

South Puget Sound Community College
Special Board of Trustees Meeting
Tuesday, July 8, 2025
Center for Student Success,
Building 22-Room 195
South Puget Sound Community College
2011 Mottman Road, S.W.
Olympia, WA 98512-6292

SPECIAL MEETING

Under RCW 42.30.080, a special meeting of the Board of Trustees, District 24, South Puget Sound Community College, was held on Tuesday, July 8, 2025, 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. in the Center for Student Success, Building 22-Room 195, 2011 Mottman Road SW, Olympia, WA 98512. The Board of Trustees had a retreat for their special meeting.

Trustee Judy Hartmann, Trustee Rozanne Garman, Trustee Jeff Davis, Trustee Doug Mah, and Trustee Steven Drew were present.

Entrepreneur Academy

Omey Nandyal, Instructor and Foundation Board member and Noel Rubadue, Dean of Corporate & Continuing Education, reviewed the program and presented the first-year outcomes of the Entrepreneur Academy:

- The program launched its inaugural cohort with 13 students in July 2024, exceeding initial expectations of four applicants. Out of the original 13, 10 students successfully completed the full program.
- The program began with a focus on creating a financial education platform with the intent of bringing practical financial literacy to schools, not just in the area but potentially statewide and nationally.
- The initial discussion about credit card fees and banking industry sparked a conversation about financial debit cards. Many students voiced general dissatisfaction with the debit cards on which they received college refunds, due to high fees. The students identified an opportunity, and as a result, in October 2024, the program pivoted to focus on developing a financial aid application, aiming to replace problematic debit cards with a new, lower-fee option. The project also addressed the lack of efficient systems for matching students with appropriate aid sources. The new vision included not just delivering funds more effectively, but also using data to better align the matching of student needs to available funds.
- In December 2024, a prototype was developed, which marked the transition from concept to tangible product. The original student cohort became the co-founders of SoundGen Financial in February 2025 and were awarded stock certificates.

There were 14 mentors who supported the students in branding, company setup, marketing, etc.

- The company structure ensures student ownership and involvement, with a portion of equity allocated to the Foundation and to a growth fund for sustainability.
- SPSCC was secured as the first customer of the product. The beta launch of the application is scheduled for July 2025; full production expected for the fall quarter; and a capital raise is planned for October 2025.
- The students attended enrichment activities that included trips to college venture groups and industry conferences, which fostered networking and exposure to entrepreneurial practices.
- Partnerships were formed with public and private financial education organizations, school districts, and a credit union interested in supporting the debit card component.
- A core focus was placed on company culture. Students collaboratively created a “culture book” with three key tenets: transparency through accountability; respect through ownership; and innovation through exploration.
- The program proved that students can successfully create, build, and launch a company. Key learnings included the importance of culture, the power of mentorship, and the need to equip students with practical, current tools and confidence to compete for high-value opportunities in the workforce or as founders.
- Cohort II will launch with 17 students in July 2025. The new cohort will tackle a disruptive project in a \$57B industry, based on an idea refined by the think tank for a year.
- The program continues to grow and attract new mentors, evolving into an ecosystem where each cohort can serve as a customer for the next, creating a self-sustaining flywheel of entrepreneurial growth.

AI Policy

Rip Heminway, Executive Technology Officer, and Dr. Melissa Meade, Dean of Humanities and Communication, presented the (Artificial Intelligence) AI Policy.

- Faculty saw immediate impacts of generative AI in classrooms, with students using AI for assignments. This raised urgent concerns around misuse, academic integrity and how to fairly assess student work, and the challenge of staying ahead of new AI technologies in teaching and assessment.
- The English faculty piloted using AI to generate essays on literary topics, quickly realizing the sophistication and possibility of AI-generated work. There was curiosity and excitement about the possibilities, but there was also concern about curricular disruption and academic dishonesty.
- They briefly reviewed:
 - MMLU (Massive Multi-discipline Multi-modal Understanding and Reasoning Benchmark for Expert AGI GPQA (Graduate-Level Google-Proof Q&A), is a public academic benchmark commonly used to measure

models' general question-answering performance and evaluate language models on challenging, graduate-level questions across STEM fields.

- The Humanities Last Exam (HLE), is a multi-modal benchmark designed to be the final closed-ended academic benchmark of its kind.
- They reviewed that AI models have seen rapid improvement in benchmarked accuracy, with state-of-the-art models reaching nearly college-level success rates in under a year and now surpassing graduate-level benchmarks in some cases.
- There was recognition that both faculty and staff need guidance and professional development to navigate the rapidly-changing AI landscape.
- The Ad hoc AI Taskforce led by Rip Heminway and Dr. Melissa Meade was comprised of faculty and staff with diverse perspectives, including both skeptics and enthusiasts. They grappled with the difficulty of creating policy for a technology that evolves so quickly, noting that the benchmarks for AI performance and best practices are in continual flux.
- Meetings were held twice per quarter, with careful adherence to shared governance review and approvals. Both AI tools and 'humans in the loop' approach were utilized in policy research, drafting, and synthesis.
- There was consensus that the policy be broad to remain nimble as technologies change, establishing foundational principles rather than rigid prescriptions.
- Central tenets include balancing academic freedom, ethical use, transparency, and data protection, while supporting innovation and alignment with complementary policies (such as academic integrity).
- The policy supports both instructional and administrative missions, with a focus on best practices for data security amid ongoing developments in AI models.
- The taskforce focused on 'doing right by the students'—preparing them for a workforce transformed by AI.

There was discussion on transparency in the use of AI, for example, in classroom assignments, institutional reports, briefings, or analysis that come to the board; on highlighting the need for aligned curriculum and new skill-building opportunities, and on considering student perspective when writing future AI-related policies.

- The Ad hoc AI Taskforce will evolve into a standing committee, maintaining ongoing oversight and policy development as AI technologies continue to advance.
- Ongoing support for professional development will be prioritized for both faculty and staff.
- An AI skills course or curriculum element will be explored to give all students foundational competencies, essential tools, and ethical awareness and ensure readiness for both workforce and transfer pathways.
- Continued monitoring of developments in other educational systems will inform future directions and resource allocation.

NWCCU Accreditation

Dr. Michelle Andreas, Vice President for Instruction, presented on Year 6, Standard 2: Policies, Regulations, and Financial Review (PRFR).

- Our 7-year visit was actually due this year, but NWCCU had broken it down into two parts:
 - Year 6: evaluation of institutional compliance with policies, regulations, and financial review (PRFR). The PRFR desk review replaces part of the previous seven-year accreditation on-site visit, making the process less burdensome and more document-focused. She noted policy review is ongoing and efforts are made to keep policies up-to-date. Feedback from the NWCCU liaison was incorporated into the report. She will send the Year 6 report to the board.
 - Year 7: evaluation of institutional effectiveness (the ways we do quality improvement across the college). Continuous improvement is embedded in college operations, not just in reporting cycles, with the executive team and a small writing group taking responsibility for report drafting and internal review. October 2026 will be our big 7-year visit; start of new strategic planning winter and finish in spring 2027. They are anticipating very few changes to the core themes, some work on the goals, mostly around the data.
- Standards in the PRFR include the following areas:
 - Governance structure of the institution including Board of Trustee policies
 - Qualification of administrators, faculty and staff and areas of responsibility
 - Qualification of the president
 - Decision-making structure
 - Academic freedom policies
 - Transfer of credit policies
 - Student rights and responsibilities policies
 - Student records policies
 - Communication policies
 - Ethics policies
 - Conflict of interest policies
 - Financial policies

Board Meeting Activities Schedule

The Board reviewed the draft Board Meeting Work Schedule for 2025-26: dates, plans, and Study Session topics.

- The Board revised and identified a few Study Session/topics of interest:
 - November 4, 2025: National Legislative update
 - January 13, 2026: Our work with tribes: BAS degree, tribal properties being established, water quality/environmental science, work with

Nisqually Land Trust, etc.

- May 12, 2026: Unlocking Opportunity update; Outcome of Transfer Study

Board Committee Assignments

The Trustees confirmed their committee assignments for 2025-26:

- ACT Legislative Action Committee (Trustee Doug Mah, primary; Trustee Steven Drew, secondary)
- Board Finance Committee (Trustee Steven Drew, primary; Trustee Jeff Davis, secondary)
- Foundation Board (Trustee Rozanne Garman, primary; Trustee Judy Hartmann, secondary)

2024-26 Operational Plan

Dr. Dave Pelkey, Vice President for Student Services, Dr. Michelle Andreas, Vice President for Instruction, and Amanda Ybarra, Executive Diversity Officer, answered questions the trustees had on the 2024-26 Operational Plan. Some of the discussion highlights are below:

- While student housing was included in the capital projects narrative of the Operational Plan, it needed clearer emphasis, so there was consensus to explicitly highlight student housing as a separate item due to its importance.
- The college offers both a professional-technical program (preparing students for the workforce) and a transfer program (for further education at four-year colleges and universities). Partnerships allow for seamless transfer into programs like cybersecurity and applied management.
- In healthcare, the college is seeking to expand offerings, including a pathway from LPN to BSN and additional fields like radiology and medical imaging. The conversation covered the need for specialized facilities, especially for imaging, due to regulatory requirements. There was ongoing assessment of demand and student interest for programs like surgical technology, with recognition that some fields face enrollment challenges despite high workforce demand.
- Clarification was provided that the only current bachelor's degree offered is in computer science, with work underway to develop a bachelor's of applied science in Tribal Enterprises and Hospitality. There is also an intention to create a nursing bachelor's program. Partnerships were highlighted, including a 2+2 agreement with Centralia College for applied management, collaboration with Grays Harbor College for computer science, and an "upside down" degree with The Evergreen State College for students with technical backgrounds.
- The college regularly holds visioning events involving faculty and employers to align curriculum with workforce needs. Recent initiatives include updates to dental assisting, automotive, engineering, and architecture programs. Faculty engagement in shaping programs is crucial for maintaining quality and meeting industry requirements.

- Facility need for healthcare was discussed and the importance of maintaining student services in close proximity to support student success, particularly for healthcare students who require additional support.
- Attention turned to “stop outs”—students who leave before completing a degree. The college uses CRM and communication strategies to re-engage these students, but return rates are low. Many students only intend to take select classes, which complicates data tracking and understanding intent. Plans are in place to implement a new survey system to better capture students’ educational goals and intentions.
- There is rising concern about security for students and the impact of state and federal policies, including immigration enforcement, on student engagement and wellbeing. Partnerships with tribal nations were considered as ways to ensure safety and build community connections.

President’s 2025-2026 Goals

As part of Dr. Stokes’ presidential evaluation, his 2025-26 internal and external goals were reviewed and discussed by the Board. The goals will be updated and finalized and provided to the Board.

Trustee Succession Planning

The Board discussed trustee appointments and terms and trustee succession planning.

2024-25 Board Self-Assessment

The Board of Trustees annually completes a Board Self-Assessment. The 2024-25 Board Self-Assessment Report was compiled and prepared by the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT). The Board reviewed and discussed the report.

ADJOURNMENT 2:05 P.M.


JUDY HARTMANN, BOARD CHAIR
SOUTH PUGET SOUND COMMUNITY COLLEGE


TIMOTHY STOKES, SECRETARY
SOUTH PUGET SOUND COMMUNITY COLLEGE