



Meeting Minutes

October 9, 2025

10:00am – 3:00pm

University Center, Western Colorado University

I. Call to Order

Chair Buckley called the meeting to order at 10:01am.

II. Roll Call/Attendance

Trustees: Chair Buckley, Vice Chair Wiens, Trustee Blessman (zoom), Trustee Carver, Trustee Gutierrez, Trustee Pribyl, Faculty Trustee Mason, Student Trustee Rosenow, Trustee Vasquez.

Excused: Trustee Hamner, Trustee Todd

Non-Trustees: Matt Aronson (Faculty Senate Chair), Jaskaran Bains (Head Football Coach), Brad Baca (President), Thomas Bishop (Audio-Visual Technician), Brad Burton (Professor of Geology), Ashley Carlson (Associate Provost), Matthew Eddy (Information Technology Technician), Ella Fahrlander (Assistant Vice President, Development), Paul Giberson (Director of Student Retention and Completion), Ian Higgins (VP Finance & Administration), Katheryne Hinze (Director of Career Services via zoom), Kelli Kelty (Politicalworks via zoom), Emily McMahon (Director, Center of Rural Mountain Allied Health), Joni Matzinger (EA to the President), Brett McClure (Director of Procurement and Contracts via zoom), Elizabeth Petrie (Professor of Geology), Gary Pierson (Dean of Students), Natalie Powell (Senior Assistant AG via zoom), Manzil Rayamajhi (IT Service Manager), Elizabeth Roten (Director of Nursing Education Program), Caitlin Rovner (Business Operations and Event Manager via zoom), Anne Ryter (Professor of Chemistry), Mary Sawyer (Assistant Professor of Nursing), Shelley Thompson (VP of Advancement, Executive Director of WCU Foundation), Miles VanHee (Director of Athletics), Marita Whalen (ALC Representative), Jess Young (Provost).

III. Approval of the Agenda

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

IV. Approval of Minutes for the Board of Trustees Meetings of June 26-27, 2025

A motion to approve the minutes of June 26-27, 2025, was made by Trustee Pribyl and seconded by Trustee Gutierrez. The motion carried.

V. Review of Action Items from prior meetings

President Baca provided updates to the presented action items.

VI. Oral Reports

A. President

President Brad Baca introduced Shelley Thompson as the new VP of Advancement and Executive Director of the Foundation, sharing his enthusiasm about her early contributions and the positive momentum she had already generated. He also recognized Ella Fahrlander for her outstanding leadership as interim VP, emphasizing that she had not only maintained operations but advanced them.

He announced Provost Jess Young's planned departure at the end of the academic year. President Baca praised Provost Young's dedication and accomplishments. He outlined the upcoming national search for her successor, including plans to engage a search firm through an RFP process and the goal to post the position by the end of the calendar year, with applications due in late January or early February.

President Baca also informed the board about engagement with Lucas Narratives, led by Cathy Lucas, to support strategic messaging in preparation for the university's 125th anniversary in 2026. Cathy's extensive experience in higher education communications is expected to help refine WCU's message and elevate its visibility across key audiences.

Finally, President Baca took a moment to recognize Head Football Coach Jas Bains, referencing a *Denver Post* article shared earlier in the week that highlighted his achievements. Coach Bains said a few words to the board members expressing gratitude for his time at WCU and provided some details on his personal and professional background.

B. Board Chair

Chair Buckley reflected on the inspiring energy at the freshman parents' gathering, where families from diverse backgrounds expressed hope and excitement for their children's futures. She also highlighted the Geiman Scholars Program, which has opened access to a Western education for students from the Gunnison Valley.

She then updated the board on the launch of the three-year comprehensive presidential evaluation, led by consultants from CommuniCon. The evaluation process would begin with interviews in late October, involving faculty, staff, students, and leadership.

Chair Buckley also shared the success of Western Week, which featured experiential learning field trips led by faculty. These events showcased topics ranging from astronomy and geology to regenerative ranching.

She concluded by ceding her time to Trustee Gutierrez, acknowledging his mentorship and friendship since their Senate confirmation hearings. Trustee Gutierrez announced that he would not be seeking a reappointment when his term expires in December 2025. He expressed gratitude for serving in this role and provided context on why he will no longer serve as a board member.

C. Student Trustee

Student Trustee Rosenow shared that orientation went very well and the freshman class is highly engaged, with four freshmen joining SGA. She mentioned that campus activity has noticeably increased, and new clubs are forming weekly. SGA recently funded a Model UN trip to Banff, where Rosenow and team will represent Brazil. She also noted the revival of the haunted house tradition using the Masonic Lodge and growing excitement around arts-related initiatives. The Geiman Fellows program received twelve applicants and plans to select eight. Rosenow concluded by expressing appreciation for Parents' Weekend and the opportunity for her family to meet campus leadership.

D. Faculty Trustee

Faculty Trustee Mason reported that the semester was in its seventh week and faculty were actively supporting first-year students through the Headwaters 100 course, which will expand next year as part of the Watershed GE program. He emphasized the importance of fall-to-spring retention and noted that this program aims to improve it. Faculty were also engaged in curriculum updates, with minor proposals due November 1st and major changes expected in the spring. He highlighted strong faculty support for the new nursing program and shared that student progress reports had recently been issued, triggering additional academic support.

E. Faculty Senate Chair

Faculty Senate Chair, Dr. Aronson expressed admiration for the work of Beth Roten, Mary Sawyer, and Crystal Southall and their work in developing the new Nursing Program curriculum. Aronson also conveyed faculty members' concern about low salaries coupled with high cost of living. He appreciated WCU's recent compensation study and urged the Board to explore ways to ensure faculty salaries keep pace with rising living costs. Aronson also notified the Board about the newest chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) in Colorado, which was chartered at WCU in June. Finally, Aronson expressed gratitude to Academic Affairs for its ongoing support of the Teaching & Learning Center.

F. Administrative Leadership Council Chair

ALC Chair Giberson shared that he had been re-elected to lead the Administrative Leadership Council for the academic year. He expressed appreciation for the support shown at the Geiman Scholars event and introduced the ALC leadership team. He noted that the Council had merged the E3 and Esprit de Corps committees to better celebrate and support staff and faculty. The Council was also focusing on professional development using internal expertise, with upcoming sessions on AI, student staff supervision, and event planning.

G. Athletic Director

Director Van Hee provided updates on upcoming Homecoming events and spotlighted the success of WCU's football team, which included the team holding a 5-0 record ranking #5 and #6 nationally, marking the highest NCAA Division II rankings in program history. The last game against NMHU drew a record attendance of 3,286. He also gave praise to Coach Bains who was featured in the *Denver Post*.

Both cross country teams were nationally ranked, with the Women's Cross Country team ranked 7th and the Men's Cross Country team ranked 9th.

In terms of collegiate licensing, Athletics began receiving royalties from Influxer, a new revenue stream tied to specific athletic marks and gear. Year-to-date, student-athletes sold \$15,259.93 in merchandise, resulting in \$4,734.67 in gross NIL profit for the athletes and \$1,178.59 in total royalties to Athletics.

Additional potential revenue streams under consideration included branded consumable products associated with the university, such as sauces, beverages, and other locally produced items.

The Mountaineer Sports Hall of Fame induction is scheduled for October 24. Honorees include Alicja Konieczek, a nine-time national champion in cross country from 2014 to 2019; Chaumont Bouknight, who rushed for 1,543 yards in a single football season, ranking third in program history; Lane Stuht, an All-American noseguard and national qualifier in wrestling; Don Mundell, who served as a trainer from 1992 to 2018; and the 1966 Ski Team, which was the runner-up in the NCAA Skiing Championships.

H. Attorney General/Legal Report

Senior AAG Natalie Powell reported on the AG Office's multi-state litigation, including litigation on grant funding. She also discussed a federal compact that was sent to several institutions of higher education but noted the compact has not been sent to any Colorado institutions to date.

I. Legislative Report

Kelli Kely provided an update on the special session and executive action taken regarding the state budget. She gave a preview of the 2026 legislative session and issues of importance to Western Colorado University.

VII. Action Items

A. Personnel Information and Action Item

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

B. Roll Call Vote on Support for W.A. "Tex" Moncrief, Jr. Petroleum Geology Program per Rady Agreement

Drs. Elizabeth Petrie and Brad Burton provided updates on the Petroleum Geology program, noting that the program continues to produce successful graduates.

A motion to take a roll call vote of the Board, President, Provost, and NES Department Chair to verbally affirm support for the Petroleum Geology program and the agreement was made by Trustee Gutierrez and seconded by Trustee Carver.

The Roll call vote was completed as follows:

Yea: Chair Buckley, Vice Chair Wiens, Trustee Carver, Trustee Gutierrez, Trustee Pribyl, Trustee Vasquez, President Baca, Provost Young, NES Department Chair Ryter.

Nay: None

C. Nursing Program Curriculum

Elizabeth Roten, Dr. Mary Sawyer, and Dr. Emily McMahon presented the launch of Western Colorado University's new nursing program. They shared progress on curriculum approval, grant funding, partnerships, and the development of a state-of-the-art simulation center. The program will offer both traditional and accelerated BSN tracks, with strong community and clinical support, and aims to address Colorado's critical nursing shortage.

A motion to approve the nursing program curriculum was made by Trustee Wiens and seconded by Trustee Vasquez. The motion carried.

Lunch with students

VII. Action Items (Continued)

D. Graduate Education Course Fee

VP Higgins presented a correction to the fee structure for Education 615, student teaching for students with exceptionalities. The fee had previously been listed incorrectly as a per-course amount instead of per-credit.

A motion to approve the Graduate Education Course Fee, at a per credit rate of \$328, was made by Trustee Gutierrez and seconded by Trustee Pribyl. The motion carried.

E. Updates to the *Trustee Policy Manual and Handbook for Professional Personnel*

- i. TPM Section 2.1: Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Policy
- ii. TPM Section 2.2: Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation Policy
- iii. TPM Section 3.4: Policy Prohibiting Violence and Weapons
- iv. TPM Section 3.5: Policy Prohibiting Sex Discrimination and Sex-Based Harassment
- v. TPM new section: Policy Regarding the Release of Personal Identifying Information and Access to Non-Public Areas of Campus
- vi. TPM new section: Digital Accessibility Policy
- vii. HPP: various section updates related to affirmative action

AAG Natalie Powell presented a series of proposed updates to the Trustee Policy Manual and Handbook for Professional Personnel. These included revisions for legal compliance, clarification of Title IX procedures, updates to the persona non grata policy, and the addition of new policies on digital accessibility and immigration enforcement response.

A motion to approve the Updates to the Trustee Policy Manual and Handbook for Professional Personnel was made by Trustee Gutierrez seconded by Trustee Pribyl. The motion carried.

VIII. Discussion Topics

A. Financial and Capital Construction Report

VP Higgins reported that WCU closed FY25 with a \$36,000 increase to the Educational General Fund reserve, driven by strong undergraduate program performance and improved graduate program results. Auxiliary and restricted funds also saw growth, bringing total institutional reserves to \$17.8 million. For FY26, projected tuition and state funding shortfalls have been offset by corrected COF revenue estimates, and a balanced budget with potential salary increases to be presented in December. Additionally, \$1.4 million in controlled maintenance funding was received for a campus electrical upgrade.

B. Savage Library Renovation Project Overview

VP Higgins presented WCU's renewed \$45.5 million capital construction request to renovate the Leslie J. Savage Library. The project aims to address critical infrastructure issues, improve accessibility, and create a centralized Student Success Center. Backed by a \$2 million gift from the Petway family, the proposal received a strong ranking and is now under state review.

C. Elevate Western Campaign and Advancement Updates

VP Thompson and Assistant VP Fahrlander shared updates on the Elevate Western campaign, highlighting over \$99 million raised from more than 8,000 donors, including significant planned gifts and estate contributions. They emphasized the campaign's impact on scholarships, with \$2.2 million distributed last year, and 95 new scholarships added. Thompson also outlined her vision for expanding philanthropic efforts and alumni engagement, while Fahrlander encouraged nominations for the Distinguished Alumni Awards by November 14.

IX. Written Reports

A. Enrollment Report

President Baca shared a brief enrollment update, noting that while total undergraduate headcount was slightly down from last fall, the incoming class grew by 13%. He emphasized the need to consistently reach 550–600 new students annually to support operational needs, as enrollment growth is essential. Early deposits for next fall and growth in non-resident areas like Minnesota and Washington were encouraging. He also discussed housing capacity and the importance of a strategic enrollment plan, with more details to be reported in the December board meeting.

B. Campus Updates

Dean Pierson was recognized for organizing an inspirational lunch that highlighted the impact of student engagement at WCU. He expressed pride in the students and the opportunity to interact with them daily. He also acknowledged the collaborative effort behind the campus update report, crediting teams across academics, athletics, and student affairs for their contributions.

X. Set Next Meeting Agenda: December 11, 2025

XI. Other Business

A. Resolution of Appreciation

President Baca formally presented Trustee Pribyl with a *Resolution of Appreciation* in recognition of his service as Chair of the Board of Trustees. Following the presentation, Trustee Pribyl expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to serve and collaborate with fellow board members.

Chair Buckley also extended appreciation to Trustee Pribyl for his leadership and dedicated service during his tenure as Board Chair.

A motion to approve the resolution was made and seconded. The motion carried.

Resolution of the Board of Trustees of Western Colorado University

Whereas, Jim Pribyl has served with distinction as a Trustee of Western Colorado University since 2019;

Whereas, during his tenure, Trustee Pribyl has demonstrated exemplary leadership, including chairing the presidential search, contributing as a member of the faculty and staff housing committee, and actively engaging with campus and community stakeholders;

Whereas, Trustee Pribyl was elected Chair of the Board in 2022 and served in this role until 2025, guiding the Board through a period of significant transition;

Whereas, as Chair, Trustee Pribyl provided invaluable mentorship to President Brad Baca, skillfully managed Board meetings, and advocated strongly for Western Colorado University within state government;

Whereas, during his chairmanship, Trustee Pribyl overcame a severe illness, which deepened his appreciation for life and strengthened his resolve to not put up with any nonsense, leaving both President Baca and fellow Trustees a bit terrified;

Whereas, the Board wishes to express its sincere gratitude for Trustee Pribyl's dedication and outstanding leadership;

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Board of Trustees of Western Colorado University formally recognizes and commends Trustee Pribyl for his exceptional service and leadership over the past three years;

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be presented to Trustee Pribyl as a token of appreciation and recorded in the official records of the Board.

Passed and adopted this ninth day of October, 2025.

XII. Public Comment

No public comments were made.

XIII. Adjournment

Chair Buckley adjourned the meeting at 2:57pm.