MEETING OF THE WOU BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING NO. 72
FEBRUARY 25, 2026

PUBLIC MEETING 9:00-3:00 PM
WERNER UNIVERSITY CENTER | COLUMBIA ROOM

MEETING MINUTES

I. CALL-TO-MEETING / ROLL CALL

Vice Chair Kari Nelsestuen called the meeting to order at 9:03 am and asked Secretary Sorce to take roll.

Roll Call:

Chair Angela Fasana	Excused
Vice Chair Kari Nelsestuen	Present
Trustee Jerry Ambris	Present
Trustee Bob Dalton	Present
Trustee Bianca Espain*	Present
Trustee Gayle Evans	Present
Trustee Paige Jackson	Present
Trustee Juan Larios	Present
Trustee Leah Mitchell	Present
Trustee Rey Perez	Excused
Trustee Dana Schowalter	Present
Trustee Kate Schwarzler	Present
Trustee Jim Vu	Excused
Trustee Susanna Winkler	Present
Trustee Mark Zook	Present

*Trustee Espain is an Ex-Officio Member of the Board

II. CHAIR'S WELCOME

Vice Chair Nelsestuen welcomed attendees and confirmed that the meeting was being livestreamed. Instructions for public comment were reviewed, including procedures for both morning and afternoon opportunities.

The Vice Chair reaffirmed the University's mission and values, emphasizing:

- Student-centered education
- Equity and inclusion

- Access and affordability
- Community engagement

Lastly, the Vice Chair acknowledged **Black History Month**, recognizing campus programming, student engagement, and events that highlight cultural awareness and institutional commitment to diversity.

III. PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

President Jesse Peters presented an overview of his comprehensive update, which is available on page three of the docket for review. The President's update began with a broader overview of the higher education landscape in Oregon and Western Oregon University's institutional position. He discussed the financial crisis at Southern Oregon University, including its declaration of financial exigency, declining cash reserves, and reliance on legislative support to maintain operations. He noted that this situation has heightened scrutiny across all public universities and prompted policymakers to pay closer attention to institutional sustainability. In this context, he emphasized that WOU has been proactive in communicating its financial position and distinguishing its circumstances, while remaining engaged in statewide discussions about the future structure and funding of higher education.
The President outlined WOU's financial strategy, including planned budget reductions of approximately $2–3 million in the upcoming fiscal year and additional reductions anticipated in the following biennium to address structural deficits. He noted that leadership is actively developing a budget plan, with a preliminary framework expected by late March, and that engagement with campus stakeholders is ongoing. He also highlighted positive enrollment indicators, including increases in applications, admissions, and campus visits, with projections for a strong incoming freshman class. These trends, along with WOU's designation as a Hispanic-Serving Institution and its high proportion of first-generation students, were cited as evidence of continued alignment with the university's mission and opportunities for future growth.
In addition, President Peters highlighted several institutional achievements and operational priorities. These included successful reaccreditation, continued progress on Title III grant initiatives supporting student success, and advancements in technology modernization, cybersecurity, and digital learning, including emerging work in artificial intelligence. He also noted the ongoing success of the Wolves Rising fundraising campaign and the important role of student support services such as Abby's House in addressing basic needs. He concluded by emphasizing the importance of maintaining momentum, balancing fiscal responsibility with strategic investment, and continuing to position WOU as a mission-driven institution serving students and the region.
After the President's update, the board had a discussion about the process and timeline for making the budget reductions and expressed a desire for transparent communication on the issue. The President reaffirmed that there where be an update in late March with preliminary decisions and that there will be continued engagement with campus stakeholders on these decisions.

IV. STAKEHOLDER UPDATES

a. SHARED GOVERNANCE

i. ASWOU | Morgan Pemberton

The ASWOU President, Morgan Pemberton, provided a detailed report on student engagement, priorities, and campus climate.

Student Engagement and Feedback:
ASWOU leadership reported strong student participation in recent engagement opportunities, including town halls and campus conversations with university leadership. These forums have allowed students to share perspectives on institutional decisions, campus climate, and student needs.

Students expressed appreciation for increased communication from the administration, particularly regarding complex and sensitive issues such as campus policy discussions and broader societal topics. These efforts were noted as helping students feel more informed and included in institutional dialogue.

Student Sentiment and Climate:
Despite increased engagement opportunities, ASWOU reported that many students continue to feel:

- Uncertainty regarding institutional decisions
- Limited ability to influence outcomes
- A desire for stronger connection to decision-making processes

Incidental Fee Committee (IFC):
ASWOU reported that the IFC is currently evaluating budget decisions and is considering:

- **Maintaining existing student services**
- **Increasing student fees** to sustain service levels

Final IFC recommendations are still pending.

Student Needs and Priorities:
Feedback gathered from students identified several recurring themes:

- Interest in **facility improvements and infrastructure upgrades**
- Continued emphasis on **affordability and access to services**
- Desire for enhanced **communication and transparency**

ii. Faculty Senate | Dr. Michael Baltzley

Dr. Michael Baltzley delivered the Faculty Senate Report. Their full report can be reviewed on Page 18 of the docket. Dr. Baltzley reported that faculty remain deeply engaged in supporting student success through instruction, advising, research, and experiential learning, particularly given Western Oregon University's mission to serve a high proportion of first-generation and Pell-eligible students. Faculty emphasized the importance of using data to evaluate outcomes, while noting that institutional performance metrics must be interpreted within the appropriate mission-driven context. They highlighted the need for accurate data reporting and alignment, particularly with external entities such as the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC).

Faculty Senate also raised several operational and structural concerns affecting academic effectiveness, including limited progress on the Honors Program, gaps in graduate program leadership, and ongoing challenges with registration and advising systems. Additional concerns included the accuracy of external program data and a perceived lack of institutional understanding of academic programs in decision-making processes. Faculty underscored that these issues are closely tied to budget and strategic planning and reiterated the importance of shared governance and faculty involvement in shaping institutional priorities.

iii. Staff Senate | Rip Horsey

Rip Horsey delivered the Staff Senate Update. Their full report can be found on page 21 of the docket for review. Staff Senate President Horsey reported on campus climate, employee engagement, and internal communication challenges. Staff emphasized their critical role in supporting student success, noting that many students rely on relationships with staff for guidance and assistance. While there is a strong commitment to students, Staff Senate identified ongoing concerns with communication across units and the flow of information, particularly during periods of institutional change. Staff also highlighted the need for more effective feedback mechanisms, noting that some employees are hesitant to share input due to cultural or structural barriers.

They also shared updates on initiatives to strengthen engagement and support across campus. These include professional development opportunities, continued participation in campus-wide discussions, and the development of a Staff-to-Student Scholarship program, which encourages staff contributions to directly support students. Staff leaders reiterated their commitment to collaboration with university leadership and shared governance bodies, while emphasizing the importance of improving transparency, communication, and inclusion in institutional decision-making processes.

b. UNION

i. SEIU | Jackson Stalley

Jackson Stalley delivered the report on behalf of WOU-082 (SEIU Classified Staff). WOU-082's update emphasized the essential role classified employees play in daily university operations and direct student support. Classified staff were described as front-line contributors who ensure continuity of services across academic and administrative functions, often serving as key points of contact for students. The report highlighted a long-term decline in classified staff capacity—approximately a one-third reduction in FTE since 2011—which has increased workload pressures and raised concerns about the sustainability of current service levels.

The update also noted that collective bargaining for classified staff continues at the statewide level across Oregon's public universities. While acknowledging improvements in campus culture and communication in recent years, the representative emphasized the need for ongoing transparency, collaboration, and regular assessment of workplace climate. The union reaffirmed its commitment to working constructively with university leadership while advocating for adequate staffing levels, equitable compensation, and sustainable working conditions that support both employees and student success.

ii. WOUFT | Dr. Benjamin Coté

Dr. Benjamin Coté delivered the WOUFT report. Dr. Coté highlighted faculty workforce trends and ongoing collective bargaining efforts, noting continued declines in overall faculty numbers, particularly among tenure-track positions. Union leadership emphasized that these reductions have implications for instructional capacity, advising load, and the long-term stability of academic programs. Faculty are balancing multiple responsibilities—including teaching, student support, shared governance, and program development—while navigating these constraints, reinforcing concerns about workload and institutional capacity.

The union also provided an update on current economic reopener negotiations, which are focused on compensation and faculty salary structures. WOUFT indicated that negotiations are being conducted using an interest-based approach to support collaborative problem-solving. The report highlighted continued faculty engagement in broader higher education advocacy efforts, particularly around state funding and policy issues, and reaffirmed the union's commitment to working with university leadership to support faculty success, student outcomes, and institutional

V. **CONSENT AGENDA** (Appendix A)

a. November 18-19, 2025 Meeting Minutes:

b. FY26 Management Report (As of December 31, 2025)

c. FY 25 External Financial Statements Audit

Vice Chair Nelsestuen presented the consent agenda, as listed in the Docket, including approval of the November 18-19, 2025, Meeting Minutes and the FY 26 Management Report (As of December 31, 2025), and the FY 2025 External Financial Statement Audit. Secretary Sorce also noted that Kristen Diggs from WOU's External Audit Firm, Elide Bailey, was also present virtually in case Trustees had any questions. Trustee Ambris moved to approve the consent agenda. Trustee Larios seconded the motion. There was no additional discussion

Roll Call:

Chair Angela Fasana	Excused
Vice-Chair Kari Nelsestuen	Aye
Trustee Jerry Ambris	Aye
Trustee Bob Dalton	Aye
Trustee Gayle Evans	Aye
Trustee Juan Larios	Aye
Trustee Paige Jackson	Aye
Trustee Leah Mitchell	Aye
Trustee Rey Perez	Excused
Trustee Dana Schowalter	Aye
Trustee Kate Schwarzler	Aye
Trustee Jim Vu	Excused
Trustee Susanna Winkler	Aye
Trustee Mark Zook	Aye

Motion passed 11-0-0

VI. FIRST PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was provided

VII. STAKEHOLDER UPDATES

a. **WOU FOUNDATION REPORT |** Katie Wojke, Vice President for Advancement

Vice President for Advancement, Katie Wojke provided an update on the Western Oregon University Foundation. VP Wojke's full report is available in Appendix B of the docket for review. VPFA Wojke highlighted continued momentum in fundraising and campaign progress. As of the most recent reporting period, the university has raised approximately $1.88 million in the current fiscal year, bringing the overall campaign total to more than $20.8 million. She noted particular strength in the scholarship pillar, supported by a

combination of new gifts, renewals, and estate commitments. Additional priorities include continued fundraising for Wolves Athletics, especially the turf project, and future integration of the Data Center into campaign matching opportunities. VP Wojke also outlined plans for Giving Day, which has been moved to April to increase participation, along with a new incentive structure to encourage donor engagement.
VP Wojke emphasized expanded efforts in alumni relations, events, and alignment with external funding. Signature events such as the Wolves Athletic Auction, Scholarship Reception, and Distinguished Alumni Awards are being used to deepen donor engagement and connect supporters with student impact. She also noted the integration of sponsored projects and grant activity within advancement operations to better align philanthropic and external funding strategies, which has already contributed significant grant revenue. Additionally, she highlighted the continued growth of the Smith Fine Arts Series and broader community programming, while noting that facility limitations in Rice Auditorium continue to constrain expansion. Overall, the Foundation's work reflects a coordinated strategy to strengthen fundraising, community engagement, and long-term institutional support.

b. **LEGISLATIVE REPORT |** Evan Sorce, Executive Director for Government Relations

Executive Director of Government Relations and Secretary to the Board of Trustees, Evan Sorce provided an update on the legislative environment, noting that the current session remains highly fluid with ongoing budget uncertainty. The state continues to face a projected deficit, and public universities remain at risk of reductions to the Public University Support Fund (PUSF), depending on revenue outcomes and legislative decisions. He highlighted several policy issues affecting higher education, including legislation related to immigration notification requirements and public safety identification, as well as continued implementation of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) study examining system structure and potential efficiencies. He emphasized that WOU has been actively engaged in shaping these conversations to mitigate institutional risk and ensure the university's perspective is represented.

Sorce also provided updates on advocacy and funding efforts, noting strong participation in University Day at the Capitol, where approximately 60 WOU students, staff and stakeholders engaged directly with legislators. He noted that this visibility has strengthened relationships and reinforced WOU's presence in Salem. He reported that WOU has secured $250,000 in federal funding for the Data Center project and has submitted additional requests for capital support, including funding for Rice Auditorium renovations. He also discussed emerging policy debates, including proposals for community college baccalaureate programs and broader workforce and teacher preparation issues. Overall, he emphasized the importance of continued advocacy, relationship-building, and positioning WOU as a critical investment for the state's economic development and student success.

VIII. ACADEMIC, STUDENT & ATHLETIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE (ASAAC)

a. Committee Chair Report | Trustee Leah Mitchell

The Academic, Student, and Athletic Affairs Committee (ASAAC) Chair, Leah Mitchell, gives the ASAAC report. Trustee Mitchell updated on a range of initiatives supporting student success, academic innovation, and campus engagement. The committee received a detailed presentation on digital accessibility efforts, highlighting the university's work to improve access across academic and administrative functions. Student affairs updates included identifying the Heritage Residence Hall roof as a critical deferred-maintenance need and successfully transitioning the Freedom Center into the Mosaic Center, which has enhanced student belonging and engagement. The committee also recognized the "Boxes of Hope" initiative, through which WOU students supported 178 foster youth in the region, demonstrating strong community impact.

Academic and athletic updates reflected continued institutional progress. The committee noted ongoing implementation of the Title III grant, including multiple active initiatives and required reporting, as well as a $1.12 million award to the Center for Early Learning Support and Innovation to strengthen early childhood systems statewide. The Center for Teaching and Learning continues to expand work in online instruction, digital accessibility, and artificial intelligence, including the launch of WOU's first AI forum. In athletics, the committee highlighted the significant role of student-athletes in campus life, noting that approximately one in nine students participates in athletics, with strong academic performance (3.1 average GPA and 187 honor roll student-athletes) and continued contributions to campus engagement, diversity, and community visibility.

IX. DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION & ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE (DEIAC)

a. Committee Chair Report | Trustee Jerry Ambris

The Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Committee (DEIAC) Chair, Trustee Ambris gave an update for the DEIAC. Chair Ambris reported on progress toward strengthening institutional compliance, policy development, and campus climate initiatives. A primary focus was the implementation of the university's Digital Accessibility Policy, which was adopted in October 2025 and requires full compliance by April 2026. The committee noted that campus-wide training began in January and is ongoing to ensure readiness. Additional policy work includes the development of an all-user restroom policy through the General Counsel's Office in collaboration with campus partners. The committee also highlighted continued efforts to modernize systems and improve accessibility, including the rollout of updated payment technologies to better support students.

DEIAC also emphasized ongoing work to enhance campus climate and student support. This includes "Know Your Rights" trainings and expanded resources for undocumented and DACA students, as well as continued collaboration with ASWOU, Faculty Senate, and Staff Senate to improve communication and engagement across campus. The committee shared updates on upcoming programming designed to support inclusion and community building, including Celebrate Your True Self Visit Day, Hispanic-Serving Institution Summit Week, and the Cesar Chavez Leadership Conference. Overall, the committee's work reflects a coordinated effort to advance equity, improve access, and foster a more inclusive campus environment.

X. EXECUTIVE, GOVERNANCE & TRUSTEESHIP COMMITTEE (EGTC)

a. Committee Chair Report | Chair Angela Fasana

Vice Chair Kari Nelsestuen gave the Executive, Governance, and Trusteeship Committee (EGTC) update. Vice Chair Nelsestuen reported on its February meeting, which focused on governance practices, audit oversight, and Board processes. The committee reviewed updates to internal audit standards driven by national-level changes and considered a revised Internal Audit Charter developed to align with those standards. These updates also necessitate corresponding revisions to the EGTC charter and the Board's broader committee structure and governing documents. Given the volume and technical nature of the changes, the committee elected to defer formal action to a future meeting to allow trustees additional time for review and consideration.

The committee also received updates from General Counsel on legal and governance matters, including progress on the President's 360-degree evaluation process, which is currently in the survey phase. Trustees were strongly encouraged to participate in the evaluation to ensure a robust and representative review. The Board Secretary provided additional updates, including governance and legislative matters. Overall, the committee emphasized the importance of maintaining strong governance practices, ensuring compliance with evolving standards, and supporting effective Board oversight and evaluation processes.

XI. LUNCH

The board recessed at approximately 11:50 for lunch with student leaders. The lunch was designed to allow for candidate conversation between the Trustees and the students. The meeting was scheduled to reconvene at 1 pm.

Vice-Chair Nelsestuen Reconvened to meeting at

XII. FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE (FAC)

a. Committee Chair Report | Trustee Gayle Evans

The Finance and Administration Committee (FAC) Chair, Trustee Gayle Evans, provided an update on the university's financial position, budget planning process, and key operational priorities. The committee discussed the ongoing need to address structural budget challenges, aligning with the President's projection of $2–3 million in reductions for the upcoming fiscal year and additional reductions in the following biennium. Members emphasized the importance of developing a balanced approach that maintains core academic and student services while ensuring long-term financial sustainability. The committee also reviewed revenue and expenditure trends in the context of enrollment projections and state funding uncertainty, underscoring the need for continued fiscal discipline and proactive planning.

The committee also focused on capital and operational priorities, including significant deferred maintenance needs and major project planning. Particular attention was given to the Heritage Residence Hall roof replacement and the Campus Recreation turf replacement, both of which were advanced for Board approval due to safety, lifecycle, and student experience considerations. In addition, the committee discussed broader capital investments, such as the Data Center and Rice Auditorium renovations, as well as ongoing efforts to improve operational efficiency and align the financial strategy with advancement and government relations initiatives. Overall, the FAC emphasized the importance of strategic investment, careful prioritization, and coordinated planning to support the university's mission and long-term stability.

b. Committee Recommendations for Board Discussion/Action

i. <u>Approval of Heritage Hall Building Roof Renovation Resolution</u>

Vice Chair Nelsestuen called Vice President for Finance and Administration Kwabena Boakye and Director of University Housing Lindsey Gibson to provide staff with an update on this agenda item. The full report is available on page 23 of the docket for review. Staff discussed the proposed Heritage Hall roof renovation as a critical deferred-maintenance project necessary to protect student housing infrastructure and prevent further deterioration of the facility. Trustees emphasized the urgency of addressing the aging roof, noting the risks of water intrusion, potential damage to the building, and impacts on student safety and living conditions. The project was framed as a necessary investment to preserve university assets and avoid more costly repairs in the future.

During the discussion, the Board also considered the project's alignment with broader capital planning priorities and financial constraints. Trustees acknowledged the need to balance immediate infrastructure needs with long-term fiscal sustainability, while recognizing that delaying the project would increase both risk and cost. Overall, the discussion reflected consensus that the renovation was essential to maintaining safe, functional housing and supporting the student experience.

Trustee Ambris moved, and Trustee Larios seconded to approve the Heritage Hall Building Roof Renovation Resolution. There was no additional discussion.

Roll Call:

Chair Angela Fasana	Excused
Vice-Chair Kari Nelsestuen	Aye
Trustee Jerry Ambris	Aye
Trustee Bob Dalton	Aye
Trustee Gayle Evans	Aye
Trustee Juan Larios	Aye
Trustee Paige Jackson	Aye
Trustee Leah Mitchell	Aye
Trustee Rey Perez	Excused
Trustee Dana Schowalter	Aye
Trustee Kate Schwarzler	Aye
Trustee Jim Vu	Excused
Trustee Susanna Winkler	Aye
Truste Mark Zook	Aye

Motion passed 11-0-0

ii. Approval of Campus Recreation Turf Field Replacement Resolution
Vice-Chair Nelsestuen invited Executive Director of Intercollegiate Athletics, Randi Lydum, and the Director of Campus Recreation, Rip Horsey, to present the staff update to the board. The complete report is available on page 26 for review. Staff discussed the Campus Recreation turf field replacement as a necessary lifecycle project to maintain a safe and functional recreational space for students and campus users. Trustees noted the field's high utilization for intramural sports, student activities, and broader campus programming, emphasizing its importance to student engagement, wellness, and the overall campus experience. The condition of the existing turf was identified as a concern, with replacement needed to ensure safety and continued usability.

The discussion also highlighted the project's alignment with student success priorities and long-term facilities planning. Trustees acknowledged the need to invest in recreational infrastructure that supports both physical well-being and community building, while balancing financial considerations. Overall, there was broad agreement that replacing the turf field was a necessary and timely investment to sustain a high-quality student experience.
Trustee Ambris moved to approve, and Trustee Larios seconded the motion to approve the Campus Recreation Turf Field Replacement Resolution. There was no additional discussion.

Roll Call:

Chair Angela Fasana	Excused
Vice-Chair Kari NelsestuenAye	
Trustee Jerry Ambris	Aye
Trustee Bob Dalton	Aye
Trustee Gayle Evans	Aye
Trustee Juan Larios	Aye
Trustee Paige Jackson	Aye
Trustee Leah Mitchell	Aye
Trustee Rey Perez	Excused
Trustee Dana Schowalter	Aye
Trustee Kate Schwarzler	Aye
Trustee Jim Vu	Excused
Trustee Susanna Winkler	Aye
Truste Mark Zook	Aye

Motion passed 11-0-0

XIII. SECOND PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment

XIV. ANNOUNCEMENTS/COMMENTS

President Peters wanted to take a moment to thank the Trustees for their active and engaged involvement in the University. It is not something that every university is lucky to have.

Secretary Sorce wanted to remind the Trustees to complete the President's Evaluation; most had not yet filled out the survey.

Reminder that there will be a Public Meetings Law training on April 21st at 10 am.

XV. ADJOURNMENT:

Before Vice-Chair Nelsestuen adjourned the public meeting, the Vice-Chair announced that the board was about to enter executive session to discuss pending litigation. Pursuant to ORS 192.660(h) (consult with counsel concerning the legal rights and duties of a public body with regard to current legislation). Representatives of institutionalized news media are permitted to attend under ORS 192.660(4) on the condition that matters discussed in the executive session remain undisclosed. Pursuant to ORS 192.660(6), no final action may be, or will be, taken in executive session.

Vice-Chair Nelsestuen has asked the following staff members to attend the executive session:

- Craig Ashford
- Nathan Sauer
- Ryan McGlinchey
- Cameron Mortensen
- Randi Lydum
- Desiree Noah
- Evan Sorce

Vice Chair Nelsestuen adjourned the public meeting at 1:49 pm

XVI. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

The Board went into executive session to discuss pending litigation. Pursuant to ORS 192.660(h) (consult with counsel concerning the legal rights and duties of a public body with regard to current legislation). No decision was made and executive session was adjourned.