

Fairmont State calls for tuition hike in 2026

BY JIM BISSETT
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FAIRMONT — Undergraduate students at Fairmont State University will pay \$8,795 in tuition this year to attend classes, the school's Board of Governors announced last month.

That's up \$87 from last year, and it applies to both in-state and out-of-state students, the board said, whether they live on campus or reside in off-campus housing.

Graduate students, who had been paying \$18,924 a

year, will see an additional \$120 increase, the governing body said.

While tuition rates were frozen last year, Fairmont State President Mike Davis said the Locust Avenue still offers a good education for the money.

The increases, he said, mean advancing the mission of the school.

"Our brightest days are ahead of us," the president said. "We are shaping the future of higher education in West Virginia."

Students are also staying, said George Wolf, who is

vice president of enrollment management.

A total of 84% of first-time freshmen who enrolled this fall have stayed on so far for the spring semester, which began Wednesday.

Wolf said the school's financial aid advisors have everything to do with the high numbers.

"It's important that we're transparent so we can uphold our promise to students and their families," he added.

In the meantime, Davis said, the school will continue to market itself in ways that

makes its presence known beyond its Locust Avenue campus — and out into north-central West Virginia and beyond.

In November, the school hosted the worldwide premiere of a Brazilian documentary on the 1968 Farmington Mine Disaster.

And last month, Fairmont State partnered with Short Story Brewing, a craft brewery in Rivesville, Marion County, to introduce "Falcon Fest," a busy offering now sold at campus events and select outlets across the region.



Photo courtesy of FSU
Fairmont State undergraduate students will pay an additional \$87 this year for school. The increase comes after the freezing of tuition rates for 2025.

WVU hires provost and VP for academic affairs

Wendland is nationally recognized scientist, scholar

WVUToday

Following a national search focused on the academic future of West Virginia University, President Michael T. Benson is announcing the hiring of Beverly Wendland, an accomplished scholar and academic leader with wide-ranging higher education experience, to serve as the University's provost and vice president for academic affairs.

"Beverly is a nationally recognized cell biologist who has served as a faculty member, department chair, dean, and provost during her extensive career, which has also included direct work with large academic medical centers," President Benson said.

"She will bring a scientific mindset to the role of provost and vice president for academic affairs that will complement my work as an historian. This balance will ensure all academic disciplines — from STEM to the arts — are prioritized at the highest levels of leadership as we drive the academic mission of West Virginia University into a new and impactful era."

Wendland most recently served as senior advisor to the chancellor at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, following a successful five-year term in the role of provost and



Submitted photo
WVU President Michael T. Benson announced that Beverly Wendland will serve as the University's next provost and vice president for academic affairs. Wendland is a veteran scholar and academic leader coming to Morgantown from Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri.

executive vice chancellor.

"Serving as provost at West Virginia University is a very meaningful opportunity to help advance a land-grant research institution at a pivotal moment in its historical arc," Wendland said. "I look forward to partnering with faculty, staff, and students to build on the strengths of WVU, support academic excellence across disciplines, and extend the University's impact for West Virginia and the communities it serves."

The University's provost administers all academic affairs, providing oversight

for deans, academic programs, student support services, curriculum development, faculty engagement and recruitment, academic budgets, institutional data and accreditation.

Under Wendland's leadership, Washington University in St. Louis (WashU) — a private research university — made significant strides in academic excellence, research innovation and community engagement while implementing a 10-year strategic plan which included the creation of the School of Public Health.

"Throughout my career,

I have enhanced student learning while leveraging academic excellence for the public good," Wendland said. "Strategic thinking allows higher education to evolve in ways that benefit all from global discovery to locally grounded community impact."

Prior to being hired at Washington University in St. Louis in 2020, Wendland served for five years as the James B. Knapp Dean of the Krieger School of Arts and Sciences at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland.

She had previously been a member of the Johns

Hopkins faculty since 1998, and was the chair of the Department of Biology from 2009 to 2014.

"Beverly's comprehensive involvement with Association of American Universities institutions will be especially helpful as we work toward our goal of AAU membership," President Benson said.

Wendland is a first-generation college graduate who earned a bachelor's degree in bioengineering from the University of California, San Diego, and a doctoral degree in

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MORGANTOWN Man jailed in sex assault, child abuse case

DPNews@DominionPost.com

The Monongalia County Sheriff's Office announced the successful apprehension of Steven Keith Waybright, of Morgantown, following a multi-agency effort and significant public assistance.

Waybright was taken into custody in Preston County, on Thursday. His arrest stems from a criminal investigation launched in November 2024, which resulted in charges of one count of sexual assault and two counts of child abuse.

On Wednesday, the Sheriff's Office featured Waybright on its popular "Wanted Wednesday" social media series.

Within 24 hours of the post, the department received multiple tips from the community regarding his whereabouts. These leads allowed law enforcement to track Waybright to a location in neighboring Preston County, where he was apprehended without incident.

Waybright is currently being held at the Tygart Valley Regional Jail. A bond has been set at \$250,000.

No further information is available at this time.



Steven Keith Waybright

VETERANS CORNER

Resolve to go one step further for our Veterans

As the calendar turns and we step fully into 2026, a new year invites reflection, renewal and resolve. January is a time when many of us set goals for ourselves — eat better, spend more time with family, give back or finally take that step we have been putting off. This new year also marks the beginning of Veterans Corner, a monthly article that will appear the second Sunday of every month, dedicated to sharing Veteran-focused topics such as



Terry Vance

local and regional events, benefits, organizations, resources and, most importantly, the Veterans who continue to

shape our communities.

The year 2026 is significant in the life of our nation. On July 4, we will celebrate the 250th Anniversary of the United States, also known as the Semiquincentennial, marking 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence. It is a milestone that reminds us of the ideals of service, sacrifice and unity that founded this country. In addition, 2026 marks the 25th Anniversary of Sept. 11, 2001 — a day

forever etched in our national memory, and one that profoundly shaped a generation of Veterans who answered the call to serve in its aftermath. These anniversaries are not just historical markers; they are moments for reflection, gratitude and recommitment to one another.

As New Year's resolutions are made and sometimes broken, let's consider adding something meaningful to our list this year. We often

say to Veterans, "Thank you for your service." Those words are appreciated and matter deeply. But for a Veteran who may be seeking employment, connection or a sense of belonging, words alone may not be enough. Perhaps in 2026, our resolution can be to go one step further — to extend a hand not just as a gesture of appreciation, but as an offer of support in whatever form that may take.

The transition from military to civilian life is

one of the most significant changes a Veteran will experience. While uniforms may be hung up and active service completed, the identity of being a Veteran never goes away. Once a Veteran, always a Veteran. Many of the leadership skills, work ethic and sense of service that Veterans bring into civilian life make them some of the greatest contributors to our communities, workplaces and civic

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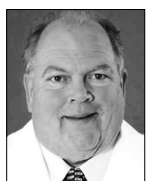
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Dr. Morgan H. Lyons, Jr.

Dr. Morgan H. Lyons, Jr. passed away suddenly on Tuesday, December 30, 2025, in Morgantown. Born on December 11, 1951, in Philippi, the son of the late Morgan and Hilda Lyons Stemple.

He graduated from West Virginia University in 1974 and earned his medical degree in 1978. He then continued his medical education at WVU, completing a combined internal medicine and psychiatry residency, followed by a fellowship in cardiology. Morgan joined Monongalia General Hospital in 1984, becoming one of the early foundational members of its cardiology practice, shaping the program and quality of care.

Morgan was a devoted and highly respected physician whose career with the Mon Health System spanned more than 41 years. Throughout his decades of service, he cared for countless patients with unwavering skill and compassion. He served as attending and consulting staff at Mon Health Medical Center and Heart and Vascular clinics in



Morgantown, Fairmont, Elkins, and McHenry, Md. In addition to his clinical work, he shared his knowledge and passion for medicine as a Cardiology Clinical Assistant Professor at WVU. He served as principal investigator in the GUSTO III and ASSENT 2 clinical trials in the Northern W.Va. area, advancing thrombolytic therapy. More recently, Morgan expanded heart care access across the state through providing cardiac telemedicine in underserved areas.

Outside of his medical practice, Morgan relished all things outdoors. An avid fisherman, he embarked on nationwide journeys in pursuit of his next big catch. He cherished deer hunting

and boating with his family. As a prominent adult leader in Boy Scouts of America Troop 93, Morgan actively participated in scouting activities. He traveled to campouts, assisted in packing and planning, and set an example for troop members.

Morgan deeply appreciated music. He recorded band performances for local schools and could often be found listening to some of his favorites from Chicago.

As a proud alumnus, Morgan was a lifelong Mountaineer sports fan, with season tickets to both football and basketball. There was always a game for him and his family to attend. Though he enjoyed many hobbies, Morgan's greatest fulfillment always came through spending time with his family whom he loved dearly. He inspired Olivia, Haley and Logan to pursue careers in medicine.

He is survived by his loving and devoted wife, Beverly; and their children: Olivia (boyfriend, Kevin Tennant), Haley (husband, Daniel Dawley) and Logan (fiancee, Lauren Carter), all of whom reside in Mor-

gantown. As well as sons: Christopher of Broomfield, Colo., and Aaron (wife, Susan) of Erie, Colo.; and his brother, Kevin (wife, Gretchen) of Philippi. He also leaves behind seven grandchildren, all of Erie, Colo.; and several nieces and nephews.

Family and friends will be received at Greater Love Family Outreach Ministries, 200 Frederick Lane Morgantown, WV 26508, until the time of the Funeral Service at 4 p.m. on Sunday, January 11, with Pastor Junius Lewis officiating. Following the funeral service cremation arrangements will be provided by Hastings Funeral Home / Omega Crematory.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Mon Health Medical Center Foundation (Heart and Vascular Program), 1200 JD Anderson Dr., Morgantown, WV 26505.

Condolences may be sent to the family online at www.hastingsfuneralhome.com

Hollister Summers Harrison

Hollister Summers Harrison, 93, completed his earthly journey Wednesday, December 31, 2025.

He was preceded in death by his wife Eleanor Jacqueline "Jackie" Croston Harrison.

Hollister is survived by his three children: Jeannine "Jennie" Harrison Powell of Jacksonville, Fla.; David Summers Harrison of Nashville, Tenn.; and Laura Hollister Suzanne Harrison of Franklin, Tenn. He is grandfather to three boys - Nicholas Harrison (Dave and GiGi Rose), Jack and Sam Harrison (Dave and Heather Harrison), and two girls - Rachel Harrison Mackey and Margot Powell (Jennie); as well as three great-grandchildren, Lucas, James and Norah Mackey; and numerous nieces and nephews.

Friends and family will be received in Sunart United Methodist Church in Morgantown, with visitation in the sanctuary Sunday, January 11 from 5 to 7 p.m., and Monday, January 12, with visitation from 10 until the 11 a.m.



time of a funeral service. Refreshments and fellowship will be offered in the Old Drummond Chapel following the service.

In lieu of flowers, the family would be grateful for donations sent, in his honor, to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tenn.; the WVU School of Medicine or the WVU School of Music, each in Morgantown. These are all organizations near and dear to Hollister's heart.

Hastings Funeral Home has been entrusted with arrangements and a full obituary may be viewed at www.hastingsfuneralhome.com



REVIEW

'Primate' keeps you on the edge of your seat

Horror in January is an annual tradition. This year's offering, "Primate," from director Johannes Roberts, is a tense and gory creature feature short on story, but filled with thrills.

Lucy (Johnny Sequoyah) is heading home to Hawaii to see her father (Troy Kotsur) and sister (Gina Hunter) for the first time in a while following the death of her mother. She is accompanied by her best friend, Kate (Victoria Wyant), her frenemy, Hannah (Jessica Alexander), and her crush, Nick (Benjamin Cheng). When



ALISE CHAFFINS

she gets home, she finds that the family pet chimpanzee, Ben (Miguel Torres Umba), was bitten by a mongoose and is feeling unwell. Her father has to leave for a book signing, so the kids plan a fun weekend alone, but when that sickness is revealed to be rabies, they must figure out how to

survive this beloved pet turned violent animal.

My expectations for this movie were admittedly quite low, but "Primate" managed to keep me on the edge of my seat right from the opening scene. The opening scene sets the tone, and it really doesn't relent for the 39-minute run-time. The pacing is impeccable, and there is no fat to be trimmed from this movie.

Part of what makes this movie work is the work of Umba as the chimpanzee. His work, combined with the incredible costume and animatronics work of

Millennium FX, gives us a villain that has all of the malevolence that you would want without any of the weird interactions that can happen by using a fully CGI animal, but without the danger and time of using a live animal. It is impressive how natural everything looks.

While most of the performances don't stand out in any particular way, all are well executed, allowing us to enjoy the mayhem. There are some really excellent scream moments, and Sequoyah, Alexander and Wyant all do a great job of

increasing the tension by creeping around, trying to avoid Ben and get out of the situation safely. The one performance of note is Umba as Ben. He lends a lot to the film, allowing the other performances to shine as well.

One aspect of "Primate" that is effective and I wish could have been used a bit more is with Kotsur and his deafness. There is an excellent sequence near the end that is shot largely in silence as he walks through the house, trying to find his daughters. It is absolutely terrifying. I just wish it had

been a little bit longer. I also think that would have required more storytelling, and this film is a lot more about carnage than character development.

I tend to like movies where you can dig into the themes and find something meaty going on, and that's not really what "Primate" is about. It provides horror and mutilation and not much else. If there's anything to be gleaned from this movie, it's that sometimes the things that you think are safe are just a step away from ripping your face off.

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neurosciences from Stanford University.

Her research focus on the molecular mechanisms of endocytosis using yeast as a model system contributes to the understanding of heart disease, cancer and other health issues.

"I have long been fascinated by how cells organize and adapt at the molecular level to accomplish their unique functions. Studying endocytosis in yeast allows us to uncover fundamental

biological principles that have implications for human health and disease," she said.

Wendland also served on the Board of Directors for the Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis — the affiliated teaching hospital for the Washington University School of Medicine — which U.S. News & World Report ranked the top hospital in Missouri.

The Provost Search Committee — co-chaired by Diana Davis, Faculty Senate Past Chair and associate professor, WVU School of Medicine, and Evan Widders, associate provost for undergraduate

education, WVU Office of the Provost — was supported by Greenwood Asher & Associates, a full-service search firm, to fill the position.

In addition to leading the University as provost and vice president for academic affairs, Wendland will have a faculty appointment in the WVU Eberly College of Arts and Sciences Department of Biology.

She will be engaging with the campus community regularly in the first half of 2026 as she prepares to officially join President Benson's leadership team on July 1.

VANCE

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organizations. In many ways, that ongoing contribution is possible because the transition never removes the Veteran — it simply changes the setting in which they serve.

Veterans are not looking for handouts. What they value is a hand up: an opportunity, a connection, a chance to continue contributing in meaningful ways. Most Veterans are not in dire straits. They are active, charitable, employed and giving back — coaching youth sports, volunteering, mentoring, leading nonprofits, running businesses and supporting neighbors. They quietly continue to serve long after their military service has ended.

However, there are some Veterans who do need assistance —

whether that is help navigating benefits, finding stable housing, addressing mental health challenges or simply reconnecting with a support system. As Veterans, as community members and as leaders, let us make 2026 the year we commit to not forgetting those who may be struggling. Let us remember those who paved the road toward ensuring that we live in the greatest state and country on Earth.

Veterans Corner is intended to be a place where these conversations happen regularly. Each month, this space will highlight Veteran organizations doing impactful work, upcoming events that bring Veterans together, resources that can make a difference, and stories of Veterans whose service continues in powerful ways. It is an introduction, a reminder and an invitation — to learn,

to engage and to support.

As we honor the past through the Semiquincentennial and remember the sacrifices tied to 9/11, let us also look forward. Let us resolve to be present for Veterans not only in moments of remembrance, but in everyday life. Sometimes support looks like sharing information. Sometimes it looks like mentorship. Sometimes it looks like listening. And sometimes it simply looks like showing up.

Here's to a new year, a new monthly tradition and a renewed commitment to those who have served — and continue to serve — our communities every day.

Terry Vance is a veteran of the U.S. Air Force and the Veterans Partnership Coordinator for Valley HealthCare System. He can be reached at tevance@valleyhealthcare.org.