

The Ohio State University at Newark – Board Meeting Minutes

Date: Thursday, March 19, 2026

Time: 9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Location: SciDome Planetarium, Newark

Board Members Present: Jeff Cox (Chair), Olivia Biggs, Talya Greathouse, Lee Heckman, Tara Houdeshell, Matt Miller, Alexa Robinson O’Neill, Brad Shumaker, Chelsea Shipley (Student Representative), Ginny Grady (Newark Representative to the Alumni Advisory Council)

Absent: Marc Lyons

Faculty/Staff Present: Matt Smith (Dean/Director), Brian Boehmer, Melissa Buelow, David Brillhart, Cory Brown, Stephanie Brown, Kim Manno, Jackie Parrill, Jamie White, Dilipama Divaratne (Director of Scidome Planetarium/ Lecturer in Physics/ Project Manager), Pratap Uppalapati (Student Intern), Robert Taylor (Student Intern)

Others present: Eric Anderman, Vice Provost, Outreach and Engagement (regional campuses)
Fred Boll, Executive Director, The Works
Megan Federer Assistant Executive Director, The Works

1. Assembly and Introductions

The group assembled at 9:00 a.m. at The Works lobby area and introductions were made

2. SciDome Tour and presentation

- Jeff Cox welcomed the Board to The Works and offered opening remarks about the value of community partnership and looking forward to new and positive experiences.
- Dean/Director Matt Smith provided remarks about OSU Newark's partnership with The Works and its connections with WOSU and the arts.
- Fred Boll, Executive Director of The Works, and Meghan Federer, Assistant Executive Director, welcomed the Board and described ongoing collaboration with COSI, including efforts to develop regional and national programming and to create interactive experiences using artificial intelligence.
- Meghan Federer provided background on the SciDome and its role within The Works.
- Dean Smith acknowledged Vice Provost Eric Anderman and introduced Dilupama (Dilu) Divaratne, SciDome Director and Licking County Learning Lab point person.
- Dilu described the collaborative relationship between OSU Newark and the community and highlighted the diverse academic backgrounds of the SciDome's student interns; she noted that two new interns will join the program this summer.
- Student intern Pratap Uppalapati, a software engineering major who began his studies at OSU Newark, described the SciDome's projection system, which uses Digistar software — considered the most advanced planetarium projection system in the world.

- Pratap explained that Digistar allows him to script and create dynamic, engaging presentations; he also performs mechanical calibration and ongoing maintenance on the projection system.
- Student intern Robert (Bob) Taylor — an astrophysics student, retired physician, lifelong amateur astronomer, and astrophysics degree holder involved with the SciDome since 1970 — conducted a live sky presentation for the Board.
- Bob's presentation covered light pollution, key celestial features visible from Newark, and the scale of the universe, highlighting remarkable facts about our solar system and beyond.
- Dilu outlined current and upcoming student capstone projects, noting that four student-produced dome shows are in development, with students engaged in research, public speaking, and content composition.
- Dilu emphasized the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration, noting ongoing faculty partnerships including a brain science program with Melissa Buelow and a communications project with Susan Sheridan-Smith.
- Dilu described a vision to expand planetarium programming to incorporate music and visuals, making complex scientific subjects more accessible and enjoyable for general audiences.
- Jeff Cox closed the presentation with appreciation for the work of the SciDome team, affirming the importance of communicating complex subjects to lay audiences in a compelling and engaging way.

3. Call to Order

Chair Jeff Cox called the meeting to order following the SciDome presentation.

4. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the March 19, 2026 meeting were approved as presented.

5. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved without changes.

6. Public Comments

No public comments were made.

7. COTC Board Report

In the absence of COTC Board Chair Andrew Guanciale, Chair Jeff Cox presented the COTC Board report from a written submission.

- The COTC Board of Trustees welcomed two new members: William L. "Bill" Given and Justin Hinderer were formally sworn in.
- Following 13 months of negotiations, the Board approved the 2025–2028 United Faculty Negotiated Labor Agreement.
- Dr. Berry emphasized that maintaining the unique cost-shared campus model with Ohio State University remains a top priority as OSU welcomes incoming President Dr. Ravi Bellamkonda.

- The Board approved a new Standard Operating Procedure to comply with House Bill 96, expanding oversight to include all substantive curricular changes.
- The Licking County Promise officially launched on February 27th, with projections indicating that approximately 64–65% of the eligible student body may qualify.
- Preparations are finalizing for the arrival of Italian students for the Italian Immersion Program, with a full roster of local host families secured.

8. Faculty Assembly Update: Cory Brown provided a Faculty Assembly update covering three areas of current activity.

- Faculty are actively reviewing and responding to the requirements of Ohio Senate Bill 1 (SB1), which introduces new mandates affecting faculty workload, institutional neutrality, and course content policies.
- Ohio State is implementing Simple Syllabus, a centralized digital platform, to meet SB1's requirement that all undergraduate course syllabi be publicly posted; full implementation is expected by Fall 2026.
- The faculty annual evaluation process is also being updated in alignment with SB1 requirements.

9. Finance Report: David Brillhart provided a finance report for the first six months of fiscal year 2025-2026. Details are included in the documents sent to board members prior to the meeting.

- State subsidy is tracking at 50% of projected budget, received in equal installments as expected, and student fees are at 63.4% of projected budget, considerably above projections due to strong summer and autumn enrollment growth.
- Overall expenditures are on track with budget; David credited Dr. Stephanie Brown for her work accommodating the record number of students in Autumn 2025.
- The campus is projecting a strong year-end surplus, and a conservative budget approach is planned for next year.
- Capital plans for the residence halls were also noted.

10. Dean's Report: Dean Matt Smith presented the Dean's/Director's report.

- **Presidential Transition**

- Matt acknowledged the recent leadership transition at Ohio State, noting that the Board of Trustees appointed Ravi Bellamkonda as the university's 18th president on March 12, 2026.
- President Bellamkonda had been serving as executive vice president and provost since January 2025 and is well-aligned with the university's strategic direction.
- Matt expressed confidence in the path forward and noted a hope to welcome President Bellamkonda to the Newark campus in the future.
- Ohio State Athletic Director Ross Bjork will visit the Newark campus on April 7 for an Oval Unscripted conversation moderated by OSU Alumni Association President Molly Ranz-Calhoun.

- **55th Anniversary Celebration of Partnership**
 - Matt and COTC President John Berry have been actively promoting the 55th anniversary of the COTC–Ohio State Newark partnership through presentations at local service clubs and community organizations throughout the region.
 - The campus hosted an internal celebration for faculty and staff. A recommitment to the partnership was signed at the event and will be displayed in the campus libraries.
- **Enrollment Update**
 - The search continues for a Director of Enrollment. Tracy Schuman from Strategic Enrollment - Undergraduate Admissions, is providing interim oversight of Newark's enrollment activities and has been well supported by Diane Kanney and other colleagues.
 - Deposits from Newark prospective students are up 30% compared to the same point last year, and the campus remains third largest among Ohio State's regional campuses.
 - Matt noted that stronger projection data will be available for the May board meeting.
- **Engineering Lab Funding**
 - Ohio State's regional campuses have received a federal appropriation of approximately \$3 million through the FY26 Commerce–Justice–Science Appropriations Act, with each campus receiving approximately \$750,000 to support engineering equipment and minor renovations.
 - The funds will support engineering technology programming, including instrumentation, robotics, and senior experience coursework beginning in 2027.
- **Additional Remarks**
 - Matt encouraged board members to attend the Graduation Celebration on April 27 at 5:00 p.m. in the Reese Auditorium and Convocation on August 24, 2026, noting that board presence at both events is meaningful to students and their families.

11. New Business: No official new business was brought before the Board; however, several items were noted for informational purposes.

- Ginny Grady noted that the Spring Alumni Advisory Council meeting is scheduled for April 9–10 and asked board members to submit any items they would like brought forward to that meeting; Ginny will provide an update at the May board meeting.
- Jeff mentioned taking another field trip, perhaps related to the BSET program, and noted that additional guests are planned for later in the year.
- Jeff reminded everyone to cast their March Madness predictions

12. Next Meeting

The next board meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 21, 2026, 9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

13. Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Jeff Cox adjourned the meeting at 10:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by

*Nichole Lenglé
Executive Assistant to the Dean and Director
The Ohio State University at Newark*