

**WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
MEETING MINUTES  
THURSDAY, MARCH 3, 2106**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Karen Lee called the special meeting of the Board of Trustees of Western Washington University to order at 5:02 p.m., in the Boardroom, Old Main 340, in Bellingham, WA.

**Board of Trustees**

Karen Lee, Chair  
Sue Sharpe, Vice Chair  
Earl Overstreet, Secretary  
Betti Fujikado  
Chase Franklin  
John M. Meyer  
Mo West  
Seth Brickey

**Western Washington University**

Bruce Shepard, President  
Brent Carbajal, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Eileen Coughlin, Senior VP, Vice President for Enrollment and Student Services  
Richard Van Den Hul, Vice President for Business and Financial Affairs  
Steve Swan, Vice President for University Relations and Community Development  
Molly Ware, Faculty Senate President  
Roger Leishman, Assistant Attorney General  
Paul Cocke, Director of University Communications  
Barbara Sandoval, Secretary to the Board of Trustees  
Elissa Hicks, Assistant Secretary to the Board of Trustees  
Belina Seare, Associated Students President  
Zachary Dove, Associated Students Vice President for Academics  
Israel Rios, Associated Students Vice President for Activities  
Hannah Brock, Associated Students Vice President for Business and Operations  
Abby Ramos, Associated Students Vice President for Diversity  
Patrick Eckroth, Associated Students Vice President for Government Affairs  
Emma Palumbo, Associated Students Vice President for Student Life

**2. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Chair Karen Lee welcomed everyone to the special joint meeting of the Western Washington University Board of Trustees and the Associated Students of Western Washington University, adding that she was honored and excited to participate in the meeting. Lee reminded participants of the ground rules for a special meeting, noting that there would not be an opportunity for public comment and that discussion must stay within the framework of the agreed upon and noticed agenda. She also reminded participants that the purpose of the meeting was not to make decisions, but rather open up the lines of communication, discuss process, and learn about university governance.

Lee thanked the student representatives for coming and for their desire to ensure that all voices of students are represented. She thanked the trustees who put aside their personal and professional commitments to make time to meet with students. Lee asked the participants around the table to introduce themselves by name and explain why they chose to come to Western.

### 3. GOVERNANCE AT WESTERN: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- *Faculty Governance — Role and Process of Students in Faculty Agenda Setting*

Molly Ware, Faculty Senate President presented slides showing the Western's Shared Governance Organization Structure and a roster for the Faculty Senate Membership to illustrate the various paths for campus governance and the different academic areas that are represented in the faculty senate. Ware explained that students have a representative on each Senate adding that students can influence the committees by participating and bringing student issues forward during their reports at each meeting. She described an example of student's bringing forward their desire to include classroom climate on all course evaluations and explained how the committee openly deliberated on what the outcome would be. She said that students were welcome to engage and connect with Faculty Senate leadership directly about ideas they may have.

Trustees asked about committees and student representation. Zachary Dove, AS VP for Academics responded that he personally sits on 18 committees noting that it is difficult to manage while being a student. He said that at the end of his term he would be submitting a report to address time management issues and how the AS representatives could be more effective on Senate committees. Trustees also had questions about past governance cooperation on campus. Past Faculty Senate President Spencer Anthony Cahill responded that over the past eight years he has noticed that the transparency for decision making and governance has greatly improved all over campus.

Ware said that the faculty senate is in a good place but is always looking for ways to better the engagement and cooperation with the Associated Students and improve campus wide governance.

- *Student Governance – Prioritization and Selection of Student Agenda; Communication and Representation with Campus Governance Organizations*

Emma Palumbo, AS VP for Student Life reported that currently there are no official ways to set AS priorities or agendas for the year, noting that the leadership team met at the beginning of the year to set priorities based on campus feedback and personal platforms. Hannah Brock, AS VP for Business and Operations provided background on the structure of the AS, which includes communicating directly with all students; overseeing all AS offices; no student senate structure, and short terms with frequent turn over. Brock said that a review is underway to look at the possibility of reinstating the Student Senate as a way to more effectively receive student feedback. As part of the review AS models from around the country and best practices are being looked at to try and improve the effectiveness of the AS Board. The Board acknowledged their current structural limitations in accessing student's genuine concerns.

Trustees asked how the AS Board oversees both programs and governance participation and expressed concerns about the disproportionately heavy workloads for seven students. There was discussion on how to spread the workload around and get more students involved with governance. Brock said that the student senate was put on hiatus in 2013 due to lack of participation, which ultimately has limited the Boards ability to interact directly with students. There was discussion on the benefits and drawbacks of several approaches including paying a student senate or the potential for credits.

Trustees asked what student empowerment means to the AS Board. Abby Ramos, AS VP for Diversity and Belina Seare, AS President said that they see student empowerment as student voices being listened to and prioritized by the administration, that governance should be more accessible and transparent to students and access to information and representation on campus decision making processes be open.

- *Western Governance – Role of Trustees and Administration in Hearing and Engaging Student Voices*

Chair Lee introduced Trustee Seth Brickey and asked him to present on campus governance at the Board level. Trustee Brickey thanked the Board's partners in governance for joining the meeting and for taking the opportunity to meet together. He briefly describe the Board of Trustees and administration's role in University governance, saying that the Board of Trustees are appointed by the Governor of Washington who has given the Trustees a mandate to govern the University on behalf of the people of Washington. He said the trustees hold mandate in the highest regard, just as the Associated Students and the Faculty Senate do with their respective constituencies.

Brickey recognized that it takes more than a board of eight individuals to make this institution function and function well and equitably. He said that it takes the hard work and dedication of students, faculty, and administrators to make Western's mission and strategic goals come to life. Brickey said that in recognizing the Trustees own limitations as volunteers with limited expertise in managing the daily operations of a University, the Trustees have delegated power to the President and his designees to exercise power on their behalf. He says the trustees see that as a way to efficiently handle the operations and concerns of the university, while retaining full legal responsibility for the actions, policies, and processes of the University.

Brickey said that the Board values the position and judgment of the President and respects the established governing process that is intended to ensure that all stakeholders' concerns can be heard and addressed accordingly.

Brickey said that historically, the trustees have relied on the AS, as elected representatives of the student body, to be the primary advocates of the student voice. However, he said that based on the conversation at the meeting, that might be a big challenge for seven full time students to undertake alone and clearly more conversation was needed to help make student governance more effective and engaging. He said that the Trustees believe a strong student voice is paramount to a strong Western and they hope to build upon open lines of communication to support the Associated Students as invaluable stakeholders.

President Shepard spoke about shared governance from his perspective by engaging various stakeholder groups on the campus by committees such as the University Planning and Resources Council and President's Cabinet meetings that bring representatives together to discuss issues and bring ideas forward to the administration and the Board of Trustees. Shepard said that as president he will not undercut any constituency group and that each group needs to come to the administration with ideas that are collectively agreed upon in order to move forward.

#### **4. SHARED GOVERNANCE - LOOKING TO THE FUTURE**

Chair Lee turned the conversation to looking to the future of shared governance on campus. She said that over the course of the meeting she has heard examples of the following:

- The organization chart for Faculty Senate is difficult to navigate
- How agendas are set and moved forward are not easily understood by people on campus.
- Roles of different governing groups are not clearly defined.
- Student leadership and representation groups have short terms which does not allow a lot of long range planning
- Student leadership is overloaded with overseeing both student programs and student governance. This model is being reviewed compared to best practices around the country.

AS members said they are working on a document that would more clearly describe the roles and responsibilities of different governance groups on campus to provide transparency to the process for future student leadership. They suggested that administration could be more available to students by holding office hours in order to have more direct contact with stakeholder groups and help the students connect with the administration. Meeting attendees also suggested that it would be a good idea to look into offering credits for a new student senate adding that it would fit perfectly with Western's mission of active minds, changing lives, by allowing those who want to be part of the process to more easily fit it into their education schedules and truly participate in the shared governance process. AS President Belina Seare commented that the challenges for the AS are cyclical problems, the same problems are still there and students are saying the same things over and over because of a lack of representation in the Associated Students. Meeting attendees discussed looking critically at things and always striving to improve both communication and processes in order to make things better for all. Structures can always improve, but it is important for things to be as accessible and simple as possible.

#### **5. CLOSING COMMENTS**

Chair Lee thanked everyone for their participation and collaboration and expressed the trustees' hope that the lines of communication stay open and innovation continues for campus shared governance and the relationships continue to grow between all parties. Students also expressed their gratitude for the conversation and hope to see it as a beginning and not an end.

6. The meeting adjourned at 6:39 p.m.