

**Marshall University Faculty Senate**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, February 19, 2026, 4:00 – 5:30pm**  
**Don Morris Room (MSC)**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Nathaniel Ramsey, Sarah McDermott, Hather Stark, Leah Turley, Sandy York, Jamey Halleck, Kevin Levine, Margie Phillips, Amanda Thompson-Abbott, Jerry Dooley, Conrae Lucas-Adkins, Mike Huesmann, Tim Melvin, Feon Smith, Tanvir Chowdhury, Ross Salary, Simon Shim, Zach Garrett, Angela Graham, Shikeal Harris, Suzanne Konz, Lisa Muto, Alysha Nichols, Marybeth Beller, Clinton Brown, Puspa Damai, Shoshannah Diehl, Megan Marshall, Boniface Noyongoyo, Daniel O'Malley, Shawn Schulenberg, Anthony Viola, Raid Al-Aqtash, Kelly Beatty, Rick Gage, Philippe Georgel, Sean McBride, Kyle Palmquist, Devon Wright, Stephen Young, Ji Bihl, Eva Patton-Tackett, Tiffany Davis, Mindy Varney, Kari Mika-Lude, Kelli Johnson

MEMBERS ABSENT: Phil Vallejo, Uyi Lawani, Ammar Alzarrad, Jodi Cottrell, Marianna Linz, Jana Tigchelaar, Nitin Puri, Ruhul Amin, Larry Sheret

EX-OFFICIO, VOTING/NON-VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT: Connor Waller  
Amine Oudghiri-Otmani

EX-OFFICIO, VOTING/NON-VOTING MEMBERS ABSENT: Richard Egleton

PARLIAMENTARIAN: Zeli Rivas

SENATE STAFF: Hailey Bibbee

GUESTS: In person – Brad D. Smith, Geoff Sheils, Andrew Morelock, Karen McComas, Brian Morgan, David Dampier, Robin Riner, Kelly Bradley, R. B. Bookwalter, Marcie Simms, Carleen O'Neill, Ginny Painter, Brandi Jacobs-Jones, Anna Mummert, Wes Stites, Deepak Subedi, Bruce Felder, Rohan Christie-David, Charlotte Weber, Billy Gardner

Virtual: Marianna Linz, Lindsey Harper, Craig Kimble, Stephanie Walker, Gretchen Beach, Leah Payne, Sonja Cantrell-Johnson, Monica Brooks, Susan Tusing, Shayna Morrison, Kelli Prejean, Maria Gindhart, Diane Palmieri, Michael Prewitt, Laura McCunn-Jordan, Eryn Roles, Allison Carey, Leah Tolliver, Miriah Young, Matt Tidd, Eric Himes, Jerry Ross, John Maher

The meeting was convened at 4:00 pm by Chair Shawn Schulenberg. Chair Schulenberg reviewed meeting procedures and expectations.

1. Approval of Proposed Agenda – approved as amended

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2. Approval of Minutes from January 22, 2025 - approved

3. Announcements – Chair

1. Our HLC Accreditation visit has been rescheduled for March 30–31.
2. Academic Affairs is working with the BAPC and Graduate Council to create a streamlined procedure for academic appeals. Currently, appeals are addressed across several policies; this effort would centralize them into a single, coherent process.
3. Given the number of severe weather events since the beginning of the semester, I have asked the BAPC to consider revisions to UPGA-2: Policy Regarding Weather-Related and/or Emergency Closings and Delays. At present, there is no formal option to transition temporarily to virtual instruction, an approach many universities use and one we implemented during COVID. The BAPC will begin preliminary discussions this spring, with the goal of recommending revisions in September, well before the next winter season.
4. Academic Affairs is beginning the process of assembling the Calendar Committee, which will begin work in Fall 2026 to develop the next four-year academic calendar (2028–2032).
5. The Campus 365 Task Force continues its work under Dr. Riner’s leadership. The President has asked the group to develop a proposal to implement recommendations developed last fall. The goal is to maintain campus operations during periods when nine-month faculty are off contract, while respecting professional norms, best practices, and principles of equity.
6. Over the past few months, I have spoken about the shared governance group tasked with drafting a university policy for Faculty Conduct. You should have received an email last week sharing the preliminary draft and inviting feedback from you and your constituents. To make this policy a gold standard, the Executive Committee voted to table it for one month to allow for broad review of the published draft. Thank you to the faculty and staff who have already submitted constructive comments. Those suggestions will be incorporated into a substitute draft that will come to the Faculty Senate for formal consideration at our March meeting. Why are we considering this policy? Because while Marshall has policies outlining standards of conduct for faculty, we do not have any process governing discipline if a rule is alleged to have been violated. Classified and non-classified staff are covered under UPHR2; faculty are not. Faculty are currently the only employee group without a defined misconduct procedure. Under the current structure, serious disciplinary matters are handled administratively. There is no required faculty peer review before major sanctions, no formal role for faculty in reviewing evidence, and no established framework for progressive discipline. In short, those subject to the policy are not part of the process that governs it. This draft does not create new conduct rules,

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alter tenure protections, or supersede federally mandated processes such as Title IX. Its purpose is to establish a clear process that incorporates peer review, defined standards, progressive discipline, and procedural safeguards before serious sanctions are imposed. Clear process protects faculty, protects our students, protects academic freedom, and protects the institution at the same time. Ultimately, this is about whether faculty wish to have a defined role in serious disciplinary matters affecting their colleagues, or whether we are comfortable continuing without one and allowing the administration to unilaterally adjudicate. Most research universities treat discipline as a shared governance responsibility. This proposal moves us in that direction. Please share any feedback to [senate@marshall.edu](mailto:senate@marshall.edu) no later than February 25.

7. Upcoming Meetings and Events

- a. We have two Faculty Senate meetings left this academic year. Our next Executive Committee meeting is scheduled for March 9 for items to be taken up at the March 26 Faculty Senate meeting. All recommendations and resolutions are due at [senate@marshall.edu](mailto:senate@marshall.edu) by February 27.
- b. I will give my annual address to the Board of Governors during their April 8, 2026, meeting.
- c. We will hold the Spring General Faculty Meeting the next day, April 9, 2026, at 4:00 PM in the Joan C. Edwards Playhouse.
- d. Academic units will hold elections 2026-28 Faculty Senate in March, receiving guidance from the Faculty Senate office in February. The newly elected senators will have their first meeting on April 30 at 4:00 PM in MSC Don Morris Room to choose their officers and executive committee.

4. Guest Speaker: Geoffrey Sheils (MU Board of Governors)

- I am very proud of what is going on at Marshall.
- While you can surmise it has been a very tough last 10 days, I can tell you it has been the honor of my life to serve Marshall in this role and am so grateful to be appointed by the Governor 8 years ago. I have learned a lot – particularly about the interdependency of the Marshall families working together to accomplish something special. Regardless of what anybody may say or think, the last 10 days have revealed to me in a deeper way, the level of caring that this board and administration has for its students and community.
- I would be remiss if I didn't mention that I continue to be amazed by your work. Every. Single BoG meeting. The reports that Faculty, Students, the Provost and the President give at the meetings are truly inspiring. **This is not hyperbole.** An

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unbelievable amount is being accomplished. The list is long that Provost Bookwalter reports on, and I congratulate you on your accomplishments as well as being the catalyst for your student's accomplishments. These reports have always been the highlights of each meeting for me.

- I wanted to focus my remarks today on a recent column that appeared in the Wall Street Journal (Jan 25, 2026) titled “**Is a Four-Year Degree Worth It?**”. Matter of fact, I referred to this column in our regular February BoG meeting. The author is the president of Dartmouth College who outlined changes that need to be made on campus if families are to answer “Yes” to the question, “Is a 4 year degree worth it?”

She asserted that **American Higher Education has a TRUST PROBLEM** and must make changes to rebuild the trust.

Two areas of change she highlighted were:

- 1) Make college affordable
- 2) Return on Investment Matters – affordability isn't enough

One quick look at the University's “Plan-On-A-Page” and you will see Priorities such as:

- Ensure affordability and the enabling of life-time achievement

You will also see these terms/phrases such as:

- Distinctive Value Proposition, Undergraduate ROI, Lifelong Prosperity and Internships and jobs

In other words, **we started emphasizing this years ago. We have been doing what others are now recognizing what they must do to rebuild trust in American Higher Education!**

In terms of Affordability and ROI

### **AFFORDABILITY**

#### **Average net Price MU vs WV 4-year Public institutions**

MU is the MOST AFFORADABLE in the state and is less than HALF of the cost to attend WVU

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**Comparison to the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) 4-year institutions**

MU is roughly 55% of the Peer average

**Comparison to Carnegie R2 Institutions**

MU is roughly 50% of the Peer average

This benchmark speaks to the incredible affordability of attending Marshall.

The next benchmark speaks to the incredible value of the education that the student receives.

**ROI** (which compares the graduate's starting annual salary to the total net price of attendance over 4 years) The higher ratio suggests a faster return on investment.

**Earnings Ratio at MU vs WV 4-year Public institutions**

MU is the highest ROI at 1.47x while the average (which is skewed because it includes MU) is 0.97x (There are 3 other institutions above 1.0x - WVU Tech, Fairmont State and Shepherd)

**Comparison to the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) 4-year institutions**

MU is the highest ROI at 1.47x while the average is 0.86x.

**Comparison to Carnegie R2 Institutions**

MU is the highest at 1.47x while the average is 0.94x.

**THESE ARE OUTSTANDING STATISTICS**

We need no confirmation, but The WSJ column clearly confirms the visionary leadership we have at Marshall. President Smith reported to the Board in December (a month before this article was published) the emphasis and importance of (and I quote) "our commitment to continuous innovation to ensure we have the most compelling value proposition...grounded in affordability, flexibility and lifetime achievement".

Results of these efforts? In Fall of 2023, a 13-year trend of declining enrollment was stopped as enrollment grew 4.5%. Then, the Fall of 2024 enrollment increased 9.1%, and in the fall of 2025 grew another 7.5% (US average 1%). Full-time freshmen up 5.5% year over year and up 24% over last 3 years!

It is still very early and in the face of the enrollment cliff, but we are seeing positive future indicators as applications are up 15.2%, admits up 47% and intents to enroll up 15.8%.

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While the WSJ column confirms our visionary leadership, the results validate President Smith when he stated in a recent board meeting, “We have charted a course to become a demonstration project for what is possible in our state and for our nation...”

Great time to be a part of Marshall University.

Another area of change that the Dartmouth president cited in the WSJ Column that was needed to rebuild trust in American Higher Education is also something not new to you.

The author noted to rebuild trust, higher education needed to be “re-centered” on learning rather than political posturing – To embrace institutional neutrality on issues that don’t affect the university’s mission or core functions.

Our role, which was developed with input from students, faculty, staff and administrators, is **outlined on our website** under the heading of “**Living our Creed – Navigating Political Issues & External Events**”.

It states, “Marshall University is a public university that provides an educational environment that prepares students to think, learn, work, and live in an evolving global society.”

Our Creed guides our behaviors in achieving these outcomes, reminding us to:

- Protect freedom of thought, belief and expression
- Express disagreements in rational ways
- Learn from our differences

As a public institution, we follow all federal and state laws, while seeking to create and protect an environment for free speech, individual thought, civil discourse and the advancement of education.

Spirited debates, lively class discussions and even protests are all part of our everyday campus life.

**The university’s role is not to take a position on such issues**, but to protect the rights and abilities of others to express their thoughts and beliefs in a constructive manner.

It further states that when political issues or external events occur, Marshall University will:

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- reaffirm the commitments in the Marshall University Creed,
- emphasize the importance of the well-being of the Marshall community, and
- express sympathy for all those affected.

**Marshall is unambiguously opposed to all forms of racial, ethnic or religious hatred.**

Three major areas where Marshall has exemplified excellence and where there is no doubt that we are ahead of the curve are:

- The Shared Governance Charter which was codified last year and which we discussed in this venue last year,
- The unending quest of being affordable and providing the best value proposition, and
- Staying focused on the university's core functions while maintaining political neutrality,

These are three fundamentals that are making Marshall a model for others to follow as the enrollment cliff fast approaches and the trust in higher education continues to diminish.

As I remarked last year when I was here, the Board of Governors is fully behind President Smith. He has done, and is doing, a masterful job of leading and involving the campus families in the transformation of Marshall.

His leadership skills, intellect, attitude and energy used to attack opportunities in the face of many headwinds combined with his unbridled passion for this university, has created not only a new optimism that has permeated the campus and beyond, but through working with all of the Marshall families, you ALL are changing lives, families and communities for generations to come.

I have enjoyed being a part of the "We" these past 7+ years. I have learned so much, and my respect for all the Marshall families is immense. You all do a tremendous job educating and inspiring our students. Your work matters and is most meaningful, and I am grateful for your commitment to Marshall University.

5. Recommendations/Resolutions

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a) **SR 25-26-15 CC** – Recommends **Undergraduate Program Addition, Deletion, Change** in the following college/schools/programs: Public History Certificate, Public History Minor, Commercial Music. - approved

b) **SR 25-26-16 CC** – Recommends **Undergraduate Course Addition, Deletion, Change** in the following college/schools/programs: HST 456, CHM 112, CMM 308, CMM 409, GEO 450. – approved

Entered into Executive Session at 4:22 p.m.

Exited Executive Session at 4:31 p.m.

c) **SR 25-26-17 EC** – Confidential **Recommendation for Spring Commencement Speaker**. - approved

d) **SR 25-26-18 EC** -Confidential **Recommendation for Spring Honorary Degree Recipient(s)**. - approved

6. Regular Reports

a) University President – Brad Smith (10 minutes)

- Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
- Good afternoon, my friends.
- In my last update, I celebrated closing the door on 2025, only to acknowledge that 2026 was trying its best to be an identical twin!
- If January felt like turbulence, February has reminded us that altitude ... **and attitude** ... matter.
- The external environment continues to shift ... legislatively, economically and competitively ...
- But what gives me confidence is:
  - We are leading by example
  - We aren't reacting, we are responding.
  - And we're doing so with clarity of mission and steadiness of purpose.
- Thank you for all you are doing to remain steadfast and focused as we serve our students, our institution and our community.
- With that context, I want to focus my comments on three areas:
  - First, to provide a Federal & State Legislative Update
  - Second, to explain our Recent Fitch Credit Rating

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- And last, but certainly not least, to walk through the decision to discontinue Women's Swim & Dive and the Introduction of STUNT
- **Let me begin with a Federal & State Legislative Update**
  - At a Federal level, the 2026 approved budget will deliver several higher education wins:
    - Maintaining funding for programs such as TRIO, campus childcare and Pell Grants, minority-serving institutions, and international exchange programs like Fulbright. \
    - It also includes slight increases for relevant federal agencies allowing greater competitive opportunity
    - At the completion of FY26, MU wins will include roughly \$30M in total:
      - Beginning with support for our Healthcare pillar, our School of Medicine will receive:
        - \$15M for construction of a medical school.
        - \$1.9M for construction to support our health informatics efforts.
        - And \$1M to support of Natural Products Center.
      - In support of our Cybersecurity pillar, we will benefit from:
        - And additional \$1.5M for Cybersecurity
        - And \$2.5M for Forensic Science
        - Closely related is \$5M for our Engineer Research and Development Center to further advance our security efforts in underground tunnel systems.
      - And in support of our Aviation pillar:
        - We will receive \$3.1M to continue to scale the program.
      - These wins are a testament to the teaching, learning and research being generated across our campus, as well as the alignment of our strategic pillars to what matters most for our state and our nation.
  - Shifting to a state level:
    - As of this week, more than 2,469 bills have been introduced ...
    - With 53 referencing higher education.

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- This volume alone signals the level of activity we are navigating.
- Marshall Day brought more than 250 faculty, staff, students and alumni to the Capitol and was a resounding success.
- Our budget hearing with the House Finance Committee occurred on February 4<sup>th</sup> and was very well received, with no follow-up questions from the committee.
  
- We are actively tracking legislation across several domains:
  - PEIA stability and sustainability
  - Tuition policy and WV Invests eligibility
  - Campus safety and trespassing statutes
  - Accreditation governance
  - Military and law enforcement tuition exemptions
  - Foreign funding restrictions
  - AI use in mental health delivery
  - And outcomes-based funding proposals
  
- The breadth of legislation touching higher education underscores an important reality:
  - Higher education is no longer operating on the margins of public policy.
  - We are at the center of it.
  
- Our Government Relations team remains on-site daily in Charleston and engaged at the federal level.
  - We are not passive observers ...
  - We are active participants in shaping outcomes aligned with Marshall For All, Marshall Forever.
  
- Again, I want to thank our faculty who engage constructively in this process ...
  - Your scholarship, your testimony and your subject-matter expertise matters.
  
- **Shifting to my second topic : Fitch’s Recent Credit Rating Update for Marshall University**
  - Last week, Fitch Ratings affirmed Marshall University’s Issuer Default Rating at **AA-** ...
  - Our revenue bonds at **A+** ...
  - While revising our outlook ***from Stable to Negative.***

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- Let me explain what all of that means.
  - First, their affirmation and unchanged rating matters.
  - We have been very transparent that we are working our way through a structural deficit.
  - The AA- rating and associated commentary highlighted our:
    - Multi-year enrollment growth
    - Increased first-time freshman enrollment
    - Strength in state and federal support
    - And meaningful philanthropic momentum
- The Outlook revision to Negative is tied to one core issue:
  - Our structural deficit, or what Fitch describes as our “operating balance on a GAAP basis.”
  - Specifically, their focus in on our cash flow ...
  - Fitch noted what we have openly discussed all year ... our cash flow was tight as we navigated through the knot hole of turning back to a net positive position.
  - They acknowledged meaningful improvement in FY26 due to expense controls and enrollment strength and will be looking for our plan to play out as forecasted:
    - As our structural deficit being eliminated in FY27,
    - And our cash flow margins begin improving as a result.
  - None of this was a surprise to us, and shouldn't be a surprise to anyone on campus ...
  - What gives me confidence is:
    - Enrollment growth is real and sustained
    - Expenditures are trending below budget in FY26
    - We have no current plans for additional debt
    - And our capital strategy is disciplined
- This is a point-in-time pressure, not a structural weakness.
- Our enduring financial principles continue to guide us through this period:
  - Grow students, not fees
  - Invest in our team
  - Take care of the house
  - And strategically manage our resources
  - Operational discipline is a muscle ... and one we continue to strengthen on a daily basis.

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- **Which takes me to my third and final topic, one that is directly affected by the tough decisions we must make to manage our strategic resources.**
- After extensive review of competitive positioning, conference dynamics, participation trends, facilities requirements, and long-term Title IX alignment ...
- We made the difficult decision to discontinue Women’s Swim & Dive and begin the process to introduce STUNT.
- Let me begin with what matters most.
- This decision impacts real students — real athletes — and families who chose Marshall because they believed in this university and in one another.
- I have heard from many of them personally.
  - Their messages have been heartfelt and sincere.
  - I respect the way these young women and their families have advocated for a program they love.
  - This has been painful for all involved,
  - And it was not made lightly.
- Let me address the timing, because I know that has raised questions.
- The timing of the announcement — and the Board meeting — was driven by responsibility, not avoidance.
  - The NCAA transfer portal operates within defined windows.
  - Acting when we did ensured our student-athletes had full access to the spring portal and every available option.
  - Delaying would not have changed the financial realities, the Title IX analysis, or the infrastructure requirements.
  - We explored fundraising and endowment pathways. \
  - Waiting would simply have reduced flexibility for the athletes.
  - The Board meeting was required to formally approve the addition of STUNT and ensure appropriate governance transparency. \
  - This was about clarity and forward motion — not silencing voices.
- Now to the core rationale.
  - This was not a performance decision.
  - Swim & Dive has represented Marshall with excellence — academically strong and competitive in the pool.
- This was a structural decision about sustainability, participation alignment, and responsible stewardship in a changing NCAA environment.
- Three factors drove the decision.
- **First, Title IX proportionality and participation.**
  - Swim & Dive carries approximately 27–30 roster spots. STUNT has the capacity to carry up to 65.

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- That difference meaningfully expands participation opportunities for women and moves us closer to proportional alignment — an area we must continue to address proactively.
- This is about expanding opportunity in a measurable way.
- **Second, financial sustainability.**
  - The annual operating cost of Swim & Dive is approximately \$819,000.
  - A fully built STUNT program is projected at roughly \$330,000 annually.
  - Even after adding STUNT, Athletics projects multi-year savings exceeding \$2 million over three years.
  - In today's NCAA landscape — shaped by revenue pressures and scholarship restructuring — stewardship matters.
- **And third, infrastructure realities.**
  - The Fitch Natatorium opened in 1981, with its last significant renovation in 2002.
  - It will continue to serve academics, recreation, and the community.
  - However, sponsoring Division I swimming at a championship level requires substantial capital upgrades to locker rooms, training areas, and aquatic systems to meet modern health, safety, and recruiting standards.
  - At this time, we cannot responsibly commit to that level of capital investment without compromising broader priorities.
  - STUNT does not require aquatic infrastructure or major capital renovation. It is also an NCAA Emerging Sport with a defined championship pathway and strong national growth.
- Finally, our commitment to our current student-athletes remains clear.
  - We are honoring scholarships for those who remain enrolled through graduation.
  - We are providing academic advising and transition support.
  - And those who wish to transfer will receive full assistance through the portal.
  - We are not walking away from these young women.
  - We are walking with them through transition.
  - Leadership is not choosing between easy and hard.
  - It is choosing between today and tomorrow.
  - Our responsibility is to ensure Marshall Athletics is sustainable, compliant, and competitive for decades — not seasons.
  - These are difficult moments.
  - But they require clarity, discipline, and care.
  - And we will continue to lead with all three.
- **So, to wrap up ...**

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- We continue to navigate external volatility and internal transformation ...
- From the outside, that could feel like instability.
- From the inside, I see something different ... a team that is working a plan and making the necessary choices to move forward ... together.
  - We're growing enrollment in a shrinking demographic region
  - We're delivering the highest ROI in the state, while advancing debt-free education
  - We're eliminating a structural deficit while maintaining AA- credit strength
  - We're engaging constructively in legislative policy
  - And we're making difficult decisions in service of long-term sustainability
- That is not instability ... it is disciplined transformation.
  
- 2026 may feel choppy.
- But we are not drifting.
- We are steering ... and we are moving forward together.
- We Are ... Marshall.
  
- Go Herd.

b) Provost – Robert Bookwalter (10 minutes)

**Enrollment** 12,205 highest since Spring 2019

Fewer students are **stopping out** fall-spring; likely due to advising & student services

IPEd's report shows that **time to graduation** has improved from 4.36 to 4.27 to 4.15

**4 yr grad rate** increased from 32% to 34%

**New Enrollment forecast indicates first time frosh will exceed 2000 in Fall 2026**

**Budget**

Unit budgets have been submitted and subject to updates for the past 3 weeks

The Budget Advisory Committee will review submissions AND Impact Statements

Staffing analysis indicates that Student/Faculty ratios lag behind SREB peers by 12%

SREB ratio is 16.8/1 MU ratio is 15/1

Our Revenue/Student exceeds our peers, but . . .

Our cost of instruction also exceeds peers by \$2800

We cover a greater percentage of courses with full-time faculty

**That is why it is necessary to look at course rotations & low enrollment offerings**

**Mercer Engagement Survey Follow up**

Why do employees think that **accountability is lacking?**

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**What can be done** to improve clarity around accountability processes?

**What tools and resources are perceived as lacking?**

What resources are needed to support your work adequately?

What is missing at MU to **ensure our programs and services meet changing market needs?**

What is desired in the work environment to foster innovation?

We continue the **Digital Accessibility project**, aimed at upgrading our accessible materials between now and April 24

We continue to plan for our **HLC accreditation visit** – Mar 30 & 31

We should be prepared to highlight

Our Commitment to Marshall's Mission

Our high quality programs

Our commitment to student success

And our Shared Governance approach to continuous improvement

We reorganized our AI task force into two subgroups led by David Wiley and Jodie Penrod

Our goal is to use AI effectively in our daily work AND

To provide our students with essential tools for their future professional lives

Our commitment to significant enrollment and revenue growth has shown consistent results and promises to continue into the next year.

Our ongoing focus on efficiency will help us sustain those gains

Our commitment to each other – and to shared governance and design thinking will help us innovate and thrive in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> century

c) Board of Governors – Robin Riner (5 minutes)

The Board of Governors met February 5, 2026. There were no action items considered.

- Faculty members Mark Zanter, Kae Bradley, Mindy Yeager-Armstead and Amanada Capino were recognized for their achievements
- Budget will be approved in April; we have made a 2M improvement on projected deficit

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The Board also met in special meeting on February 17, 2026. They voted to approve the discontinuation of the swim & dive program and to add a new sport: Stunt.

Our next meeting will be April 8, 2026. A reminder that all meetings are open to the public.

d) Advisory Council of Faculty – Amine Oudghiri-Otmani (5 minutes)

The Advisory Council of Faculty (ACF) had a Zoom meeting on Friday, Jan. 23 from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m., one day following last month’s Faculty Senate meeting. The following are important highlights from the meeting:

- I- The meeting was called to order at 1:05 p.m. We started off by approving minutes from last year’s ACF retreat that took place from Nov. 7-8, 2025.
- II- We were then joined by Chris Rasmussen, HEPC, who provided a few updates about (and important highlights of) the first two weeks of the sixty-day legislative session. III- Joe Jenkins, HEPC General Counsel, joined the meeting and reported that House committees have been busy with education and higher education. He specifically discussed HB 4081, Higher Education Health and Aid Grant, which will be a win for students. This bill provides grants to state institutions so that institutions can provide food and health aids pantry on campus. The bill is expected to pass the House. He also briefly discussed the following bills:
  - a. HB 4087 West Virginia – Ireland Education Alliance – an educational alliance; Members of four-year universities and two-year colleges; Federal funding for Ireland Trips \$250,000 total per year for the grant to travel to Ireland each year.
  - b. HB 4002 Establishing the West Virginia Collaboratory – addresses certain programs and fees to go through Collaboratory. Marshall University will be spearheading this initiative. Will help with research projects and such. (Modeled off policy at UNC Chapel Hill)
  - c. HB 4014 Workforce Readiness and Opportunity Act – micro-credentials, governor on board likely to be passed.
  - d. HB 4116 Relating to eligibility for WV Invests Grant Program -change of profession - first generation students – emergency medical services
  - e. HB 4119 Establishing the West Virginia TEACH Scholarship Program – early childhood education
  - f. HB 4152 Workforce-Education Partnership Act – allows employees to teach welding at vocational tech training. Employers can receive a tax credit equal to 100% of employees’ gross wages. Employees participating in programs to maintain their employment status and benefits.

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- g. HB 4533 Relating to including Potomac State College as an eligible institution for permanent participation in the “Learn and Earn Program” and remove reference to the program being a “pilot” program.
  - h. HB 4587 Prohibiting public funds from supporting low-earning outcome degree programs. Fed wants return on investment.
  - i. SB 414 Keep Accreditation About Academics Act (regarding accrediting bodies calling for DEI)
  - j. SB 476 Selecting Neutral Accreditors Act - one portion mentions law school accreditor and the DEI commitment (bill also mentions reviewing accreditors and selecting those who have not adopted DEI in the last five years.) (Example: All accredited programs have an active consortium and could lose money without the accredited social work program)
  - k. SB551 Restoring voting rights to faculty, students, and employee members of institutional boards of governors. Cross over day for the legislature is about 40 days into the session. Joe Jenkins entertained a few additional topics, including potential budget cuts, pay increases, implementation of PEIA increase funding law, revamping financial aid streamline, promise scholarships, rule on composite ACT scores, and the HEAPS workforce grant.
- VII- Meeting concluded with a brief discussion of potentially having members of the ACF show up in Charleston during the legislative session, in addition to a discussion of the four workgroups that the ACF also formed within the main ACF body, which are internationalization, K-12 and early college, online learning standards, and adjunct, summer, and overload pay.
- VIII- Meeting adjourned at 3:05 p.m. Next ACF meeting is Apr. 24, followed by a summer meeting, which will take place on Friday, July 10. At this meeting, new officers will be elected
- e) Graduate Council – Richard Egleton (5 minutes)
  - f) Student Government Association – Connor Waller (5 minutes)

**7. Standing Committee Liaison Reports**

- a) Government Affairs Committee – Marybeth Beller (4 minutes)

The Government Affairs Committee met February 5<sup>th</sup>. We tentatively passed a resolution to send to Faculty Senate and agreed to send it out electronically to members who could not attend the meeting so that they could consider it. A majority confirmed the resolution.

Following are the bills relevant to Higher Education, and particularly Marshall University. It is worth noting that, other than appropriations bills, the deadline has passed to introduce

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new bills into the House. After Monday, February 23, no new bills can be introduced into the Senate. Therefore, this is the near total number of bills we are following.

Two bills (HB 4002 and HB 4081) brought to the Faculty Senate's attention last month have now passed the House and are in Senate Education:

HB 4002 establishes a Collaboratory, to be housed at and operated by Marshall University with the advice of an advisory group composed of members of WVU, WVSU, the House and Senate and the Chancellor of HEPC, as well as citizens appointed by the Speaker and Senate President. The purpose of the Collaboratory is "to conduct, manage, or participate in research projects and opportunities that may be of interest to citizens and policymakers within the state, including, but not limited to, research in the areas of workforce development, public education, economic development, and natural resources management, including, but not limited to, research related to the environmental and economic components of the management of the natural resources within the state and of new technologies for habitat, environmental, and water quality improvements". It directs all state and local governments to cooperate with the Collaboratory and states that any work of the Collaboratory will not be subject to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. The State Treasurer's Office provided a fiscal note with no information, other than to say the Collaboratory would be funded out of a special fund.

HB 4081 creates the Higher Education Health and Aid Grant which is to be funded out of general revenue appropriated to the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC). The purpose of the program is to provide grants to state institutions of higher education that have one or more campuses to address student food insecurity and student health and hygiene inadequacies. The fiscal note had no details of costs.

HB 4592 mandates that higher education campuses create digital campus maps, including floor plans in all buildings, using software that local emergency first responders can access, and that the institutions of higher education provide these to all first emergency responders. This bill has also passed the House and is now in Senate Education.

HB4958 creates a five-year program, the Southern Coalfield Resiliency and Revitalization Program, which will identify existing resources in the coalfield counties of Boone, Logan, McDowell, Mingo and Wyoming to identify resources in those areas that can enhance economic development and direct state resources toward those counties for the purposes of collaborating with businesses to further economic development in the area. The bill creates a Revitalization Council to govern this program and states that a representative from the Marshall University Center for Business and Economic Research will sit on that council. The program will be housed in the WV Division of Economic Development and will report

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annually to the governor. The bill mandates that no hiring may take place to fulfill the purpose of the program. This bill is on third reading in the House tomorrow, February 20<sup>th</sup>.

SB 781 removes surplus funds from the general revenue and moves them to a Civil Contingency Fund for use in matching grants. While the bill does not specifically mention higher education, it is filed under Higher Education in the bill database. It passed the Senate and is in House Finance.

The following bills are not moving but should be studied and followed carefully as they will affect us if they pass and they are likely to return next year if they fail to gain traction this year.

Two bills require institutions of higher education to either exempt the vaccination requirement for students who have religious objections (SB 609) or to ban the requirement entirely for all faculty, staff and students (HB 5111).

SB 41 and 69 require higher education acceptance of the Classic Learning Test (CLT) as an alternative to the SAT or ACT for assessing a student's college readiness. The CLT is used by many home-schooling parents and charter schools.

SB 202 provides free tuition for a variety of first responders and their families as well as disabled veterans and military personnel. It provides no funding to universities to cover this loss of tuition revenue.

SB 414 requires higher education accrediting bodies to remove any requirements for DEIA practices for institutions to receive accreditation.

SB 483 creates the WV Officials Training Act. This would make use of a variety of sources to establish quality training for state and local elected officials. It will be operated out of the state auditor's office. While it is not currently moving, this might be a bill for the university to investigate as many of our programs are equipped to provide that training.

Finally, there are two bills which seek to restore voting rights to all members of higher education boards of governors. SB 551 restores voting rights to student, faculty and staff members of those bodies and SB 675 restores voting rights to student members only. Neither bill is moving, but faculty might want to reach out to Senators Mike Woelfel and Joey Garcia who sponsored the bill to restore rights to all members of the governing boards.

A bill discussed in this report last month is still not moving but should be considered: HB 4587 (and its Senate counterpart, SB 618), the Higher Education Accountability Act, will expand a federal ban on use of direct student loans (PL119-21, section 84001) for students

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to major in “low earning programs.” This is measured by taking the cohorts graduating in a major and measuring their median earnings over a 3-year span. If the median earnings do not meet or exceed the median earnings of employees in that field who do not have a degree, the degree program is defined as “low earning.” This bill would forbid public money to be spent in any way on low earning programs.

After March 4<sup>th</sup> any bill that has not passed its house of origin dies, so watch for these bills to see if they move before then.

The Government Affairs Committee will meet again on March 5<sup>th</sup>, at 2:00, in TEAMS.

b) University Curriculum Committee – Tim Melvin (4 minutes)

Meetings Held: November 21, 2025 and January 20, 2026

3:00 PM | Microsoft Teams

**Course Changes ALL APPROVED BY UCC**

CMM 474: Patient-Provider Communication Interpersonal Health Comm  
CMM 479: Health Promotion and Influence Public Health Communication  
ESS 485: Independent Study  
ESS 486: Independent Study  
ESS 487: Independent Study  
ESS 488: Independent Study  
GEO 101: Physical Geography (CT)  
HS 485: Independent Study  
HS 486: Independent Study  
HS 487: Independent Study  
HS 488: Independent Study  
HST 475 : History Internship  
CMM 308 : Persuasive Communication  
CMM 409 : Social Influence Studies Theory Persuasion Change  
GEO 450 : Extreme Weather & Mesoscale

**Course Additions ALL APPROVED BY UCC**

SCLA 490 : HerdWork Internship  
CHM 112 : Foundations of Chemistry Lab  
HST 456 : Intro to Genealogy

**New Programs ALL APPROVED BY UCC**

962 : Health Communication

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958 : Public History

959 : Public History

***Program Changes ALL APPROVED BY UCC***

749 : Health and Wellness

***Program Deletions***

6 : Commercial Music

***Course Inactivation – None***

c) Faculty Personnel Committee – Clinton Brown (4 minutes)

The FPC met on Tuesday, 2/17.

We reviewed and approved changes to the JCESOM P&T Policy. We sent that over to the provost. We also reviewed the Faculty Fitness to Serve/Duty. We are making changes to that policy and anticipate this to be brought to the Faculty Senate by the March or April meeting.

d) Research Committee – Philippe Georgel (4 minutes)

Quinlan Award Process Updates

- Refined disqualification criteria (existing travel support from ongoing grants for example) also including consequences for missing prior post-award reports.
- Use of Dynamic Forms approved for routing applications through Chairs/Deans.
- Scoring rubrics are being finalized to ensure fairness across disciplines and career stages.

Marshall Research Status & Challenges

Marshall remains an R2 institution with current research expenditures of \$30–\$39M, (below the \$50M R1 threshold). This is considered a good performance to maintain and improve on our R2 status.

Potential issues for acquisition of new grant funding:

- The NIH shift toward human-based research may disadvantage researchers, mostly MUSOM, currently using animal models.
- Lack of internal seed grants our limits ability to gather preliminary data required for external submissions.

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Generation of a White Paper to identify Priorities

A White Paper focusing on identifying institutional research needs—including funding, graduate support, infrastructure, and student engagement—to strengthen Marshall’s long-term research capacity will be initiated by the committee.

Main priorities:

- Recommend establishing internal seed grants in the \$5k–\$25k range.
- Emphasize need for graduate tuition waivers to support competitive recruitment.
- Propose improved visibility infrastructure such as a campus-wide research calendar and searchable expertise directory.
- Propose improved research visibility by highlighting faculty/student accomplishments in MU newsletter and social media.

Student Research Pipeline

Support early undergraduate participation through paid research roles and/or academic credit.

Collaboration with MURC

Discussion with Dr. John Maher (VP-research, MURC Director) confirmed that the FSRC will maintain regular dialogue with MURC on federal policy shifts and administrative processes.

Dr. Maher requested help from the committee for the John Marshall students and Faculty awards (internal MU grant program).

Next Steps

- Finalize the revised Quinlan Award scoring rubric.
- Complete the White Paper and prepare a Faculty Senate proposal.

e) Student Conduct & Welfare Committee – Tony Viola (4 minutes)

The meeting was convened at 3:02 p.m. by Bethany McFann, Chair.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The minutes of the November 12, 2024 meeting were approved.

2. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Regarding the development of a procedure for students afraid of other students, Bethany McFann reported back that students can use Advocate to submit a report on another student.

B. Concerning an excused absence policy for online, asynchronous courses, Michael Borsuk reached out to Kat Smith from Student Advocacy and Accountability, as well as Jessica Rhodes from the Title IX office. Currently, there is no defined policy, and any extensions on course work are made at the discretion of the professor. The only exceptions

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to this are extensions granted by Title IX or accommodations made by the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations. Michael Borsuk reported back that a subsection is being developed for the attendance policy that would provide extensions for students in online, asynchronous courses when necessary.

C. Concerning AEDs in the dorms, Michael Borsuk suggested adding more signage and including emergency numbers.

3. NEW BUSINESS: None.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:19 p.m.

f) Faculty Technology Committee – Nitin Puri (4 minutes)

- MUIT will be deprecating the current solution for MUPages and will soon be working with impacted faculty to migrate their sites to the university hosted platform, Pantheon. Student organizations should work with Student Affairs to use the new HERDLife platform.
- MUIT also introduced a new Technology Project Management policy for first reading that assists in prioritizing technology projects for the university.
- The Annual Technology Survey will be released next week.

8. Other Requests to Speak

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

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Respectfully Submitted:

*Kelli Johnson*

Kelli Johnson, Recording Secretary, Faculty Senate

**MINUTES APPROVED BY FACULTY SENATE:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Shawn Schulenberg, Chair  
Faculty Senate

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Signed

**MINUTES READ:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Brad Smith, President  
Marshall University

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Signed

