

**WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
MEETING MINUTES  
Thursday, October 17, 2024**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Pettis called the regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of Western Washington University to order at 3:03pm on Thursday, October 17, 2024, in the Board of Trustees Conference room, Old Main 340, at Western Washington University in Bellingham, Washington. She welcomed the guests and Trustee María Sigüenza to her first Board meeting.

**Attendance:**

Faith Pettis, Chair  
Chris Witherspoon, Vice Chair  
Chase Franklin, Trustee  
Tina Ekhteraee-Sanaee, Trustee  
María Sigüenza, Trustee  
John Meyer, Trustee  
Ash Awad (on Zoom)  
Sabah Randhawa, President  
Brad Johnson, Executive Vice President and Provost  
Jacqueline Hughes, Chief Diversity Officer and Executive Director of the Office of Equity  
Lisa LaGuardia, AAG  
Becca Kenna-Schenk, President's Office Chief of Staff  
Jim Sterk, Director of Athletics  
Kim O'Neill, Vice President for Advancement and Executive Director of the Foundation for Western Washington University and Alumni  
Melynda Huskey, Vice President for Enrolment and Student Services  
Joyce Lopes, Vice President for Business and Financial Affairs  
Elissa Hicks, Government Relations and Board of Trustees Policy Coordinator  
Rebecca Hansen-Zeller, Executive and Liaison to the Board of Trustees

**2. WASHINGTON ROUNDTABLE: SKILL UP FOR OUR FUTURE, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION**

President Randhawa gave a brief introduction of the WA Roundtable President, Steve Mullin, and Vice President, Neil Strenge. Former Trustee and WA Roundtable Member, Earl Overstreet, also joined the discussion. The WA Roundtable includes major private sector employers from across the state. President Randhawa commented on the WA Roundtable's partnership with Western, the strength of the data they track, and their leadership on shared priorities.

Steve Mullin and Neil Strege gave a presentation called 'Skill Up Our Future' structured around the goal of having 70% of WA high school graduates attain a post-secondary credential. They began by sharing that WA State's economy is a leader which means we have high workforce needs to maintain that strength. While demographic shifts and domestic immigration are largely predictable, they discussed challenges of making job projections, specifically how Artificial Intelligence could impact job-demand and how federal immigration policy could impact workforce needs.

Steve Mullin shared data that show a workforce demand to fill 1.5 million new net jobs by 2032 and that 75% of those jobs will require a post-high school credential. The area with the greatest differential between job openings and education requirements is in the need for Bachelor's Degrees or higher, which makes Western a crucial partner in addressing this need. They shared additional details about the 13 high-demand sectors that represent over 40% of those jobs. If we lack a trained workforce, it will limit economic growth.

Neil Strege identified key policy levers that could assist in more post-secondary participation, and specifically attainment of Bachelor's Degrees, such as guaranteed admissions, continued financial aid, dual credit programs, streamlined direct transfer agreements and quality advising. Strengthening high school and post-secondary partnerships is another top priority.

The discussion that followed covered topics such as Applied Bachelor's Degrees, the variety of programs and fields where Bachelor's Degrees are needed in the workforce, and the need for more student supports to enroll and retain students. Other discussion was related to how industry and credential programs work together and how the partnership between WWU and Washington Roundtable can be coordinated in the areas where two organizations' budget and bill advocacy goals align.

### **3. WASHINGTON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT COUNCIL, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION**

President Randhawa welcomed guests from the Washington Student Achievement Council: Jeff Vincent, WSAC Chair; and Michael Meotti, WSAC Executive Director.

Jeff Vincent and Michael Meotti gave a presentation about WSAC, which is a Cabinet-level agency aimed at creating an affordable and supportive educational environment where more Washingtonians will enroll in programs and complete credentials. Priorities include the organization's support for affordability, enrollment, student supports and completion. WSAC also makes recommendations to the state for funding and policies to support higher education.

Michael Meotti detailed the work WSAC does for college savings, financial aid and affordability. Student basic needs is a specific area that is in high demand and WSAC supports programs for unsheltered and food insecure students. In addition to the work

being done with high school graduates, working adults is another population in need of more of supported pathways.

Jeff Vincent shared the 2025-27 state-funding recommendations and bill ideas aimed at increasing higher education access and increasing student supports. The topic for the joint discussion is how Western, WSAC and WRT can partner to support one another's goals and advance shared priorities.

Chair Pettis thanked WSAC for funding the successful pilot program to address food insecurity. She acknowledged WSAC for their whole-student approach and taking a holistic look at the barriers students face at all stages of their journey to and through higher education.

A robust discussion followed about higher education opportunities and messaging around college affordability in WA, the broader value of higher education and economic mobility it provides and the business and economic need for more credentialed workers. Chief of Staff Becca Kenna-Schenk thanked the guests from Washington Roundtable and Washington Student Achievement Council for their leadership in defining the state workforce and education needs, being advocates for education priorities, and partners in implementing the solutions.

#### **4. ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 5:02pm.