

**EAST ARKANSAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE**  
**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
**EACC Welcome Center**  
**6:00PM**

**Date of Meeting: February 8, 2024**

**I. CALL TO ORDER:**

The Board of Trustees meeting was called to order at 6:01pm and opened in prayer by Chairman Brent Howton.

**II. ROLL CALL:**

The following board members were in attendance: Mr. Alan Curtis, Mrs. Beverly Devazier, Mrs. Jan Haven, Mr. Rausch Hodges, Mr. Brent Howton, Judge Ann Hudson, Mr. Kevin Lewey, and Dr. Florine Milligan. Mr. Al Miller was unable to attend.

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Dr. Cathie Cline, Mrs. Lindsay Midkiff, Mr. Jack Hill, Mr. Adam O'Neal, and Mr. Jim Huff. Minutes were recorded and transcribed by Mrs. Anne Kelso.

**MEDIA PRESENT:**

Media representation included Mrs. Tamara Johnson representing the Forrest City *Times-Herald* newspaper.

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS:**

Mr. Howton asked if there were any corrections or additions to the minutes of the previous meeting held on November 9, 2023. Mr. Hodges moved to approve the minutes, and Judge Hudson seconded the motion. The motion carried with no opposition.

**IV. OLD BUSINESS: None**

**V. Special Reports**

**A. Campus Activities Report**

Lindi Huffaker reported on employee activities promoted by the Campus Culture and Communications Committee which included partnering with Lee County Cooperative to host an employee health fair with fourteen vendors who provided a number of free screenings for faculty, staff, and students. During Thanksgiving, we had "Thankfulness Week." This initiative by the Campus Culture and Communications Committee sent notes of gratitude to employees. Every employee on campus received an expression of gratitude for their contributions to the college. We also hosted "Twelve Days of Festive Fun." These included ugly sweater day, Santa vs. Grinch day, caroling across campus, a gingerbread contest, cookie decorating, flannel day, pajama day, Hawaiian day, camo day, and hat day, and then the week concluded with a hot cocoa bar. We had lots of participation and activities were one hundred percent employee driven. No campus funds were used for any of these events.

Next, Adam O'Neal reported on Student Services updates. The new Welcome Center space served us well during registration. We had a challenge during the days of snow, but I am proud to say that our student services staff continued to serve students remotely through phone, email, or zoom calls. Students were able to receive the same assistance virtually, and you will see this reflected in Dr. Cline's enrollment report later, as this could have resulted in a loss of students, but instead we were able to hold on to our students.

Since classes started, we have also re-energized our focus on our student organizations such as Student Government Association (SGA), Minority Males, Diverse Women, campus ambassadors, and the Baptist Collegiate Ministry (BCM). BCM's attendance is up 50%, SGA has a functioning group of officers for the first time since COVID, and our student ambassadors have welcomed guests and assisted with campus tours. We are also excited for the progress our café has made since initially opening in October. We had a soft opening, but since our return from Christmas break, through our menu selections, low prices, and social media marketing, we have been able to increase our sales by 40%. The café has been the hub of the campus and we look forward to having more people from the community on our campus.

Lindsay Midkiff reported on campus events. In celebration of Black History Month, we held a food drive in support of the national MLK Day of Service. Mrs. Niki Jones, Director of Development, wrote and received a grant through Engage Arkansas, and as part of this grant, the campus was invited to donate shelf-stable food items and hygiene product.

Also, this year's African-American Heritage Tour will visit the Stax Museum and the Withers Collection Museum and Gallery. Other events include Cultural Cafes and Lunch & Learn events for various literature and art. We also hosted the UAPB Vesper Choir on Thursday. Choir members from Forrest City High School and Palestine-Wheatley High School attended the performance, some of which had the opportunity to audition for the Vesper Choir.

We also hosted the Cross County Spelling Bee in Wynne through our partnership with Woodruff Electric. We had a record-breaking crowd to attend. Tomorrow, we will host the St. Francis County Spelling Bee for Forrest City and Palestine-Wheatley school districts.

## **B. Campus Projects Report**

Dr. Cline reported on moving the library to the Welcome Center in order to increase student usage. At present, we have completed combining two classrooms into one resource room and renovating a third large classroom as a computer lab for the library. We have also created an allied health library and it is located in the newly created Betty Jo Hodges Allied Health Office Building. This will offer more resources to Allied Health students in one central location and help keep the Betty Jo Hodges legacy alive on our campus. Another new opportunity is the creation of an EACC archives room which will house materials related to the history of EACC and the area. This is located in the former library building, and will be available by appointment for research needs. Usage will be under the supervision of library personnel and

Ms. Jenny Vandiver who has agreed to be a part of a team that evaluates materials to determine what is archival. In addition, Mrs. Amanda Minor, Director of Library Services, will engage in a reappraisal of our holdings and determine if any need to be deaccessioned. We have received permission from the state to donate any materials that are deaccessioned to the EACC Foundation.

The Learning Resource Building will continue to be a major part of our campus. We have leased half of the building to Arkansas Workforce Services to house their workforce staff and programs. The other half of the building will continue to house Community Education and Business and Industry Training, as well as the aforementioned archives.

The Concurrent Credit and Secondary Career Center staff have moved into Office Building 2, where along with the Career Coaches, we have established an Early College Department. The relationship between these programs is being utilized more effectively now that they are in one location.

As noted in previous meetings, Office Building 6 has undergone renovations such as painting and a new roof, and business staff will begin moving into that space later this month.

We have received a metal dedication plaque commemorating the Welcome Center's original construction and renovation. Ms. Midkiff has the plaques here for you to review tonight. A dedication ceremony for the building and the named spaces will be scheduled at a future date.

We advertised for bids for the Connectivity Trail and received no bidders. We are working on re-releasing that bid, and ways to entice bidders for the project.

Regarding campus safety, we have recently installed new Flock Camera Systems at each entrance to the College. This system operates with real-time data that will help on-campus security with monitoring activities. The cameras are solar powered and have a built-in communication system to let technicians know if a problem with the equipment occurs. We are excited to have a new form of technology for additional safety.

Vice President for Academic Affairs, Jack Hill reported on new academic programs that he is working on. He reported the Agricultural Maintenance Equipment program has been approved through the Coordinating Board and we hope to start that program during the Summer I session. We are also working on developing a Phlebotomy program which is highly needed in this area among others. And I am most excited about a new option for our Automotive Service Technician program which is Electrical Vehicle Maintenance. I will be bringing these to the Board for approval at a later date. This report is informational only and requires no action by the Board.

## **VI. FINANCIAL REPORT:**

Dr. Cline presented financial reports for the periods ending October 31, 2023, November 30, 2023, December 31, 2023 and January 31, 2024. In compliance with Act 69 (2021), you also have the *Days of Cash on Hand* report. Per Mr. Huff's memo, no reportable budget adjustments have been made since the last meeting of the Board of

Trustees. Mr. Lewey moved to accept the financial reports as presented, and Mrs. Devazier seconded the motion. The motion carried with no opposition.

## **VII. New Business**

### **A. Holiday Schedule 2026-2027**

Dr. Cline reported. The proposed 2026-2027 holiday schedule was included in the board packet for review:

Labor Day	Monday, September 7, 2026
Thanksgiving Day	Thursday, November 26, 2026
Christmas Eve	Thursday, December 24, 2026
Christmas Day	Friday, December 25, 2026
New Year's Day	Friday, January 1, 2027
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	Monday, January 18, 2027
Memorial Day	Monday, May 31, 2027
Independence Day	Monday, July 5, 2027

The schedule above includes eight of the eleven state holidays. The Governor typically proclaims the Friday following the Thanksgiving holiday as an additional holiday. However, if she fails to allow this additional day, the College will still be closed on November 27th and one (1) day of annual leave will be charged to employees, unless this day is granted by the Board.

Observation of the additional three state holidays, which include George Washington's birthday, Veterans' Day, and the employee's birthday, are recommended to be taken on December 28, 29, and 30. We also request that December 31 be granted, so that the College may be closed completely between Christmas Eve and New Year's Day. If the Board does not approve the additional day requested in December, we will still close and charge one additional day of annual leave to employees.

Dr. Milligan moved to approve the 2026-2027 Holiday Schedule as presented, and Judge Hudson seconded. The motion carried with no opposition.

### **B. College Calendar 2026-2027**

Dr. Cline discussed the proposed 2026-2027 college calendar included in the board packet for review. Judge Hudson moved to approve the 2026-2027 college calendar and Mrs. Haven seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

### **C. Enrollment Report-Spring 2024**

An updated memo was distributed. Dr. Cline reported that Spring 2024 had a preliminary census date enrollment figure of 1,151 students compared to spring 2023, which had a census day enrollment of 1,115 students, an increase of 3.23%. Preliminary Student Semester Credit Hours (SSCH), which represent the overall number of credit hours in which students enrolled, were 8,531 compared to spring 2023 SSCH of 7,905, an increase of 7.92%. This is the first time since COVID that SSCH increased at a greater rate than headcount. The ice and snow

in January pushed the first day of classes back by 4 days, and extended registration, which was a hurdle. However, even with the ice and snow, this spring enrollment represents the 2nd highest enrollment in the last 7 years. This report is informational and requires no action by the Board.

**D. Report on Part-Time Faculty Payroll and Faculty Overloads**

Dr. Cline presented the preliminary Spring 2024 part-time faculty payroll and a list of faculty overloads prepared by Mr. Jack Hill. These items are informational and require no action by the Board.

**E. Resignations/Terminations/Retirements**

Dr. Cline reported that the following individuals are no longer employed with EACC: Josh Rodgers, Fine Arts Center Technical Manager; Janet Brawner, Administrative Assistant III/Business Office; and Darlene Young, Admissions & Retention Counselor. This item is informational only and requires no action by the Board.

**F. Report on New Hires/Change in Duties**

Dr. Cline reported that the following personnel have been hired or have had a change in duties: Dennis Smith, Department Chair/Math-Science Department; Daniel Grantham, Department Chair/Humanities-Social Science Department; Amanda Minor, Director of Library Services; Dr. Jon Misewicz, EMS Program Director; Nick Hess, Director of Community Education; VerMarsha Stewart, Director of Secondary Career Center/Career Coach Counselor; Sam Harris, Executive Assistant for Academic Affairs; and Tierney Fletcher, Academic Advisor/Student Engagement Specialist. This is an informational item and requires no action by the Board.

**G. Board Expense Reimbursement**

Mr. Howton reported that Section 2 of Act 1211 of 1995 provides that "Every state board may, by a majority vote of the total membership of the board cast during its first regularly scheduled meeting of each calendar year, authorize expense reimbursement for each board member for performing official board duties. The expense reimbursement shall not exceed the rate established for state employees by travel regulations." Mr. Howton stated that the resolution is the same as in previous years and recommended that the Board adopt the following resolution:

*BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of East Arkansas Community College authorizes its members to be reimbursed as provided by state law and regulations during the 2023 calendar year for all official travel entailed in their duties including, but not limited to, attendance at regular or called meetings, conferences, conventions, in-service activities, or other official duties.*

*BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the administration of the college be authorized to make a written request to the Office of Accounting on behalf of Board members to allow the maximum for lodging to be exceeded as outlined by state regulations.*

Mrs. Haven moved to adopt this resolution, and Dr. Milligan seconded. The motion carried with no opposition.

## **H. Nominating Committee Report and Election of Officers**

Mr. Howton noted that the nominating committee (Howton, Haven & Curtis) met prior to the Board of Trustees meeting. Mr. Curtis stated that the committee is recommending that the same slate of officers continue to serve this year: *Brent Howton, Chair; Alan Curtis, Vice Chair; Kevin Lewey, Secretary and Rausch Hodges, Treasurer*. Judge Hudson moved to approve the recommended slate of board officers and Mrs. Haven seconded the motion. The motion passed with no opposition.

## **I. Strategic Partnership Agreement**

A memo regarding a Strategic Partnership Agreement was distributed. Mr. Howton gave background on why this is being presented. He noted that Dr. Bobbitt attended the opening of the new Welcome Center and was very impressed with the community support for this institution. Dr. Bobbitt noted, that in his opinion, the University of Arkansas did not have enough presence in eastern Arkansas and asked if EACC and the Board would be interested in an affiliation with the University of Arkansas System. Mr. Howton noted that he did not know what to say. We had never talked about that. Following that conversation, Dr. Cline and I discussed it and concluded that there might be a mutual advantage in aligning with the UA System and that it would be in the best interest of the faculty, staff, and students to at least investigate and discuss the benefits of an affiliation.

Dr. Cline noted that there are two types of colleges: those that are considered independent and those that are a member of a larger system of colleges and universities. Over the years, more colleges have chosen to join a system. Membership within a system allows a college to maintain its local mission and serve its constituents, while also providing support and resources to assist it now and in the future as higher education continues to change and adapt.

The benefits of such an arrangement have increased post Covid. In broad terms, they include legal and fiscal advice, inclusion in larger state-wide initiatives, advocacy, and access to the additional resources for employees and students that can only be provided by a larger system.

In order to ensure that EACC continues to be future-focused in providing the highest quality educational and cultural programming, and to enable the institution to provide expanded opportunities for student and employee professional and educational growth, the Board of Trustees may request that Mr. Brent Howton, Chairman, and Dr. Cathie Cline, President of EACC, discuss an affiliation agreement with the University of Arkansas System. If an agreeable arrangement is reached, it will be presented to the Board for its review and approval, which, if also approved by the UA System Board of Trustees, would initiate the process of becoming a member college of the University of Arkansas System. If the Board of Trustees would like to make such a request, a motion and vote are appropriate at this time, as well as any discussion in which the Board wishes to engage. Mrs. Haven made a motion to move forward with investigating a strategic partnership with UA Systems. Mr. Hodges seconded the motion. Following discussion, Mr. Howton called for a vote and the motion passed with no opposition.

**President's Report** - None

**EXECUTIVE SESSION** - None

**ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business to discuss, Mr. Curtis made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Lewey seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 6:43 p.m.

Approved:

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Mr. Brent Howton, Chair  
EACC BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Date