

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 on the Big Spring campus on Monday, June 23, 2025.

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

Dr. John Freeman, Chairman
Maxwell Barr, Vice-Chairman
Adrian Calvio, Secretary
Raul Marquez (Regular Meeting only)
Mark Morgan
Dr. Marisha Beck
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
Dr. Hanna Carter, Chief High School Partnerships Officer
Monica Castro, Provost, Lamesa
Brenda Claxton, Chief Fiscal Officer/Controller
Eric Hansen, Chief Technology Systems/Data Security 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
Steve Smith, Chief Business Officer/Internal Auditor

Others present were:

Stephanie Bissonette, Interpreter
Robert Creswell, Security
Justin Jenkins, Head Rodeo Coach
Andreia Medlin, Coliseum Event & Mailroom Delivery Coordinator/Big Spring Campus Reporter
Renee Porter, Interpreter
Shannon Stuteville, Executive Assistant to the President
Shane Taiclet, District Director of Administrative Services
Rebecca Villaneuva, District Reporting Officer (via Zoom)

Prior to the meeting, board members and select administration officials toured several areas of the Big Spring campus. Trustees visited the Softball Field and explored potential sites for both a baseball field and new dormitories.

Chairman Dr. John Freeman called the meeting to order at 11:15 a.m. Immediately after, the Board moved into an Executive Session at 11:16 a.m. to discuss personnel matters. Upon concluding the Executive Session, the Board recessed for lunch. The regular meeting was open to the public in the Board Room of the Student Union Building at Howard College and accessible online via Zoom. The meeting was recorded and will be available on the website, along with the minutes.

Dr. Freeman reconvened the meeting at 12:56 p.m. He noted there were no guests present. Mr. Calvio led the invocation.

Next, Dr. Freeman welcomed any communication to the Board; however, there were no comments.

Next, Trustees considered routine matters including the minutes from the May 19, 2025, Regular Meeting; the Financials for May 2025, monthly reports of auxiliary services, personnel matters, and an internal audit report. Mr. Zeichick made a motion to approve the routine matters as presented. Mr. Barr seconded the motion. All Trustees voted in favor of the motion.

Trustees then moved to items under New Business.

Next, Dr. Sparks shared that this meeting marks the beginning of the strategic planning process for the 2025–2026 academic year. The discussion focused on providing foundational information that will guide both the upcoming

budget and the development of the institutional plan of action. According to the planning calendar, the process is officially underway.

Next, as part of the strategic planning update, Dr. Sparks noted that the previously discussed SACSCOC substantive change actions have been officially approved. Budget allocations will be made to support these changes as the college moves forward with implementation.

Next, Dr. Sparks presented the proposed budget from the Howard County Appraisal District, which is distributed to all taxing entities for review. She recommended approval. Mr. Calvio made a motion to approve the Howard County Appraisal budget as presented. Mr. Marquez seconded the motion. All Trustees voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Dr. Sparks shared information regarding recent changes within the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association (NIRA) regions, noting that important national-level decisions have been made. She congratulated Rodeo Coach Justin Jenkins and the Howard College rodeo team on their outstanding performance at the College National Finals Rodeo, where the team ropers finished second in the nation. She also recognized former assistant coach John Sharp, who has accepted the head coaching position at Eastern New Mexico University and expressed pride in their contributions.

Coach Jenkins addressed the Board, highlighting the team's impressive showing in Casper. After a rough first round, the team rallied and advanced to the finals, finishing as national reserve champions—just half a second away from first place. Jeryn Ellerd, one of Howard College's ropers, was identified as the best heeler at the event and drew the attention of major university recruiters. Jenkins expressed appreciation for the support and presence of Dr. Sparks during the competition, noting that Howard College made a strong impression on the national stage.

Coach Jenkins also explained the significant changes to NIRA's regional structure. The Southwest Region, long one of the largest and most competitive in the nation, has officially been split into two new regions: Caprock and Lone Star. This change was prompted by growing logistical and financial challenges, including overcrowded rodeos with over 900 contestants, limited facility capacity, and rising costs for host schools. With 17 schools previously competing in the Southwest Region, the split will now offer more equitable competition and expanded opportunities for student-athletes to qualify for nationals.

Importantly, Justin Jenkins was selected by his peers to serve as the faculty advisor for the new region, a significant honor that recognizes his leadership and advocacy. He will represent Howard College at the College National Finals each year. Dr. Sparks emphasized how critical the advocacy efforts of both Jenkins and former HC student leader Jacob Walters (serving as NIRA's national student president and the header on the HC team roper team who is currently attending Texas Tech) were to the successful passage of this controversial regional realignment. Their work helped communicate the pressing logistical challenges and rally support at the national level.

The change is expected to better position Howard College for future success, offering a more balanced competitive environment while maintaining national visibility. Students will still travel for competitions, but the distances and related burdens will be reduced.

Next, San Angelo Provost Pam Callan provided an update on Howard College's federal Community Project Funding request, announcing that HC was selected as one of 15 projects by Congressman Pfluger to advance to the appropriations subcommittee. A smaller committee will meet on July 14th for markup, followed by the full committee meeting on the 17th. Pam shared that, based on recent conversations, Howard College is in a strong position due to demonstrated community support and the project's shovel-ready status.

Dr. Sparks commended Pam for her outstanding work in developing and guiding the proposal through the process, noting her leadership and persistence in advancing the project to this critical stage. Further updates will follow once the committee decisions are finalized.

Next, Dr. Sparks shared that a series of focused meetings are set to begin. On September 22 the meeting centered on the SouthWest College for the Deaf (SWCD) will occur. Planning for the meeting is currently underway, with more details to come as preparations progress.

Next, Dr. Sparks, in preparation for the SWCD focused meeting, requested the Board's approval to name the plaza on the SouthWest College for the Deaf (SWCD) campus The Nexus Memorial Plaza. The vision for the space is to create a commemorative area that unites the past, present, and future of SWCD, with the name "Nexus" reflecting this purpose.

Research for the project is being informed by the dissertation of Dr. Mary Dudley, whose work focused on the founding of SWCD. Her research is helping to identify key individuals who played a significant role in the college's early development. These individuals' names will be honored with plaques placed beneath existing trees in the plaza.

Mr. Zeichick made a motion to approve both the naming of the plaza as The Nexus Memorial Plaza and Dr. Sparks' request to proceed with the naming and recognition efforts. Dr. Beck seconded the motion. All Trustees voted in favor of the motion.

Next, as part of the strategic planning process, Dr. Sparks provided an update on Howard College's financial health. Standard & Poor's has reaffirmed the college's credit rating at AA-, reflecting strong confidence in our financial stability. This rating is important for the management and issuance of our bonds.

While the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) will provide their financial condition report at a later date, this external rating from S&P, alongside positive assessments from our auditors, demonstrates that Howard College remains financially sound.

Next, Dr. Sparks provided an overview of the recent Student Satisfaction Survey, which was sent to all students except dual credit participants. The survey received responses from 190 students. Demographic data about the respondents was shared to provide context on the student makeup.

The report in BoardBook provided by Cindy Smith summarized the key findings, highlighting both positive feedback and areas where students suggested improvements. Dr. Sparks reviewed several survey questions and their responses in detail.

She noted that this feedback is instrumental in guiding budgeting decisions and strategic priorities, including discussions around the dormitories and technical campus enhancements.

Next, Dr. Sparks reviewed the graduation survey, which was distributed to students who graduated in Spring 2025, with the majority of responses coming from the Big Spring campus. Dr. Sparks provided demographic information about the respondents to offer insight into the survey population.

Several proud moments shared by graduates were highlighted, including stories such as a 46-year-old graduate celebrating that it's never too late to earn a degree, and a student who was the first in their family to graduate from college. Respondents also rated their academic experience positively, noting improvements in verbal and communication skills, teamwork, and other personal and professional growth areas. Financial aid satisfaction was also addressed. The college uses the data from these surveys to identify strengths and areas for improvement to better support future students.

Next, Trustees considered Campus Retail Hub & Book Mart #25-001. Dr. Sparks shared that, after much consideration, her recommendation is to discontinue having a traditional bookstore space on the Big Spring and San Angelo campuses, noting this is a trend seen across many colleges nationwide. There is a strong movement toward open educational resources (OER) as textbooks continue to be costly. Thanks to our faculty's efforts, about 80% of textbooks used are now OER, significantly reducing student expenses. However, some students such as those in the health professions, still want to purchase some books.

She explained that each campus currently operates differently:

Lamesa handles bookstore services and food through Monica Castro and her team, while textbooks are managed by the Big Spring Bookstore.

Big Spring maintains a 40-hour-per-week bookstore in the SUB. Food options are sufficient due to the cafeteria and vending in the dorms. Foot traffic is high here because of the residential student population and usage of the SUB by the community.

SouthWest College for the Deaf (SWCD) students utilize the Big Spring bookstore.

San Angelo (SA) campus has experienced challenges with food services and limited bookstore presence due to low foot traffic. Up to now, many health profession students have attended St. John's off the SA campus, which further reduces on-campus demand.

With the majority of SA students returning to the campus, as we transition back to campus the volume now supports a café, leading to an agreement with Great Western Dining to provide a limited café. Dr. Sparks also noted that vending services on the Big Spring campus have improved to Steve's efforts, especially in the Big Spring library.

Two proposals were received for bookstore services: Bibli U and eCampus.com. Bibli U proposed a fee of \$85,000 for managing two bookstores, while eCampus offers an entirely online bookstore model. After thorough evaluation, including outreach to other small colleges, the committee concluded that eCampus better meets our needs. Their competitive pricing and flexible shipping options, direct to students' homes or designated campus locations, make this the preferred solution.

Despite moving primarily online, the college plans to maintain a physical retail space on the Big Spring campus to serve dorm students and continue selling branded gear across the district, though this location will have limited hours. Pop-up shops will be hosted at other campuses and during key times in the semester to promote HC apparel and materials.

Trustee Zeichick expressed concern about branding and gear sales. Dr. Sparks explained that eCampus has an online apparel store, but the college is still developing a strategy for local gear sales and brand visibility, including pop-up events at games and other activities.

To inform students of the new bookstore system, course Blackboard shells will contain relevant information. Since 80% of courses do not require textbooks due to OCR options, the communication campaign will emphasize cost savings and convenience. The physical store on the Big Spring campus will have an employee on limited hours to assist students, with pop-ups handled elsewhere.

Mr. Marquez made a motion to approve Campus Retail Hub & Book Mart #25-001 as presented. Mr. Barr seconded the motion. All Trustees voted in favor of the motion. Dr. Sparks noted more details would be forthcoming on the retail operation but it was necessary to move forward with the bookstore.

Next, the Trustees considered the purchase of the Recruitment Success module and the renewal of the EAB Navigate platform for student advising, support, and recruitment. Originally acquired through a grant, the platform has now been institutionalized. By renewing a five-year contract, the college will receive a significant discount.

After general discussion about the saving percentage, Steve provided a detailed breakdown of the five-year pricing plan, noting that by combining the renewal with the recruitment and retention modules, the total discount amounts to approximately \$166,000.

Eric offered an overview of EAB's capabilities, and Amy highlighted how the platform has transformed student tracking. EAB integrates with CAMS and supports the goals of the Pathways initiative. It enables progress reporting to advising teams and enhances communication across departments, streamlining student tracking and advising processes.

Mr. Morgan made a motion to approve the purchase of the Recruitment Success module and the renewal of the EAB Navigate platform as presented. Mr. Calvio seconded the motion. All Trustees voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Trustees considered handbook and catalog changes. Dr. Burchett provided an update on curriculum developments within the Nursing program, as well as adjustments related to veteran and active-duty service benefits.

Dr. Sparks discussed handbook changes, specifically regarding substantive change and the time and effort reporting policy to ensure compliance with federal labor reporting requirements. Steve Smith explained that all federal grants require accurate time and effort documentation. To address this, an external firm was engaged to develop a policy that meets auditor standards. This policy has been reviewed by the external auditor, who expressed satisfaction with the compliance measures.

Mr. Zeichick made a motion to approve the Handbook and Catalog changes as presented. Mr. Barr seconded the motion. All Trustees voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Dr. Sparks noted that updates about the Big Spring Softball Field House and general Campus Renovations had been provided during the tour.

Next, she told Trustees that the baseball and softball field fence graphics and padding have been ordered.

Next, Fabian Serrano reported that regarding the Big Spring Oncor/Lineman Training Lab, 400 linear feet of fencing is planned. The project is set to begin this week or next. A light pole will be installed near the entrance of the lineman lab and at the corner of Echols Street. The lab will be located east of the McKinney Building, on the site of the former greenhouse. All sewer and fiber lines in the area have been identified to avoid conflicts during construction. A classroom will be housed within the McKinney Building.

The training lab will feature approximately 8-10 poles for student practice. Dr. Burchett shared that financial aid options are being explored and finalized. Several companies have expressed interest and are actively sending students to the program.

Next, Shane Taiclet reported that the ADN department is relocating from St. John's to the main San Angelo campus. The move will occur next month in three phases: first, IT equipment will be moved to the SA campus from St. John's; second, all beds and medical equipment will be relocated from St. John's to the SA campus; and third, everything left at St. John's will be consolidated on the first floor. July is expected to be a busy month for the transition.

An added benefit of this move is a reduction in lease costs.

Next, Shane shared that Great Western Dining (GWD) is setting up café services on the San Angelo campus. With ADN students now returning to campus, the timing is ideal. GWD employees were on site today unpacking and moving in equipment to prepare for operations.

Next, Fabian provided an update on the SWCD Dental Lab Technology Classroom/Lab project, reporting that the flooring installation is complete and the electrical work is approximately 90% finished. An eye wash station is being installed as a special project, and pendant lighting has been added. The project is expected to be completed by mid-July.

Next, Dr. Sparks provided an update on upcoming activities, noting that summer break begins next week. The next Board Meeting is scheduled for July 30. Additionally, the West Texas Legislative Summit will take place the two days prior to the meeting. A budget workshop is planned for August 11. Dr. Sparks reviewed the schedule through August and announced that the retirement reception for Monica Castro has been rescheduled to the end of August.

Next, Dr. Sparks said that in addition to the great showing by the rodeo students, Hawks first baseman Jimmy Dionne received Second Team All-American Honors this year after an incredible season.

As part of Teacher and Military Appreciation Week, San Angelo Cosmetology students and faculty generously volunteered their time to provide manicures and hand massages at Crockett Elementary, Glenn Middle School, and Goodfellow Air Force Base.

Additionally, the theater department received several honors from the Kennedy Center for the Arts Collegiate Theater Festival.

Next, Dr. Sparks provided legislative and general updates. She noted that in BoardBook Representative Darby's office had provided a recap along with updates from the Texas Association of Community Colleges (TACC). She noted that we have not yet received our final funding numbers; the THECB is still reviewing all submissions. Once those numbers are released, we will begin the process of allocating funds by campus. Funding for SWCD remains the same, as we did not receive additional funding in this cycle. We will continue to work on this for the next round.

Information on Senate Bill 37 was included in the board materials. Dr. Sparks discussed that the new legislation includes specifics such as increased oversight by governing boards. It establishes a general education curriculum

advisory committee and places governing boards over hiring provosts and deans. Faculty councils and senates will now be exclusively advisory bodies. Presidents are required to review all vice presidents annually and report any removals. The THECB has also established an Office of the Ombudsman.

Dr. Beck departed at 2:53 p.m.

There will be expanded training for Trustees related to audits, ethics, and student privacy laws starting January 1, 2026. HC will be reviewing all pertinent policies that have been impacted by the new legislation. She noted that there is also legislation related to the restriction of faculty teaching remotely that is under review.

The Governor called a special session recently, but none of the agenda items affect us directly—those focused on hemp, real property, and victim trafficking.

Next, six trustees signed affirmations confirming they had completed the state-required Cybersecurity training. Dr. Freeman, Mr. Barr, Mr. Calvio, Dr. Beck, Mr. Marquez, and Mr. Zeichick all affirmed completion of the training. Mr. Morgan has not yet completed it. Dr. Sparks reminded trustees that the deadline to finish the training is July 30, 2025.

There being no other business, Trustees adjourned at 3:05 p.m.



Dr. John Freeman, Chairman

Adrian Calvio, Secretary
by Dr. Brenda Madore