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William Jewell College Charts Path for the Future

Board of Trustees Demonstrates Commitment to Financial Stability through Recent Vote

Liberty, Mo. – Like many small liberal arts colleges across the country with modest enrollments and endowments, William Jewell College is facing significant financial challenges brought about by increasing costs. Despite many strategic innovations in the last several years—including a tuition re-pricing and diversified enrollment growth—the pace of revenue has not kept up with the cost of operations.

Following extensive analysis and thoughtful deliberation, the William Jewell College Board of Trustees voted to declare financial exigency, an intentional step toward creating financial stability and securing the path forward for the College. In doing so, the Board deployed an important tool that enables reallocation of resources, restructuring of programs and reductions in force.

“William Jewell College delivers an extraordinary product at an incredible value as demonstrated by our graduates. However, the cost of program delivery is not sustainable. It is essential that we confront that inefficiency and build a solid foundation for future growth,” said Bill Gautreaux, chair of the Board of Trustees for William Jewell College. “On behalf of the Board, we are passionately committed to navigating these challenges to transform William Jewell College—now and for the future.”

Colleges across the country have struggled in recent years due to declining enrollment. William Jewell College's leadership—including the interim president, cabinet, faculty leadership, and the Board of Trustees—previously implemented a variety of strategic cost-cutting measures to achieve efficiencies. These included asset sales, savings through improved procurement and sourcing, operational cost cuts, deferral of maintenance on non-essential properties and equipment, and most recently, a reduction in administrative staff. Despite these efforts, stronger measures and urgent changes are required to secure stability and preserve Jewell for the future.

“This is a challenging time—one that involves difficult decisions which impact our valued colleagues. That said, we are collectively dedicated to the preservation of Jewell for the long term,” said Interim President Susan Chambers. “We are grateful to faculty for their collaboration and for engaging in meaningful ways in this process to ensure Jewell’s relevance as a leading higher education institution. We are determined to sustain our mission as a critical-thinking, career-focused college.”

A committee comprised of faculty members and members of the Board of Trustees will be tasked with evaluating programs, departments and corresponding faculty needs. Further details will be shared in the coming weeks as the College’s leadership, faculty and staff act quickly, but thoughtfully, to evolve its programs to be more relevant to students in the future.

As a fixture of the Kansas City metropolitan region, William Jewell College recently celebrated its 175th anniversary and serves as an economic driver in the community. Approximately three quarters of new

graduates are employed in the Kansas City region, using their critical thinking skills to contribute to the success of local businesses and organizations.

Jewell graduates are highly valued by employers across the Kansas City region and beyond. They complete a rigorous critical thinking curriculum designed to develop leaders, setting them apart from other candidates and creating more career opportunities.

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Media Contact:

Kelly Cooper

kcooper@parriscommunications.com