



Meeting Minutes

May 9, 2025

9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

University Center, Western Colorado University

I. Call to Order

Chair Pribyl called the meeting to order at 9:03am.

II. Attendance

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

Excused: Vice Chair Buckley

Non-Trustees: Matt Aronson (Faculty Senate Chair), Brad Baca (President), Ashley Carlson (AVP Academic Affairs via zoom), Laurel Fisher (ALC Representative), Kim Gailey (Director of Human Resources), Paul Giberson (ALC Chair), Ian Higgins (VP Finance & Administration), Hanna Justis (Human Resources Specialist via zoom), Mike LaPlante (VP Advancement), Sharoni Little (Dean of the School of Business), Joni Matzinger (incoming EA to the President), Gary Pierson (Dean of Students), Natalie Powell (Senior Assistant AG via zoom), Ainsley Rosenow (Incoming Student Trustee), Caitlin Rovner (EA to the President via zoom), Leslie Taylor (VP Marketing & Enrollment Management), Miles VanHee (Director of Athletics), Tiffanie Wick (Director of Library Services via zoom), James Young (Campus Audio-Visual Manager), Jess Young (Provost).

III. Approval of the Agenda

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

IV. Approval of Minutes for the Board of Trustees meeting of March 27, 2025

A motion to approve the minutes of March 27, 2025 as presented was made by Trustee Blessman and seconded by Trustee Todd. The motion carried.

V. Review of Action Items from the Board of Trustees meeting of March 27, 2025

President Baca provided updates to the presented action items.

VI. Action Items

A. Personnel Action and Information Items

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

B. FY2025-26 Current Fund Budgets

VP Higgins presented the proposed FY2025-26 Current Fund Budgets. The proposed FY2025-26 Education and General (E&G) budget supports undergraduate and graduate instruction, primarily funded through tuition, state support, and COF stipends. The proposed budget assumes flat enrollment, tuition rate increases (2.3% for residents, 2.5% for nonresidents), and an increase in state appropriations of \$515K. Expenditures include a one-time 1.25% "trust dividend" salary payment for faculty and staff, and potential for a 2.5% salary increase starting January 2026 if enrollment targets are met. The proposed plan covers increases in health premiums, mandated costs, and salary adjustments based on the recently completed compensation study. A one-time \$85K spend is requested to launch a Women's Wrestling program. Graduate instruction anticipates \$169K in fund balance use. Auxiliary budgets include \$8.5M in tuition/fee revenue and \$15M from enterprise services, yielding net revenues of \$365,065. Restricted funds, totaling \$9M, support financial aid, grants, and operations of the Rady School.

A motion to approve the FY2025-26 current fund budgets was made by Trustee Hamner and seconded by Trustee Todd. The motion carried.

C. FY2026-27 Capital and Controlled Maintenance Requests

VP Higgins presented Western's plans to submit several capital and maintenance funding requests for FY2026-27 that align with state processes and deadlines. The primary capital construction request is a \$45.6M renovation of the Leslie J. Savage Library, which includes major infrastructure upgrades (HVAC, electrical, ADA compliance), asbestos abatement, and space reconfiguration to create a centralized student success hub and 24/7 workspace.

For controlled maintenance, Western seeks \$2.3M for "Phase 2" of the campus lighting project, addressing prior funding shortfalls and improving energy efficiency, and \$2.5M for rehabilitating deteriorating roadways and parking lots, 43% of which are in failed condition.

Additionally, Western will submit a \$4-\$6M IT capital request to the Joint Technology Committee to modernize campus-wide access control and security systems, including digital credentials and integrated surveillance.

A motion to approve the proposed controlled maintenance, capital and IT priorities and authorize staff to continue to refine estimates and submit by requisite deadlines was made by Trustee Hamner and seconded by Trustee Wiens. The motion carried.

D. Election of Officers for 2025-26: Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer

Chair Pribyl provided information on officer terms.

Trustee Hamner nominated Trustee Buckley for Chair, and Trustee Weins as Vice Chair. Trustee Gutierrez seconded.

No other nominations were put forward. Discussion followed. The motion to elect Trustee Buckley as Chair, and Trustee Wiens as Vice Chair carried.

President Baca provided context for the Treasurer and Secretary roles.

A motion to designate President Baca as Secretary and VP Higgins as Treasurer was made by Trustee Hamner and seconded by Trustee Gutierrez. The motion carried.

VII. Executive Session

A motion to convene an executive session motion under Sections 24-6-402(3)(a)(II), 24-6-402(3)(a)(V) and 24-6-402(3)(b)(I) of the Colorado Revised Statutes to receive legal advice, and to consider employment negotiations and personnel matters on the following topic:

- a.** Negotiations related to the renewal of the president's contract.

was made by Trustee Todd and seconded by Trustee Blessman. The motion carried.

As part of the motion, the Board invited its voting trustees, its counsel, and Human Resources Director Kim Gailey to join the executive session, and President Baca to join for part of the session.

The Board returned to public session at 11:38am.

During executive session, the Board discussed negotiations concerning the President's contract renewal and received advice from its legal counsel on proposed contract amendments.

VIII. Action Item

A. President's Contract Renewal (*hand-carry*)

A motion to approve Chair Pribyl continuing contract negotiations with President Baca within the guidelines provided by the Board and counsel today, and subject to final Board approval, was made by Trustee Todd and seconded by Trustee Blessman. The motion carried.

VIII. Discussion Topics

A. Enrollment Report

VP Taylor gave an update on new student deposits for Fall 2025, as well as preliminary data for first-year retention and fall enrollment of continuing students.

Lunch with newly tenured and emeritus faculty.

VIII. Discussion Topics cont.

B. Elevate Western Campaign and Advancement Update

VP LaPlante shared that the Mountaineer Gala has met key milestones for sponsorship revenue and ticket sales. We expect upwards of 100 more people in attendance than in 2024. With VP LaPlante's departure, he has been working on transition documents for Advancement and the Elevate Western Campaign. VP LaPlante also announced the Elevate Western Campaign pushed past another big milestone and has raised

over \$90M with 14 months remaining. He recognized the amazing senior cabinet and thanked the Board for their confidence in him to lead the campaign and the Foundation into a new era.

IX. Written reports

A. Campus Updates

X. Oral Reports

A. President

President Baca introduced Joni Matzinger, the incoming Executive Assistant to the President, to the Board. He updated that Ella Fahrlander would be serving as the Interim VP for Advancement (VPA) / Executive Director (ED) of the WCU Foundation and provided an update on the search to for a new VPA / ED.

B. Board Chair

No formal report was presented by Chair Pribyl.

C. Student Trustee

Student Trustee Tanner introduced Ainsley Rosenow as the incoming student trustee, who will be taking over the role for the upcoming year. Ainsley provided a brief introduction, sharing her background and involvement at WCU. Trustee Tanner gave an update on the goals set by the Student Government Association (SGA) for the student body, which included: establishing new clubs and activities, prioritizing mental health initiatives, enhancing social media and promotional efforts, and fostering greater community engagement among students.

D. Faculty Trustee

Faculty representative John Mason reported on end of semester work and upcoming summer graduate and undergraduate educational activities. He also reported on the impacts of recent federal funding cuts on faculty research and student internships.

E. Faculty Senate Chair

The Faculty Senate chair, Dr. Aronson, reported that Western will soon have its own chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). The AAUP provides a variety of important resources, information, and support; the chapter at Western is intended solely to support the well-being and security of all faculty members, including contingent employees who teach across the university's programs. Dr. Aronson also reported that Western's Faculty Senate voted on May 5, 2025 to approve a resolution encouraging President Baca and/or the Board of Trustees to participate in a statewide "mutual academic defense compact" (which may soon be convened by Chancellor Tony Frank of the CSU system). This mutual defense compact is inspired by recent attacks by the federal government on universities and academic freedom/inquiry in the U.S., which is something Western's Faculty Senate does not take lightly. Dr. Aronson also expressed enthusiasm about the upcoming/new "Western Watershed" general education (liberal arts core) program at Western and its encouragement of interdisciplinary courses.

F. Administrative Leadership Council Chair

Chair Giberson reported that at this year's Faculty and Staff Recognition Event, seven employees received Distinguished Mountaineer Awards for their exceptional contributions in academics, athletics, and student support. The honorees were Cierra Abbott, Deanna Banker, Laurel Becker, Bob Cohen, Angie Dalleck, Josh Eberly, and Janine Pleau. Meanwhile, the Thank a Mountaineer program, led by the E3 Committee, continues to boost morale by providing a simple way for colleagues to express appreciation. Looking ahead, ALC will host a Professional Development Day on June 2 with workshops on first-generation support, belonging, onboarding, and Handshake (career services platform), open to both staff and faculty. Leadership nominations for ALC roles for FY2025–26 are currently underway. Additionally, a recent senior survey revealed that 98% of graduating students felt a faculty or staff member had significantly impacted their experience at Western, with 45 individuals specifically recognized.

G. Athletic Director

Director Van Hee highlighted significant achievements and developments across Western's athletic programs. A total of 77 student-athletes are graduating with the Class of 2025, and the Mountaineer Bowl now features the officially installed MOJO Field logo, thanks to alum Michael Johnson.

The annual Crab & Steak Feed/Auction raised \$80,000 for scholarships with 500 attendees. Winter sports saw major successes, including Women's Basketball finishing 2nd in the RMAC and tying the all-time season wins record, with multiple student-athletes receiving Academic All-District and All-Academic honors. Wrestling celebrated Dean Noble as an NCAA All-American, while Swimming & Diving had national qualifiers and multiple academic awardees. Football had four players named to the All-Colorado team, hosted a successful spring game, and welcomed a strong recruiting class; Coach Jas Bains was appointed to the American Football Coaches Association (AFCA) Board of Trustees.

Western will add Women's Wrestling as its 14th varsity and 8th women's sport, beginning in 2026–27, aligning with the NCAA's newest championship. The Conference and Events Services division projects 33 events and over 6,800 participants this summer, with football and wrestling accounting for nearly 60% of attendees.

H. Attorney General/Legal Report

AAG Natalie Powell updated the board on federal litigation related to grants, recent executive orders related to higher education, and the status of the federal Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVIS) terminations.

I. Legislative Report

Kelli Kely provided an overview of the 2025 legislative session including the budget and legislative impacts for Western. She also provided insight on the coming budget forecast and the 2026 legislative session.

XI. Public Comment

No public comments were made.

XII. Set Next Meeting's Agenda: June 26 and 27, 2025

XIII. Other Business

President Baca introduced Dr. Sharoni Little, Western's new Business Dean. Dr. Little shared her background and answered questions.

Chair Pribyl delivered an unforgettable performance of *The Iowa Waltz* acapella on key, thus fulfilling a promise made in May.

XIV. Adjournment

Chair Pribyl adjourned the meeting at 2:59pm.