

The Bluefield College Board of Trustees voted this month to further align Bluefield College with the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM) family of schools by joining its education consortium. Representatives of the two higher education institutions jointly announced the agreement in a March 19 announcement in the Chandler Boardroom at Bluefield College.

“Bluefield College has been fortunate to have VCOM as a valued, key partner for a number of years,” said President David W. Olive. “We believe that God has ordered our steps to bring us to this place in our relationship.”

Through this agreement with the educational consortium, Bluefield College will retain its name, will remain a separate 501(c)(3) entity with assets and liabilities intact, and will continue its Christ-centered mission and covenant relationship with the Baptist General Association of Virginia (BGAV). The BGAV, alongside local community leaders, founded Bluefield College in 1922 as a college serving students in Appalachia. Further, the governing board will continue to guide the direction of the College. Non-governing boards, such as the Alumni Association Board of Directors, President’s Advisory Council, and others will continue as they currently operate.

“Students should see that nothing will change regarding their educational and co-curricular experiences at Bluefield College,” said Olive. “We do anticipate a benefit of capital improvements to campus facilities, and assuming no one chooses to leave, the same faculty and staff will continue to serve.”

Bluefield College currently offers a Master of Arts degree in Biomedical Sciences (MABS) on the Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM) Virginia campus. Its purpose is to enhance academics to gain acceptance into a medical school or other healthcare programs through a nine-month, 35-credit hour, face-to-face delivery program. The program places emphasis on biomedical coursework, research experience, field study, as well as seminars in professional development. As part of the agreement, the new revenue for the College for Capital improvements will come from the development of new science and health sciences programs that provide pathways to medical school and other healthcare professions. With Bluefield and VCOM being

supported by the same foundation, programs for both Bluefield and VCOM students will be jointly developed to offer degrees for those seeking research careers in the future.

The agreement to restructure will require approval from Bluefield College's accreditor, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and the U.S. Department of Education. Bluefield College will immediately begin working more closely with VCOM in the weeks following the announcement. The restructuring, if approved, will seek to be implemented in January 2021 by Bluefield and the foundation that also owns VCOM.

The accreditation of VCOM will remain independent of Bluefield, and with the Commission of Osteopathic College Accreditation (COCA), the only USDE approved accreditor for osteopathic medical schools.

“The mission of VCOM and Bluefield College align very closely,” said Mr. John Rocovich, Jr., Chairman and Treasurer of VCOM. “The collaboration and partnership possibilities are endless as one family of schools.”

The Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (VCOM) is a four-year osteopathic medical school offering the Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (D.O.) degree. VCOM's mission is to prepare globally-minded, community-focused physicians to meet the needs of rural and medically underserved populations and promote research to improve human health. Osteopathic physicians are licensed in every state to practice the full scope of medicine including examining patients, diagnosing illness, writing prescriptions, performing surgery, as well as providing musculoskeletal manipulation. Osteopathic physicians enter every field of medicine from family practice to neurosurgery. The majority of osteopathic physicians practice primary care, with approximately one-fourth of the profession providing care in small communities and rural areas. The school has four campuses in Blacksburg, Virginia; Spartanburg, South Carolina; Auburn, Alabama; and Monroe, Louisiana.

Bluefield College is a Christ-centered learning community preparing servant-leaders. It offers a challenging academic and co-curricular experience within a climate of diverse

Christian tradition. The College is committed to developing students' potential through academic excellence and the integration of faith, the liberal arts, career-oriented programs, and service to God and the global community. Bluefield College is accredited by SACSCOC, and boasts over forty academic offerings from associate level to master level degrees. The College is located in the Appalachian Mountains of southwest Virginia in Bluefield, Virginia.

VCOM President and Provost Dixie Tooke-Rawlins stated: "The addition of Bluefield College within the foundation's ownership will not negatively impact VCOM's other University public-private partnerships such as Virginia Tech, Auburn University, or the University of Louisiana Monroe. In fact, we are hopeful that this will offer recruitment from Bluefield graduates into those universities' other professional programs as well. In the past decade, we have seen challenges to the U.S. private colleges and collaboration on both educational programs and research are needed to maintain private colleges that are located in the rural areas of our states."

For more information on Bluefield College joining the VCOM family of schools, please contact Rebecca Kasey in the Office of Public Relations and Marketing at 276.326.4212 or [**bcnews@bluefield.edu**](mailto:bcnews@bluefield.edu). For more information on VCOM, please contact the Office of Communications at VCOM at 540.231.5419 or [**crawlins@vt.vcom.edu**](mailto:crawlins@vt.vcom.edu).