

SPECIAL TELEPHONE MEETING OF THE WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

VIA TELEPHONE

The Board of Trustees of Western Carolina University met by telephone in a special session on April 7, 2020 in Room 501A of the H. F. Robinson Building. The meeting was called to order at 2:30 p.m. by Chair Kinney.

**ATTENDANCE**

The following members of the Board were present: Chair Bryant Kinney, Mr. Kenny Messer, Mr. Bob Roberts, Mrs. Haden Boliek, Mr. Ken Hughes, Mr. Tim Haskett, Mrs. Rebecca Schlosser, Ms. Kathy Greeley, Mr. Casey Cooper, and Mr. David Rhode.

Board Members Absent: Mr. David Rhode and Mr. John Lupoli.

Present – Faculty and Staff of Western Carolina University: Chancellor Kelli R. Brown, Dr. Richard Starnes, Interim Provost; Mr. Shea Browning, General Counsel; Dr. Melissa Wargo, Chief of Staff; Mr. Mike Byers, Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance; Dr. Sam Miller, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs; Mr. Craig Fowler, Chief Information Officer; Ms. Jamie Raynor, Interim Vice Chancellor for Advancement; Mr. Bill Studenc, Chief Communications Officer; and Ms. Jessica Woods, Assistant Secretary to the Board of Trustees.

**ROLL CALL**

Ms. Woods called the roll of the Board members in attendance. A quorum of the Board was present.

**ETHICS STATEMENT**

Chair Kinney: “As Chair of the Board of Trustees, it is my responsibility to remind all members of the Board of their duty under the State Government Ethics Act to avoid conflicts of interest and appearances of conflict of interest as required by this Act. Each member has received the agenda and related information for this Board of Trustees’ meeting. If any Board member knows of any conflict or interest or appearance of conflict with respect to any matter coming before the Board of Trustees at this meeting, the conflict or appearance of conflict should be identified at this time.” **There were no conflicts disclosed.**

**Chancellor Updates**

Chair Kinney recognized Chancellor Brown for Chancellors updates and updates on COVID-19 Issues. Chancellor Brown shared that we have an amazing senior leadership team here at WCU and that they meet regularly sharing what they are learning not only on campus, but from our counterparts at the system office as well as UNC sister institutions. She shared with the board that the senior leadership team are having robust conversations and talking through issues from across the campus and they are talking through potential scenarios to make good decisions.

Chancellor Brown shared that the Chief Audit Officer, Ms. Lisa Gaetano, and her staff are currently revisiting and reviewing the risk assessment and adjusting the audit plan accordingly. The review is taking place because work conditions across the entire university have changed due to COVID 19. Ms. Gaetano will share any modifications to the plan with the Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee as well as the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

Chancellor Brown shared that the System Office has engaged with Witt O'Brien's to facilitate emergency response and recovery tasks in a manner that will maximize eligibility for recovery of reimbursement through FEMA's Public Assistance program and other Federal programs.

Chancellor Brown shared an update on the Vice Chancellor for Advancement search. She shared the schedule for mid-late May/early June for on-campus interviews.

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**COVID-19 Issues** (Chancellor Brown)

Chancellor Brown recognized Dr. Richard Starnes, Mr. Mike Byers, Dr. Sam Miller, Mrs. Jamie Raynor, and Dr. Melissa Wargo for a brief COVID-19 update from each of their respective departments/areas.

Dr. Starnes provided an update for Academic Affairs. He shared that all organized sections have been in distance modality since March 23<sup>rd</sup>, with a few exceptions. He mentioned that WCU is paying attention to students with disabilities, MAPS students, and critical subpopulations. WCU is providing Tutoring and other forms of academic support continue in a distance environment. He thanked Coulter Faculty Commons, IT, and peer mentors/SMEs in Departments for their great work. He noted that WCU moved to on-line for all summer school instruction. Dr. Starnes noted that WCU is doing the S/U/W grades model, developed in conjunction with Faculty Senate. Students can opt in after seeing grades at the end of term. Faculty will grade as normal. This takes pressure off students as they confront unknown realities. There will be no Chancellor or Dean lists for Spring and extended the Withdrawal date until the end of term. The tenure process has been extended and first University in the UNC System to endorse this. Faculty will opt in if they wish using the standard process for extensions. WCU has cancelled residential camps through July, and are working with sponsors.

Mr. Byers provided a summary from Administration and Finance and Athletics. Mr. Byers shared that HR/Payroll/Accounting/Purchasing/Budget/ Student Accounts are operating largely remotely (consistent with our Business Continuity Plan). Mr. Byers noted that all units are fully operational, although in person training and professional development offerings have been suspended until further notice. A significant reallocation of staffing/resources has been realigned around implementing and communicating COVID-19 Special Work and Leave Provisions. Consistent with guidance from the UNC System Office, WCU ordered all non-mandatory faculty and staff (to include temporary employees and student workers) to not report to work onsite beginning March 18 and continuing through at least April 30, 2020. For those employees who are unable to work onsite or remotely (via telework) paid administrative leave is provided. Mr. Byers noted that effective April 1<sup>st</sup>, mandatory employees who are required to work onsite will receive 1.5X their standard base pay for all hours worked onsite.

Mr. Byers shared that per guidance from the UNC System, all “non-essential” HR actions (to include new hires, salary actions, and position actions) have been suspended until further notice. The Chancellor has the authority to make exceptions for actions that are deemed critical and essential to the continued operation of the institution. We will continue to move forward with the majority of faculty searches to ensure adequate staffing is in place for the Fall semester.

Mr. Byers shared that Police and Emergency Services personnel are all Mandatory. Both, especially Shane, are in frequent communication with Health Services, UNC System Office, Jackson County Emergency Management, FEMA and others. He shared that Facilities Operations have been scaled back, keeping a few mandatory employees on campus. Of course, all employees are on-call and administrative functions performed remotely. Critical utility infrastructure is operational and staffed accordingly (Steam Plant, Water Plant, Campus Power, and Western Carolina Power). He noted that all construction continues.

Mr. Byers shared that Athletic competitions, as well as practice and recruiting activities, have been suspended. He noted that WCU is working to re-calibrate budgets and plan for Fall semester. He shared that Mr. Alex Gary, has been engaging and is bringing himself up to speed heading into his start date of May 1, 2020.

Dr. Miller provided an update for Student Affairs. Dr. Miller shared that WCU’s Department of Residential Living participated in the UNC System coordinated housing exception process. He shared that over 110 students have applied and been funded through the Student Affairs facilitated emergency fund process. Students have received about \$80,000 in support from this process. Dr. Miller mentioned that clinicians in Health Services have continued seeing patients in Bird, as well as responding to students online. He mentioned that Counseling and Psychological Services is also serving students by shifting appointments to online. Dr. Miller shared that Campus Services staff are working on the UNC System authorized refunds for room rates and meal plans and are hopeful that these refunds will be processed before the end of April. Dr. Miller shared that WCU has continued paying student workers during the extended spring break and through April. He noted that where possible some students are working online, but most are on paid administrative leave. Dr. Miller shared that some staff working from home are reaching out to stay in touch with students through online meetings and phone calls and other staff are interacting with students through social media platforms. He shared that the Admission staff are working with Marketing team members to develop a virtual admission tour hosted by student tour guides and using stock video footage of campus events. This new resource should be posted in the next few days. Dr. Miller also shared that the Residential Living team is making plans the end of the year move-out. WCU students will return to campus and remove their belongings tentatively in May.

Ms. Raynor provided an update for the Division of Advancement. Advancement leaders have been in regular communication with UNC System sister institution colleagues to share ideas and discuss opportunities and challenges. Advancement has six priorities for their focus, at this time: Stewardship, Telling the Alumni Story, Supporting Students, Transparency with Donors, Engaging Alumni Online, and Supporting Staff. Ms. Raynor shared that Advancement and Athletics Development staff are calling through their entire portfolio for check ins with their

donors and prospects and Chatty Cat student callers are calling remotely and checking in with donors and alumni. Ms. Raynor shared that Vendor PCI is continuing to call alumni for the directory project and finding success with extended alumni phone calls and copious amounts of new data reported from alumni. She shared that Advancement staff are processing gifts regularly that continue to arrive from generous alumni and friends.

Ms. Raynor shared that staff are collecting data on Alumni calls and sending alumni story ideas to her for brainstorming with Marketing and Communication staff for story leads. Ms. Raynor also shared that Advancement is sending donors to [give.wcu.edu/relief](http://give.wcu.edu/relief) to support the main Student Affairs Emergency Fund and partnering with Dr. Sam Miller and Student Affairs team to coordinate the push for this support. The FY end solicitation mailing to lapsed donors around Student Emergency Fund will be mailed in early May. Advancement is partnering with Athletics Development, including Ryan Jones and incoming Athletics Director, Alex Gary, to assist with Catamount Club support needs for our student athletes and to strategize donor renewals as we approach the fiscal year end.

Ms. Raynor shared that letters are going to all endowment fund holders to give them an update on UNCMC's investment work and to provide a timeline of the expected impact in FY22 for endowment funds. Ms. Raynor shared that Alumni Engagement is occurring online in the month of April with family activities. She mentioned that the Alumni Board of Directors will be reaching out to the WCU alumni club members in their geographic area. Ms. Raynor also noted plans of an alumni e-newsletter with helpful links and activities and launching a virtual book club for alumni and friends with vendor PBC.

Ms. Raynor also shared that Advancement has built a strong online community through Microsoft Teams for staff. She mentioned that Advancement has also onboarded two new staff members using the technologically driven team environment.

Dr. Wargo provided an update on internal and external communications. Dr. Wargo mentioned that the initial communications were decision-oriented, mostly FAQ, and now we are pivoting to recovery-oriented and resilience-focused communications with an eye to highlighting WCU's role as a regional partner and to uplift morale. Dr. Wargo shared that we are receiving mixed feedback on the communications. Dr. Wargo shared that our constituents are reeling, much like we are and that tenor and tone of feedback vacillates between expressing frustration over the shifting sands and changing circumstances and gratitude for institutional responsiveness to the issues du jour. Dr. Wargo mentioned that most social media activity has been around refunds and commencement. Dr. Wargo shared that we are also working with the System Office to help stay abreast of political and legislative issues and to ensure that WCU's needs are not overlooked.

## **Upcoming Western Carolina University Events (Chancellor Brown)**

### **a. June 2020 BOT Meeting**

Chancellor Brown shared that we plan to host a Zoom meeting for the June BOT meeting on Friday, June 5<sup>th</sup>. Chancellor Brown noted that the agenda setting call with the Executive Committee and Committee Chairs is scheduled for May 5<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 am and that Ms. Woods will

send the meeting invite out later this week. Chancellor Brown reminded the board that Committee Secretaries will be sending emails to collect agenda items for each committee meeting in the next couple of days. Chair Kinney suggested that we hold committee meetings in the morning and full board in the afternoon and Chancellor Brown suggested beginning the committee meetings at 9:00 am and having sequential meetings at 9:00, 10:00 and 11:00 a.m., break for lunch and then back at 2:00 pm for full board until 5:00 pm. Chair Kinney and Chancellor Brown suggested streamlining the committee and full board agendas with all "information items" read in advance, with time only allowed for any Trustee questions. Therefore, committee meetings would be dedicated primarily to "action items." The same would hold true for the full board, however we will plan brief verbal reports from Chancellor Brown, Chair Kinney, Faculty Senate Chair, Staff Senate Chair, Alumni President and SGA President. Chair Kinney and Chancellor Brown noted that this will allow for time to approve action items from committees and any closed session items we have.

#### **b. Spring Commencement 2020**

Chancellor Brown recognized Melissa Wargo for the Spring Commencement 2020. Dr. Wargo shared that we cannot yet set a date for the rescheduling of commencement exercises originally set for May 8-9, given Governor Cooper's statewide order. Dr. Wargo shared that we are committed to hosting in-person commencement ceremonies and discussed looking at possible dates for the Commencement in early August or mid-December. Dr. Wargo shared that we will set a firm date for the rescheduled spring commencement ceremonies in the weeks ahead.

#### **c. Chancellor's Installation**

Chancellor Brown recognized Melissa Wargo for the Chancellor's Installation Update. Dr. Wargo discussed the postponement of the installation ceremony and related events until the fall semester. Dr. Wargo discussed a possible date of September 25, 2020 for the Installation Ceremony. Dr. Wargo shared that we will communicate the new date as soon as it becomes available.

#### **CLOSED SESSION**

Mr. Roberts moved that the Board go into closed session to consider the competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial appointment, of a public officer or employee or prospective public officer or employee. Ms. Greeley seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

Chair Kinney asked Chancellor Brown, Dr. Starnes, and Mr. Browning, to remain for the closed session item.

Chair Kinney recognized Chancellor Brown and Dr. Starnes for the Personnel Discussion of the Health and Human Sciences Dean Candidate. Dr. Starnes shared the cover letter, CV, and AA-12 documents and recommended the Dean of Health Sciences candidate to the Board of Trustees for approval.

## **RETURN TO OPEN SESSION**

Mr. Roberts moved that the Board return to Open Session. Ms. Greeley seconded the motion, and it was approved.

Chair Kinney asked for a motion to approve the recommended Dean of Health and Human Sciences candidate and Academic Ranking and Tenure as discussed in Closed Session. Mr. Messer made a motion to approve the candidate and Ms. Boliek seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. The press release will be released on May 5, 2020 and Trustee members were asked to keep the information confidential, until the news is released on May 5<sup>th</sup>.

Chair Kinney asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mrs. Schlosser made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mrs. Greeley seconded the motion; and the meeting was adjourned at 3:20 p.m.