



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Meeting Minutes

March 26, 2026

8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting

<https://western.zoom.us/j/83113252618>

I. Call to Order

Chair Buckley called the meeting to order at 8:01am.

II. Attendance

Trustees: Chair Buckley, Vice Chair Wiens, Trustee Blessman, Trustee Carver, Trustee Hamner, Trustee Henry, Trustee Nordini, Trustee Pribyl, Faculty Trustee Mason, Student Trustee Rosenow.

Non-Trustees: Brad Baca (President), Kelsey Bennett (Associate Provost), Ashley Carlson (Associate Provost), Andrew Flebbe (Audio-Visual Manager), Ian Higgins (VP Finance & Administration), Joni Matzinger (EA to the President), Gary Pierson (Dean of Students), Natalie Powell (Senior Assistant AG), Caitlin Rovner (Business Operations and Event Manager), Kaylee Summers (Associate Athletics Director of Business Operations, Interim Director of Athletics), Leslie Taylor (VP for Marketing & Enrollment), Shelley Thompson (VP of Advancement, Executive Director of WCU Foundation), Katie Walters (Executive Assistant to the Vice President of Academic Affairs), Marita Whalen (Equal Opportunity Officer), Lance Wright (Interim Director of Residence Life), Jess Young (Provost).

III. Approval of the Agenda

A motion to approve the agenda as updated by Chair Buckley was made by Trustee Carver and seconded by Trustee Hamner. The motion carried.

IV. Approval of Minutes for the Board of Trustees meeting of February 5, 2026

A motion to approve the minutes of the February 5, 2026 Board of Trustees meeting was made by Trustee Hamner and seconded by Trustee Carver. The motion carried.

V. Review of Action Items from BOT Meeting of February 5, 2026

President Baca reported that all outstanding action items had been completed, including sharing campus-wide communications with students and employees about immigration-related resources and hosting a well-attended session with local law enforcement and nonprofit partners to clarify available support. He also noted that while the university had documented emergency operations plans for natural disasters, there was a need to communicate those plans more frequently, particularly given upcoming summer camps and conferences, and efforts were underway to share additional guidance with the campus before the end of the semester.

VI. Oral Reports

A. President

President Baca reported that housing remained a significant challenge, prompting lease extensions and continued progress on University's housing project, while leadership searches for Provost and Athletic Director were advancing toward finalist stages. He also shared that a proposed reorganization of student affairs and enrollment management was being rolled out to strengthen student success, and that he continued working with the governor's office to finalize the remaining board appointment.

B. Board Chair

Chair Buckley shared reflections from the winter season in Crested Butte, describing it as an important "up-valley campus" where she regularly engaged with Western students, faculty, staff, and the broader community. She noted strong enthusiasm for Western's programming and opportunities, highlighted pride in alumni achievements, and acknowledged community concerns about low snowpack and water impacts, emphasizing the relevance of Western faculty research addressing these issues.

C. Student Trustee

Student Trustee Rosenow reported that SGA updated its constitution, approved two funding bills, and was preparing to open elections, reflecting continued student engagement and support for campus initiatives. She shared updates on campus life, noting the cancellation of Rail Jam due to weather but strong alternative programming, progress on making menstrual products accessible in academic buildings, and recent student achievements, including mock trial honors and the Geiman Fellows' academic trip to Spain.

D. Faculty Trustee

Faculty Trustee Mason highlighted the extensive advising work faculty completed to support student progress, fall registration, and retention, noting the significant time commitment involved and recent improvements through coordinated advising trainings. He also recognized the Teaching and Learning Center's role in faculty professional development and emphasized the increased individualized support faculty provided to students during the final weeks of the semester to help them manage academic and personal challenges and persist to graduation.

VII. Executive Session

A motion to convene an executive session to consider legal advice and personnel matters in accordance with § 24-6-402(3)(a)(II) and §24-6-402(3)(b)(I), C.R.S. was made by Trustee Nordini and seconded by Trustee Carver. 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 9:04am.

The Board reviewed the President's recommendations on tenure applications. A motion to approve the grant of tenure to the following candidates was made by Trustee Blessman and seconded by Trustee Pribyl.

Dr. C.J. Clugston, Dr. Matthew Evertson, Dr. Benjamin Justis, Dr. Madelon van de Kerk, Dr. Ricardo Vazquez-Perales, and Dr. Muhabbat Yakubova.

The motion carried.

VIII. Action Items

A. Personnel Action and Information Items

President Baca and Provost Young presented emeritus recommendations for faculty and staff, highlighting individuals who demonstrated long-standing excellence in teaching, service, leadership, and commitment to Western and its students. They emphasized that emeritus status recognized distinguished careers and allowed honorees to remain connected to the university community, and President Baca strongly endorsed all faculty and staff emeritus nominations presented for approval.

A motion to approve the personnel action items was made by Trustee Blessman and seconded by Trustee Carver. The motion carried.

B. Updates to *Trustee Policy Manual*, Sections 3.7 and 3.8: Drug and Alcohol Policies

AAG Natalie Powell presented proposed updates to the Trustee Policy Manual's drug and alcohol policies, noting they had not been substantively reviewed in over 20 years. She explained that the revised Section 3.8 would apply only to employees, clarify testing and impairment standards (including for marijuana, psilocybin, and medications), align with federal requirements, and incorporate the drug-free workplace language, making Section 3.7 redundant and recommended for repeal.

A motion to approve the Updates to Trustee Policy Manual, Sections 3.7 and 3.8: Drug and Alcohol Policies was made by Trustee Wiens and seconded by Trustee Blessman. The motion carried.

C. Provisional Approval of State Land Board MOU

VP Higgins presented background and context for an electrical easement project critical to increasing campus power capacity, explaining that a proposed rerouting would avoid costly blasting but required negotiation with the State Land Board due to right-of-way limitations. He outlined a potential agreement that would allow the city to proceed while granting the State Land Board an option on a portion of land and emphasized that any agreement should prioritize benefits to Western, particularly affordable housing for faculty and staff.

A motion to delegate the authority to negotiate and execute an MOU with the State Land Board to the Vice President for Finance and Administration was made by Trustee Hamner and seconded by Trustee Nordini. The motion carried.

Break

IX. Discussion Topics

A. Draft FY2026-27 Current Fund Budgets (hand carry)

VP Higgins reported that higher education funding decisions by the Joint Budget Committee remained delayed due to the state's economic forecast, which projected a significantly larger deficit. The current staff recommendation was to return to original FY26 funding levels, resulting in a potential \$267,000 restoration for Western, though flat funding or further reductions were still possible. Because of this uncertainty, the university continued to project operating deficits and evaluate tuition, enrollment, and expense adjustments pending final state action.

B. Undergraduate Enrollment Report

VP Taylor reported that new student deposits were tracking significantly ahead of last year, with strong growth across several academic programs and continued success with non-resident enrollment. She highlighted particularly strong gains from Texas and other western states, noting that timely financial aid packaging and targeted recruitment and engagement strategies were contributing to the positive results. While new student enrollment trends were very encouraging, she noted ongoing challenges with continuing student enrollment and described efforts focused on retention, readmits, and local outreach.

C. Elevate Western Campaign and Advancement Update

VP Thompson provided an update on the Elevate Western campaign, noting continued fundraising progress, record donor engagement, and an endowment value reaching a new high. She reported that Mountaineer Gives Day exceeded expectations in its second year, generating strong participation, new donors, and significant funds raised. VP Thompson also outlined plans for a post-campaign strategy focused on maintaining fundraising momentum, expanding planned giving, and advancing several key institutional priorities to support Western's long-term success.

X. Written reports

A. Financial and Capital Construction Report

VP Higgins provided a brief update on financial and capital reports, noting anticipated general fund deficit spending of approximately \$155,000, which remained within the previously approved budget parameters. He explained that the deficit was primarily related to subsidized leases at the Lazy K apartments and that an additional request would be brought forward at the May meeting for units being retained next year. Overall, he reported that finances were trending as planned and that the university was entering the final quarter of the fiscal year in a stable position.

B. Campus Updates

Dean Pierson shared highlights from his written report, expressing appreciation for the breadth of campus activities and pride in the Western community. He encouraged trustees to attend the Alumni Awards of Excellence Banquet on May 8, noting its significance in celebrating alumni and faculty achievements. He also highlighted the upcoming Spring Day of Service, during which students would engage with local nonprofits, and emphasized that April was a particularly active month showcasing what makes Western exceptional.

XI. Set Next Meeting Agenda: May 8, 2026

XII. Public Comment

No public comments were made.

XIII. Other Business

No other business was discussed.

XIV. Adjournment

Chair Buckley adjourned the meeting at 11:34am.