



## *MECC Local Advisory Board*

### Meeting Minutes

*Tuesday, September 16, 2025, 4:30 p.m.*

*Kline Foundation Boardroom*

#### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

SCOTT COUNTY	WISE COUNTY	LEE COUNTY	DICKENSON CTY	NORTON
Keith Wilson	Mike Hatfield	Emily Kinser		
Rodney Baker	Kim Mullins	Kristi Taylor		
Adrienne Hood	Teresa Adkins	Scott Napier	Dana Cronkhite	

#### **MEMBERS ABSENT**

Carol Caruso (City of Norton)  
Freda Starnes (Scott)  
Gail Lunsford (Wise)

#### **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  
William Bott – Representing Faculty Senate

#### **CALL TO ORDER**

The Mountain Empire Community College Advisory Board met on Tuesday, September 16, 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. Scott Napier motioned to accept the minutes of July 15, 2025, as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Rodney Baker and passed unanimously. (**Exhibit 1**)

#### **ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS**

Mr. Wilson reported on the following information items:

- Mr. Wilson welcomed the newly appointed board member, Ms. Kim Mullins, representing Wise County.
- Mr. Wilson reviewed the 2025-2026 Board Committee Assignments with Board members and noted that committee assignments remained the same, except for the addition of our newly appointed Board members. (**Exhibit 2**).

## President's Report – Dr. Kristen Westover

Dr. Westover reported on the following items:

### Enrollment

- The Fall 2025 Preliminary Enrollment headcount is 2,121, which is the same as this point in time last year.
- The College's FTE is 1,402 compared to 1,388 last year, reflecting an increase of 1 percent. She mentioned that we have had a 7% increase in Full-time headcount compared to last year.

Dr. Westover reported that the System is up 3.7% FTE and 3.36 in headcount. There are 13 colleges in the VCCS that have experienced a 10% or greater increase in dual enrollment. MECC is holding steady in DE due to the College Career Ready Virginia (CCRV) initiative, which took effect on July 1st. This initiative requires us to create a full first-year pathway for an associate degree for students in DE at no cost to the students. She mentioned that this will impact colleges differently depending on how much of that program was already offered. MECC was already offering this pathway, which means we are not receiving any revenue for these robust pathways that we have created.

### VCCS updates:

Dr. Westover shared the Presidential Evaluation Metrics for 2025-2026. ([Exhibit 4](#)).  
Dr. Westover shared our priorities and what we will be held accountable for this year.

### 2026 Strategic Planning goal progress:

#### Overarching goal:

To award \$300,000 cumulative meaningful credentials by 2030. Degrees, diplomas, certificates, career studies certificates, and FastForward credentials awarded.

- MECC's target is 4564 credentials. In FY25, MECC awarded 4,273 credentials, so 291 additional credentials awarded is the MECC Goal for FY26.

**-Goal 1.2 – FastForward Completion Rate** – Target is 95% of FastForward course enrollments with a passing grade within 30 days of class end date.

- ⊕ MECC had 99% in FY25.

**-Goal 2.4 – Enrollment of Working-Age Adults** -Unduplicated headcount of students aged 25-65 enrolled in FastForward courses during the year.

- ⊕ MECC's goal for FY26 is 735. This is the same goal as FY25, since less funding was available for FastForward Scholarships this academic year.

**-Goal 3.1 – Faculty Professional Development** – Unduplicated count of full-time faculty participating in an approved professional development activity focused on emerging topics for student success.

- ⊕ The target goal for FY26 is to submit a list of full-time faculty and an inventory of professional development opportunities in the Fall of 2025 and Spring of 2026, to establish a baseline for the system and college.

**-Goal 3.3 – Online Availability of Uniform Certificate of General Studies (UCGS) Courses** - The goal is to define at least one online UCGS pathway that MECC offers.

- MECC has UCGS pathways in place online asynchronously and at every high school in the service region. This goal is met for Fall 2025.

**-Goal 4.3 – Front-Line Support Staff Training** – The goal for FY26 is to submit a list of front-line staff identified based on systemwide definitions and participate in professional development related to financial resources for student as well as an inventory of professional development opportunities in Fall 2025 and Spring 2026.

- Professional development will only be counted if they are institutionally driven and awarded. The digital accessibility training offered during our Fall In-service will count toward professional development for faculty and staff. There are some specific ones that our Financial Aid staff will participate in, which our System Office will deliver.

## Other Updates

- Dr. Westover reviewed her current community involvement with Board members, including a list of internal and external activities from July 16 to September 16, 2025. (**Exhibit 3**).
- MECC's AI Taskforce** - Dr. Westover reported that MECC conducted its first meeting of the AI Taskforce:  
**Mission Statement:** At MECC, we believe in the responsible and innovative use of artificial intelligence to enhance teaching, learning, and operations. Our mission is to guide the ethical integration of AI into campus life by shaping policy, fostering transparency, and equipping faculty, staff, and students with the tools to thrive in an AI-enhanced world. Through collaboration and curiosity, we aim to prepare graduates who are informed, adaptable, and ready to lead an increasingly AI-driven society.  
The Taskforce has two pilot projects that we will focus on throughout the year – one is administratively focused on utilizing AI tools in administrative tasks, and the other is on applying AI in teaching and learning.
- “One System”** - The VCCS has shared a draft vision statement concerning the “one system” approach to our work. The statement is in early draft stages, and Dr. Westover will share it once it is finalized.
- MECC Challenges** - Dr. Westover recently shared with the MECC Advisory Board via email some of the financial challenges that MECC is facing within the next couple of months. She mentioned that these challenges are not only financial in nature but also structural, and they directly affect our ability to serve students and support the economic vitality of our region.

Over the past decade, MECC has steadily increased the percentage of dual-enrolled students, with that growth accelerating significantly in the post-pandemic period. While this expansion has opened doors for many high school students, it has also placed a growing strain on our financial model. For years, MECC offered dual enrollment at a discounted rate of 20% of full tuition. We recognized that this rate was unsustainable, but as the College and Career Ready Virginia (CCRV) legislation moved through the General Assembly, we held off on making changes in the hope that the state would fund the mandate. Unfortunately, CCRV was enacted without funding, and MECC has been forced to offer the first year of an associate degree at no cost and to maintain the current 20% rate for any dual enrollment course taken outside the UCGS pathway (the first year of an associate degree).

The financial impact of this policy has been significant. Although our enrollment has remained steady, regular enrollment has been steadily decreasing while dual enrollment has steadily increased. MECC has experienced a \$2.5 million reduction in tuition revenue due to the loss of tuition for CCRV participants and dual enrollment. At the same time, inflation has driven up the cost of instructional materials, equipment, and utilities, while state funding and tuition increases have not kept pace with mandated bonuses or infrastructure needs.

These pressures have resulted in a significant projected budget shortfall for the current fiscal year. While pandemic relief funds helped bridge gaps in the past, those resources are now depleted.

Approximately 87% of MECC's budget is dedicated to employee payroll, which means that any meaningful cost reductions will inevitably impact staffing and the services provided. We are committed to approaching this situation with transparency, fairness, and a deep respect for the people who make our mission possible. No decisions have been made yet, but we are preparing for difficult conversations and thoughtful planning to ensure the college's long-term sustainability.

While the challenges we face are real and complex, they are not insurmountable. MECC has a long history of adapting with resilience, creativity, and a deep commitment to student success. By working together, with transparency, shared purpose, and a focus on solutions, we can continue to serve our region with excellence. Our mission remains unchanged, and our collective efforts will ensure that MECC remains a vital force for education and opportunity in Southwest Virginia. MECC plans to operate with a reduction. Dr. Westover will keep the Board informed about the implementation of the plan, which is expected to be complete and approved by the VCCS State Board by the end of November.

#### Vice President, Academic Affairs and Workforce Solutions – Dr. Clint Pinion

Dr. Pinion reported on the following items:

- Welcome Week Update – Dr. Pinion reported that MECC's Welcome Week was a success and provided a positive experience for our students.
- Honors Program: Dr. Pinion reported that MECC has been awarded \$1 million from the Anne & Gene Worrell Foundation to support the launch of the new MECC Honors Program. Mr. Derek Bryant will serve as the program coordinator and will focus on developing recruitment processes, establishing honors student requirements, and building partnerships with other institutions. The goal is to begin recruiting the first cohort of students in the spring. Participants in the program will have opportunities to engage in research, faculty mentorship, service projects, and cultural experiences, including international travel.
- SACSCOC – The SACSCOC year-end report has been submitted and is awaiting feedback. The initial meeting with the new SACSCOC president went very well.
- MECC will continue to expand its partnership with Flatwoods Job Corps to include programs in Industrial Technology and Health Sciences.
- Standard Operating Procedures – The committee has identified 160 critical day-to-day operating procedures to be developed this year and reported that 64 have already been completed.
- Strategic Enrollment Management Plan – Dr. Pinion shared that this System initiative, scheduled to launch in October, will examine underserved populations, retention strategies, and market demographics. The work will align with Opportunity 2030 and Student Success goals focused on FTE growth, retention, and student achievement.
- In addition to Dr. Westover's report on dual enrollment, Dr. Pinion shared that each high school has an approved UCGS outlining the General Education courses offered at no cost. Two meeting sessions were held with Superintendents, Guidance Counselors, and Principals to review these plans, and all schools have signed their MOUs/contracts.
- SCHEV V-TOP vision grant update (work-based learning) – The College received a \$25,000 award. Funds will be used to hold sessions with our Curricular Advisory Committees and Perkins Committee—which include business partners, administrative staff, and faculty—to identify the most effective use of these funds.

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** – Ms. Hall reviewed the Local Funds Expenditure Report with Board members for the period ending August 31, 2025 (see Exhibit 5 for details). She noted that, to date, there have been few expenses and that the Small Business Development Center budget is now reported separately.

**Personnel Report** – Ms. Hall reviewed the personnel report through September 2025 (See Exhibit 6 with details)

There were no questions or comments regarding the reports.

**Facilities update:**

- Ms. Hall reported that the **Life Safety Project** in Godwin Hall is in its final stages. The generator will be permanently installed behind Godwin Hall. Due to crane issues, the installation was delayed but is scheduled to proceed this Friday, requiring a temporary building evacuation.
- The **Solar Roof Project** began this week, starting with Dalton Cantrell Hall. Solar panels will be installed on all main campus buildings, with project completion anticipated in December.
- The **Phillips/Taylor HVAC Project** is currently under review and is expected to begin in the summer 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.

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

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

- This year, the MECC Foundation brought in \$1.59 million in revenue as of today, compared to \$1.1 million at this date in 2024. Our endowment is valued at \$44.4 million. For comparison, the endowment was at \$39 million at the beginning of the year and \$27 million in 2018.
- **Scholarships:**
  - Anne and Katherine Riggs Memorial Scholarship benefiting our CDL Program
  - Suzi Cassell Memorial Endowed Scholarship
  - Big Stone Gap High School Class of 1959 Endowed Scholarship
  - FA Davis Annual Scholarship
- **Amphitheater Update**

Throughout the summer, the Amphitheater committee has had multiple meetings with our design team from Hurt & Proffit and the VCCS. Based on construction and excavation costs at the chosen site location (outside Phillips Taylor Hall), it appears that we will need to present a scaled-down version of the amphitheater design to the Foundation board at their meeting in late October.
- The college has administered approximately \$435,000 in scholarship awards so far this academic year, with plans to award more than \$1 million by the end of the academic year.

**Grant updates:**

- The Foundation has applied for and received approximately \$2.5M in grants for 2025 to include:
  - ARC Grant for \$491,000 for Project Soar. The SOAR program addresses a critical need to expand the past work of Project Amelioration by offering training opportunities to individuals who are housed in newly opened recovery facilities in Lee and Dickenson County, which include the Higher Ground Women's Recovery Residence in Lee County, Va., and those living and being served in the new and soon to be open Dickenson County Recovery Center, Wildwood Recovery Center, and Wildwood Wellness Center located in

Dickenson County, Va. Project SOAR would also expand services to individuals who are in recovery and who are incarcerated on-site at the Wise Correctional Unit 18 in Wise County, Va. In addition, Project Soar would also be expanded to offer training for the first time at a location in Scott County, Va. Training would be provided in high-demand skill fields, including carpentry, electrical, plumbing, and welding.

- Rapha Foundation – middle school coding camp, nursing study for the wellbeing of graduates in the field for UVA Wise and MECC, and simulation lab technology upgrades
- Anne & Gene Worrell Foundation – Honors Program and Retention Specialist
- ODP has generously provided funding for Home Craft Days as well as our Power Lineman program.

#### **Upcoming events:**

- The Home Craft Days breakfast event for donors and community supporters will be held on Saturday, October 18. Board members will be sent an invitation and encouraged to RSVP if they plan to attend. Dr. Greear also mentioned that HCD items, such as t-shirts, etc., can be preordered through the college's website.
- The HCD concert is scheduled for Friday, October 17<sup>th</sup>, at 6:00 p.m. in the Goodloe Center.
- The Foundation's Winter Gala is scheduled for Saturday, December 5. Additional information will be forthcoming.

#### **COMMITTEE REPORTS – no reports**

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

#### **ACTION Item(s):**

- 2025-2026 Curriculum Advisory Committees – The Curriculum and Student Affairs Committee presented for review and approval the 2025-2026 Curriculum Advisory Committee Membership, which is updated each year. After review, the MECC Advisory Board voted to approve these updates/changes as presented, and the motion passed unanimously. (**Exhibit 7**)
- The Curriculum and Student Affairs Committee presented for review and approval the following:
  - **New Program:**
    - a. Criminal Justice (AAS)  
Purpose: The Criminal Justice degree aims to prepare individuals for careers in criminal justice and related occupations. It is not designed to train for any specialty, but rather to provide a broad foundation. Through a combination of didactic and hands-on experiences, this program equips students with the knowledge and skills to enter any of the many criminal justice fields.
    - b. Advanced Science – Career Studies Certificate (CSC)  
Purpose: The Advanced Science program is designed for those individuals interested in pursuing a career in health professions. This program will enable students interested in healthcare professions to acquire advanced preparation for the healthcare field and fulfill undergraduate requirements for many advanced healthcare programs.
  - **Program Discontinuance**
    - a. Police Science – Discontinuance is due to a program name change only. Criminal Justice will now replace Police Science (name only), and the curriculum will stay the same.
- After review, the MECC Advisory Board voted to approve these updates/changes as presented, and the motion passed unanimously. (**Exhibit 8, 9, 10**)
- **Finance and Facilities Committee: (did not meet)**

OLD/NEW BUSINESS - None

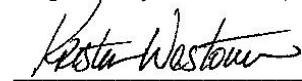
OTHER COMMENTS - None

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:42 p.m. without further discussion. The next meeting is scheduled for November 18, 2025.

Peggy Gibson, Recorder

Respectfully Submitted,



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Kristen Westover, President & Secretary to the Board

APPROVED:



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November 18, 2025