

**EAST CENTRAL COLLEGE  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING  
Monday, April 17, 2025**

**CALL TO ORDER:** The regular meeting of the Board of Trustees was called to order at 5:29 p.m. by Board President Ann Hartley. Other Board members present for all, or parts of the meeting were Joseph Stroetker, Eric Park, Cookie Hays, Audrey Freitag, and J.T. Hardy. Also present were President of the College Jon Bauer; Administrators – Vice President of External Relations Joel Doecker, Vice President of Student Development Sarah Leassner and Vice President of Academic Affairs Robyn Walter; Faculty – Faculty Association President Tracy Mowery, ECC-NEA President Reg Brigham, and Mathematics Instructor Shaun Roberson; Other Staff – Human Resources Director Carrie Myers, Director of Communications & Marketing Gregg Jones, Professional Staff Association President Todd Tracy, Classified Staff Association President Denise Walker, ECC Foundation Director Bridgette Kelch, Institutional Research Director Bethany Lohden, and Executive Assistant to the President Stacy Langan.

**RECOGNITION OF GUESTS:** Gregg Jones recognized Chris Parker from the *Missourian*; Officer Todd Schlitt from the Union Police Department; ECC students, Violet Melcher, Addi Klophaus, and Jovie Garner; and community members Paul Gross and Dean Gross.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** There was no public comment.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:** Each item on the consent agenda shall be deemed to have been duly approved with the same validity as if each action were separately moved, seconded, and adopted.

**Motion:** To **approve** the agenda for April 17, 2025, meeting of the Board of Trustees.

*Motion by Joseph Stroetker; Seconded by Audrey Freitag; Carried Unanimously*

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** The Board approved the minutes of the March 3, 2025, regular meeting of the Board of Trustees.

**CANVAS ELECTION RESULTS | BOARD DISCUSSION:** President Bauer noted that it is important for the public to hear from the Board regarding the recent tax levy ballot issue that voters did not pass. He stated that this is a disappointing outcome for the institution and thanked those who participated in the election, regardless of how they voted. President Bauer expressed appreciation for individuals who worked on the campaign and supported the issue. It will be necessary to determine how best to move forward and address maintenance and repairs, underutilized spaces, and opportunities that will not occur without additional funding sources. The pursuit of federal grants will continue to help offset College expenses. President Bauer noted that a few key deferred maintenance and repair projects need to be addressed sooner rather than later. The operations of the College will have some impact in fiscal year 2026, though the largest impact will be seen in fiscal year 2027 after the bonds retire in February 2026. Planning for fiscal years 2026 and 2027 and beyond will begin promptly. The levy will be set in August 2025, and it is anticipated to be lower than in previous years since only two payments are left in August and February. The final number will come after the county determines the assessed valuation on the tax base. This is a reassessment year with a new senior property tax freeze that will affect the outcomes. After the last payment in February, there will not be a general obligation debt for the first time since 1970. There are liabilities on the balance sheet, but no general obligation debt. When it is set in August 2025, the operating levy likely will be the lowest it has been since 1978. Considering the deferred maintenance and repairs that must be addressed, it will be necessary to

finance those projects out of the general fund, as there will not be a general obligations levy, which will impact other operating costs. President Bauer mentioned that operating expenses continue to climb while funding continues to decline. Reserves were utilized this year for some one-time expenses, which cannot be repeated year over year, or there is a risk of depleting the reserves. Determining how best to proceed with input from employees, students, and the community is essential. The Board's role will be critical in identifying which options are feasible.

President Bauer stated that there is no simple solution and that we have critical needs. HVAC systems must function, and roofs must not leak. During the election, we clearly communicated our needs, which is why we brought the issue forward, and those needs remain. We have always taken the high road and never asked for more than was necessary. The request was honest and tied directly to the projects we need to complete. Now, we must lay everything on the table to determine how to move forward under more difficult circumstances. He went on to say this will require hard choices. The administration will review every dollar spent and examine our assets to see if they can be used more effectively.

Board discussion ensued. Voters rejected an ongoing operating levy but did not close the door to a future bond issue for capital improvements. That option should remain under consideration. These needs will only grow. It is now our job to begin addressing them.

Trustees noted that we must prioritize the most urgent needs. Unfortunately, delaying these needs has made them more expensive. Fundraising was suggested. Since the College operates on a fixed income, the focus will be on short-term expenditures. Community members voted against the operational levy, stating that one reason was the lack of a sunset provision. Given the current anti-tax sentiment, a sunset would likely not have changed the outcome. The opposition campaigned on lowering property taxes, which resonated with voters. Grants are valuable, though projects funded by grants must be maintained with operational funds. Expenses must be analyzed closely, not just the revenue of the college.

Asked by Board President Hartley, the vice presidents mentioned that the College examines expense lines annually, operates on a skeleton budget, and conducts yearly assessments; this team is not afraid of hard work. Administrators noted the challenge of balancing revenue with the expenses needed to carry out the work of the college.

President Bauer noted that moving forward, the focus will be on expenses. Programs and services will be reviewed and considered for reduction. The College receives less state aid than it did in 2002. Every budget and every staffing plan includes vacant positions that will be assessed. Maintenance and repairs have been deferred due to insufficient funds. State aid can be withdrawn mid-year, and expenses must account for that. We are accustomed to operating on a lean budget and will continue to do so. There is an opportunity cost each year. If revenue does not approach expenses, we must make difficult decisions to present a balanced budget while addressing deferred maintenance. This is not the first time we have examined expenses. Every dime spent is a public record. This is a complex and challenging situation.

The college has effectively prioritized students' needs, which is why some deferred maintenance has been overlooked. The operating fund hasn't been increased locally for 40 years. We have successfully supported student success and will continue to provide a quality education for them.

**Motion:** To **accept** the results of the April 8, 2025, Proposition ECC election as certified by the county clerks.

*Motion by Audrey Freitag; Seconded by Cookie Hays; Carried Unanimously*

**TREASURER’S REPORT AND FINANCIAL REPORT:** President Jon Bauer reviewed the financial statements as of February 28, 2025. He noted that we are on track in terms of budget, with no significant changes or causes for alarm, and that the fiscal year will end on target.

President Bauer noted that audited financial reports, along with the annual audit and all Board packets, are available on the college website. The Board does not approve matters without thorough consideration, and all expenses are examined to ensure transparency in financial matters.

**Motion:** To **approve** the treasurer’s report, the financial report, and the payment of bills subject to the annual audit.

*Motion by Eric Park; Seconded by Audrey Freitag; Carried Unanimously*

**FACULTY PROMOTION IN RANK:** President Bauer shared that faculty seeking promotion must submit a portfolio for review by the Rank and Promotion Committee. Vice President Walter stated that faculty may apply for and earn three levels of rank through a rigorous, well-defined promotion process, which requires a complete application and a portfolio of evidence demonstrating their commitment to ECC. A faculty committee reviews the portfolios against a rubric and makes a recommendation to the vice president, who, in turn, reviews these recommendations before presenting them to President Bauer. The evidence in the portfolio pertains to teaching and learning, contributions to the college, scholarly or creative endeavors, and community service. Seven faculty members were presented for the Board’s consideration for rank. She also mentioned that two faculty members earned Tenure, as listed on the consent agenda. Dr. Nancy Mitchell, Academic Dean of Health Sciences and Director of Nursing, defended her dissertation today, while faculty member Brittany Clark will defend hers next week.

**Motion:** To approve the promotion of Adisa Velic and Timothy Derifield to Assistant Professor; Dr. Coreen Derifield, Dr. Reginald Brigham, Jennifer Higerd, and Dr. Elizabeth Rozema to Associate Professor; and Dr. Wendy Pecka to Professor effective with the 2025-2026 academic year.

*Motion by Joseph Stroetker; Seconded by Audrey Freitag; Carried Unanimously*

**FY26 BUDGET DEVELOPMENT:** President Bauer indicated that the budget and staffing plan are on target to be presented at the June meeting for approval. The state budget must be completed by May 9. The recommendation to the Governor will likely include a 1.5% increase for higher education. The Board approved a 3% increase in tuition. Historically, we have seen 3% growth in assessed valuation. This is a reassessment year with a newly implemented senior property tax freeze, which may impact that amount. Revenue will continue to be refined based on the state budget, local tax base, and changes in enrollment. Expenses will be scrutinized and adjusted to balance the budget. The budget will be provided to the Board in advance of the June meeting to allow time for review.

**BIDS:** President Bauer noted that higher electronics prices are expected to rise with tariffs, so computer purchases are being made now to take advantage of the lower costs.

**Motion:** To **approve** the purchase of 40 instructor station computers and 40 accompanying monitors from Dell Inc. at a cost of \$34,880 from the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) public bid cooperative contract #MHEC-04152022, to be funded from an allocated federal earmark for the Phase II Technology/Streaming Project.

*Motion by Audrey Freitag; Seconded by Cookie Hays; Carried Unanimously*

**Motion:** To approve the purchase of 40 laptop computers at a cost of \$34,400, through the Midwestern Higher Education Compact contract #MHEC-04152022, funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Strengthening Community Colleges grant for the new Respiratory Care program.

*Motion by Cookie Hays; Seconded by Audrey Freitag; Carried Unanimously*

**\*PERSONNEL:** The Board **approved** the reappointment of the following administrators for the 2025-2026 fiscal year: Joel Doecker, Vice President of External Relations, Sarah Leassner, Vice President of Student Development, and Dr. Robyn Walter, Vice President of Academic Affairs. The Board also **approved** the reappointment of full-time faculty for the 2025-2026 academic year as listed in the attached memorandum; the appointment of Briget Young as the full-time Research Analyst effective April 21, 2025 with an annual salary of \$55,856.22 and Sunny Roberson as the full-time Financial Aid Advisor effective April 28, 2025, with an annual salary of \$44,275.27; and the roster of adjunct faculty for the Summer 2025 semester as listed in the attached memorandum.

**BOARD PRESIDENT'S REPORT:** Board President Hartley expressed appreciation for the employees who worked on their own time on the Prop ECC campaign.

#### **REPORTS:**

**A. STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION:** SGA held a successful first spring fling with sixteen activity booths and a mini horse. A student band, Stag Runners, also played at the event. Trivia night was canceled for this year. All four SGA officers will graduate this year. One replacement has been enlisted, and recruitment efforts continue to replace the other three. A recent student body meeting was well attended. SGA will host a popcorn table for donations during the next ECC Theatre production.

Three new student clubs have been created, including the Outdoor Club, where members learn about plants, hiking, and canoeing; the Dungeons and Dragons Club; and the Disc Golf Club, where members learn to play the game. Student nurses are selling t-shirts for fundraising. The SGA and PTK had tables at the recent Earth Day event on campus. The Engineering Club attended a workshop, and members of PTK recently attended a national conference, where an ECC student was selected to be one of 32 chapter officers.

In March, eleven students and three staff chaperones went on a trip to London, where they visited museums, shows, cathedrals, the British Library, a musical cabaret, and took a tour of Westminster Abbey.

**B. FACULTY ASSOCIATION REPORT:** Faculty Association President Tracy Mowery reported that twelve faculty members attended various conferences. The association reelected Tracy as president and Tim Derifield as vice president. College committees have started selecting committee chairs, and faculty members have begun choosing the committees they will serve on next academic year.

**C. ECC-NEA:** no report.

**D. PROFESSIONAL STAFF ASSOCIATION REPORT:** Professional Staff Association President Todd Tracy reported that PSA member Jenni Crosby was elected to the Gasconade County R-II school board, where she will serve a three-year term. Rachael Karr dedicated her time over spring break to assist students affected by the recent storms. The Summer Learning Academy portal launched during the first week of April, offering 101 classes in Union and Rolla, many of which are already at capacity. President Tracy expressed, with a spirit of partnership and shared purpose, that PSA is eager to contribute when called upon to ensure our institution's fiscal viability today, tomorrow, and into the future.

**E. CLASSIFIED STAFF ASSOCIATION REPORT:** Classified Staff Association President Denise Walker reported that Denim Day raised \$122.50 in March for the Franklin County Humane Society and \$22.50 for the Cuba Animal Shelter. In April, they raised \$110 for the ECC Food for Falcons and \$70 for the Cuba Animal Shelter. The CSA Spotlight Award for this semester will be presented to Technical Support Technician Jules Parham on April 22<sup>nd</sup>. The spring fundraiser

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT:** President Bauer reported that an F1 tornado hit campus on a recent Friday evening. There were no injuries; the damage was mainly to the athletic fields. We are working with insurance and estimate repairs at \$200,000. The baseball field fence has been installed. Dugout walls were damaged. Fourteen trees were lost. Some roof damage occurred to the Health Science building, which has been repaired, and Hansen Hall will be restored soon. Three signs on campus were also damaged. Earlier that evening, strong winds caused damage to a concrete block wall near Buescher Hall. President Bauer expressed appreciation for the quick response from Facilities and MUSIC, the College's insurance carrier. Other community colleges and schools also reported damage. Our deductible is \$1,000 on the \$200,000 claim. Damage numbers have been submitted to Franklin County and FEMA.

Summer enrollment is up 6.1% in headcount and 12.6% in credit hours, with 46 days remaining until the semester starts. Summer is a smaller semester overall, with 522 students enrolled in 2,844 credit hours. Fall enrollment is down 6.6% in headcount and 9.9% in credit hours, with 123 days until the semester starts. These numbers have improved since the start of the enrollment cycle. Headcount is important, but credit hours have a greater impact on the budget.

The Senate is now working on the budget. A 1.5% increase for higher education is expected, which would equal about \$95,000 in new funding. That is less than half of what is needed in revenue. We will see how the Senate proceeds. Final figures are expected by May 9. We will continue to monitor this closely.

A bill being introduced is designed to improve transfer pathways to universities. While most transfers are strong, some areas remain challenging. This bill would expand and protect credit transfer by statute. It stalled in the Senate last year when few bills advanced. Every session sees good bills that reach the finish line but do not cross it.

The board will receive more information about commencement and student recognition in the coming weeks. Participation remains steady, and the number of graduates has grown over the last several years. This year, we will move to a ticketed event with overflow spaces so each student may have family present in the gym. We may eventually hold two ceremonies.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**Motion:** To **adjourn** the April 17, 2025, regular meeting of the Board of Trustees 7:11 p.m.

*Motion by J.T. Hardy; Seconded by Joseph Stroetker; Carried Unanimously*

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President, Board of Trustees

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Secretary, Board of Trustees