COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT TWELVE BOARD OF TRUSTEES Centralia College	
Hanson Boardrooms **Centralia College** **Centralia, Washington**	**Study Session/Regular Meeting** **October 8, 2026** **3:00 p.m.**

MINUTES

Study Session

CCSSE/DESSE

Fia Eliasson-Creek, Associate Vice President of Institutional Research, presented an overview of the 2026 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and the Dual Enrollment Student Engagement Survey (DESSE). The CCSSE is a national survey administered by the Center for Community College Student Engagement at the University of Texas at Austin. In 2026, 407 community colleges across 45 states participated. Centralia College received 537 valid CCSSE responses, representing 90% of the 600-student target. The respondent profile was representative of the college's student population, although full-time and female students were somewhat overrepresented and Hispanic/Latinx students were underrepresented. Eliasson-Creek noted that differences in how demographic information is collected may account for some of these differences.

CCSSE results are organized into five benchmarks: active and collaborative learning, student effort, academic challenge, student-faculty interaction, and support for learners. Centralia College scored above the overall mean and the small-college comparison group in active and collaborative learning; scores for the other four benchmarks were below the mean. Eliasson-Creek noted that raw scores would be needed for meaningful year-to-year comparisons.

Key findings related to enrollment and retention included:

- 89% of respondents registered for all classes before the term began.
- 77% reported that an advisor helped develop an academic plan during their first term.
- 48% participated in a student success course, although many students were unaware that an orientation course was available.
- Among students who reported struggling academically, 45% said the College had contacted them to provide assistance.
- 70% agreed or strongly agreed that they review progress on their educational plan with an advisor, and 70% said advising helped them understand program and degree requirements.
- The most identified factors that could lead students to leave the College were cost (52%), working full time (38%), first-generation status (37%), and caring for dependents (27%). It was noted that most identified risk factors were external, life-related circumstances.

Overall, 88% of respondents rated their experience at Centralia College as excellent or good, and 70% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt a sense of belonging at the college.

For the DESSE, which focused on Running Start students, 161 of 563 students provided valid responses, for a 29% response rate. The respondent profile was similar to the Running Start population. Fifty-six percent first learned about Running Start through friends, classmates, or family, while 35% identified high school counselors, faculty, or materials. Key barriers included scheduling conflicts (42%), balancing college and high school coursework (28%), academic preparedness (19%), and transportation (18%).

Positive findings included 90% of respondents reporting that they were motivated to succeed, 81% reporting increased confidence in succeeding in college after high school, and 62% reporting a more positive perception of community colleges. Seventy-seven percent agreed that they felt part of the Centralia College community, and 93% would recommend the Running Start program to a friend or family member.

1. **Call to Order**

   Board Chair Chris Thomas called the meeting to order at 4:08 p.m.

   Board members present:
   - Chris Thomas
   - Pretrina Mullins
   - Mark Scheibmeir
   - Court Stanley

2. **Introductions/Presentations:**

   Connie Smejkal, Vice President of Instruction, introduced the tenure track faculty:
   - Claire Carter, BAS in Teacher Education
   - Jennifer Emswiler, Fine Arts
   - Erik Blanco, Advising/Counseling
   - Adam Woodland, Diesel
   - Chris Oswald, Construction Trades Apprenticeship Preparation (Corrections)

   The tenure track faculty members were introduced to the board. The Board welcomed the probationary tenure track members to the college.

   Yanet Blanco, Director of Student Life and Involvement, introduced the 2026-27 SAALT Team:
   - Liam Ponyah, President
   - Ashlyn Lloyd, Vice President
   - Mark Henderson, Coordinator for Executive Affairs
   - Rachael Heinrich, Coordinator for Civic Engagement
   - Azami Eckerson, Coordinator for Student Engagement
   - Hugo Garcia, Coordinator for Diversity
   - Chloe Miller, Coordinator for Wellness
   - Dakota Fox, Coordinator for Social Media/Publicity

SAALT students support and plan events for Centralia College students. As the representative for the governing body of Centralia College students, all SAALT members advocate for students.

The Board welcomed the students to Centralia College.

3. Open Forum

No one requested to speak in open forum.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

Adoption of Minutes:

It was MOVED BY Pretrina Mullins THAT THE BOARD APPROVE THE REGULAR MINUTES OF September 10, 2026, AS PRESENTED. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Policy Governance

Policy Updates

Dr. Mohrbacher reported Institutional Effectiveness (IE) met October 7, 2026. Two policies were approved on second reading:

- 1.XXX – Personal devices on Microsoft 365
- 4.131 – Waitlist

One policy was deleted on second read:

- 4.041 Athletic Housing Requirement (delete date January 1, 2027)

Dr. Mohrbacher reported that the Institutional Effectiveness Committee discussed a proposed policy for awarding posthumous degrees and certificates. Under the proposal, a credential could be awarded to a student who died while actively pursuing a credential and in good academic standing, provided the student had completed at least 75% of the program requirements or was within two academic terms of completion.

Discussion focused on whether the credential should be treated as a traditional or honorary degree, the Board of Trustees' role in the process, and potential implications for completion statistics. Trustees expressed concern about establishing rigid eligibility criteria that could exclude students in exceptional circumstances. The proposed policy provides for exceptions when extraordinary circumstances exist. No action was taken.

Dr. Mohrbacher explained that the athletic housing requirement, which requires first-year student-athletes to live in student housing, will expire on January 1, 2027.

5. Trustee Reports

Court Stanley reported that he attended the Kickoff breakfast and had the opportunity to talk with Student Advocacy Activities Leadership Team (SAALT) member Dakota Fox and described the event as enjoyable. He also attended Scholarship Night, noting the large crowd and the enthusiasm of the students and attendees.

Stanley reported that he has been working with the Economic Development Council, Todd Chaput, Hampton Lumber, and representatives of the forest industry to organize a timber summit for Lewis County leaders. The event is scheduled for October 22 at 3:00

p.m. in TransAlta Commons. The summit will provide an opportunity to connect with and discuss the forest industry's role in Lewis County and opportunities for greater collaboration. The college will host the event, with the Board of Trustees serving as sponsors.

Pretrina Mullins reported that attendance at the Centralia College East Open House was good. Community members toured the building, learning about current activities, and connecting with college representatives. She noted strong support from community members and recommended continuing to hold similar events at Centralia College East. She also expressed anticipation for the upcoming Foundation Gala on Saturday.

Chris Thomas reported he also attended the Kickoff breakfast where the Academic Year Collection fashion show was well received. He also attended the staff soirée at the observation deck, participated in the ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Southwest Washington Flexible Training (SWFT) Center, and volunteered at the Trailblazer Kickoff, noting strong student attendance and engagement.

Thomas also attended Trustee Tuesday on September 22. He reported that the State Board's goal is to avoid losses and maintain current services, previously enacted policies, and new investments that support students, programs, and communities. A work group is examining opportunities to reduce redundancy and costs while considering access, structure, campus operations, and student success. The report and recommendations are due to the Governor and Legislature by December 1, 2026.

He also visited the Student Involvement Fair and noted strong attendance and a variety of activities.

Mark Scheibmeir reported that he had been out of the country for almost a month and had no formal updates. He thanked the trustees for their involvement in college activities during his absence. He provided an anecdote from his recent trip to Ireland, where he researched his maternal family history and learned that his family name, Heffern, is a shortened form of Heffernan, with roots in County Limerick.

The Board agreed to move its November meeting to Tuesday, November 10, due to a scheduling conflict with the fall ACT conference.

It was MOVED BY Court Stanley THAT THE BOARD MOVE THE REGULAR MEETING OF November 12, 2026, TO November 10, 2026. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

<u>WA-ACT</u>

The 2026 ACT Fall conference will take place November 12-13, 2026, at the Seattle Hilton Hotel & Conference Center in Seattle, WA. This year's program has timely information, practical tools, and opportunities to connect with trustees, college leaders, and colleagues from across the state.

Looking ahead to the 2027 legislative session, the focus will be on key college and student issues, including legislative and budget priorities, advocacy, and federal and state updates.

ACCT

The 2026 ACCT Leadership Congress is scheduled for October 21 – 24, 2026 at the Hyatt Regency Chicago in Chicago, Illinois. The focus this year is leading with care, innovation, and effective governance in changing times. No one from Centralia College will be attending this year's event.

6. President's Report

Dr. Mohrbacher reported he attended the State Board meeting at Highline College in his role as WACTC chair. He highlighted Centralia College accomplishments, including the Kickoff and centennial time capsule, CCSSE survey results, and awards received by Sharon Mitchler and Nikki Sprague.

He also reported on the recent WACTC meeting in Spokane, where members heard about Spokane College's response to multiple summer wildfires. The college operated an emergency operations center for two weeks, while employees faced evacuations and, in some cases, losing their homes. The presentation reinforced the importance of emergency planning and communication.

WACTC discussed annual audit compliance across the community and technical college system. Several colleges face delays due to staffing shortages, procedural challenges, and unresolved data issues following the implementation of ctcLink. Staffing shortages at the State Auditor's Office have also contributed to delays. State Board representatives are working with the Auditor's Office to address the backlog. Some colleges have hired private audit firms at costs comparable to those of the State Auditor's Office. Dr. Mohrbacher noted that Centralia College has consistently completed its audits on time.

Dr. Mohrbacher reported that average electricity rates have increased more than 35% over the past two years. Centralia College has experienced smaller increases through Centralia City Light, while customers served by Puget Sound Energy and Avista have faced significantly higher rates, prompting calls for relief.

He provided an update on the Teacher Education and Family Development (TEFD) capital budget request, which ranks sixth on the major capital project list. Total requests are approximately $619 million, with $423–424 million needed to reach Centralia's project on the pipeline list. Because legislative funding has historically been around $400 million, the project may fall below the funding threshold. Spokane's apprenticeship center project ranks immediately below Centralia College's, adding to the uncertainty surrounding funding priorities. Dr. Mohrbacher noted that the college has been waiting several years for funding and remains hopeful the project will move forward, although no decision has been made.

Dr. Mohrbacher reported continued efforts to fill the college's vacant trustee position. The State Board is collaborating with the Governor's Office to clarify the appointment process and address delays. Preliminary steps, including address verification for the college's two applicants, are underway, but the appointment timeline remains uncertain.

7. SAALT

During the first two weeks of the quarter, SAALT hosted resource tabling events featuring campus and community resources, including suicide prevention information. One event highlighted Blazer Central and its Minds Squared mentorship program. Members also promoted a movie event by dressing as minions and monsters. Despite a location change and inclement weather, attendance was good, and P&W Scoops served ice cream to students.

Other recent activities included a poster sale, the Student Involvement Fair featuring student clubs and campus resources, and Volley for the Cure, which raised breast cancer awareness through bingo and prizes.

Upcoming activities include Collegiate Alcohol Awareness Week to promote awareness of excessive alcohol consumption among college students, as well as Ballot Bootcamp and two tabling events to encourage voter registration ahead of the October 20 election.

Ponyah recognized three SAALT members for their contributions: Rachael Heinrich for voter awareness and registration efforts; Dakota Fox for social media outreach and student engagement; and Chloe Miller for raising awareness of mental health, suicide prevention, and breast cancer.

Reflecting on the Trailblazer Kickoff, Ponyah said helping incoming students navigate campus and learn about campus buildings gave him a new perspective. He also reported higher attendance at the Student Involvement Fair than in previous years, noting that the activities and poster sale helped attract students.

8. Faculty

Mark Gorecki, Faculty Representative, Centralia College Federation of Teachers President, reported that he had no additional updates to share and noted that the term was progressing quickly.

9. Classified

Emil Parke-Fagerness, Classified Representative, provided updates from classified staff.

Gina Sterner reported that the classified staff contract has been tentatively approved. Although the contract does not include the requested health care compensation for 2027, no existing benefits were lost, and staff retain the right to bargain for 2028. Contract improvements include enhanced sick leave and vacation provisions, an expanded definition of home phone calls to include electronic communications, clarification that employees are not required to take rest periods at their workstations, clarified suspended operations language, and minor adjustments to overtime carryover.

Kathy Tukes reported that community outreach by classified and other college staff, particularly efforts to build relationships with veterans, resulted in a $1,000 donation to the Centralia College Foundation for emergency grants to veterans experiencing financial hardship. The American Legion also contributed $500 for a scholarship to assist veterans who have exhausted their VA education benefits.

10. Instruction

Connie Smejkal, Vice President of Instruction, reported low enrollment in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes within Transitional Studies. While the cause is unknown, concerns about Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activity in the area may be affecting students' willingness to attend classes on campus.

Smejkal highlighted the success and expansion of the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) model, which pairs basic skills and content instructors in introductory courses. She noted improved student completion and class performance, including mathematics, and commended math instructor Preston Kiekel for pioneering the approach in the department, which has encouraged broader adoption across eligible math courses.

Yanet Blanco described Centralia College's longstanding transfer partnership with The Evergreen State College, which has included visits to Evergreen by small groups of students. Dr. Mohrbacher noted that differences in instructional models can make integration challenging, but the college continues to inform students about transfer opportunities. He explained that transfer to Evergreen is more straightforward because its flexible academic structure can accommodate credits in several ways, while applying Evergreen credits toward Centralia College degree requirements can be more challenging.

Smejkal noted that Centralia College also participates in other intercollege partnerships, including a consortium developing common course numbering for applied bachelor's programs in behavioral health care. Dr. Mohrbacher added that students who complete an associate in arts Direct Transfer Agreement (AA-DTA) degree enter participating Washington public universities at junior standing, although additional coursework may be required for admission to specific programs.

Dr. Mohrbacher reported that the college is developing a transfer agreement with Saint Martin's University. A preliminary agreement is in place, and a meeting with the university's new provost has been rescheduled for November 16.

Smejkal explained that College in the High School instructors must meet the same credentialing requirements as faculty teaching comparable college courses and are assigned a college faculty mentor who conducts classroom observations and provides support. These requirements can create challenges with high school partners when instructors meet other institutions' standards but not Centralia College's, particularly when teachers hold master's degrees in education rather than in their subject area. Some flexibility is available in interpreting the requirements.

Dr. Bob Mohrbacher reported that Jamie Traugott of the State Board is organizing a work group with university, K–12, and other representatives to explore better coordination among Running Start, College in the High School, and Career and Technical Education (CTE) dual credit programs, including potentially standardizing instructor credentialing requirements.

Smejkal noted that Running Start enrollment continues to trend upward, although growth has recently leveled off, while College in the High School enrollment remains steady, with no new classes added.

11. Human Resources & Equity

Joy Anglesey, Vice President of Human Resources and Equity, announced that a redesigned five-day new employee orientation program will launch October 16. Developed collaboratively in response to feedback from current and new employees, the program is designed to strengthen employees' understanding of the college's mission, culture, and operations.

The program will focus on belonging and the college's history, mission, values, accreditation, and strategic plan on Day 1; technology systems and essential processes on Day 2; connecting employees' work to the student experience on Day 3; workplace safety, emergency procedures, benefits, and related policies on Day 4; and inclusion, belonging, and 30-, 60-, and 90-day plans on Day 5. Participants will also complete a feedback survey to help evaluate and improve the program. Anglesey noted that current employees may also sign up for individual sections of the orientation.

Anglesey explained that the supervisor training seminars grew out of a statewide effort by the Human Resource Management Commission (HRMC) to develop supervisor training. When the group was unable to agree on a training model, Anglesey began offering seminars and invited supervisors from other colleges to participate at no cost. More than 500 supervisors have attended the training to date.

Dr. Mohrbacher noted that colleges often share training and professional development resources informally, while services provided directly to another college are typically managed through contracts. There is ongoing conversation among some of the colleges about services that might be shared in order to realize efficiencies or cost savings.

12. Student Services

Yanet Blanco, Director of Student Life and Involvement, for Dr. Robert Cox, Vice President of Student Services, introduced Darcell Scott, Dean of Student Success and Retention.

Scott reported that the College received nearly 500 emergency grant applications addressing needs such as technology, housing, childcare, food, medical care, fees, and utilities. Approximately 378 awards were approved, a slight increase from previous years despite reduced funding. To maximize available assistance, some awards were partially funded. Scott recognized Graziela Gonzalez for connecting students with community organizations and resources to help meet basic needs.

The emergency grant program is primarily supported by state grants for which the college applies annually, including the Student Emergency Assistance Grant (SEAG) and the Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness (SSEH) grant, which supports housing needs. The Foundation provides a separate, smaller source of assistance for circumstances not covered by college funds. Scott explained that the program builds on lessons learned during the CARES funding period by combining financial assistance with referrals to address students' underlying needs.

Additional support includes a quarterly food credit program that provides students with $100 in cafeteria credit through an application process. This quarter, the college also began developing a housing assistance program offering small loans to help students in campus housing manage rising housing and rental costs.

Scott emphasized that every emergency grant application is reviewed, even when funding is unavailable, so staff can connect students with other resources. These include SNAP benefits, food credits, the campus food pantry, and community organizations. He commended the Emergency Grant, Welcome Desk, and SLIC teams for collaborating to support students. Centralia College's approach has also drawn interest from other colleges seeking guidance on food credits, housing assistance, and SNAP referrals.

Scott reported continued recruitment and enrollment efforts, with staff and faculty visiting local high schools, including WF West, Tenino, White Pass, Mossyrock, and Rochester, to assist students with registration. Three registration events held June 30, July 28, and August 27 resulted in approximately 275 students registering for fall quarter. Planning is underway for the winter registration event in November, with faculty already responding to invitations to participate.

The City Expo attracted approximately 197 students and 45 parents. Scott noted increased parent involvement and strong support for the event. Student prizes and scholarships, along with awards recognizing the best faculty tables, contributed to its success. He recommended continuing these activities as the event grows to encourage faculty participation and friendly competition. Scott said the college hopes to build on successful campus events to create a more engaging student orientation experience that fosters positive memories and lasting connections with the college.

Scott reported that WF West High School students participated in numerous summer activities, including Rainier Games, campus events, textbook assistance, financial aid and scholarship support, and the College Kickoff. The WF West Legacy Grant also assists students who are within 15 credits of completing their degrees. After Enrollment Services verifies their remaining requirements, eligible students may receive funding to complete their final credits.

Scott highlighted Oscar Escalante's outreach and partnership with the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, including campus tours and plans for additional visits. The college has also received requests for further communication about potential partnerships. Scott noted that the college was again invited to attend the Chehalis Tribe's annual meeting and continues to welcome tribal members to campus.

13. <u>Administrative Services</u>

Tariq Qureshi, Vice President of Finance and Administration, reported that year-to-date actual expenses were approximately 4.2% ($1.3 million) below budget.

He announced that Joseph Hing is the new Director of Procurement Services.

14. <u>Foundation</u>

Christine Fossett, Associate Vice President of Advancement, provided an update on preparations for the Foundation Gala, noting that planning was on track and attendance was expected to be similar to last year. Additional donations for the "Raise the Paddle" portion of the event had also come in from individuals unable to attend. She recognized Annalee Tobey for her work preparing for the event and expressed confidence in the transition of Foundation responsibilities.

Fossett announced that she will transition into the Grants Administrator position in November and encouraged campus employees to share potential grant opportunities with her. She is working with VPFA Tariq Qureshi to establish reporting and documentation

procedures for the new role. Qureshi added that Christine has also been involved in managing grants associated with construction and energy projects, including solar panels and lighting improvements.

The Board recognized Christine for her contributions to the Foundation during her tenure, noting improvements in operations, collaboration, and revenue generation. Annalee Tobey expressed appreciation for the warm welcome she has received as she learns her new role and prepares to continue the Foundation's work. An appreciation event honoring Christine was announced for October 28, from 4 to 6 p.m., at Hanke House, with invitations to follow.

Dr. Mohrbacher reported a strong response to the college's outreach regarding the Christine Fossett Scholarship. The scholarship is nearing its endowment funding goal, with only one or two additional donations needed.

15. New Business

There was no new business.

16. Old Business

Strategic Planning

Fia Eliasson-Creek, Executive Director of Institutional Research, reported that President's Cabinet is reviewing the college's strategic plan to determine whether current strategies remain relevant, need modification, or can be completed or removed. The review will help guide priorities for the remaining two years of the strategic planning period, which ends in 2027–28.

Accreditation

Fia Eliasson-Creek, Executive Director of Institutional Research, had no accreditation updates to report.

17. Executive Session

Under RCW 42.30.110, the Board may hold an executive session for the purpose of reviewing the performance of a public employee and current or potential agency litigation or to review professional negotiations.

There was no Executive Session.

18. Action from Executive Session

19. Announcement of Upcoming Meeting Date and Place:

The next board meeting will be Tuesday, November 10, 2026, via Teams and Centralia College Boardrooms, Centralia, WA.

20. Comments

Joy Anglesey invited the board to attend one or more sessions of the redesigned new employee orientation, with the first day suggested as a particularly appropriate option. Trustees may use the link in the orientation email to indicate which sessions they wish to attend.

21. Adjournment:
The meeting adjourned at 5:41 p.m.

APPROVED:

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Chris Thomas, Board Chair	*Dr. Bob Mohrbacher, Board Secretary*