

The Board of Trustees of the Howard County Junior College District met for a special meeting in Room 5 of the Lamesa Campus at Howard College in Lamesa on Monday, October 7, 2024.

The following members of the Board and District Administration were present:

Dr. John Freeman, Chairman
Maxwell Barr, Vice-Chairman
Adrian Calvio, Secretary (via Zoom)
Dr. Marisha Beck
Ben Zeichick

Dr. Cheryl T. Sparks, Ed.D., President
Dr. Amy Burchett, Ed.D., Executive Vice-President
Pam Callan, Provost, San Angelo
Monica Castro, Executive Dean, Lamesa
Luci Gabehart, Dean of Instruction, Big Spring
Brad Keller, Chief Institutional Research Officer
Laurie Kincannon, Chief Human Resources Officer
Dr. Brenda Madore, Ed.D., Chief of Staff/Institutional Advancement Officer - recorder
Fabian Serrano, Chief Operations and Safety/Security Officer
Cindy Smith, Chief Student Success/Public Information Officer
Steve Smith, Chief Business Officer/Internal Auditor

Others present were:

Jessica Chavera, Academic Advisor/Student Success Specialist
Michael Contreras, Director of Library Services
Kloee Fairchild, Howard College Student
John Grove, EMS Instructor
Heidi Martinez, Speech Instructor
Ashtin Sifuentes, Lamesa Site Assistant
Homer Stewart, Division Director, San Angelo Campus
Shannon Stuteville, Executive Assistant to the President

Special guests present:

Dora Armendariz, Lamesa Chamber of Commerce
Julie Arredondo, Medical Arts Hospital and Howard College Alumnus
Bryant Busby, EMT Instructor, Medical Arts Hospital
Mona Ferguson, Executive Director, Lamesa EDC
Bobby Gonzalez, LEDC/LEAP President, Lamesa City Council
Joe Hines, City Manager, City of Lamesa
Angie Hernandez, Lamesa EDC
Angela Martinez, Director, Dawson County Library
Freddy Olivarez, CEO, Medical Arts Hospital
Belen Olvera, Lamesa ISD and Howard College Alumnus
Randall Presley, Guest
Abigail Presley, Guest
Karen Presley, Guest
David Ritchey, Superintendent, Lamesa ISD
Carter T. Schildknecht, District Judge retired
Daylan Sellers, Seagraves ISD
Delia Rodriguez, Dawson County Public Library

Prior to the start of the meeting trustees, administration, and special guests participated in a short tour of the Lamesa campus.

After a short break for lunch, trustees convened for the special meeting.

Chairman Dr. John Freeman called the meeting to order at 12:18 p.m. The meeting was open to the public in Room 5. Due to technical difficulties, the meeting was not recorded. Minutes will be available on the website. Mr. Barr led the invocation.

Next, Dr. Sparks recognized the guests present. She asked board members to introduce themselves. This was followed by introductions of those in the room with their respective roles at Howard College and in the Lamesa community.

Next, Dr. Sparks provided an overview of the focused meeting's purpose, referencing the self-evaluation completed by the Board in strategic planning in 2023. During that planning, they determined to increase the Board's presence at each of the four campuses in the district. Dr. Sparks explained that the meeting held today would provide a focus on the Lamesa campus, its students, and operations. However, since the Lamesa campus is not located within the taxing district, the Board would not conduct any regular business.

Trustees moved to New Business, President's Report.

Next, Dr. Sparks discussed a resolution passed at the meeting held on September 23, 2024, expressing gratitude to Medical Arts Hospital for their part in the development of and support of students in the EMS program. Dr. Sparks proceeded to read the resolution, which specifically named several leaders and educators. Following this, a framed copy of the resolution was presented to representatives, and Dr. Sparks gave each a signature Howard College dark chocolate bar.

Next, Dr. Sparks discussed the sad passing of Naomi Presley this past summer. Naomi was an important person not only to Howard College in Lamesa but to the entire community. Dr. Sparks then announced that in Naomi's honor, the Board had approved changing the name of the Lamesa General Scholarship to the Naomi Presley Memorial Scholarship. She then asked the Presley family members who were present in the audience to come forward and be recognized. They were presented with a dark chocolate bar.

Next, Trustees moved to Visioning/Future Directions.

Next, Monica Castro, Executive Dean of the Lamesa campus, delivered the State of the Lamesa Campus address. She expressed her gratitude to the Board of Trustees and attendees for their participation and provided an overview of key activities and updates related to the Howard College Lamesa campus.

Monica introduced the Lamesa campus support staff and Student Government Association members who were in attendance. She recognized the significant contributions of Naomi Presley, who taught ENGL 1301, ENGL 1302, and GED courses. Naomi was known for her dedication to her students, always going above and beyond, and taking pride in their successes. Monica thanked the Presley family for sharing Naomi with Howard College.

Monica acknowledged the long-standing support from Dawson County and the local community, noting that Howard College has been part of the community since 1972. She highlighted the county's generosity in providing the campus building, covering utilities, and funding necessary repairs over the years.

She explained the ongoing partnership with Lamesa High School, emphasizing their collaboration as the school works toward becoming a Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH).

To increase enrollment, Monica detailed efforts to raise awareness of the FAST program, which benefits dual credit high school students. An advisor from Lamesa has already visited both Lamesa and Grady High Schools and met with several students. Later this semester, advisors will speak to freshmen and sophomores about the advantages of dual credit courses and attending Howard College after graduation.

Monica shared recent marketing efforts in collaboration with the Howard College Marketing Department to boost campus visibility and enrollment. Initiatives include increased activity on the Lamesa campus Facebook page, an ad in the Lamesa High School football program, and ads in the local newspaper. She thanked Lamesa ISD and the Chamber of Commerce for including Howard College links on their websites and acknowledged City Manager Joe Hines for featuring Howard College in the newly released City of Lamesa video.

Another strategy for increasing enrollment is the introduction of evening distance learning courses, planned for Fall 2025.

Monica reported that enrollment for the Fall 2024 semester has increased by 14%, adding 17 students for a total of 134.

For the first time in several years, a CNA evening class was offered, beginning on October 1 with nine students. This success followed substantial recruitment efforts.

She emphasized the campus's continued commitment to providing student services such as tutoring, advising, and access to online tutoring. The library offers laptops for student checkout and maintains a small on-site collection, supported by librarians from the Big Spring campus.

The campus has also hosted various student activities, including a movie night at the local theater and a Taco Tuesday/Lotería event in celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month. The Student Government group remains highly active.

Over the past decade, there has been a steady increase in the number of students completing their associate degrees, many of whom go on to further their education and return to contribute to the Lamesa community.

Monica highlighted the success of the partnership with Texas Tech University's Tech Teach program.

She concluded by reporting on recent campus updates, including the installation of LED lighting in Room 5 and an upcoming facelift for the front vestibule.

Next, Monica introduced Lamesa graduate Belen Olvera, who had taken dual credit courses in high school before returning to Howard College several years later as a non-traditional student. Belen then shared her inspiring story with the attendees. Belen's story began in 2010 when she graduated from high school with plans to attend Midland College and pursue a degree in radiology. However, life took a different turn. By 2013, she was living at home, feeling like she had let her family down. She was working weekends and holidays, had bought a house, and gotten married. Yet, she knew she didn't want to continue down this path indefinitely. That's when she reached out to Monica for advising and support, including tutoring in math. By 2018, Belen had earned her associate degree.

With a desire to be at home when her children were, Belen came across an ad for the Tech Teach program, which offered a shorter time frame for completing her degree. She reached out to Monica again, and with Monica's help, Belen connected with Texas Tech to join the first-ever Tech Teach cohort in Lamesa. She described how she and her peers, who would carpool and study together during the program, formed a close-knit group. The year was intense—"fast and furious," as she called it—balancing full-time school, family, and work, but she had the support of both her family and the Lamesa staff. Today, all three members of her cohort work for Lamesa ISD, and one of her colleagues even won Teacher of the Year last year.

Belen shared how the program gave them the tools they needed to succeed as teachers and reflected on how it led her to realize that she was, in her words, "a pretty good teacher." Working in Lamesa, she saw firsthand the economic challenges her students faced, which motivated her to think deeply about how she could help. She became passionate about addressing not just academic but also social and emotional needs, leading her to pursue her master's degree in counseling. She now works as a 2nd-grade teacher for Lamesa ISD, where she continues to make a difference in the lives of students.

Next, Monica introduced Julie Arredondo, a student who had taken courses for a couple of semesters before stepping away from school for a few years. Julie eventually returned to Howard College, set her course, and graduated in the Spring of 2015 with an Associate of Science in General Studies, earning Ampla Cum Laude honors. She went on to complete a bachelor's degree in business administration with a focus on Accounting at Texas Tech and is set to begin a master's program at Texas A & M this semester.

Julie shared her story, explaining that she always had a natural talent for finance, despite initially planning to pursue a career in nursing. "My mom only went to kindergarten, and my dad through the 7th grade," she noted. Julie's path to higher education wasn't linear. She enrolled at Howard College with plans to study nursing, but life took an unexpected turn when her mother became ill when Julie was 19. This forced her to put her education on hold to care for her mother, driving back and forth to Big Spring for treatments.

During this time, she realized that healthcare wasn't the career path for her. "I knew I didn't want to do that kind of health care," she said. When she was ready to return to school, Julie reached out to Monica for guidance. Howard

College was not only local but also affordable, a key factor for Julie as a young mother with a 1-year-old son (who is now 12). While her mother was in dialysis, Julie took advantage of the time to study in the library at Howard College's Big Spring campus.

Julie did everything she could at the Lamesa campus before transferring to Texas Tech to complete her bachelor's degree. Monica was instrumental in helping her prepare her application and connecting her with the right people to ensure a smooth transfer process. Julie expressed her deep gratitude for Monica's support throughout her journey, which ultimately led her to pursue her goals in finance and healthcare administration.

Julie emphasized the support she received from the community, sharing her message of empowerment. "You can look like me and still be successful," she said, encouraging others to consider community college as a steppingstone before transferring to a university. She credited Howard College in Lamesa, Big Spring, and San Angelo with giving her the foundation to succeed while allowing her to save money and stay close to her family during a challenging time.


Next, continuing with the Lamesa campus focus and in alignment with Board strategic priorities, Dr. Sparks reviewed the most recent Lamesa Student Roundtable results. She gave Trustees background information on student roundtable procedures and the care that is taken to respond in a timely way to student comments and concerns. She then discussed specific comments brought up by students at the Lamesa campus.

Next, Dr. Sparks gave an update on the 2024 Facilities Master Plan and shared specific activities already underway related to the Lamesa campus. She began with a brief overview of the development of the Master Plan and the history of its use. She then discussed the phases of the 20-year plan and the particular goals that had been set for the Lamesa campus.

There being no other business, Trustees adjourned at 1:24 p.m.



Dr. John Freeman, Chairman



Adrian Calvio, Secretary
By Brenda Madore