

The Board of Trustees of the Howard County Junior College District met for a regular meeting in the Board Room of the Student Union Building on the Big Spring campus on Monday, November 18, 2024.

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

Dr. John Freeman, Chairman  
Maxwell Barr, Vice-Chairman  
Adrian Calvio, Secretary (Executive Session and tour in person, Zoom for Regular Meeting)  
Dr. Marisha Beck  
Mark Morgan  
Ben Zeichick

Dr. Cheryl T. Sparks, Ed.D., President  
Dr. Amy Burchett, Ed.D., Executive Vice-President  
Jeff Anderson, Provost, SWCD  
Pam Callan, Provost, San Angelo  
Monica Castro, Executive Dean, Lamesa  
Brenda Claxton, Chief Fiscal Officer/Controller  
Eric Hansen, Chief Technology Systems/Data Security Officer (by phone)  
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:

Stephanie Bissonette, Interpreter  
Jared Champion, Assistant Men's Basketball Coach  
Kyle Cooper, Athletic Director/Head Men's Basketball Coach  
Ricky Creswell, Security  
Al Davis, Women's Head Basketball Coach  
Jeri Farmer, Associate Professor/Dental Hygiene  
Christi Fenter, Dean of Student Services  
Luci Gabehart, Dean of Health Professions  
Karina Gee, Assistant Women's Basketball Coach  
John Grove, Program Chair EMS  
Alex Havlicek, Assistant Baseball Coach  
Justin Jenkins, Head Rodeo Coach  
Dr. Amber Kelly, SACSCOC Liaison  
Taylor Lavery, Men's Assistant Basketball Coach  
Eddie Levins, Adjunct Instructor, Health Professions  
Dee Lindsey, Campus Dean of Workforce Development  
Ashley Lopez, Head Softball Coach  
Amanda Macer, Program Chair, Veterinary Technician Program  
Rene Porter, Interpreter  
John Sharp, Assistant Rodeo Coach  
Trevin Sonnier, Head Baseball Coach  
Shannon Stuteville, Executive Assistant to the President  
Mick Sudano, District Website Administrator/Director of Marketing for the Big Spring Area  
Shane Taiclet, District Director of Administrative Services  
Kelby Vise, Campus Dean of Arts and Sciences  
Shayna Wimberly, Big Spring campus student

The Board of Trustees of the Howard County Junior College District met for an Executive Session and Regular Meeting in the Board Room of the Student Union Building at Howard College on Monday, November 18, 2024.

Chairman Dr. John Freeman called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. Immediately after calling the meeting to order, the Board moved into Executive Session to discuss personnel matters. The regular meeting was open to the public in the Board Room on the Big Spring Campus and through remote connection utilizing a toll-free number. The meeting was recorded and will be available on the website. Minutes will also be available on the website. Upon conclusion of the Executive Session at 10:23 a.m., the Board recessed for a tour of areas of the Big Spring campus.

As part of this focused meeting's purpose, trustees, administration, and special guests participated in a tour with commentary being provided by Dr. Sparks and others along the way. Starting at the McKinney Center, they proceeded to the Baseball Field to observe the condition of the fence and field overall. They then visited a room of the Men's Dorm as well as the lobby. The bus then picked them up and proceeded to the Rodeo grounds, passing by the Softball Field House along the way. Afterward, they returned to Old Main for a stop at the Hawk Good Life Center.

The Board then returned to the Student Union Building for lunch.

Dr. Freeman reconvened the meeting at 12:33 p.m. Mr. Barr led the invocation.

Next, Dr. Freeman welcomed the many guests in attendance.

Next, Dr. Sparks provided an overview of the history and purpose of focused meetings, referencing the Board's strategic planning self-evaluation from 2023, during which the Board committed to increasing its presence across the district's four campuses. Dr. Sparks explained that today's meeting was focused on the Big Spring campus, its students, and operations. As the Big Spring Campus is located within the taxing district, the Board would also conduct regular business.

Dr. Freeman welcomed any communication to the Board but there was no one in attendance to provide comments.

Next, Trustees considered routine matters including the minutes from the October 21, 2024; Regular Meeting held at SWCD as part of the focused meeting series; the checklist for October 2024; personnel matters; an internal audit report. Mr. Morgan made a motion to approve the routine matters. Mr. Barr seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Trustees then moved to New Business.

- Next, Dr. Amy Burchett, Executive Vice President, led the State of the Big Spring Campus report. She began by inviting Cindy Smith to present the coaching staff for each athletic team. Each head coach then introduced their assistant coaches and provided updates on their teams:  
Kyle Cooper, head men's basketball coach, introduced his assistant coaches and highlighted the team's progress. The men's basketball team started the season with a 5-1 record and was undefeated until last weekend. They are nationally ranked, and Kyle expressed pride in his players, noting their ability to represent the community well. Over the past two years, 10 players have moved on to Division 1 basketball. Kyle shared that the team is feeling confident about the upcoming season.
- Trevin Sonnier, head baseball coach, introduced his assistants, both of whom are former Howard College players. While currently in the offseason, Trevin expressed optimism for the upcoming year and commended the team's strong academic performance. He emphasized the goal of advancing to the national tournament in Grand Junction.

- Al Davis, head women's basketball coach, introduced his assistant coach, Karina Gee. They both recently joined the Howard College Coaching staff from Eastern Oklahoma State College. The women's basketball team has a 4-3 record and is playing an up-tempo, fast-paced style this year. Al praised the warm welcome from the community and emphasized their academic success, with all players maintaining a high GPA.
- Justin Jenkins, head rodeo coach, introduced his new assistant, John Sharp, and provided an update on the rodeo team. Now in his third year, Justin shared that the fall season recently concluded, with five more rodeos scheduled for the spring. Two team members are currently on track to qualify for the College National Finals Rodeo, with others making individual finals. He expressed excitement for the spring semester and noted that the team will continue practicing throughout the winter.
- Ashley Lopez, head softball coach and previous member of the program, shared that she is in her fifth year leading the program. The new Assistant Coach, Kirsten Martinez, also a previous player, was working with a student. The team recently completed their fall season, facing challenges but also gaining valuable experience by competing against Division 1 and other strong opponents.

Dr. Burchett introduced Dee Lindsey, Dean of Workforce Development, who provided a brief update on the recent industry luncheon held on the Big Spring campus. Dee reported that the event was a success and well attended by industry partners. Attendees offered valuable input on a variety of topics, and an action plan is being developed in response to their feedback.

Finally, Dr. Burchett introduced Kelby Vise, Big Spring Campus Dean of Arts and Sciences, who welcomed Amanda Macer, the new Program Chair for the recently launched Vet Tech program. Dr. Sparks shared with Trustees that finding Amanda took some time and expressed excitement about the program's launch and its future potential.

Next, Dr. Burchett introduced the Spotlight Student, Shayna Wimberly, a standout member of the Howard College rodeo team. Originally from Arizona, Shayna embodies the spirit of a great Hawk. Described as enthusiastic, eager to learn, and wonderful to have in class, she is an all-around exceptional student. Shayna came to Howard College on a full scholarship and chose the college partly because her grandparents live nearby.

Shayna plans to pursue a career in accounting and intends to transfer to Angelo State University after completing her studies at Howard. Beyond her academic ambitions, Shayna is passionate about rodeo. Coach John Sharp highlighted her as a driven and focused team member who always supports her teammates and contributes to the family-like atmosphere of the rodeo team.

Next, Dr. Sparks continued the Big Spring campus focus by presenting the latest results from the Big Spring Campus Student Roundtable, aligning with the Board's strategic priorities. She provided an overview of the roundtable process, explaining how student feedback is gathered, managed, and addressed.

Dr. Sparks highlighted that the recent roundtable included a large diverse group of students, fostering rich discussions on various topics. A major focus was the residence halls, with feedback ranging from straightforward fixes to more complex, long-term concerns. Dr. Sparks emphasized the need for ongoing conversations about the future of the dorms.

Other feedback topics included building and grounds improvements, such as the softball field house, and suggestions from the Student Government Association (SGA). Students also shared appreciation for Howard College professors, giving them a round of applause at the Roundtable.

Additional areas of interest included:

- Athletics: Requests for an additional trainer and concerns about the basketball locker room being too warm.
- Food Service: Students noted water spots on the silverware, which Dr. Sparks explained was due to the high mineral content in the water in the area.

Dr. Sparks noted the high engagement and attendance at the Roundtable, with a full room of participants contributing to the valuable discussions.

Next, Dr. Sparks provided an update on the 2024 Facilities Master Plan (FMP), outlining ongoing and planned projects for the Big Spring Campus. She reviewed the development of the FMP, its historical context, and its phased structure, which divides improvements into five-year segments. Key areas of focus included the McKinney Center, the dorms, and the baseball field.

#### *Baseball Field and Dorm Updates*

Dr. Sparks addressed immediate needs regarding the baseball field, noting safety concerns with the fencing. Approximately \$30,000 has already been spent on the field to meet conference guidelines concerning dugouts, but further investment raises questions about long-term plans. The original FMP proposed relocating the baseball field near the softball field to free up space for new dorms in its current location. However, construction of new dorms is also pressing, as the last major updates occurred approximately 15 years ago.

The estimated costs for these projects are significant:

Dorm construction: \$11 million

Baseball field demolition, construction, and relocation: \$4 million

Dr. Sparks emphasized that the FMP was a beginning point. Decisions need to be made, particularly as existing dorms are in poor condition and students find them too small and outdated. Moving the dorms to the center of campus remains a consideration, but the current plan would necessitate relocating the baseball field.

#### *Trustee Input and Discussion*

The trustees engaged in a thoughtful discussion about the relationship between the dorm and baseball field projects. Concerns about security if women's dorms were placed where the baseball field currently stands were discussed and alternative locations that could be considered, which would decouple the dorm and baseball field plans were suggested. This approach would allow the baseball field to remain in its current location temporarily while addressing the dorm project independently.

Trustees discussed the advantages of moving the baseball field as originally planned to create a unified dorm area at the center of campus. Highlights of consolidating the dorms in a central location would align with long-term strategic goals and could enhance the student experience.

The conversation reflected the complexity of balancing immediate needs with long-term planning and fiscal unknowns, as well as the importance of community and student input in making these decisions with Board input. Dr. Sparks emphasized the necessity of accurate cost estimates and infrastructure considerations to help the Board reach a well-informed consensus.

#### *General Obligation Bond and Revenue Bond Considerations*

The meeting included a discussion of funding options for upcoming projects in the Facilities Master Plan (FMP), including the nearing completion of a \$21.6 million General Obligation Bond, which will be paid off a year early due to prudent financial management. Dr. Sparks suggested exploring a new General Obligation Bond to maintain current tax rates while addressing campus improvement needs, citing infrastructure needs that are a continual priority as well as the increasing need to address the Student Union Building (SUB). Revenue bonds, typically funded through student fees, were also discussed, with the

acknowledgment that dorm scholarships impact institutional costs making that fact a consideration for the residence hall revenue bond repayment. A revenue bond would be the source of funding for dorms.

#### *McKinney Center and Phase 1 Updates*

Dr. Sparks identified the McKinney Center renovation project as currently listed in Phase 2 of the FMP, but emphasizing the need to start planning renovations and moving the project to Phase 1 given the building's current state. Potential funding for the project using oil revenues has accumulated \$1.6 million and continues to increase, but more planning and collaboration, potentially with local school districts, will be required to define its future use.

#### *Next Steps*

To prepare the Board for decision-making, Dr. Sparks concluded by highlighting the plan to obtain firm pricing, options, and cost analyses for all projects. She and her team will work on developing clear proposals and financial strategies to address these pressing campus needs. The Board will continue discussions on project priorities, funding options, and long-term infrastructure planning.

Next, Trustees considered a resolution thanking Economic Mobility Systems, Ascendium, and the Greater Texas Foundation for their assistance in developing, assisting with funding, and implementing the Open Roads Promise program. Mr. Morgan made a motion to approve the resolution as presented. Mr. Barr seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Dr. Sparks reminded Trustees that in October, the Appraisal District received only one nomination to replace the board seat vacated by Noel Hoff, and that nominee was deemed ineligible. The district then extended the nomination period by 45 days. Trustees decided to pass on nominating anyone to the board.

Next, the Board considered affirming an Interlocal Cooperation Contract between Angelo State University and Howard College regarding the use of Angelo State's Regional Security Operations Center (RSOC) services.

Dr. Sparks explained that the agreement, which has already been signed since there was no cost, allows Howard College to benefit from state-funded services provided by the RSOC. These services include ransomware protection and network monitoring at no cost to Howard College.

Dr. Sparks noted the urgency of the decision, as the signing window occurred two weeks prior, and moving forward promptly was in the college's best interest. The partnership ensures enhanced cybersecurity measures for the institution without additional financial burden. Mr. Barr made a motion to affirm the action. Mr. Morgan seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Trustees moved to Performance Measures/Outcomes.

Next, Trustees considered the Small Class Report. This report to the board is required each semester. Mr. Zeichick made a motion to approve the Small Class Report as presented. Mr. Barr seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Dr. Amber Kelly provided a PowerPoint presentation on SACSCOC Student Achievement Data (8.1) as part of Howard College's annual efforts to meet that guideline and in the preparation for Howard College's reaffirmation of accreditation.

Dr. Kelly emphasized the importance and challenges of meeting this standard, noting that 51% of institutions seeking reaffirmation last year did not meet it. She began by reading the standard and explained how Howard College has aligned its strategic priorities with student achievement metrics.

Key points from the presentation included:

- **Thresholds and Goals:** The college established its own baseline thresholds and added percentage increases to set achievement goals.
- **Completion Rates:** Tracking students who complete a degree or credential within 150% of the standard time frame, focusing on degree- and certificate-seeking students using National Center for Education Statistics (IPEDS) data.
- **Persistence and Transfer Rates:** Discussed the percentage of students who persist and transfer to four-year institutions. Trustee Zeichick questioned whether the transfer goal for SWCD was realistic. Dr. Sparks responded, noting that the small cohort size allows focused support, making the goal achievable.
- **Completion of College-Level Courses:** Data shows signs of recovery from COVID-19 impacts.
- **Licensure Pass Rates:** Nursing and Health Professions programs pass rates are exceptionally high, while other areas face challenges.
- **Job Placement Rates:** Gathering accurate data remains difficult, but the college is making efforts to address this.

Dr. Kelly then highlighted initiatives inspired by data insights to change results, including holistic advising, DREAMS Week, Pathways work, automatic graduation processes, and the expansion of mental health services. She closed on a hopeful note, emphasizing the college's commitment to continuous improvement, even when goals are met.

Next, under Performance Excellence, Trustees considered the Quarterly and Annual Investment Reports. Mr. Zeichick made a motion to approve both reports as presented. Mr. Barr seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, under Monitoring, Trustees considered a quote for Desk Top All-In-One Computers. Mr. Barr made a motion to approve the quote as presented. Mr. Morgan seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, the Trustees considered a quote for an Audio Visual (AV) Upgrade for the Board Room and Tumbleweed Room.

Dr. Sparks explained that with the discontinuation of the AT&T conference line option, there was a need to evaluate how to best accommodate both trustees and the audience for meetings. Zoom has been a helpful tool for remote attendance, but with the phasing out of the AT&T conference line, alternative solutions need to be found.

Dr. Sparks noted the challenges with audio and visual clarity for those attending meetings remotely and in-person. One potential option was to move board meetings to the Cactus Room; however, this would still require additional upgrades to ensure adequate technology and seating. The Trustees reviewed the Taurus proposal for the AV upgrade, which aims to improve the overall experience for both trustees and the public. Mr. Barr made a motion to move forward with the upgrades as presented. Mr. Morgan seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, the Trustees considered affirming payment of the cost for emergency cleanup services related to the hot water storage tank leak in the Coliseum that occurred the previous week. The cleanup cost was approximately \$118,000 and insurance will cover part of that cost.

Dr. Sparks provided an update on the ongoing cleanup efforts. Fortunately, both the Sonic and Harold Davis Court floors were unaffected as the water did not reach the wood, and they were able to salvage the Harold Davis Court and other areas of the floor. The water had seeped from the hot water storage tank. Cameras helped identify the source of the leak.

The hot water storage tank was removed since a large hot water heater remains and teams choose to shower later. The cleanup team worked to extract as much water as possible. When they began lifting the floor, they dried the bottom portion of the platform, as half of it had been submerged. However, the wooden playing surface itself was not affected or damaged. The Sonic Floor remains intact. Although concerns were raised about the potential damage, especially to the Harold Davis Court, the outcome was much better than initially expected. Dr. Beck made a motion to affirm the expenditure. Mr. Zeichick seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Trustees discussed the use of the court playing surface at SouthWest College for the Deaf (SWCD). In light of the recent flood at the Coliseum, Dr. Sparks explained that it was thought initially that the Howard College basketball team might need an alternative location. At the same time, it was an opportunity to address concerns by SWCD students from the recent Roundtable that the logo be updated from the outdated SWCID logo and to consider the rebirth of the SWCD athletic program. Steve Smith had looked into the cost of resurfacing and rebranding the SWCD basketball court. The current floor was also too slick, leading to discussions about how it needed to be polished differently to ensure it met the standards for competitive play and practices.

The idea of hosting a game at SWCD in the future was discussed as part of the ongoing efforts to utilize the facilities effectively, which would encourage campus bonding and may be needed while the Coliseum is prepared for Air Handling Unit replacement if it becomes too cold in the Coliseum. Administrators will move forward with the effort to address the SWCD floor.

Next, Trustees considered giving Dr. Sparks authority to continue moving forward with repairs on the Big Spring Softball Field House. Dr. Sparks explained that the project initially started as a student-led instructional project, which had been in progress for four or five years. While an initial quote had been received to complete the project, it was determined other options would be explored to ensure the best approach for the project.

Dr. Sparks requested the authority to keep the project moving forward with the start of games approaching, and in light of the need to respond to the OCR visit emphasized that it was important to keep exploring alternatives while maintaining progress. Dr. Sparks informed the Trustees that she would report back on any updates as the project developed. Mr. Barr made a motion to grant the authority requested. Mr. Zeichick seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Trustees considered granting Dr. Sparks the authority to move forward with the Big Spring Baseball Field Fence project as a safety measure. Dr. Sparks explained that there had already been considerable discussion on the matter, with Fabian exploring different material options. While wood was currently being considered, metal remained another possible option in light of future plans regarding the field. Dr. Sparks emphasized the need to continue making progress on the project and requested authority to move forward with the next steps. She informed the Trustees that she would report back with updates as the project developed. Dr. Beck made a motion to grant authority as requested. Mr. Morgan seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Trustees considered giving Dr. Sparks the authority to move forward with the Big Spring Women's Residence Hall Lighting project. Dr. Sparks explained that, in light of ongoing discussions about dorms and lighting, this project was a necessary step to improve security and safety in the women's residence area. She clarified that while the cost did not require formal approval, the installation of additional lighting was a priority to enhance the overall safety of the area and she wanted them to be informed of the efforts. Since Board approval was not required there was no vote on the matter.

Next, trustees considered catalog and purchasing handbook updates. Mr. Zeichick made a motion to approve the updates as presented. Mr. Barr seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Fabian Serrano reported on progress with the Big Spring Campus's Coliseum Air Handling Units and Transformers. He discussed when power outages to certain buildings would occur as a result of the upcoming transformer work. February 15th is when the new rooftop Air Handling Units are scheduled to arrive.

Next, Fabian continued with an update on the SWCD Residence Hall. Last Monday the boys were able to move into the rooms with the new bathrooms. The next day, MidTex began demolition on the wing that will complete the project. Students were thrilled to be in the updated facilities.

Next, Shane Taiclet gave an update on the San Angelo Plumbing and Electrical Building. He was happy to report that the project was complete and the ribbon cutting would occur on December 4 at 9:00 a.m.

Next, Trustees noted that the McKinney Building Report had already been discussed.

Next, Dr. Sparks gave a brief report on recent audits. The Office of Civil Rights Audit on-site visit on October 15 and 16 went well. Dr. Audra Patridge, the THECB representative, expressed appreciation for the cooperation and professionalism demonstrated by the Howard College team.

As part of Phase II of the OCR audit, an architectural firm conducted an additional audit last week. The findings will be submitted to the THECB by the end of the month, with Howard College expected to receive the report by mid-January. The college must then respond with a detailed plan of action. The lack of a fieldhouse for the softball program was noted as a finding, a solution was discussed earlier in the meeting.

Additionally, the annual financial audit has been in progress over the past week.

Next, Dr. Sparks delivered the President's Report. She highlighted upcoming activities:

- The Theater Department will present *A Tuna Christmas* on December 3-5.
- The San Angelo Focused Board meeting will be December 4. A bus will be available for Trustees to ride, it will leave the Memorial Stadium parking lot at 7:00 a.m. that morning.
- The San Angelo campus graduation will be Thursday, December 12.
- The regular board meeting will be on December 16 at the SWCD campus due to the transformer project necessitating an electrical outage in the SUB.

Next, Dr. Sparks recognized the Theater students who participated in the Alamo Plaque Ceremony at the Howard County Courthouse in October, in her estimation they "stole the show". She also recognized Rodeo Team members Jeryn Ellerd and Logan White who qualified for the Sonny Sikes College Pioneer Chute Out.

Next, Dr. Sparks provided updates on legislative matters and shared the Howard County Summit would be held January 15, 2025, in the East Room of the Coliseum. Community College Day at the Capital would be February 2-3, and Howard County Day at the Capital would be February 5-6. She also noted that preliminary funding projections are beginning to come in and that we have been encouraged by the clarifying questions coming out of the Legislative Budget Board office for the SWCD funding request.

Next, under Board Training Dr. Sparks told Trustees that the Board of Trustees Institute would be held in Austin on February 27-28.

Next, in the interest of time, Trustees decided to table the 2024 Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) Annual Congress Update until the next regular meeting.



Next, Dr. Sparks noted that the Regular December Meeting would be held on December 16 at the SWCD campus as discussed earlier in the meeting.  
There being no other business, Trustees adjourned at 3:19 p.m.



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Dr. John Freeman, Chairman



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Adrian Calvio, Secretary  
By Brenda Madore