



**WOU Board of Trustees Retreat  
Meeting No. 42—September 10, 2021  
8:30 AM-4:00 PM**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**I. CALL-TO-MEETING/ROLL CALL**

Chair Betty Komp called the meeting to order at 8:35 AM and asked Secretary Hagemann to take roll. The following trustees were present:

Zellee Allen (virtual)  
Jerry Ambris  
Jaime Arredondo (arrived at 8:50 AM)  
Danielle Campbell  
Susan Castillo  
Gayle Evans (arrived at 8:47 AM)  
David Foster (virtual)  
Jay Kenton  
Betty Komp  
Cec Koontz  
Malissa Larson  
Doug Morse

The following trustees were absent:

Linda Herrera  
Leah Mitchell

**II. ICE BREAKER/INTRODUCTIONS**

At the outset of the retreat, Chair Komp recognized Mike Morgan from the WOU Foundation, CM Hall as a member of the Alumni Association Board, and Dave McDonald as the retreat facilitator. Komp turned to McDonald to offer announcements and information about the day's activities and presentations. McDonald introduced Dr. Bridget Burns from the Education Innovation Alliance as the keynote speaker. McDonald asked the retreat participants—including trustees and cabinet members—to introduce themselves for the group.

**III. ONE-YEAR GOALS: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES—PRESIDENT KENTON**

Chair Komp recognized Interim President Dr. Jay Kenton for a presentation on his one-year goals and the opportunities and challenges facing the university. Kenton directed



retreat participants to his PowerPoint presentation that was included in the written docket materials. He outlined his 2021-2022 goals as (1) enrollment and student success, (2) diversity, equity and inclusion and (3) restructuring and cost control. Kenton shared that he approaches change with a portfolio approach and observed that there was not one single solution that would assist the university, but, the focus was mostly about enrollment, including recruitment, retention, persistence, and graduation. He noted that some initiatives might pay off big, and others might fail, but that the institution that would move forward as a result of multiple, simultaneous efforts.

Kenton described to the retreat participants that he would approach the coming year by creating a buzz and conveying a clear signal to campus that things will be different and decisions will be made. He stressed that morale needed to be improved and that, under his leadership, he would talk and listen to everyone and treat the campus community with respect.

Kenton turned to the challenges confronting WOU. He outlined the following challenges:

- Enrollment and finances
- Compensation challenges
- Curriculum challenges
- Aging campus with growing deferred maintenance
- Limited staffing due to cuts with critical shortages in certain areas
- First-generation students and transfer students need added support
- Perceived lack of decisiveness
- Lack of accountability
- Lower retention and graduation rates
- Arbitration and grievance issues
- No true champions in the legislature today
- Employee diversity does not match student diversity



In addition to the challenges, however, Kenton also described the opportunities that WOU could seize:

- Top teacher education university in Oregon
- Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) efforts
- WOU:Salem
- Growing graduate programs with new authority for professional doctorates
- Nationally renowned programs in ASL, D-B, and Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing fields
- Criminal justice expansion in social justice and justice studies
- New, more flexible general education requirements
- Quality of people at the university
- Beauty and location of campus
- Growing sponsored projects
- Partnerships with community colleges, Willamette Promise, TSPC, and Willamette
- Medical partnerships
- Comprehensive campaign and 170th anniversary celebration
- Convergence and momentum of will on DEI efforts
- Experienced trustees with key contacts
- Addition of men's soccer
- Capital funding for capital renewal and the Student Success Center

After the presentation of the opportunities and challenges facing the university, Kenton described specific efforts in enrollment management. He outlined the new recruitment goals, the impact of COVID on recruitment and admission activities, greater outreach to the Latinx community, improved marketing and communication efforts, a partnership with EAB to enhance the degree completion and graduate markets, strategic use of



financial aid and the involvement and participation of everyone on campus to enhance enrollment in all of its dimensions.

Kenton continued with the multi-dimensional approach to enrollment with university's efforts in Salem, state partnerships, new programs to attract students, investment in new faculty in key programs, the addition of men's soccer, and growth in sponsored projects.

In addition to enrollment, Kenton described focus on DEI initiatives as a key goal for the upcoming year. He shared the following dimensions of the university's DEI work:

- Recruitment of the first Executive Director DEI
- Creation of the Freedom Center
- Required cultural competence training
- Work in Human Resources to reach diverse populations for positions
- Budget incentives
- Inclusion of spaces and services for underserved communities in the new Student Success Center

Kenton also shared his ideas regarding restructuring and cost control—his third goal for the upcoming academic year:

- Move of Human Resources to Finance & Administration
- Separation of Capital Construction and Planning from Facilities
- Move web designer from UCS to MARCOM
- Political work with the Governor and Legislature
- Increase institutional research capacity
- Introduction of web-time entry
- Transition to Banner financial aid
- User support position for Client Relationship Management



Kenton concluded his presentation with a brief description of the Student Success Center renovation and the upcoming comprehensive campaign.

After Kenton's presentation, McDonald called for a break and reorganized the retreat's agenda to hear from Dr. Burns on the future of higher education after the break.

#### **IV. BREAK**

#### **V. THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION: DR. BRIDGET BURNS**

Burns joined the retreat to offer a national perspective on the future of higher education. She shared her experience as a student trustee on the State Board of Higher Education and the consequential responsibilities of trustees that serve on university boards.

Burns stressed that future students will make decisions primarily based on learning style. She noted that the shift to on-line learning during the pandemic might make this transition easier, but students would insist on experienced based on how they learn. Burns framed her presentation with her personal story with higher education during her upbringing in rural Montana and how her father's need to return to school shaped her approach to college. She shared the story to convey how universities and boards should retool how they reach out to learners and that it would be important to emphasize retraining and re-educating students and learners based on their needs and the demands of the economy.

After her story, Burns emphasized that higher education was not designed around students and urged the Board to consider this notion as it searched for its next president. She noted that universities were organized about the intellectual capital of faculty and not the needs of students. Burns observed that universities spend much time satisfying external requests at the expenses of students and when universities and decision-makers realize the "design flaw" in how universities are organized, the focus on students will be much easier to accomplish as universities turn to redesign. She shared "every system is perfectly designed to get the results it gets." Burns stressed that the phenomenon to replicate structures at other institutions and excessive deference to tradition are also obstacles to effective redesign of the university.

Burns offered some trends to consider as the university charts its future. First, we know that higher education matters to the economy. Burns noted that there are more people with some college and no degree than those with a college degree. To that point, Burns observed that the nation needs more degrees. Second, growing low-income populations will impact how colleges and universities need to respond to student needs. She shared data about the achievement gap based on income highlights the issue



facing universities into the future. Third, she noted that, other than elite institutions, most sectors are experiencing an enrollment decline. Fourth, Burns described the change in demographics and decline in college-going students generally.

After highlights some of the trends facing higher education, Burns turned to describing the themes universities should consider as they chart their future. Some of the trending pressures include: financial sustainability, mergers/closures, declining enrollment, graduate school shrinkage, political pressure, shifting target populations, demographic changes, crowded on-line learning space, shifting focus on completion, growing public skepticism, college to career redesign, and the future of work.

Burns, after reviewing the trending pressures facing higher education, observed some of the innovations that are trending. They include: adult learner focus, student unit record data, income share agreements, unbundling and badging, employer partnerships, open education resources, quality online learning, college to career innovation, adaptive learning, chatbots, predictive analytics, and proactive advising. With the trending pressures and innovations, Burns stressed the future of higher education will involve incorporating universal learning into the trajectory of how the universities offer outreach to learners. Burns used the presentation to highlight some themes that might assist the Board with its presidential search. She shared that a vision should be compelling and clear, stable and focused governance should be based in trust and the boundaries and roles should be clear, institutional stability should be evident, the search committee must have clarity on a shared vision and their role in the process, and the Board must understand the differences between signals and noise and what it can ignore.

McDonald asked the group for questions. Trustee Castillo asked for advice about how to counter the impulse to tackle these persistent trends with the notion that we will do this “the Oregon Way.” Komp echoed Burns’ description of WOU’s presidential search committee and stressed her interest in a shared vision across the committee to find WOU’s next leader. Koontz observed that some of the threats that stand out are the increased skepticism about the value of higher education and the partisanship. Burns reiterated the notion that the Board—in the face of the trending pressures, innovations, and threats—needed to have the new president’s back because of the difficulty of the position.

#### **IV. DISCUSSION: PRESIDENTIAL SKILLS, TRAITS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

After Burns’ presentation, McDonald turned the retreat participants to a discussion on presidential skills, traits and characteristics the community would like to see in the university’s next president. McDonald started with asking trustees and participants to



brainstorm presidential attributes. The retreat participants offered the following list of attributes:

- Entrepreneurial spirit
- Honest transparency
- Visionary
- Partner
- Communicator
- Student-oriented
- Makes hard decisions
- Understands equity
- Inspirational
- Trust-Builder
- Diverse Representation (how would this be measured/demonstrated)
- Not afraid to raise funds
- Leader/Motivator
- Fortitude
- Personable
- Collaborator
- Able to handle the stress of the position
- Resilient
- Strategic manager
- Ethical



- Courageous
- Student Interests First
- Visionary Thinker
- Innovative Programming
- Thinking Outside of the Box
- Creative
- Enthusiastic
- Resourceful
- Use of Privilege to Advance Equity

After the creation of the list, McDonald asked retreat participants to identify one of the attributes that was indispensable:

- Students Interest First (2)
- Diverse Representation (2)
- Partner (2)
- Inspirational
- Strategic Manager
- Honest Transparency (3)
- Ethical (2)
- Resilient
- Make Hard Decisions

Trustee Evans wanted to discuss the concept of “diverse representation” to ensure that the board and the university would be able to support the new president. She





challenged the board to embrace “diverse representation” from a “multicultural experiences” perspective. Evans noted that she was uncomfortable with the appearance approach to diverse representation and wished the board to focus on experiences. CM Hall cautioned the group against diverse representation as a checkbox. Hall emphasized the concept of “understanding equity.” Larson reiterated the notion that active work in ensuring everyone is included is important. Burns emphasized that these are concepts that today’s students demand.

After the brief discussion on “diverse representation,” McDonald asked the retreat group to look at the revised list of attributes and narrow it down to the single attribute that was most important for the new president to possess:

- Honest Transparency (5)
- Inspirational (2)
- Make Hard Decisions
- Diverse Representation/Demonstrable Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion (3)
- Students Interests First (3)

With the revised list of attributes, McDonald challenged small group breakouts to convene and discuss—in the context of the morning’s deliberations—where WOU should go.

## **VII. SMALL GROUP BREAKOUTS: WOU AND THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

The retreat participants broke into small groups to discuss the future of higher education and WOU’s path into the future.

## **VIII. BREAKOUT SESSION REPORTS**

McDonald asked the groups to report out to all of the retreat participants about their deliberations. Trustee Arredondo emphasized changing demographics, expansion for the non-traditional learners, listening to marginalized voices, a curriculum that speaks to the learners of the future, listening to the needs of community employers, and the concept of micro-credentials. McDonald turned to Trustee Evans for another report out. She shared the following concepts for the future: financial stability, good reputation, redesign processes and practices focused on students, improved enrollment, development of student-focused metrics, introduction of a “portfolio” approach to



student success. Winningham reported out for the final break-out group. He discussed diversity and inclusion, the pursuit of HSI status, focus on the non-traditional student, services and programs that future learners need to succeed, responding to the regional workforce needs, the necessity of partnerships, and the evolution of high-impact practices

## **IX. FALL 2021 UPDATE—DAVE MCDONALD**

After the breakout sessions, McDonald offered the group a brief COVID-19 update. McDonald described the bi-weekly committee meeting to discuss COVID-19 strategies and changes. He noted that the university also participates in a group of COVID coordinators from all seven public universities and a community group. McDonald reviewed a COVID-19 safety checklist and shared various resources with the group. Winningham discussed course modalities and the strategies the university undertook in the classroom prior to the first day of classes for fall term.

## **XII. BOARD POLICIES: BEST PRACTICES & BOARD STATEMENTS—RYAN HAGEMANN**

McDonald recognized Hagemann to offer a brief overview of the Board's policy statements. Hagemann walked the Board through its website, including where dockets are posted, trustee emails were located, and information on committees could be located. Hagemann specifically noted that individual trustee email addresses were posted on the website as well. In approaching the Board's policy statement, Hagemann reviewed the ten habits of highly effective boards from the Association of Governing Boards and how the Board's policy statements were designed to echo those habits. The habits include:

- Creates a culture of inclusion
- Uphold basic fiduciary principles
- Cultivate a healthy relationship with the president
- Select an effective board chair
- Establish an effective governance committee
- Delegate appropriate decision-making authority for committees
- Consider strategic risk factors



- Provide appropriate oversight of academic quality
- Develop a renewed commitment to shared governance
- Focus on accountability

With outlining the university's policy structure, including board statements, Hagemann reviewed two of the AGB habits and how various university policy statements echoed that habit. For example, for the habit "cultivate a healthy relationship with the president," the Board's bylaws, the Board Statement on the Delegation of Authority, the Board Resolution on Shared Governance, and the Board Statement on the Performance Evaluation of the President all echo and reiterate the Board's commitment to the "habit" of cultivating a healthy relationship with the president. Hagemann continued with the "habit" of "developing a renewed commitment to shared governance" by reviewing the Board Resolution on Shared Governance and the Board Statement on the Conduct of Public Meetings. Hagemann discussed continuous improvement in committees by describing how each of the Board's standing committees contribute to each of the AGB habits.

### **XIII. COMMITTEE BREAKOUTS: 2021-22 WORKPLANS**

McDonald asked trustees to break into their respective committees to discuss what the committees would like to accomplish over the coming academic year. Each of the committees broke out into small groups, accompanied by cabinet members and staff assigned to each standing committee.

### **XIV. COMMITTEE WORKPLAN REPORTS, CREATE BOARD WORKPLAN & 2021-22 GOALS**

After the committee breakouts, McDonald asked each committee to report out to the full group. Koontz spoke for the Finance & Administration Committee. She described the cyclical budget and audit requirements, COVID-19 requirements, human resources policy development, work with technology, and discussion of public safety. Arredondo and Winningham reported out on the Academic and Student Affairs Committee. Winningham shared the following ASAC topics with the group: a "lessons learned from COVID" showcase, partnerships, DEI initiatives, and mental health. Komp reported out the following EGTC topics for the following year: appointment and on-boarding of the new president, support of the interim president, policy changes, and board vacancies.

To conclude the retreat, McDonald offered a summary of the day and asked each trustee if they wanted to offer any final comments.



**XV. ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Komp adjourned the meeting at 3:51 PM with a quorum of the Board.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ryan James Hagemann".

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RYAN JAMES HAGEMANN  
Secretary to the Board of Trustees