COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT TWELVE
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Centralia College

Hanson Boardrooms	**Study Session/Regular Meeting**
Centralia College	**September 10, 2026**
Centralia, Washington	**3:00 p.m.**

MINUTES

Study Session

Inspiring Future Blazers

Connie Smejkal, Vice President of Instruction, introduced Teresa Schneider, Director of Early Learning. Smejkal noted that the Early Learning program serves as a model for collaboration and team building that could be expanded across campus.

Schneider provided an overview of her professional background in teaching, family childcare, childcare licensing with the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), and the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), noting that this experience has been valuable in her current role.

Schneider reported that the campus program serves 159 children, ages one through five, at two primary locations and employs just under 60 staff in 10 classrooms. Approximately 81% of the campus program is funded through ECEAP, with additional support from private pay and state, military, and tribal subsidies. Through partnerships with community providers and school districts, the college supports approximately 320 ECEAP slots throughout Lewis County and southern Thurston County, in addition to approximately 30 community childcare slots on campus. Partners provide facilities, teachers, food services, and transportation, while the college provides coaching, professional development, family support, recruitment and enrollment, and program monitoring.

She noted that Centralia College has received ECEAP funding for 34 years and that the program has grown from 100 slots and approximately $690,000 in annual funding in 2015 to 320 slots and nearly $5 million in funding. Schneider attributed the program's growth and improved quality to staff education and professional development, increased full-time staffing, consistent classroom practices, and ongoing quality improvement efforts.

Schneider reported that all three of the college's program sites recently achieved the highest Washington State Quality Recognition and Improvement System (QRIS) rating of Level 5, with seven of the College's 13 sites now at Level 5. Maintaining this level of quality is the program's next priority. The program continues to maintain strong enrollment, with the greatest demand for toddler care, and works with community partners to refer families when services or hours do not meet their needs.

Schneider reviewed ECEAP's role in providing free preschool and comprehensive family support to eligible children and families. She shared data demonstrating positive developmental and educational outcomes for children participating in ECEAP and Head Start and noted that approximately 37% of children enrolled on campus have complex needs, including Individual Education Plans (IEPs), significant trauma, or challenging

behaviors. The program uses Teaching Strategies GOLD to assess child development and inform continuous improvement.

Schneider reported that five staff members are currently attending Centralia College, with eight additional employees applying for the Early Opportunity Grant, and that staff from community childcare partnerships have also expressed interest in pursuing education. She noted that the program's partnerships with school districts and childcare providers continue to expand access to early learning services.

Schneider noted that children regularly spend time outdoors and participate in community field trips, with an outdoor preschool partnership a possible future opportunity. She also reported that current ECEAP funding remains stable and that the state continues to prioritize expansion, with the goal of providing access to eligible children extended to 2030.

Schneider shared the success of a former ECEAP student who graduated with high honors, participated in Running Start at Centralia College, received a University of Washington scholarship, and is pursuing a career in dentistry. She emphasized the long-term impact of early learning and family support. Smejkal commended Schneider's leadership and the team's collaborative approach.

1. Call to Order

Board Chair Chris Thomas called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Board members present:

- Chris Thomas
- Pretrina Mullins
- Court Stanley

2. Introductions/Presentations:

Jason Moir, Athletic Director, introduced two of the fall sports teams.

Jason Moir introduced head coach Ceanna Michalek and assistant coach Rob Shaftoe and the members of the women’s 2026-27 volleyball team.

Jason Moir introduced head coach Garret Wenrich and the members of the men’s 2026-27 soccer team.

Dr. Mohrbacher introduced Tammy Remund, Director of Benefits and Compensation, who is filling in for Joy Anglesey.

3. Open Forum

No one requested to speak in open forum.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

Adoption of Minutes:

It was MOVED BY Court Stanley THAT THE BOARD APPROVE THE REGULAR MINUTES OF June 11, 2026, AS PRESENTED. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

It was MOVED BY Court Stanley THAT THE BOARD APPROVE THE SPECIAL MINUTES OF July 27, 2026, AS PRESENTED. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Policy Governance

Policy Updates

Dr. Mohrbacher reported Institutional Effectiveness (IE) will meet October 7, 2026.

5. Trustee Reports

Court Stanley reported that he is helping coordinate a Lewis County Leadership College Summit scheduled for October 22 at Centralia College. The event will bring together forest landowners, mills, community leaders, and local organizations, including the Economic Development Council and United Way, to identify common interests, strengthen relationships, and support rural community growth.

Stanley also reported that he will be participating in the Legislative Action Committee of ACT. The committee is scheduled to begin meeting September 22 in preparation for the upcoming legislative session.

Pretrina Mullins reported attending the Board retreat in July.

She has been working with John Holmgren at Centralia College East to plan an open house in Morton on September 22 from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Mullins plans to participate in the Trustees of Color affinity group and attend additional campus activities and athletic events as her schedule permits.

Chris Thomas reported attending the annual graduation breakfast, nursing pinning ceremony, and Summerfest. He assisted with the graduation breakfast and Summerfest food service.

Thomas attended forums for finalists for the Foundation director position and expressed appreciation for the quality of the candidates. Thomas serves on the executive board of the Centralia-Chehalis Chamber of Commerce and participated in the selection of Kevin Carnes as the Chamber's new executive director.

Thomas noted that he looks forward to assisting with the upcoming College Kickoff breakfast and plans to attend the Centralia College East open house and Centralia College Foundation event on September 22.

WA-ACT

Dr. Mohrbacher reported that Dr. Sharon Mitchler has been selected as the recipient of the Pacific Region Faculty of the Year Award from the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT). Mitchler will be recognized at the ACCT national conference. Although she will be unable to attend due to a previously scheduled professional presentation, Kim Tanaka will work with Mitchler to provide a statement to be read at the conference.

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.

6. President's Report

Dr. Mohrbacher announced that Annalee Tobey has accepted the position of Associate Vice President for Advancement and Executive Director of the Foundation. Tobey will begin October 1, providing approximately one month of overlap with Christine Fossett to assist with the Foundation Gala and transition responsibilities.

Dr. Mohrbacher reported that Monica Brummer, who began serving as the college's grant writer on July 1, has accepted a position with a Washington State University energy program. Her last day will be September 15. Christine Fossett has agreed to assist with the grant writing responsibilities during the transition, with the interim arrangement expected to last between one and eight months.

Dr. Mohrbacher reported that, following the Founder's Day event, Stu Halsan presented the college with a colorized portrait of George Washington. The college will identify a location for the portrait in Washington Hall and install a plaque recognizing the donation. Photos will be taken once the portrait is installed and shared through social media and other college communications.

Dr. Mohrbacher reported that TransAlta and the Economic Development Council had asked the college to submit a letter of support regarding TransAlta's proposed conversion to natural gas. Following discussion, the Board agreed that the college should not take a position on the proposal.

Dr. Mohrbacher reminded the Board that the College's Kickoff event would be held Monday and invited Board members to attend. He noted that breakfast would be provided and that employees would have an opportunity to participate in the annual staff photo and the placement of the college's time capsule.

7. SAALT

No report provided.

8. Faculty

Mark Gorecki, Faculty Representative, Centralia College Federation of Teachers President, reported that tenure-track faculty are being added in art, teacher education, advising, and construction trades at the corrections facility. He noted that the faculty representatives would coordinate with Connie Smejkal and Robert Cox to attend a future Board meeting.

Gorecki welcomed Paula Rose and Karen Olson, pro rata faculty members who have joined the College's new Massage Therapy program.

9. Classified

Emil Parke-Fagerness, Classified Representative, reported that Heather Beaird, Student Job Center staff member and local historian, spoke at the Centralia Founders Day event and gave a well-received presentation on George Washington, founder of Centralia.

Parke-Fagerness also reported that the classified staff union held a walkout on August 31 from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. as part of ongoing contract negotiations. He noted that the union is seeking a contract that maintains current health care premiums and requested the Board's support.

10. Instruction

Connie Smejkal, Vice President of Instruction, reported that the Instructional Division had a successful summer and highlighted partnerships involving the Worker Retraining program. She noted that new probationary faculty had completed orientation and were prepared for the start of fall quarter. New faculty will be introduced to the Board later in the fall, with Smejkal coordinating the introductions with Faculty Representative Mark Gorecki.

Smejkal highlighted the college's partnership with Equus through WorkSource, which provides funding assistance for students pursuing commercial driver's licenses (CDL). Because CDL programs are not eligible for traditional financial aid and can be costly, the partnership helps offset expenses and allows Worker Retraining funds to serve additional students.

She also noted that the Instructional Division is reviewing potential new academic programs.

Smejkal reported that the college is exploring a potential partnership with Walla Walla Community College related to an agriculture program. She also noted that a grant will support a temporary position to help develop Continuing Education offerings focused on skill-based opportunities that allow individuals to improve without enrolling in a full four-credit course.

Current feasibility studies include programs in entrepreneurship and a Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS) in criminal justice. Smejkal explained that the studies assess factors such as employment opportunities for graduates and potential competition with nearby colleges. Proposed programs must also receive approval from the State Board before moving forward.

11. Human Resources & Equity

Director Tammy Remund, for Joy Anglesey, Vice President of Human Resources and Equity, reported that much of the department's recent work has focused on recruiting and supporting new faculty and filling positions related to new programs and temporary program development. She also emphasized efforts to automate manual processes to improve efficiency.

Remund noted that Human Resources is beta testing new employee performance evaluation processes.

12. Student Services

Dr. Robert Cox, Vice President of Student Services, reported that the month's focus was safety and security. He recognized Safety and Security Director Jared Cunningham for improving emergency response planning and reporting. Cunningham has established designated floor evacuation personnel with assigned responsibilities to sweep buildings

during an emergency and ensure individuals do not re-enter until it is safe. Cox noted that this is the first step in ongoing work to improve campus evacuation procedures and safety.

Cox reported on the expansion of the college's closed-circuit television (CCTV) camera system. The installation of additional cameras and development of a new server system to monitor and manage the system is being developed. Cameras are located throughout campus, with placement coordinated through the appropriate union process. Student government has also provided funding for additional cameras, particularly in outdoor areas where students congregate.

In response to a question regarding the status of the esplanade project, Cox reported that the portion near the TSB Building is complete, including the landscaping. The remaining portion between the field and the TSB Building is expected to be completed during the next biennium beginning in July 2027.

13. Administrative Services

Tariq Qureshi, Vice President of Finance and Administration, reported that the college ended the fiscal year with actual expenditures of $30.8 million, approximately 3% under budget. Most of the savings were attributed to salary savings resulting from staff turnover.

Qureshi recognized Nikki Sprague for receiving the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) Rising Star Award at the organization's national convention in July. The national award recognizes emerging leaders in higher education business administration for innovation, leadership, and significant contributions to their institutions and profession.

Qureshi provided an update on the college's fully grant-funded solar panel project currently in the planning phase. It will involve installation on the Diesel Tech Building roof, which can support the panels. The project is expected to provide significant energy savings and will primarily offset utility costs. The college already has solar panels on the library roof that help reduce its utility expenditure.

The project will include an instructional component and a public-facing display showing energy consumption and savings. The project is anticipated to be completed in November or December, with opportunities for the campus community to tour the installation the following spring.

Additional energy-efficiency projects are in the works. A multi-phase lighting project in the Science Center will replace existing fixtures with energy-efficient lighting and is being funded through a combination of capital and grant funds. The college is also planning a similar lighting project for Washington Hall during the next biennium. The installation of electric vehicle charging stations is also part of the ongoing energy-efficiency efforts.

14. Foundation

Christine Fossett, Associate Vice President of Advancement, reported that the Foundation has several upcoming events including the staff soiree on September 15, Foundation Night at the Oly Club on September 22, and Scholarship Night on September 23. More than 300 students have RSVP'd for Scholarship Night, which will be held in the banquet rooms in the TransAlta Commons.

Fossett provided an update on the upcoming Foundation Gala, noting that the entertainment will include two fortune tellers, Lori Sears will demonstrate poi spinning and SAALT President Liam Ponyah as the strongman. The Foundation has secured numerous silent auction items and several live auction items.

Fossett reported that the Mobile Classroom is off to a strong start for the year and is scheduled to visit Chehalis on September 21. Eight new logos representing local businesses were recently added to the Mobile Classroom.

Fossett encouraged Board members to attend the Swift Center open house and ribbon cutting, noting the significant transformation of the facility.

The Board continues to develop an auction item for the Gala. A description of the Trustees' auction item is needed by September 24 for promotional purposes. Fossett offered to assist the Trustees in finalizing the details.

15. New Business

President's Contract

The Board discussed the President's contract, which had been reviewed during the Board retreat. The Board agreed to review the matter in executive session and anticipated taking action following the executive session. Dr. Mohrbacher and staff were working to finalize the contract language prior to the meeting.

16. Old Business

Strategic Planning

Fia Eliasson-Creek, Executive Director of Institutional Research, reported that the college is slightly past the halfway point in its current strategic plan and will review the plan in greater detail as work continues.

Accreditation

Fia Eliasson-Creek, Executive Director of Institutional Research, reported that accreditation will be a significant focus during the coming year. The college must submit a report in early February addressing the four recommendations resulting from the 2025 accreditation visit. A focused accreditation visit is anticipated in April, although the specific date has not yet been established. The visit will focus on areas related to the recommendations, including the budgeting and assessment processes.

Eliasson-Creek reported that the college's accrediting organization has approved new accreditation standards and will begin using the name Northlight. The new standards include a focus on return on investment, including reporting on graduate wages and employability. The accreditor is considering using federal data for this reporting. The accreditation cycle is also expected to be extended from seven to eight years.

An upcoming webinar for Accreditation Liaison Officers (ALOs) will provide additional information regarding the new standards and accreditation process. Eliasson-Creek will provide an update to the Board at a future meeting.

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.

At 5:00 pm Board members moved into executive session to consult with legal counsel about current or potential litigation and to review the performance of public employees. The Board expects Executive Session to last approximately 25 minutes. The Board will be in Executive Session until 5:25 p.m. unless notified that the time is extended.

The Board has adjourned the Executive Session and reconvenes in Open Session. The time is 5:25 p.m.

The Board will proceed with the final agenda items.

18. Action from Executive Session

It was MOVED BY Pretrina Mullins THAT THE BOARD AMEND DR. MOHRBACHER'S CONTRACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE 2% STATE COLA AND FIVE ADDITIONAL FLEX DAYS. THE AMENDMENT WILL BE RETROACTIVE TO JULY 1, 2026.

19. Announcement of Upcoming Meeting Date and Place:

The next board meeting will be Thursday, October 8, 2026, via Teams and Centralia College Boardrooms, Centralia, WA.

20. Comments

21. Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

APPROVED:

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