

**PENNSYLVANIA HIGHLANDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
February 17, 2026 – 4:30 PM
BOARD ROOM and via Zoom
Minutes**

The Board of Trustees of Pennsylvania Highlands Community College held a regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, February 17, 2026, via Zoom teleconferencing with some members present at the Richland campus in the Holzman Boardroom.

CALL TO ORDER

Dr. Janet Grady, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM. Roll call was taken by Mr. Greg Winger, Secretary and Treasurer of the Board of Trustees, and a quorum was established.

TRUSTEES PRESENT

Dr. Jennifer Anderson
Mr. John Augustine
Dr. Kristy Chunta
Dr. Janet Grady
Mr. Joseph Hurd
Ms. Jackie Kulback
Mr. Brian Lanham
Ms. Lladel Lichty
Dr. Jennifer Mitchell
Mr. Greg Winger
Mr. Brett Smith
Ms. Linda Thomson
Rev. Reginal Floyd
Dr. Leah Spangler

TRUSTEES ABSENT

Mr. Carl DeYulis
Mr. Benjamin Estell
Ms. Carissa Westrick

ALSO PRESENT

Dr. Steve Nunez, President
Ms. Trish Corle, Senior VP of Strategic Initiatives
Dr. Sara Conroy, Vice President of Academic Affairs & Student Services
Ms. Susan Fisher, Associate Vice President of Administration
Mr. Omar Strohm, Associate Vice President of Finance
Ms. Carole VanMeter, Director of the Foundation
Dr. Barb Zaborowski, Dean of Library Services & Special Projects
Mr. Gary Boast, Associate VP of Technology and Analytics
Mr. Matthew Bodenschatz, Executive Director of Recruiting & Admissions
Mr. Ray Weible, Jr., Executive Director of Marketing & Communications
Ms. Sonya Augustine, Executive Assistant to Administrative Operations, Recorder

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

GUESTS & SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Dr. Grady welcomed everyone in attendance.

CONSENT AGENDA

Upon a motion duly made by Mr. John Augustine, seconded by Ms. Linda Thomson, and unanimously carried by voice vote, it was:

MOVED: The Board of Trustees approves the Consent Agenda as presented.

- Approval of Minutes from December 16 Board of Trustees Meeting
- Administrative Leave Policy (Revision) (EXEC 1001-2026)
- Management and Control of Police Academy Firearms and Ammunition Policy (Revision) (EXEC 1002-2026)
- Cash Reserve Policy (Revision) (FF 1002-2026)
- Residency Requirements Policy (Revision) (FF 1003-2026)
- Tuition Refund Policy (Revision) (FF 1004-2026)
- Incomplete Grades Policy Revision (AASS 1000-2026)
- Multiple Degrees, Certificates, and Diplomas Revision (AASS 1001-2026)
- Student Consumer Information Policy Deletion (AASS 1002-2026)
- Student/Faculty Appraisal Policy Deletion (AASS 1003-2026)

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Annual items to be completed by the Board of Trustees

- **Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest and Statement of Financial Interest forms**– Dr. Grady reminded the Board of Trustees to complete these forms as soon as possible.
- **Annual Board of Trustees Evaluation** – Dr. Grady stated that the evaluation survey will be sent in March, and the results will be discussed at the Board Retreat in April.
- Dr. Grady reminded the Board of the upcoming events on the agenda and encouraged participation in the annual giving campaign. She stated that the short form included in the recent mailing makes contributing simple. She added that the College is fortunate to have such committed employees, and the Board should strive to match their example in its support.
- Dr. Grady welcomed Dr. Kristy Chunta as the newest member of the Board of Trustees. Dr. Chunta thanked the Board for the warm welcome and shared that she is currently a professor and coordinator of the PhD in Nursing program at Indiana University, where she has served for 20 years. She previously taught at Mt. Aloysius. She expressed her enthusiasm for joining the Board and looks forward to contributing her academic and healthcare expertise.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Nunez congratulated Mr. John Augustine for being recognized as one of Pennsylvania Business Central's Top 100 People for 2026.

Middle States Accreditation Update-Dr. Barb Zaborowski reminded the Board that they should have received an invitation to the March 22 opening dinner at Asiago's. She stressed the need to submit RSVPs and meal selections by the first Friday in March. She added that preparations with the visiting team are progressing well, and meeting schedules should be finalized within the next week.

Athletic Programming – Ms. Trish Corle reported that, following an evaluation of the athletics program and its impact on student recruitment, she and Suzanne Brugh, the Athletic Director, are recommending discontinuing Esports, Bowling, Cross Country, and Softball due to low enrollment and moving Men's Basketball, Women's Volleyball, and adding Women's Basketball to Division II to allow scholarships. Wrestling and Golf would remain in Division III as they continue to grow.

She stated Division III limitations, especially the inability to offer scholarships and the declining number of DIII teams, are impacting recruitment and scheduling. The recommended changes would have minimal additional cost (estimated at \$10,000–\$15,000 annually) and should be offset by increased athletic enrollment, especially from local students. She highlighted that in the wrestling program's first year; two athletes have qualified for the NJCAA Division III national championship taking place in Iowa.

Economic Impact Study by the Center of Rural PA – Dr. Nunez stated that it is important for the College to periodically conduct an economic impact study to assess its contribution to the region. The College's previous study, though comprehensive, had become outdated, and the vendor's new pricing was significantly higher than before. After discussing the issue with Susan Whisler, she connected the College with the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, which completed a streamlined analysis at no cost.

Dr. Nunez shared that the study indicates the College generates an estimated \$21 million in annual economic impact on our region, contributes about \$5 million in tax revenue across local, state, and federal levels, and returns \$1.60 to the region for every \$1 invested. The study also showed that individuals with an associate degree earn roughly 25% more over their lifetime than those with only a high school diploma. He stated that these results reinforce the College's value to the regional workforce and economic development and will be helpful in conversations with legislators and county commissioners. The full report will be shared with the Board.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Report from Committee Chair – Dr. Grady reported that the minutes are included in the packet from February 10, 2026.

Employee Voluntary Retirement Incentive Plan Revision (EXEC 1003-2026) – Dr. Nunez explained that the policy was updated to clarify eligible employee groups for the Employee Voluntary Retirement Incentive Program. The revisions specify eligibility criteria and formally remove faculty from coverage. The updated Plan replaces the December 17, 2025 version and takes effect immediately upon Board approval.

Upon a motion duly made by Mr. Greg Winger, seconded by Dr. Leah Spangler, and unanimously carried by voice vote, it was:

MOVED: The Board of Trustees of Pennsylvania Highlands Community College approves the revised Employee Voluntary Retirement Incentive Plan (EVRIP), as presented, clarifying that eligibility is limited to only specific groups of full-time administrative and support staff employees as outlined in the Plan. The revised Plan will replace the version previously approved on December 17, 2025, and shall be effective immediately.

Strategic Plan 2026-2028 (EXEC 1004-2026) – Dr. Grady stated that, as you can see from the details in the meeting packet, significant effort has gone into developing a thoughtful set of baseline goals for the College, with each goal closely aligned to the institution's mission.

Dr. Nunez stated that he is very proud of the comprehensive work that went into the strategic planning process. He explained that the College conducted extensive listening sessions with students, employees, community members, and other stakeholders, and also consulted outside experts for guidance. All of this input was used to shape a strategic plan that is transformational while remaining grounded in the College's mission of providing affordable, accessible, quality

education. He added that although the strategic focus will evolve, the core mission remains unchanged. He thanked Ms. Trish Corle for all the work she has put into the plan.

Ms. Trish Corle stated that the plan outlines the strategic initiatives and the goals under each imperative. Each department will review these goals and develop its own strategies, objectives, and practices to support their achievement. Departments will then assess their progress to determine how well their objectives contribute to the institution's overall goals. She stated that the process is transparent and inclusive, providing strong opportunities for employee and student engagement. The plan focuses on community needs, student success, and career readiness, addressing barriers to learning, supporting diverse and non-traditional student populations, and aligning education with employment outcomes. She noted that the plan reflects the College's mission of helping students progress toward long-term career and life success.

Dr. Nunez stated that strategic planning requires focusing limited resources on the initiatives with the greatest impact. Feedback from listening sessions and experts highlighted the need to prioritize career pathways and prepare students for family-sustaining careers or successful transfer to four-year institutions. Expanded experiential learning, such as job shadowing, internships, and hands-on opportunities, paired with flexible scheduling through shorter course formats and enhanced career services will better prepare students for the workforce. The plan will also help the College sharpen and clearly communicate its identity as a career-focused institution, distinguishing it from other higher-education providers.

Upon a motion duly made by Dr. Jennifer Anderson, seconded by Ms. Ladel Lichty, and unanimously carried by voice vote, it was:

MOVED: That the Board of Trustees approves and adopts the Pennsylvania Highlands Community College Strategic Plan for 2026–2028 and the new vision statement, as presented.

FINANCE & FACILITIES COMMITTEE

Report from Committee Chair – Mr. Greg Winger stated that the minutes from the February 5, 2026, meeting are included in the packet.

Financial Statements ending December 31, 2025 (FF 1001-2026)- Mr. Omar Strohm reviewed the Operating and Capital Budget Summary, the Statement of Revenues, Expenses, and Net Position and the Statement of Net Position for the period ending December 31, 2025. The lack of revenue due to lower core enrollment and reduced State contributions, combined with higher operations costs, has led to a tighter than expected financial picture for the first half of the year. Revenue from several grants is higher so far this year, helping to offset some of the revenue shortfall. However, a temporary reduction in cash, combined with ongoing asset depreciation, has resulted in a decrease in our net position for the period.

Upon a motion duly made by Ms. Jackie Kulback, seconded by Mr. Joseph Hurd, and unanimously carried by voice vote, it was:

MOVED: The Board of Trustees approves the Financial Statements ending December 31, 2025.

Report from the Associate Vice President of Administration – Ms. Susan Fisher reported that energy usage remains a significant concern for the College. Director of Facilities, Kirk

Rosenbaum, has been working diligently to reduce electrical consumption at the Richland campus. Their recent review of energy data shows a 35% reduction in electricity usage since 2022, demonstrating the effectiveness of his efforts. Although rising utility rates have prevented direct cost savings, the College would be paying substantially more without these improvements.

She stated that a College team has been working with the landlord of our Ebensburg facility to evaluate whether a smaller space within the same plaza would better meet our needs. The landlord has expressed interest in reclaiming our current space, so the College is exploring a reduced footprint in the plaza. Work continues with Namdar, our leasing agent at the Blair Center to address several roof leaks. These leaks have caused the temporary closure of a restroom and a classroom and raised concerns about the server room. While multiple areas are affected, the situation is being managed, and the mall's maintenance staff has been responsive, which is appreciated.

A discussion was held regarding seeking legal counsel and the possible need to place lease payments into an escrow account due to ongoing facility issues that may present safety concerns and could potentially justify withholding direct payments. The current lease is restrictive and not favorable to the College, but recurring disruptions such as potential class cancellations may strengthen the College's legal position. The College is transitioning to a new real estate attorney, who will review the lease and advise on next steps. Additional concerns were raised about potential reputational impact and the risk of the mall eventually closing, underscoring the need to be prepared to avoid disruptions to academic operations. Mr. John Augustine initially made a motion; however, it was withdrawn after it was clarified that a formal motion was not needed to proceed with investigating next steps.

Report from the Associate Vice President of Technology and Analytics – Mr. Gary Boast reported that his update focused on cost control as the College enters budget-planning season. He noted that Information Technology continues to face significant vendor cost increases, inflationary pressures, and an ongoing AI-driven memory chip shortage that is expected to push consumer technology prices higher through at least 2027. As an example, laptop prices have nearly doubled, which will affect the budget for technology refreshes. To mitigate these impacts, IT has shifted from Intel to AMD processors and continues to negotiate with vendors. Documented savings have already been achieved in the phone system and disaster-recovery backup services, and the College is currently negotiating with a new Internet service provider that also serves Richland High School and UPJ, which may yield additional savings in the next budget cycle. He also reported staffing efficiencies within IT. Following the departure of the network administrator, duties were redistributed among three helpdesk and hardware technicians, who are now handling device setup, repair, customer support, and portions of network management. As a result, the network administrator position will not be backfilled. IT now operates with six employees, down from eight in 2024, and is positioned to meet current operational needs.

Mr. Boast concluded by announcing his retirement effective March 31. He thanked the Board for their support and for their commitment to the students, community, and College throughout his tenure.

Report from the Associate Vice President of Finance – Mr. Omar Strohm reported that the budgeting process for next year is underway. Budget packets have been distributed to cost center managers, who will compile their departmental budgets and return them to their respective cabinet members. Cabinet members will then forward the information to him for review. Cabinet will meet in early March to discuss a three-year budget projection. By

mid-March, a draft budget will be prepared and reviewed before being sent to the Board through the committee process. At the April Board meeting, the draft budget, along with any recommended tuition or fee adjustments, will be presented for review. Additional updates will be gathered between April and June, with a finalized proposed budget circulated through the Board committee process beginning in June. The goal is to present the final budget for Board adoption at the June 16 meeting.

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS/STUDENT SERVICES COMMITTEE

Report from Committee Chair – Dr. Jennifer Anderson stated that the minutes from February 3, 2026, are in the packet.

Report from the Student Trustee and Student Senate President – Mr. Brian Lanham reported that the first three weeks of the Spring Semester have been both fun and busy. Student clubs are actively planning events, including:

- Student Senate: Hosting a Facility Appreciation Day Breakfast on March 5.
- Caring for Cubs: Hosting a Literacy Night on March 16 for children ages birth to 8 and participating in local schools' Read Across America Week.
- SHRM Club: Has a tour of the Sheetz Corporation planned.
- Criminal Justice Club: Preparing for a trip to the Indiana County Jail in March.
- Students are also enjoying weekly Student Activities, such as themed food days (Blueberry Pancake Day, Chocolate Cake Day, Groundhog Day Donuts) and today's Random Acts of Kindness Day. The Free Dunkin' Cruizer will visit campus on March 18.
- Congratulations to Gina Pettenati and Emly Johns for receiving this year's PASSHE Scholarships, covering two years of tuition at any PASSHE state institution.
- Men's Basketball: Secured the first seed for the Region 20/WPCC game on February 21 at Butler County Community College.
- Wrestling: Freshmen Alex Crist (5th at districts) and Zach Gomer (4th) are the college's first two national qualifiers and will compete in Iowa on March 4.
- Student Senate will host a Spring Dance and Karaoke Event at the end of the semester.

Report for Academic Affairs – Dr. Sara Conroy reported that Academic Affairs has been reviewing its organizational structure in preparation for Academic Affairs and Student Services moving under one umbrella following Trish Corle's retirement. A recent change involved realigning responsibilities between the Dean of Faculty and the Dean of Academic Affairs to ensure consistent oversight of the faculty contract. All full-time and adjunct faculty now report to the Dean of Faculty, while the Dean of Academic Affairs will focus on operational functions such as curriculum and program development, dual enrollment, and future partnerships.

Academic Affairs has developed a comprehensive program-evaluation rubric consisting of eight criteria. The tool can be used by anyone at the College to assess programs and generate ideas for improvement based on student and regional needs. When applied to the current program portfolio, scores ranged from 42 to 88, prompting productive conversations with faculty about potential new programs aligned with workforce demands.

Recruitment for the Police Academy is going very well. Last year's class graduated nine cadets, the current cohort includes 17, and next year's class is projected at 25–30 cadets.

Report from the Senior VP of Strategic Initiatives – Dr. Jennifer Anderson stated that Ms. Corle full report is in the packet.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Report from Committee Chair – Ms. Lladel Lichty stated that the minutes from February 4, 2026, are included in the packet.

Foundation Report – Ms. Carole VanMeter reported that the Foundation has reached 94% of its annual community fundraising goal. Community annual giving now totals \$28,194, an increase of \$1,600 since last week's Executive Committee meeting. She also noted that the wrestling program received its first gift, a \$1,500 donation, which came at an ideal time as wrestlers prepare to travel to Iowa for national competition.

The Supporting Scholars Fund stands at \$47,500, and employee giving for 2025 totaled \$13,330, surpassing the \$13,000 goal thanks to the generosity of the College employees. The Foundation also provided \$975 in vouchers to support the SHRM Student Chapter and is sponsoring a February 26 workshop featuring Dave Jones, president of the Johnstown Toastmasters Club, who will lead a professional development session for students on mock interviews, virtual interviews, portfolio development, and résumé building. In addition, \$19,875 has been awarded this semester for Spring 2026 scholarships.

Puttupalooza is scheduled for Friday, March 13th. She encouraged everyone to attend and highlighted that there are still sponsorship opportunities, as well as the need for donated baskets and raffle items. With this year's Friday the 13th theme, attendees are encouraged to bring their lucky charms.

Recruiting and Admissions – Mr. Matthew Bodenschatz reported that spring enrollment totaled 9,101 credits, bringing the academic year total to 20,534 credits. Overall, the College is 7.8% below budget, though Ebensburg is 1% above budget and online enrollment is 22% above budget. He noted that students continue to enroll primarily on a part-time basis, indicating that many are balancing work, family, and other responsibilities. This trend may also explain the strong growth in online enrollment, which offers greater flexibility. As of February 3, enrollment was approximately 100 credits above budget, and dual-enrollment registrations continued through the end of the week, further increasing totals.

The College is working to improve inquiry response times through automated outreach leading to faster personal follow-up, expanding evening hours to better serve prospective and current students, and redesigning the College applications to create a single, more user-friendly, streamlined form.

Marketing Report – Mr. Ray Weible highlighted several recently completed marketing projects, including the dual enrollment process video, the holiday video, and a new Black Bear Athletics promotional video. He stated that all video production is done entirely in-house, scripting, filming, editing, and distribution, which significantly reduces costs. The athletics video, shown during External Affairs, uses a storytelling approach to highlight what it means to be a student-athlete at the College, and this style is being carried into upcoming brand videos. New brand content is currently being filmed, including a student-focused video next week and a testimonial featuring a non-traditional male student on March 3, which is expected to be ready for the next Board meeting. The team also completed culinary program photography and is preparing additional student testimonials for the website.

He explained that marketing is intentionally producing videos in multiple formats to allow reuse across platforms such as YouTube, digital advertising, television, and on-campus displays. All productions are created with digital accessibility in mind, including proper visual contrast and

accurate closed captioning in compliance with the April accessibility deadline. He also noted limited use of generative AI tools to enhance editing and emphasized that the department is not creating fully AI-generated content.

The personal enrichment campaign has launched, and the second phase of the billboard campaign is underway, with 20 additional billboards appearing from February through June, which should generate more than 3 million impressions. Additional campaigns are planned for behavioral sciences, summer, and other initiatives before the end of the budget year. In 2025 the College issued 73 press releases, averaging more than one per week, which is consistent with 2024–2025 levels and higher than in prior years.

Dr. Grady encouraged Board members who had not yet viewed the video to use the YouTube link provided, noting how impressive the production quality is, especially considering all videos are created entirely in-house. She stated that the professionalism of these short, high-quality pieces reflects exceptional work by the marketing team. Ms. Ladel Lichty agreed, highlighting the Black Bear Athletics video in particular. She praised the storytelling approach, noting that it goes beyond listing athletic programs and instead captures what it truly means to be a Black Bear.

Dr. Nunez reported that several grants, including the Somerset County Scholarship Grant, remain delayed in the State Budget Office. The delay does not appear to be specific to the grants; rather, many grants are currently pending review. He noted that the Jobs Training Grant is also awaiting a final signature but is expected to be funded.

He stated that there are ongoing discussions in Clearfield County following the departure of two major universities from the area. The county needs educational services, and the College could potentially provide them at a relatively low cost; however, securing appropriate funding would be necessary. Dr. Nunez will keep the Board updated on this matter.

REPORTS/COMMENTS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

Rev. Reginald Floyd expressed concern regarding campus safety. He referenced a prior incident in which a former student threatened a staff member, noting that the same individual was recently involved in a fatal domestic incident. He stated that this underscores the need to elevate campus security measures and consider additional options. Rev. Floyd added that the College is one of the few institutions in the area without armed security and suggested that this may be an important topic for future consideration.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

ADJOURN

With no further business to be discussed, at 5:49 PM, Mr. John Augustine and Mr. Brian Lanham made a motion to adjourn the Board meeting which was unanimously approved by voice vote.