



Grays Harbor College provides meaningful and engaging learning opportunities and support services to enhance the knowledge, skills, and abilities of our students and support the cultural and economic needs of our community.

Grays Harbor College Board of Trustees Regular Meeting

Board Meeting: The Board meeting was convened on December 9, 2025, at 1:10 PM.

Members Present: Dr. Paula Akerlund, Jim Sayce, Dr. Harry Carthum

Members Present on Zoom: Aliza Esty

Others Present: Holly Bringman, Ja'Shona Cooks, Derek Edens, Dr. Carli Schiffner, Jason Gordon, Matthew Barber, Cathy LeCompte, Kristy Anderson, Erin Tofte, Cassaundra Smith, Lori Christmas, Holly Duffy, Kiah Balken, Maya Esquivido, Cherie Edwards, Tia Lutz, JEB Thornton, Jared Stratton, Sean Lyons, Anita Plagge, Tom Kuester, Ginelle Hanaway, Sydni Yeager, Lisa Getty, Virgil Matthews, Annethe Orona, Camryn Scheuber, Kaleb Ames, Isaac Humiston, Angel Galeana, Sarah Dalrymple, Marco Cerqueira

Others Present on Zoom: Penny James, Jennifer Johnson, Julie Randall, Amy Hitchcock, Dr. Aaron Coby, Lisa Smith, Heidi Wood, Ariel Finfrock, Annalee Atwell-Tobar, Lizbeth Sánchez, Jody Pope, Cheyenna Carroll, Jamie Traugott, Sarina Tung, Ashley Bowie-Gallegos, Jackie Blumberg, Carla Idohl-Corwin, PJ Moore, Ariel Finfrock, Patrick Martin, Marjie Stratton, Brian Mahoney

A study session featuring a Tribal Government Affairs update by Maya Esquivido from the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and a Native Pathways Program update by Cherie Edwards and Tia Lutz from Grays Harbor College was held at 12:00 PM.

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Dr. Paula Akerlund called the meeting to order at 1:10 PM. Roll call was taken by Ja'Shona Cooks.

II. Safety statement

Chair Dr. Paula Akerlund called attention to the safety statement.

III. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Dr. Paula Akerlund led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

IV. Land Acknowledgment

Jim Sayce read the Land Acknowledgment. Chair Dr. Paula Akerlund thanked him for doing so.

V. Agenda Adoption

Chair Dr. Paula Akerlund called for a motion to adopt the agenda. Jim Sayce moved to approve the agenda, and Dr. Harry Carthum seconded the motion. The motion carried.

VI. Public Comments

Lori Christmas, Grays Harbor College employee, shared information about the Montesano Festival of Lights Parade.

VII. Celebration

Holly Bringman celebrated Coach Virgil Matthews for his induction into the University of Montana Hall of Fame. Matthews briefly shared remarks reflecting on his experience and the significance of the honor.

Bringman also recognized the collective efforts supporting the Harbor Landing Food Pantry, including Student Life, the GHC Foundation, Jamie Traugott from the State Board, and the community. Isaac Humiston extended appreciation to the students and staff who contributed to assembling food baskets and supporting food pantry operations. He also thanked and welcomed new employees Marco Cerqueira and Angel Galeana, who began their roles on December 1.

VIII. New Employee Introductions

Erin Tofte introduced new employees. Amy Hitchcock joined the College as Program Manager A at the Ilwaco Campus. Angel Galeana transitioned into the Student Life Coordinator position. Crystal Butler joined as a Corrections Education Navigator at Stafford Creek Corrections Center. Leilani Polk joined the College as a TRIO Student Support Specialist. David Minkler joined as a Grounds and Nursery Specialist 3.

IX. Review Items

1. First Reading of Operational Policy 503 - Financial Management
 - a. Jason Gordon provided a brief overview of Operational Policy 503 and the review process that took place. He noted that there were no significant changes to the policy.
2. First Reading of Operational Policy 504 - Cash Control
 - a. Jason Gordon provided a brief overview of Operational Policy 504 and shared that the policy received minor revisions. He also clarified that surplus funds refer to cash and investments held as reserves.

X & XI. Action Items & Standing Reports

Action Items

1. Approval of November 18, 2025 Minutes
 - a. Chair Dr. Paula Akerlund called for a motion to approve the November 18, 2025 meeting minutes. Dr. Harry Carthum moved to approve the minutes, and Jim Sayce seconded the motion. The motion carried.
2. Second Reading of Operational Policy 403 - Federal Educational Right and Privacy Act (FERPA)
 - a. Discussion noted that FERPA violations are tracked by the Registrar's Office and Human Resources.
 - b. Chair Dr. Paula Akerlund called for a motion to approve Operational Policy 403 - Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Jim Sayce moved to approve the policy, and Dr. Harry Carthum seconded. The motion carried.
3. Second Reading of Operational Policy 501 - Business Functions, Delegation of Authority
 - a. Chair Dr. Paula Akerlund called for a motion to approve Operational Policy 501 - Business Functions, Delegation of Authority. Dr. Harry Carthum moved to approve the policy, and Jim Sayce seconded. The motion carried.

Standing Reports

1. Student Government Report (Isaac Humiston)

Isaac Humiston reported that December holiday baskets are currently being distributed. He also shared that Student Government has registered to attend Advocacy Day on February 5.

2. Classified Staff Report (Jared Stratton)

Jared Stratton informed the Board that this would be his final report and that he is working to identify a replacement. He expressed appreciation to the Board for their support.

3. Represented Exempt Staff Report (Shelly Hoffman)

There were no updates beyond the written report.

4. Faculty report (Anita Plagge)

Anita Plagge acknowledged Tom Kuester for his service as the Grays Harbor College Federation of Teachers (GHCFT) President over the past three years and introduced Sean Lyons as the incoming GHCFT President.

5. Administrative Services Report (Jason Gordon)

Jason Gordon reported that budget development for the upcoming fiscal year is underway, with budget managers' submissions due by the end of the month. He shared that revenue projections will begin next, and that he will continue to monitor state level projections.

Gordon also reported that KPFF Consulting Engineers will begin predesign work related to the Lake Swano Dam. Representatives from KPFF Consulting Engineers will be on campus later this week to conduct site data collection and hold a project kick-off. He explained that the predesign phase involves analyzing the dam and evaluating options for the College's next steps, followed by a design phase that will inform future construction decisions. Discussion then ensued regarding cash payment options at athletic events.

6. Human Resources Report (Erin Tofte)

Erin Tofte noted that the organizational charts included in the report are updated monthly and posted on the public Cabinet webpage. She shared that the Director of Advising position and the Associate Dean at Stafford Creek Corrections Center position have now been posted. Tofte also provided the Board new employee identification badges.

7. Learning & Student Success Report (Holly Bringman)

Holly Bringman provided an enrollment update, reporting that total enrollment is at approximately 1,180 students, including Running Start and Stafford Creek Corrections Center (SCCC) enrollments. She shared that several enrollment initiatives are underway, including a call campaign beginning this week and Enrollment Days scheduled for Tuesday and Wednesday of next week. Bringman also noted that 86 percent of Running Start students are enrolled full-time.

Bringman reported that the Bachelor of Science in Computer Science program, developed in collaboration with Teri Bell, Jaime Reino, and Dr. Aaron Coby, has been approved and submitted to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) for a planned Fall 2027 launch.

She also shared that the Culinary Arts program is transitioning from a certificate to a degree pathway. The two-year Associate of Arts degree has been approved by the NWCCU and does not constitute a new program in the College's program inventory. Discussion followed regarding growing the program's capacity, including short-term and continuing education offerings.

8. President's Report (Dr. Carli Schiffner)

Dr. Carli Schiffner expressed appreciation to the Celebration Committee for hosting yesterday's Holiday Celebration. She also thanked Jared Stratton and Marjie Stratton for their service and time at the College. Dr. Schiffner shared that the upcoming legislative session is expected to focus on budget cuts, and the College is preparing locally. She noted that the Governor's proposed budget is anticipated within the next week. The College's advocacy message will focus on maintaining status quo funding for community colleges and fully funding cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs). She also shared that efforts are underway to organize visits to Olympia.

a. Accreditation (Kristy Anderson)

The written report provides an update on the Year 7 Report, and feedback will soon be gathered from campus. Positive feedback has been received from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) regarding the College's previous accreditation report.

9. Board Reports

a. Foundation Meeting Report (Astrid Aveledo & Lisa Smith)

Lisa Smith reported that the *Journey Campaign* mail appeal has been sent to donors and will run through the end of February. She also shared that the College was awarded a grant from the AMB Foundation to support the Native Pathways Program, with the Grays Harbor College Foundation serving as the fiduciary manager. The grant will help expand outreach efforts, provide technology support, and offer culturally relevant programming for the Native Pathways Program. Smith added that the Foundation will continue working with Cherie Edwards and Tia Lutz to pursue additional grant opportunities.

b. Legislative Committee Report (Jim Sayce)

Jim Sayce reported that he has been in contact with legislative staff and is working to schedule a meeting during the third week of January. Dr. Carli Schiffner added that the Legislative Send Off will take place on January 9. Prior to the event, a morning meeting will be held in collaboration with the Port of Grays Harbor to hear directly from local representatives and discuss community needs.

c. Fiscal Liaison Report (Aliza Esty)

Aliza Esty reported that she met with Jason Gordon to discuss ways to provide additional context for the budget, including better connecting FTE data to the overall budget picture.

d. Items of Interest (Dr. Paula Akerlund)

There were no items of interest.

XIV. Executive Session

The Board entered a closed executive session at 2:10 PM under RCW 42.30.110 to consult with legal counsel regarding ongoing legal matters and personnel matters. The session was scheduled to last approximately 15 minutes. The Board reconvened in open session at 2:24 PM.

XV. Action Items as a Result of the Executive Session

No action was taken as a result of the executive session.

XVI. Good of the Order

Dr. Harry Carthum asked about the current Running Start FTE. It was shared that the current Running Start headcount is approximately 430 students. Discussion followed regarding the overall experience of Running Start students and diversifying funding streams. It was also shared that the College currently has eight open staff positions, with one faculty position anticipated to open in January.

XVII. Adjournment/next meeting

There being no further business, Chair Dr. Paula Akerlund adjourned the meeting at 2:30 PM. The Board of Trustees will hold its next meeting on January 13, 2026 at 1:00 PM, at Grays Harbor College in Aberdeen and via Zoom.

Dr. Carli Schiffner, Secretary

Dr. Paula Akerlund, Chair