

**PIERPONT COMMUNITY & TECHNICAL COLLEGE
BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

Advancement and Public Relations Committee Meeting

**Tuesday, May 13, 2025
1:30 PM**

**Pierpont's Advanced Technology Center (ATC)
500 Galliher Drive
Fairmont, WV 26554
Room 216A**

MINUTES

Notice of Meeting

A meeting of the Pierpont Community & Technical College (Pierpont) Board of Governors Advancement and Public Relations Committee was held on May 13, 2025, beginning at 1:30 PM. The meeting was conducted in person at the Advanced Technology Center in Fairmont, WV. Advanced announcement of this meeting was posted on the WV Secretary of State's Meeting Notices Webpage.

Committee Members Present: Lisa Lang – Committee Chair, Christine Miller, Juanita Nickerson, and Joanne Seasholtz

Committee Members Absent: Jessica Killon

Other Board Members Present: Thomas Cole, Vickie Findley, David Hinkle, and Jeffrey Powell

Others Present: Members of the President's Cabinet, faculty, staff, and others

I. Call to Order

Lisa Lang called the meeting to order at 1:34 PM.

II. Approval of Minutes – February 18, 2025

Joanne Seasholtz moved to approve the February 18, 2025 meeting minutes. Christine Miller seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

III. Marketing and Branding Update

Stefanie Moore introduced Alex Casey as the new Assistant Director of Marketing and presented the Marketing and Branding Update (**Attachment A**).

Discussion included the importance of allowing sufficient lead time for marketing and event promotion, with a recommended timeframe of 3–4 weeks in advance. Invitations should follow a similar timeline. Additional items discussed included program-specific billboards,

highlighting two-year educational pathways such as dual enrollment that allow students to graduate and enter the workforce earning competitive wages, and the potential to partner with local businesses for joint advertising efforts. A monthly spotlight segment on WDTV was also suggested as a promotional opportunity.

IV. Adjournment

There being no further business, Christine Miller moved to adjourn the meeting. Joanne Seasholtz seconded the motion. All agreed. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted by Amanda N. Hawkinberry



Mission Statement: To provide accessible, responsive, comprehensive education that works
Vision: To empower individuals and strengthen communities through exceptional training and educational pathways
Tagline: Education that works!

MARKETING AND BRANDING REFRESH AT PIERPONT

Empathy-Driven Marketing and Branding Strategy



1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Higher Education is at a crossroads. Everyone has different perceptions of it, and prospective students debate whether college is worth it. There is an opportunity to make a larger impact, be innovative, and show that college matters.

One way is through the brand, marketing, and communications. Showing the community empathy. Empathy is one of the most powerful tools for building relationships.

Pierpont Community & Technical College has progressed a lot in its 51-year history. Pierpont is now where it can establish itself as Pierpont Community & Technical College, a college focused on the community it serves.

With a focus on empathy in the branding, marketing, and communications, Pierpont can stand out of a loud, crowded market with a brand that is authentic, distinctive, and personal.



2

EMPATHY-DRIVEN **BRANDING**

Branding is more than a logo and tagline: “It’s how people feel when they think about the brand. It’s the story they tell themselves about who you are and what you stand for.” (Heart over Hype, 2025).

We need to build a brand that means something and makes people feel something they won’t forget. To do so, we have to start with our audience. What do we currently mean to them and how can we improve that or enhance it?



3

EMPATHY-DRIVEN **BRANDING**

Empathy-driven branding replaces shouting the loudest with showing your audience that you actually get them. Higher education is an emotional decision. It’s personal.

Authenticity, distinctiveness, and resonance are the backbone of any strong brand.



4

EMPATHY-DRIVEN MARKETING

Empathy-driven marketing focuses on customers by seeking to understand their emotional needs and viewpoints. This approach requires businesses to step into the customer's perspective, recognizing their challenges, and customizing marketing strategies to align with their values and feelings. By showing true concern and understanding, this method cultivates deeper connections and enhances loyalty.

This allows us to:

- Connect with audiences on their values and feelings.
- Understand the audience's needs and values.
- Understand the deeper context of their actions.



5

THE OPPORTUNITY

- Improve brand consistency.
- Create better awareness touchpoints for prospective students.
- Deepen student connections through empathy.
- Promote all of Pierpont's offerings.
- Refresh the institutional image.



6

THE GOALS



- Increased enrollment.
- Improved student retention.
- Increased awareness of Pierpont and all of its offerings.
- Stronger alumni engagement.
- More effective marketing spend.

7

STUDENT MESSAGING



- Prospective students need to see themselves. They need to see real stories, struggles, and triumphs.
- Messages need to reflect the nuanced reality of your audience's lives.
- We need to forge deeper, more authentic connections with our audiences and avoid using empty buzzwords.
- We need to find out what truly sets us apart and connect those strengths to the people who want and need them.
- They're worried about choosing the right program and calculating how to juggle work, parenting, and school. Instead of "Flexible class schedules available," it's "We know balancing school with work and family is challenging. That's why we offer evening and online classes designed to fit your life, not disrupt it."
- Personalization is more than just adding their name; it's making them feel like you're speaking to them personally.
- Timing matters. Tone matters. Volume matters. And most of all, understanding matters.

8

STUDENT JOURNEY MAP



- Explore the student's journey, from brand awareness to graduation and beyond.
- Review how students are experiencing Pierpont at every turn.
 - What messages are they receiving?
 - What feelings were they left with?
 - Were we making them feel like they belonged, or were they just another number?
- It's about how you make your audience feel at every step.
- It's also making sure there is the right mix, not overwhelming them with too many emails, mailers, calls, etc., but establishing a mix that will address their concerns and provide support without pushing them away.

9

BRAND REFRESH



Pierpont has an opportunity to refresh its brand in a way that builds on its student experience and community impact. A brand is campus-wide. It's not just Pierpont's story; it's how the community sees our brand.

Brand Refresh Steps:

- Conduct focus groups
- Interview prospective students, current students, parents, alumni, faculty, and staff.
 - Why did you choose this institution?
 - What's been the most meaningful part of your experience here?
 - How do you describe this college to others?
 - What sets this school apart?
 - What would you say if you had sixty seconds to convince someone to come here?
 - What do you believe makes Pierpont unique?
 - Why did you choose to work, study, or stay here?
 - What stories stand out to you as proof of our impact?
- Use the data from the surveys for quantitative and qualitative feedback.

10

MARKETING PLAN



Some focuses, outside of the brand refresh:

- Produce high-quality content and remove low-quality content that could drive students away.
- Create a content marketing plan to boost SEO and organic reach.
- Prioritize the message in advertising with very targeted audiences in an omnichannel approach.
- Build out personas for key programs within each school.
- Create a social media plan utilizing user-generated content and community building.
- Build simpler touchpoints for prospective students to note their interest.
- Strategically work with local news companies for advertising for better public reach.
- Re-engage alumni and create a plan for capturing their contact information before they graduate.
- Highlight current student's stories, showing it is possible and highlight alumni's successes to show outcomes.
- Local sponsorship and advertising to reach the 13-service region community.
- A student ambassador program and a refresh of the use of the mascot.

11

NEXT STEPS

- Audit the messaging through an empathy lens.
- Map out the student's journey from brand awareness to graduation.
- Create a campaign for current students to enroll in classes.
- Conduct focus groups and surveys among the different Pierpont Community audiences.
- Based on the data collected, build out a brand refresh. Data + Empathy = Impact.
- Create the brand personality and voice, crafting Pierpont's story in this voice.
- Review the website for usability and accessibility.
- Create a campaign around "I got in!"/admission to Pierpont.
- Record videos for the different touchpoints across the student's journey and find stories to tell.
- Build the Annual Marketing Plan for FY26.



12

CONCLUSION



We have an opportunity to create a brand that reflects where Pierpont stands today and where it aspires to go. By understanding and aligning with its students' aspirations, we can authentically connect with its current and future students.

The marketing, communications, and branding of the college as a whole will be grounded in the community with a consistent, authentic, and empathetic lens.

The refresh will be based on our community and 13-county service region with a campus-wide effort.

As we look to move forward with this, we want to involve the community and help them feel as though they are part of this decision.

13

QUESTIONS & CONCERNS?



14