



WESTERN

COLORADO UNIVERSITY

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Meeting Minutes

February 6, 2025

10:00am – 5:00pm

The Sonesta Downtown, Denver

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Pribyl at 10:02am.

II. Attendance: Oath of Trusteeship—Trustee Carver and Trustee Vasquez

Senior AG Paralegal Xan Serocki issued the Oath of Trusteeship to Trustees Carver and Vasquez.

Trustees: Chair Pribyl, Vice Chair Buckley, Trustee Carver, Trustee Gutierrez, Trustee Hamner, Faculty Trustee Mason, Student Trustee Tanner, Trustee Todd (via zoom), Trustee Vasquez, Trustee Wiens (via zoom).

Excused: Trustee Blessman.

Non-Trustees: Matt Aronson (Faculty Senate Chair), Brad Baca (President), Mayela Cardenas (Professor of Art), Ashley Carlson (AVP Academic Affairs), Steph Chichester (President of North Slope Capital Advisors), Nancy Chisholm (Elevate Campaign Chair), Laurel Fisher (Administrative Leadership Council Representative), Jess Hickey (Student Government Association [SGA] Representative), Ian Higgins (VP Finance & Administration), Jim Hinckle (Hinckle & Company), Hanna Justis (Human Resource Specialist - zoom), Kelli Kelty (Politicalworks), Brian Kerrigan (SGA Representative), Mike LaPlante (VP Advancement), Gary Pierson (Dean of Students), Natalie Powell (Senior Assistant AG), Chad Robinson (Associate VP and Chief Information Officer - zoom), Ainsley Rosenow (SGA Representative), Caitlin Rovner (EA to the President- zoom), Theresa Szczurek (former Trustee), Nick Taylor (Managing Director of North Slope Capital Advisors), Miles VanHee (Athletic Director- zoom), Chase Watts (Director of Admissions), Marita Whalen (Equal Opportunity Officer), James Young (Campus Audio-Visual Manager), Jess Young (Provost).

III. Approval of the Agenda

A motion to approve the updated agenda as presented was made by Trustee Gutierrez and seconded by Trustee Hamner. The motion carried.

IV. Approval of Minutes for the December 5, 2024 Board of Trustees Meeting and the January 2, 2025 Special Meeting

A motion to approve the minutes for the December 5, 2024 Board of Trustees Meeting and the January 2, 2025 Special Meeting was made by Trustee Gutierrez and seconded by Trustee Hamner. The motion carried.

V. Review of Action Items from BOT Meeting of December 5, 2024, and the January 2, 2025 Special

Meeting

President Baca provided updates on the presented action items.

VI. Oral Reports

A. President

President Baca recognized the SGA students attending the meeting and thanked them for their work during the Capitol visit. He spoke of the national level of discourse around executive orders, and reported that a campus-wide email affirming Western's values had been sent. Confirmation hearings for Trustees Carver and Vasquez have been held and both forwarded to the full Senate with favorable recommendation.

B. Board Chair

Chair Pribyl reported on the execution and updating of the MOU with the Foundation Board of Directors and asked VP LaPlante to speak of this during his report later in the agenda.

C. Student Trustee

Student Trustee Tanner spoke on the progress made by the Student Government Association (SGA) at the start of the second semester including helping to fund the Western Ski Mountaineering Team going to an international competition. She also spoke on the idea of wellness that SGA is pushing throughout their "fun" events which are late-night events once a month that encourage student participation and wellbeing on campus.

D. Faculty Trustee

Faculty Trustee Mason discussed faculty involvement with Attendance Reports, Progress Reports, Search Committees, Self-Evaluations and Professional Development Plans. Trustee Buckley expressed admiration for the amount of work and effort put into students this early in the semester, and how this impacts retention.

E. Faculty Senate Chair

Dr. Matt Aronson, Faculty Senate Chair, briefly updated the Board on several things, including the revisions Academic Affairs recently made to guidelines for tenure-track search committees (clearer and much appreciated), all the work/deliberation involved in proposing changes to Western's General Education (our Liberal Arts core) with hope to present to the Board by its March meeting, and an expression of gratitude for faculty members' hard work in creating the many curriculum proposals contained in this month's Board packet. Dr. Aronson concluded by mentioning his collaboration with a Sociology student working on an interview project (topic: stigma and men's mental well-being in rural communities); Dr. Aronson commented that this illustrates the practical value of applied social science with a goal of improving community health.

F. Administrative Leadership Council Chair

Laurel Fisher, on behalf of Chair Giberson, provided updates on ALC efforts. The Distinguished Mountaineer Awards will be held on April 23 from 4-6 p.m. in the UC Ballroom, with nominations currently open. This award recognizes outstanding employees and teams across Western Colorado University for exceptional achievement and dedication beyond their usual responsibilities. The Employee Experience Enhancement (E3) committee has been renamed to emphasize employee experience, is expanding its outreach efforts, and is developing an Inside Western site for better accessibility. In Training and Development, ALC will present on supporting first-generation college students at its February 27 meeting. Additionally, the ALC has passed a resolution in favor of establishing a Staff Senate, which will now be reviewed by the Cabinet. The Board of Trustees is invited to the awards celebration.

G. Attorney General/Legal Report

AAG Natalie Powell updated the Trustees on a recent federal lawsuit filed by Colorado and other states in federal district court in Rhode Island. The States are challenging the federal government's "freeze" or "pause" on federal grant funding in accordance with recent Presidential executive orders. AAG Powell reported that the federal judge granted a temporary restraining order, temporarily unfreezing federal funding. However, it is unknown how long the temporary restraining order will remain in place; the case is to be further litigated for potential longer injunctive relief.

H. Legislative Report

Kelli Kelty provided an update on the 2025 legislative session and the budget picture for Western and higher education to date.

I. Athletic Director

Miles VanHee reported that Western Colorado University student-athletes set a new all-time GPA record with a 3.44 for Fall 2024, led by Women's Basketball (3.77) and Men's Basketball (3.44). Football made history with two players, Ricky Freymond and Chance Wiening, earning 1st-Team NCAA Academic All-American honors—the first time Western has had two in one year. He provided updates on other sports rankings. The 22nd Annual Crab & Steak Feed Auction, the largest athletics fundraiser, is set for April 5.

VII. Action Items

A. Personnel Action and Information Items

Provost Young explained the sabbatical process and answered questions. A motion to approve personnel recommendations as presented, including sabbaticals, was made by Trustee Buckley and seconded by Trustee Gutierrez. The motion carried.

B. FY2025-26 Board of Trustees Meeting Schedule and Administrative Calendar

President Baca presented a meeting schedule based on discussion from the December 2024 Board meeting. A motion to adopt the FY2025-26 annual meeting schedule was made by Trustee Buckley and seconded by Trustee Vasquez. The motion carried.

C. FY2024-25 Current Fund Budget Amendments (hand-carry)

VP Higgins reported on adjustments to revenue and expenditures across Education & General (E&G), Auxiliary, and Restricted Funds. Undergraduate E&G revenues are expected to be \$1.8 million below budget due to a decline in resident student enrollment and overestimated FTE projections. To address this shortfall, strategic spending reductions and reallocated funds, including salary savings and operational cuts, will help balance the budget while minimizing the impact on students and enrollment efforts. Graduate programs, which were integrated into E&G funds in FY24, continue to operate independently while contributing significantly to institutional finances. However, anticipated revenue shortfalls of \$339K and expenditure overruns of \$317K will require the use of School of Graduate Studies (SGS) fund balances, alongside strategic cost reductions and potential tuition adjustments to offset future deficits. Overall, E&G revenues are projected to decrease by \$2.2 million (4.35%), with expenses reduced by \$1.5 million (3.0%).

In Auxiliary Funds, revenue is expected to increase by \$361K due to higher extended studies tuition, room and board, and conference service revenues, despite lower student fee collections from declining enrollment. Budgeted expenditures will decrease by \$190K, leading to an overall positive net revenue of \$765K.

Meanwhile, Restricted Funds will see a \$427K (5%) increase in both revenue and expenditures, reflecting higher instructional costs funded by grants and contracts. There will be no net change in fund balance for restricted funds. These amendments aim to ensure financial stability while maintaining institutional priorities and student support.

A motion that the Board approve the amended budget as presented for all current funds was made by Trustee Buckley and seconded by Trustee Hamner. The motion carried.

D. 2024 Affirmative Action Plan

Equal Opportunity Officer Marita Whalen summarized Western's 2024 Affirmative Action Plan (AAP) and confirmed that Western is in compliance with affirmative action regulations. She then provided a progress update on the 2023-2025 Program for Affirmative Action Strategies which is comprised of action-oriented strategies designed to meet Western's AAP goals. Discussion Followed. A motion to approve Western's 2024 Affirmative Action Plan (AAP) as presented was made by Trustee Gutierrez and seconded by Trustee Hamner. The motion carried.

Lunch with Former Trustee Szczurek

Former Trustee Theresa Szczurek was recognized for her contributions to the Board over her tenure as Trustee. Thanks were expressed for her time, attention to detail, and proud support of Western.

VII. Action Items Continued

E. Proposed Curriculum Changes for 2025-2026

Provost Young presented five undergraduate and seven graduate program curriculum changes which were new sub-major programs, certificates or substantive changes to existing degree programs to the Board per Section 5.2.II and III of the Trustee Policy Manual. She explained the faculty shared governance process leading to the proposed changes. A motion that the Board approve the proposed curriculum changes was made by Trustee Buckley and seconded by Trustee Hamner. The motion carried.

F. Update to Information Security Policies

CIO Robinson provided recommended updates to the Trustee Policy Manual (TPM). The proposed policy change consolidates two existing policies (3.11 and 3.12) on information security into a single, updated High-Risk Information Confidentiality and Security Policy. The new policy expands the definition of high-risk confidential information (HRCI) to include online account credentials, such as usernames and passwords. It clarifies roles in preventing unauthorized disclosures, restricts credential sharing, and prohibits the use of HRCI for harassment or personal gain. The policy emphasizes adherence to IT Services guidelines, requiring secure storage and transmission of HRCI, and mandates that all faculty, employees, and student employees sign confidentiality agreements, rather than just those handling HRCI. Additionally, it requires annual security awareness training and regular data risk assessments to enhance compliance and protection. A motion to replace the existing policies (3.11 and 3.12) with the proposed High-Risk Information Confidentiality and Security Policy and make it part of the TPM as Section 3.11 was made by Trustee Hamner and seconded by Trustee Gutierrez. The motion carried.

G. Updates to Title IX Policies *moved to before lunch*

AAG Natalie Powell updated the board that on January 9, 2025 a federal court judge vacated the Department of Education's Title IX Rules. Since that ruling, the Department of Education has stated that it will enforce its

2020 Title IX Rules. Due to this, AAG Powell recommended that the Board approve revisions to Sections 2.2, 3.5 and 3.14 of the Trustee Policy Manual so that these policies will revert back to the versions that existed prior to the updates for the 2024 Title IX Rule. A motion that the Board approve the revision of Sections 2.2, 3.5, and 3.14 of the Trustee Policy Manual to the form as they existed before amendments were made due to the 2024 Title IX Regulations was made by Trustee Gutierrez and seconded by Trustee Buckley. Discussion followed. The motion carried.

VIII. Discussion Topics

A. Elevate Western Campaign and Advancement Update

VP Advancement LaPlante and Elevate Campaign Chair Chisholm reported on the status of Elevate Western Campaign. The restated focus of the remaining 17 months will be to address unmet needs including startup costs for new Rady School programs, Nursing program and completing funding for Gunnison Valley Promise. Champions have been identified for Rady and Nursing programs. \$87M has been raised in the campaign to date, with over \$3M in cash received in FY25. VP LaPlante shared updates on the Foundation board, and expressed excitement for Paula Hendrickson's new leadership role as Chair. He focused on a new peer-to-peer fundraising initiative to widen the donor base called Mountaineer Gives Day. This will be held March 4th and will focus on six funding areas: Mountain Sports, KWSB/Top O' The World, Mountaineer Marketplace, Geology Field Camp, Adult Degree Completion and Western Fund. He encouraged Trustees to participate by serving as ambassadors and donors. Finally, VP LaPlante encouraged the Trustees to participate in the Mountaineer Gala, being held on May 17th to celebrate 50 years of impact of the Foundation.

Chair Pribyl and President Baca noted the passing of Dick Bratton and shared his impact on Western and the Gunnison Valley.

B. FY2023-24 Financial and Compliance Audit

Ian Higgins described the audit process: Each year, the State Auditor contracts an independent firm to conduct our financial and compliance audit. For FY2023-24, Hinkle & Company performed the audit, marking our first year working with them. A single material weakness was identified, concerning the delayed submission of exhibits to the Office of the State Controller; however, the decision to prioritize accuracy over timeliness was intentional. The Legislative Audit Committee released the audit report on December 9, 2024, making it publicly available. VP Higgins then introduced Jim Hinkle to discuss the audit process and address any questions.

C. Long Term Housing Update: Bond Financing Overview

VP Higgins introduced Steph Chichester, President, and Nick Taylor, Managing Director of North Slope Capital Advisors to lead a discussion about debt issuance as required by our Trustee Policy Manual.

Break

VIII. Discussion Topics Cont.

D. FY2025-26 Tuition, Fees, Room and Board Rates and Initial Budget Assumptions

VP Higgins reported that Western is navigating changes in state funding and tuition adjustments. Initially, the Governor's budget proposal would have reduced Western's funding by \$2.3M due to the annualization of rural funding. However, his amended request maintains this funding through FY26, with potential long-term support from the Joint Budget Committee. Despite this, proposed adjustments to COF and fee-for-service allocations would still result in a net state funding reduction of over \$500K for Western. The collective request from higher education institutions (IHE) could provide approximately \$1.2M in funding, though differences in resident tuition caps—ranging from 2.3% (Governor's proposal) to 2.7% (IHE collective ask)—complicate financial planning. As a result, initial tuition and fee rates are under discussion but not yet finalized.

Proposed undergraduate tuition increases include a 2.3% hike for Colorado residents (\$7 per credit), bringing the annual cost from \$7,308 to \$7,476. Non-resident tuition would rise by 2.5% (\$21.28 per credit), increasing the annual total by \$504. Differential tuition for the Rady School of Engineering would also rise, with a larger increase for non-residents to equalize the differential amount. Graduate tuition adjustments include a \$63 per credit increase across all courses, a \$50 one-time matriculation fee, and a \$100 per credit increase for Creative Writing, along with a new \$600 summer residency fee. Housing and food service rates are expected to rise by 3% due to inflation and contract costs, with student fees also increasing by 2.3% for most categories. Other proposed adjustments include a \$300 optional Orientation Fee to support outdoor-based programming. These changes aim to balance financial sustainability while maintaining quality student services.

E. Enrollment Report

Director of Admissions Watts provided updates on submitted applications for the 2025-2026 Academic Year. There have been increases in applications and acceptances of First Generation and Non-Resident prospective students.

F. Board of Trustees- Individual Action Plan Updates

President Baca thanked Trustees for their work in implementing their individual action plans. He reiterated the ongoing willingness of Western staff to support Trustees with their action plans and encouraged Trustees to reach out to senior leadership for assistance.

G. Economic Impact Study

President Baca reported on the results of the Economic Impact Study, which was also shared with legislators during the Capitol event.

IX. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

X. Executive Session

A motion to convene an executive session to receive legal advice under Colorado Revised Statute section 24-6-402(3)(a)(II) and to consider personnel matters under Colorado Revised Statute section 24-6-402(3)(b)(I) on the following topics:

- the status and next steps on the personnel searches for two administrator positions – the Dean of Equity and Inclusion, and the Dean of the Business school

was made by Trustee Gutierrez and seconded by Trustee Buckley. The motion carried.

As part of the motion, the Board invited its legal counsel and President Baca, along with non-voting trustees and members of senior cabinet to join for the portion of the executive session on the Dean of Equity and Inclusion, and for legal counsel, President Baca, and Provost Young to join for the Dean of the Business School portion.

The Board returned to public session at 4:50pm.

XI. Set Next Meeting Agenda: March 27, 2025

XII. Other Business

There was no other business discussed.

XIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Pribyl at 4:57pm.