

REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
OF WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

September 8, 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 September 8, 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. Haden Boliek, Mr. William Brawley, Ms. Becky Brown, Mr. Joe Crocker, Mr. Dan Field, Ms. Kathy Harrington, Mr. Tim Haskett, Mr. Ken Hughes, Mr. Jake Robinson, and Mr. CJ Mitchell.

**The following members of the Board were absent:** Mr. Casey Cooper (attended via Zoom) and Mr. Bob Roberts (attended via Zoom).

**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; Ms. Ashleigh Simmons, Associate Athletics Director for Student Services; Dr. Cory Causby, Associate Vice Chancellor of Human Resources and Payroll; Ms. Karen Woody, Budget Officer; Ms. Regina Aton, Staff Senator; Ms. Melissa Day, Staff Senator, Staff Senator; and Ms. Jessica Woods, Assistant Secretary to the Board of Trustees.

**WELCOME**

Chair Greeley welcomed Governor Phil Byers, 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.

**SWEARING-IN OF NEW AND REAPPOINTED TRUSTEES**

New Appointments: Mr. Dan Field and Ms. Kathy Harrington were sworn in as new Board of Trustees by Ms. Woods.

Reappointments: Ms. Becky Brown, Ms. Kathy Greeley, Mr. Ken Hughes, and Mr. Tim Haskett were sworn-in to serve a second term on the Board of Trustees by Ms. Woods.

## **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 June 9, 2023, Regular Session, Board of Trustees meeting (TAB B-1) and the minutes of the July 13, 2023, Special Called Meeting of the Board of Trustees (TAB B-2). 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 welcomed the Honorable Kathy Harrington and Mr. Dan Field to their first Board of Trustees meeting. Chancellor Brown shared that the fall semester was off to a very busy start. Chancellor Brown shared that Mr. Craig Fowler, Chief Information Officer, announced his retirement for June 2024. She expressed her appreciation for his wise counsel and advice for WCU and IT. Chancellor Brown shared updates on enrollment, retention. She shared information on WCU’s strategic plan performance metrics and shared that WCU exceeded its goals in five of the six performance funding metrics. She shared that the UNC System Office asked to include 5 stretch goals.

Chancellor Brown provided an update on NC Innovation and its partnership with Western Carolina University. The four primary hubs for this partnership includes Western Carolina University, UNC-Charlotte, North Carolina A&T, and East Carolina University. Chancellor Brown shared that the announcement of the NC Innovation Western Carolina University Hub Director will come in October and their office will be on our main campus here in Cullowhee. Chancellor Brown provided an update on the Webster Village Partnership. She shared that Western Carolina University is partnering with two local non-profit organizations to facilitate a multi-income housing development on over 40 acres near Webster, just downriver from Cullowhee. The project will include 120 apartment units, built and managed by Givens Estates, exclusively for senior citizens and will include 30-35 new homes, for low-to-moderate income families by Mountain Projects. Chancellor Brown shared that WCU plans to partner with a 3rd party developer to construct approximately 60-80 adult professional apartments to accommodate some of the area’s workforce housing needs, which could include WCU faculty and staff, healthcare and education

professionals, first responders or any working professionals in the greater Jackson County area. The complex will include a mix of 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom units.

Chancellor Brown shared that she has initiated the search for the Inclusive Excellence Officer. She shared that Dr. Scott Eldredge, head of the Department of Communication, will be chair of the search committee. Chancellor Brown also shared a Legislative Update and shared that they expect to see a draft budget soon. She shared that she has been having conversations with President Hans and some legislators about the budget process and leadership is reassured that faculty and staff compensation remains a high priority from the General Assembly and feel similarly optimistic regarding Western's priority requests around a new engineering facility and engineering program expansion.

Chancellor Brown shared an update on the Campaign and shared that Western Carolina University launched the new name, branding, key priorities, and goals of the *Fill the Western Sky* comprehensive campaign. She shared that the *Fill the Western Sky* Campaign priorities will seek to secure philanthropic support for the promises that the university has made to its students and to the region it was founded to serve, doing so through three specific areas: academics, engagement, and athletics.

Chancellor Brown shared University Accolades with the board. She highlighted a few things happening at Western Carolina University, including that Western Carolina University was notified of a number of grant awards from Golden Leaf and Dogwood Health Trust; Dr. Kim Winter, College of Education and Allied Professions Dean, was recently accepted into this year's cohort of Leadership North Carolina; and SACSCOC, our regional accreditor, accepted our Fifth-Year Interim Report and the QEP Impact Report without the need for any additional follow-up reporting. Chancellor Brown also shared that Dr. Kata Spasovska, in the College of Arts and Sciences, was notified of a Fulbright Award to begin next year in Kosovo. She shared that Western Carolina University's soccer team was a recipient of the 2022-23 United Soccer Coaches Team Academic Award.

Chancellor Brown thanked the board for their support they provide to Western Carolina University. Chancellor Brown thanked Governor Byers for his attendance. Chancellor Brown shared the first *Fill the Western Sky* campaign video with the board.

#### **COMMENTS FROM BOG LIASION (Governor Phil Byers)**

Governor Byers shared some projects that the Board of Governors were currently working on, including the budget, upcoming 2022 reports for campuses, and Tuition and Fees. He shared his appreciation for the *Fill the Western Sky* Campaign for Western Carolina University.

#### **COMMENTS FROM CHAIR**

Chair Greeley thanked Chancellor Brown and Governor Byers for their Reports. Chair Greeley thanked the board for electing her chair of the board. She thanked Chancellor Brown and her leadership and her Executive Committee for their support. Chair Greeley welcomed the new board members Kathy Harrington and Dan Field. She also welcomed Governor Byers. Chair Greeley also shared that she was hopeful that the new budget will favorably include WCU's legislative priorities. She reminded the board that Ms. Woods emailed the board regarding the upcoming 2023 UNC System BOT Workshop on November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023 on the campus of the University of NC at Greensboro and asked the board to let her know of their attendance no later than October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023. She shared that she was hopeful that all board members would be able to attend the informative workshop.

Chair Greeley shared that she would like to continue one of Mr. Roberts' traditions, to feature a trustee and to share their WCU Story. Chair Greeley shared her Western Story since she was the current chair.

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 in Boston, MA in March 2024. She asked the board to let Ms. Woods know of their attendance by November 30, 2023. \_\_\_\_\_

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.

### **STRATEGIC PLAN ANNUAL REPORT**

Chair Greeley recognized Dr. Metz for the Strategic Plan Annual Report. Dr. Metz provided an overview of the revision of the 2020 Strategic Plan. Dr. Metz shared the 2022-23 Honoring Our Promise Annual Report. He mentioned and discussed the seven Strategic Directions and 100 Strategic Initiatives. He shared the revisions, approved by Executive Council, with the Trustees. The Strategic Plan is in the Trustee materials and will be updated and posted the WCU website.

### **REPORT OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

Chair Greeley recognized Ms. Boliek 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.

Ms. Boliek shared that Dr. Starnes provided the Provost's Report. Provost Starnes noted that a freshman class of nearly 2100, increases in new transfers and new graduate students are key highlights, especially given the historic graduating classes last year. The First-time Full-time Freshmen retention rate is up four percentage points to 75.4%.

Western Carolina University recently got some exciting news from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges – WCU's Fifth-Year Interim Report and the QEP Impact Report were accepted without the need for additional follow-up reporting.

WCU has been selecting interdisciplinary themes for more than a decade. The 2023-2024 campus theme is Community and Belongingness.

Academic Affairs and the Faculty Senate will be forming an AI Working Group to develop resources for faculty and staff to become better acquainted with AI and will recommend policy revisions and potentially recommendations for quality practice to academic leadership and Faculty Senate.

This year the Pride of the Mountains Marching Band presents "Feeling Lucky," a journey through life in four movements: Feeling Good, Feeling Respected, Feeling Driven, and Feeling Lucky. Band members and leadership will also be spending the fall semester preparing to travel to Ireland in March 2024 for the St. Patrick's Day parade.

In light of the new UNC System funding model and its impact on Summer School, Dr. Starnes will be appointing a working group to begin the process of revising our policies and practices to the new model and to adjust summer salaries.

The UNC Board of Governors passed a revised version of Section 400.3.4 of the UNC Policy Manual, Policy on Faculty Workload. This revision is quite detailed and has requirements – including approval of the Board of Trustees – that require some additional administrative practices and processes. Academic Affairs will be convening a group of faculty and leaders to codify these practices in light of this policy change.

Dr. Starnes also provided several good news items regarding faculty, staff, students, programs, new leaders, and initiatives across Academic Affairs.

Ms. Boliek shared that Dr. Causby provided the Committee with 2023-2024 Legislative Increase (LI) and related compensation updates noting that any potential legislative increase (LI) is contingent on the approval of a new state budget. The UNC System Office has partnered with Buck Consulting to complete a comprehensive market analysis and update to current SHRA Salary Ranges. It is anticipated that these ranges will be released in late Fall.

The UNC Omnibus Bill (Senate Bill 195) passed in July 2023 granting authority to move SHRA staff positions that are exempt from federal overtime provisions to EHRA Non-Faculty under the purview of the UNC Board of Governors. Human Resources will work with eligible and interested SHRA staff to convert them to EHRA Non-Faculty.

Ms. Boliek shared that the committee was provided information regarding new hires in TAB C-2 of the Trustee materials; 17 faculty appointments, 22 administrative appointments, and 10 athletic 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 received two discussion items and four information items.

The Legislative Update was provided by Ms. Christy Agner, Deputy Chief of Staff and External Relations Director. Ms. Agner shared an update on the activities to date of the long session of the NC General Assembly including new laws with impact on UNC institutions: UNC Omnibus Bill; 2023 Self-Liquidating Bill (which includes authorization for athletics facility improvements); Nondiscrimination and Dignity in State Work Act (Compelled Speech); Parents' Bill of Rights; School Threat Assessment Teams Act; Sports Wagering Bill; and Fairness in Women's Sports Act. The UNC System Office also assisted with the annual General Assembly appointments bill. The appointments bill contained UNC System institutional trustee appointments from the NC General Assembly, including one reappointment and one new appointment for WCU. Ms. Agner also provided an overview of WCU's legislative budget priorities that are still pending resolution with the passage of a state budget. The University remains optimistic about requests related to compensation increases for faculty and staff as well as funding for the engineering building replacement and engineering program expansion.

Dr. Sam Miller, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, provided the Fall 2023 Census Summary. The Fall 2023 total headcount topped out at 11,628, which was essentially flat over last year. New first-time, full-time freshmen enrollment total was 2,082, an 8.8% increase over last fall. The freshman retention rate increased to 75.48%, a 4% increase over last year. In addition, transfers saw a small uptick as did overall student credit hours.

The committee also received four informational items: University Policy Updates (TAB D-2), Chancellor's Residence Condition Report and Inspection Audit (TAB D-3), Advancement Update (TAB D-4), and Board of Trustees Meetings Schedule (TAB D-5)

## **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 one action item, two discussion items and received one information item.

Mr. Haskett shared that Mr. Byers provided an overview of an easement request to provide a gravel driveway entrance onto private property across the northern edge of WCU property located near the intersection of Airport Road and Little Savannah Road. The Finance and Audit committee recommended to the full Board that they authorize the North Carolina State Property Office to enter into a Disposition by Easement, for the benefit of WC, which can be found in Tab E-2a and E-2b of the Trustee material, and hereby approve the execution, delivery, and consummation of the required documents. The motion comes from committee and does not require a second. The Board authorized the North Carolina State Property Office to enter into a Disposition by Easement, for the benefit of WCU and hereby approved the execution, delivery, and consummation of the required document and it was unanimously approved.

Mr. Haskett shared that the committee heard from Mr. Craig Fowler, along with members of the WCU IT staff, as they presented the Annual IT, Cybersecurity, and Privacy Update. Allison Joseph and Carl Cortright discussed how WCU is using and leveraging data analytics. Summary topics covered were the journey that WCU has been on in this area, the results thus far, and the offerings that are in place. These offerings include Admissions, Enrollment Management, Student Success, Deans dashboard, and Funding modeling. Joel McKenzie, Chief Information Security Officer and Chief Privacy Officer discussed cybersecurity and data privacy. This included risk management processes, security and privacy frameworks, security training, gap assessments, and tabletops. Scott Swartzentruber reviewed the results of the Networking Program Review that was conducted by an external firm. Mr. Fowler followed up with a review of client satisfaction, overall objectives performance, supply chain and staff recruiting concerns, as well as information on the technical currency for learning spaces, the data center, and networking. The complete presentation can be found in Tab E-3 of your trustee materials.

Mr. Haskett shared that Mr. Joe Walker provided a verbal update on the status of many Capital Projects on campus, including: Apodaca Science Building – Hunter Stair and Quad, The “Rocks” (Lower Campus Residence Halls), Moore Building Renovation & Joyner Drive, Athletic Facility Improvements, RAC Basketball Locker Rooms Renovation, Norton Intramural Fields, and Miscellaneous R&R Projects: Killian HVAC, Roof Replacements (Reid, HFR, Bird), HFR 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Renovations, and Ramsey Elevator Replacement.

Mr. Haskett shared that the Internal Audit Update can be found in TAB E-4 and E-4-1 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 External Updates and UNC ASG Updates. (SGA 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 2022-2023 academic year and

upcoming actions for the current academic year including Academic Policy and Review Council, Collegial Review Council, Faculty Affairs Council, and Rules Committee. Dr. Gulley shared the three resolutions that were passed in 2022-23. Dr. Gulley shared information on faculty hiring and retention for Fall 2022 – Fall 2023 and highlights of faculty accomplishments. (FACULTY SENATE 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 the 2022-2023 Staff Senate Annual Report and list of current Staff Senators. He shared the Staff Senate Initiatives for 2023-24 and current focus areas. (STAFF 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. She shared that the Alumni Association held its annual meeting on June 16, 2023 and the board has officially begun operating under their new bylaws. She shared that the Alumni Board recognized and thanked several alumni for their service as they concluded their membership on the board of directors. President Hinson shared that the Alumni board meeting has been rescheduled for Friday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>. (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) as described on the September 8, 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 Greeley asked 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. Brawley. The board unanimously approved to return to Open Session.

#### **FCC REQUIRED BIENNIAL OWNERSHIP REPORT FOR 95.3 WVCU**

Chair Greeley recognized Mr. Shea Browning for the FCC REQUIRED Biennial Ownership Report for 95.3 WVCU. Mr. Browning shared that all Board members need to sign and file the reports.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Greeley asked for a motion and a second to adjourn. Motion to adjourn from Ms. Brown and a second from Mr. Cooper. The motion was unanimously approved by board.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 am.