Comparison reports, and shared information on upcoming Educational Foundation events.

### **Old Business**

There was no old business to discuss.

### **New Business**

#### **A. Statement of Economic Interest Reminder**

Dr. Downey reminded the Board to submit their Statements of Economic Interest by the end of January, sharing that five of the eleven Board members had already submitted their statements.

#### **B. Report from the President**

Dr. Downey presented his report, noting that classes for the spring semester were scheduled to begin on Tuesday, January 20. He shared that the Collegiate Future Farmers of America (FFA) met yesterday in the Plecker Workforce Center to discuss parliamentary procedures statewide, with Dr. Bruce Bowman, serving as a speaker to support the event's focus on increasing agricultural information. Virginia's Secretary of Agriculture, Katie Frazier, Director of Aviation, Greg Campbell, and Farm Credit of Virginia, which helped to fund the grant supporting the event, were also involved.

In December, BRCC hosted a Legislative Breakfast attended by four local legislators, Delegate Tony Wilt, Delegate Chris Runion, Delegate Ellen McLaughlin, and Senator Mark Obenshain.

Graduation is scheduled for Saturday, May 9, at the Atlantic Union Bank Center at James Madison University. Planning for the event is underway, and a potential keynote speaker has been contacted.

Dr. Downey and Ms. Kiger plan to attend the upcoming VCCS 60th Anniversary Celebration next Thursday in Richmond. BRCC students will also participate in the VCCS Community College Student Advocacy Day Legislative Event at the General Assembly during the last week of January.

New federal regulations require colleges to ensure that their websites, mobile apps, and digital documents, such as PDFs, Word files, presentations, and spreadsheets meet accessibility standards. This change has resulted in significant work for faculty and adjuncts to review and revise existing materials to bring them into compliance.

During this year's General Assembly session, BRCC is requesting continued funding for the Aviation Maintenance Technician program, the only publicly funded program of its kind in Virginia and one with the highest first-time pass rate in the country.

## Public Input

In lieu of in person verbal public input, Mr. Dave Briggman submitted a written letter to the Board. Each Board member received an electronic and physical copy of the letter.

There being no further business or discussion, the meeting adjourned at 7:29pm.

*\*Items requiring action.*

*Respectfully submitted by Ms. Laura Otrhalik*