



**EXPLORE@RC**

The Lab School at Roanoke College

## **Explore@RC Governing Board Meeting Minutes**

Date: July 7, 2026

Time: 3:00 – 4:30 pm

Location: Teams

In-person attendees included Natasha Watts, Jennifer Dean, Becca Goldstein, Heather Johnson, Kaitlyn McCoy, Christina Rose, Mike Riley, Sally Southard, Lisa Stoneman, Cheryl Hopson, Kathy Wolfe and Debbie Carpenter. Absent members were Karin Carneal, Curtis Hicks, Christina Rose, Karen Sanzo and Kimble Reynolds. The following members experienced technical difficulties accessing the Teams link: April Woodward, Mike Riley and Wayne Adkins.

Natasha Watts called the meeting to order and noted that the meeting was intended as an informational and update session rather than a voting meeting. The goal was to complete the agenda within one hour and establish the next meeting date.

### **Board Roles and Governance Updates**

Natasha reviewed roles for the Governing Board as outlined in the Bylaws:

- Chair
- Vice Chair
- Secretary
- Treasurer

### **Key Discussion Points**

- Most positions will be filled by Roanoke College representatives.
- The Vice Chair position is designated for a K–12 partnering division representative.
- Staff transitions may impact officer appointments.
- ExploreRC anticipates hiring a part-time administrative assistant in the fall.
- Board officer terms are two years.
- No individual may hold more than one office simultaneously.

### **Action Item**

- Board leadership appointments will be finalized prior to or at the fall meeting.

### **Student and Parent Handbook**

Natasha provided an update on the development of the ExploreRC Student and Parent Handbook.

### Highlights

- Handbook will serve as a public-facing guide.
- Modeled after school division handbooks, including Roanoke County examples.
- Will address operational procedures, discipline practices, and policies for students from multiple school divisions and homeschool settings.
- Designed as a living reference document for families and partners.

### Action Item

- Handbook will be distributed to Governing Board members for review before the Fall meeting.
- Formal Board vote will occur at a future meeting.

## Admissions Lottery Process

Natasha reviewed new admissions lottery requirements implemented under updated state regulations effective July 1, 2026.

### Key Points

- Lab schools are required to maintain a public admissions lottery process once enrollment exceeds available seats.
- ExploreRC developed an internal Microsoft Teams/Forms-based lottery system.
- Applications will be assigned randomized numbers.
- Students not initially admitted will be waitlisted through the lottery process.
- Lottery procedures will be posted publicly on the ExploreRC website.

### Enrollment Update

- Target enrollment for the coming year: 70 students
- Current projected enrollment: 52 students on campus
- Additional enrollment is anticipated through Salem High School dual enrollment courses.

### Comments

Kaitlyn McCoy shared that Google Forms has worked successfully for lottery management in ODU partner schools, including high-volume programs.

## Financial and Operational Updates

Heather Johnson provided a financial update.

### Planning and Startup Grants

- Approximately \$1.925 million has been expended from startup funding.
- \$245,000 remains allocated for Morehead Hall renovations.

### Operational Funding

- ExploreRC has received 14 of 15 scheduled payments through its fiscal sponsor arrangement with ODU.

## Major Expenditures

1. Equipment, technology, and furniture (56.19%)
2. Personnel costs
3. Facilities improvements

## Future Considerations

- Additional staffing support will be added as the program grows.
- Long-term sustainability planning is underway.
- Future fundraising and endowment discussions will involve Roanoke College Advancement leadership.

## Morehead Hall Renovation Project

Debbie Carpenter presented updates and photographs of the renovation project.

## Improvements Completed

- HVAC replacement
- ADA accessibility enhancements including ADA-compliant restroom updates
- New energy-efficient windows
- Refinished hardwood floors
- Updated conference room with enhanced AV capabilities
- Kitchen improvements

## Student Benefits

- Expanded study and collaboration space
- Food preparation and storage access
- Check-in/check-out technology for attendance tracking
- Additional capacity to support enrollment growth
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## Timeline

- Final punch-list items are underway.
- Anticipated completion: before students return for the Fall semester.

## Congressional Funding Update

Heather reviewed congressional earmark funding secured through Senator Warner and Senator Kaine with the funding purpose of supporting expansion of the ExploreRC dual enrollment program.

## Planned Investments

### Personnel

- Curriculum Specialist
- Dual Enrollment Liaison

### Student Support

- Transportation van
- Technology enhancements
- Sound booths
- Smart boards
- Student laptops and charging stations

#### Program Development

- High school curriculum alignment
- Associate degree pathway implementation
- Expanded outreach and recruitment efforts

#### Discussion

Natasha highlighted that creation of the Associate of Arts pathway emerged from conversations with K–12 partners about increasing value and accessibility for students.

### K–12 Leadership Luncheon

Lisa Stoneman provided an overview of the recent regional leadership luncheon.

#### Attendance

- Approximately 31 participants
- Superintendents
- School division leaders
- Guidance personnel
- Virginia Western representatives
- Roanoke College Board of Trustees representatives

#### Outcomes

- Increased awareness of ExploreRC opportunities.
- Positive feedback from school leaders.
- Strong support for continued regional collaboration.
- Opportunity to clarify ExploreRC's role alongside Virginia Western rather than in competition.

#### Future Plans

- Make the luncheon an annual event.
- Explore co-hosting future events with Virginia Western.

#### STEAM Academy Report

Rebecca Goldstein reported on the successful completion of the week-long Current Voices STEAM Academy.

#### Participation

- 15 students attended.

### Activities Included

- Environmental science field studies
- Roanoke River investigations
- Crystal Spring Pump Station visit
- Psychology activities
- Local history exploration
- Poetry and writing workshops

### Outcomes

- Strong student engagement.
- Positive parent feedback.
- Successful showcase presentations at week's end.
- Interest in securing additional future funding.

## Illinois College of Optometry (ICO) Program

Rebecca and Natasha reviewed the ExploreRC student trip to Chicago and the Illinois College of Optometry.

### Program Features

- Clinical observation experiences
- Exposure to specialty optometry fields
- Research facility visits
- Career exploration
- Mentorship opportunities
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### Student Impact

- Students gained exposure to health care careers beyond traditional perceptions of optometry.
- Several participants expressed increased interest in health professions and research pathways.

### Undergraduate Mentor Highlight

- Roanoke College student AJ served as an outstanding undergraduate mentor.
- Demonstrated professionalism, leadership, and strong engagement throughout the trip.
- Created a positive peer leadership model for ExploreRC students.

### Future Opportunities

- Expand healthcare-focused partnerships locally.
- Explore connections with regional healthcare career camps and organizations.

## Next Meeting

The next quarterly meeting will be September 23, 2026, from 9 – 11:30 am on the Roanoke College Campus. The meeting date will be revisited if significant scheduling conflicts arise for multiple board members.

## Closing Remarks

Board members expressed appreciation for the progress of ExploreRC and the team's work in developing innovative opportunities for students.

## Comments

- Sally Southard commended the program's growth, outreach, and collaboration efforts.
- Cheryl Hopson praised the team's exceptional work and accomplishments.
- Kaitlyn McCoy noted excitement about ExploreRC's initiatives and future direction.

## Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at approximately 4 pm.