Proposed Meeting Minutes

March 23, 2023

The Western Michigan University Board of Trustees (BOT) Formal Session was called to order by Chair Edgerton at 11:04AM on Thursday, March 23, 2023. The meeting was conducted in a mixed modality with participants both attending in person at the Fort Shelby Double Tree Hotel in Detroit, Michigan or engaging through Zoom, a virtual platform. The engagement was 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 Schuemann by 5PM, Wednesday, March 22nd. Presiding in person were Chair Edgerton and Vice Chair Penn, along with Trustees Burris, Chen-Zhang, Hoadley, Turfe, and Williams. Trustee Trevan participated through Zoom.

A motion to accept the March 23, 2023 BOT agenda was made by Vice Chair Penn with a second by Trustee Burris. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion to accept the minutes as exhibited from the January 26, 2023 Meeting was made by Vice Chair Penn, with a second by Trustee Turfe. The motion passed unanimously.

Remarks were provided by Chair Edgerton – Attachment A, followed by remarks from President Montgomery – Attachment B.

Faculty Senate President Summy and Western Student Association (WSA) President Sun provided comments regarding their respective areas and their ongoing activities and initiatives relating to shared governance, promoting student involvement, and academic enrichment.

Next, President Montgomery introduced WMU student Destini Powers who shared her story of achievement as a student leader from the Detroit region.

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

As Action Items, Vice Chair Penn recommended a resolution celebrating the WMU Men's Basketball 25-Year Anniversary 1998 MAC Championship Team. A motion to accept the Resolution Celebrating Men's Basketball 25-Year Anniversary 1998 MAC Championship Team was made by Vice Chair Penn, with a second by Trustee Hoadley, and passed unanimously.

Provost Vasquez Heilig next proposed a purchase of Aircraft by the College of Aviation with investment from WMU Foundation. A motion to accept the Purchase of Aircraft, College of Aviation with Investment from WMU Foundation was made by Trustee Chen-Zhang with a second by Trustee Turfe. The motion passed unanimously.
A motion to approve the Consent Items was made by Vice Chair Penn, with a second from Trustee Turfe. The BOT unanimously approved the following Consent Items as exhibited: A. Curriculum Proposals; B. Personnel Report; C. One-Day Liquor License Applications, International Congress on Medieval Studies WMU Valley Dining Center, May 11-12, 2023; D. Annuity and Life Income Funds Performance Report; and E. Operating Cash Investment Performance Report.

Jerjuan Howard provided commentary during General Public Comments.

The BOT meeting ended at 11:58AM following a motion to adjourn by Vice Chair Penn, with a second from Trustee Burris, and unanimous approval.

Respectfully submitted,

Kahler Schuemann, Ph.D.,
Secretary to the Board of Trustees
Western Michigan University
I’d like to express, again, that it has been my pleasure spending the past two days in Detroit for the WMU Board of Trustees retreat and formal board meeting. What a successful time we had introducing our new trustees to board responsibilities and expectations and discussing board priorities for the next year. I look forward to a successful season with the board.

Wednesday’s focus group session and the dignitary dinner gave us an opportunity to hold productive discussion and break bread with people who are invested in the fiber of Detroit, rich with history and steeped in tradition. Thank you to our focus group for connecting with the board to highlight all that Detroit has to offer and how Western is a school of choice for many Detroit natives.

We have a gem of a city in our state. In fact, according to a 2023 Reader’s Choice USA Today survey, the Detroit Institute of Art was named the number one art museum in the country—a tremendous honor. We’re always glad to connect with our Detroit friends. The hospitality has been amazing and on behalf of the trustees, thank each of you for making our retreat a successful one.

Today we will celebrate on a couple of different fronts. First, we’re celebrating a Bronco who took advantage of the regional achievement scholarship we offer at Western. This Bronco has soared in the classroom and in the Kalamazoo community, and she is in high pursuit of her purpose in life. We’ll hear from Ms. Destini Powers, a 4th-year senior at Western, who will talk about her success at the University and her dreams of returning to her hometown, Detroit, to give back to her community that had a hand in rearing her.

The second celebration—which also is a board action item—is a cherished one for Vice Chair Penn and many of us, especially as all eyes are on the NCAA basketball tournament. At the request of Vice Chair Penn, we have prepared a special Western Resolution commemorating and honoring the Bronco Men’s Basketball 25-Year Anniversary 1997-98 MAC Championship Team.

Also on today’s agenda, Dr. Vasquez Heilig will set the stage for discussion on the purchase of aircrafts for the College of Aviation. This proposal represents a generous investment from the WMU Foundation, and we sincerely appreciate the work that went to this recommendation we will consider as a board in a few moments.
Thank you, Chair Edgerton.

Good morning. I’d like to welcome everyone and thank those of you who drove across town to make it to the Doubletree Hotel as well as those who made the two-hour drive from Kalamazoo to Detroit. This is our second swing at holding a trustee meeting in Detroit; we scheduled a meeting in 2020 that was ultimately canceled due to the pandemic.

But it was here in Detroit in fall of 2021—less than three miles from where we meet today—that we first announced the initial scholarships and student support programming funded by our historic $550 million Empowering Futures Gift—the largest gift ever made for a public university in U.S. history.

Those scholarships include the Bronco Promise, which provides a tuition-free education for up to five years for eligible first-year students. And the Empowering Futures Housing Scholarship, which focuses on providing a community of belonging for first-year and transfer students from Detroit, Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids. But these scholarship programs are open to all other eligible Michigan residents.

We are incredibly blessed to have this wonderful gift centered on diversity and inclusion supporting our efforts to create pipelines for success, pathways to graduation, increase retention and improve student resilience.

And we’re excited to be back in the city today highlighting the solid educational experiences students receive at Western. We’ve also had a tremendous time welcoming our new trustees aboard and helping them acclimate to their new role.

Yesterday afternoon, led by Vice Chair Penn, we held a Detroit Engagement Focus group meeting with local business and economic development leaders, clergy and social service administrators, as well as educators and those in government services who live and work here in the city of Detroit.

I’d like to express my appreciation to Vice Chair Penn for working with Chief of Staff and Board Secretary Kahler Schuemann to organize this powerful engagement focus group and the delegate dinner that followed.

Again, my thanks to our Bronco employees and the Board of Trustees for making this retreat possible in the remarkable city of Detroit.
Long known as the automobile capital of the world, famous for Motown music, the DIA as Chair Edgerton referenced, music and theater legends that span 60 years. When we talk about Detroit, we cannot forget about the unforgettable delicacies—coney dogs and pizza! Speaking of pizza, for the second consecutive year, CBS News reported that Detroit was named America’s best city for pizza, largely because of its low cost and high restaurant ratings. Detroit, way to go on beating out Chicago and New York for the coveted top spot.

I’d like to formally welcome and introduce our new trustees Burris, Hoadley and Williams to the table. It has been my pleasure to become acquainted with you thus far, and I’m looking forward to working with you as you assimilate to your new role.

I echo Trustee Edgerton’s comments regarding faculty sabbaticals. This customary but critical opportunity in higher education is one that allows educators—through an application and approval process—time away from the University to focus on their academic discipline and develop new abilities in teaching or research and return ready to serve students. We applaud those who are taking sabbatical leave in the next few semesters, and we thank them for their steadfast work at Western.

We would also like to express gratitude to faculty members, deans and academic affairs staff who have dedicated significant time crafting and perfecting curriculum changes and updates. These implementations are placing Western on a solid path of continued academic excellence.

Finally, I wanted to give a brief overview of two trips, one was a February trip to Rio Verde, Arizona, with University Advancement. We took the opportunity to connect with alumni and friends of Western. In addition, we had the opportunity to watch the Bronco Women’s Golf Team host the 20th annual Rio Verde Golf Tournament. Two Broncos placed in the top 25 in that tournament, graduate student Alissa Fish and freshman Megha Vallabhaneni.

In keeping with our mission and commitment to enhancing the future of our global citizenry, Dr. Paulo Zagalo-Melo at the Haenicke Institute for Global Education is solidifying plans for representatives from the institute and I to travel to Korea in May.

Our plan is to highlight Western’s extensive global educational footprint and make continued inroads to attract and serve students from every region of the world. We look forward to forging education partnerships with foreign dignitaries in the Korean region. I will have additional information to report with you in the coming months on the impending trip to Korea.
I’d like to echo Chair Edgerton’s remarks honoring the Men’s Basketball 25-Year Anniversary 1997-98 MAC Championship Team. In honor of this celebratory anniversary, we were pleased to recognize the team in February at halftime of a Bronco Men’s Basketball game in Read Fieldhouse. Congratulations on this team’s accomplishment.

In conclusion, I have an alumni plaudit to share with you. WMU alumnus Jerjuan Howard (jerWAHN) is exposing Detroit school students to debate as a confidence building after-school activity. Shortly after graduation from WMU in 2020, Jerjuan founded the Umoja Debate Team and has since launched the course in four Detroit-area middle schools.

The program teaches conflict resolution, thought articulation for debate and boosts students' overall self-confidence. Jerjuan believes that learning how to debate helped mature him as a youth. The Umoja Debate Team was featured recently on Channel 4 Live in the D and the segment expands on the entire Umoja Village project.

In his final semester at Western, Jerjuan, former WMU Black Student Union President, ALSO authored a book "A Message to Black College Students." When this news item came across my desk, I immediately thought, what an innovative example of an alum giving back to build the next generation of leaders. We wish Jerjuan good luck with his debate team and the Umoja Village!