

REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
OF WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

March 3, 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 March 3, 2023, in Room 501A of the H.F. Robinson Administration Building. Chair Roberts called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

ATTENDANCE

The following members of the Board were present:

Present from the Board: Chair Bob Roberts, Ms. Haden Boliek, Mr. William Brawley, Ms. Becky Brown, Mr. Casey Cooper, Mr. Joe Crocker, Ms. Kathy Greeley, Mr. Tim Haskett, Mr. Ken Hughes, Mr. Bryant Kinney, Mr. Jake Robinson, and Ms. Estefany Gordillo-Rivas.

The following members of the Board were absent: Ms. Rebecca Schlosser (attended via Zoom).

Present – Faculty and staff of Western Carolina University:

Chancellor Kelli R. Brown; Dr. Richard Starnes, Provost; Dr. Kae Livsey, Faculty Senate Chair; Dr. Betsy Aspinwall, Staff Senate Chair; Ms. Allison Henson, 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; Mr. Zach Williams, Staff Senator, Mr. Benny Smith, Executive Director of Communications and Marketing; and Ms. Jessica Woods, Assistant Secretary to the Board of Trustees.

WELCOME

Chair Roberts 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 Roberts 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 Roberts 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 Roberts 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 Roberts asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the December 2, 2022, Regular Session, Board of Trustees meeting (TAB B-1). Mr. Brawley 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 some news about Western Carolina University with Trustees. She shared that the WCU December commencement ceremonies were a huge success, and that University Communications and Marketing hosted an incredible kickoff event for the new “Live Western” brand campaign, and we celebrated our Chancellor’s List students who earned a 3.8 GPA or higher during the Fall 2022 semester with one of the highest attended Chancellor’s List events in recent memory. She shared that she and Travis Jordan, Chief Marketing and Communications Strategist, had the opportunity to discuss the new WCU brand campaign and WCU’s enrollment initiatives at both WCU’s main campus and Asheville campus with WLOS 13 which aired February 19th.

Chancellor Brown shared some general updates including on enrollment, retention, and overall applications. Chancellor Brown shared an update on the Senior Leadership Fellows Program. She shared that the ‘grow your own’ leadership development program is showing tremendous potential to be impactful on our succession planning and retention efforts of talented campus leaders.

Chancellor Brown shared recommendations from the NCAA Division 1 Transformation Committee and an update on the NC Innovation partnership. She shared that NC Innovation wants to work with universities like Western to show that there are major innovations happening outside of the research triangle that are just as important, and that the impact of universities in our state’s rural areas can be just as impactful on the economic health of our state as the research triangle. Western Carolina University will be one of only 4 regional hubs, along with ECU, UNC Charlotte, and NC A&T, in this effort.

Chancellor Brown shared that as WCU continues to implement the new performance funding model, she will update the board on the campus performance relative to the core and campus-selected metrics in the new model. Chancellor Brown discussed student debt at the time of graduation for Western Carolina University’s first-year students and transfer students. She shared that Western has done well in keeping costs affordable for an excellent educational experience. WCU has continued to make inroads and see declines in the amount of debt carried by our graduates. Chancellor Brown mentioned that the Catamount Commitment program was introduced last year and will officially take effect in the Fall 2023 semester. Catamount Commitment is a pilot initiative that makes WCU’s financial award and investment in students transparent on the front end and, as long as the student meets the timely criteria, it takes some of the guesswork out of the competitive and complicated student financial aid landscape. NC Promise and Catamount Commitment are just two examples of some of the many efforts WCU employs to help lower debt costs for our students.

Chancellor Brown provided a Legislative Update. She shared that we are currently in the Long Session of the General Assembly. This year, WCU is aggressively pursuing several funding items related to the expansion of our Engineering programs. Western Carolina University is seeking \$3.5M recurring and \$3.5M nonrecurring funding to support engineering program expansion and \$95.3M to construct a new facility home for the College of Engineering and Technology. She shared that Western Carolina University is also seeking consideration around faculty and staff salaries and funding for a special merit scholarship program. The Board of Governors has approved our engineering requests and the faculty and staff salary request in their legislative budget priorities as well.

Chancellor Brown provided a Board of Governors Update. She shared that Provost Starnes and Dean Winter are working with the UNC System Office to respond to the recent BOG report regarding the performance of the 15 UNC educator preparation programs in teaching literacy. She shared that Western Carolina University is also reviewing the recently approved policy amendment on compelling speech to better understand its impact and taking action to ensure WCU's employment and admissions practices comply. She shared that the BOG approved last week the slate of fee increases this Board endorsed in December and we are moving forward with implementation of those fee increases in Fall 2023. She shared that next month, the BOG should finalize a modification to the UNC minimum course requirements that will allow some campus flexibility around the foreign language requirement necessary for admittance to UNC campuses.

Chancellor Brown provided a Campaign Update. She shared that the campaign steering committee met for the first time on Friday, January 27th where the committee got the chance to put together next steps for the comprehensive fundraising campaign. The Advancement team is hard at work on some final touches with our marketing firm, Ologie, for campaign deliverables by April 2023. She shared the amount raised to date.

Chancellor Brown shared University Accolades with the board. She highlighted a few things happening at Western Carolina University, including that Western Carolina University's Birth-Kindergarten Program was recently awarded a grant of nearly \$900K by the Dogwood Health Trust for Leadership, Equity and Access Fellowship in Early Childhood Education; the Goodnight Distinguished Professorship of Early Literacy was created from a donation from Jim and Ann Goodnight in the amount of \$1.5 million along with a \$1 million match from the UNC System creating a total endowment of \$2.5 million for that distinguished professorship position; and she signed a memoranda of understanding with President Garrett Hinshaw of Catawba Valley Community College and President Kandi Dietemeyer of Central Piedmont Community College that will guarantee admission of transfer students from those institutions to WCU; and that Forbes recently ranked WCU in the Top 100 of America's best midsize employers for 2023. We were one of only two organizations in North Carolina to make the Top 100.

Chancellor Brown thanked Estefany Gordillo-Rivas for her service as Western's SGA president this past year and presented her with a farewell gift. Chancellor Brown thanked each of the Trustees for the support they provide to Western Carolina University.

COMMENTS FROM THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS LIASION

Governor Powers shared that they are in full swing in the Legislative Session. He shared that there was no increase in Tuition and Fees this year. He shared an update on the Engineering ask, Bill to regulate sports, Chancellor Search Process, and NC Innovation. He provided an update on BOT Trustee Appointments. He shared that the Board of Governors will vote at the April BOG meeting and terms are effective July 1, 2023

COMMENTS FROM CHAIR

Chair Roberts thanked Chancellor Brown for her Chancellor's Report and Governor Powers for the Board of Governor's Report. Chair Roberts shared that since the last meeting in December, much work has begun around Western Carolina University's \$75 million comprehensive campaign. He shared that the board will be asked to get more involved soon and asked the board to think about ways of participation and personal commitment. Chair Roberts shared that the Trustees had the privilege of meeting and having lunch with Western Carolina University's Faculty Senators on Thursday, before the committee meetings.

Chair Roberts mentioned that Trustees were able to tour the Engineering and Technology building and hear more about the case for expansion. He thanked Dean Randy Collins for his commitment to growing Western Carolina University's already successful program and for his passion to bring a state-of-the-art facility to Western Carolina University's campus and to its region. He shared that the breakfast meeting with the leaders in technology program was equally as informative and exciting. He shared that Western Carolina University is so fortunate to have these leaders influencing the students.

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

Chair Roberts reminded the Trustees of the 2023 AGB National Conference on Trusteeship which is scheduled for April 2-4, 2023, in San Diego, CA. Chair Roberts asked Trustees to respond to Ms. Woods on attending the conference. He shared that he would like to see WCU have a good representation at the conference that provides attendees with current principles and best practices of good governance.

Chair Roberts shared that we 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. Chair Roberts noted that he is blessed to work alongside each of the Trustees to make Western Carolina University an even better University. He thanked each of the Trustees for their continued focus, leadership, and service to the board. Chair Roberts featured former Board Secretary, Trustee Tim Haskett and asked him to share his story of what drives him to be an advocate for WCU.

REPORT OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Chair Roberts recognized Ms. Boliek to give the report of the Academic Affairs and Personnel Committee. The Academic Affairs and Personnel Committee had two discussion items and received one information item in open session and considered one action item in closed session.

Ms. Boliek shared that Dr. Starnes provided updates on Enrollment and Academic Affairs. Ms. Boliek shared that Western Carolina University will submit a report to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) in March to maintain institutional accreditation. She shared that students who are pursuing majors supported by Western Carolina University's Advising Center will have an increased connection with professional advisers under the new advising model. Western Carolina University continues to review the dashboards related to the legislatively mandated ROI study and the process will continue throughout the spring and summer, with a submission by the system to the General Assembly in November. Ms. Boliek shared that the UNC System's Project Kitty Hawk team visited Western Carolina University on January 26th to present and discuss opportunities. She also shared information on Office of Research Administration (ORA) feedback provided by faculty forums and surveys, Chat GPT, and numerous events and professional development opportunities for faculty and staff.

Ms. Boliek shared that Dr. Causby provided a Faculty and Staff Compensation Review Update, which is in TAB C-2 of the Trustee material. Dr. Causby shared the update on Faculty and Staff salaries as compared to national and state-wide market data.

Ms. Boliek shared that the committee was provided information regarding new hires; 7 faculty appointments, 11 administrative appointments and 1 athletic appointment in TAB C-3 of the Trustee materials.

The Committee has one closed session item to be considered.

REPORT OF ADMINISTRATION, GOVERNANCE, AND TRUSTEESHIP COMMITTEE

Chair Roberts recognized Ms. Greeley to give the report of the Administration, Governance, and Trusteeship Committee. The Administration, Governance, and Trusteeship had one discussion item and received seven information items in open session and considered two action items in closed session.

Ms. Greeley shared that the Western Carolina University Intercollegiate Athletics Report for 2021-2022 can be found in Tab D-2 of the Trustee material. Kelly Tornow, Associate General Counsel, compiled information provided by the Division of Academic Affairs and the Division of Athletics to respond to the UNC Board of Governors' annual request for Intercollegiate Athletics student and financial information. The Report has been approved by Chancellor Brown and has been provided to the UNC Board of Governors.

Ms. Greeley shared that the Inclusive Excellence Report can be found in Tab D-3a of the Trustee material.

Ms. Greeley shared that the Lean Forward Booklet can be found in Tab D-3b of the Trustee material.

Ms. Greeley shared that the Legislative Update can be found in Tab D-4 of the Trustee material.

Ms. Greeley shared that the Division of Advancement and Campaign Update can be found in Tab D-5 of the Trustee material.

Ms. Greeley shared that the Spring Census Report can be found in Tab D-6 of the Trustee material. The Student Body Profile was provided as a handout by Dr. Miller.

Ms. Greeley shared that the Board of Trustee Meetings Schedule can be found in Tab D-7 of the Trustee material.

The Committee has two closed session items to be considered.

REPORT OF FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Chair Roberts recognized Mr. Cooper to give the report of the Finance and Audit Committee. The Finance and Audit Committee considered three action items and received two information items.

Mr. Cooper shared that the Finance and Audit committee heard from Robin Davis of the North Carolina State Auditor's Office. She provided the annual report on WCU's 2022 Financial Statement audit. She confirmed that again this year, WCU received a "clean" audit, with no reportable findings or deficiencies. Robin also added that her office conducted a single audit on Financial Aid with the same clean results. The Finance and Audit committee recommended to the full board the acceptance of the 2022 audited financial statements which can be found in Tab E-2 of the Trustee material. The motion comes from

committee and does not require a second. The proposed 2022 audited Financial Statements were unanimously approved.

Mr. Cooper shared that the Finance and Audit committee heard from Chancellor Brown, Ms. Morgan Burnett, and Mr. Mike Byers and they presented an “All Funds Budget Forecast” for Western Carolina University, which can be found in Tab E-3 of the Trustee material. The All Funds Budget is a requirement by the Board of Governors and is intended to allow WCU’s stakeholders to better understand resource allocation, enhance stewardship, and improve transparency and campus engagement. The Finance and Audit committee recommended to the full board the approval of the All Funds Budget Forecast. The motion comes from committee and does not require a second. The All Funds Budget Forecast was unanimously approved.

Mr. Cooper shared that the Finance and Audit committee heard from Mr. Byers, and he presented a resolution to authorize the refinancing of WCU’s 2013 Limited Obligation Bonds. The full resolution can be found in Tab E-4 of the Trustee material. The Finance and Audit committee recommended to the full board the authorization of the Refinancing of the 2013 Limited Obligation Bonds. The motion comes from committee and does not require a second. The Refinancing of the 2013 Limited Obligation Bonds was unanimously approved.

Mr. Cooper shared that the Capital Projects Update can be found in Tab E-5 of the Trustee material.

Mr. Cooper shared that the Summary of the 2022 Financial Report can be found in Tab E-6 of the Trustee material.

The Committee had no closed session items.

STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT INFORMATION REPORT

Chair Roberts welcomed and thanked Ms. Estefany Gordillo-Rivas for her service as SGA President. Chair Roberts recognized Ms. Gordillo-Rivas to give the SGA Report. Ms. Gordillo-Rivas shared information on the 2023-2024 Elections: Executive Office Candidates and Senator Candidates. She also shared information on Executive Branch, Legislative Branch, and Judicial Branch. Ms. Gordillo-Rivas also provided External Updates and UNC ASG Updates. (SGA REPORT IS IN REPORT MATERIALS ON FILE).

FACULTY SENATE INFORMATION REPORT

Chair Roberts welcomed and thanked Dr. Livsey for her service as Faculty Senate Chair. Chair Roberts asked Dr. Livsey to give the Faculty Senate Report. Dr. Livsey shared faculty feedback with the Trustees. Dr. Livsey shared Ongoing Faculty Senate Agenda Items including Faculty Affairs Council, Academic Policy and Review Council, Collegial Review Council, Standing Committee for Faculty Student Support Fund, Standing Committee on Faculty Salaries, and Rules Committee. Dr. Livsey also shared points of pride for the faculty. (FACULTY SENATE REPORT IS IN REPORT MATERIALS ON FILE).

STAFF SENATE INFORMATION REPORT

Chair Roberts recognized and thanked Dr. Aspinwall for her service as Staff Senate Chair. Chair Roberts asked Dr. Aspinwall to give the Staff Senate Report. Dr. Aspinwall shared her appreciation for the opportunity to the Trustees for providing a report on quarterly activities of the WCU Staff Senate. Dr. Aspinwall thanked the Trustees for their leadership and continued support. Dr. Aspinwall shared Staff Senate Initiatives Update including Investing in Staff, Connecting Across Campus, and Across the System. Dr. Aspinwall also provided Committee Updates including Governance Committee, Human Resources Committee, Scholarship and Professional Development Committee, and Staff Engagement Committee. (STAFF SENATE REPORT IS IN REPORT MATERIALS ON FILE).

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION INFORMATION REPORT

Chair Roberts recognized and thanked President Allison Hinson for her service as Alumni Association President. Chair Roberts asked President Hinson to give the Alumni Association Report. President Hinson gave an update on the WCU Alumni Association Board of Directors, WCU Alumni Family, and Director of Alumni Engagement. (ALUMNI ASSOCIATION REPORT IS IN REPORT MATERIALS ON FILE.)

CLOSED SESSION

Chair Roberts asked for a motion to go into closed session. Ms. Greeley 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)(2), (a)(3), and (a)(6), as described on the March 03, 2023, Board of Trustees of Western Carolina University Closed Session Agenda. The motion was seconded by Mr. Brawley. The motion was unanimously approved by the board.

Chair Roberts asked Chancellor Brown, Mr. Browning, Dr. Starnes, Dr. Wargo, Ms. Raynor, and Mr. Gary to remain for closed session. Discussion followed on the Closed Session agenda items.

RESUMPTION OF OPEN SESSION

Chair Roberts asked for a motion to return to Open Session. Mr. Crocker made the motion to return to Open Session. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hughes. The board unanimously approved to return to Open Session.

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION REGARDING 2022-23 TENURE AND PROMOTION CANDIDATES

Chair Roberts recognized Ms. Boliek for approval of Academic Affairs and Personnel Recommendation Regarding 2022-23 Tenure and Promotion Candidates as discussed in Closed Session, which can be found in TAB C-5 of the Trustee materials. Dr. Starnes presented the candidates for tenure and promotion. The academic Affairs and Personnel Committee recommended to the full board the approval of the 2022-23 Tenure and Promotion Candidates. The motion comes from committee and does not require a second. The 2022-23 Tenure and Promotion Candidates were unanimously approved.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Roberts asked for a motion and a second to adjourn. Motion to adjourn from Mr. Robinson and a second from Mr. Kinney. The motion was unanimously approved by board.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.