
**PENNSYLVANIA HIGHLANDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
August 19, 2025 – 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, August 19, 2025, 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. Ms. Board Member Linda Thomson took roll call, and a quorum was established.

TRUSTEES PRESENT

Dr. Jennifer Anderson
Rev. Reginal Floyd
Ms. Lladel Lichty
Dr. Janet Grady
Mr. John Augustine
Mr. Joseph Hurd
Dr. Leah Spangler
Ms. Linda Thomson
Ms. Carissa Westrick

ALSO PRESENT

Dr. Steve Nunez, President
Ms. Trish Corle, Vice President of Student Services
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
Dr. Barb Zaborowski, Dean of Library Services & Special Projects
Mr. Matthew Hoffman, Chief Information Officer
Ms. Sonya Augustine, Executive Assistant to Administrative Operations, Recorder

TRUSTEES ABSENT

Mr. Carl DeYulis
Ms. Jackie Kulback
Mr. Brett Smith
Mr. Greg Winger
Dr. Jennifer Mitchell
Mr. Mike Puruczky

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

GUESTS & SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Dr. Nunez thanked everyone in attendance. Mr. Matthew Hoffman, Chief Information and Security Officer, presented the annual Cyber Security update to the Board. Mr. Hoffman serves as the College's designated security expert, fulfilling multiple roles typically handled by a dedicated security officer. He is certified as a Lead Implementer and Auditor for the updated

National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) cybersecurity framework, which now includes a stronger role for the Board in oversight. He stated that the IT Department is expanding cybersecurity responsibilities across staff to ensure continuity and coverage. The College conducts regular risk assessments and maintains detailed documentation to support audits and compliance. Industry data shows that 80–95% of breaches are caused by human error through phishing scams. This highlights the critical role individuals play in cybersecurity. A single employee clicking on a malicious link can expose sensitive data and significantly disrupt operations. The average cost of a data breach in 2024 was \$4.8 million, up from \$4.5 million the previous year, reflecting a concerning upward trend across the industry.

Executive impersonation attacks are a growing concern, and the College has safeguards in place to detect and block fake texts and emails. All staff, faculty, and students are trained to recognize and report suspicious activity. The IT Department conducts simulated phishing tests, and anyone who clicks on a test link must complete additional training. New employees receive a 45-minute cybersecurity onboarding, and students are also assigned to cybersecurity training.

In compliance with the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act (GLBA), the College must ensure all third-party service providers have proper data safeguards in place. If a vendor experiences a breach, the College is also held accountable, making thorough vetting essential. To protect institutional and student data, the College has implemented several key safeguards: multi-factor authentication for all network users, partnerships with certified vendors for secure hardware disposal, and a significantly improved inventory management system. Advanced monitoring tools provide real-time alerts, allowing the IT Department to respond swiftly to any detected threats. To manage third-party risk, the College uses the HECVAT tool provided by EDUCAUSE. Vendors must complete this assessment before contracts are signed. If they fail to meet our standards, the College does not proceed with the partnership. The College maintains these assessments on file for audit purposes.

Our systems are patched monthly, with urgent updates applied as needed. All computers have been upgraded to Windows 11, and the IT Department monitors threats daily to stay ahead of emerging risks. They have also implemented a new system for annual penetration testing to identify and fix vulnerabilities. If an incident occurs, a comprehensive response plan is activated involving key stakeholders. Recently, there has been an increase in fake applications, particularly at larger colleges. The College's new CRM system includes tools to detect and block these fraudulent submissions. Admissions, IT, and other staff are working together to address these threats. Additionally, the network infrastructure has been upgraded to require RADIUS authentication for all network access, preventing unauthorized device access.

The College follows the guidelines established by the NIST, under the U.S. Department of Commerce. This framework is designed to manage risk and meet national security standards. Mr. Hoffman has completed extensive training and earned certification in this framework, which is also widely adopted at other organizations. One of the key strengths of this framework is its inclusive approach, which involves not only IT professionals but also managers, practitioners, executives, and even Board members. Everyone plays a role in maintaining cybersecurity standards. The framework recently transitioned from Version 1 to Version 2 in 2024, introducing a new governance model. This update places greater responsibility on executive leadership and boards to stay informed about cybersecurity risks and ensure compliance. Presentations like this one are part of our effort to meet those requirements and keep everyone aligned with best practices.

A discussion was held regarding the national security standards the College follows compared to the less rigorous practices at some other institutions. Mr. Matthew Hoffman stated that these higher standards not only strengthen our cybersecurity but also improve our ability to secure cybersecurity insurance, which is an increasingly difficult task for colleges with weaker safeguards.

CONSENT AGENDA

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

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

- Approval of Minutes from June 17 Board of Trustees Meeting

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

None.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Nunez introduced Dr. Sarah Conroy, who has joined Penn Highlands Community College as the new Vice President of Academic Affairs and Student Services, succeeding Dr. Cindy Doherty, who retired in May. Her appointment follows a nationwide search. He stated that Trish Corle continues to lead Student Services and Workforce Development. However, she has announced her intention to retire next summer. Over the next eight to nine months, responsibilities will gradually transition from Trish to Dr. Conroy. Dr. Conroy brings over a decade of experience from the Community College of Allegheny County, where she most recently served as Dean of Business and Technology. Her background spans both academic and industry settings, having served as a teacher, administrator, and professional outside of higher education. This diverse experience adds valuable depth to our leadership team. Dr. Conroy expressed enthusiasm about joining PHCC and looks forward to being part of the team.

Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest of Dr. Nunez – Dr. Nunez stated that, in accordance with Board policy, he is required to disclose any potential conflicts of interest to both the Cabinet and the Board on an annual basis. Cabinet members have also confirmed that they have no conflicts to report. Dr. Nunez's disclosure form is included in the packet and outlines his involvement with multiple boards, but does not consider them to be true conflicts of interest as he represents the College and the College's interest on those boards.

Strategic Plan Update – Dr. Nunez stated that the College has completed its 2020–2025 Strategic Plan and is now beginning development of a new plan. The current plan, included in the Board packet, reflects recent updates and accomplishments. Dr. Nunez expressed pride in the College's progress and the team's commitment to executing the plan over the past four years. A full summary of the completed plan will be shared in December or January to highlight key achievements. The new strategic planning process will be launched this fall. The Board of Trustees will be actively involved, and their input will help to shape the future direction of the College.

The goal is to present the new strategic plan to the Board for approval at the February meeting. This timeline ensures alignment with the upcoming budget cycle, allowing the plan to be connected to financial, human, and capital resources for effective implementation.

Accreditation Update – Dr. Barb Zaborowski reminded the Board that the upcoming accreditation meeting should already be on their calendars. A dinner is scheduled for Wednesday, October 29, at 5:00 PM, where the Board of Trustees will meet with the Middle

States Team Chair, Dr. Austin. She emphasized the importance of attending this dinner, as it provides a valuable opportunity to engage directly with Dr. Austin and gain insight into his expectations for the accreditation process. During the dinner, Dr. Austin will outline the Board's role in the accreditation process. Additionally, a luncheon with the full accreditation team will be held during their visit in March.

Top 10: Highlights for FY 2025 – The Top 10 List of College Achievements was discussed. Ms. Trish Corle stated that she is proud of the successful launch of the College's Nonprofit Learning Center, which officially opened with a symposium last week. This initiative has been two years in the making, and she expressed deep appreciation for the team's efforts in bringing it to fruition. The opening symposium welcomed nearly 50 nonprofit organizations from five counties, all of whom expressed gratitude for the opportunity to collaborate and identify their training needs through this new learning partnership. Ms. Corle also acknowledged the importance of securing a grant from the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies to support the launch.

Ms. Susan Fisher stated that she is proud of the renovations completed on the athletic side of the building, noting the collaborative effort between the facilities team, student athletics, staff, and security to make the space more inviting and accessible to both students and employees. She highlighted the improvements to the main gym and weight room as a beautiful and significant step forward. These upgrades were accomplished using operational funds, and while additional enhancements are planned as part of a future capital project, she is proud of the progress made to date.

Dr. Barb Zaborowski stated that she is proud to be involved in a significant community initiative securing the listing of the first Cambria AME Zion Church on the National Register of Historic Places.

Mr. Omar Strohm stated that he was proud of the successful transition to a new payroll and human resource information system. This upgraded system is a significant improvement over the previous one, offering enhanced integration and accessibility. It benefits not only the Business Office but also employees across the College, allowing them to input and access personal employment-related information more efficiently.

Dr. Nunez stated that Mr. Gary Boast was most proud of the cybersecurity initiative, noting the significant investment of time and resources into strengthening cybersecurity and training across the College.

Dr. Nunez expressed pride in the Foundation's significant progress over the past year, noting that it is now well-positioned for continued growth. One of the most impactful developments was the addition of the \$1,150,000 Pardee Endowment, which provides a substantial boost to the Foundation's resources. He also highlighted the \$1 million Dual Enrollment Innovation Grant, emphasizing its potential to transform the College's dual enrollment program. He stated that while the grant itself is a major achievement, the true value lies in how the funds can be used to benefit students and the broader community.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Report from Committee Chair – Dr. Grady reported that the minutes are included in the packet from August 12, 2025.

Appointment of Benjamin Estell to the Board of Trustees (EXEC 1013-2025) – Dr. Grady stated that the motion recommends the Board of Trustees appoint Benjamin Estell to complete the remainder of Ralph Stewart's term, which ends in August 2026. He has 15 years of municipal experience, along with academic credentials, including a master's degree and an MBA. He is currently the Executive Director of the Centre Region Council of Governments, and previously held the role of borough manager, giving him extensive experience in municipal operations, community engagement, and grant initiatives.

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 appoints Benjamin Estell, effectively immediately, to the Board of Trustees for a term that ends August 2026.

FINANCE & FACILITIES COMMITTEE

Report from Committee Chair – Dr. Janet Grady stated that the minutes from the August 7, 2025, meeting are included in the packet.

Financial Audit ending June 30, 2025 (FF 1016-2025)- Mr. Omar Strohm presented the Financial Statements ending June 30, 2025 which encompasses the entire FY 2025. A summary of the Operating and Capital Budget, the Statement of Revenues and Expenses, and the Net Position was reviewed. He stated that revenues from grants, investments, and dual enrollment programs have helped offset the decline in core enrollment and the associated tuition revenue. Year-over-year comparisons through June 2025 show that while revenues increased, they were partially offset by rising expenses similar to last year, though to a lesser extent. A decrease in net position is anticipated, though it is smaller than the decline experienced last year. Dr. Nunez stated that the College's net position had grown over the past several years due to strategic investments. However, the current depreciation of those investments is now contributing to the decline in net position.

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

MOVED: The Board of Trustees approves the Financial Statements ending June 30, 2025.

Report from the Associate Vice President of Administration – Ms. Susan Fisher reported that the facilities team has been actively preparing for the start of the fall semester. The next major initiative will be a capital project focused on completing renovations to the athletic wing of the building. Additional improvements are planned to enhance student experiences in shared spaces such as the café and student services areas. The timing of the Request for Proposals (RFP) will be coordinated to ensure proposals are received ahead of the Finance and Facilities Committee meeting. Since the project depends on State funding, the most likely timeline for issuing the RFP is December. However, if funding is approved earlier, the process could begin as soon as October.

Report from the Associate Vice President of Technology and Analytics – Dr. Nunez went over some highlights of the IT report on behalf of Mr. Boast who was not able to attend the Board meeting. The IT department recently completed several key projects, including a successful migration to Windows 11. A total of 640 PCs and laptops were upgraded across campus. In collaboration with the facilities team, outdated flash-mode equipment was replaced, and commercial-grade televisions were installed to enhance instructional spaces. These upgrades

replaced aging projectors and pull-down screens, reflecting the College's commitment to high-quality teaching and learning environments. Among the accomplishments tied to the Strategic Plan is the integration of artificial intelligence (AI). Last year, the Board approved a policy governing the use of AI, which has since been implemented across the institution. AI has significantly improved operational efficiency, particularly for a small organization where staff often wear multiple hats. Leadership team members are using AI tools to assist with tasks such as drafting documents and generating initial content, helping to streamline workflows and enhance productivity.

Report from the Associate Vice President of Finance – Mr. Omar Strohm reported that Wessel and Company Auditors have been working onsite and appear to be progressing well. A formal audit presentation by Wessel will be scheduled for the Board in October.

The College is currently finalizing a three-year budget projection, which is both a requirement for accreditation and a valuable tool for long-term financial planning.

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS/STUDENT SERVICES COMMITTEE

Report from Committee Chair – Dr. Jennifer Anderson stated that the minutes from August 5, 2025, are in the packet.

Report for Academic Affairs – Dr. Sara Conroy stated that Kay-Leigh Davis, Dean of Academic Affairs, has been doing an excellent job administering the Dual Enrollment Innovation Grant. The \$1 million grant will be used to expand dual enrollment programming, with a strong focus on serving rural populations, especially those students who are economically challenged. Approximately 80% of the grant budget is dedicated to direct student support, including scholarships and funding for a new Student Support Specialist. This specialist will assist dual enrollment students in navigating college processes such as registration, accessing online systems, and transitioning to college life. They will also visit high schools to help recruit students into the program. The College anticipates a dramatic increase in dual enrollment credits as a result of this grant. The College already has a strong dual enrollment program, and this funding is expected to further strengthen and grow it.

The College has hired a new faculty member specializing in business with a focus on marketing. This addition has led to the establishment of a new Marketing Program Advisory Council, which was presented for discussion and will begin meeting during the academic year.

Lastly, she shared an update regarding the Police Academy. Through Perkins funding, the cost per cadet has been reduced from \$1,000 to \$200. Additionally, the time to completion has been shortened from 11 months to 9.5 months. These changes represent significant progress in making the program more accessible and efficient. Board member John Augustine stated that on behalf of the Greater Johnstown Career and Technology Center (GJCTC), he is happy to see the progress made in the Police Academy program. He noted that the decision to transition the program to the College was made with a strong commitment to serving both students and the community. He extended his congratulations to the College for its successful implementation and leadership of the Police Academy.

Report from the Vice President of Student Services – Ms. Trish Corle reported that the College reached approximately 95% of its enrollment goal for the previous year. Student Services has been actively managing the deregistration process, which involves removing students who have not made payments or arranged payment plans. Approximately 600–700 credits were

deregistered, yet the current total stands at over 9,400 credits. Considering the deregistration, this reflects solid progress, though the College remains below its fall goal of 10,801 credits. New Student Orientation is scheduled for tomorrow, and enrollment efforts are ongoing. The current student count is 978, and registration will continue through the drop/add period next week. The Strategic Plan update focused on the College's collaboration with Career and Technology Centers (CTCs). She explained that Greater Altoona developed flyers to outline clear educational and career pathways for students. One example, the cybersecurity pathway flyer included in the packet, shows students how to progress from taking courses at Greater Altoona CTC, to enrolling in dual enrollment courses at their high school (if available), and finally completing their studies at Pennsylvania Highlands. Similar flyers have been done for Somerset and Greater Johnstown CTC's. The College plans to distribute these flyers during fall recruitment visits. Additionally, a list of Advisory Council members from all locations was shared to provide transparency on who is serving across the various academic programs.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Report from Committee Chair – Ms. Lladel Lichty stated that the minutes from August 6, 2025, are included in the packet.

Foundation Report – Dr. Nunez stated that Ms. Carole VanMeter's full report is in the packet and will provide an update in Ms. VanMeter's absence. The Foundation is currently focused on preparations for the upcoming Chef Auction. Several restaurants have already committed to participating, including Balance, Conemaugh, Seven Springs, and Harrigan's, and a full lineup is expected. The event is scheduled for October 22, and tickets are available through the Foundation. A top-chef sponsor at the \$2,500 level has already been secured and will be announced soon. In addition to the Chef Auction, the Foundation has partnered with the Athletics Department to install sponsorship banners in the gymnasium, now fully operated by the College. Over \$1,200 has been raised so far to support athletic uniforms and travel expenses. Another key update is the approval of a new strategic plan for the Foundation, which includes a renewed focus on expanding the Alumni Association. This initiative is now a top priority, with several efforts already underway, including a clearly defined criterion for alumni status and outreach involving 200 phone calls to engage alumni in future projects.

Marketing Report – Dr. Nunez stated that Mr. Ray Weible's full report is in the packet and he will provide a few updates in Mr. Weible's absence. The Integrated Marketing and Communications (IMC) plan developed by Mr. Weible is a comprehensive communications and marketing plan that outlines how resources will be allocated throughout the year. While the plan is flexible and can be adjusted as needed, it provides a clear framework for spending and has been shared with the recruitment team to ensure alignment. A key focus of the current marketing strategy is returning to the College's core values, particularly affordability. Dr. Nunez emphasized that affordability is a strength that may sometimes be taken for granted, but it remains central to the College's mission. Marketing efforts have been intentionally using the term "affordable" to reinforce the message that Pennsylvania Highlands offers a high return on investment. In response to ongoing public discussions about the value of higher education, the College is positioning itself as a cost-effective and worthwhile option. As part of this campaign, a variety of materials including commercials and postcards have been developed.

Six employees participated in the Western Pennsylvania Community College Leadership Institute (WPCCLI), where they were required to complete a project aligned with institutional goals. Their chosen initiative focused on branding Penn Highlands Online, and the team collaborated

closely with the Marketing Department to develop a concept page that promotes the online learning experience.

Dr. Nunez reported that the State budget has not yet passed, and as a result, the College has not received any operating or capital funding. At this time, there is little movement, and it's likely that a final budget won't be approved until September or October. However, Dr. Nunez noted that there has been no indication of negative impacts to the possible higher education funding or to the College's appropriations. While the delay is challenging, there is hope that the outcome will ultimately be favorable.

Dr. Nunez stated that efforts are ongoing to identify and secure additional funding to support operations in Somerset County. The College is actively working to increase visibility and brand recognition in Somerset County.

REPORTS/COMMENTS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

None.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

ADJOURN

With no further business to be discussed, at 5:45PM, Ms. Lladel Lichty and Rev. Reginal Floyd made a motion to adjourn the Board meeting which was unanimously approved by voice vote.