

Cascadia College Board of Trustees

Regular Meeting Minutes – May 21, 2025

Location: 18345 Campus Way NE, Bothell, WA 98011

Time: 4:00 PM – 6:21 PM

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Present: Dr. Colleen Ponto, Chair; Dr. Meghan Quint, Vice Chair; Alex Lee, Shahryar Quadri

EXECUTIVE STAFF

Chari Davenport, Dr. Kerry Levett, Erin Blakeney, Sean Poellnitz, Dr. Eric Murray, Dr. Ellen Evans, AAG.

Susan Thomas (recorder)

Thais Lima (presentation assistant)

AUDIENCE

Audience members via Zoom included: See Addendum A

1. Public Meeting Call to Order

Chair Dr. Colleen Ponto officially called the regular meeting of the Cascadia College Board of Trustees to order at **4:00 PM**. She welcomed attendees and noted that the board would enter an executive session shortly to discuss confidential matters.

2. Executive Session

At **4:05 PM**, the Board entered into Executive Session as permitted under RCW 42.30.110 to discuss personnel issues and legal matters.

3. Return to Public Meeting

The Board reconvened in Public Session at **4:30 PM**.

At this time, President Dr. Eric Murray requested that the **Tenure Action Item** be moved ahead of the Information Items for timely discussion and voting.

MOTION: Trustee Alex Lee

SECOND: Vice Chair Dr. Meghan Quint

OUTCOME: Approved unanimously by all board members present.

4. Consent Agenda

Chair Ponto presented the Consent Agenda for approval. No modifications were proposed.

MOTION: Trustee Alex Lee

SECOND: Vice Chair Dr. Meghan Quint

OUTCOME: Approved unanimously.

5. Public Comments

There were **no public comments** submitted or made during the meeting.

6. New Employees / Promotions

Vice President Sean Poellnitz introduced the following new members of the Cascadia staff:

- **Aman Siid** – IT Support Analyst
- **Gergina Lazarova** – Assistant Accounting Manager

Vice President Erin Blakeney’s staff introduced the following new members of the Cascadia staff:

- **Gianfranco Herrera** – Academic Advisor, Running Start Specialist
- **Vishaan Jethra** – Program Coordinator, Student Success Services
- **Torina Scott** – Customer Service Specialist III, Enrollment Services

The Board welcomed the new employees and expressed appreciation for their commitment to student success.

Action Item Moved to Front of Agenda:

Tenure Resolutions

President Murray and Vice President Levett presented three faculty members for tenure after extensive evaluation by Tenure Review Committees and administrative recommendations.

- **Dr. Khai Button**
MOTION: Trustee Alex Lee
SECOND: Vice Chair Meghan Quint
OUTCOME: Unanimous approval
- **Dr. Victor Begay**
MOTION: Vice Chair Meghan Quint
SECOND: Trustee Shahryar Qadri
OUTCOME: Unanimous approval
- **Dr. Kimia Ghanbeigi**
MOTION: Trustee Alex Lee
SECOND: Trustee Shahryar Qadri
OUTCOME: Unanimous approval

7. Information Items

A. 10th Day Enrollment Report

Dr. Kerry Levett and Erik Blakeney shared enrollment data through the tenth instructional day. Current enrollment aligns with expected patterns, with slight variances from prior years. The report highlighted ongoing challenges and strategies to improve enrollment and retention.

B. Tentative 2025–2026 Board Meeting Calendar & Retreat Date

Trustees were given a preview of the proposed board calendar and invited to suggest adjustments before the final version is adopted in June. A potential retreat was also discussed.

8. Discussion & Presentation Items

A. Psychology Student Success & Conference Participation

Professor Garth Neufeld, with the support of Guided Pathways grant funding, brought nine psychology students to the Western Psychological Association Conference in Las Vegas.

Student participants shared their transformative experiences:

- **Lily Bennett** (Running Start student, Inglemoor HS): Described the conference as invaluable and inspiring.
- **Oscar Rojas-Onofre** (Running Start student, Monroe HS): Appreciated the real-world exposure to academic research.
- **Alex** (Cascadia student): Emphasized the personal and academic growth gained from networking opportunities.

B. Mission Fulfillment Moment: Math & English Placement Equity

Dr. Levett introduced **Elizabeth Banning, M.S.**, who presented an analysis of student placement and success outcomes. The report identified disparities and outlined interventions.

Math faculty **Megan Luce** and **Linda Richards** discussed how revised placement processes are improving equitable access and outcomes for underrepresented student groups.

C. Associated Students – S&A Fee Allocation

Becky Riopel presented the student-led Services & Activities (S&A) Fee Allocation Process. The Equity and Budget Committee (EAB) met for over 18 hours across two weeks to deliberate on allocations.

- Fee amounts are determined by the state, but student input is central to prioritizing funding.
- Decision-making emphasized equity and inclusion.

D. Associated Students – Budget Presentation

Olivia Kent-Horton provided highlights:

- Departmental funding requests increased significantly.
- The Jumpstart program may become a mandatory onboarding experience.
- Student safety will be addressed at the June meeting.

MOTION TO APPROVE ASCCBudget: Vice Chair Quint

SECOND: Trustee Lee

OUTCOME: Unanimous approval

E. Monthly Finance Report (FY25–26 Budget Forecast and FY24-25 Review)

Presented by **Sean Poellnitz**.

- Strong fiscal management avoided a planned \$1M drawdown for 24-25.
- A projected **5% decline in international students** and 7% increase in domestic students are considered conservative estimates.
- Budget subcommittee members **Alex Lee** and **Colleen Ponto** endorsed the report and the proposed 25-26 Budget recommendation.

MOTION TO APPROVE 25-26 BUDGET: Trustee Lee

SECOND: Trustee Qadri

OUTCOME: Unanimous approval

9. Action Items

A. Parking Fees

A follow-up to last month's review. The board voted on a 3% annual increase over three years, per President Murray's recommendation.

MOTION: Vice Chair Quint

SECOND: Trustee Lee

OUTCOME: Approved unanimously

B. ASCC Budget

Budget was approved earlier during the meeting.

C. Tenure

Tenure for three candidates was approved earlier during the meeting.

10. Other Reports

A. Cascadia Events & Advocacy Board (EAB)

Student Rep **Olivia Kent-Horton** highlighted recent and upcoming initiatives:

- Events: Wicked Night, Spring Involvement Fair
- Advocacy: Common Hour feedback, Student Needs: Gathering Spaces, Student Employment, Lower Parking Fees
- Common Hour survey results finalized and report pending distribution

B. Cascadia Community College Federation of Teachers

Dave Shapiro emphasized academic freedom and encouraged trustees to read a letter from Brandy Winegarden, calling it an inspirational statement on faculty autonomy.

C. Cascadia Classified Union (WPEA)

Ryan Higgins informed the board that the governor signed the new budget, excluding the anticipated COLA increase for classified staff. He read a prepared letter expressing concern and disappointment.

D. Reports from Board Chair and Trustees

- **Chair Ponto** attended a Northshore School District meeting—highlighted progress in hiring a new superintendent.
- **Trustee Lee** reported on a visit to Lake Washington School District, expressing mutual appreciation.
- **Vice Chair Quint** noted that she and Trustee Lee attended the End-of-Year Celebration and praised the vibrant community culture.

E. President's Report – Dr. Eric Murray

- Acknowledged staff for their efforts in preparing the budget.
- Upcoming June meeting will include a celebration for **VP Kerry Levett**.
- Will attend a UW Seattle event honoring **President Cauce's** decade of service and retirement.
- Shared updates on public school district partnerships.

11. Other Business or Announcements

No additional business or announcements were introduced.

12. Next Meeting

Date: Wednesday, **June 18, 2025**

Agenda will include final approval of the 2025–26 Board Calendar.

13. Meeting Adjournment

Chair Dr. Colleen Ponto adjourned the meeting at **6:21 PM**.

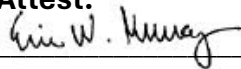
Approval of Minutes

Approved and Adopted on: June 18, 2025



Dr. Colleen Ponto, Board Chair

Attest:



Dr. Eric Murray, President

Addendum A

Board of Trustees Meeting Attendance	Present
Eric Murray, President	X
Colleen Ponto, Chair	X
Meghan Quint, Vice Chair	X
Alex Lee, Trustee	X
Shayryar Qadri	X
Ellen Evans, AAG	X
Erin Blakeney	X
Kerry Levett	X
Chari Davenport	X
Sean Poellnitz	X
Olivia Kent-Horton	X
Thais Lima	X
Susan Thomas	X
Ryan Higgins	X
Jullia Thurman Lascurain	X
Tonio Shapiro	X
Lily Bennet	X
Oscar Rojas-Onofre	X
Erik Tinglestad	X
Deann Holliday	X
Garth Neufeld	X
Alexandria Otero	X
Lelia Olson	X
Laura Heddal	X
Debra Waddell	X
Shawna Pitts	X
Kelly Leahy	X
Chris Byrne	X
David Ortiz	X
Kristina Young	X
Teya Viola	X
Michael Horn	X

Becky Riopel	X
Yukari Zednick	X
Fernanda Meer	X
Linda Richard	X
Ifrah Mohamed	X
Khai Button	X
Kimia Ghanbeigi	X
Victor Begay	X
Elizabeth Banning	X
Richard Lewis	X
Aman Siid	X
Tori Scott	X
Ana Nina	X
Gergina Lazarova	X
Jacinth Nurse	X
Miyuki Sandoval	X
Vishaan Jethra	X
GianFranco Herrera	X
Chantal Carrancho	X
Vickie Ashe	X
Larissa Tikhonova	X
Tasha Vice	X
Jamie Rocco	X

Addendum B

Dear Eric Murray,

As you know since the college was founded 25 years ago classified staff have lost over 21% of their real income to inflation due to subpar Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs), and this does not even account for the cost of living crisis in our area. This year classified staff will receive no COLA at all. This is a failure that you cannot just keep blaming on others.

After bargaining for almost a year your employees made basically every concession OFM (the team that represents you in bargaining) demanded, agreeing to a 3% COLA for 2025 even though the state's own prediction was a CPI increase of 3.8%. But when the final contract was sent to the state legislature last month they decided that they had received it "too late" to be included in the legislative budget. This means your employees get nothing. Why was this received late?

Seven months ago on October 16th I gave a presentation to you and the board explaining in detail why 91% of members voted to reject OFM's first offer. On November 20th I warned you that OFM was refusing to return to bargaining and asked you to do something to bring them back to the table. When they finally came back to the table after MONTHS of delays I kept you updated, the most common update being "no real progress has been made on bargaining".

What did you do in response? From what I have seen, nothing.

You cannot blame this outcome on OFM, you choose to have them bargain on the college's behalf and pay them to represent you.

You cannot blame this outcome on the bargaining process. No Cascadia College representative bothered to even show up to bargaining outside of a handful of meetings that I had to beg you to attend.

You cannot blame this outcome on your bargaining coalition. Five other colleges expressed concern and even boycotted meetings because they disagreed with OFM's bargaining strategy, and you were not one of them.

You cannot blame this outcome on lack of influence or power to act. As I understand it you are the longest serving college president in the coalition and have been coalition president. In your Friday Letter on May 2nd you described how you used this influence to try and protect potentially millions of dollars for CC5 through various avenues. Where was any of that fight for your classified employees and the less than \$100,000 that would have funded our raises?

Even when you have had the chance to do something individually at Cascadia you failed us. I sent my first email to the college outlining a proposal for free classified employee parking on August 11th. After 6 months of emails, meetings, and presentations you finally announced that you would engage in “preliminary” discussions on February 25th. Now three months later you have again pulled the plug on something that might have benefitted classified employees.

Six months ago you asked me to prepare a presentation to this board on what it would look like to break away from the Higher Ed bargaining coalition and to try and negotiate a contract locally instead. But given your actions, and especially your lack of actions, why should anyone expect something different from you? Why would this end in anything other than another failure to support your employees?

Sincerely,

Ryan Higgins

Dear Ryan,

This communication is in response to your letter to me, which you presented at the May 21 Board of Trustees meeting. Your letter and my response will both be included in the May board materials. Please note that due to pending litigation between WPEA and the State of Washington, I am not responding to certain topics you mention. However, please know that our college leadership is striving to support every employee.

Please see below the statements from your letter, followed by my responses in red.

“After bargaining for almost a year your employees made basically every concession OFM (the team that represents you in bargaining) demanded, agreeing to a 3% COLA for 2025 even though the state’s own prediction was a CPI increase of 3.8%. But when the final contract was sent to the state legislature last month they decided that they had received it “too late” to be included in the legislative budget. This means your employees get nothing. Why was this received late?”

The statutory deadline under RCW 41.80 for contracts to be submitted to the Director of the Office of Financial Management is October 1 prior to the legislative session at which requests are to be considered. The tentative agreement was ratified on April 3, 2025, and was submitted to the Legislature for approval. The Legislature did not approve funding for the 2025-2027 CBA.

“What did you do in response? From what I have seen, nothing.”

Due to pending litigation, I cannot comment on this.

“You cannot blame this outcome on OFM, you choose to have them bargain on the college’s behalf and pay them to represent you.”

Washington State institutions of higher education may elect to have the Office of Financial Management, as the Governor's designee, conduct labor negotiations on their behalf, RCW 41.80.010(4). Cascadia is one of thirteen community colleges comprising the community college coalition; OFM represents the coalition in bargaining with the WPEA.

“You cannot blame this outcome on the bargaining process. No Cascadia College representative bothered to even show up to bargaining outside of a handful of meetings that I had to beg you to attend.”

The interests of the community college coalition are represented by OFM; nevertheless, Cascadia did ensure that a representative from the college was physically present for the majority of bargaining sessions through March of 2025.

“You cannot blame this outcome on your bargaining coalition. Five other colleges expressed concern and even boycotted meetings because they disagreed with OFM’s bargaining strategy, and you were not one of them.”

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As I indicated to you and the Trustees, I started developing a strategy for this last October. Unfortunately, given the current budget deficit, and in consideration of feedback from the Budget Council, free parking is not an option at this time.

Six months ago you asked me to prepare a presentation to this board on what it would look like to break away from the Higher Ed bargaining coalition and to try and negotiate a contract locally instead. But given your actions, and especially your lack of actions, why should anyone expect something different from you? Why would this end in anything other than another failure to support your employees?

You were invited to share your viewpoint on Cascadia's membership in the community college coalition. You are welcome to continue informing me and the Board about your constituents' thoughts.