



MECC Local Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, November 18, 2025, 4:30 p.m.

Kline Foundation Boardroom

MEMBERS PRESENT

SCOTT COUNTY	WISE COUNTY	LEE COUNTY	DICKENSON CTY	NORTON
Keith Wilson	Gail Lunsford	Emily Kinser		Carol Caruso
Rodney Baker	Ruth Ann Price	Kristi Taylor		
Adrienne Hood	Teresa Adkins	Joyce Williams		
Freda Starnes				

MEMBERS ABSENT

Scott Napier (Lee)
Mike Hatfield (Wise)
Kim Mullins (Wise)
Dana Cronkhite (Dickenson)

Others Attending:

Dr. Clint Pinion – Vice President, Academic Affairs and Workforce Solutions
Ms. Kristy Hall – Vice President, Financial and Administrative Services
Dr. Amy Greear – Vice President of Institutional Advancement
Dr. Kristen Westover - President
Peggy Gibson – Executive Assistant to the President
Sarah Gilliam – Representing Faculty Senate

CALL TO ORDER

The Mountain Empire Community College Advisory Board met on Tuesday, November 18, 2025, at 4:30 p.m. in the Kline Foundation Boardroom. The meeting was called to order by the chair, Mr. Keith Wilson

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Rodney Baker motioned to accept the minutes of September 16, 2025, as presented. The motion was seconded by Kristi Taylor and passed unanimously. (Exhibit 1)

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Mr. Wilson reported on the following information items:

- ✚ Mr. Wilson welcomed the newly appointed board members, Ms. Gail Lunsford and Ruth Ann Price, representing Wise County.
- ✚ Mr. Wilson reminded Board members that the MECC Christmas Luncheon is scheduled for Friday, December 5th, at 11:30 a.m. in the Goodloe Center and encouraged members to attend.

President's Report – Dr. Kristen Westover

Dr. Westover reported on the following items:

Enrollment

- The Fall 2025 Preliminary Enrollment headcount is 2,104, compared to last year's enrollment of 2,115, a decrease of 1%.
- The College's FTE is 1,387 compared to 1,370 last year, reflecting an increase of 1 percent.

Other Updates

- Dr. Westover reviewed her current community involvement with Board members, including a list of internal and external activities from September 16 to November 18, 2025. (**Exhibit 2**).
- MECC's AI Taskforce – The MECC AI Taskforce has been meeting to discuss and advance the AI administrative and teaching pilot projects. The committee learned about agentic AI at the last meeting. The Committee has found that the new ChatGPT Atlas Browser for Mac can complete quizzes and tests on the Canvas platform. Faculty should be aware. Currently, the Respondus LockDown Browser can prevent this from happening.
- Dr. Westover reported that MECC's AI Taskforce is moving forward. The Taskforce has two pilot projects that we will focus on throughout the year – one uses AI tools for administrative tasks, and the other applies AI to teaching and learning.
- MECC Challenges and Restructuring update – Dr. Westover recently briefed the MECC Advisory Board on the financial and structural challenges the College has faced in recent months. She noted that these issues—common among community colleges nationwide—include declining enrollment, inflationary pressures, and stagnant state funding. Through targeted efficiencies and a realignment of programs and personnel, the approved restructuring plan will reduce recurring expenditures by more than \$2 million annually while preserving MECC's core academic and workforce missions.

As part of this restructuring, 14 employees will conclude their service with the College, and 20 employees will transition into new or redefined roles that align with the updated organizational structure. Dr. Westover emphasized the College's deep appreciation for the dedicated service and significant contributions of all affected employees, whose work has strengthened MECC and supported its mission. The restructuring plan has received full approval from the VCCS.

This transition marks the next phase of MECC's growth toward becoming a regional leader in healthcare, technology, and advanced manufacturing, ensuring the College remains a cornerstone of opportunity and innovation in Southwest Virginia. Dr. Westover also noted findings from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), highlighting that community colleges nationwide continue to operate hundreds of millions of dollars below their cost-based funding needs.

- Achieving the Dream (ATD) Initiative -Achieving the Dream has launched a grant-supported initiative to expand the use of shortened academic sessions across community colleges. MECC was selected as a grant recipient, receiving \$100,000 over four years (\$25,000 annually). Research indicates that shortened sessions can enhance student momentum, improve retention, and better support the needs of adult, working, and part-time learners.
 - Aspen Top 200 Recognition - Dr. Westover also announced that MECC has been named one of the Aspen Top 200 institutions eligible to compete for the \$1 million Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, the nation's highest recognition of two-year college achievement. Selection is based on student outcome metrics, including retention, completion, transfer success, and bachelor's degree attainment.
 - Personnel Breakdown Update - Finally, Dr. Westover reviewed the updated Personnel Breakdown. As of January 1, 2026, MECC will employ 335 individuals, down from 351 employees reported on September 1, 2025 (see Attachment 3 for details).
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Vice President, Academic Affairs and Workforce Solutions – Dr. Clint Pinion

Dr. Pinion reported on the following items:

- Program Viability Review and Discontinuance - Dr. Pinion updated the Board on the program viability review conducted as part of the College's restructuring efforts to ensure MECC remains viable and positioned to meet regional workforce needs. The review began with programs enrolling 15 or fewer students over a five-year average and graduating 10 or fewer students during that same period. From this analysis, his team identified 11 programs for discontinuance. Concurrently, the VCCS completed its annual viability review and recommended discontinuing two additional programs, bringing the total to 13 programs slated for discontinuance. Two additional programs will be paused due to their potential long-term value; additional information will be shared in the spring. Dr. Pinion noted that the 10 programs listed for discontinuance at the bottom of the report represent significantly under-enrolled, low-graduation, low-FTE programs, some with zero current enrollment. Removing these programs reduces the administrative workload associated with evaluating and assessing inactive offerings, allowing the College to focus resources on high-enrollment, high-demand programs. This work is a key component of the ongoing restructuring process.
- New Academic Structure - Dr. Pinion also discussed the new academic structure, designed to strengthen alignment across programs, enhance student pathways, and improve institutional effectiveness. Beginning January 1, 2026, the College will transition to a new structure that includes updated Schools, Divisions, and Departments, each aligned with designated academic pathways and primary points of contact.

Office of Academic, Student, and Workforce Affairs

- Dr. Clint Pinion, Jr.
 - Mrs. Angelia Reynolds

School of Arts, Sciences, and Human Services (ASHS) - Dean: Mrs. Jane Jones

- Pathways:
 - Art and Music

- Business (Exception: Paralegal Studies)
- Early Childhood Education
- Environmental Science
- Transfer Pathways

School of Information and Industrial Technologies (IIT) - **Dean: Mr. Matt Rose**

- Department:
 - Workforce Solutions
- Pathways:
 - Construction
 - Engineering (non-transfer programs)
 - Manufacturing
 - Technology

School of Health and Safety (HS) - **Dean: Mr. Wes Mullins**

- Pathways:
 - Allied Health
 - Clinical Health
 - Public Safety

Division of Student Success (SS) - **Dean: Ms. Lelia Bradshaw**

Departments:

- Admissions and Records
- Financial Aid
- Student Outreach and Success
- Student Services
- Student Support Services
- Talent Search

Library Services - **Director: Ms. Meg Wilson**

Dual Enrollment / Governor's School - **Coordinator: Mrs. Angie Lester**

Institutional Effectiveness and Research - **Coordinator: Mrs. Natasha Tabor**

Instructional Technology / SSDL - **Instructional Technologist: Mrs. Christy Lee**

Small Business Development Center - **Director: Mrs. Becki O'Quinn**

This new structure is designed to promote synergy across academic, student, and workforce initiatives by aligning related disciplines and services within integrated schools. The structure encourages collaboration among faculty, cross-disciplinary curriculum development, and greater responsiveness to regional workforce needs.

- Dr. Pinion reported that his team continues to advance the Strategic Enrollment Management Plan and noted that MECC has made the most progress among all 23 VCCS colleges. As a result, MECC has been invited to present its work to the other colleges in January.

The team has completed a kickoff session and is finalizing goals for the Plan, which focuses on underserved populations, retention strategies, and market demographics. This work aligns closely with MECC's Opportunity 2030 and Student Success goals.

- Dr. Pinion mentioned that Accessibility (digital content) work and training are still ongoing here at MECC.
- Business Partner Survey - Dr. Pinion reported that his team has developed a survey for business partners, which was piloted by the Perkins Advisory Committee. The survey is designed to identify opportunities for employer engagement with students, including work-based learning, job placements, and classroom presentations on specific careers. The survey will be rolled out more broadly in the spring with MECC's Curricular Advisory Committees.
- Student Class Schedule Preference Survey – Dr. Pinion also shared the results of a recent student survey completed by 573 respondents. Findings indicate a strong preference for online classes. Of the students surveyed, 73% were enrolled full-time; 47% were between 18 and 24 years old, while 44% were adult learners. Additionally, 71% of respondents reported being employed either full-time or part-time.

Action Item(s): See Curriculum and Student Affairs Committee below

Vice President, Financial and Administrative Services – Ms. Kristy Hall

Ms. Hall reported on the following items:

Local Funds Expenditure Report and Small Business Development Center Report – Ms. Hall reviewed these two reports with Board members for the period ending October 2025 (see Exhibit 4 for details).

Personnel Report – Dr. Westover previously reviewed this report in her updates above.

There were no questions or comments regarding the reports.

Facilities update:

- Ms. Hall reported that the Life Safety Project in Godwin Hall is expected to be completed by the end of the year.
- Phillips Taylor Roof Project – Ms. Hall reported that we are currently in the middle of replacing the roof which is expected to be completed in December. She mentioned that the Solar Roof Project for that building cannot move forward until the roof project is completed.
- The Solar Roof Project began a few weeks ago, starting with Dalton Cantrell Hall. Solar panels will be installed on all main campus buildings, with project completion anticipated in December or January.
- The Phillips/Taylor HVAC Project is expected to begin in the summer of fall of 2026. The project will require evacuating the building for approximately 1.5 to 2 years. Ms. Hall noted that the VCCS has agreed to fund the cost of a few modular units to accommodate some health science classes during this period. Additional updates will be provided as the project progresses.
- The college is currently in the process of **repurposing our old bookstore space** into an advisory center. The project has been submitted to Thompson and Litton for any work conducted, funded by the MECC Foundation.
- The Robb Hall elevator repair is expected to be completed by January.
- SIM Lab project is moving slowly through the approval process at the VCCS. We do not have an anticipated date.
- Dalton Cantrell lock project - this project is to replace the electronic lock software, which will take approximately 6-8 months. The project will not interfere with building operations and will soon be put out to bid.
- Ms. Hall reported that a survey was recently distributed to employees and students to gather input on desired food options on campus. While the College is currently hosting food trucks to provide meal options, survey respondents

expressed strong interest in reestablishing an on-campus food service similar to the former Red Fox Grill. An RFP for the Grill area is now being prepared.

Vice President of Institutional Advancement/Foundation – Dr. Amy Greear

Dr. Greear provided the following updates on behalf of the Foundation:

Dr. Greear updated Council members on the Foundation's current funding responsibilities. In the past, the Foundation covered key operational salaries, including a grant writer, but recent staff reductions and a move to an automated accounting system have shifted some operations. Operational costs are now funded by interest earned on unrestricted donations. During last month's Foundation meeting, approval was given to cover the following:

- Coordinator of Philanthropy
- Coordinator of Marketing, including salary and benefits for the marketing and communications position supervised by the VP of Institutional Advancement
- Annual marketing budget (print, radio, TV, billboards, social media, signage, and local sports sponsorships)
- Travel and related expenses for the Executive Director and Foundation staff
- Website licensing and maintenance for the MECC and Foundation sites, as well as affiliated event sites
- Salary and benefits for the College printing technician supporting College and Foundation marketing
- 40% of the VP of Institutional Advancement's salary and benefits, in alignment with SACSCOC requirements, including the advertising budget.

The total approved expenses amount to \$348,000, freeing up more unrestricted funds to support the College's operations.

- Dr. Greear also noted that discussions are underway on campus regarding the development of an Adult Promise Program.

Upcoming Events:

- MECC Winter Gala – December 6 at 6:30 p.m. in the Goodloe Center
- Planning for the 2026 John Fox, Jr. Festival – Dr. Greear noted that the upcoming year will mark the festival's 50th anniversary, and the planning team is currently considering several authors for the event.

COMMITTEE REPORTS – no reports

- Executive Committee (did not meet)
- Curriculum and Student Affairs Committee

ACTION Item(s):

- **2025–2026 Curriculum Advisory Committees Update**
The Curriculum and Student Affairs Committee presented for review and approval the revised **2025–2026 Curriculum Advisory Committee Membership**. After review, the MECC Advisory Board voted to approve the

updates as presented. Ms. Freda Starnes seconded the motion, and the motion **passed unanimously**. (Exhibit 5)

○ **Program Discontinuance Recommendations**

The Curriculum and Student Affairs Committee presented for review and approval the discontinuance of the programs listed below. As previously outlined by Dr. Pinion, these programs are being recommended for discontinuance due to **consistently low enrollment over the past five years**, with **average FTEs below 13** and **fewer than 8 graduates** during that period.

Business & Information Technology	Industrial Technology
AST – Medical Office Specialist AAS (298-02)	Smart Farming I
Clerical Assistant Certificate (218)	Smart Farming II
Legal Office Assisting Certificate (261)	Bioprocessing Operator
Medical Receptionist CSC (221-286-01)	Building Construction-Electrical Emphasis
Medical Records Technician CSC (221-285-73)	
CSS – Mobile Application Development (221-299-00)	

- After review, the MECC Advisory Board voted to approve the discontinuation of the above 10 programs. Mr. Rodney Baker seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously. (See attachments)

- Finance and Facilities Committee: (did not meet)

OLD/NEW BUSINESS - None

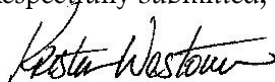
OTHER COMMENTS - None

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:46 p.m. without further discussion. The next meeting is scheduled for January 20, 2026.

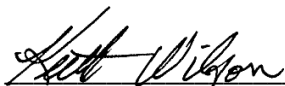
Peggy Gibson, Recorder

Respectfully Submitted,



Kristen Westover, President & Secretary to the Board

APPROVED:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Art Wilson", is written over a horizontal line.

January 20, 2026