

BROOKDALE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**Board of Trustees
Public Business Meeting Minutes**

December 16, 2025

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

Vice-Chair Abby-White called the meeting to order at 5:30 P.M. and roll call was taken.

| Present | Trustees | Administration: |
|------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| | Ms. Tracey Abby-White, Trustee, Vice-Chair | Dr. Katie Lynch |
| | Mr. Steve Clayton, Trustee | Ms. Nancy Kaari |
| | Dr. Stephanie D'Alessio, Trustee | Ms. Bonnie Passarella, Esq. |
| | Ms. Dyese Davis, Trustee | Mr. Kornipibob Kanthanjan |
| | Ms. Stephanie L. Hoitt, Trustee | Dr. Teresa Manfreda-Foley |
| | Mr. James McCracken, Trustee | Dr. Yesenia Madas |
| | Dr. Les Richens, Trustee | |
| | Mr. Montez Swartz, Trustee | |
| | Dr. David Stout, Secretary | |
| | Ms. Cyndie Williams, Trustee | Ms. Cynthia Gruskos |
| | | |
| Absent | Ms. Mary Pat Angelini, Trustee | |
| | Mr. Paul Crupi, Trustee | |
| | Ms. Barbara Horl, Chair | |
| College Counsel | Mr. Mitch Jacobs, Esq., General Counsel | |

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 December 9, 2025 at 11:30 AM 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. Jacobs read the statement on procedures and requirements for making public comment during the public meeting.

Vice-Chair Abby-White led the pledge of allegiance followed by a welcome to those in attendance.

Vice-Chair Abby-White 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 memory of Anna Uhouse, a retired Brookdale employee who served nearly three decades in key administrative roles. She was remembered for her professionalism, dependability, and care for others, and Dr. Stout expressed gratitude for her lasting contributions to the college.

| Topic and Discussion | Votes Taken | Action and Follow-up Actions |
|--|---|------------------------------|
| Adoption of Agenda | A motion to adopt the agenda was made by Trustee D'Alessio and seconded by Trustee Clayton. Motion passed. | |
| Swearing in of Trustee Stephanie Hoitt – Trustee Stephanie Hoitt was sworn in by Mr. Jacobs, Esq. and welcomed to the Board of Trustees. | | |
| President's Report – Dr. Stout welcomed new trustee Stephanie Hoitt and provided an update on our Middle States accreditation. The accreditation visit is scheduled for Fall 2026, and preparations are underway. The steering committee learned best practices during the MSCHE annual conference for linking accreditation with strategic planning and continuous improvement. Dr. Stout highlighted student Christina Weber's leadership in engaging 20 students in the self-study process and noted her recognition at the conference. The self-study draft will be shared college-wide in February, followed by a Board retreat in April focused on accreditation. The visiting team chair will conduct a preliminary visit before the full accreditation review in Fall 2026. | | |
| Reports from the Board Committees and Liaisons A. Finance & Facilities Committee – Trustee McCracken reported out on the Finance and Facilities Committee held on December 9, 2025. Trustee McCracken welcomed Trustee Hoitt and reviewed facilities updates, including scoreboard installations. The October financial report showed a cash position of \$31.9 million, down \$1.4 million from last year. Grants totaled \$3.1 million year-to-date, a 5.5% increase, and Foundation revenue surged to \$2.4 million due to a \$1.6 million scholarship bequest. The committee discussed issuing an RFP to assess campus asset valuations for naming rights and sponsorship opportunities. Budget concerns dominated the discussion, with FY26 projecting a \$2.1 million deficit due to a 32% increase in health insurance premiums and reduced state aid. Even with a tuition increase, FY27 forecasts a \$1.2 million shortfall. Leadership is reviewing vacancies, operational efficiencies, and program adjustments, with budget scenarios to be presented in January and finalized in February. | | |

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|--|-------------|------------------------------|
| <p>B. Audit Committee – Trustee D’Alessio reported that the Audit Committee reviewed the Fiscal Year 2025 financial audit conducted by Withum, which resulted in an unmodified (clean) opinion—the highest level of assurance—with no material weaknesses, disagreements, or indications of fraud. The committee commended the finance team, led by Dr. Manfreda Foley, for their strong preparation and performance. Although the audit was substantially complete, the single audit remains pending due to delayed federal compliance guidance and is expected to conclude in early January for formal board acceptance in February. Financial highlights presented by the auditors showed several trends requiring close monitoring: total assets declined by \$4.8 million, largely due to a \$3 million reduction in cash, while unrestricted reserves fell by \$3.6 million to \$18.3 million, reflecting rising operating expenses and continued reliance on reserves to balance the budget. Despite modest increases in both operating and non-operating revenues, expenses grew at a faster pace, resulting in a \$526,000 decline in net position for the year. With no objections, the Committee agreed to recommend acceptance of the FY25 financial audit at tonight’s meeting.</p> <p>The committee also received updates on internal audit progress, noting continued work with CohnReznick on contract management and upcoming testing related to financial reporting, budgeting, and forecasting. Dr. Stout confirmed that no reports were received through the ethics hotline during the period reviewed.</p> <p>C. Governance Committee - Trustee Davis reported on the Governance Committee meeting held on December 8, 2025, highlighting extensive policy review and refinement undertaken by the committee. The committee examined updates to the Tuition and Fees Policy, clarifying that the tuition and fee schedule is intended to generate sufficient revenue to support the college’s annual operating budget rather than implying tuition and fees alone balance it. Additional revisions affirmed the President’s responsibility to propose tuition and fee schedules as part of the budget development process and incorporated language on tuition waivers aligned with existing policies, collective bargaining agreements, and state-mandated programs. The committee also conducted a thorough review of the Presidential Search Process Policy, incorporating prior recommendations to allow board discretion in hiring an external search firm, updating terminology from "screening" to "search," and restructuring sections to place interim appointment procedures earlier in the document. Further refinements aligned policy language with Middle States accreditation standards by specifying that any interim president must possess qualifications consistent with the college’s mission. The committee agreed that while essential procedural steps should remain in the policy, detailed operational guidance will be moved to a separate guideline document.</p> <p>Beyond policy review, Trustee Davis noted that professional development funding constraints led the committee to prioritize trustee attendance at the ACCT National Legislative Summit in February and to limit participation at the National Leadership Congress in October. Planning continues for the Board retreat on April 18, which will focus on Middle States accreditation preparation and board governance goals. The committee confirmed three overarching goals for the President: ensuring a successful Middle States self-study and visit, advancing and implementing Strategic Plan 2030 with full campus engagement, and stabilizing the college’s finances through multi-year planning. Trustee self-evaluations were completed and will inform retreat planning and future governance improvements.</p> | | |

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| <p>D. Graduate Trustee Report – Graduate Trustee Swartz reported on his early activities and emerging student concerns following his first Graduate Trustee Advisory Council (GTAC) meeting on December 1. He highlighted three key issues raised by students: (1) a lack of clear information regarding ICE activity on or around campus and its impact on some students’ comfort and decisions about attending in-person classes; (2) the need to strengthen student involvement and engagement on campus to support academic success; and (3) questions about improving the accessibility and quality of academic advising across departments. He noted upcoming meetings with Dr. Lynch and Dr. Madas to continue the advising discussion. Trustee Swartz also shared his involvement in campus and community events, including participating in the December 16 Esports 24-hour charity livestream benefitting a cancer charity, and an upcoming December 17 meeting organized with Senator Andy Kim to discuss community college issues with our GTAC students.</p> <p>E. Foundation Update - Vice-Chair Abby-White provided a brief update on Foundation activities, reminding trustees that year-end, tax-deductible contributions to the annual campaign were still being accepted and that all gift sizes were meaningful. She also summarized recent planning progress for the upcoming April 24 gala, emphasizing the positive energy and creative ideas from the committee. The event will feature a refreshed approach focused on offering experience-based live auction items—such as travel packages or local experiences—and trustees were encouraged to submit suggestions or contribute smaller items that could be combined into themed packages. She expressed appreciation for trustees willing to assist through their professional networks.</p> <p>F. NJCCC - Dr. Stout reported on the NJCCC Executive Committee meeting he attended on December 15, outlining significant statewide concerns affecting all New Jersey community colleges. He emphasized that the sector is facing a potentially severe financial strain due to steep increases in health benefits premiums, which most colleges—including Brookdale—pay through the School Employees Health Benefits Program (SEHBP). To address these pressures, the NJCCC plans to request three key funding increases from the state: a 3% inflationary boost in operational aid (about \$2.5 million system-wide), a one-year \$30 million supplemental fund to offset rising health insurance costs, and an additional \$30 million investment to support workforce credential programs. Dr. Stout noted that the new gubernatorial administration appears to be restructuring the state budget development process, raising both uncertainty and cautious optimism about community colleges receiving appropriate funding after years of being under-supported. He also stressed that New Jersey ranks 47th nationally in state funding for community colleges, underscoring the urgency of securing increased aid to keep tuition affordable. Additionally, he shared that NJCCC has convened a senior-level task force to analyze long-term solutions to skyrocketing health benefit premiums, including a forthcoming presentation by Doug Forrester. Dr. Stout concluded by noting that the situation remains fluid and that he will continue to report developments as they unfold.</p> | | |
| <p>Public Comment on Agenda Items</p> <p>No public comment on agenda items was made and Ms. Gruskos confirmed that no written public comment was submitted.</p> | | |

| Topic and Discussion | Votes Taken | Action and Follow-up Actions |
|--|---|------------------------------|
| Review of Consent Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Any item may be removed from the consent agenda for discussion by any voting member of the Board of Trustees.</i> <p>A. Acceptance of Consent Agenda</p> | <p>A motion to adopt the consent agenda was made by Trustee Clayton and seconded by Trustee Williams.</p> <p>Motion approved.</p> | |
| Approval of Public Business Meeting Minutes - November 25, 2025 | <p>A motion to approve the minutes from the Public Business Meeting on November 25, 2025, was made by Trustee McCracken and seconded by Trustee Swartz.</p> <p>Motion passed.</p> | |
| Approval of Consent Agenda <p>A. Approval of Human Resources B. Acceptance of Grants C. 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 D. Open Invoice Payment Requests for Vendor, Student and Employee Payments E. Monthly Financial Reports F. Capital Project Update</p> | <p>A motion to approve the consent agenda was made by Trustee McCracken and seconded by Trustee Swartz.</p> <p>Motion passed.</p> <p>YES: Trustees Clayton, D'Alessio, Davis, Hoitt, McCracken, Richens, Swartz, Williams and Vice-Chair Abby-White</p> <p>NO: None</p> <p>ABSTENTIONS: None</p> | |
| Acceptance of FY25 Financial Audit | <p>A motion to accept the FY25 Financial Audit was made by Trustee Clayton and seconded by Trustee Abby-White.</p> <p>Motion passed.</p> <p>YES: Trustees Clayton, D'Alessio, Davis, Hoitt,</p> | |

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|--|---|------------------------------|
| | <p>McCracken, Richens, Swartz, Williams and Vice-Chair Abby-White</p> <p>NO: None</p> <p>ABSTENTIONS: None</p> | |
| <p>Lodging of Revised Policies</p> <p>A. 1.3035 Presidential Search Process (new title)</p> <p>B. 4.1000 Tuition and Fees</p> | <p>A motion to approve the lodging of revised policies listed below was made by Trustee Davis and seconded by Trustee D'Alessio.</p> <p>A. 1.3035 Presidential Search Process (new title)</p> <p>B. 4.1000 Tuition and Fees</p> <p>Motion passed.</p> <p>YES: Trustees Clayton, D'Alessio, Davis, Hoitt, McCracken, Richens, Swartz, Williams and Vice-Chair Abby-White</p> <p>NO: None</p> <p>ABSTENTIONS: None</p> | |
| <p>Public Comment -</p> <p>No public comment was made and Ms. Gruskos confirmed that no written public comment was submitted</p> | | |
| <p>Old/New Business –</p> <p>Vice-Chair Abby-White reported on a recent visit to the Culinary Center in Asbury, highlighting the exceptional five-course tasting menu offered at an accessible price and noting that the student-run operation now allows BYOB to support training in wine service. Dr. Stout then acknowledged the difficult campus climate resulting from recent financial challenges, including the significant rise in health insurance premiums and the college's ongoing reliance on reserves. He expressed appreciation for the leadership team's extensive work and compassion in communicating non-renewal notices to affected employees, while reaffirming the college's efforts to identify vacant positions that may serve as potential placements.</p> | | |

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| Finally, Vice-Chair Abby-White referenced newly distributed committee assignments and encouraged trustees to approach their roles with openness to learning, noting adjustments to meeting times and confirming April 18 as the date for the annual board retreat | | |
| Adjournment Meeting adjourned at 6:14 PM | A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Trustee Clayton and seconded by Trustee Swartz. Motion passed. | |