



External Engagement Committee

12:45 p.m.

March 19, 2026

Kyle Hall, Room 340

Radford, VA

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. George Mendiola Jr., Vice Chair

Mr. Dale S. Ardizzone

Ms. Mary Anne Holbrook

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT

Ms. Betsy D. Beamer, Chair

Mr. William C. Davis

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Tyler W. Lester, Rector

Mrs. Jennifer Wishon Gilbert, Vice Rector

Ms. Jeanne S. Armentrout

Ms. Joann S. Craig

Dr. Betty Jo Foster

Mr. David A. Smith

Mr. Jonathan D. Sweet

Ms. Callie M. Dalton

Mr. James C. Turk

OTHERS PRESENT

Dr. Dannette Beane, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Strategic Communications

Mr. Ryan Bowyer, Chief of Staff

Ms. Lisa Ghidotti, Assistant Vice President for Government Relations and Strategic Initiatives

Dr. Robert Hoover, Vice President for Finance and Administration

Dr. Angela Joyner, Vice President for Economic Development and Corporate Education

Ms. Susan Richardson, University Counsel

Dr. Bethany Usher, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

Ms. Penny Helms White, Vice President for Advancement and Alumni Relations

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. George Mendiola Jr., Vice Chair, formally called the External Engagement Committee meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. Kyle Hall in Room 340, Radford, Va.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. George Mendiola Jr., Vice Chair, asked for a motion to approve the March 19, 2026, agenda, as published. Mr. Dale S. Ardizzone made the motion and Mrs. Jennifer Wishon Gilbert, Vice Rector, seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. George Mendiola Jr., Vice Chair, asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the December 4, 2025, meeting of the External Engagement Committee meeting, as published. Mrs. Jennifer Wishon Gilbert made the motion. Mr. Dale S. Ardizzone seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CORPORATE EDUCATION

Dr. Angela Joyner, Vice President of Economic Development and Corporate Education, presented her division's strategic roadmap and its alignment with the university's broader strategic plan. The division maintains core partnerships throughout the New River Valley and Roanoke regions, with additional relationships extending into Southwest Virginia, including Danville, Martinsville, and the South Boston area. The division's strategic priority areas include partnership and economic impact, student success and experiential learning, continuing education and workforce development, community engagement and regional tourism, and organizational excellence and culture.

Dr. Joyner reported that Radford University is an active participant in the Strong ACC (Accountable Care Community) in Richmond. Ms. Nichole Hair, Director of Economic Development and Community Engagement, visited General Assembly representatives from Southwest Virginia as part of a coalition advocating for constituent support spanning early childhood through career readiness.

Radford University is actively collaborating with regional partners to advance a series of community-focused research initiatives across the New River Valley. In partnership with the City of Radford, the University is currently conducting both a retail analysis and a transportation study. The retail analysis will examine local business trends and market conditions to identify strategies that strengthen business attraction and retention over the long term. A housing study is also underway, coordinated in collaboration with the New River Regional Commission, to assess regional housing needs and inform future planning decisions.

The Economic Development and Corporate Education division advances student opportunity through a coordinated suite of experiential programs, including a deliberate Student Employment Strategy, the Economic Development and Corporate Education Internship Program, the Onward NRV Experience Program, and Highlander Gigs. Each initiative is designed to connect classroom learning with meaningful professional experience while strengthening the economic vitality of the broader region.

Our partnership with the Virginia Department of Education on a Statewide Workforce Development Initiative demonstrates Economic Development and Corporate Education's capacity for high-impact workforce training. Since launching in 2022, the custom development training has served over 2,700 Virginia educators and generated more than \$444,000 in investment. Tom Bennett II, Senior Director of Business Operations and Planning, has been instrumental in leading the implementation and continuing the relationship.

UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT AND ALUMNI RELATIONS

Ms. Penny Helms White, Vice President of Advancement and Alumni Relations provided an update to the committee on several areas within the Division of Advancement and Alumni Relations. To better align with the university's strategic plan, Advancement and Alumni Relations has expanded and refined several priorities to reflect our goals and the impact we aim to have across the university. These priorities include Athletics Philanthropy and Engagement; Donor Growth, Retention and Stewardship; Planned Giving and Legacy Engagement; Volunteer Pathways to Philanthropy; and Young Alumni Connection and Early-Stage Engagement.

In reporting on fundraising progress for fiscal year 2026, Ms. Penny Helms White shared that, as of the end of February, total fundraising stands at \$9.2 million.

In Athletics Philanthropy and Engagement RAD48 raised nearly \$170,000 from 1,262 donors, demonstrating strong engagement and continued growth in participation. The division also introduced a new Athletics Stewardship Plan, which creates a broader vision for athletics philanthropy and enhances how we engage and recognize donors who support Radford Athletics.

Two recent gifts were highlighted that directly support the university's strategic plan. The Virginia Credit Union Financial Success Center received a \$2.5 million gift, which will provide financial literacy resources for both students and members of the surrounding community. In addition, alumni Mary and Kory Hummer made a gift to support the Hummer Championship Pickleball Courts, contributing to the expansion of club sports opportunities on campus.

Rebekah LaPlante, Director of Gift Planning, provided an update on planned giving initiatives. Efforts are focused on growing the planned giving pipeline through a relationship-first approach while identifying potential legacy donors through new donor societies, consistent annual donors, and lifetime giving data. The program is also increasing engagement with Radford University retirees.

Additional work has focused on making planned giving more approachable through a legacy giving website, targeted print and digital communications, and donor stories featured in Radford Magazine. Legacy donors are recognized through the Society of 1910. Planned giving continues to play an important role in sustaining donor-funded scholarships year after year.

To stay current with best practices in the field, the division continues to participate in professional development opportunities. Seven Advancement and Alumni Relations staff members attended the CASE District III Conference, where the division also received recognition for the Together Campaign closing celebration video.

In closing, Ms. Penny Helms White shared several upcoming events including Radford Night with the Rail Yard Dawgs Hockey on March 27, the Senior Block Party/Celebration on April 9, and Tartan Toast on April 17 also celebrating the New River Society and Red Brick Society members. Spring Commencement will take place May 1–2 with Eugene Naughton '89 serving as the commencement speaker.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 1:58 pm.

Respectfully submitted,