



Meeting Minutes

March 27, 2025
8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Pribyl at 8:00am.

II. Attendance

Trustees: Chair Pribyl, Trustee Blessman, Vice Chair Buckley, Trustee Carver, Trustee Gutierrez, Faculty Trustee Mason, Student Trustee Tanner, Trustee Todd, Trustee Wiens.

Excused: Trustee Hamner, Trustee Vasquez.

Non-Trustees: Brad Baca (President), Kelsey Bennett (AVP Academic Affairs), Ashley Carlson (AVP Academic Affairs), Steph Chichester (North Slope Capital Advisors), Steve Coughlin (Professor of English), Laurel Fisher (ALC Representative), Ian Higgins (VP Finance & Administration), Mike LaPlante (VP Advancement), Aaron MacLennan (Associate Director of IT Services), Fred Marienthal (Kutak Rock LLP), Gary Pierson (Dean of Students), Natalie Powell (Senior Assistant AG), Caitlin Rovner (EA to the President), Leslie Taylor (VP Marketing & Enrollment Management), Miles VanHee (Director of Athletics), Alan Wartes (Gunnison County Times), Chase Watts (Director of Admissions), Tiffanie Wick (Director of Library Services), James Young (Campus Audio-Visual Manager), Jess Young (Provost).

III. Approval of the Agenda

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Trustee Gutierrez and seconded by Trustee Blessman. The motion carried.

IV. Approval of Minutes for the Board of Trustees meeting of February 6, 2025, and the Special meeting of March 14, 2025

A motion to approve the Minutes for the Board of Trustees meetings of February 6, 2025, and March 14, 2025 was made by Trustee Gutierrez and seconded by Trustee Wiens. The motion carried.

V. Review of Action Items from BOT Meeting of February 6, 2025, and the Special Meeting of March 14, 2025

President Baca provided updates to the presented action items.

VI. Oral Reports

A. President

President Baca provided an update on the potential partnership between the university and Bear Ranch / The Town. He continues to lead a feasibility analysis and will be working with a variety of entities to help in this assessment. He thanked Caitlin Rovner, who will be departing in mid-May for her exemplary work as his Executive Assistant. He also updated the Board on the search process for a new VP of Advancement. He welcomed Trustees' recommendations and referrals for this position.

B. Board Chair

Chair Pribyl extended his thanks to VP LaPlante for his work with Advancement. He also promised to sing the Iowa Waltz in acapella at the May Board meeting, in honor of Caitlin Rovner.

C. Student Trustee

Student Trustee Tanner spoke on updates surrounding the Student Government Association, including a proposal the group reviewed for the creation of a staff senate, continuing conversation with students about the impact of the federal level changes to higher education regarding DEI+, and the implementation of the campus climate survey. SGA is also amid applications and elections for the 2025-26 school year and is hosting multiple guest speakers in the next few weeks as the semester ends, including members from the community and campus.

D. Faculty Trustee

Faculty Trustee Mason reported on faculty efforts over the last year to develop the new Western Watershed GE program and on faculty advising to register students for the fall 2025 semester.

VI. 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 §24-6-402(3)(b)(I), C.R.S.** on the following topics:

- a. Federal administration transition updates and planning; and
- b. President Baca's recommendations on faculty tenure applications

was made by Trustee Todd and seconded by Trustee Buckley. The motion carried. As part of the motion, the Board invited its voting trustees, its counsel, President Baca and Provost Young to join the executive session.

The Board returned to public session at 9:17am.

The Board received updates on the federal administration transition and heard legal advice concerning those updates. No further action is needed from the Board at this time.

The Board also reviewed the President's recommendations on tenure applications. A motion to grant tenure to the following candidates was made by Trustee Buckley and seconded by Trustee Carver:

Dr. Kanae Haneishi, Dr. Derek Houston, Dr. Samuel Micka, and Dr. Micah Russell.

The motion carried.

VIII. Action Items

A. Faculty and Staff Housing: Bond Financing

VP Higgins introduced Fred Marienthal to explain the bond documents necessary for the execution of financing for the new housing project. Western is progressing on the faculty and staff housing development, with land acquisition from the Foundation awaiting final subdivision approval. A contract with Fading West is in progress, pending state approval. The project was approved for participation in the State Intercept Program and cash fund spending authority was granted. The final step is bond issuance, with legal and financial advisors assisting.

A motion for the Board to approve the Sixth Supplemental Bond Resolution required for the issuance of the Series 2025 Bond was made by Trustee Gutierrez and seconded by Trustee Todd. The motion carried.

B. Personnel Action and Information Items

A motion to approve the personnel items as presented was made by Trustee Buckley and seconded by Trustee Carver. The motion carried.

C. Western Watershed GE Program

Associate Provost Kelsey Bennett, Provost Young, and Western Watershed Director Steve Coughlin presented the rationale for change, described the research and consultation with external experts, students, and faculty, and introduced the structure and curriculum. The program supports the 2023-2028 Strategic Action Plan objective to modernize the liberal arts curriculum by emphasizing interdisciplinary approaches and aligning with the strategic plan's guiding principles of sustainability, global outlook, sense of place and diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice.

A motion that the Board approves the Western Watershed GE Program curriculum for delivery in Fall 2026 was made by Trustee Buckley and seconded by Trustee Blessman. The motion carried.

IX. Discussion topics

A. Enrollment Report

VP Taylor and Director Watts gave an update on current undergraduate admissions numbers for Fall 2025. Admits and Deposits are tracking at 5-year highs heading into April and May, when Western typically sees significant increases in deposits. Director Watts also spoke about the focus on data, doing core work effectively, and creating more collaborations across campus.

B. Elevate Western Campaign and Advancement Update

VP LaPlante shared an update about the Elevate Western Campaign, which has currently raised over \$89M, including over \$5M raised since July 1, 2024. An update on the inaugural Mountaineer Gives Day (MGD) was shared. This event was a huge success as \$81,394 was raised, 117% of the goal. 301 unique donors gave to MGD and all six funding areas met their individual goals. Alumni (34%) followed by faculty/staff (23%) were the primary donor types to Mountaineer Gives Day. A strong sense of community and understanding of philanthropic impact were positive outcomes from this inaugural event.

X. Written reports

A. Financial and Capital Construction Report

B. Campus Updates

XI. Set Next Meeting Agenda: May 9, 2025

XII. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

XIII. Other Business

VP Higgins advised that the Joint Budget Committee had completed the long-bill process, with a recommendation of an increase in funding of \$32.3M for higher education and a 3.5% cap on resident tuition.

XIV. Adjournment

Chair Pribyl adjourned the meeting at 11:50am.