

February 23, 2024

As Board of Regents, we are committed to fulfilling WSU's land-grant mission and ensuring the long-term success of the university for the benefit of all of Washington state. Like you, we care deeply about WSU. It's clear we share a passion for our university and its future, even if we don't always agree on the path forward.

The Board of Regents have actively engaged in conversations with members of the Concerned Faculty Group and the Faculty Senate over the last year. Board of Regents Chair Schauer has had more than 10 individual contacts with Ron Mittelhammer who has served as a spokesperson for this group since last April. In addition, the administration has also had meetings with the group and has sent extensive response materials.

We take your concerns seriously. We have listened and we have acted. We have provided continual access to board leadership. We are committed to dialogue, internally and externally—about the future of WSU with **all** stakeholders of the university.

We have taken the liberty to provide a [link](#) with the comprehensive engagement and responses we have collectively participated in for interested parties to review.

The challenges we face as an academic institution are not unique to WSU. The board and the administration have been proactively preparing for these issues for years by positioning WSU for the future. WSU leadership and its Board of Regents have been intentional and strategic, focusing on proactive enrollment efforts in 2019, adopting the "OneWSU" systemwide strategic plan in 2020, and prioritizing financial sustainability. Outcomes of these investments are already being seen. Universities and colleges around the country are being forced to do things differently in response to an environment of record change in higher education. It requires strong leadership and a university-wide focus on impactful solutions. **We confidently believe we are on the right path, and we welcome your collaboration as we continue to work to toward a prosperous future for WSU.**

When President Schulz arrived at WSU in 2016, the university was facing an \$30 million operating deficit and severely depleted reserves. Two years into his fiscal recovery effort, the university's operating budget was in the black for the first time since 2013. Difficult changes have been necessary to improve the financial stability of the university, and the faculty have been a strong partner in this effort. The university has made significant sacrifices, while continuing to deliver an exceptional educational experience to students, in order to position WSU for a healthy future.



President Schulz’s steady and strong leadership has been at the core of this progress. He has the support and confidence of the Board of Regents.

Regarding the other matters you raised, we share some of your concerns and have been engaged and collaborating with President Schulz and his leadership team to proactively address our challenges. While there is much work to do, WSU is making meaningful progress. During this time of challenge, we are grateful for the tremendous partnership with the Faculty Senate and the overwhelming support from Cougar Nation. We are thankful for the robust statewide Cougar community, and we are committed to ensuring WSU’s ability to fulfill its mission for the future of Washington.

The strategic vision for WSU, “OneWSU,” allows the university to meet Washingtonians where they are—fueling our state’s workforce and future. It will require change and innovation. We acknowledge this will not be “business as usual” and will create some discomfort.

While we navigate this time of change, we are optimistic about the important progress that has been made, particularly in the areas of concern you raised. This progress includes:

- **Unprecedented investment in the future of WSU.** Under President Schulz’s leadership, investment in the university has grown significantly. Washington State University is now home to a new, fully funded medical school and three new medical residency programs. Since 2015, the legislature has funded 100 new faculty positions. Other recent highlights include a new \$80 million engineering building and a \$125 million plant sciences building in Pullman, a new life sciences building in Vancouver, a new student union and an academic building in Tri-Cities, and a major health sciences remodel on the Spokane campus. WSU also raised a record \$167.9 million in private philanthropy in fiscal year 2023.
- **Enrollment increases.** Overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic and national trends will continue to be a challenge, but a comprehensive plan is in place and several new enrollment initiatives have been launched. These efforts are beginning to bear fruit with enrollment growing 6.5% this year for new first-year students.
- **Rankings increases.** It will take continued focus to improve WSU’s annual rankings. The president commissioned a task force last summer that made a number of long-term recommendations to improve rankings. Progress was made this year with WSU moving up 34 positions in the 2024 U.S. News & World Report university rankings.
- **New leadership.** Several vice president searches are underway, as well as a provost search, which will significantly strengthen support of the “OneWSU” vision and implementation.
- **Athletics leadership and strategy.** The university has been navigating uncharted waters and financial issues that pre-date this administration. Important progress has been made with key victories in the courts, and WSU is well-positioned to design the next chapter of Cougar athletics.



The Board of Regents is proud of WSU's process for elevating faculty voice and influence in the governance process. WSU was the first public university in Washington to have a Faculty Regent who could serve as a liaison between the Faculty Senate and the Board of Regents. The creation of this position is a testament to the administration's commitment to transparency and the value it holds for the Faculty Senate. The Faculty Regent has been integral to the Board's decision making. We are also respectful of the Faculty Senate governance structure, and we actively seek the counsel of the Faculty Senate leadership. **We are fully committed to continued transparent and engaged conversation with faculty, staff, and students.**

No one leader or one group will solve all the challenges we face as a higher education institution. It will take all of us working together to create a strong future for WSU. We believe the path is clear, and we welcome your collaboration in working through the solutions that will take WSU into its next 100 years.

WSU Board of Regents
Executive Committee

Lisa Keohokalole Schauer, Chair
Jenette Ramos, Vice Chair
Marty Dickinson, Past Chair