



West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission

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State's schools have eyes on a share of funding Federal money could make it possible to build a dozen K-12 schools

by Ry Rivard, Daily Mail staff

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- West Virginia officials hope the federal government will provide the state with a half-billion dollars for school construction, renovation and modernization.

State officials have compiled a wish list of \$545 million in capital projects at public schools and colleges across the state, according to information provided by Gov. Joe Manchin's office.

The list includes a new middle school and three new high schools but does not identify them specifically.

There also are dozens of multimillion-dollar renovations, upgrades and modernizations at schools and colleges. Smaller projects include ventilating units, electrical system upgrades and sewer and water line improvements.

One large request is \$26 million for a practice facility for West Virginia University's basketball teams. The practice facility was approved on Dec. 12 by WVU's Board of Governors contingent on private funding. Eleven days later, the state had the building on the federal funding request list.

The list also includes \$25 million to renovate and add on to Fleming Hall, the aging athletic building at West Virginia State University. The university has struggled for years to replace the hall with a new athletic and educational facility.

"We were looking at every funding source possible," said Bob Parker, WVSU's vice president for finance.

With federal money, the university could avoid raising student fees and spending time scouring for private donations in a weak economy.

The school projects, along with another \$1.5 billion of "shovel ready" spending, have been sent to the state's congressional delegation in hopes that the state will receive some of the vast economic stimulus package being pushed by President Barack Obama.

Among the large education projects being requested by West Virginia officials are:

\$20 million, \$31 million and \$53 million for three new high schools, none of which is named in the list.

\$45 million for a center for contemporary art at Shepherd University.

\$30 million to renovate WVU's White Hall on its downtown campus for use by the physics program.

\$25 million for a new residence hall, and \$30 million for a health and wellness center, at Glenville State College.

\$20 million for renovations at three unspecified elementary schools.

\$15.7 million for renovations at Greenbrier West High School.

\$7.3 million for a school that houses prekindergarten through eighth-grades in Harts, Lincoln County.

The federal money could make it possible for the state to build about a dozen K-12 schools that it otherwise could not, according to Mark Manchin, the executive director of the state School Building Authority.

Some of those schools could be built later with state money freed up by federal spending. Others would be built with federal money substituting for state funding that has already been committed.

All of the public school construction requests are said to be "shovel ready," and could begin soon.

Of the higher education projects, some have already been approved but are waiting for funding. Others, like the art center at Shepherd, are projects that are in the middle of several phases of construction.

One of the smaller requests is for \$250,000 to resurface the tennis courts at Fairmont State University and to provide a road to them.

Several requests are listed for West Virginia State in addition to the \$25 million for Fleming Hall. They include: sewer lines campus wide, \$1 million; water lines campus wide, \$1 million; campus information center, \$1 million; telecommunications network and infrastructure campus wide, \$1 million; and Lakin Field renovation, \$600,000.

Another \$16.5 million is requested for renovations to a dozen or more buildings on the West Virginia State campus.

WVU-Tech is seeking \$1 million for demolition of the Coed Hall building and \$2.5 million for a diesel garage for its community and technical college and nearly \$1 million for several renovation projects.

Marshall University is requesting only five projects with a combined cost of less than \$10 million.

Marshall has construction of several large facilities under way, mostly through public-private partnerships, and didn't have other projects that were a priority, ready to go and without a funding source.

The status of the actual funding is part of an ever-shifting economic and political landscape in Washington.

Some feel the current plans for education do not go far enough.

In a recent letter to his colleagues on the Senate Finance Committee, Sen. Jay Rockefeller, D-W.Va., urged them to set aside \$25 billion in the stimulus package for school modernization, repair, and technology upgrades. That would be about \$15 billion more than is currently being contemplated for such projects.

The current version of the stimulus package is still in the House. A version from late last week included about \$140 billion for education, including money and tax code changes to increase funding for support programs like Head Start; construction and modernization of public schools and colleges; and increases in Pell Grants.

January 28, 2009

WVU adds candidates to search

By Alison Knezevich, Staff writer

West Virginia University's presidential search committee will interview two more candidates than previously planned.

At a special meeting Monday night, the committee voted unanimously to interview two more people, WVU officials said Tuesday. That brings the interview list to 16 people.

On Jan. 17, the committee had decided to narrow 60 applicants down to 14 people.

On Tuesday, WVU spokeswoman Janey Cink said members of the committee chose Monday to invite the two people for interviews because they had received more information on the candidates.

Cink said she did not know whether the two candidates were part of the original pool of applicants, because the discussion on them occurred in a closed session.

"I know the committee is very, very pleased, and Chair [Gene] Budig is very pleased with the high quality of the pool and the selections that they made for off-campus interviews," Cink said.

According to a timeline WVU's Board of Governors approved in the fall, the 15-member search committee will wrap up interviews by March 15. They hope to pick a replacement for interim President Peter Magrath by April 3.

Officials have said they would not release the dates or locations of the interviews, saying that would break confidentiality rules set out by the state's Higher Education Policy Commission.

In a statement released Tuesday, Budig said, "We are heartened by the high interest in West Virginia University and the exceptional candidates for the position of president."



January 30, 2009

Manchin names new member to WVU BOG Diane Lewis runs Morgantown business

BY CASSIE SHANER The Dominion Post

THE WVU BOARD of Governors will meet in special session at 10 a.m. Monday by telephone. The call will originate in the president's conference room at Stewart Hall. THE BOG will meet in regular session at 8:30 a.m. Feb. 6 in the Barnette BOG meeting room at the Erickson Alumni Center. INFO: bog.wvu.edu.

Morgantown businesswoman Diane Lewis will replace Parry Petroplus on the WVU Board of Governors, Gov. Joe Manchin announced Thursday.

Petroplus, president of the Morgantown real estate firm Petroplus and Associates Inc., and a partner at the development firm Platinum Properties, LLC, resigned from the board at the end of December. Lewis is the founder, president and CEO of Action Facilities Management Inc., a firm that provides facilities management contracting services for government and commercial entities. She was appointed by Manchin to fill Petroplus' unexpired four-year term, which ends in June.

In a statement released Thursday, Lewis said she was honored by the invitation to join the board.

"WVU is a leading land-grant institution with a rich history and an even brighter future, and I want to be a part of that momentum," said Lewis, a Clarksburg native and graduate of Fairmont State College.

Manchin said Lewis brings knowledge and experience to the board. She has previously worked as a contract administrator and financial adviser for K-Ray Security and as a branch manager of Norwest Financial.

Lewis has also been recognized as a 2008 "Young Gun" by West Virginia Executive magazine, 2007 West Virginia Minority Small Business Person of the Year by the U.S. Small Business Administration and 2005 West Virginia Minority Business Development Center Female Entrepreneur of the Year.

"She has a proven record as a local entrepreneur and has shown the ability to grow a small business, manage people and produce positive results," Manchin said. "I believe that with the skills Ms. Lewis possesses, coupled with the talented individuals that currently serve on the Board, West Virginia University will continue to position itself to compete at the highest level."

Mike Perone, vice-chairman of Mountaineers for Integrity and Responsibility and a member of the WVU Faculty Senate, said Manchin called him Thursday morning to inform him of the appointment.

MIR began pushing for changes to the BOG — including increased diversity — after an investigative panel found that WVU had awarded Heather Bresch, Manchin's daughter and chief operating officer of Mylan Pharmaceuticals, an executive MBA degree she did not earn.

"I understand that she is an accomplished businesswoman," Perone said, noting that he is not familiar with Lewis' record. "I believe she will bring a fresh perspective to the BOG that is welcome."

Perone and Morgantown Mayor Ron Justice both said they appreciated Manchin's decision to choose someone from the Morgantown area. Justice sent a letter to Manchin last week asking him to consider community concerns in making future BOG appointments.

"I know Diane, and I think she's a wonderful selection," Justice said. "It's very important, from a community standpoint, that we have people that can express concerns and ensure a good working relationship between the university and the community."

Virginia Kleist, chairwoman of the WVU Faculty Senate, said she is also pleased with Lewis' appointment, and she looks forward to working with her.

"She seems like a very smart businesswoman, and I'm very pleased to see increased diversity on the West Virginia University Board of Governors," Kleist said.

Kleist and other Faculty Senate leaders met with a representative from Manchin's office earlier this month to discuss several candidates for the BOG seat recommended by faculty. Lewis was not on the list, which was provided to The Dominion Post by Manchin's office earlier this month.

In statements released by WVU on Thursday, both BOG chairwoman Carolyn Long and interim WVU President C. Peter Magrath said they have already spoken with Lewis.

"I met with Ms. Lewis yesterday, and found her to be a bright, forward-thinking and respected businesswoman and community leader," Long said. "We welcome her participation on the Board."

Magrath added: "I'm delighted that Gov. Manchin has successfully filled the vacancy on the Board of Governors with a strong and outstanding appointment."

Manchin spokesman Matt Turner said Lewis would be eligible for, and likely reappointed to, a full four-year term in June if she's interested.

The board's next meeting is a special conference-call session scheduled for Monday. An agenda for the conference-call meeting lists two items to be discussed in executive session — the presidential search and student records.

In his resignation letter, Petroplus said he wanted to give his replacement a chance to participate in WVU's presidential search. The board is slated to select a new president by April 3.

In the Wake of Scandal, No News Is Good News at West Virginia U.

By PAUL FAIN

The fallout from last year's degree scandal at West Virginia University featured the resignation of several university administrators and heaps of unflattering publicity. But in the six months since the departure of the university's president, Michael S. Garrison, that unrest has largely subsided.

The welcome break from the spotlight has earned praise for West Virginia's interim chief, C. Peter Magrath, a veteran leader in public higher education, who arrived in July. Also winning plaudits has been the university's Board of Governors, which was bolstered last year by the addition of Charles M. Vest, president emeritus of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The controversy centered on an executive M.B.A. improperly awarded to Heather M. Bresch, daughter of West Virginia's governor (The Chronicle, January 3, 2008). The results of an external audit of the university's recordkeeping were scheduled to be released next Monday.

University professors who were vocal critics of the university's handling of the degree matter say relations have improved dramatically between the faculty and the administration.

"The mood has lifted considerably," says Mark T. Brazaitis, an associate professor of English and director of the university's creative-writing program. "There's a spirit of consideration and energy."

Faculty members point to one factor as key to the thaw on campus: Mr. Magrath's credentials.

"It just felt really good to have the university taken out of the politicians' hands and put back in the hands of academics," says William F. Wonderlin, an associate professor of biochemistry.

Winning Back Trust

Mr. Magrath, 75, is a former president of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges who has led several major universities. Mr. Garrison was a lawyer and prominent lobbyist in West Virginia when he was hired as president. In addition, Mr. Garrison, who is now 40 years old, took heat for his youth.

For his part, Mr. Magrath acknowledges that his track record in higher education helped to quickly ease tensions. But he insists that he has been more than a placeholder with a nice résumé.

“This is not a stroll in the park,” says Mr. Magrath, who was initially reluctant to accept the position. “I have found this extraordinarily energizing.”

First on his list of tasks was to listen to faculty members who he says were “very hurt” by the degree scandal. Then, he says, he set to tackling three or four “big ticket” issues rather than a larger list of goals. In addition, he says he opted to not fill the various vacancies among senior administrators, leaving them in the hands of interims until his successor arrives.

One of Mr. Magrath’s priorities was to repair strained relationships with donors. In April the West Virginia-based McGee Foundation announced that it was dropping its support for a planned university art museum. Mr. Magrath says the \$1-million gift from the foundation is back on, and more large gifts are on the way. The university is also in the planning phase of a major capital campaign.

West Virginia would not be the only university to escape a recent scandal with its fund-raising capacity unscathed. In fact, other institutions have seen an uptick in giving after controversies, including Dartmouth and Hamilton Colleges. Some experts say alumni may feel a need to help their alma maters during tough times. And perhaps equally important is that the institutions were in the news—the maxim that any publicity is good publicity.

Several people at West Virginia say Mr. Magrath has brought candor and humor to the job. One example is his effort to curb what he says are “ridiculous bureaucratic procedures.” In December he created an ad hoc group called the Committee to Rescind Asinine Procedures. Despite the cheeky name, Mr. Magrath says the group of faculty and staff members, and students will undertake a serious effort to eliminate wasteful redundancies.

Degree Audit Looms

Mr. Magrath’s work at West Virginia has been helped by the state’s healthy economy, including a thriving energy sector.

“We’re financially very stable,” Mr. Magrath says. Enrollment continues to grow, with half of the university’s students hailing from outside of the state.

But West Virginia has not fully emerged from the degree scandal. One major test remains in the outside review of the university’s records and of the College of Business and Economics, which is being conducted by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers. The group’s report will shed light on whether Ms. Bresch’s degree was an anomaly, or, as some university officials suggested last year, many more students received unearned diplomas. Either way, explaining the results will pose a challenge for the university.

Mr. Magrath should be busy in his few remaining months as president. He says he is not interested in the permanent position, which university officials hope to fill by early April.

Soft Landing

West Virginia's former president, Mr. Garrison, is now working as a lawyer with a Morgantown-based firm. But he retains deep ties to his alma mater. In an interview in Washington the morning after he was on hand to watch the Mountaineers' basketball team play Georgetown University, he said he hears often from people on the campus, like students seeking career advice. That contact has helped ease the sting of leaving the presidency, he said.

Mr. Garrison is proud of his accomplishments during his one year as president, among them his efforts to secure financing from the state government and to win a contract dispute with a former head football coach, who eventually paid \$4-million to the university (The Chronicle, June 20, 2008). In retrospect, he said, his administration's actions rankled critics more than his experience or age.

"Most of the controversy around my being president revolved around our aggressive change agenda," he said.

January 29, 2009

MU to trim number of summer sessions

BILL ROSENBERGER, The Herald-Dispatch

HUNTINGTON -- Marshall University plans to cut its summer sessions from six to four because of a combined loss of \$1.3 million during the past four summers.

Provost Gayle Ormiston unveiled the new plan Thursday afternoon at a meeting of the Faculty Senate.

In previous years, Marshall employed six summer sessions that included the five-week session immediately following commencement; back-to-back six-week sessions; a 10-week session; and a combination of two others.

"We cannot run summer sessions where we lose money," Ormiston said. "They have to be able to pay for themselves."

The new schedule, Ormiston said, would include four sessions: May 11 to June 5; June 8 to July 10; July 14 to August 14; and an overlapping 12-week session that starts May 25 and ends August 14.

The changes come as a result of a 2007 report written by a small group of faculty regarding summer sessions. That report, Ormiston said, called for reducing the number of summer sessions to two.

He said four sessions that offer the classes students really need should give way to greater enrollment figures. And the addition of undergraduate courses at the South Charleston campus, which also starts this summer, should have a significant impact.

"We're really trying to schedule courses that students need," he said. "Courses that we know have good enrollments, and the data shows what courses those are."

Undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in summer sessions at the Huntington and South Charleston campuses totaled 5,723 in 2008, a 4.8 percent drop from two years before.

Ormiston said the plans for the revamped summer schedule would be completed over the next month as department heads submit summer schedules.

The Faculty Senate also approved the addition of a bachelor's degree program for radiology. Although opposed by Marshall Community & Technical College member Michael McComas, the dean of the College of Health Professions said it would provide students a greater edge in the medical field.

"Radiology is mostly an associate degree," Dean Shortie McKinney said. "It's very common for programs in the health profession to start at the technical level, then advance to a higher level."

While neither the state of West Virginia nor the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists are requiring a bachelor's degree, McKinney said it provides more options for students.

"It allows students to have a professional bachelor's degree, and there's value in that," she said. "It's very important to go beyond basic technical training."

Marshall President Stephen Kopp also told the Faculty Senate that bonds from 1992, set to be paid off in 2012, might be able to be paid off earlier.

"If we can accelerate and pay them off, we could free up to \$2 million," Kopp said, adding that the money could be used to invest in university programs. He plans to talk to legislators about it before the session starts in February.