1. CALL TO ORDER

Board Chair Earl Overstreet called the work session of the Board of Trustees of Western Washington University to order at 12:12 p.m. at the Washington Athletic Club, in Seattle, WA.

2. EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 12:12 p.m. Chair Overstreet announced that the Board would convene in Executive Session for approximately one and a half hours to discuss a personnel matter as authorized in RCW 42.30.110 (1)(g).

The board returned to open session at 2:08 p.m.
3. STRATEGIC ISSUES, TRENDS, AND CHALLENGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND FOR WESTERN

Chair Overstreet welcomed Cathy Trower, President, Trower & Trower, Inc. to the board’s work session, and invited her to begin the session with a presentation with general data and trends on higher education. Trower led a discussion that included areas related to increased costs associated with education, increased online courses, and increased student debt, issues of significant import nationally, regionally, and to Western. Further discussion explored trends such as increased demand for alternative degrees and non-degree options such as certifications and badges, increased pressure from employers and the public on universities to prove graduates are ready for the work force, and the likelihood of new, non-degree credentials provided outside the traditional higher education space flooding the job market. The board additionally discussed the difference between technical problems—issues that can be addressed by known resources, expertise, or approaches—and adaptive challenges which require new methods, models, and collaborative structures.

Trower next introduced a strategic conversation centered on technology drivers and how that could have an impact on Western’s mission in the future. She posed the question to the trustees on what the “purpose” of higher education will be in a future transformed by big data, AI, and digitalization, and how will it be organized, as many traditional careers and pathways change or are eliminated by technology, and what kinds of investments Western need to make to be relevant in this type of future.

The board and executive leadership discussed at length how to incorporate lifelong learning as part of a liberal arts education from Western and the role of humans in the classroom as technology continues to evolve. It was noted that Generation Z and upcoming generations are extremely advanced with respect to technology and its pervasive impacts on society and modern life, but as a result may need more of the “acculturation” and “maturation” elements of higher education than previous generations. It was determined that proactively staying in touch with students after graduation would encourage them to re-engage with the university and reiterate the value in lifelong learning. It was acknowledged that students of the future will be first generation, Pell Grant eligible, and very new to institutional structures such as higher education, which have traditionally served affluent students from college going families who are largely self-directed and highly socially capitalized. It was noted that community colleges are more appropriately set up for the kinds of students that Western will increasingly see in the future, and Western would do well to adopt some of their systems.

Board Chair Earl Overstreet adjourned the meeting for the day at 5:05 p.m. on Thursday, September 26, 2019 and noted that the board will reconvene at 8:00 a.m. the following day.

Board Chair Earl Overstreet called the work session of the Board of Trustees of Western Washington University to order at 8:02 am on Friday, September 27, 2019 at the Washington Athletic Club, in Seattle, WA.
4. REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF BOARD SELF-ASSESSMENT

Cathy Trower, President, Trower & Trower initiated a conversation with regards to the board’s self-assessment. The board reviewed and discussed the data that had been collected by Trower to better understand areas of growth and strategic thinking for the future, including the areas described in greater below.

5. ANNUAL AGENDA PLANNING

The Board of Trustees discussed the importance of building a more comprehensive annual planning calendar that would include regular meeting dates and locations, recurring Board actions and university processes, important legislative events, and significant campus dates in an effort to create a centralized location for information. The Board also expressed a desire to have more regular communication between meetings including updates summarizing key statistics, goals, latest issues, events, media chatter, and related background would be helpful for the trustees to better overall engagement with campus.

Chair Overstreet announced a break at 9:45 a.m. The board returned and reconvened the meeting at 10:04 a.m.

6. BOARD GOVERNANCE AND COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

The Board of Trustees engaged in a conversation to evaluate the purpose, charge and desired outcomes of the Executive Committee, Student Success Committee and the Finance, Audit and Enterprise Risk Management (FARM) Committee, respectively. The board discussed the differences between the two latter two committees and how to best to align the work of each committee. It was noted that scheduling future sub-committee meetings at different times, rather than concurrently, would allow for the President and Board Chair to attend both meetings when suitable.

7. EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 11:30 a.m. Chair Overstreet announced that the Board would convene in Executive Session for approximately one hour to discuss a personnel matter as authorized in RCW 42.30.110 (1)(g).

The board returned to open session at 12:41 p.m.

8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 12:44 p.m.