

**WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2025**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Pettis called the regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of Western Washington University to order at 10:07 am on Thursday, February 13, 2025, in the Garden Room of the Bellwether Hotel in Bellingham, Washington.

Attendance

Faith Pettis, Chair
Chris Witherspoon, Vice Chair
Mo Western Washington University, Trustee
Maria Siguenza, Trustee
Tine Ekhteraee-Sanaee, Trustee
Ash Awad, Trustee
Chase Franklin, Trustee (on Zoom)
Sabah Randhawa, President
Brad Johnson, Provost and Executive Vice President
Joyce Lopes, Vice President for Business and Financial Affairs
Rebecca Hansen-Zeller, Executive and Liaison to the Board of Trustees
Elissa Hicks, Policy Coordinator for Government Relations and the Board of Trustees

2. BOARD OF TRUSTEES WORK SESSION

The Board held a work session for a focused discussion about Western's operating budget, within the context of the state budget and other external forces. They discussed several strategies that will be used to close a large gap in the university's operating budget. Cabinet members joined the conversation midday for a roundtable on challenges being faced by each division.

3. EXECUTIVE SESSION: RCW 42.30.110(1) (a) (ii) (g)

As per RCW 42.30.110(1) (a) (ii) (g), Chair Pettis called an Executive Session at 3:44pm. The Executive Session ended at 4:11pm.

4. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned for the day at 4:12pm.

**WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2025**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Pettis called the regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of Western Washington University to order at 8:01 am on Friday, February 14, 2025, in the Board of Trustees Conference room, Old Main 340, at Western Washington University in Bellingham, Washington.

Attendance

Faith Pettis, Chair
Chris Witherspoon, Vice Chair
Mo Western Washington University, Trustee
Maria Siguenza, Trustee
Tine Ekhteraee-Sanaee, Trustee
Ash Awad, Trustee (on Zoom)
Chase Franklin, Trustee (on Zoom)
Sabah Randhawa, President
Brad Johnson, Provost and Executive Vice President
Joyce Lopes, Vice President for Business and Financial Affairs
Melynda Huskey, Vice President of Student Affairs
Kim O'Neill, Vice President for Advancement, Executive Director of the Foundation for WWU and Alumni
Jim Sterk, Director of Athletics
Jacqueline Hughes, Chief Diversity Officer and Executive Director of the Office of Equity
Becca Kenna-Schenk, President's Office Chief of Staff
Kerena Higgins, AAG
Michael Slouber, Faculty Senate President
Malachi Phillips, ASWWU President (on Zoom)
Rebecca Hansen-Zeller, Executive and Liaison to the Board of Trustees
Elissa Hicks, Policy Coordinator for Government Relations and the Board of Trustees

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. Regular Meeting: December 12-13, 2024

The Trustees reviewed the minutes.

MOTION 02-01-2025 Trustee Mo West **MOVED**, that the Board of Trustees of Western Washington University, upon the recommendation of the president, approve the following minutes: Board of Trustees Regular Meeting on December 12-13, 2024.

Trustee Maria Siguenza seconded the motion. The motion passed 7-0.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

No one signed up for public comment.

4. BOARD CHAIR REPORT

Chair Faith Pettis began with a report from Regents & Trustees Day in Olympia. Chair Pettis, Trustee Maria Siguenza, Trustee Mo West, and Tina Ekhteraee-Sanaee represented Western; each reported on the meetings they had with legislators and staff.

Chair Pettis thanked Trustee Mo West and Trustee Tina Ekhteraee-Sanaee for attending the Martin Luther King, Jr. community celebration. She also thanked them for attending the recent scholarship dinner on campus. Chair Pettis shared that she recently attended a Foundation event at the Seattle Children's Theater. Directors and actors from Western were part of the SCT production and Chair Pettis learned about an exciting collaboration between SCT and WWU to create new works through the Test Kitchen workshop.

Following those announcements, Chair Pettis provided a summary of the Board's work session the day before. The primary topic of discussion was Western's difficult budget situation. The Board discussed the impacts of current and future cuts and framed them within the context of the university's mission. The pillars of the strategic plan are all student-centered: advancing inclusive student success, increasing WA impact, and enhancing academic excellence. These pillars were a guide when considering budget strategies.

A notable theme in the budget discussion was how Western's principles of shared governance should be employed throughout the budget decision-making process. Chair Pettis shared that, as fiduciaries, the Board has a unique role and makes final decisions that are in the best interest of the institution long-term. The Board also holds the President and his administration accountable for executing those decisions and advancing shared priorities. The shared governance engagement with the Faculty Senate informs the Board's thinking and decision-making.

During the work session, the Board also discussed the impacts of federal actions, our state funding, and other factors that shape the current operating budget picture. To address the budget deficit, the university has employed several short-term strategies and is now looking at permanent changes to address not only our immediate budget gaps, but also projected changes in the future. Chair Pettis shared that there is a six-year plan to restore reserves and move the university to better financial footing. During that period, the Board and the

administration will continue their advocacy in the legislature while aligning Western's budget with a commitment to preserving core functions and supporting our institutional goals.

5. UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT REPORT

President Randhawa thanked the Board for their guidance and leadership at the work session. He noted the shared commitment to ensuring the university remains strong into the future.

President Randhawa shared that he and Provost Johnson have had a series of breakfast meetings to celebrate with newly promoted and tenured faculty. He commented on the breadth and depth of the research, scholarship and creative activity of the Faculty, as well as their commitment to students.

The President reported on a meeting with Faculty Senate to discuss the work being done on the Peninsulas and address concerns related to program offerings and curriculum. The shared goal is to complete the process discussions and move forward by the end of this academic year.

President Randhawa briefed the Board on a hazardous waste violation and shared what has been done to address that and avoid future problems.

President Randhawa then invited Kerena Higgins and Dan Records-Galbraith to report on recent federal actions related to Title IX and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. AAG Higgins shared how the Title IX changes impact current and future investigations. Daniel Records-Galbraith offered that the practical differences under the new changes will likely be minimal because WA State law and university policies already address discrimination. Daniel Records-Galbraith also spoke about immigration, DEI, transgender recognition and actions that impact other groups on campus and noted that, so far, the language we have received has been vague, and the university is not changing policies until it has more guidance.

6. FACULTY SENATE REPORT

Michael Slouber, Faculty Senate President, began by mentioning the concerns Faculty have raised related to the recent federal actions. He thanked the administration for support for Faculty during this time of uncertainty.

Faculty Senate President Slouber, reported that the Faculty Senate is working with the administration on the status of Faculty on the Peninsulas. That conversation will continue this spring.

Michael Slouber also raised an issue related to the Library collections budget and recurring problems with publications being canceled or withdrawn. He explained that these resources are a core need for teaching and learning and offered that coordination with other libraries

might help with resource availability. He suggested that if there was a network of libraries, they could coordinate, and more publications could be offered.

Faculty Senate President Slouber shared the results of a survey of Faculty regarding threats and harassment. The survey indicated that this is a significant issue, with the potential to escalate. A centralized reporting structure for threats and harassment is being launched, and classroom locations are no longer publicly accessible. Michael Slouber also shared concerns about a recent public records request that requests to release office locations, among other information, which Faculty are challenging for safety reasons.

Michael Slouber shared work that is underway to address generative AI in the classroom. Faculty Senate is working on a new policy to address the ethical issues of academic integrity that the new technology raises.

Faculty Senate President Slouber updated the Board on the status of the Faculty handbook revisions. The revisions are on-track to be considered by the Faculty Senate in May, and a new document could come to the Board for a vote as soon as June.

In closing, Michael Slouber raised concerns about the reorganization of international programs and impacts to Faculty.

7. ASSOCIATED STUDENTS OF WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY REPORT

Malachi Phillips, President of the Associated Students of Western Washington University, joined the meeting remotely to provide his report. He began by talking about vacancies in the Associated Students structure and the Office of Civic Engagement that are impacting the student election process. Candidates for next year will begin filing to run on March 7 and elections will follow. There will be a transition period for incoming and outgoing AS leaders in order to provide training and share institutional knowledge with the incoming leadership. Two Senators have had to resign and the process for appointing their replacements is underway.

Malachi Phillips shared that there are new forms for student government to gather input from students. He hopes the new portal will increase student engagement. He will share results during his next report, in April.

AS President Phillips shared that he is using a goal-based model to look at the AS structure, student participation and institutional impact.

Malachi Phillips mentioned that he is collecting more information to inform the Active Transportation Fee process. He'd like to know more about the history and intent of that fee. In the future, those fee increases will come through AS prior to a recommendation to the Board. He thanked Vice President Lopes for working with him on clarifying that process.

The S&A fee committee will begin meeting soon and that a discussion has begun about restructuring that committee for next year.

About fifty students from Western went to Olympia for the student advocacy day in Olympia. Students who attended reported that they felt like their advocacy was effective and that it is was a good learning opportunity. Malachi Phillips outlined some of the key issues and bills that students supported.

Student athletes recently came to the AS Executive Board to propose a new Athletics fee. The pros and cons are being weighed among AS leadership.

AS President Phillips acknowledged the impacts of the federal executive actions as well as the budget cuts at Western.

In closing, Malachi Phillips shared that he and other students were disappointed to hear that the Foundation is not going to be part of the ACSRI process or subject to the university's policy.

Before moving on, Trustee Chase Franklin offered a brief clarification regarding the Foundation's role related to the ACSRI. He shared that while the Foundation continues to have representation on the advisory committee, but the Foundation is not able to participate in the process as fully as committee members would like.

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

Trustee Chase Franklin, Chair of the Finance, Audit, and Enterprise Risk Management Committee, reported on the January meeting where the committee had a financial audit exit conference with CliftonAllenLarson for the 2023-24 financial audit. There were no material findings. This the first audit conducted by CLA. The FARM committee and Board will consider extension of that contract at a future meeting.

Chief of Staff, Becca Kenna-Schenk, provided the committee with the state budget outlook and shared how various proposals might impact Western and other similar state agencies. She noted that there is a significant operating budget gap and the state budget decisions will influence the size of that institutional gap.

The committee also heard on update on the university's financial health. Vice President Lopes and her team prepared the presentation based on a National Association for College and University Business Officers model that considers a few key factors for analyzing the institution's financial stability. This is the second year that we have used the NACUBO framework to prepare a sustainability assessment. Chair Franklin commented that deferred maintenance of facilities is a recurring risk-management issue that requires attention.

The FARM committee meets next later in February for a strategic discussion about student fees.

9. BOARD ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND STUDENT SUCCESS COMMITTEE REPORT

Trustee Mo West, Chair of the Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee, reported on two recent committee meetings. In December, the committee met with the Directors of the Centers and Institutes. The committee members learned about unique research being done, the place-based element of some of the Centers and Institutes, and the impact of those entities both at Western and more broadly in the region. Ways to expand external partnerships and attract more students were discussed.

The committee also discussed student mental health resources and the resources available for crisis intervention and suicide prevention.

Fall enrollment data was discussed and disaggregated data based on a variety of factors were presented. The committee inquired about specific programs for outreach and enrollment to underserved groups and how the new high-school senior and family list will be used for targeted recruitment.

The committee also heard about the work being done to facilitate difficult conversations and increase a sense of belonging on campus. One significant project that will build connections within and around Western is with the House of Healing Longhouse that will open in Fall 2025.

In January, the committee met with Director Meagan Bryson from the Advising and Student Achievement Center. She shared a series of examples for targeted services offered to boost student success.

Provost and Executive Vice President Johnson reported on the reorganization of Academic Affairs, and Robert Squires joined the committee to talk about Outreach and Continuing Education. Robert Squires outlined the priorities of OCE, which are: access, community engagement, continuing education, K-12 engagement, transfer pathways for community college students, as well as self-sustaining programs.

The meeting closed with a brief updated on the inaugural meeting of the NW Education and Workforce Coalition, which was hosted by Western.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

10. FOUNDATION FOR WWU & ALUMNI / ADVANCEMENT UPDATE

President Randhawa introduced the presentation, which will offer reflections on the merger of Alumni and Foundation functions, recent structural changes to Advancement, and preparations for a comprehensive campaign.

Kim O'Neill, Vice President for Advancement and Executive Director for the Foundation for WWU & Alumni, shared the new organizational structure that integrates communications and marketing, which recently moved under the Advancement umbrella. This alignment of functions will assist with enrollment, fundraising and engagement of external constituents. She added that this structure increases collaboration and fosters creativity to allow the university to tell its story and promote impactful narratives that lead to greater student enrollment and donor interest. Conversations with alumni experts about branding and communication are underway and Kim O'Neill thanked Trustee Witherspoon for offering his expertise to that project.

Vice President O'Neill shared her priorities for the remainder of this year and into next. Priorities include student recruitment, enhancing brand awareness, coordination and support for Western on the Peninsulas, increasing our digital presence, and new ways to using technology to fundraise.

Trustee West inquired about branding for Nursing in Bellingham and health care programs on the Peninsulas. She encouraged more partnerships and pathways to offer opportunities for students.

Trustee Witherspoon commented that he has enjoyed working with Foundation leadership and offering his perspective on branding and marketing.

11. LEGISLATIVE SESSION REPORT

Nora Selander, Director of Government Relations, began by thanking the Trustees who attended the higher education advocacy day in Olympia.

She then reported on the difficult state budget landscape, which is being negotiated in the context of a deficit. She reminded the group what was included in the December 2024 budget that was proposed by then-Governor, Jay Inslee, which is only a starting point for the House and Senate to build their budget proposals. The House and Senate budget proposals are expected in the third week in March, around the same time as the new revenue forecast.

Director Selander reminded the group higher-education is a discretionary spending category and that higher education entities are working hard to preserve funding and avoid cuts. Western's primary ask this session is for an adjustment to the base funding. Western ranks lowest among the 4-year institutions in the state for per-student funding; and has lagged behind for many years. Western is asking for funding to address that per-student funding disparity.

The Trustees thanked Director Selander for her work in Olympia and for representing WWU's great reputation among legislators so well.

ACTION ITEMS

12. APPROVAL OF AMENDMENTS TO ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE INVESTING CHARTER

Chair Pettis asked Trustee Chase Franklin, who is the Chair for the Advisory Committee on Socially Responsible Investing, to introduce the action item.

To introduce the Charter revisions, Trustee Franklin noted that, from the beginning of this process, the Foundation was encouraged to participate, even though they were not obligated to adopt the policy or change their investment practices. Since the Foundation is an independent entity, the Board's policy cannot bind them.

Trustee Franklin also shared information that the advisory committee discussed related to \$15 million of university-owned investments that are currently managed by the Foundation. The future of those investments will need to be considered by the Board with an eye to increasing transparency so those holdings can be analyzed using the new Socially Responsible Investing policy.

The amendments before the Board today remove the Foundation from the Charter and clarify that it is not bound by the SRI policy. The proposal also adds a statement that underscores that the Board encourages the Foundation, despite their current structural restrictions, to move toward transparency and in the direction of SRI.

Trustee Awad spoke in support of the amendment that encourages the Foundation to increase transparency and focus on SRI in their practices.

Vice President O'Neill reported that the Foundation is working with a consultant to revise the current investing policy to reflect SRI. The Foundation Board will consider adoption of that new investment policy at their May Board meeting. Trustee Franklin replied that the Foundation's current investment policy has not been disclosed and he encouraged that the policy be shared publicly.

MOTION 02-02-2025 Vice Chair Chris Witherspoon MOVED, that the Board of Trustees of Western Washington University, upon recommendation of the Board of Trustees Executive Committee, approve the amended Charter for the Board Advisory Committee on Socially Responsible Investing (ACSRI).

Trustee Mo West seconded the motion. The motion passed 7-0.

13. APPROVAL OF WINTER QUARTER DEGREES

Brad Johnson, Provost and Executive Vice President, proudly submitted 411 undergraduates and 42 masters students for degree-approval, contingent upon the completion of their work at the end of Winter Quarter 2025.

MOTION 02-03-2025 Trustee Tina Ekhteraee-Sanaee MOVED, that the Board of Trustees of Western Washington University, on recommendation of the Faculty and subject to the completion of any unmet requirements, approves awarding undergraduate and graduate degrees to the candidates listed in the files of the Registrar and Graduate Dean, for Winter Quarter 2025, effective March 22, 2025.

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

14. APPROVAL OF CONTRACTS

Joyce Lopes, Vice President for Business and Financial Affairs, asked Traci Brewer-Rogstad, Associate Vice President for Facilities Development and Operations, to introduce the contracts. Brian Ross, Director of Capital Budget and Capital Operations, also commented on the need for replacement of these aged systems.

a. CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT AWARD FOR HIGGINSON HALL ELECTRONIC SAFETY UPGRADES, PW811

MOTION 02-04-2025 Trustee Ash Awad MOVED that the Board of Trustees of Western Washington University, upon the recommendation of the President, award a contract to Dutton Electric Company, Inc., Lynnwood, WA, in the amount of \$714,900 (plus associated sales tax) for Higginson Hall Electronic Safety Upgrades.

Trustee Chase Franklin seconded the motion. The motion passed 7-0.

b. CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT AWARD FOR PHYSICAL PLANT ELECTRICAL UPGRADES, PW820

Trustee Awad asked if the new generator will be a natural gas or diesel/fuel generator. Presenters confirmed that it will be a natural gas generator.

MOTION 02-05-2025 Trustee Maria Siguenza MOVED that the Board of Trustees of Western Washington University, upon the recommendation of the President, award a contract to Prime Electric Inc., Bellevue, WA, in the amount of \$574,937 (plus associated

sales tax) for the construction of the electrical upgrades at the Physical Plant.

Trustee Mo West seconded the motion. The motion passed 7-0.

15. ACCEPTANCE OF FY 2024 FINANCIAL REPORTS

Joyce Lopes, Vice President for Business and Financial Affairs reported that BFA worked productively with CliftonLarsonAllen. The FARM Committee reviewed the report and referred it to the Board for acceptance.

Chair Pettis noted that the recommendations that were provided were helpful and illustrated good best practices.

Trustee Awad complimented everyone for working together to complete the audit. The hard work and professionalism of Western's Business and Financial Affairs team to transition to the new auditor and collaborate on this first audit, were noted by CLA. Trustee Franklin commented on the higher-ed expertise of CLA and the high-level work being done.

MOTION 02-06-2025 Trustee Chase Franklin MOVED, that the Board of Trustees of Western Washington University, upon the recommendation of the President, accept the WWU FY 2024 Financial Reports.

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

16. APPROVAL OF 2024-2025 AND 2025-2026 ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION FEE REDUCTION

Joyce Lopes, Vice President for Business and Financial Affairs, offered clarity on the process used to recommend active transportation fee increases, which are capped at 5% annually. In the future, the administration will work with the ASWWU to recommend these fee increases. Today's action would replace the original request for a 13% increase and would instead institute a 5% increase for 2024-25 and an additional 5% for 2025-26. The increase helps fund service for the Starlight Shuttle.

MOTION 02-07-2025 Trustee West MOVED that the Board of Trustees of Western Washington University, upon the recommendation of the President, approve a reduction of the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 Active Transportation Fee to \$31.50 per quarter in 2024-2025 and \$33.08 per quarter in 2025-2026.

Trustee Maria Siguenza seconded the motion. The motion passed 7-0.

APPROVED
April 11, 2025

INFORMATION ITEMS

21. WRITTEN REPORTS

- a. Enrollment Management Summary
- b. University Advancement Report
- c. Capital Program Report
- d. Student Affairs Report
- e. Sustainability Report

Chair Pettis thanked staff for preparing the reports.

22. TRUSTEE REMARKS

Trustee West thanked Elissa Hicks for her work in organizing the higher-ed advocacy day in Olympia.

Vice Chair Chris Witherspoon expressed appreciation for the student-first approach of the administration, despite turbulent times both with the operating budget and the recent federal actions.

Trustee Siguenza thanked President Randhawa and his team for proactive communication that reinforces the university's values.

Trustee Ekhteraee-Sanaee noted that she is impressed with the university's leadership team. She shared how she and other students are feeling during a time of federal policy shifts and funding constraints in Olympia.

23. DATES FOR NEXT REGULAR MEETING

The next Regular Meeting is April 10-11, 2025, in Bellingham, WA.

24. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 am.