

BROOKDALE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**Board of Trustees
Public Business Meeting Minutes**

February 25, 2026

**Brookdale Community College
Student Life Center, Navesink Rooms
765 Newman Springs Rd.
Lincroft, NJ 07738**

Chair Horl called the meeting to order at 5:30 P.M. and roll call was taken.

Present	Trustees	Administration:
	Ms. Barbara Horl, Chair	Dr. Katie Lynch
	Ms. Tracey Abby-White, Trustee, Vice-Chair	Ms. Nancy Kaari
	Mr. Steve Clayton, Trustee	Dr. Yesenia Madas
	Mr. Paul Crupi, Trustee	Ms. Bonnie Passarella, Esq.
	Dr. Stephanie D'Alessio, Trustee	Mr. Kornipibob Kanthanjan
	Ms. Dyese Davis, Trustee (6:35 pm departed meeting early after closed session)	Ms. Nancy Kegelman
	Ms. Stephanie L. Hoitt, Trustee	Dr. Teresa Manfreda-Foley
	Mr. James McCracken, Trustee	
	Dr. Les Richens, Trustee	
	Dr. David Stout, Secretary	Ms. Cynthia Gruskos
	Ms. Mary Pat Angelini, Trustee	
Absent	Mr. Montez Swartz, Trustee	
	Ms. Cyndie Williams, Trustee	
College Counsel	Mr. Sean Kean, Esq., General Counsel (It should be noted that Mr. Mitch Jacobs, Esq, attended the Closed session only)	

Ms. Gruskos read the following statement: "In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S. 10:4-6 et seq., advance written notice of this meeting of the Board of Trustees was provided in the following manner:

On February 18, 2026 at 4:30 PM advance written notice of this meeting was posted on the Brookdale Community College website; emailed to *The Asbury Park Press* and *the Star Ledger* and filed with the Clerk of the County of Monmouth.

Mr. Kean read the statement on procedures and requirements for making public comment during the public meeting.

Chair Horl led the pledge of allegiance followed by a welcome to those in attendance.

Chair Horl read our mission statement:

Brookdale Community College opens doors to education with courage and care, guiding diverse learners toward a lifetime of growth and success.

The meeting began with a moment of silence led by Dr. Stout in remembrance of retired employee, Joyce Harris.

Topic and Discussion	Votes Taken	Action and Follow-up Actions
Adoption of Agenda	A motion to adopt the agenda was made by Trustee McCracken and seconded by Trustee Crupi. Motion passed.	
Resolution to Hold a Closed Meeting	A motion to approve by resolution (Attachment A) to hold an Executive Session was made by Vice Chair Abby-White and seconded by Trustee Richens. Motion passed.	
Motion to Re-Open the Meeting to the Public	A motion to reopen the meeting to the public was made by Vice Chair Abby-White and seconded by Trustee Crupi. Motion passed.	
<p>Report on College's Financial Aid Program</p> <p>The Board received a comprehensive annual update on the College’s financial aid operations delivered by Mr. Jonathan Ng, Director of Financial Aid. The presentation outlined that more than \$28 million in aid was disbursed across federal, state, institutional, and private sources during the 2024–2025 academic year, with a significant portion attributed to Pell Grants and state Tuition Aid Grants. Mr. Ng described staffing structure, compliance performance—including zero audit findings for federal aid programs—and continued participation in state and federal audits. He highlighted operational improvements such as increased automation, streamlined verification processes, enhanced use of technology, and expanded peer-to-peer support initiatives. The Board also heard about emerging challenges, including FAFSA</p>		

Topic and Discussion	Votes Taken	Action and Follow-up Actions
<p>simplification delays, increased fraudulent applications (“ghost students”), anticipated regulatory changes, and the upcoming implementation of Workforce Pell. Priorities for the coming year include financial literacy outreach, targeted student communications, and strengthened collaboration across student support services. Trustees commended the improvements and asked questions regarding loan default monitoring, parent engagement, and clarity of aid requirements.</p>		
<p>Presentation on FY27 Budget and Tuition and Fees</p> <p>The Dr. Manfreda-Foley, Vice President for Finance & Operations and Dr. Stout, President, presented the proposed FY27 tuition, fees, and operating budget recommendations. The budget was developed under assumptions of flat county aid, a modest state aid increase of approximately 1%, and level enrollment projections. The administration proposed a \$25 per-credit tuition increase for in-county students (a 13.7% increase), while keeping required fees flat, citing unprecedented cost pressures, especially a nearly \$5 million increase in employee health benefit expenses. The Board reviewed comparative tuition data across New Jersey community colleges and four-year institutions, revenue and expenditure projections, the growing revenue contribution of Continuing & Professional Studies programs, and the planned use of institutional reserves as a temporary bridge. Trustees discussed long-term affordability concerns, the need for multi-year tuition planning, and the College’s commitment to developing a three-year financial stabilization and restructuring plan. Dr. Stout emphasized that the cost drivers, particularly state health benefits, left limited alternatives to raising tuition without risking deep reductions to staff, services, or programs.</p>		
<p>Public Hearing on Tuition and Fees</p> <p>Chair Horl opened the meeting to public comment on tuition and fees and directed the public to do so in accordance with the instructions for making comment provided by Mr. Kean at the beginning of the meeting.</p> <p>No public comment was made on tuition and fees and Ms. Gruskos confirmed that no written public comment was submitted.</p> <p>Public comment on tuition and fees was closed.</p>		
<p>Reports from the Board Committees and Liaisons</p> <p>A. Finance & Facilities Committee – Trustee McCracken reported out on the Finance & Facilities Committee meeting held on February 17. The report from the Finance & Facilities Committee, delivered by Trustee McCracken, provided an expanded context to the College’s financial landscape and highlighted ongoing concerns and areas of operational focus. The Committee's work over the past several months has centered heavily on the development and analysis of the FY27 operating budget, which constituted the committee’s most significant area of review this cycle.</p>		

Topic and Discussion	Votes Taken	Action and Follow-up Actions
<p>Trustee McCracken noted that routine monthly financial indicators, including income, expenditures, purchases, capital projects, and foundation financial activity, appeared normal and without irregularities during the committee’s review.</p> <p>However, the committee’s attention during this period was overwhelmingly shaped by the extraordinary rise in employee health benefit costs, which has placed significant and unprecedented pressure on the operating budget. Trustees discussed in depth how this cost escalation—more than \$5 million in new obligations for FY27—has constrained financial flexibility and contributed directly to the need for the College’s proposed tuition increase. The report emphasized that these increases are structural and external, not tied to any enhancement in employee benefits, and mirror statewide and national trends affecting educational institutions.</p> <p>Trustee McCracken reiterated the committee’s view that the College cannot sustain year-over-year benefit cost growth of this magnitude, and stressed the importance of pursuing state-level benefit reform. The committee encouraged continued advocacy with state legislators and regulatory agencies to address the inequities and instability of the current State Health Benefits Program, noting that multiple stakeholder groups—including school districts, county governments, and other colleges—face similar fiscal strain.</p> <p>Beyond budget pressures, the committee highlighted areas of strategic growth, particularly within Continuing & Professional Studies (CPS). Trustee McCracken expressed optimism about CPS as a significant revenue-generating opportunity, citing successful expansions in workforce and healthcare offerings. He pointed to the College’s culinary program as another promising area for future investment and growth, noting the potential for program expansion and the committee’s enthusiasm for pursuing those opportunities.</p> <p>Looking forward, Trustee McCracken emphasized the importance of receiving regular monthly updates on the College’s forthcoming institution-wide restructuring plan, which the President committed to developing. This plan is intended to stabilize the institution’s fiscal trajectory over the next three years which will be critical in reducing long-term reliance on tuition increases and in addressing the structural challenges that have emerged from external cost pressures. The committee reaffirmed its commitment to working closely with the administration as this plan develops and to continuing its financial oversight role to ensure sustainable operations.</p> <p>B. Student Success & Educational Excellence Committee - The Student Success & Educational Excellence Committee reported on enrollment trends, student engagement initiatives, and fraud-mitigation processes, including a cross-departmental team addressing fraudulent applications. The committee reviewed the academic program evaluation for Respiratory Care, which demonstrated strong retention, employment placement, and accreditation preparation. Institutional Learning Outcomes assessment results were presented, showing high levels of student achievement across STEM and Communications, and Middle States self-study preparations remain on schedule.</p> <p>C. ACCT National Legislative Summit – Chair Horl reported on participation in the 2026 ACCT National Legislative Summit, highlighting her engagement in ACCT committee work focused on ACCT’s three-year strategic priorities related to advocacy, student success, and communication. ACCT Committee members assisted in coaching students on how to effectively present their personal</p>		

Topic and Discussion	Votes Taken	Action and Follow-up Actions
<p>stories and educational challenges to federal representatives, emphasizing the importance of first-person narratives in conveying the impact of federal aid programs. During Capitol Hill visits with members of Congress and their staff, the college delegation which included Dr. Stout, Trustees Clayton, Swartz and Horl, discussed issues including the taxation of Pell Grants, support for federal workforce development initiatives, and the role of community colleges in delivering industry-aligned credentials. She and Trustee Clayton noted the value of maintaining strong relationships with federal representatives and the importance of monitoring ongoing federal policy discussions impacting funding and student support programs. Trustee Clayton commented on the notable speakers at the conference.</p> <p>D. NJCCC -The New Jersey Council of Community Colleges (NJCCC) report summarized statewide concerns shared during the Council’s recent meeting, including the substantial increases in the State Health Benefits Program costs affecting all New Jersey community colleges. The Council has been actively engaging the Governor’s Office and legislators to advocate for increased operating support, including a proposed 3% increase in state aid and a one-year \$30 million supplemental allocation to offset benefit-related budget pressures. Additional advocacy topics included progress on bills from the Community College Opportunity Agenda, changes to the state funding formula that now incorporate demographic and completion-based metrics, and anticipated state guidance on industry-valued credentials that will determine eligibility for certain workforce-related funding streams. Trustees were briefed on upcoming budget deliberations, planned meetings with the Monmouth County legislative delegation, and the need for continued coordinated advocacy to protect institutional stability.</p> <p>E. Foundation Update - The Foundation report focused on board development efforts and ongoing planning for the annual Scholarship Bash. Trustees were informed that Foundation leadership is actively identifying prospective board members who can support the organization’s mission to raise scholarship funds, particularly as student financial needs continue to grow. The Scholarship Bash planning committee has begun securing sponsorships and donations, with the goal of attracting approximately 300 attendees and maximizing revenue through auction items and event participation. Trustees were encouraged to assist by contributing to the Board’s traditional shared digital advertisement and by recommending potential donors or supporters. Recent donations—including high-value items such as golf outings, culinary experiences, and esports arena sessions—were highlighted as examples of contributions that enhance the event’s fundraising potential.</p>		
<p>Public Comment on Agenda Items</p> <p>Chair Horl opened the meeting to public comment on agenda items only and directed the public to do so in accordance with the instructions for making comment provided by Mr. Kean at the beginning of the meeting.</p> <p>No public comment was made and Ms. Gruskos confirmed that no public comments were submitted in writing.</p> <p>Public comment on agenda items only was closed.</p>		

Topic and Discussion	Votes Taken	Action and Follow-up Actions
<p>Review of Consent Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any item may be removed from the consent agenda for discussion by any voting member of the Board of Trustees. <p>A. Acceptance of Consent Agenda</p>	<p>A motion to adopt the consent agenda was made by Trustee Richens and seconded by Crupi.</p> <p>Motion passed.</p>	
<p>Approval of Public Business Meeting Minutes - January 27, 2026</p>	<p>A motion to approve the minutes from the Public Business Meeting on January 27, 2026, was made by Trustee D’Alessio and seconded by Vice Chair Abby-White.</p> <p>Minutes Adopted.</p> <p>ABSTENTIONS: Trustee McCracken</p>	
<p>Approval of Executive Session Minutes - January 27, 2026</p>	<p>A motion to approve the Executive Session Minutes on January 27, 2026, was made by Trustee Richens and seconded by Vice Chair Abby-White.</p> <p>Minutes Adopted.</p> <p>ABSTENTIONS: Trustee McCracken</p>	
<p>Approval of Consent Agenda</p> <p>A. Approval of Human Resources</p> <p>B. Acceptance of Grants</p> <p>C. Submission of Grants</p>	<p>A motion to approve the consent agenda was made by Trustee Richens and seconded by Vice Chair Abby-White.</p>	

Topic and Discussion	Votes Taken	Action and Follow-up Actions
<p>D. Emergency Purchase in Excess of \$44,900 and New Jersey "Pay-to-Play" bids, and Pursuant to the New Jersey "Pay to Play" Process, in Excess of \$17,500 Purchase(s)</p> <p>E. Purchases in Excess of \$44,900 and New Jersey "Pay-to-Play" bids, and Pursuant to the New Jersey "Pay to Play" Process, in Excess of \$17,500</p> <p>F. Open Invoice Payment Requests for Vendor, Student and Employee Payments</p> <p>G. Monthly Financial Reports</p> <p>H. Capital Project Update</p>	<p>Motion Passed.</p> <p>YES: Trustees Abby-White, Angelini, Clayton, Crupi, D'Alessio, Hoitt, McCracken, Richens and Chair Horl</p> <p>NO: None</p> <p>ABSTENTIONS: None</p>	
<p>Approval of FY27 Schedule of Tuition and Fees</p>	<p>A motion to approve the FY27 Schedule of Tuition and Fees was made by Trustee Richens and seconded by Vice Chair Abby-White.</p> <p>Motion Passed.</p> <p>YES: Trustees Abby-White, Angelini, Clayton, Crupi, D'Alessio, Hoitt, McCracken, Richens and Chair Horl</p> <p>NO: None</p> <p>ABSTENTIONS: None</p>	
<p>Approval of FY27 Operating & Capital Budgets</p>	<p>A motion to approve FY27 Operating & Capital Budgets was made by Trustee Hoitt and seconded by Trustee McCracken.</p> <p>Motion Passed.</p> <p>YES: Trustees Abby-White, Angelini, Clayton, Crupi, D'Alessio, Hoitt, McCracken, Richens and Chair Horl</p>	

Topic and Discussion	Votes Taken	Action and Follow-up Actions
	<p>NO: None</p> <p>ABSTENTIONS: None</p>	
<p>Approval of FY27 Chapter 12 Projects</p>	<p>A motion to approve FY27 Chapter 12 Projects was made by Trustee McCracken and seconded by Trustee Crupi.</p> <p>Motion Passed.</p> <p>YES: Trustees Abby-White, Angelini, Clayton, Crupi, D’Alessio, Hoitt, McCracken, Richens and Chair Horl</p> <p>NO: None</p> <p>ABSTENTIONS: None</p>	
<p>Approval of the Associated Students of Brookdale Community College (ASBCC) FY27 Budget</p>	<p>A motion to approve the Associated Students of Brookdale Community College (ASBCC) FY27 Budget was made by Trustee Hoitt and seconded by Vice Chair Abby-White.</p> <p>Motion Passed.</p> <p>YES: Trustees Abby-White, Angelini, Clayton, Crupi, D’Alessio, Hoitt, McCracken, Richens and Chair Horl</p> <p>NO: None</p> <p>ABSTENTIONS: None</p>	

Topic and Discussion	Votes Taken	Action and Follow-up Actions
<p>Approval of the Auxiliary Services FY27 Budget</p>	<p>A motion to approve the Auxiliary Services FY27 Budget was made by Vice Chair Abby-White and seconded by Trustee Crupi.</p> <p>Motion Passed.</p> <p>YES: Trustees Abby-White, Angelini, Clayton, Crupi, D’Alessio, Hoitt, McCracken, Richens and Chair Horl</p> <p>NO: None</p> <p>ABSTENTIONS: None</p>	
<p>Approval of MOU with Thomas Jefferson University</p>	<p>A motion to approve the MOU with Thomas Jefferson University was made by Trustee Richens and seconded by Vice Chair Abby-White.</p> <p>Motion Passed.</p> <p>YES: Trustees Abby-White, Angelini, Clayton, Crupi, D’Alessio, Hoitt, McCracken, Richens and Chair Horl</p> <p>NO: None</p> <p>ABSTENTIONS: None</p>	
<p>Approval of Designation of Qualifying Online News Source for Required Bi-Monthly Legal Notice</p>	<p>A motion to approve by resolution the Designation of the Asbury Park Press, app.com, as our Qualifying Online News publication for printing required Bi-Monthly Legal Notice was made by</p>	

Topic and Discussion	Votes Taken	Action and Follow-up Actions
	Trustee Crupi and seconded by Vice Chair Abby-White. Motion passed.	
Approval of Rescinding Policy 2.1003 COVID-19 Vaccination or Weekly Testing Requirement	A motion to approve the rescinding of Policy 2.1003 COVID-19 Vaccination or Weekly Testing Requirement was made by Trustee Hoitt and seconded by Trustee Crupi. Motion passed YES: Trustees Abby-White, Angelini, Clayton, Crupi, D’Alessio, Hoitt, McCracken, Richens and Chair Horl NO: None ABSTENTIONS: None	
Approval of Revised Policy 6.9000 Athletic Policy	A motion to approve revised policy 6.9000 Athletic Policy was made by Trustee Hoitt and seconded by Vice Chair Abby-White. Motion Passed. YES: Trustees Abby-White, Angelini, Clayton, Crupi, D’Alessio, Hoitt, McCracken, Richens and Chair Horl NO: None ABSTENTIONS: None	

Topic and Discussion	Votes Taken	Action and Follow-up Actions
<p>Public Comment - Chair Horl opened the meeting to public comment and directed the public to do so in accordance with the instructions for making comment provided by Mr. Kean at the beginning of the meeting.</p> <p>No public comment was made and Ms. Gruskos confirmed that no public comments were submitted in writing.</p>		
<p>Old/New Business –</p> <p>Trustee Crupi reported attending the Shore Conference basketball tournament hosted at Brookdale. He highlighted the positive impact of bringing the tournament back to the College, noting that the event was well attended and show cased Brookdale’s facilities to visiting families and students. He described a conversation overheard among local high school students who expressed surprise at the quality of the College’s athletic facility, underscoring the value of hosting community events that increase public awareness of campus resources. The Board extended appreciation to the President and College staff for their efforts in securing and coordinating the tournament.</p> <p>Dr. Stout offered closing remarks, thanking the Trustees for their thoughtful deliberation throughout the fiscal planning process and noting the difficulty and importance of the decisions made during recent budget development discussions. He reaffirmed the College’s commitment to implementing the “find a million, save a million” initiative and to delivering a comprehensive three-year financial stabilization plan in the months ahead. He also expressed gratitude to staff members, particularly the finance team, for their sustained effort and dedication during the budget preparation period</p>		
<p>Adjournment</p> <p>Meeting adjourned at 8:14 pm</p>	<p>A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Vice Chair Abby-White and seconded by Trustee Crupi.</p> <p>Meeting adjourned.</p>	

BROOKDALE COMMUNITY COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING EXECUTIVE SESSION

WHEREAS, while the Sen. Byron M. Baer Open Public Meetings Act (N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq.) requires all meetings of the Brookdale Community College Board of Trustees to be held in public, N.J.S.A. 10:4-12(b) sets forth nine (9) types of matters that may lawfully be discussed in "Executive Session," i.e. without the public being permitted to attend, and

WHEREAS, the Brookdale Community College Board of Trustees has determined that **1** issues are permitted by N.J.S.A. 10:4-12(b) to be discussed without the public in attendance and shall be discussed during an Executive Session to be held on **February 25, 2026 at approximately 5:45 PM** the nine (9) exceptions to open public meetings set forth in N.J.S.A. 10:4-12(b) are listed below, and next to each exception is a box which will be marked when the issues to be privately discussed fall within that exception, and after each exception is a space where additional information that will disclose as much information about the discussion as possible without undermining the purpose of the exception shall be written.

"(1) Any matter which, by express provision of Federal law, State statute or rule of court shall be rendered confidential or excluded from public discussion." The legal citation to the provision(s) at issue is: _____ and the nature of the matter, described as specifically as possible without undermining the need for confidentiality is _____

"(2) Any matter in which the release of information would impair a right to receive funds from the federal government." The nature of the matter, described as specifically as possible without undermining the need for confidentiality is _____

"(3) Any material the disclosure of which constitutes an unwarranted invasion of individual privacy such as any records, data, reports, recommendations, or other personal material of any educational, training, social service, medical, health, custodial, child protection, rehabilitation, legal defense, welfare, housing, relocation, insurance and similar program or institution operated by a public body pertaining to any specific individual admitted to or served by such institution or program, including but not limited to information relative to the individual's personal and family circumstances, and any material pertaining to admission, discharge, treatment, progress or condition of any individual, unless the individual concerned (or, in the case of a minor or incompetent, his guardian) shall request in writing that the same be disclosed publicly." The nature of the matter, described as specifically as possible without undermining the need for confidentiality is _____

Approved: February 25, 2026 - RESOLUTION

"(4) Any collective bargaining agreement, or the terms and conditions of which are proposed for inclusion in any collective bargaining agreement, including the negotiation of terms and conditions with employees or representatives of employees of the public body

"(5) Any matter involving the purchase lease or acquisition of real property with public funds, the setting of bank rates or investment of public funds where it could adversely affect the public interest if discussion of such matters were disclosed." The nature of the matter, described as specifically as possible without undermining the need for confidentiality – **real estate: consideration of selling or leasing real property**

"(6) Any tactics and techniques utilized in protecting the safety and property of the public provided that their disclosure could impair such protection. Any investigations of violations or possible violations of the law." The nature of the matter, described as specifically as possible without undermining the need for confidentiality is:

a) "(7) Any pending or anticipated litigation or contract negotiation in which the public body is or may become a party. Any matters falling within the attorney-client privilege, to the extent that confidentiality is required in order for the attorney to exercise his ethical duties as a lawyer." The parties to and docket numbers of each item of litigation and/or the parties to each contract discussed are and the nature of the discussion, described as specifically as possible without undermining the need for confidentiality is:

"(8) Any matter involving the employment, appointment, termination of employment, terms and conditions of employment, evaluation of the performance, promotion or disciplining of any specific prospective public officer or employee or current public officer or employee employed or appointed by the public body, unless all individual employees or appointees whose rights could be adversely affected request in writing that such matter or matters be discussed at a public meeting." Subject to the balancing of the public's interest and the employee's privacy rights under South Jersey Publishing Co. v. New Jersey Expressway Authority, 124 N.J. 478 (1991), the employee(s) and nature of the discussion, described as specifically as possible without undermining the need for confidentiality...:

"(9) Any deliberation of a public body occurring after a public hearing that may result in the imposition of a specific civil penalty upon the responding party or the suspension or loss of a license or permit belonging to the responding party as a result of an act of omission for which the responding party bears responsibility." The nature of the matter, described as specifically as possible without undermining the need for confidentiality is a

WHEREAS, the length of the Executive Session is estimated to be 60 minutes after which the public (select one) meeting of the Brookdale Community College Board of Trustees shall reconvene and immediately adjourn or

reconvene and proceed with business where formal action will be taken.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Brookdale Community College Board of Trustees will go into Executive Session for only the above stated reasons; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Brookdale Community College Board of Trustees hereby declares that its discussion of the aforementioned subject(s) will be made public at a time when the public's interest in disclosure is greater than any privacy or governmental interest being protected from disclosure.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board Secretary, at the present public meeting, shall read aloud enough of this resolution so that members of the public in attendance can understand, as precisely as possible, the nature of the matters that will privately discussed; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board Secretary, on the next business day following this meeting, shall post this Resolution on the Board website and furnish a copy of this Resolution to any member of the public who requests one at the fees allowed by N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1 et seq.