

The Board of Trustees of the Howard County Junior College District met for an Executive Session, dedication, tour, and Regular Meeting focused on the SWCD campus at SouthWest College of the Deaf on Monday, September 22, 2025.

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 only)
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
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
Cindy Smith, Chief Student Success/Public Information Officer
Steve Smith, Chief Business Officer/Internal Auditor
Lupe Sudano, Provost, Lamesa

Others present were:

Stephanie Bissonette, Interpreter, SWCD
Katie Creswell, Assistant Professor
Shannon Creswell, Director of Student and Administrative Services, SWCD
Luci Gabehart, Campus Dean of Health Professions
John Grove, Program Chair EMS
Jennifer Key, Assistant to Director of Student & Administrative Services, SWCD
Renee Porter, Interpreter, SWCD
Shannon Stuteville, Executive Assistant to the President
Teresa Minchew, Instructor, Interpreter Training Program, SWCD
Tim Stewart, Welding Instructor, SWCD

Special guests present:

Martin Avalos
Sarah Avalos
Johnnie Lou Avery Boyd
Kelly Lynch
Ralph Lynch
Jonathan Masudi, SWCD Student
Debbye Valverde, Big Spring Chamber of Commerce, Director

Chairman Dr. John Freeman called the meeting to order at 9:41 a.m. in the Visionaries Auditorium of the Maddux Student Center. The dedication ceremony was held in the Nexus Plaza, followed by a short campus tour. The regular meeting was open to the public in the Auditorium and via Zoom, and was recorded for posting on the website along with the official minutes.

Immediately after calling the meeting to order, the Board entered Executive Session at 9:41 a.m. to discuss personnel matters. At 10:30 a.m., Trustees attended the Nexus Plaza dedication, followed by a tour of the Richard Covell DLT Center, Teaching and Learning Center, the Curley Tutoring Center, and additional campus facilities. Trustees and guests then gathered for lunch in the Maddux Student Center Visionaries Auditorium before convening the regular meeting.

Next, Chairman Freeman reconvened the regular meeting. Mr. Barr gave the invocation.

Next, Dr. Sparks recognized several guests including Johnnie Lou Avery, former member of the Big Spring Industrial Park Committee formed after the closure of Webb Air Force Base, the daughter and granddaughter of former HC President Dr. Hays, and Jennifer Jeffers, member of the first graduating class. She then thanked the many staff members and the SWCD campus leaders who had made the Nexus Plaza dedication a success. She noted that the recording of the dedication would be shared with individuals who had not been able to attend the dedication.

Next, Dr. Sparks provided an overview of the meeting's focus, 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 SWCD campus, its students, and operations. As SWCD is located within the taxing district, the Board would also conduct regular business.

Next, Chairman Freeman invited communication to the board. There were no comments.

Next, Trustees considered routine matters including Minutes of the Regular Meeting held on August 25, 2025; Checklist for August 2025; Monthly Reports of Auxiliary Services; Personnel Matters; and an Internal Audit. Mr. Zeichick made a motion to approve the routine matters as presented. Mr. Calvio seconded the motion. All trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Provost Jeff Anderson presented the annual State of the SWCD Campus Address, highlighting recent accomplishments and sharing the vision for the future. Over the past year, the campus renovated the Dental Lab Technology classroom, Teaching and Learning Center, and dorm bathrooms, as well as added the Nexus Plaza—an addition that reflects SWCD's vision of honoring the past, present, and future. Looking forward, plans include possibly expanding into culinary arts and offering additional online courses, building on the successful launch of two ASL courses this year.

The campus has been revitalized with new furniture and technology upgrades, including a soon-to-be-installed Zoom Room funded by a grant, which will provide students with access for interviews and Sorenson translators. The Rattler Good Life Center, led by Shannon Creswell and Stephanie Bissonnette, will serve as a valuable resource for students. Jeff also recognized Welding Instructor Tim Stewart and his students for their work on the new planter and arch located in the Nexus Plaza, with special credit to Donavon Trujillo, Trent Travis, and Talik Locket, whose artistry is featured on the planter.

Recruitment efforts are ongoing, with faculty and staff currently covering outreach while a recruiter search continues. Jeff also introduced the new automotive instructor Martin Avalos, and Activities Director Kelly Lynch, who have already made an impact through campus engagement and creative designs. Jeff then introduced SWCD student Jonathan Masudi.

Next, SWCD student Jonathan Masudi shared his inspiring journey as an international student from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Jonathan is pursuing studies in Business and reflected on the challenges he faced growing up in Africa, where opportunities for Deaf individuals were limited. Prior to coming to the U.S., he worked as an accountant, taught the Bible, and held restaurant jobs, but found himself frustrated by the lack of access and support.

Jonathan described the transition to the United States as a major culture shock, made more difficult by limited fluency in ASL. With the support of interpreters, faculty, and staff at SWCD, he embraced the challenges and began to flourish. He emphasized the high expectations at SWCD and expressed deep gratitude to the college for providing the opportunities and support that have transformed his life.

Next, as part of the focused meeting, Dr. Sparks provided an update on the most recent SWCD Student Roundtable. These sessions offer students the opportunity to share feedback on a wide range of topics, including dorm facilities, the cafeteria, and campus signage. While students are reminded that they may not always see immediate changes, their input helps pave the way for future improvements.

Items raised during the roundtable are assigned to appropriate staff for response or resolution, and updates are posted within a month. A comprehensive report is also shared each spring. Dr. Sparks highlighted several successful outcomes from past roundtables, including renovations to the DLT lab, enhancements to the welding program, and improvements to dorm bathrooms and kitchens—all initiated from student feedback. The roundtables continue to be a constructive and collaborative way to engage students in shaping their campus experience.

Next, Trustees considered nominations to the Howard County Central Appraisal District Board. Dr. Sparks explained the Board may nominate up to five candidates, and all votes may be cast for a single nominee. Trustees

discussed nominating Jordan Partee to continue to serve on the board. This nomination reflects the Trustees' confidence in Mr. Partee's ability to represent the college's and community's interests and contribute effectively to the board's work in managing property appraisals and supporting the local community. Mr. Morgan made a motion to nominate Mr. Partee. Mr. Calvio seconded the motion. All trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Dr. Sparks informed the Trustees that Howard College will celebrate the 80th anniversary of its founding on November 17, 2025. In preparation for the milestone, she requested authority to name currently undetermined areas on campus and to order commemorative plaques and other items. Mr. Calvio made a motion to grant Dr. Sparks the requested authority, supporting the college's plans to honor its history and achievements. Mr. Barr seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Trustees considered a donation. Luci Gabehart and John Grove shared that the Martin County Hospital District had offered to donate a decommissioned ambulance to Howard College for use as a simulator. The ambulance will remain stationary and feature a wrap recognizing the district's donation. It will allow students to simulate emergency scenarios, including the challenges and coordination required in real-life situations, enhancing their hands-on training.

Dr. Sparks highlighted the ongoing growth and impact of the EMS program, noting the team's efforts to expand training opportunities throughout the district, including rural areas. The donation reflects both community support and the college's commitment to providing practical, high-quality EMS education. Mr. Zeichick made a motion to accept the donation as presented. Dr. Beck seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Trustees considered a resolution thanking Lamesa ISD for their partnership. This will be presented at the Lamesa focused meeting on October 6. In addition, special recognitions will be presented. Mr. Zeichick made a motion to approve the resolution as presented. Mr. Morgan seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, under Performance Measures/Outcomes, Dr. Sparks presented the Initial Enrollment Report, prepared by Rebecca Villaneuva with campus-specific breakdowns. The certified enrollment report will be presented at the October Board Meeting, but it is not anticipated to change much.

Overall, Howard College continues to maintain steady enrollment, currently standing at approximately 4,200 students. Compared to last year, overall enrollment is up 1.25%, reflecting growth in key areas:

- **Big Spring:** Up 3%
- **Lamesa:** Up 38%
- **San Angelo:** Slight decline of 1.43%
- **SWCD:** Down 9%, though we anticipate adding approximately 20 new students in the spring

The report provides figures both with and without dual credit students, giving a full picture of enrollment trends. These results indicate that while certain campuses face minor fluctuations, the college is generally on an upward trajectory, demonstrating strong retention and ongoing improvement in student recruitment efforts.

Next, Trustees considered the purchase of a 2026 Chevy Silverado 3500HD through a BuyBoard contract for use by the Grounds Department. The vehicle will support the department's operational needs and will be delivered via transport truck. Discussion also included the BuyBoard process, noting that while local businesses are welcome to participate, many have not yet joined the program. Mr. Zeichick made a motion to approve the purchase as presented. Mr. Barr seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Trustees considered several catalog and policy updates to remain compliant with recent legislative changes and institutional needs. Dr. Sparks highlighted the impact of SB2972, which requires updates to policies governing expressive activity for students, employees, and the community. Background articles were provided in Board Book to give context to the changes.

Under the new law, students and employees must be granted the same opportunities to express themselves in outdoor campus areas, with new parameters established around issues such as amplification of sound, the wearing of disguises, camping, and defamation. For community members, the law allows colleges to designate specific outdoor areas for expressive activity. Trustees approved designated locations on each campus:

- **Big Spring:** East side of the coliseum

- **San Angelo:** West side of campus, directly adjacent to the Academic Student Services areas
- **SWCD:** East side of the Village
- **Lamesa:** North side of the building on the blacktop area

Additional updates included:

- **Catalog:** Admission requirements revised to include Academic Fresh Start provisions and exemptions as provided through recent legislation. In addition, new program curriculum for a Pharmacy Technician Level 1 Certificate, pending approval from the THECB and scheduled to begin Spring 2026.
- **Employee and Board Handbooks:** Competitive procurement policy submitted for legal review; Trustees authorized moving forward upon receipt to avoid delays in releasing the softball field house project.
- **Employee Handbook:** Policy 4.19, governing Video and Closed-Circuit Television, updated for the first time since 2021 to clarify the purpose of security cameras, update job titles, identify authorized users, and implement a new CCTV Access Request form.

Dr. Beck made a motion to approve the catalog and policy updates as presented. Mr. Barr seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Dr. Sparks provided an update on the Softball Field House project, sharing the latest information from architect Phil Furqueron. Once final details are received, the project will be prepared for competitive procurement. Trustees granted authority to proceed with the bid process upon legal review of the procurement policy to ensure there are no delays.

During discussion, Mr. Zeichick inquired about the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) timeline on the Softball Field House. Dr. Sparks explained that immediate accommodations were made by providing a temporary facility in the Agriculture Complex while the new field house project moves forward.

Dr. Sparks shared the calendar of upcoming events, noting the excitement of the fall semester and the many activities scheduled through Thanksgiving. Highlights include Deaf Awareness Week, the Howard College Theatre production taking place this Tuesday through Thursday, and several key community events designed to strengthen partnerships. The Crossroads groundbreaking is scheduled for tomorrow at 11:00 a.m., and the retirement of the Executive Director of the Economic Development Corp., Mark Willis will also be recognized this week.

Other events include upcoming rodeos, "Meet the Hawks" on September 29, and the Lamesa focused meeting on October 6, with bus departure at 10:00 a.m. Superintendent meetings are planned, and on October 15 the college will host the Open Roads Pledge event. The next regular board meeting is set for October 20, followed by the ACCT conference.

Next, under Recognitions, Dr. Sparks thanked student Jonathan again for his example and leadership.

Dr. Sparks provided legislative and general updates, noting that the recent session brought significant attention to higher education and left institutions with substantial follow-up work. A select committee was appointed by the Governor in both the Senate and House to address key issues related to expressive activities, with SB37 expected to generate additional responsibilities moving forward.


She also shared that Howard College is working to re-establish a Faculty Senate, enhancing faculty engagement in governance. In addition, Dr. Amy Burchett has been appointed to a state-level committee comprised of representatives from seven universities and seven community colleges, providing valuable representation for Howard College at the state level during this time of change.

Finally, Trustees discussed final information for their upcoming trip to the ACCT Congress held in October.

There being no other business, Trustees adjourned at 1:38 p.m.



Dr. John Freeman, Chairman



Adrian Calvio, Secretary