

**PENNSYLVANIA HIGHLANDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
April 21, 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, April 21, 2026, via Zoom teleconferencing, with some members present at the Richland campus in the LGI Room.

CALL TO ORDER

Dr. Janet Grady, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 4:34 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
Ms. Lladel Lichty
Dr. Jennifer Mitchell
Mr. Greg Winger
Mr. Brett Smith
Rev. Reginal Floyd
Dr. Leah Spangler
Mr. Carl DeYulis
Mr. Benjamin Estell
Mr. Brian Lanham

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. Matthew Hoffman, Chief Information Officer
Mr. Matthew Bodenschatz, Executive Director of Recruiting & Admissions
Ms. Sonya Augustine, Executive Assistant to Administrative Operations, Recorder

TRUSTEES ABSENT

Ms. Carissa Westrick
Ms. Linda Thomson

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. Lladel Lichty, and unanimously carried by voice vote, it was:

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

- Approval of Minutes from February 17 Board of Trustees Meeting
- Title IX Policy (Revision) (EXEC 1005-2026)
- Disclosure of Professional Services 2026-2027 (FF 1006-2026)

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Board of Trustees Meeting Schedule 2026-2027 and 2027-2028 – Dr. Grady stated that the Board of Trustees meeting schedules are included in the meeting packet. She thanked everyone who completed the Board self-evaluation and participated in the Board Retreat, noting that the discussion at the Retreat around the survey was productive and thoughtful.

May 15 Commencement (at 6:00PM) – Dr. Grady reminded the Board that Commencement will take place on May 15. Board members are asked to arrive at the Richland library by 5:30 p.m., with the ceremony beginning at 6:00 p.m. Attendance is strongly encouraged, as it is meaningful for students and families to see Board members present.

Dr. Grady commended Dr. Nunez on the Smart Start Program press conference and media coverage, highlighting the effective rollout and commendable community outreach that brought positive attention to the new program.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Smart Start Promise Program – Dr. Nunez reported on last week's announcement of the Cambria County Smart Start Promise Program. He stated that the initiative was a collaborative effort supported by strong community partnerships, including Representative Jim Rigby, Senator Langerholc, and the 1889 Foundation. The Smart Start Program is a last-dollar tuition assistance initiative that covers any remaining tuition and fee balance after federal and state aid is applied, allowing recent Cambria County high school graduates to attend Penn Highlands tuition-free for their first year. Dr. Nunez noted that affordability and proximity are key factors in students' decisions to enroll and that, once on campus, students recognize the quality of academic programs and the supportive environment. He stated that he is confident that the program will both attract students and improve second-year retention.

Dr. Nunez stated that marketing wanted him to share that the Smart Start Program announcement generated more than 40 media mentions across news outlets and broadcasts and that the social media campaign achieved some of the College's highest engagement to date, reaching over 48,000 views and more than 28,000 unique viewers on Facebook.

Somerset County Regional Community College Grant – Dr. Nunez stated that the Somerset County Board of Commissioners has received the Somerset County Regional Community College Grant, and the College looks forward to receiving those funds from the County soon. The funds will be used to support a 10% reduction in tuition and comprehensive fees for Somerset County residents. This reduction will apply to all eligible Somerset County students enrolled at the College and is expected to provide a positive financial benefit while contributing to increased enrollment.

Dr. Grady requested that, before the next Board meeting, members take a few minutes to review the Executive Committee minutes. She explained that this would help ensure all Board

members are informed, particularly those who do not serve on the Executive Committee. She stated that time will be set aside at the beginning of the meeting for questions, which may help meetings run more efficiently.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Report from Committee Chair – Dr. Grady reported that the minutes are included in the packet from April 14, 2026.

Dr. Sarah Conroy presented an overview of each motion and detailed the service of each faculty member in support of their promotion and tenure recommendations.

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

MOVED: The Board of Trustees grants advancement in rank to Dr. Bukoski from Associate Professor to Professor of Communication and Media Studies, effective August 1, 2026.

Upon a motion duly made by Dr. Leah Spangler, seconded by Rev. Reginal Floyd, and unanimously carried by voice vote, it was:

MOVED: The Board of Trustees grants advancement in rank to Ms. Robin Hughes from Associate Professor to Professor of Mathematics, effective August 1, 2026.

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

MOVED: The Board of Trustees grants the advancement in rank to Ms. Laura Gaunt from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor of Health Care Professions, effective August 1, 2026.

Upon a motion duly made by Dr. Kristy Chunta, seconded by Ms. Lladel Lichty, and unanimously carried by voice vote, it was:

MOVED: The Board of Trustees grants tenure to Mr. Gregory Paonessa, effective August 1, 2026.

FINANCE & FACILITIES COMMITTEE

Report from Committee Chair – Mr. Greg Winger stated that the minutes from the April 9, 2026, meeting are included in the packet.

Financial Statements ending February 28, 2026 (FF 1005-2026)- 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 February 28, 2026. He stated that lack of revenue due to a decline in core enrollment and reduced State funding, combined with higher operating costs, has led to a tighter-than-expected financial position through the first two-thirds of the fiscal year. Increased revenue from multiple grants has helped offset shortfalls in other areas. Despite continued asset appreciation, the College maintains a relatively strong cash and cash reserve position.

A discussion was held regarding projected enrollment and revenue impacts of the Smart Start Program. Dr. Nunez stated that similar promise programs have increased enrollment within the targeted population by approximately 10–20 percent once fully implemented. Expectations for the first year are more modest, with an estimated enrollment increase of 5–10 percent, and potentially 10 percent or more in subsequent years.

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

MOVED: The Board of Trustees approves the Financial Statements ending February 28, 2026.

Dr. Nunez stated the purpose of the following motions is to position the College to access PDE capital funding in support of two potential projects. Participation in the PDE capital funding process requires an approved application from the Board of Trustees. He explained that many of the College's existing leases and renovation costs are partially supported by PDE capital funds. For example, 50% of the Richland mortgage, the Blair lease, and the Bellefonte lease are funded through this process. The requested application amounts represent estimates of potential needs, not guaranteed expenditures, and any future lease agreements or loans would still require separate Board approval before execution.

PA State Public School Building Authority Loan and PDE Capital Funding Request- Blair Campus Renovations (FF 1007-2026) – This project would support renovations and a new lease, should the College relocate from its Altoona Mall location.

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

MOVED: The Board of Trustees approves borrowing from the Pennsylvania State Public School Building Authority Revolving Loan Fund and authorizes the administration to seek capital funding from the Pennsylvania Department of Education for amounts not to exceed \$2,000,000 for the construction of a new Blair County Campus and \$1,800,000 to support a ten-year lease agreement.

PA State Public School Building Authority Loan and PDE Capital Funding Request-Culinary Center Lease (FF 1008-2026)-This project would support the planned move of the culinary program from the downtown Johnstown location to the Pasquerilla Center, allowing the College to access capital funding to support 50% of the lease costs.

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

MOVED: The Board of Trustees authorizes the administration to apply for Pennsylvania Department of Education Capital Funding and to enter into a lease agreement for a new Culinary Center location with annual lease costs not to exceed \$40,000.

Tuition and Fee Schedule FY 2025-2026 (FF 1009-2025) – Dr. Nunez stated that, to help offset rising College expenses, an increase in tuition and fees is being recommended. This includes a 1.6% increase for Cambria County, the College's sponsoring county; an increase of 2.8% for ACE and Summer Session Development Courses; an increase of 6.4% for non-sponsoring counties; and an increase of 6.6% for out-of-state students. The only exception is Somerset County, where tuition and fees will be reduced by \$35 due to the Somerset County grant.

Upon a motion duly made by Mr. Joseph Hurd, seconded by Dr. Kristy Chunta, and unanimously carried by voice vote, it was:

MOVED: Administration requests that the Board of Trustees approve the proposed 2026–2027 Tuition and Fee Schedule, including the definitions of tuition and comprehensive fees, as required by PA Higher Education Transparency Act.

Report from the Associate Vice President of Administration – Ms. Susan Fisher reported continued progress in finalizing the move of the Culinary Center to the Pasquerilla Center. Facilities staff have been working closely with the culinary professor to ensure the equipment is arranged in a way that supports student learning and maximizes the benefits of the expanded space.

Plans are underway to relocate the Ebensburg location to a smaller space within the same plaza, pending further information from the property owner and management company. The proposed move would reduce the College's square footage by approximately half, and the College is currently awaiting additional information before proceeding.

Lastly, she reported that the UPMC renewal for medical, dental, and vision benefits initially proposed a 14% increase, which she successfully negotiated down to 8.5%. She stated that she is happy to report that the plans were renewed with no changes to the plan design.

Report from the Associate Vice President of Finance – Mr. Omar Strohm reported that the College is in the early stages of forming a cross-functional, interdepartmental committee to review future options for the College bookstore.

Report from the Chief Information Officer –Mr. Matthew Hoffman reported that the College recently completed third-party cybersecurity testing in which an external firm attempted to identify vulnerabilities across the network, servers, laptops, desktops, and other devices. The review highlighted several strengths, including strong incident reporting procedures, malware mitigation, automatic account lockouts, a robust password policy, regular monthly patching, and comprehensive endpoint protection. The assessment identified eight total findings, five of which require follow-up. Several of these relate to external systems such as HVAC and camera systems, which are already being addressed. Overall, the College performed well, with only minor areas identified for continued risk mitigation.

Lastly, he reported achieving budget savings through ongoing contract renegotiations over the past year. By reviewing agreements with vendors such as RingCentral and internet service providers and making strategic changes, the College has realized approximately \$81,000 in cost savings to date. He added that additional opportunities are still being explored and that efforts to further reduce costs are ongoing.

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS/STUDENT SERVICES COMMITTEE

Report from Committee Chair – Dr. Jennifer Anderson stated that the minutes from April 6, 2026, are in the packet.

Surgical Technology AAS – New Program (AASS 1004-2026)-Dr. Sara Conroy reported that the new Surgical Technology AAS program was developed in partnership with Conemaugh

Memorial Medical Center. She explained that Conemaugh approached Penn Highlands to collaborate on this workforce-focused initiative in response to growing demand for surgical technologists as the regional healthcare system expands and staffing gaps persist. Conemaugh currently offers this degree in partnership with UPJ, and Penn Highlands students will now also have access to the program. Under the program structure, students will be dually enrolled and will complete their general education coursework at Penn Highlands and then apply separately to the Surgical Technology program at Conemaugh, where they will complete all technical and laboratory-based instruction. Conemaugh will provide specialized technical training, while Penn Highlands will deliver the academic general education components. She stated that the program strengthens the College's healthcare program offerings and directly aligns with regional workforce needs, a priority outlined in the College's strategic plan. The College anticipates launching the program in Fall 2026.

A discussion was held regarding the demand for surgical technologists. Dr. Conroy noted that Conemaugh Memorial Medical Center is currently unable to meet workforce demand through its existing program and partnership, which prompted the decision to expand. She also shared that Conemaugh plans to increase the number of procedures performed at the hospital, further driving the need for additional surgical technologists.

Upon a motion duly made by Mr. Greg Winger, seconded by Ms. Lladel Lichty, and unanimously carried by voice vote, it was:

MOVED: The Board of Trustees approves the Surgical Technology AAS Program effective Fall semester, 2026.

Report for Academic Affairs – Dr. Sara Conroy stated that her full report is included in the Board packet. She stated that the College had another successful year in dual enrollment, exceeding its budgeted target by more than 1,000 credits. She attributed the achievement to the State's Dual Enrollment Innovation Grant and the collective efforts of Kay-Leigh Davis, her team, faculty, and participating students.

She also highlighted the success of the Police Academy, noting that the current cohort will graduate at the end of June. Recruitment efforts for the upcoming class have been strong, with expectations of enrolling more than 25 cadets, approaching the program's capacity of 30. If realized, this would mark the largest class to date, and the College is looking forward to welcoming them in the fall. She stated that, as mentioned earlier, the College is exploring a new location for the culinary program due to continued growth. She reported that 17 students from Greater Johnstown High School have already expressed interest in participating through dual enrollment and would attend daytime classes for college credit.

She stated that in addition to the Surgical Technology program previously discussed, the College plans to advance a Pre-dental Hygiene Program in partnership with the University of Pittsburgh. They plan to open a regional dental hygiene training facility in Johnstown in 2027 and have expressed interest in Penn Highlands offering a preparatory certificate focused on sciences, mathematics, public speaking, and general education coursework. She stated that this program addresses a significant regional workforce need and that UPJ representatives have already begun recruiting students on campus for that program.

Dr. Conroy also provided an update on the opportunity for Penn Highlands students to access UPJ housing as early as the fall semester. She explained that while housing may not be the best

option for every student due to cost, it offers particular value for out-of-county and out-of-state students. She added that the housing option includes access to meal plans.

Lastly, she announced that the Student Engagement Awards ceremony will be held on April 23 and encouraged attendance to help celebrate student achievements earned throughout the academic year, including academic, athletic, and leadership awards as detailed in the packet.

A discussion was held regarding student housing and how residency affects in-county tuition eligibility. Dr. Conroy explained that College policy requires students to be residents of Cambria County for six months to qualify for in-county tuition. As a result, students who utilize student housing could become eligible for in-county tuition as early as the spring semester, once the six-month residency requirement is met.

Report from the Student Trustee and Student Senate President – Mr. Brian Lanham provided an update on student activities and achievements during the spring semester. He stated that graduating students picked up caps, gowns, and related information at graduation fairs held at each campus location during the second week of April.

Student engagement activities included the Caring for Cubs Club participating in Read Across America Week, a tour of the Sheetz Corporation by the SHRM Club, and the Theater Club's current spring play, with an additional performance scheduled for the evening of the Student Engagement and Success Awards.

Students also participated in a variety of weekly activities, including celebrations for National Cheese Doodle Day, St. Patrick's Day, National Tater Day, and the annual Easter egg hunt. A free Dunkin' Cruiser visited campus on March 18. In addition, Caitlyn Carnahan, Emmie Johns, Gina Pettenati attended the Pennsylvania Commission event in Harrisburg on April 8, where they and Makayla Stephens were named to the All-PA Team.

He stated that the men's basketball team won the Region 20 WPCCC Championship at Butler Community College and hosted the district tournament before advancing to Joliet, where they finished sixth nationally. Zach Gomer competed in the National Wrestling Tournament on March 6 and 7 in Cedar Falls, Iowa, and six members of the men's golf team are also participating in national competition. He added that student-athletes participated in Middle States open forums and announced that women's basketball is being added to the athletics program. Both basketball teams and the volleyball team will compete at the Division II level.

Student Senate members also participated in the Middle States open forum and are planning a dance event later in May, as well as a trip to Hersheypark on May 1.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Report from Committee Chair – Ms. Lladel Lichty stated that the minutes from April 8, 2026, are included in the packet.

Foundation Report – Ms. Carole VanMeter reported that Puttapalooza raised over \$7,900 and highlighted the success of expanded, tiered hole sponsorships, which generated \$950 as a revenue strategy that the Foundation plans to continue. In addition, she noted that the games of chance were very successful and expressed pride in the strong College-wide support for the event, with faculty, students, alumni, and staff all contributing to its success.

Ms. VanMeter reported that the College is approaching the scholarship deadline and provided an update on current scholarship activity. She shared that 59 scholarships are complete, with 104 additional applications in progress, noting that many students are close to finishing and are being encouraged to complete the remaining requirements. She stated that this will be the first year the Pardee Endowment scholarships are awarded, providing up to six full-tuition and fee scholarships for students from the Cambria Heights and Northern Cambria School Districts. More than \$17,000 was distributed for spring semester scholarships, along with \$1,800 in culinary student parking permits. EITC donations totaled \$9,450, and the Foundation received over \$15,000 in in-kind donations, including athletic equipment, food items, and hygiene supplies to support students.

She stated that several grants are nearing completion, with outcomes to be reported at the June meeting. Additionally, the Foundation Board will hold its retreat in May, two days before graduation. She announced the appointment of Heather Franci, Head of Nursing at Penn Highlands Healthcare in DuBois, as a new Foundation Board member, and noted that officer nominations and elections for the next two-year terms will be held.

She announced dates for Puttupalooza on April 2, 2027, and the Chef Auction on October 7, 2026.

Recruiting and Admissions – Mr. Matthew Bodenschatz reported that spring enrollment totaled 9,164 credits, with 433 full-time and 582 part-time students, representing a decline from last year. Summer enrollment currently stands at 1,052 registered credits across 216 students, with just under one month remaining before the first summer term begins. Overall, enrollment is 10.1% behind full-year projections, reflecting a shortfall of approximately 2,429 credits.

He stated that spring recruitment efforts are showing improvement. Attendance at spring open houses increased to 44 students, a gain of 15 students compared to the previous spring open house held two years ago. This increase was attributed to the addition of a second open house, allowing more opportunities to engage prospective students.

He highlighted progress with Academic Planning Days, which focus on enrollment conversion rather than recruitment. The first event, held prior to open registration, welcomed 19 students, followed by 13 students on April 18. An additional 11 students are currently registered for the final event. Compared to 50 total attendees across three events last year, he expressed optimism that this year's attendance will meet or exceed last year's totals.

Marketing Report – Dr. Sara Conroy stated that the complete Marketing report is in the packet. She stated that the marketing department reported progress on several initiatives, beginning with website accessibility updates. Although the College initially faced a compliance deadline of April 24 to meet new DOJ accessibility guidelines, we have been notified that full compliance has been extended until next year. The College is already approximately 95–98% complete, placing it well ahead of schedule. Current efforts are focused on ensuring accessibility within Brightspace pages for upcoming courses, a development expected to be well-received by faculty.

Marketing has also led several website enhancements, including updates to the About section to better highlight the College's strategic plan, economic impact report, and institutional history in a more user-friendly format. New student testimonials have been added to the site in a Q&A format, featuring strong photography and design, and showcasing students' experiences and

reasons for choosing Penn Highlands. Academic program pages are being refreshed with clearer layouts, concise bullet points, and more prospective-student-friendly content.

In addition to website updates, marketing also launched new campaigns for summer and fall enrollment. One campaign targets transfer and visiting students, particularly those at four-year institutions seeking to complete or get ahead on general education courses such as calculus, sciences, English, and history, traditionally strong summer offerings. Another campaign focuses on the Behavioral Sciences program, which has been redesigned based on student and advisory board feedback. The program will now be offered fully online in an accelerated, year-round, seven-week format to better serve adult learners.

Lastly, Dr. Conroy thanked the Marketing Department for the success of the Smart Start Program, press conference, and campaign.

REPORTS/COMMENTS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

Dr. Nunez stated that this meeting was Ms. Trish Corle's final Board meeting and expressed appreciation for her years of dedicated service. He stated that she is one of the strongest strategic thinkers he has worked with and that he has greatly valued their six and a half years of working together. Her direct communication style and collaborative leadership will be missed. He thanked her for her many contributions and for the lasting positive impact she has made on the College, its students, and the leadership team.

Ms. Corle thanked Dr. Nunez and the Board, reflecting on her 16 years of service, during which she missed only two Board meetings. She stated that she is looking forward to retirement but will be working part-time with the College for a short period to assist with the completion of the faculty contract and thanked everyone for their support and friendship.

Dr. Grady stated that she was present at Ms. Corle's original interview and thanked her for the many roles she has held and for the strategic leadership she demonstrated throughout her tenure.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

ADJOURN

With no further business to be discussed, at 5:48 PM, Mr. John Augustine and Mr. Greg Winger made a motion to adjourn the Board meeting which was unanimously approved by voice vote.