

**Western Washington University  
Board of Trustees  
Work Session Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, September 15, 2021**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Board Chair John Meyer called the work session of the Board of Trustees of Western Washington University to order at 2:06 p.m. via Zoom. A quorum was established by roll call.

**Board of Trustees**

John Meyer, Chair – *via Zoom*  
Chase Franklin, Vice Chair – *via Zoom*  
Faith Pettis – *via Zoom*  
Karen Lee – *via Zoom*  
Mo West – *via Zoom*

**Western Washington University**

Sabah Randhawa, President  
Melissa Nelson, Assistant Attorney General  
Paul Dunn, Chief of Staff and Secretary to the Board of Trustees  
Rayne Rambo, Assistant Secretary to the Board of Trustees

**1. DISCUSSION OF LEGACY REVIEW TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS**

Trustee Meyer, Board Chair welcomed everyone to the Work Session and noted that Trustee Sue Sharpe was not present as she recused herself from the conversation due to a conflict of Legacy Review Task Force (LRTF) membership. Meyer reported that no action or decisions would be made during the work session and that the time would be used to explore the report and recommendations provided by the LRTF. He added that the objective of the conversation would be to determine a robust, transparent, and clear decision-making procedure and to determine if additional information is needed for final conclusions. Chair Meyer expressed appreciation to the time and effort provided by the LRTF membership that included: Laural Ballew, Executive Director, American Indian/Alaska native and First Nations Relations and Tribal Liaison, Lisa Bear, Professor, Political Science. Josh Cerretti, Professor, History, Paul Dunn, Chief of Staff to the President, LeaAnn Martin, Former Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Melissa Nelson, Assistant Attorney General (Ex-officio), Kaylan Rocamora, Student Representative, Phil Sharpe, Former Western Trustee, Collette Taylor, Alumni Representative, and Laura Wagner.

President Randhawa acknowledged the work of the Legacy Review Task Force and the supportive work of Western's Libraries Heritage Resources that provided reports on named buildings and college on Western's campus in addition to specific details pertaining to the

naming of Huxley College. Randhawa acknowledged that has resulted in increased awareness of the history and the personalities that have shaped Western onto the institution that it is today. He added that it has also created a responsibility to evaluate the values of the past as Western moves into the future and that naming or de-naming a building or college requires careful consideration and should be undertaken with thorough examination of all the circumstances that or potential consequences. He emphasized that it is essential to review the detailed evidence regarding the building or college names and the context and/or circumstances that led to the initial naming decision.

Randhawa detailed that the process of evaluating the naming of a building or college is part of a broader effort to create and sustain an institutional environment that acknowledges our past and provides for greater future inclusivity and success for the greater campus community.

Randhawa also expressed appreciation for the LRTF, the Western Libraries Heritage Resources for their reports, and for the research and observations from scholars and biographers with relevant expertise on T.H. Huxley and his legacy with respect to race. Randhawa noted that Huxley was the only recommendation on which the task force voted unanimously in support of de-naming the college.

Paul Dunn, Chief of Staff to the President and Chair of the LRTF provided an overview of the process, timeline, and a review of the task force charge. He noted that the university's initiated the legacy review process after a list of demands was brought forward by Western's Black Student Organizations in June 2020 to rename Huxley College of the Environment and to name campus buildings to honor important figures in black history. He added that other names that the LRTF advanced recommendations about were Haggard Hall, Mathes Hall, and the Viking Student Union building.

Dunn explained the LRTF was charged with reviewing the reports prepared by the Western Libraries Heritage Resources on the history and significance of building names on Western's Bellingham campus, and to commission additional reports and research as necessary, in order to formulate recommendations as to whether names of particular buildings or college warrant consideration for removal. He added the second task in the charge was to review the names associated with named colleges. He noted that the LRTF was not charged with considering new names for buildings in question, or to consider new names for colleges if it ultimately advances a recommendation for renaming.

Dunn explained that the in the course of its work, the LRTF invited observations from four scholars with expertise on Huxley and the intellectual history of the Victorian era and held a virtual open forum as part of the Huxley College Speaker Series. Dunn reported that community members were also invited to submit their thoughts about potentially removing names from buildings or colleges at Western using an online feedback form that was located on the President's web page <https://president.wvu.edu/legacy-review-task-force> The group also looked at similar legacy review processes at other institutions, as well as the principles for potentially de-naming named features. In addition to the Task Force's final report, Dunn and Task Force member Phil Sharpe submitted letters to the President and Board of Trustees expressing different perspectives, with the knowledge and permission of the other Task Force members. He explained that the final responsibility and authority on naming buildings and academic colleges rest with Western's Board of Trustees.

The trustees engaged in continued discussion to determine the criteria needed to formulate a decision at an upcoming regular meeting of the Board of Trustees. It was noted that the October 8, 2021, meeting agenda for the Board of Trustees will allow for conversation with the trustees and Western leadership that will provide another opportunity for engagement on this very important resolution.

## **2. ADJOURNMENT**

Board Chair John Meyer adjourned the meeting for the day at 4:27 p.m.