

WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY BOARD OF TRUSTEES REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, October 16, 2025

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Faith Pettis called the regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of Western Washington University to order at 3:01pm on Thursday, October 16, 2025, in the Board of Trustees Conference room, Old Main 340, at Western Washington University in Bellingham, Washington.

Attendance:

Sabah Randhawa, President

Faith Pettis, Chair

Chris Witherspoon, Vice Chair

John Meyer, Trustee

Mo West, Trustee (on Zoom)

Maria Siguenza, Trustee

Ashlynn Tibbot, Trustee

Brad Johnson, Provost and Executive Vice President

Joyce Lopes, Vice President for Business and Financial Affairs (on Zoom)

Kim Hill, Vice President for Advancement, Executive Director for the Foundation for Western Washington University and Alumni

Jacqueline Hughes, Chief Diversity Officer and Executive Director for the Office of Equity

Becca Kenna-Schenk, President's Office Chief of Staff

Kerena Higgins, Assistant Attorney General

Rebecca Hansen-Zeller, Executive and Liaison to the Board of Trustees

Elissa Hicks, Government Relations and Board of Trustees Policy Coordinator

2. WWU IN METHOW VALLEY: SUSTAINABILITY PATHWAYS COMMUNITY

Joshua Porter, Director of WWU's Sustainability Pathways Program; Lael Williams, Sustainability Pathways Student; and Antonia Parrish, Sustainability Pathways Alum and Staff, joined the Board meeting to share information about the Sustainability Pathways Program and relay their positive experiences as students.

The program is offered through the College of the Environment. The interdisciplinary program is place-based in the Methow Valley, has strong local community engagement, and operates with a collaborative cohort model. The summer undergraduate fellowship consists of a paid professional practicum, research project management, and housing. So

far, six cohorts have completed the program, which totals about 100 students. The capacity for the program is currently limited by housing availability as the students both live and study near their field education sites. The model fosters a strong sense of community and belonging among students who participate.

Director Porter explained outreach efforts to local high schools and community colleges. The program is currently offering two College in the High Schools courses, a summer Youth Corp for high school students, and has a growing relationship with Wenatchee Valley Community College, all of which strengthen a college-going pipeline in the area. The program is currently self-sustaining: fundraising and grant-writing are ways the program will expand its reach in the future.

Lael Williams shared the academic and personal experiences she had while participating in the program during summer 2025. Her practicum focused on habitat protection and land use policy. She had the opportunity to work with other cohort members to collaborate with municipalities, partner organizations, and the community to design a pocket park in Twisp. She was proud to have formed lasting relationships with supervisors, students and community members.

Antonia Parrish then shared her experience as a student in the 2020 pilot program and how that exposure shaped her education and career path. During her undergraduate practicum, she gathered data on Canada Lynx and coyote scat. Analysis of that data continued after the summer program concluded. The Sustainability Pathways Program inspired her to continue doing field research after graduating from Western through a variety of jobs. She is now in graduate school and continues to study Canada Lynx and the impacts that wildfires have on the species. Antonia is currently working as the Sustainability Pathways Program Coordinator and serves as a near-peer mentor for current students.

Chair Pettis inquired about the recent land gift from Lee Whittaker, a Western alum. Joshua Porter reported that 160 acres were recently gifted and he expressed gratitude for the donor's support for student housing and field research sites that support conservation and land stewardship.

College of the Environment Dean, Teena Gabrielson, offered her thanks to Director Joshua Porter and praised the commitment and passion he brings to the work.

3. EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 3:37pm, Chair Pettis called the Board into Executive Session for 45 minutes, to end at 4:22pm.

The executive session was authorized by RCW 42.30.110(1)(i) and by RCW 41.30.110(1)(g). The purpose is to discuss the status of litigation with the attorney representing the institution, and to review the performance of a public employee.

4. RECONVENE

The Board reconvened at 4:24pm.

5. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 4:24pm.

Friday, October 17, 2025

6. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Faith Pettis called the regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of Western Washington University to order at 8:01am on Friday, October 17, 2025, in the Board of Trustees Conference room, Old Main 340, at Western Washington University in Bellingham, Washington.

Attendance:

Sabah Randhawa, President

Faith Pettis, Chair

Chris Witherspoon, Vice Chair

John Meyer, Trustee

Mo West, Trustee (on Zoom)

Ash Awad, Trustee (on Zoom)

Maria Siguenza, Trustee

Ashlynn Tibbot, Trustee

Brad Johnson, Provost and Executive Vice President

Joyce Lopes, Vice President for Business and Financial Affairs (on Zoom)

Kim Hill, Vice President for Advancement, Executive Director for the Foundation for Western Washington University and Alumni

Jacqueline Hughes, Chief Diversity Officer and Executive Director for the Office of Equity

Becca Kenna-Schenk, President's Office Chief of Staff

Erika McPhee-Shaw, Faculty Senate President

Aspen Cates-Doglio, ASWWU President

Kerena Higgins, Assistant Attorney General

Rebecca Hansen-Zeller, Executive and Liaison to the Board of Trustees

Elissa Hicks, Government Relations and Board of Trustees Policy Coordinator

7. PUBLIC COMMENT

The Board of Trustees agenda provides for public comment per Amended RCW 28B.35.110, also known as the Open Public Meetings Act. Nobody signed up for public comment for this meeting.

8. BOARD CHAIR REPORT

Board of Trustees Chair Faith Pettis reported that the Trustees had a fun social with members of the Faculty Senate Executive Council the previous evening and enjoyed informally meeting the Faculty leadership.

Chair Pettis thanked Trustees Tibbot and West for attending Fall Quarter kick-off events: Trustee Tibbott spoke at New Student Convocation and Trustee West attended the Convocation, the Academic Affairs Leadership meeting, and was also at President Randhawa's State of the University speech, which Chair Pettis also attended.

The Chair closed by reiterating that the Board is fully engaged in the success of the Presidential Strategic Enrollment Growth Initiative. Both enrollment and retention play critical roles in keeping the university budget on track. The Board is planning a retreat at the end of October and the initiative will be a major topic.

9. UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT REPORT

President Randhawa began by commenting that the academic year is off to a positive start. Events such as Info Fair, Convocation and First Night Out were well-attended. He noted a recent event at the Lummi School to recongize Indigenous People's Day and thanked Chief Diversity Officer, Jacqueline Hughes, for attending. He noted the opening of a new space in the Viking Union for Latinx students.

He was pleased to share that there is a new Electrical and Computer Engineering Department with in the College of Science and Engineering. The department is offering a new graduate program: Master of Science in Electrical and Computer Engineering. President Randhawa congratulated the Faculty and Dean for launching that new department and graduate program.

President Randhawa acknowleged that Fall 2025 enrollment fell short of the goal and that the state budget forecast is not positive, which means the enrollment and retention work is urgent. Given the state budget forecast, the Council of Presidents discussed ways to build relationships with Governor Ferguson and amplify higher ed issues. Federal pressure was another topic of discussion among that group.

Provost and Executive Vice President, Brad Johnson, closed the report with an update on the Services & Activities fee allocation process changes. The proposed process changes will be brought to the Board for its consideration in December 2025.

10. FACULTY SENATE REPORT

Erika McPhee-Shaw, Faculty Senate President, shared the three issue areas that were identified by the Executive Council as priorities for this year. Those focal points are: shared governance, academic freedom and free expression, and Artificial Intelligence in higher education.

Discussion has begun and work is currently underway in all three areas. She noted that the new Faculty Handbook will be used as a guide for strengthening shared governance. In the area of academic freedom and free expression, she thanked President Randhawa for expediting approval of a new policy related to recording in classrooms. Faculty appreciated having that policy in place at the beginning of Fall Quarter. And related to Artificial Intelligence, at the first Senate meeting in the fall, each Senator shared their thoughts and concerns with Artificial Intelligence in academia. The group plans to form a committee to further analyze the issues that were raised.

Another topic of discussion at the Faculty Senate's first meeting was encouragement of collegiality among Faculty Senate members. President McPhee-Shaw shared that support for fellow educators is especially important right now given an external environment that is hostile to higher education. During that discussion, Senators also acknowledged the difficult issues and hard decisions that university administration is facing.

11. ASSOCIATED STUDENTS OF WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY REPORT

Aspen Cates-Doglio, President, Associated Students of Western Washington University, began by sharing that the Senate has started the process to fill 5 vacant positions for which they received 77 applications.

President Cates-Doglio described ways the Senate and Executive Board are working together on shared goals which include developing a missions statement for student government, forming workgroups to increase collaboration between the Senate and Executive Board, increasing voter registration and turnout through a partnership with the Civic Action Program and offering ballot printing stations, increasing the visibility of AS through proactive outreach, and refining the student governance structure.

He closed by sharing student concerns about how recent budget cuts and structural changes have impacted students, and raised questions about the heating problem in Miller Hall. He delivered a large number of postcards from students thanking the university for its Socially Responsible Investing Policy and urging the Foundation to divest from fossil fuels.

12. BOARD FINANCE, AUDIT, AND ENTERPRISE RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

Trustee John Meyer, Chair, Finance, Audit, and Enterprise Risk Management Committee, recently assumed the Chair position, which is a leadership role he has previously held during his tenure on the Board.

He reported on the September 25, 2025 meeting where Executive Director of Internal Audit, Priya Sall, reported on ongoing Internal Audit investigations. She also introduced the draft FY26 Audit Plan. The seven priority projects in that plan are: P Cards, Scholarships, Cabinet Expense Review, Career Services Center, Surplus Sales, Bookstore Inventory Count, and I-200 compliance. The committee voted to approve the draft FY25-26 Audit Plan and it is on the Board's consent agenda.

At the meeting, Vice President Lopes provided an update on the new Division structure and how the reorganized functions are working together. She briefed the committee on a change to the enrollment fee which is included in the 2026-27 Tuition & Fee package that is on the Board's agenda for approval.

Committee Chair John Meyer and Trustee Mo West, who chairs the Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee, met recently and discussed ways to increase information sharing and communication across the two standing committees, especially on issues that have interests that crossover between the two committee's areas of responsibility.

13. BOARD ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND STUDENT SUCCESS COMMITTEE REPORT

Trustee Ashlynn Tibbot, who is a member of the Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee, gave the report on behalf of Committee Chair Mo West.

Trustee Tibbot shared that at the September 26, 2025 meeting, Robert Squires, Vice Provost for Outreach and Continuing Education, reported on the expansion of the College in the High School program both geographically and in course offerings. He noted strong partnerships with WWU Faculty and the K-12 teachers who teach CIHS classes. Many of the schools that WWU partners with are Title I schools with a large population of typically underserved groups of students.

Another topic that the committee engaged in was Fall enrollment and plans for strengthening recruitment, enrollment and retention efforts. Provost Johnson shared enrollment projections for Fall 2025 that indicated that we will be down from last year. The final census data was included in the Board's packet for this meeting.

Given our enrollment and budget circumstances, Chief of Staff, Becca Kenna-Schenk, introduced the Presidential Strategic Enrollment Growth Plan. The three pillars of the initiative are: an automatic admission pilot in five counties, guaranteed transfer from Community Colleges, and expanded recruitment, marketing and engagement. More details about the goals of the Presidential Initiative will be presented later in the Board meeting.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

14. FINAL FALL 2025 ENROLLMENT, PRESIDENTIAL STRATEGIC ENROLLMENT GROWTH INITIATIVE

Brad Johnson, Provost and Executive Vice President, began with a historic summary of Western's overall enrollment by headcount, and more recent data that shows a trend of precipitous enrollment decline. He shared that data to illustrate that the university is currently experiencing external and internal events that present a unique moment in time which requires a strategic response from the institution.

Trustee Ash Awad asked about what forces are at play that are causing the decline in enrollment. Provost and Executive Vice President Johnson explained how the nationwide demographic cliff will start to impact the Northwest and the ways WA State's low college-

going rate among high school graduates exacerbates that larger trend. Developing a stronger college-going culture is important to building Western's enrollment and impact in the state.

Vice Chair Chris Witherspoon inquired about how Western's enrollment trends compare to other four-year institutions in Washington. Provost Johnson shared information on the enrollment trends at the other regional universities, and with the exception of UW, the other state universities have seen an enrollment decline.

Provost and Executive Vice President Johnson presented the Fall 2025 Census Day numbers that showed an overall decline in both first-year and transfer students compared to Fall 2024. College in the High School was one area that grew, and there were gains in enrollment of students of color.

Becca Kenna-Schenk, Chief of Staff, provided a briefing on the Presidential Strategic Enrollment Growth Initiative. The initiative addresses the urgency to respond to the enrollment decline and has clear goals for Fall 2026-2027 enrollment which are: 3,200 new first-year students, 1,200 new transfer students, and increasing our retention rate to 80%. The three big components of the initiative are: Western Guaranteed Admissions Program, Guaranteed Community College Transfer, and Expanded Recruitment, Marketing, and Engagement.

Chief of Staff Kenna-Schenk shared the eligibility criteria for the Western Guaranteed Admission Pilot. Through a data sharing agreement, Western will be able to contact eligible high school seniors to notify them that they are admitted. To smooth the process, no application and no fee will be required to enroll.

Trustee John Meyer asked how the 2.75 GPA requirement was calculated. The Chief of Staff shared that there was analysis of data on student success based on high school GPA that showed fewer students who enrolled with a GPA below 2.75 were successfully completing a degree. While not eligible for guaranteed admissions, students with a GPA below a 2.75 could be admitted to Western, but would go through the regular admission process for evaluation.

Chief of Staff Kenna-Schenk informed the Board of a program similar to what Western is launching called the WA Guaranteed Admission Program. That program is offered at participating high schools statewide and has different GPA and high school course completion requirements. Western's five-county pilot program has a 2.75, instead of 3.0, GPA requirement, and waives College Academic Distribution Requirements.

Chief of Staff Kenna-Schenk shared information on recently executed and pending guaranteed transfer agreements with community colleges. Direct admission to a major is an element of those agreements that smooths a transfer student's pathway to completion of their intended degree.

The presentation closed with a summary of the ways recruitment, marketing, family engagement and scholarships will support the goals of the initiative.

Trustee Ash Awad asked about how student success and completion will be measured among the incoming students and how the university will support students who benefit from expanded access.

Trustee Maria Siguenza asked about how Western will adjust to student demographic shifts and suggested more engagement with community-based organizations that have existing relationships with families of color.

Vice Chair Chris Witherspoon asked how Trustees can provide support for the initiative and track progress. This is a topic that the Board will discuss in greater detail at its upcoming work session.

Trustee Mo West asked how Faculty, students and the executive team will be communicating with each other to address barriers and stay on-track for success. She also asked how the initiative supports regional workforce development. Becca Kenna-Schenk shared the channels of communication that are being used both internally and externally. Feedback from the university and regional communities has been positive.

15. BREAK

16. TUITION AND FEES PACKAGE FOR 2026-2027

Faye Gallant, Associate Vice President for Strategy, Management and Budget, shared key elements of the Tuition & Fees package. She shared how the state calculates allowable tuition rate increases for resident undergraduates, and how the university calculates recommended increases for non-resident undergraduates, resident graduate students and non-resident graduate students. The recommendation before the Board is an across the board 3.3% increase, except for non-resident undergraduate tuition, which would not see an increase for 2026-2027.

In addition to the tuition rate changes, Associate Vice President Gallant provided information on changes to mandatory student fees. Across all fee types, an overall 2.68% increase is what is being recommended for the Board to approve.

She also outlined changes to the New Student Enrollment Fee. The fee will increase and the timing of the fee payment will move to fall quarter, after the student has enrolled, which allows financial aid to apply. This fee supports orientation, advising, tutoring and other support for first-year students.

Leonard Jones, Executive Director for University Residences, continued the presentation by sharing key elements of the changes to Housing & Dining rates. Affordability and belonging are central to decision-making about housing and dining on campus. A 4.1% increase for 2026-2027 is recommended to the Board for its approval.

Trustee Tibbot asked how maintenance and safety are factored in to the fees. Executive Director Jones shared how reserves are used and how bonds and capital investments can be used to address maintenance needs.

ACTION ITEMS

17. CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Approval of Minutes from August 15, 2025
- b. Approval of FY26 Audit Plan
- c. Approval of Expedited Rulemaking, Chapter 516-21 WAC – Student Conduct Code
- d. Approval of Progressive Design-Build Contract Amendment for Student Development and Success Center – PW776

Chair Pettis introduced the consent agenda as a new standing item on board agendas. Items on the consent agenda will be approved as a group, but any Trustee can pull an item for further discussion prior to the Board's vote.

Trustee Meyer asked Executive Director of Internal Audit, Priya Sall, to provide more context for the FY26 Internal Audit Plan. She shared the seven priority projects in the plan and noted that, in addition to the planned projects, the department will continue to respond to incoming investigation requests as the year progresses.

MOTION 10-1-2025

Trustee Ashlynn Tibbot **MOVED**, that the Board of Trustees, upon the recommendation of the President, and under the individual motion language proposed in the attachments, approve the items listed on the Consent Agenda.

- a. Approval of Minutes from August 15, 2025
- b. Approval of FY26 Audit Plan
- c. Approval of Expedited Rulemaking, Chapter 516-21 WAC – Student Conduct Code
- d. Approval of Progressive Design-Build Contract Amendment for Student Development and Success Center – PW776

Vice Chair Chris Witherspoon seconded the Motion. The motion passed 7-0.

18. APPROVAL OF PRESIDENT'S CONTRACT EXTENSION

Faith Pettis, Chair of the Board of Trustees, reported that the Board discussed the President's contract in Executive Session and decided to extend the contract for two-years and add an annual professional assignment leave. Chair Pettis thanked Trustee Chase Franklin and Assistant Attorney General Kerena Higgins for their work drafting the contract.

MOTION 10-2-2025

Vice Chair Chris Witherspoon **MOVED**, that the Board of Trustees of Western Washington University, upon recommendation of the Board Chair, approve a two-year extension of the President's contract through July 31, 2028.

Trustee John Meyer seconded the Motion. The motion passed 6-0. With Trustee Tibbot abstaining.

19. APPROVAL OF 2026-2027 TUITION AND FEES

MOTION 10-3-2025

Trustee John Meyer **MOVED**, that the 2026-2027 annual tuition operating fee and capital building fee rates for state-funded resident undergraduate students, resident and non-resident graduate, resident and non-resident MBA, resident and non-resident Clinical Doctorate of Audiology program, resident and non-resident Clinical Mental Health and School Counseling, and the resident and non-resident Speech Pathology program be raised by 3.3%, and non-resident undergraduate students be raised by 0%.

FURTHER MOVED, that the Board of Trustees of Western Washington University, upon the recommendation of the President and various constituent review committees, approve the 2026-2027 mandatory student fee levels for the following fees:

- Services & Activities Fee (3.51% or \$9.10 per quarter increase for students taking 10 credits or more, pro-rated for students taking less than 10 credits)
- Student Recreation Fee (4.00% or \$4.93 per quarter increase for students taking 10 credits or more, pro-rated for students taking less than 10 credits)
- Student Health Services Fee (2.21% or \$4.00 per quarter for students taking 6 or more credits)
- Student Technology Fee (No increase)
- Non-Academic Building Fee (No increase)
- Sustainability, Equity and Justice Fund Fee (No increase)
- Active Transportation Fee (4.90% or \$1.62 per quarter)
- Legislative Action Fee (No increase)
- Multicultural Services Fee (No increase)
- Food Security Fee (No increase)
- Enrollment Fee (Replacing previous "Enrollment and Confirmation Fee," now charged to new first-time and transfer students in their first quarter, \$450 one-time charge).

Vice Chair Chris Witherspoon seconded the Motion. The motion passed 7-0.

20. APPROVAL OF 2026-2027 HOUSING AND DINING RATES

MOTION 10-4-2025

Trustee Maria Siguenza **MOVED**, that the Board of Trustees of Western Washington University, upon recommendation of the President, approve the 2026-2027 Housing and Dining rates as proposed.

The 2026-2027 proposed rates call for:

An aggregate 4.10% increase in base residence hall room and board rates and a 7.5% increase in Birnam Wood apartment rates.

Trustee Mo West Seconded the Motion. The motion passed 7-0.

INFORMATION ITEMS

21. WRITTEN REPORTS

- a. Academic Affairs Report
- b. Business and Financial Affairs Report
- c. Advancement Report
- d. Office of Equity Report

Chair Pettis noted that the written reports are now submitted by Division and asked both Trustees and executive team members for their feedback on the new way of presenting the information.

Trustee Maria Siguenza shared her interest in the marketing work that is being done and was supportive of the plan to hold focus groups that inform ways Western can share its stories.

Chair Pettis thanked Chief Diversity Officer, Jacqueline Hughes, for her work in support of the enrollment initiative, specifically as it relates to retention.

22. TRUSTEE REMARKS

Vice Chair Witherspoon noted that the Board will meet for a work session at the end of October and he looks forward to taking time for in-depth discussion on important issues.

23. DATES FOR NEXT REGULAR MEETING

The next regular meeting is scheduled for December 11-12, 2025 in Bellingham, WA.

24. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 10:47am.