

<b>COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT TWELVE BOARD OF TRUSTEES Centralia College</b>	
<b>Hanson Boardrooms Centralia College Boardrooms Centralia, Washington</b>	<b>Study Session/Regular Meeting October 9, 2025 3:00 P.M.</b>

**MINUTES**

- Study Session**

Trustee Advocacy & Relations

Kim Tanaka, Executive Director of the Washington Association of College Trustees (WA-ACT), provided an overview of WA-ACT’s role in supporting community and technical college trustees, including trustee advocacy, orientation for new board members, and engagement in state and national policy issues.

She outlined three key discussion topics: community connection, increasing visibility and leadership within WA-ACT, and succession planning. Ms. Tanaka commended the board for its strong cohesion, community involvement, and positive relationships among current and former trustees, noting that the board already demonstrates many best practices in trustee and community engagement.

Encouraging an interactive discussion, Ms. Tanaka invited questions and dialogue throughout her presentation. Ms. Tanaka emphasized the importance of trustees reengaging with the community and taking opportunities to represent the college in their various professional and civic roles, ensuring consistent and accurate communication about the institution. Ms. Tanaka highlighted Centralia College’s deep roots and vital role in the community, noting its long-standing presence and centennial celebration.

Ms. Tanaka encouraged trustees to consider hosting community events, meetings, or gatherings on campus to showcase the college’s facilities and increase community awareness. She noted that many community members may not visit the campus unless invited for a specific purpose and suggested using such opportunities to highlight the college’s programs and spaces.

Ms. Tanaka addressed common misconceptions about community colleges, noting that they are often viewed merely as pathways to four-year universities. This perception undervalues the significant educational and career opportunities community colleges provide, including bachelor’s degree programs.

Ms. Tanaka highlighted the value of trustees partnering with the college president to present a unified voice for the college. She noted trustees bring a unique community perspective that complements the president’s official role. She mentioned that the State Board plans to update its one-page “field guide” summaries for each college, which include key data, trustee information, and program highlights. These materials can serve as useful reference tools for trustees in community engagement and legislative advocacy.

Ms. Tanaka outlined the various WA-ACT committees available for trustee involvement, including the Governance Committee, Education and Equity Committee, and Advocacy Committee. These committees help shape the organization’s policies,

conference topics, and legislative advocacy efforts. Participation is primarily virtual via Zoom, making involvement accessible and a good way to connect with other trustees. She also highlighted the importance of engagement with ACT, the national organization, noting that trustees serve on committees addressing equity, impact, and success at the national level.

Ms. Tanaka discussed the challenges smaller counties face in receiving gubernatorial appointment attention compared to larger counties like King, Snohomish, and Spokane.

Ms. Tanaka thanked the trustees for the opportunity to speak to them on behalf of her role as the Executive Director of the Washington Association of College Trustees.

### **1. Call to Order**

Trustee Mark Scheibmeir called the meeting to order at 4:11 p.m.

### **2. Roll Call**

Board members present:

- Annalee Tobey (Teams)
- Pretrina Mullins
- Mark Scheibmeir
- Chris Thomas

### **3. Introductions/Presentations:**

Connie Smejkal, Vice President of Instruction introduced the tenure track faculty:

- ShaunaLee Martin, Nursing
- Nathaniel Leslie, Physics
- Tim Malroy, Advising/Counseling

Each of the tenure track faculty members was introduced to the board. Each faculty member expressed their appreciation for being hired by Centralia College. The Board welcomed the probationary tenure track members to the college.

### **Open Forum**

No one requested to speak in open forum.

### **4. CONSENT AGENDA**

#### **Adoption of Minutes:**

It was MOVED BY Chris Thomas THAT THE BOARD APPROVE THE REGULAR MINUTES OF September 11, 2025, AS PRESENTED. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

### **Policy Governance**

#### **Policy Updates**

Dr. Mohrbacher reported Institutional Effectiveness (IE) met October 1, 2025. Eight policies passed on second read:

- 1.003 Accessibility Policy
- 1.275 Retention of Public Records
- 1.395 Whistleblower Program
- 2.021 Early Resignation/Retirement of Tenured Faculty
- 2.140 Faculty Leave
- 2.201 Pay Rate
- 2.370 Retirement Medical Expense Plan
- 2.530 Immigration Reform

Four policies were deleted on second read:

- 2.042 Leave
- 2.066 Shared Leave
- 2.355 Part-time Exempt
- 2.465 Shared Leave

Dr. Mohrbacher reported that the Institutional Effectiveness Committee held its first meeting of the year, which included discussions on developing new artificial intelligence policies, likely at least two, addressing classroom and non-classroom applications.

He noted that several board policies are due for review this year, as the last major update occurred five years ago. Dr. Mohrbacher proposed two options: forming a subcommittee of two trustees to review and bring policy recommendations to the board, or distributing binders of the policies for all trustees to review individually. Annalee Tobey expressed support for forming a subcommittee.

It was discussed that Court Stanley and Pretrina Mullins form the committee to review the policies and suggest or make changes as needed, if needed.

## **5. Trustee Reports**

Chris Thomas reported he attended the Trailblazer Kickoff, which drew over 200 students and featured strong participation from clubs, advisors, and classes. He also attended Foundation Night at the Oly Club, remarking on the positive atmosphere and anticipation of fundraising results.

He also attended several athletic events, including softball and soccer games, and commended the strong performance and enthusiasm of student athletes. He expressed enthusiasm for the upcoming gala and future college events.

Pretrina Mullins reported attending the Trustees of Color Affinity group meeting, where discussions focused on college funding, legislative decisions, and the varied impacts on institutions across the state.

After several scheduling challenges, Pretrina was able to attend a Foundation Executive Board meeting, which centered on preparations for the upcoming gala, budget planning, and ongoing discussions about student housing. She noted the high level of organization and enthusiasm surrounding the gala and expressed anticipation for the event.

Mark Scheibmeir expressed appreciation to the Foundation staff for their extensive efforts in preparing for the upcoming gala, managing ticketing and donation logistics, and coordinating multiple simultaneous events, including the Centennial Picnic and

McMenamins celebration. Mark acknowledged the significant workload and dedication of staff in ensuring the success of these events.

Annalee Tobey encouraged everyone to take a look at the Trustees' auction item, which will be featured in the live auction at the gala this Saturday. It's a fun and creative item that should generate significant interest.

In recent weeks, *Experience Chehalis* has celebrated a couple of ribbon cuttings for new businesses in downtown Chehalis. Annalee was pleased to see such great community turnout at both events, including the opening of a new bank.

Annalee attended *Pints with Purpose*, a United Way fundraiser held at The Orchard at Sunshine Hill. It is an ideal setting for community gatherings just a few miles outside of Centralia.

Lastly, Annalee is attending her annual Main Street Conference this week in Gig Harbor. It's an event she participates in every year, and this year's location is a great opportunity for networking and learning. Annalee was thankful to be able to join the board meeting via Teams.

#### WA-ACT

Court Stanley and Pretrina Mullins will be attending the 2025 Association of College Trustees (ACT) Fall Conference on November 13-14<sup>th</sup>. As this coincides with the November board meeting, attendance by remaining members will be important.

#### ACCT

The 2025 ACCT Leadership Congress will be in New Orleans, Louisiana this year on Wednesday, October 22 through Saturday, October 25, 2025. The theme will be "Reimagining Community College: Innovation for a Changing World." Annalee Tobey, Chris Thomas, Dr. Cox, and Dr. Mohrbacher will be attending this year.

### **6. President's Report**

Dr. Mohrbacher noted that the federal government has now been shut down for over a week. Despite this, all institutional federal funding streams remain secure, with the exception of the TRIO Student Support Services grant. Current funding sources, whether received directly, through the State Board, or via agencies such as DSHS, have all been confirmed.

The only remaining item pending resolution is the renewal of the Basic Food, Employment, and Training (BFET) grant, which is still under negotiation between the State Board and DSHS. This delay is not directly related to the federal shutdown, and no significant issues are anticipated.

Dr. Mohrbacher cautioned, however, that due to limited staffing at the US Department of Education, technical assistance and program approvals may experience delays. Faculty and staff were asked to remain attentive to any student concerns that may arise as a result.

Dr. Mohrbacher provided an update on the state allocation model revisions. The State Board has approved the model's elements but continues to refine the implementation schedule. Initially proposed as a six-year phase-in beginning with 5% in the first year and increasing annually, the revised recommendation calls for an even

division across six years, approximately 16% per year. This adjustment translates to a reduction of approximately \$89,000 from the operating budget each year, beginning in July 2026.

Dr. Mohrbacher announced that the State Board has selected ConexED to provide a new student success software platform. The college will transition from EAB Navigate to ConexED over the coming months. The vendor has been responsive and accommodating, and the college anticipates a smooth implementation as modules are developed and rolled out.

Dr. Mohrbacher revisited the discussion from the board's study session regarding college messaging and how trustees can help with that message. At the upcoming gala on Saturday, the college will celebrate both its history and its future under the theme of *Launching a Second Century of Excellence*. Dr. Mohrbacher stressed the importance of not only reflecting on the past but also looking ahead as the college begins its second century of service.

Dr. Mohrbacher reported he will be out of the office for much of October due to vacation, the trustee conference, and a scheduled medical procedure. As previously approved, Dr. Cox will serve as Acting President during his absence.

Dr. Mohrbacher encouraged participation in the upcoming CC Future Academy, noting that invitations have been sent and the event will be open to all community members. The Academy will feature three themed sessions, each offered twice, once in the morning and once in the late afternoon or early evening, to accommodate different schedules. The first session will explore the college's history and the changes over the past 100 years; the second will examine the current state of the college; and the third will look ahead to the next century, envisioning where the institution might be in 2125 and what steps are needed now to prepare for that future. Dr. Mohrbacher remarked that the event will be both engaging and forward-looking, emphasizing the college's commitment to "launching another century of excellence."

## **7. SAALT**

Alicia Jenkins, Student Advocacy Activities Leadership Team (SAALT) President, reported on recent student activities over the past two weeks. The outdoor movie night, featuring the live-action *How to Train Your Dragon*, drew more than 100 attendees marking the highest turnout for a student-led evening event since the pandemic.

The event was followed by the "C is for Consent" seminar, which was well attended, particularly by student-athletes, and provided valuable educational resources promoting awareness and healthy conversations around consent.

Coordinator Heidi VanWinkle is leading the "All In Challenge", an initiative focused on increasing voter registration and engagement among students. Jenkins emphasized the importance of this effort, especially with upcoming elections.

The Involvement Fair was successful with strong student participation. A total of 127 students completed "passports" by visiting at least eight club and committee booths, earning tacos as an incentive. This activity led to high sign-ups for various student organizations and committees, significantly boosting overall engagement.

In recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, student leaders hosted informational tables at recent men's and women's soccer games and plan to continue at

the “Volley for the Cure” event. These efforts included distributing self-exam pamphlets and awareness materials.

SAALT has partnered with the Integrated Food Theme initiative, which has been very well received. The partnership includes the *Hunger Games* movie showing and cafeteria offerings featuring sustainable food options.

Additionally, Jenkins reported ongoing coordination with the Veterans Center to implement \$10,000 in allocated renovation funds. Planned upgrades include new furniture and improvements to create a more welcoming space for veterans and military-affiliated students.

Jenkins concluded by reminding the board that SAALT meetings are held every Friday from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. and are open to students, staff, and community members.

Dr. Mohrbacher expressed appreciation for the well-rounded mix of student activities, noting that the report included entertainment events, educational programs, health and wellness initiatives, and civic engagement opportunities. He commended the Student Government for offering such a diverse range of experiences that support students both inside and outside the classroom.

## **8. Faculty**

Mark Gorecki, faculty representative, Centralia College Federation of Teachers President, acknowledged that ongoing discussions about the college’s budget and technology transitions are not always easy but emphasized their importance. He noted that the willingness of faculty and administration to engage in open, sometimes uncomfortable, conversations reflect positively on the college’s culture.

Gorecki emphasized the example of tutoring services, observing that while it would have been simpler to eliminate the program, the college instead chose to discuss its value and consider thoughtful adjustments. He referenced the transition from EAB Navigate to ConexED, noting that while such changes can be challenging, they present meaningful opportunities for improvement and deeper institutional benefit. Gorecki added that while students have benefited from the existing system, usage data has been relatively low. He noted that he did not have the detailed figures but recognized the importance of evaluating how effectively such tools are being utilized as the college transitions to the new platform.

Connie Smejkal provided additional details regarding the tutoring services. She explained that the primary costs of the tutoring program are associated with hiring and training a few part-time, hourly tutors, so the expense is not tied to software but rather personnel. Given the relatively low number of students utilizing the tutoring resources compared to other campus support centers like the Writing Center and STEM Center, the college is evaluating the most effective allocation of these tutoring hours to best support students.

Smejkal noted that there have been some challenges this year, including a delay in the on-campus tutoring centers due to the longtime Writing Center coordinator stepping away during the summer. This led to a transition period with a new hire. Faculty expressed concern about the availability of tutoring services, and as a result, the college decided to reinstate the E-Tutoring service for the current academic year. Faculty have committed to promoting the service to students to increase engagement.

She highlighted a key benefit of eTutoring: it covers a wide range of subjects through a consortium, providing access to tutors in areas not available on campus, such as accounting. While students may receive support from tutors across the consortium, the college receives usage data to track student interactions and frequency of use. This data will be closely monitored throughout the year to assess effectiveness.

Smejkal concluded by emphasizing the college's goal to support students as effectively as possible with limited resources, noting that this is an ongoing process of testing and adjustment.

## **9. Classified**

Emil Parke-Fagerness, classified representative, provided an update on recent developments in the diesel and welding programs. He reported that Clint Baumel earned several certifications last spring, which have contributed to significant cost savings by enabling in-house servicing of the diesel fleet vehicles. Additionally, enrollment numbers in the diesel technology program are at an all-time high, and the welding program is also experiencing strong participation.

## **10. Instruction**

Connie Smejkal, Vice President of Instruction, distributed brochures detailing the upcoming theater productions for the year, encouraging trustees to plan their schedules accordingly. The brochures will also be sent electronically to ensure everyone receives the information.

Smejkal noted that faculty negotiations will take place during the spring quarter, with preparatory work already underway.

She expressed gratitude and enthusiasm for her current leadership team, noting that 50% of her cabinet members were in their first year with the college. Despite being a relatively new team, she highlighted their motivation, cohesion, and strong collaborative spirit.

Connie provided an update regarding the mobile lab partnership with the Centralia Community Foundation. Bill Sullivan is coordinating the site visits for this year. One of the challenges identified is that the mobile lab requires more than one person to manage effectively; having it as an additional responsibility for staff complicates logistics.

Bill has been working to schedule the mobile lab at as many schools as possible. Recently, the lab was at Chehalis, with photos showing students engaging with the simulators. The goal is for some school groups to follow up with campus visits to utilize portable simulators and larger simulators that cannot be transported in the mobile lab.

The Centralia Community Foundation's support has been instrumental, particularly in working with DryBox to provide CDL drivers to transport and set up the mobile lab. The team looks forward to seeing how the program develops throughout the year.

Smejkal reported on the mandatory Student Success class, noting that while it was piloted last year as an optional course, it is now required for all students unless they transfer in an equivalent number of credits. The course focuses on retention, with early data indicating a positive impact.

She highlighted the strong team of instructors for College100, who collaborated closely on curriculum development. Despite having more sections of College100 than

even English 101, the instruction remains consistent, supported by a shared repository of materials. The course is offered in multiple formats, online, hybrid, and fully face-to-face, to accommodate student needs. Feedback and student evaluations have been largely positive, recognizing the value of the course requirement.

Smejkal added that the college has been in discussions with several local school districts about the possibility of offering College in the High School courses related to the Student Success program. She explained that there are currently three discipline-specific versions of the College 100 course, each tailored to different academic and career pathways.

The Trades 100 course serves students in diesel, welding, and electronic robotics programs; Business 100 is designed for students in business administration, business technology, and accounting; and Science 100 supports students pursuing science-related fields. Each course maintains the same foundational student success concepts but allows instructors to adapt the material to align with the students' chosen disciplines, making the experience more relevant and career focused.

## **11. Human Resources & Equity**

Joy Anglesey, Vice President of Human Resources and Equity, noted that the HR report format has been updated to provide a clearer picture of each team member's specific responsibilities. This shows the wide variety of work handled by the department and the collaborative efforts that result in strong outcomes for the college.

Anglesey reviewed recent and upcoming legislative changes affecting HR operations. Some of the laws took effect in July 2025, while others are scheduled to begin in January 2026. She recognized the ongoing challenge of staying current with numerous new regulations but emphasized that the HR team is committed to ensuring compliance and supporting employees as these changes are implemented.

Anglesey provided details regarding upcoming legislative changes that will significantly impact Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML). She explained that new regulations are altering eligibility and job retention requirements. The most notable change is the reduction in qualifying hours for job restoration—from 1,250 hours down to 820 hours effective January 2026. She noted that PFML is managed by the Employment Security Department, which can create communication delays. When an employee begins PFML, it can take up to six weeks before HR is notified, posing challenges for staffing and planning.

Anglesey highlighted several other legislative updates, including the clarification of what constitutes a personnel file under state law—providing long-awaited consistency in how such files are defined and accessed.

Regarding pay transparency, she acknowledged that compliance continues to be complex but emphasized that the HR team is adapting to meet requirements. She discussed the new provisions allowing PFML and Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) benefits to be stacked and managed more effectively. Previously, employees could take up to 12 weeks of unpaid federal FMLA leave followed by an additional 12 to 18 weeks of PFML, which was difficult to administer. Under the new rules, HR will be better equipped to coordinate the two programs, resulting in improved management and oversight.



There are also changes related to salary thresholds for exempt employees, and it is as the salary cap increases, fewer positions are affected since many have already been adjusted accordingly. While the updates may require some employees to shift to overtime reporting, most have adapted smoothly, and HR proactively assesses upcoming impacts to ensure a smooth transition.

Finally, Anglesey recognized Lesley Contreras, describing her as a “treasure”. Lesley recently returned to school to pursue a degree in Human Resource Management and has already been applying her coursework to her role. She commended her growth and dedication, expressing satisfaction in both Lesley’s professional development and her contributions to the department.

## **12. Student Services**

Shelley Bannish, Director of Student Life and Involvement Center, reported for Dr. Robert Cox, Vice President of Student Services.

Shelley Bannish presented the Student Services report noting that much of the written report centered on Blazer Central initiatives. She highlighted the success of the Trailblazer Kickoff event, which was a joint effort between Blazer Central and Student Life. Bannish reported that attendance was strong, with approximately 200 participants. Although registration numbers were similar to last year’s, many additional attendees participated without pre-registering. The event featured a lively and engaging atmosphere, with students visiting various advisor stations along the esplanade. Bannish noted that the event’s success sets a strong example and expressed interest about repeating it in future years.

She also provided updates regarding athletics and student engagement. The women’s soccer, men’s soccer, and women’s volleyball teams all defeated Pierce College the previous day. Bannish observed a noticeable increase in campus engagement across the board, from athletic events to Student Life activities such as the outdoor movie night and involvement fair. Attendance and participation in these events have been significantly higher than in recent years, a trend she described as encouraging and energizing for the campus community.

## **13. Administrative Services**

Tariq Qureshi, Vice President of Finance and Administration, providing the board with a brief financial update. He reported that actual expenses remain approximately \$1.4 million below budgeted expenses for the first few months of the fiscal year, reflecting continued fiscal discipline and careful budget management.

Qureshi noted that the Department of Revenue had recently issued a notice regarding the potential application of sales tax to continuing education courses and events. However, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges successfully obtained a reprieve from this requirement, meaning the college will not need to implement the change. Qureshi described this as a significant relief for both the business office and the college overall.

He is currently attending the Business Affairs Commission (BAC) Conference virtually, which is being held in Spokane. During the conference, a video was shown recognizing the important contributions of finance and administrative professionals

across the system. The video, generated using AI technology, humorously underscored the evolving role of artificial intelligence in the workplace.

Qureshi provided a facilities update, noting that the esplanade design phase with the architect has been completed for the upcoming project scheduled in the current biennium. The college plans to go out to bid with contractors soon, with the goal of beginning construction in the spring. He expressed appreciation for the dedicated staff whose behind-the-scenes efforts make this progress possible.

He added that work is also underway to update the old kitchen in the Transitional Services Building (TSB). A hazardous materials assessment was completed the previous week, and the college is awaiting the inspection report. In the meantime, staff are engaging contractors and preparing to move forward with both the CC East floor replacement and the TSB kitchen renovation. Both projects are funded through the same capital project allocation.

#### **14. Foundation**

Christine Fossett, Associate Vice President of Advancement, noted that Amanda Haines will lead the November study session and would like to tailor her presentation to the trustees' interests. Trustees were encouraged to submit questions or topics of interest in advance. The presentation will include marketing initiatives, recent successes, and a brief discussion of the Southwest Washington Fair, but additional areas of interest are welcome.

Fossett provided a brief update regarding the annual Foundation Night at the Oly Club, reporting that the event raised \$1,810.33. Although attendance was slightly lower than in previous years, the overall results were positive and successful. Appreciation was expressed to trustees and staff for their participation and support, including those who helped set up and host the event. Special thanks were extended to Chuck and Nan Higgins for arriving early to assist with setup.

Fossett provided an update on preparations for the upcoming gala event, noting that final arrangements are nearly complete. She and Amber have coordinated the event details, ensuring that everything from food and beverages to auction items is ready for the evening. The event will feature a full menu creating a welcoming and celebratory atmosphere for attendees.

Fossett reported that there will be 36 silent auction items as well as several experience-based donations. Fossett expressed appreciation for these contributions, noting that such experience-based items had been limited in previous years. She highlighted the impressive selection of beautiful handmade items that will be available during the silent auction, and deems the evening promises to be both enjoyable and successful.

The event will have strong participation from both current and former college leaders. Invitations were extended to all former foundation board members and former trustees, and Fossett personally followed up with those who had not yet responded, resulting in several additional confirmations. She noted that current trustees will be seated near the former trustees' table to encourage connection and conversation among attendees.

#### **15. New Business**

### President's Contract

Under RCW 42.30.110, the board may hold an executive session for the purpose of reviewing the performance of a public employee. At 5:10 pm board members moved into executive session to review the performance of a public employee. The Board will be in Executive Session until 5:20 p.m. unless notified that the time is extended. There will be action after Executive Session.

The Board has adjourned the Executive Session and reconvenes in Open Session. The time is 5:25 p.m.

It was MOVED BY Chris Thomas THAT THE BOARD RENEW THE CONTRACT OF DR. MOHRBACHER WITH A THREE-YEAR TERM, INCREASING THE BUYOUT CLAUSE FROM SIX MONTHS TO ONE YEAR, AND INCLUDE THE CONTRACT SALARY INCREASE OF 3% COLA AS APPROVED BY LEGISLATURE. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

### **16. Old Business**

#### Strategic Planning

Fia Eliasson-Creek, Executive Director of Institutional Research, provided an update on the college's progress toward the goals and objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan. She also provided some information on the College and Career Success course.

Fia reviewed a progress table summarizing advancements within the three strategic priority areas:

- Support Students
- Develop Employees
- Revitalize Campus and Community Engagement.

There are seven overarching goals and nineteen objectives within the Strategic Plan, each supported by multiple strategies. The progress table includes three columns: the first lists the priority areas, goals, and objectives; the second indicates the number of objectives with work in progress; and the third shows the percentage of objectives that have met their targets. Of the nineteen objectives, work began on eleven, with an average completion rate of approximately 60% toward established targets. To date, 44% of objectives have been fully achieved.

As the strategic plan spans five years, it's expected that not all objectives will be started at once. Many objectives and strategies are scheduled to begin this year or next. The plan continues to be reviewed and discussed within Institutional Effectiveness, the Executive Management Team (EMT), and other campus groups to ensure it remains a dynamic and active document.

Regarding the strategic priority areas, clear numeric targets have been established for "Support Students" where measurable progress is being achieved. The other two areas, "Develop Employees" and "Revitalize Campus and Community Engagement" involve more qualitative measures, making progress less quantifiable; however, efforts in these areas are ongoing.

Ms. Eliasson-Creek shifted focus to the College and Career Success courses. She noted that future Board meetings will feature updates from additional areas on their progress in advancing the Strategic Plan; however, the current presentation is centered on this course.

Connie Smejkal added that the College and Career Success course was first offered in Summer 2023 as a recommended course for first-time degree- or certificate-seeking students, who could enroll during their first, second, or third term. The course includes four tracks aligned with students' academic pathways: Business, Science, Trades, and a General track for other disciplines.

Beginning in Summer 2024, the course became a requirement for all new degree- or certificate-seeking students, to be completed within their first or second term. The course is designed to support college readiness by developing skills in time management, study strategies, and navigating institutional processes—key factors that can influence student success and retention.

This initiative aligns with Strategic Plan Objective 1.1.2, which focuses on ensuring each student has a declared pathway, develops an educational plan within the course, and monitors academic progress toward completion.

The data shows promising results:

- Among students enrolled at any point during the academic year, fall-to-fall retention improved from 52% (pre-course) to 55% when it was recommended, and subsequently to 71% after the course became mandatory representing a 16-percentage point increase. This positive trend is especially noticeable among students of color, including Latinx and Black/African American students.
- For the traditional fall-start cohort, the impact has been more modest to date; however, continued improvement is anticipated as the program matures.

Overall, the data suggests that the course is having a significant positive effect on students' persistence, with expectations that it will also support higher graduation rates in the future. The course has shown particular benefits for students who start at various points throughout the year, not just the traditional fall term. These students often come in with less defined academic paths, and the course helps them clarify their goals and navigate college processes.

Despite these gains in retention, overall enrollment has declined. The decrease is attributed to fewer new students enrolling, rather than retention failures. One contributing factor is the growing number of Running Start students (high school students who earn college credits and often complete associate degrees prior to graduation) resulting in fewer enrolling as new students after high school. Additionally, enrollment in Basic Skills courses, which are not part of degree-seeking pathways, has declined and is not included in the reported retention data.

To address enrollment challenges, the college is expanding outreach efforts with community groups, housing services, and healthcare networks to attract Adult Basic Education and English language learners. Programs with declining enrollment, such as the bachelor's degree in IT, are under review for restructuring. Meanwhile, new program development and expansion of existing cohorts, such as the Medical Assistant program, are already underway in partnership with local organizations.

Regarding retention, initial gains have been strong, though further improvements are expected to be gradual. The team is tracking fall-to-fall retention and second-year

progress, including success in college-level math and English, while ensuring students' progress into their second year, including success in college-level math and English courses.

The discussion emphasized the need to better share student success stories and program highlights as part of a coordinated recruitment and marketing strategy. Aligning marketing efforts with retention goals will strengthen the message to prospective students. Board members were encouraged to contribute ideas and questions to shape future marketing efforts, particularly for the upcoming session with Amanda Haines.

Lastly, it was acknowledged that student retention extends beyond the first year and involves ongoing support. Expanding the success course or similar programs to other student groups, such as those in Basic Skills, presents an opportunity to increase engagement and persistence. Work continues to refine data tracking and targeted support strategies to help all students succeed.

### Accreditation

Fia Eliasson-Creek, Executive Director of Institutional Research, provided an update on the college's accreditation status, focusing on progress made following the 2025 evaluation of institutional effectiveness. During that evaluation, the accreditation team issued four recommendations, including the need to widely and transparently share the college's assessment processes, methodologies, and data on resource allocation aimed at improving student achievement.

A key concern from the evaluators was that assessment data had been closely controlled and not widely shared with faculty, deans, or the rest of the college community. This data had not been integrated into planning or resource allocation decisions, limiting its usefulness.

Initially, assessment data collection was managed by a single faculty member and stored privately on a personal computer. Faculty submitted data through an unstructured process, which led to inconsistencies, inaccuracies, and missing information. It was difficult for anyone to analyze student achievement outcomes effectively across the institution.

To address these issues, the Institutional Research Office worked to secure permission to access the data and began the process of cleaning and organizing it. Recognizing the limitations of the existing system, Eliasson-Creek commissioned the development of a new online application designed to streamline data entry. This app enforces structured input aligned with course outlines, ensuring that outcomes reported are consistent and linked accurately from course-level outcomes to program outcomes, to institutional student learning competencies.

The new system stores data on the college's SQL Server, making it accessible and easy to aggregate, sort, and analyze. To further increase transparency and usability, a dashboard was created that allows faculty, deans, and the entire college community to review assessment results by outcome, course, and program.

Eliasson-Creek outlined the rollout plan for the new assessment system to faculty. She will provide faculty with dashboard screenshots and a direct link to the live dashboard, enabling detailed exploration of assessment results by course, program, and distribution areas.

Connie Smejkal reported that the Assessment Committee responded well to the new system. She confirmed the dashboard would be officially released to faculty the following day. The goal is to have robust, well-shared data by the next accreditation visit demonstrating both student achievement outcomes and the college's use of this data in planning and resource allocation.

Smejkal explained one of the key features of the new assessment tool: it allows faculty to request resources directly through the system. Previously, such requests were informal and lacked documentation. Now, instructors can submit detailed requests linked to student learning outcomes, which are sent directly to Smejkal for review and tracking. Smaller requests are considered during budget planning, while larger needs may involve outreach to the college Foundation for additional funding. Smejkal noted the positive faculty feedback and emphasized that all resource requests must now follow this formal process. Since implementing this system, she no longer accepts resource requests outside of this formal process, which has helped streamline planning and budgeting.

### **17. Executive Session**

Under RCW 42.30.110, the board may hold an executive session for the purpose of reviewing the performance of a public employee and current or potential agency litigation or to review professional negotiations.

At 5:55 pm board members moved into executive session to consult with legal counsel about current or potential litigation and to review the performance of public employees. The Board will be in Executive Session until 6:10 p.m. unless notified that the time is extended.

The Board has adjourned the Executive Session and reconvenes in Open Session. The time is 6:10 p.m.

The Board will proceed with the final agenda items.

### **18. Action from Executive Session**

There was no action from executive session.

### **19. Announcement of Upcoming Meeting Date and Place:**

The next board meeting will be Thursday, November 13, 2025 via Teams and Centralia College Boardrooms, Centralia, WA.

### **20. Comments**

### **21. Adjournment:**

The meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

### **APPROVED:**

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*Annalee Tobey, Board Chair*

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*Dr. Bob Mohrbacher, Board Secretary*