

Proposed Meeting Minutes

September 11, 2025

The Western Michigan University Board of Trustees (BOT) Formal Session was called to order by Chair Shelly Edgerton at 12:02PM on *Thursday, September 11, 2025*.

The meeting was conducted in person in the Heritage Hall Ballroom and streamed live through the BOT website. Prior marketing encouraged the public to engage and those interested in providing comment were asked to notify Board Secretary Kahler Schuemann by 5PM, *Wednesday, September 10, 2025*.

Presiding in person were Chair Shelly Edgerton, Vice Chair Alan Turfe, Trustees Jon Hoadley, Lisa Williams, and Kara Wood. Trustee Kelly Burris participated virtually and Trustees Lynn Chen-Zhang and James Liggins Jr made prior arrangement to be absent.

A motion to accept the *September 11, 2025 BOT agenda* was made by Trustee Kara Wood with a second by Trustee Jon Hoadley. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion to accept the minutes as exhibited from the *June 26, 2025 BOT Meeting* was again made by Trustee Kara Wood with a second by Trustee Jon Hoadley, and passed with full support of the voting members.

Remarks were provided by Chair Shelly Edgerton – *Attachment A*, followed by remarks from President Russ Kavalhuna – *Attachment B*.

Faculty Senate President Amy Naugle, Western Student Association President Luke Kritzman, and Graduate Student Association President Claire Binford provided comments regarding their respective areas and outlined ongoing activities and initiatives relating to shared governance, promoting student involvement, and academic enrichment.

President Russ Kavalhuna paid special tribute to the recent Western Michigan University graduates recognizing them for their academic achievements.

Next, President Russ Kavalhuna introduced John Winchell, Archives Curator; Lynn Houghton, Regional History Curator; and Susan Steuer, Distinctive Collections Librarian who presented *A History of Teaching and Learning; Zhang Legacy Collections Center*.

There was no indicated public interest in providing commentary regarding any Action Items.

As Action Items, Interim Provost and VP for Academic Affairs, Dr. Chris Cheatham recommended the Professional Instructors Organization (PIO) 2025-2029 Agreement. **A motion to support the Professional Instructors Organization (PIO) 2025-2029 Agreement** was made by Vice Chair Alan Turfe, with a second by Trustee Jon Hoadley and passed unanimously. Remarks followed by PIO Contract Enforcement Officer Kate Elder.

Secretary Kahler Schuemann next advocated support for Authority to Confer Degrees be Delegated to the President of the University. **A motion to support Delegated Authority to Confer Degrees** was made by Vice Chair Alan Turfe, with a second by Trustee Kara Wood. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion to approve the Consent Items was made by Trustee Kara Wood, with a second from Trustee Jon Hoadley. The BOT unanimously approved the following Consent Items as exhibited: Personnel Report; and Amendment to the Brian Schott LaCombe Humanitarian Scholarship.

David Prellwitz, Said AbuBakr, Jacinda Swanson, and Marissa Wagner addressed the Board in **General Public Comments**.

The BOT meeting ended at 1:20PM following **a motion to adjourn** made by Chair Shelly Edgerton with a second by Trustee Kara Wood, and unanimous approval.

Respectfully submitted,



Kahler B. Schuemann, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and Secretary to the Board of Trustees
Western Michigan University

ATTACHMENT A

WMU Board of Trustees Chair Edgerton's Remarks September 11, 2025

Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you for joining us for the WMU Board of Trustees meeting in-person and virtually. It is my pleasure to be here with you today. As we come together to address important matters and make decisions that will guide our University, I want to acknowledge and thank my colleagues for their leadership on this board. You are true champions of Western Michigan University!

It's wonderful to be back together again. I hope the start of this academic year has been a great experience for each of you. Just one year ago, we were in the early stages of a search for our 10th President. Today, we are fortunate to have welcomed our new advocate in chief in July, President Russ Kavalhuna, who has already embraced the role and is leading Western with great energy and passion.

President Kavalhuna, welcome once again to the board table.

As co-chair of the Presidential Transition Team, I have had the privilege of joining the President on his Listening Tour. I have been both inspired and encouraged by the participation and the depth of conversation at these sessions. I am certain that President Kavalhuna will speak to his experiences at the listening sessions during his remarks, but I want to say that this tour has truly been a standout opportunity for students, faculty, staff and community partners to share their insight on how we can shape WMU's future. Our campus community has risen to the occasion, and on behalf of the board, I thank each of you for your thoughtful perspectives and commitment to helping move Western to the next level.

Before we discuss today's agenda, I want to briefly remark on the state budgeting process, which remains incomplete. The outcome of that process will have a direct impact on our University and this board's fiscal responsibilities.

As many know, state legislative leaders and the Governor continue to work on reaching an agreement on the fiscal year budget that begins on October 1. It is critical for WMU that an agreement be reached before this deadline. We strongly support a provision that was included in the House passed version of the budget, which shifts the bulk of state funding for higher education operations to be funded from the state's School Aid Fund.

This fund is constitutionally protected and designated to support all of public education here in Michigan. This shift will provide stability and certainty for higher education for the next fiscal year and fiscal years in the future.

We thank the Governor, Senate and the House for including increased investments in WMU in each of their recommendations. We urge them to include these increased investments in the final budget agreement. An increased investment in our operations and campus will ensure our ability to support our students' needs, continue to provide world-class education and research opportunities and play a major role in the local, regional and state economy. This is so critically important, I wanted to take this opportunity share these thoughts. Thank you.

Now on to the board's agenda: Today we will hear remarks from our shared governance partners; President Kavalhuna will acknowledge the Summer 2025 employee graduates and also tee up a presentation from WMU's Zhang Legacy Collections Center.

As part of the board action items, Interim Provost Chris Cheatham will update us on the Professional Instructors Organization's 2025-2029 Agreement.

Also during action items, the board will consider delegating authority to confer degrees.

And on the consent agenda, the board will consider approval of the personnel report and amendment to the Brian Schott LaCombe Humanitarian Scholarship.

ATTACHMENT B

WMU Board of Trustees President Kavalhuna's Remarks September 11, 2025

Thank you, Madam Chair. Trustees, thank you for allowing me to sit here with you. I've sat in the audience many times, and it's a bit of a dream come true to sit up here with you, so thank you very much.

Madam Chair, thank you very much for your introductory comments. I echo your sentiments that we're not in the business of complaining about state government, but we are in the business of asking for help. And so, if those in Lansing are listening, we are grateful for the support you've given us through the years, and we're hopeful you will continue that support, maybe even before the end of this month.

I also want to thank you, Madam Chair, for Co-Chairing the Presidential Transition Team and Listening Sessions. Some of you may or may not know that the President of the Faculty Senate and my friend, Dr. Amy Naugle, co-chaired that also, and I see several folks who helped build what is the ongoing Listening Session Tour. If you wouldn't mind Dr. Naugle, would you join your colleagues in the Transition Team and stand. I just want everyone to see the kind of folks that built this. I see several of you. Thank you very much.

We've been moving around campus quite a bit as a group, to do formal listening sessions. Some of you know I've been moving around campus on my own, popping into your offices, classrooms and workspaces. I am so excited to be back at Western Michigan University. I've been here two months, but I'm even more excited that it's the beginning of the semester because as you know, and as everyone before you knows, the campus really springs to life.

A couple things just recently happened that I want to call my colleagues and my teammates out for, for having made the beginning of this semester so successful. You probably saw that we had Bronco Bash and that's something that's been going on for decades. It was exciting for me to take part in my new role, but I've been to the event many times myself, as a student and then as an employee. And I think Dr. Schuemann, we reached a record with how many people were out there. If you weren't there, it was a testament to how many people care about, and are comfortable on, our campus to come and be with one other and see and feel what this campus is all about. There were also some really great welcome-week events that a lot of folks had a lot to do with.

I also want to call out the two graduate assistants in the President's Office. You're also making sure I don't get out of here without making mistakes. The students who are new to this campus got to see a really exciting and engaging opportunity, about what it feels like to live and to learn here. Our two graduate students are really great leaders in that. They're examples of what we're going to become in the future because they're students here while they're leaders.

We also had our first home football game recently. I see Chief Merlo in the corner. His team was very helpful with the student tailgate which was fun and safe. Those two words were very closely connected because of your team and your colleagues. I saw Michigan State Police, County Sheriffs, and of course our own Campus Safety Officers. Thank you, Chief Merlo.

Student Affairs and Athletics both had really great effort to show students and community members what it's like to be on campus. And if you weren't aware, we triple the amount of people who come into this region— they spend money and they see our beautiful campus and they rooted for what was a really great football game for everything except the very end, which is okay. We play to win, but we also play to improve, and we accomplished one of those things.

You also saw published recently, that WMU is a really good place to work. I hope me sitting here today shows you that I agree with that. Over 160,000 people around our country answered Forbe's questionnaire about the best places to work. What they said was that Western was a great place to work. In fact, we were rated the highest of higher-education institutions in the state of Michigan, which I'm really excited about. Although I'm not really surprised about it because I know how great it is to work here, and I know how great it is to live and learn here. I just want to tell all of you who work here, people recognize what you do. It's not just working here that is great. It's working with each other and that's an exciting thing for me to be part of. I think one of the reasons people like to work here so much is because we've had some really great expansions over my predecessor's tenure in our physical plant. Two of those are worthy of recognition for LEAD Certifications. If you don't know what LEAD is, it's a standard that identifies buildings, physical structures, that are both saving money because of how they're built but also saving in carbon footprint. There are two buildings that recently received certifications. One is Dunbar Hall, which received gold status LEAD certification, and one is our Student Center which received a silver certification in LEAD.

There are a lot of people who deserve a lot of credit for those things, but certainly facilities management which is led by Vice President Van Der Kley.

Then of course the College of Arts and Sciences were leading these and I see my friend Dean Koretsky here. If you didn't know, she hosted an event recently, that I was pleased to attend. It was a recognition of her teammates who were receiving promotions and it was a great team-building event. That is just two examples of things that we're seeing here at the university and LEAD certification is what I know a lot of you care about on this campus because during the listening sessions I've heard that financial and environmental stewardship are hot topics on your list and for us to win those two certifications is something I'm very excited about.

I'm also excited about something that comes out of Vice President Remzi Seker's area. As you know, he is proud to help and supervise the Biosciences Research and Commercialization Center, the BRCC. That was one of the inaugural recipients of state funding and \$5.3 million is coming to Western Michigan University and Dr. Seeker in through BRCC's work. That's a big part of the \$60 million that the state of Michigan contributed to that. You probably know we're punching above our weight in research and this is literal dollars that prove that.

Some other things that are happening on campus that I'm really excited about are our students, not surprisingly again, but really encouraging— you showing that Bronco Nation is not only strong but is actually leading the way. One of them is the Bronco Cyber Security Club who got second place out of 27 teams in the undergraduate division at the 2025 Social Engineering Cyber Security Competition. I heard about the Cyber Security Club during my listening session that the chair and I met with an industrious young man who is either the leader or the number two leader of the cyber security club. And I tell you, these are leaders Madam Chair, he told me how we need to change the curriculum now to improve. And he didn't tell me, but he could have said, "And by the way, we got second place out of 27 teams." We're pretty excited about them.

Eight Western Michigan University students were awarded the 2025 Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship. If you don't know what that is, it's a highly competitive federal study-abroad program that is specifically directed toward students with high financial need. One of our teammate's deserves credit for that. That's Joe Milostan. If he were here, I'd ask him to stand and I'd say he's the Director of Study Abroad and Faculty Enrichment in WMU's Haenicke Institute for Global Education. And frankly, the entire HIGE team deserves credit for this. Madam Chair, this ties last year's record of eight students receiving that.

The College of Education and Human Development is also in line for some pats on the back. They've won two grants, both trying to help students as they become better educators. I have family members who are graduates of that college. It was just called the College of Education when they were there, but it's now the College of Education and Human Development. If you don't know the leader of that group, that's Dean Dinehart. I was flipping hot dogs with her yesterday. They put on a really great hot dog lunch and I'll tell you, students liked that. They showed up to that. They even ate the food that I burned— I appreciate them doing that. But more importantly— Dean Dinehart is leading a college that recently was awarded \$230,000 to help make PreK STEM learning more engaging for Southwest Michigan students. An additional \$650,000 was awarded to her teammates Dr. Kristal Ehrhardt and Jessica Heybach, to launch a psychologist training program in the fall of 2027 that'll help practitioners deal with the shortage of what we all know is a growing problem in mental health generally across our population but certainly those that are in public education or education generally.

I've mentioned some of my colleagues and teammates and I want to keep doing that. One of them is Tamara Davis. She's the director of WMU's Starting Gate and she was recently awarded a Woman of Achievement and Courage from a group called WomanUp and Celebrate, a Kalamazoo organization. So, thank you.

Madam Chair, I could just keep going on and on, but I will stop. I want to remind you all that Bronco Nation needs to show up and tell Lansing how great we are, and we're giving ourselves an opportunity to do that on September 24, on Capital Day. That is when we will visit Lansing to say why we deserve support and hopefully there'll be a budget by then. But if there's not a budget by September 24, we'll all come together and be on and around the Capital. Vice President Breneman is here— He's got a great series of ways for us to be advocates all together. And I believe we'll have some athletes there.

If you haven't heard, the last national championship to exist in Michigan, comes from Kalamazoo. We'll be bringing that national championship trophy up to Lansing. Hopefully that hardware will bring us some gold. So, we're excited about that. If you want more information about September 24 Capital Day, please let me know. As you know, I'll be there.

Madam Chair, thank you.