

The Board of Trustees of the Howard County Junior College District met for an executive session and regular board meeting in the Board Room of the Student Union Building at the Big Spring campus of Howard College on Monday, October 20, 2025.

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

Dr. John Freeman, Chairman

Adrian Calvio, Secretary (departed after the executive session)

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

Brenda Claxton, Chief Fiscal Officer/Controller

Eric Hansen, Chief Information Technology 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

Lupe Sudano, Provost, Lamesa

Others present were:

Stephanie Bissonnette, Interpreter

Terry Deathridge, Security

Andreia Medlin, Coliseum Event & Mailroom Delivery Coordinator/BS Campus Reporter

Renee Porter, Interpreter

Shannon Stuteville, Executive Assistant to the President

Chairman Dr. John Freeman called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. Immediately after, the Board moved into an Executive Session at 10:05 a.m. for consultation with the attorney, security, and personnel matters. Upon concluding the Executive Session at 11:48 a.m., 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 12:42 p.m.

Mr. Zeichick then led the invocation.

Next, Dr. Freeman noted that no guests were present and welcomed any communication to the Board; however, there were no comments.

Next, Trustees considered routine matters including the minutes from the September 22, 2025, Regular Meeting and Special Meeting held on October 6, 2025; the Checklist for September 2025, monthly reports of auxiliary services, and personnel matters. Mr. Zeichick made a motion to approve the routine matters. Mr. Morgan seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Trustees then moved to items under New Business.

Next, Dr. Sparks provided an update on the ongoing transition from the previous bookstore (BibliU) contract to the new provider (eCampus). While there have been a few expected challenges, particularly with the launch of a new system and the timing of the change during the 8-week terms, progress continues to be made. Adjustments are being made to the approach for managing spirit gear as well as management of book provision, including revising the job description for the position that will oversee those efforts. The position has been posted, and the team is exploring next steps for the previously planned alumni-related role in the original job description. Students are being kept informed through social media updates as operations continue to stabilize.

Next, Dr. Sparks provided an update on the progress of revising the Faculty Senate bylaws in response to the requirements of Senate Bill 37. Because the previous Faculty Senate structure could not operate under the new legislation, the Board had previously passed a resolution to allow a transition period so that a Faculty Senate could be formed.

Areas of the old bylaws have now been struck that conflicted with the new law, and a new draft has been developed for discussion. A committee consisting of remaining members of the previous Faculty Senate, the Executive Vice President, Provosts, and the President met on the previous Friday to make additional decisions. The draft will be shared at the all-district meeting to inform the college community. The revised bylaws will be brought to the Board for approval on November 17. Following approval, elections will be held by division, and the president will appoint senators for each division, with officers appointed by the president from that group in accordance with the new legal requirements. The group has also determined that the Faculty Senate will formally meet once each year, with special meetings convened as needed.

Next, Trustees considered giving Dr. Sparks the authority to seek engagement of a public adjuster to assist with insurance claims related to the June 9, 2025, storm. As additional damage has been identified the need for a professional services adjuster became clear to help ensure accurate evaluation and fair resolution of claims. This step is intended to streamline communication and prevent disputes with the insurance company. Trustees discussed potential impacts on future insurance rates, and Dr. Sparks noted that legal counsel had confirmed that no issues are anticipated and that the arrangement aligns with the college's current policy. Dr. Sparks noted that a similar approach was successfully used decades ago following a previous hailstorm. The selection of a public adjuster will be brought back to the Board for approval. Mr. Zeichick made a motion to approve the request. Dr. Beck seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Dr. Sparks shared that the focused meeting for the Big Spring campus, scheduled for November 17, coincides with the anniversary of the creation of the Howard County Junior College district. Plans are underway to invite some of the original stakeholders, or their family members, to attend the meeting and share reflections on the founding of the college. As we continue to lose members of that inaugural group, this gathering will provide a meaningful opportunity to honor their contributions and preserve their stories. While no naming recognitions will take place during the November meeting, those celebrations are being reserved for September 30, 2026—the 80th anniversary of the first day of classes at Howard College.

Next, Dr. Sparks discussed that the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board periodically reviews and updates institutional peer group classifications. After many years of being included in the small college peer group, Howard College has now been reclassified into the medium-size group due to changes in enrollment ranges and sustained growth over the past three years. Several other institutions also experienced similar adjustments. It was shared that Dr. Amy Burchett had participated in a brief, straightforward meeting with the Coordinating Board to confirm the change and discuss its implications.

It is anticipated that the groups will be finalized as presented by the THECB. Preliminary comparative data was shared with Trustees to provide context for the college's new classification. While these comparisons are not yet final, Brenda Claxton and Eric Hansen have started modeling potential impacts and trends to inform planning and decision-making.

Next, the Howard County Workforce Luncheon, a recurring event designed to engage local Howard County area businesses, was highlighted as a report item for the Board by Dr. Sparks. Last year's luncheon brought together businesses from across the county to share input, which has continued to inform the college's workforce initiatives. The upcoming meeting on November 6, will provide an update on the feedback received and the progress made on related projects. Moving forward, the plan is to hold these gatherings in a two-year cycle to collect information the first year, with the following year dedicated to providing feedback to participants. Board members were asked to indicate their interest in attending.

An update on the Clery Act, which intersects with Title IX, was provided by Fabian Serrano, noting that all information in the annual safety and security reports reflect activity from the 2024 calendar year. Howard College, including the Big Spring, Lamesa, and San Angelo campuses, is reported together, while SouthWest College for the Deaf is reported separately. It was also clarified that the fire report covers only incidents occurring within residence halls.

Fabian also provided an update on the college's annual security and safety reporting required by the State. Each year, the Texas School Safety Center requests review of the college's Emergency Operations Plan and an accompanying annex, both of which were submitted on October 1. Feedback from the Center is typically received in February, at which time any recommendations or required updates will be addressed.

Dr. Sparks noted that information regarding Title IX matters was also included in the reports and shared with the Board in Executive Session. The State report was reviewed with the Board during the executive session and was formally submitted as part of the college's compliance documentation due on October 1.

Next, Trustees considered using a competitive sealed proposal construction method for the Softball Field House construction. Dr. Beck made a motion to approve using a competitive sealed proposal construction method for the Softball Field House construction. Mr. Morgan seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Trustees considered the purchase of an Avigilon Network Video Recorder for SWCD. Steve Smith reported that it would be purchased through BuyBoard and was a replacement for the security system server at the SWCD campus. Mr. Zeichick made a motion to approve the purchase. Mr. Morgan seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Trustees considered giving Dr. Sparks authority to exceed budget limits for transportation and charter services, as the college continues to face significant challenges in hiring bus drivers. Efforts to fill a full-time driver position have been unsuccessful, and the retirement of the only part-time employee driver left the college without drivers at the start of the academic year. Over the first two months, approximately \$80,000 has been spent on charter services, with additional funding likely needed to maintain operations. In response, part-time pay rates for bus drivers were increased to \$35–\$38 per hour to be competitive, and recruitment efforts have expanded through social media, job fairs, and online postings. The college is also exploring CDL training partnerships to develop internal candidates. While vans are utilized, when possible, buses remain essential for both academic transportation and other college events. Mr. Zeichick made a motion to approve the request for authority. Dr. Beck seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion. The Board's approval allows the college to exceed usual spending limits to maintain safety and operational standards.

Next, Trustees considered handbook and catalog changes:

- **Bus Driver Salary Schedule:** Updated to address ongoing bus driver shortages.
- **Policy 1.15 – Employee Expression and Use of College Facilities and Grounds:** Revised to ensure compliance with Executive Order GA-44.
- **Policy 9.4 – Part-Time Faculty Compensation:** Updates specify that faculty teaching a 32-week course will be paid in six equal installments on the first banking day of October, November, December, March, April, and May.
- **Catalog:** Scholarships for continuing education will now adhere to Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP).
- **Student Handbook:** Updates include the addition of a new anti-hazing policy.
- **Purchasing Handbook:** Procurement procedures discussed in Executive Session will be incorporated, aligning with Board Policy 4.12 and Employee Handbook Policy 4.1. The State bid limit has increased from \$50,000 to \$100,000 effective September 1, 2025, though some internal restrictions will remain.

Trustees also considered giving Dr. Sparks authority to make necessary updates to applicable policies for the October 24, 2025, submission to the State as part of the Select Committee work ordered by the Governor.

Mr. Morgan made a motion to approve the handbook and catalog changes and to give Dr. Sparks authority to make updates as necessary as presented. Dr. Beck seconded the motion. All Trustees present voted in favor of the motion.

Next, Dr. Sparks provided an update regarding the Vietnam Memorial located at the SouthWest College for the Deaf (SWCD) campus and the development of a new area to be named the West Texas Veterans Memorial near the Hangar 25 Museum. Due to the declining health or passing of original members of the Viet Nam Memorial committee, and their inability to continue upkeep and maintenance as planned in the original agreement, responsibility for same has shifted to the Hangar 25 Museum and the City of Big Spring Air Park in recent years. As a result, some interested and concerned individuals focused on maintaining the past recognition and expanding the vision to align with the Hangar 25 Museum, created a new committee. The new committee has been actively working on the plan for the new memorial, which is designed to consolidate and preserve the existing displays, including planes and helicopters, and to include amenities such as outside bathrooms. Groundbreaking for the new memorial location occurred on October 11, and funding is being pursued through grants with strong support from the City.

Discussions have arisen between remaining members of the original Vietnam Memorial group and the new committee, as some previous members wish to retain and preserve certain elements at the current site. While the college has not historically been responsible for upkeep since this was proposed by the Viet Nam Memorial Committee on SWCID land, the college has been monitoring the situation to ensure expectations are clear relative to the college as this transition takes place since Howard College is being asked to possibly maintain whatever remains. Steve Smith and Fabian Serrano, as well as Dr. Sparks, have attended these meetings, noting that maintenance has recently been managed by the Big Spring Airpark.

A proposed five-year lease for \$1 is being considered, which would allow the City of Big Spring Air Park to continue maintaining the current site, while next steps are being determined. Trustees discussed that the college could possibly consider maintaining what remains of the Viet Nam Veterans Memorial at this location in the future if needed. For now, the arrangement under discussion would preserve and respect the memorials until further decisions are made. The Board was informed that the situation is being actively discussed, with ongoing communication and collaboration among all stakeholders, and a final lease document will be brought forward for approval.

Next, Dr. Sparks informed Trustees that the college is moving forward with the Softball Field House project. Requests for bids are scheduled to be published on Friday, October 24, and Sunday, October 26.

Next, Dr. Sparks provided an update on several upcoming events and activities across the college. Several Trustees are attending the ACCT Congress this week, and multiple athletic events are scheduled in the near term. Additional highlights include the ADN pinning ceremony on Thursday, Howard Harvest on October 25, and the Big Spring Foundation meeting on October 30. A theater production is also planned, and the next Board meeting is scheduled for November 17, followed by the San Angelo focus meeting on November 20.

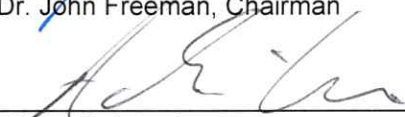
Next, Dr. Sparks noted that the pre-season polls for basketball have been shared. Women's basketball is doing very well in the pre-season and Men's basketball is currently ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Next, Dr. Sparks provided a brief legislative update, highlighting the October 24 submission to the Select Committee on Expressive Activities.

Next, Dr. Sparks reminded Trustees that they had received travel information on the ACCT Annual Conference.

There being no other business, the Trustees adjourned at 2:01 p.m.

  
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Dr. John Freeman, Chairman

  
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Adrian Calvio, Secretary