

9-11-2007

## 2007 - Board of Trustee Meeting Minutes

Board of Trustees, Central Washington University

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/bot\\_minutes](http://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/bot_minutes)

---

### Recommended Citation

Board of Trustees, Central Washington University, "2007 - Board of Trustee Meeting Minutes" (2007). *CWU Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes*. Book 530.

[http://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/bot\\_minutes/530](http://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/bot_minutes/530)

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the University Archives and Special Collections at ScholarWorks@CWU. It has been accepted for inclusion in CWU Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@CWU.

September 11, 2007

Judy Yu  
Board Chair, Central Washington University

Jerilyn McIntyre  
President, Central Washington University

Dear Judy and Jeri:

It was a pleasure to work with you and your colleagues at Central Washington University. Thank you for that opportunity. As I understand it, you wanted an assessment from me based on my conversations with trustees and others, as well as my review of university materials. The comments that follow reflect my thinking about CWU's current situation, and steps that its trustees might consider as they plan for the future of this fine university. I would be happy to discuss any of these ideas with you at your convenience.

The trustees have the opportunity to resolve three important questions over the course of the coming year:

- What should be our priorities for strengthening an already fine university?
- What skill sets should we seek in a future president in order to bring about these changes?
- How do we wish to assert board leadership to support our university leaders and bring about our highest aspirations for Central itself?

#### Some Background

In the near future, the president will likely announce her intentions regarding her retirement to the university community. This announcement will not surprise many at the campus where there is plenty of speculation about the tenure of the president and some of her senior staff. But it will be a momentous turning point in the history of the university. Since 2000, President McIntyre has exerted a calm, reasoned and highly competent leadership style that has served Central extremely well. Following the failed presidency of her predecessor, she reunited the campus and has gone on to make it an extremely attractive venue for education, built the enrollment, assembled an able senior staff, and generally positioned Central to great advantage in the competition for students and public monies. President McIntyre not only brought peace to a troubled valley, she asserted positive leadership leaves the institution demonstrably stronger.

Central Washington University is an attractive, safe, convenient learning environment that many feel is "just the right distance" from the state's population center around Seattle. Its history is rooted in teacher development. Its heritage as a state normal school is indelibly etched on the façade of a major building on the boarder of the campus. By all accounts, it offers other strong programs as well with geology perhaps enjoying the strongest reputation in teaching and research.

Yet there are signs of some turmoil in the academic life at Central. Like other regional, comprehensive universities in Washington, Central is experiencing the first years of collective bargaining with faculty. The older traditions of academic shared governance are yielding to more formal and adversarial relationships. It will be some time before the administration, the faculty at large and faculty actively engaged in the union work out a reasonably comfortable *modus vivendi*. Attention to the achieving a contract and implementing it have likely pulled

administrative attention away from other important issues, including those surrounding recognition of the teacher education program.

During the time of my visits, it was reported that Central runs some risk of being put on probation by NCATE, the chief accrediting association for teacher preparation programs. At the same time, it appears that the state approval authority for teacher education has serious questions about Central's programs. It is important not to exaggerate these problems. NCATE is widely regarded as an excessively bureaucratic, input-focused organization that frustrates many truly effective teacher education programs. Yet it is the gold standard for recognition in this field. A black mark from this association would certainly damage Central's reputation with current and prospective students in its signature program. These problems with program accreditation and approval beg questions regarding the focus and effectiveness of academic leadership at Central.

Central is the only traditional regional comprehensive university in Washington that does not hold AACSB accreditation for its business programs. This recognition has been a topic of discussion for a decade, but apparently institutional will and resources have not been applied to gaining this accreditation. To be sure, there are plenty of good business programs that have not sought this relatively expensive option. Still, its lack at Central raises several questions. Are there distinctive features in the business program that at once make it exemplary and render accreditation unnecessary or even unadvisable? If not, is there material damage to Central's reputation or brand by standing alone without it? If AACSB accreditation is important to CWU and its students, why has the university not concentrated the resources and authority to achieve it?

In time, the new relationship dictated by collective bargaining will become familiar, though it will never be as congenial as the one it replaces. In time, the disputes over teacher education will be resolved. It remains to be seen if Central will actively pursue business accreditation. But the convergence of these issues point to the need to focus attention on the academic life of the university.

The board of trustees itself is changing. During the troubled presidency before President McIntyre arrived, trustees became deeply engaged in arranging the departure of one leader and securing a new one. They established a highly inclusive search process both for its obvious process benefits and as a symbol to the campus of their respect for shared decision making. Yet as it became clear to trustees that their new president was an able and confident leader, they withdrew from their former activist role. This pattern is common and reasonable. A crisis demands trustee intervention. A highly competent president needs their help far less.

This hands-off posture of the trustees, understandable in light of Central's history, frustrates newer trustees who do not share that history. Several of the newer trustees want to take a more active role in the life of the university. They are concerned with the accreditation issues mentioned above. They also bring new ideas to the table including expectations that Central will play a more vigorous role in the economic life of the region and that the university will devote more attention to its brand or reputation.

#### Whither Central Washington University and its Board?

Some boards of trustees would be content to address the academic problems mentioned above, but otherwise to coast along with an unexceptional agenda. To be sure, thanks in large measure to President McIntyre's effectiveness and the fortunate circumstance of its location, Central is in a sweet spot in many respects.

But I would encourage the trustees to pursue higher aspirations with respect to the university, its next president and the board itself. Regarding the University, why not seek to become a "premier, comprehensive university" rather than merely a pretty good one?

If the board seeks this more ambitious goal, it will want to discuss within its own ranks as well as with the campus and regional community, what it would mean to achieve this premier status. To be sure, the accreditation issues mentioned about would need to be solved. But the board would also want to ask itself and the university community questions about the optimal size of the institution; the standards for incoming students; criteria for hiring, promoting and tenuring faculty; policies on branch campuses and off-campus locations; which academic programs to emphasize; which additional accreditations (if any) to seek; the role of the honors program; how to identify the right benchmarks to match this aspiration; how would changes in academic programs and reputation building be financed; as well as a host of practical questions having to do with marketing, branding and national rankings.

Assuming that the trustees embrace this aspirational agenda, they would also need to define the job expectations for the new president in light of these goals. Probably the most that could be achieved before the new president arrived would be a commitment to seeking this higher status and a very broad understanding of what it would take to achieve it. An early assignment for the new president might be to develop with the campus community and the board a five-year plan for defining and achieving this premier status. In any event, if the board wants to move in this direction it will need to make these expectations explicit during the search process.

Finally, how should the board adjust its own behaviors and standards to become a higher performing unit and to support the achievement of premier status? As we discussed at the retreat, high performing boards develop a leadership partnership with their presidents centered on achieving ambitious university aspirations. This is a far different pattern from the traditional concept of trusteeship that centers on finding an able president and letting that person do their job. Practically, Central can really only pursue this high performing model after a new president is in place. But the transition period can be put to good use nevertheless.

During this transition period, the board will need to oversee a search process for a new leader. Trustees can use the search process itself as a time to discuss the future of the university with faculty, staff, students and community leaders. Wide ranging discussion prior to the beginning of the search will enable the board to develop consensus around key features of Central's future and what it means to be a premier comprehensive university. These discussions could also help solidify support for the new president and his or her agenda. I should emphasize that leading a search in the manner described here would require thoughtful organization and a major time commitment from trustees.

In my view, Central Washington University is an ably led, high quality, attractive and safe place for students to live and learn. The current problems with program accreditation are disturbing, but they can be successfully addressed. The key question facing its trustees is do they have the determination to invest the time and energy it will require to take this fine institution to the next higher level?

Respectfully submitted,

Terry MacTaggart  
101 Sidney Blvd.

Hampden, ME 04444  
207-478-9487; [tjm@maine.edu](mailto:tjm@maine.edu)