

**South Puget Sound Community College
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
REGULAR MEETING
Tuesday, November 4, 2025
Building 25-Boardroom
South Puget Sound Community College
2011 Mottman Road, S.W.
Olympia, WA 98512-6292**

CALL TO ORDER

Board Chair Judy Hartmann called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Trustee Judy Hartmann, Trustee Steven Drew, and Trustee Rozanne Garman were present for a quorum. Trustee Doug Mah was absent. Justin Kjolseth, Assistant Attorney General (AAG), was present.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 2:05 p.m. Board Chair Hartmann announced that the Board was going into Executive Session to review the performance of public employees ((RCW 42.30.110(1)(g))). The executive session was estimated to conclude at 2:30 p.m. unless otherwise extended at that time. No action was taken by the Board during the Executive Session.

RECONVENE REGULAR MEETING

The regular meeting reconvened at 2:33 p.m.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

It was moved by Trustee Drew, seconded by Trustee Garman, and carried **THAT THE FOLLOWING CONSENT AGENDA BE APPROVED. THE MOTION CARRIES.**

A. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

- October 14, 2025 regular board meeting

B. MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES

- ACT Fall Conference, November 13-14, 2025, Seattle
- ACT Trustee Tuesday, December 9, 2025, virtual

C. ANNOUNCEMENTS**D. DATE OF THE NEXT BOARD MEETING**

Regular Meeting
December 9, 2025
2:30-4:30 p.m.

South Puget Sound Community College
2011 Mottman Road, S.W.
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PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chair Hartmann announced, “Board Policy 105 (*Meetings*) allows for oral comments or questions by members of the public on any matter relevant to its responsibilities and duties in the operations of the college. Consistent with this policy, comments may be limited to three minutes per person. The board is here to listen and typically does not respond and/or engage in public comments. We will now hear from individuals who wish to comment.”

There were no comments.

BOARD SPECIAL COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORTS

- ACT Legislative Action Committee (LAC): Trustee Doug Mah--primary; Trustee Steven Drew--secondary
 - Trustee Drew reported there was no LAC report; a legislative update would be presented later in the agenda.
- Board Finance Committee: Trustee Steven Drew--primary
 - Trustee Drew reported the Board Finance Committee did not meet and there was no report.
- Foundation Board: Trustee Rozanne Garman--primary; Trustee Judy Hartmann--secondary
 - Trustee Garman reported:
 - She attended Foundation’s Aspen Celebration Happy Hour event, where she met current Foundation members and former trustee, Judy Blinn.
 - Brunch with a Purpose is scheduled on December 6, 2025.
 - Foundation Board 2025 Climate Survey is being distributed to assess member sentiments.
 - Encouragement for board members to participate in the application reviews for winter quarter scholarships.
 - Finance committee formed an RFP subcommittee to select an investment manager; four firms interviewed, recommendation is forthcoming at next Foundation board meeting. Selection process for investment managers is significant and can be political due to the foundation size and local vendor involvement; reminder this pertains to the Foundation board, not the Board of Trustees.

REPORT FROM THE COLLEGE PRESIDENT

- Dr. Stokes reported:
 - DSHS notified the State Board that the BFET (Basic Food Employment & Training) program was suspended as of October 1; invoices can be submitted through September 30, but the program is unlikely to be reactivated. WorkFirst is expected to be suspended on December 31, possibly permanently.
 - The college is currently covering BFET costs through fall, approximately

\$220,000 per quarter for both BFET and WorkFirst; no payment is expected for BFET invoices after September, and the program's return is uncertain. Administration may likely come to the Board for funding extension request for winter.

- The Foundation launched an emergency grant, distributing \$250 each to students who lost SNAP benefits; high demand indicates significant student need.
- The campus food pantry is seeing increased use due to cuts to the Thurston County Food Bank; cash donations to the Foundation for food cards are most impactful.
- Community non-profits, including the Economic Development Council (EDC) and United Way of Thurston County, are facing serious financial challenges. EDC's footprint at the Lacey campus will be reduced. United Way had discussed options of alignment, affiliation with a partner organization, or a merger with Pierce County United Way. United Way board directed the executive director to look at alignment and affiliation, and they reached out to the college's Lacey Center for some space. United Way may co-locate with the college to sustain operations, and lease negotiations are ongoing to help the EDC remain sustainable during financial difficulties.
- Active engagement continues with state and federal legislative matters, workforce development initiatives, and advocacy for community colleges.
- He will attend the upcoming AACC Economic Workforce Commission meeting in D.C., which will focus on Pell issues and the shift of workforce initiatives from the Department of Education to the Department of Labor. There is discussion about expanding workforce programs at community colleges, with the belief that these colleges can deliver services more efficiently and directly to clients, reducing bureaucracy.
- He and Marriya Wright, Dean of Allied Health, met with the executive director of the Washington Board of Nursing to discuss challenges in expanding nursing programs and excessive bureaucratic work. He also interviewed to join the Board of Nursing, emphasizing the need for a college administrator's perspective. The process appears slow, but efforts continue to secure representation.
- The executive team discussions are ongoing regarding allied health program space options, including meetings with The Evergreen State College, a review of the PacMtn (Pacific Mountain WorkForce Development) building, and an upcoming meeting with the Capital Medical Center administrator about Imaging Sciences space. The executive team is considering options, with a preference for investing in facilities closer to campus. Further ideas will be brought forward after more conversations.
- He noted the President's Outreach/Professional Development/Advocacy Activities List in TAB 2.

POLICY No Report.

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS No Report.

BUDGET AND FINANCE No Report.

STUDY SESSION

Legislative Update

Arlen Harris, Legislative Director for the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, provided a summary of the Governor's budget priorities, state legislative session focus, and national legislative update.

The governor's initial and supplemental budget priorities focus on exploring potential new expenditures, though details are not yet finalized. Key elements include addressing the impact of federal policies on both higher education and broader state operations.

The legislative session begins with a budget shortfall, and advocates plan to emphasize the essential role colleges play in workforce development, economic mobility, and providing affordable pathways out of poverty.

The college system's top concern is securing full funding for faculty and staff salary increases (\$15.3M) and ensuring compliance with statutory cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs), particularly those required by Initiative 732 (\$7.1M). There are ongoing efforts to cover unfunded salary increases and to fully fund new contracts, such as those recently ratified by classified staff.

Additionally, the legislature will consider funding to offset rising utility costs at colleges and ensure compliance with the Clean Buildings Act, as well as prioritize capital projects.

Two major legislative priorities for the session are: (1) expanding the Washington College Grant to support short-term certificate and continuing education programs, which would help laid-off workers and recent graduates re-skill for new careers; and (2) ensuring college nursing programs are recognized for meeting national accreditation standards, aiming to address the state's urgent nursing shortage while limiting unnecessary oversight if certification rates remain high.

Mr. Harris discussed recent federal priorities and legislative changes affecting Washington State's community colleges, especially around Pell Grant funding and support for minority-serving institutions. Advocacy efforts have been ongoing year-round, with notable contributions from Sen. Patty Murray, who helped restore Pell funding in the Senate's version of the bill. There was disappointment over Department of Education funds being primarily directed to HBCUs, leaving out Hispanic and Asia Pacific Islander-serving institutions in Washington. Local and federal outreach continues, led by college presidents, trustees, and staff, to maintain connections with D.C. and advocate for sustained support of programs like TRIO, Gear Up, and basic grants. The federal government shutdown has created uncertainty about funding

streams, though some programs have confirmed continued support through year-end.

Mr. Harris highlighted the positive impact of community college programs and emphasized the importance of ongoing advocacy and educational work.

Unlocking Opportunity

Dr. Michelle Andreas, Vice President for Instruction; Dr. Dave Pelkey, Vice President for Student Services; and Jennifer Evans, Office Technology professor, provided an introductory update on Aspen's Unlocking Opportunity initiative.

Purpose: "South Puget Sound Community College is engaging in Unlocking Opportunity to ensure that our students are graduating with livable wages and/or transferring and completing a bachelor's degree: Achieving the goals they established when entering SPSCC. We will continue our commitment to access, retention, and completion in addition to post-graduation goals."

The initiative began in September and is still new and many are just being introduced to the initiative. Aspen has outlined a clear process. The college's longstanding mission is to ensure graduates achieve living wages and sustainable careers, whether through workforce or transfer programs. The new Unlocking Opportunity initiative offers a roadmap to further this mission by focusing on student outcomes after graduation (post-completion success), without abandoning access, retention, or completion efforts. Nationally, declining economic mobility and widening wealth gaps make this work urgent. Post-secondary education is critical to economic mobility. The plan involves setting local living wage standards, classifying programs by post-completion outcomes (workforce wages, transfer degree completion), and setting goals to improve programs and pathways. The emphasis is on the opportunity each program provides, not individual student choices. The process includes faculty involvement, data analysis, and setting strategies to increase transfer success and wage outcomes, with the goal of better supporting students' long-term success.

Professor Evans shared early-stage thoughts on the following from faculty:

- Outdated data that may not accurately represent today's job market
- Initial wage comparisons show disparity: large wage gap between different living situations; single adult, no children vs. single adult with one child; similar challenges for households with two incomes and those faced by single parents
- Local employment opportunities and wage levels are important factors; Some concerns that students may graduate without the ability to earn a living wage; highlighted need for improving and expanding programs and possible bachelor's degree pathways
- Whether to use a single wage data point or multiple categories for program evaluation

Dr. Andreas noted the early stages of the initiative; ongoing efforts to gather more current and relevant employment data, with recognition that wage and cost-of-living

metrics will need regular updating; and collaborative, iterative work to improve programs over time similar to past guided pathways initiatives.

South Sound Review

Liona Burnham, English Professor, and student editors Jordan Nicolas and Claudine Andrea Valencia, provided an update on the South Sound Review (previously Percival Review) project.

The students previously published the Percival Review, a written publication of literary work by students. During her tenure process, Professor Burnham, together with students Jordan and Claudine, launched The South Sound Review—a website showcasing a wide range of student creative work, including writing, music, visual arts, and baking. Each day in May, a new student's work was featured online, broadening exposure beyond the college community. The project emphasizes accessibility, diversity in submissions, and aims to expand student participation of creative work from across all college programs. The team follows selection guidelines, minimally edits submissions, and strives to make the process sustainable by mentoring future editors. The initiative has been well received, significantly increasing the reach and celebration of student creativity.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION No Report.

COMMENTS FROM INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

EXECUTIVE SESSION None.

ACTION ITEM FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION None.

ADJOURNMENT 4:33 P.M.


JUDY HARTMANN, BOARD CHAIR
SOUTH PUGET SOUND COMMUNITY COLLEGE


TIMOTHY STOKES, SECRETARY
SOUTH PUGET SOUND COMMUNITY COLLEGE