

REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OF WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

December 15, 2023

9:30 a.m.

H.F. Robinson Administration Building, Room 501A

The Board of Trustees of Western Carolina University (Board) met in regular session on December 15, 2023, in Room 501A of the H.F. Robinson Administration Building. Chair Greeley called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

ATTENDANCE

The following members of the Board were present:

Present from the Board: Chair Kathy Greeley, Ms. Becky Brown, Mr. Casey Cooper, Mr. Joe Crocker, Mr. Dan Field, Ms. Kathy Harrington, Mr. Tim Haskett, Mr. Ken Hughes, Mr. Bob Roberts, Mr. Jake Robinson, and Mr. CJ Mitchell.

The following members of the Board were absent: Mr. William Brawley (attended via Zoom) and Ms. Haden Boliek.

Present – Faculty and staff of Western Carolina University:

Chancellor Kelli R. Brown; Dr. Richard Starnes, Provost; Dr. Yancey Gulley, Faculty Senate Chair; Mr. Zachary Williams, Staff Senate Chair; Ms. Allison Hinson, Alumni Association President; Dr. Melissa Canady Wargo, Chief of Staff; Mr. Mike Byers, Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance; Mr. Shea Browning, General Counsel; Ms. Jamie Raynor, Vice Chancellor for Advancement; Dr. Sam Miller, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs; Mr. Craig Fowler, Chief Information Officer; Mr. Alex Gary, Athletics Director; Dr. Cory Causby, Associate Vice Chancellor of Human Resources and Payroll; Ms. Karen Woody, Budget Officer; Ms. Kelly Tornow, Associate General Counsel and Chief Compliance Officer; Dr. Kim Winter, Dean, College of Education and Allied Professions; Ms. Kathy Boland, Staff Senator; Ms. Julia Duvall, Senior Media Relations Coordinator; and Ms. Jessica Woods, Assistant Secretary to the Board of Trustees.

WELCOME

Chair Greeley welcomed the Faculty and Staff Senate Chairs, Alumni Association President, as well as staff and faculty attending the meeting, via Zoom and joining, via LiveStream.

ROLL CALL

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

ETHICS STATEMENT

Chair Greeley read the Ethics Statement as follows:

“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 conflicts 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 of 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.” **No conflicts of interest were disclosed.**

Chair Greeley reminded the board that the meeting was a public meeting and is being recorded, via the Zoom platform, and is being livestreamed.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Chair Greeley read the Land Acknowledgement as follows:

“The Western Carolina University campus is situated within the ancestral homelands of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. At WCU our work seeks to embrace and connect to this Cherokee landscape as we work to reinforce our mission at WCU. We will work to actively engage our community with the extraordinary indigenous identity and culture of this special place.”

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Greeley asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the September 8, 2023, Regular Session, Board of Trustees meeting (TAB B-1) and the minutes of the November 2-3, 2023, Board of Trustees Retreat (TAB B-2). Mr. Cooper made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Crocker seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

COMMENTS FROM CHANCELLOR KELLI R. BROWN

Chancellor Brown welcomed the Trustees, Executive Council, and the Faculty Senate and Staff Senate Chairs and Senators who joined the meeting in person, or via livestream or zoom. Chancellor Brown also welcomed faculty and staff and members of the news media and others who participated, via livestream.

Chancellor Brown shared that while the fall semester is nearly over, WCU held its third annual Holidays on the Plaza and lighting of the Alumni Tower to celebrate the holiday student with students, faculty, and staff. Chancellor Brown shared that the December Commencement ceremonies are tomorrow, Saturday, December 16th and she is excited to celebrate another class into ranks of Catamount alumni.

Chancellor Brown provided general campus updates including enrollment for the Fall 2024 semester; retention rates and campus performance metrics; campaign updates; lab school performance and highlights; and provided general campus highlights for the 2023 year.

Chancellor Brown recognized the significant efforts of Dr. William Moultrie, his staff in the Division of Student Success, and the work of our talented and dedicated faculty and staff, for their support of our students and their commitment to their success. Chancellor Brown shared that the Catamount School has now graduated a total of six classes of 8th graders. One of the many benefits of The Catamount School is having an additional place locally for our college-aged students to get hands-on, field experience. This past year WCU placed 12 school and clinical psychology students, 26 school counseling interns, four nursing preceptors, and four senior nursing students at The Catamount School.

Chancellor Brown shared that in 2023, WCU was notified of several grant awards from the NC Golden Leaf Foundation and Dogwood Health Trust focused on academic program growth. The nursing program received a \$2M grant from the Bedford Falls Foundation. This marks only the second university in North Carolina that the Bedford Falls Foundation has supported. These funds will be used to help support the expansion of the master’s entry in nursing program. WCU received nearly \$100M from the General Assembly this year to assist with the engineering program expansion. Chancellor Brown shared that WCU has partnered numerous community colleges from across the region and State to sign Memoranda of Understanding that guarantees students from those institutions admission to Western if they choose to transfer here.

Chancellor Brown shared some highlights from Catamount athletics. She shared that for the first time since 2008, the WCU women’s soccer team won the SoCon Championship and moved on to the NCAA Women’s Soccer Championship. She shared that the football team made it into the national ranks for ten

straight weeks this season. Overall, they won 7 games this season. She also shared that WCU was ranked #10 on the Largest NC Colleges and Universities list in the Triad Business Journal.

Chancellor Brown shared faculty, staff, and student highlights including WCU's University Participant Program becoming the first fully accredited program by the Inclusive Higher Education Accreditation Council and that WCU's prelicensure nursing students achieved a 100% pass rate on the licensing exam for the first half of 2023; and that recently the American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology selected three WCU faculty members as the winner of its Editor's Choice Award for an article they co-wrote. Chancellor Brown shared that the University Communications and Marketing team were the winners of two Best of CASE District III awards. The team won awards in both the Photography Series category and in the Writing: News Feature category. She shared that SACSCOC, our regional accreditor, accepted our Fifth-Year Interim Report and the QEP Impact Report without the need for any additional follow-up reporting. For the second year in a row, the Division of Athletics "won" our friendly Faculty/Staff Giving Competition for having the highest rate of Division participation of donors.

Chancellor Brown shared student highlights including students from the Interior Design program had the opportunity to participate in the Coalition for Housing Repair's ReFrame 2023 Conference where they were able to present their research around resilient, age-inclusive design; an elementary education student presented her Capstone Research findings alongside her professor at the NAEYC's annual national conference; and this year the Chancellor's Ambassadors received some additional leadership and public speaking training to assist them in their roles as student representatives. Chancellor Brown thanked Trustee Cooper for speaking at the Chancellor's Ambassadors training. Chancellor Brown also shared that some of WCU's scholarship recipients had the opportunity to present examples of their scholarly and creative work to the donors who helped make those endeavors possible at this year's Scholars Showcase.

Chancellor Brown thanked the board for their support they provide to Western Carolina University.

COMMENTS FROM CHAIR

Chair Greeley thanked Chancellor Brown for her report. She thanked Chancellor Brown and her leadership and her Executive Committee for their support. Chair Greeley thanked the trustees for attending the Board Retreat at the WCU Biltmore Park in Asheville in November. She gave a special thanks to Ms. Woods and the Executive Council members for their support and guidance during the retreat. She shared trustees had good discussions and an opportunity for feedback and direction.

Chair Greeley thanked the trustees who attended the BOG Workshop in Greensboro. Chair Greeley noted that many of the Trustees were able to attend the Association of Governing Board's conference in San Diego. She noted that Ms. Woods shared information on the conference and hopes that WCU will have good attendance for the AGB National Conference on Trusteeship in Boston, MA in March 2024. She shared that the conference format is designed to connect us to resources and ideas we need to meet significant governance and leadership challenges.

Chair Greeley reminded trustees of the seven (7) Strategic Directives that drive our governance: Academic Excellence; Student Experience; Inclusive Excellence; Regional Development and Engagement; Employee Excellence; Responsible Stewardship; and Vision Advancement.

Chair Greeley shared that her hope, as board chair, was that the Board of Trustees can be 100% in commitments to Fill The Western Sky campaign. She shared that WCU is making progress having all BOT on board with documented campaign commitments, and shared that the board was at 66% participation, so far with campaign gifts. Chair Greeley shared that she looked forward to the WCU December Commencement Ceremonies on Saturday, December 16th and hoped many of the trustees would be able to attend as platform party members.

Chair Greeley shared that Ms. Woods will be sending out a survey after the BOT meeting, again, to help provide feedback on ways we can improve the effectiveness of BOT meetings. She thanked Trustees in advance for providing their valued feedback and asked Trustees to complete the survey and return to Ms. Woods.

Chair Greeley asked Trustee Becky Brown to share her WCU Story.

REPORT OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Chair Greeley recognized Mr. Robinson to give the report of the Academic Affairs and Personnel Committee. The Academic Affairs and Personnel Committee received two discussion items and one information item.

Mr. Robinson shared that Dr. Starnes provided the Provost's Report. Dr. Starnes shared that applications are running ahead of last year point in time. Graduate enrollment for spring will likely be above that of spring last year, and transfer enrollment remains strong. As of Monday, December 11th, WCU had retained 1913 freshmen (91.7 %) from the 2023-24 class for the spring semester.

Mr. Robinson shared that Dr. Starnes also shared updates regarding accreditation, ROI next steps, the Summer Session Working Group, the Faculty Load Policy, and other matters. He shared that he was pleased to announce that the 2024-2025 campus theme will be WNC/Mountain Life. Dr. Starnes noted that WCU has joined JED Campus in support of student well-being and mental health. The program is a nationwide initiative of The Jed Foundation (JED) and is designed to help schools evaluate and strengthen their mental health, substance use, and suicide prevention programs and systems to ensure that we have the strongest possible mental health safety nets. WCU's 4-year JED Campus membership is being co-led by Dr. Carol Burton, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Dr. Sam Miller, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs.

Mr. Robinson noted that Dr. Starnes shared that the Jamaica teacher program will be discontinued. WCU will not seek reaccreditation with the University Council of Jamaica and will begin to teach out the two remaining cohorts in-country. He shared that WCU's young musicians, representing majors across campus, are preparing to travel to Dublin, Ireland, in March 2024 for the St. Patrick's Day parade. He mentioned to watch WCU's social media feeds for more information. He also noted that after 7 years as the Director for the Cherokee Center, Sky Sampson has departed WCU to begin a new journey with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians as the tribe's Secretary of Education. A search for a new Director is underway.

Mr. Robinson mentioned that Dr. Starnes also provided several good news items regarding faculty, staff, students, programs, and initiatives across Academic Affairs. Mr. Robinson shared that Provost Starnes provided the Committee with information about tenure (TAB C-2) and the tenure process at WCU.

Mr. Robinson shared that Dr. Causby provided the Committee with WCU's 2023 EEO Summary Report (TAB C-3) noting that Racial/Ethnic Minority representation in the faculty ranks decreased by 0.2% while staff representation increased by 0.2% leaving overall racial/ethnic minority representation unchanged from the prior year. Overall female representation increased to 51%, overall representation for Veterans is 3.1% and Individuals with Disabilities is 8.1%. 303 new full-time faculty and staff were hired during the last plan year and 103 current employees were promoted via a competitive search process.

Mr. Robinson shared that Dr. Causby also provided the Committee with Legislative Increase and Related Compensation Updates (TAB C-4). The salary provisions for state employees included: 4% across-the-board salary increase for FY2024 for benefits-eligible faculty and staff retroactive to July 1, 2023 (processed in October payroll); 3% across-the-board salary increase for FY2025 for benefits-eligible

faculty and staff scheduled to be effective July 1, 2024; Nursing Faculty Salary Adjustment Fund that will provide WCU will approximately \$740,000 to support increased salaries and corresponding benefits for UNC System Nursing Faculty. The salary adjustments will be processed no later than the January 2024 payroll and will be retroactive to July 1, 2023.

Mr. Robinson mentioned that Dr. Causby shared that the UNC System Office partnered with Buck Consulting to complete a comprehensive market analysis and update SHRA staff salary ranges. On average, salary ranges will increase by 12.8% with a range from 7.5% to 25%. WCU's SHRA market index will shift from 99.5% of the current salary ranges to 88% of the new ranges.

Mr. Robinson shared that the committee was provided information regarding new hires in TAB C-5 of the Trustee materials; 2 faculty appointments and 3 administrative appointments.

REPORT OF ADMINISTRATION, GOVERNANCE, AND TRUSTEESHIP COMMITTEE

Chair Greeley recognized Mr. Cooper to give the report of the Administration, Governance, and Trusteeship Committee. The Administration, Governance, and Trusteeship Committee considered one action item, three discussion items, and one information item.

Mr. Cooper shared that the Committee heard the presentation of the WCU Legislative Budget and Policy Agenda for the upcoming short session by Ms. Christy Agner and Dr. Melissa Wargo. He noted this agenda, if endorsed, would comprise the priority requests to be presented to members of the NC General Assembly beginning next spring. The proposed priorities can be found in TAB D-2 of the Trustee materials. The motion comes from committee and does not require a second. The Board endorsed the WCU Legislative and Policy Agenda and it was unanimously approved.

Mr. Cooper shared that the Annual Marketing Recap was provided by Mr. Travis Jordan, Chief Marketing and Communication Strategist. Mr. Jordan reported on the implementation and ROI of the Live Western brand campaign. He provided summary updates on the different tactics implemented and their ultimate impact in terms of impressions and driving traffic to the website. Mr. Jordan also provided information on next steps in the marketing campaign including the use of AI and evolving technologies.

Mr. Cooper mentioned that the Annual Advancement Report and Division Overview was provided by Ms. Jamie Raynor, Vice Chancellor for Advancement. Ms. Raynor presented a summary of the highlights from 2023 which included ROI data on productivity and timeline of engagement. Ms. Raynor also reported the preliminary totals for Giving Tuesday. A total of \$1.57 million was donated by 1,251 individual donors, which surpasses the goal of 1,000 donors and constitutes an increase of 134% from 2022. In addition, the amount raised towards the Campaign goal to date is \$48,703,570, or 65% of the 75M goal.

Mr. Cooper noted that Dr. Sam Miller, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, provided the Student Body Profile Fall 2023 as a handout. The Student Body Profile highlights enrollment data for Fall 2023.

Mr. Cooper shared that the committee was provided information the Board of Trustees Meetings Schedule in TAB D-5 of the Trustee materials.

REPORT OF FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Chair Greeley recognized Mr. Haskett to give the report of the Finance and Audit Committee. The Finance and Audit Committee considered four action items, two discussion items and received one information item.

Mr. Haskett shared that a slate of changes to Tuition, Fees, Rates, and Surcharges was proposed by Mr. Mike Byers and can be found in TABs E-2 and E-2A of the Trustee material. He mentioned that these recommendations are the same as those the trustees reviewed at the Board of Trustees Retreat in November. The motion comes from committee and does not require a second. The board approved the proposed changes to Tuition, Fees, Rates, and Surcharges as presented in Tabs E-2 and E-2A of the Trustee material and it was unanimously approved.

Mr. Haskett shared that the Internal Auditor Director, Mr. Gary Malloy, presented the revised Audit Charter, found in Tabs E-3 and E-3A of the Trustee material, for recommendation to the full Board. The Audit Charter was revised as a result of recommendations included in the external Quality Assessment Report. The motion comes from committee and does not require a second. The board approved the revised Audit Charter as presented in TABs E-3 and E-3A of the Trustee material and it was unanimously approved.

Mr. Haskett noted that Mr. Malloy also presented a revised Finance and Audit Committee Charter, found in Tab E-4 and E-4A of the Trustee material, for recommendation to the full Board. He mentioned that the Finance and Audit Committee Charter was revised as a result of recommendations included in the external Quality Assessment Report. The motion comes from committee and does not require a second. The board approved the revised Finance and Audit Committee Charter as presented in TABs E-4 and E-4A of the Trustee material and it was unanimously approved.

Mr. Haskett mentioned that the Committee heard from Mr. Byers that a Request for Qualifications was solicited, and responses received by Western Carolina University for the Athletic Facility Improvement Project Construction Manager. He noted that a committee comprised of staff from Facilities Planning, Design and Construction, Athletics, and the project designer team considered four finalists and ranked them in order of preference as described in Tab E-9 in the Trustee material. The motion comes from committee and does not require a second. The board approved the James R. Vannoy & Sons Construction Company as the preferred Construction Manager for the Athletic Facility Improvement Project, with the preference of the remaining firms being in the order listed in Tab E-9 in the unlikely event that an agreement cannot be reached with the first choice. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Haskett shared that Mr. Malloy presented the external Quality Assessment Report, found in Tab E-5 of the Trustee material. Audit Standards require an external assessment to be conducted at least once every five years by a qualified, independent assessor or assessment team from outside the organization. The Quality Assessment team rated WCU's Office of Internal Audit with an overall evaluation rating of "Generally Conforms", which means the internal audit activity has a charter, policies and processes that are judged to be in accordance with the Standards in all material respects, but some opportunities for improvement may exist.

Mr. Haskett mentioned that Mr. Malloy also provided a revised FY24 Audit Plan, which can be found in Tab E-6 of the Trustee material. Ms. Haskett shared that Mrs. Deidre Hopkins presented to the Committee the annual Title IX and Student Conduct Report, which can be found in Tab E-7 of the Trustee material. The Title IX Office is preparing for the new Title IX Regulations that are anticipated to be available in March 2024. Preparations include internal policy changes, identifying a training module for employees, and a communication plan to get messaging across to the campus community.

Mr. Haskett shared that the Capital Projects Update can be found in TAB E-8 of the Trustee material.

STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT INFORMATION REPORT

Chair Greeley recognized Mr. CJ Mitchell to give the SGA President Information Report. Mr. Mitchell shared information on the Executive Branch, Legislative Branch and Judicial Branch. Mr. Mitchell also provided UNC ASG Updates. (SGA REPORT IS IN REPORT MATERIALS ON FILE).

STAFF SENATE INFORMATION REPORT

Chair Greeley recognized Mr. Zachary Williams to give the Staff Senate Report. Mr. Williams provided staff senate updates including Homecoming, Employee Appreciation Day, and Gathering to Celebrate and Welcome. He shared Committee Updates for the Governance Committee, Human Resources Committee, Scholarship and Professional Development Committee, Staff Engagement Committee and UNC System Staff Assembly. (STAFF SENATE REPORT IS IN REPORT MATERIALS ON FILE).

FACULTY SENATE INFORMATION REPORT

Chair Greeley recognized Dr. Gulley to give the Faculty Senate Report. Dr. Gulley shared a summary of some of the Faculty Senate actions and accomplishments from the 2023-2024 academic year and upcoming actions for the current academic year including Academic Policy and Review Council, Collegial Review Council, and Faculty Affairs Council. Dr. Gulley shared highlights of faculty accomplishments. (FACULTY SENATE REPORT IS IN REPORT MATERIALS ON FILE).

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION INFORMATION REPORT

Chair Greeley recognized President Hinson to give the Alumni Association Report. President Hinson shared the Alumni Association Board Report. President Hinson shared that the new Alumni Association Constitution and Bylaws have helped the alumni Board of Directors take a significant step forward into its engagement framework. She shared examples and information for the nomination committee, engagement committee and advancement committee. (ALUMNI ASSOCIATION REPORT IS IN REPORT MATERIALS ON FILE.)

CLOSED SESSION

Chair Greeley asked for a motion to go into closed session. Mr. Cooper made a motion to go into closed session to prevent the disclosure of privileged or confidential information, or information not considered a public record pursuant to § NCGS 143-318.11 (a)(3) and (a)(6) as described on the December 15, 2023, Board of Trustees of Western Carolina University Closed Session Agenda. The motion was seconded by Ms. Brown. The motion was unanimously approved by the board.

Chair Greeley asked for only Chancellor Brown and Mr. Browning to remain for closed session. Discussion followed on the Closed Session agenda items.

RESUMPTION OF OPEN SESSION

Chair Greeley asked for a motion to return to Open Session. Mr. Cooper made the motion to return to Open Session. The motion was seconded by Mr. Robinson. The board unanimously approved to return to Open Session.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Greeley adjourned the Board of Trustees meeting at 11:15 am.