Western Michigan University
Board of Trustees
October 29, 2026

Proposed Meeting Minutes – September 10, 2026

The Western Michigan University Board of Trustees (BOT) Formal Session was called to order by Chair Alan Turfe at 12:05PM on Thursday, September 10, 2026.

The meeting was conducted in person in the Student Center 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 Stacy Thinnes by 5PM, Wednesday, September 9, 2026.

Presiding in person were Chair Alan Turfe, Vice Chair Kelly Burris, Trustees Shelly Edgerton, Jon Hoadley, Lisa Williams, Kara Wood.

Presiding online was Trustee Lynn Chen-Zhang.

Absent was Trustee James Liggins Jr.

A motion to accept the September 10, 2026 BOT agenda was made by Trustee Shelly Edgerton with a second by Trustee Jon Hoadley. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion to accept the minutes as exhibited from the June 25, 2026 BOT Meeting was made by Trustee Shelly Edgerton with a second by Trustee Kara Wood. The motion passed unanimously.

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

Faculty Senate President Dr. Jan Hahn, Western Student Association President Luke Kritzman, and Graduate Student Association President Luis Jacobo Mejia provided comments regarding their respective areas and outlined ongoing activities and initiatives relating to shared governance, promoting student involvement, and academic enrichment.

Chair Alan Turfe invited David Prellwitz and Kerstyn O'Connor to the podium so that they could give a presentation on *AFSCME's Adopt-A-Highway and Food Drive* projects.

Chair Alan Turfe invited Dr. Paul Pancella and Lucas Rudegeair to the podium to give a presentation on *WMU's Particle Accelerator Lab.*
President Russ Kavalhuna congratulated *Western Michigan Employee Graduates* from the Summer 2026 semesters.

There were no public comments regarding Action Items.

As Action Items, Vice President Jan Van Der Kley presented the *American Association of University Professors (AAUP) Labor Agreement*. **A motion to support the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) Labor Agreement** was made by Trustee Jon Hoadley with a second by Trustee Shelly Edgerton. The action passed unanimously.

President Russ Kavalhuna advocated support for an *Honorary Degree Recommendation for David Dombrowski.* **A motion to approve the Honorary Degree Recommendation for David Dombrowski** was made by Trustee Kara Wood with a second by Trustee Shelly Edgerton. The action passed unanimously.

A motion to improve the Consent Items was made by Trustee Shelly Edgerton with a second by Trustee Wood. The BOT unanimously approved the following Consent Items as exhibited: *Donation of Real Estate to the City of Kalamazoo; Personnel Report; Curriculum Proposals; Annuity and Life Funds Performance Report; and the Operating Cash Investment Report*.

There was one **General Public Comment** made by Irshad Manji.

The BOT meeting ended at 1:32 PM following **a motion to adjourn** by Trustee Shelly Edgerton with a second by Trustee Jon Hoadley, and unanimous approval.

Respectfully submitted,

Stacy Thinnes
Secretary to the Board of Trustees
Western Michigan University

ATTACHMENT A

WMU Board of Trustees

Chair Turfe's Remarks September 10, 2026

Before we get into today's agenda, I want to take a moment to celebrate some good news involving two Broncos. Congratulations to Vice Chair Burris on two well-deserved honors. In August, she was named a Notable Leader in Accounting, Consulting and Law by Crain's Detroit Business. She was also honored by DBusiness magazine as one of its 2026 Powered by Women recipients. And congratulations to President Kavalhuna, who was recognized this summer in DBusiness's Detroit 500, which spotlights the region's most influential business leaders.

As we look ahead to today's agenda, we have a few presentations that will give us an opportunity to hear from the campus community and recognize some of the people and work that make Western Michigan University special.

David Prellwitz, chair of AFSCME 1668's community service committee and Kerstyn O'Connor, Local 1668's Recording Secretary and a member of its Community Service Committee, will highlight the service of our AFSCME employees, including their Adopt-A-Highway project and recent food drive.

These efforts are great examples of members of the University community coming together to serve Western Michigan University and our neighbors throughout the region. We look forward to that presentation. One of the privileges we have at Board meetings is the opportunity to learn more about the exceptional work happening across this University, particularly the research and Experience-Driven Learning that distinguish a WMU education.

To that end, we will hear a presentation today from Dr. Paul Pancella, professor of nuclear physics, and Lucas Rudegeair, a physics undergraduate student, here to talk about Western's Particle Accelerator Lab. We will also have the opportunity to recognize some employees of the Western Michigan University community who have reached an important milestone of their own.

While serving the University, these employees have balanced their responsibilities to the University with the hard work required to earn a degree, and we're pleased to

recognize that accomplishment today. President Kavalhuna will lead us in recognizing our summer employee graduates.

In action items, under consideration is a labor agreement between Western Michigan University and the American Association of University Professors. Jan Van Der Kley, vice president for business and finance, will introduce this item and provide the Board with an overview of the agreement.
Also in action items, President Kavalhuna will also introduce an action item that would recognize the exceptional career and accomplishments of a fellow Bronco. The Board will consider the nomination of 1979 alumnus David A. Dombrowski to receive an honorary degree from the University.

Finally, under action items, the Board will consider the consent agenda, with items including the donation of real estate to the city of Kalamazoo, the personnel report, curriculum proposals, the annuity and life income funds performance report and the operating cash investment report.

ATTACHMENT B

WMU Board of Trustees

President Kavalhuna's Remarks September 10, 2026

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon, Broncos. How's everybody doing today?

Good. Good to see you all. It is the start of a new semester and a new academic year, and I'm really excited about that. There's an energy in the air and activity across campus. We slow down during the summer, but we kick off the fall with what is now 44 years of history with Bronco Bash. We wanted to see who was really serious about Bronco Bash because we made you go through rain, then sun, then rain and then sun. It was fantastic, and I was happy to see so many of you out there.

It's also an exciting time because we see students move onto campus and take an important step in their process of growing up. We see families and students showing up with boxes and moving into residence halls, and it's just really fun to take part in that.

I want to thank everyone who helped make the start of the semester possible. I saw Dr. Chris Cheatham, Keith Hahn, several student-athletes and several deans, including Jeff Breneman. Faculty have returned to campus, classes are underway, and if you walk around campus, you're going to see a vibrant campus. If you're interested in higher education and care about human development, there really is no better time of the year than the fall and its start.

One student was particularly inspiring for me. You may recall that the Make-A-Wish Foundation selected an individual named Adalae, who experienced cancer in her youth. As she started to recover, she made clear that her goal was to attend Western Michigan University and become a nurse.

It was a point of pride for me to welcome Adalae and her father and help move her into one of our residence halls. She's an inspiration to us all. She also took the stage with me at Bronco Bash and led a charge of, "Let's go Broncos." I know Adalae is not here today, but if you Google WMU Adalae, you're going to see an image representing courage, grit and the bright future our students represent as they overcome challenges and grow while they're here at Western.

I'm also excited to tell you that Western Michigan University recognizes our mission to be an open-door institution, and "So That All May Learn" is our motto. We've made that mission collaborative with our goal to increase enrollment.

Through the leadership of Dr. Chris Cheatham and others, we've established agreements with Kalamazoo Valley Community College, West Michigan Aviation Academy and, most recently, Kellogg Community College. These agreements remove barriers for students coming to Western. If they successfully complete those pathways, they're welcome here, and we're also providing scholarship support. I'm excited about that, and Mr. Chairman, you can thank Provost Cheatham and Dr. Salomonson for their support.

I'm also thankful for our colleagues in the University Advancement office who put together an "Up North" tour. I was excited to meet with alumni in Traverse City, Bay Harbor, Petoskey and Grand Rapids. We're continuing to reach out to alumni and strengthen those connections, and that's starting to work as a result of University Advancement and their team. Jennifer Yelovina is leading that organization as an interim leader, and she's doing a fantastic job.

I want to give a couple shoutouts to faculty and staff. Congratulations to Dr. Sally Hadden, professor of History, who has been selected as a Fulbright U.S. Scholar. She will spend six months at The University of Manchester in the United Kingdom conducting research for a new introductory-level book examining how people in early America understood and used law.

I also want to congratulate my friend Dr. Laura Dinehart, Dean of the College of Education and Human Development, who was recently appointed by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer to the Every Child Reads Champions Council. She's one of three appointees representing Michigan's lifelong education sector who were selected for their expertise in the science of reading. This is an important issue for our entire state, and we're proud that Dean Dinehart is a leader not just in our region, but across Michigan.

I've referenced Dr. Chris Cheatham a couple of times, but I want to officially congratulate him on his appointment as Western Michigan University's Provost and Executive Vice President. He has had what he jokingly calls the "longest tryout ever," but it's been meaningful for me to watch what he has delivered for this institution. He brings decades of service, experience serving multiple presidents and cabinets, and skills

that make him particularly valuable to this Board and me. Congratulations, Chris.

I also want to thank Elaine Russell, Interim Vice President and Director of Athletics. She is doing extraordinarily difficult work during a challenging time for the athletic department. After our previous athletic director moved to Michigan State University, Elaine stepped in on an interim basis and has led the department with dignity and grace. If you see Elaine Russell, please tell her that all of us Broncos are proud of her and thankful for her leadership. She returned to WMU in 2022 after a previous stint, and we would not be where we are without her leadership.

I want to thank Chair Turfe and Vice Chair Burris for helping lead the search for a new Athletic Director. They care deeply about the institution and understand that this selection will have a pivotal effect on the University going forward. We've made great progress, interviewed a number of candidates and are moving into the final process over the next two weeks. We are on track to have a new athletic director on site by the middle of September.

I also want to thank Dr. Danyelle Gregory, Interim Vice President of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, and Dr. Remzi Seker, Vice President of Research, for co-leading our search for a Vice President of University Advancement. We're getting a great candidate pool, with first-round interviews planned for early October and a goal of having a new vice president by the end of October.

These leadership transitions are part of the administrative redesign we rolled out more than a month ago. We've provided updates to the Board and are planning public town halls later this month where we can answer questions about the redesign. We have also established a website outlining the steps we're taking, the leaders involved and the opportunities ahead for WMU.

I'm really excited that Dr. Chris Cheatham and his search committee were tasked with finding our next chief financial officer. This was an important and difficult process because of the shoes that person would have to fill.

I previously talked about my colleague and teammate Jan Van Der Kley as Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, but I also want to recognize her service to the Board as Treasurer. When I was an employee at the College of Aviation, I would see Treasurer Van Der Kley at these meetings and was struck by the respect everyone had for her. This

Board has an important fiduciary responsibility, and having someone you can trust in these pivotal roles is essential. Treasurer Van Der Kley has fulfilled that responsibility exceptionally well.

Just two weeks ago, the rating agency that evaluates our financial position upgraded WMU's bond status from A to A+. We had an A for a long time, but we wanted to get better, and Treasurer Van Der Kley wanted to get better. It is a fitting capstone to a marvelous career, and there's no one who deserves more credit for that achievement. Those are big shoes to fill, but I'm excited because we've found the candidate and future teammate who is going to do it.

Our new Chief Financial Officer, Carlos Rodriguez, comes to us from Michigan Tech, where he serves as Chief Financial Officer. He has led a comprehensive transformation of Michigan Tech's Finance and Administrative Operations, emphasizing modernization and long-term financial stability.

Before Michigan Tech, he served as Vice President of Finance at Penn State, providing financial and operational leadership across 20 Commonwealth Campuses. He also brings federal government experience from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Office of Personnel Management and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. I'm also proud to say that he served his country in the United States Army and has retired from the Army.

When I interviewed Carlos, what really made a difference for me was how much he wanted to find a higher education institution where we could take on a difficult future for higher education and where he could invest his time and personal attributes in Kalamazoo.

So, it is my distinct pleasure to introduce our new Chief Financial Officer, Carlos Rodriguez. Carlos, welcome to Bronco Nation. It's good to have you here. You're at the best university on the planet in the best city on the planet, and I'm glad you're here with us. So, Mr. Chairman, I'm sorry I went a little longer than I should have, but that is my report, and I'll take any questions the Board has.