

**Western Oregon University Board of Trustees:
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility Committee (DEIAC)**
Meeting No. 19— October 15, 2025
1:00 pm – 2:30 pm

Meeting Minutes

I. CALL-TO-MEETING AND ROLL CALL

Chair Ambris welcomed everyone, called the meeting to order on Wednesday, October 15, 2025, at 1:03 pm, and asked Secretary Sorce to call the roll.

Committee Members Present: Chair Jerry Ambris, Trustee Paige Jackson, Trustee Susanna Winkler

Committee Members Not Present: Vice Chair Nelsestuen

Others Present: President Jesse Peters, Board Secretary Evan Sorce, Executive Director of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Dominique Vargas, Director of Abby's House Kristen Perry,

II. WELCOME

Chair Ambris welcomed everyone to the first DEIAC meeting of the year, welcomed the new committee members, and then walked through the agenda. Trustee Ambris also noted that, since two committee members are absent from this meeting, the updates will be slightly more high-level, but questions are welcome. President Peters also welcomed everyone to the meeting. Emphasized that the University is moving forward amidst everything happening in the state and the world. President Peters added that this year will be a great opportunity for this committee, in particular, to address key areas and work toward priorities that will enable Western to better serve our community.

III. CONSENT AGENDA

1) Approval of the May 22, 2025, Meeting Minutes

Trustee Paige Jackson moved to approve the May 22, 2025, Meeting Minutes as presented in the docket. Chair Ambris seconded the motion. There was no additional discussion.

Roll Call:

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|--------------------|---------|
| Chair Ambris | Aye |
| Trustee Jackson | Aye |
| Trustee Nelsestuen | Excused |

IV. REPORT & DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1) Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Update | Dominique Vargas

Executive Director Vargas presented her board update, available on page 5 of the docket. Executive Director Vargas provided updates on several initiatives at Western, including a professional development session on the change in federal policy and its impact on the university, and an update on the ADA regulations on digital accessibility. Additionally, Executive Director Vargas announced upcoming events for Free Speech Week. Trustee Jackson asked a question about the Freedom Center. Executive Director Vargas mentioned that the Freedom Center transitioned to a new Multicultural Student Organization Center, now called the MOSIAC Center. Finally, Executive Director Vargas shared progress on the equity assessment, which concluded in winter 2025 and outlined new recommendations for initiatives to address barriers on campus, including areas around basic needs, parking, athletics, food security etc. This committee will receive a quarterly update from the accountability leaders responsible for each action plan initiative.

V. PRESENTATION: ABBY'S HOUSE, CENTER FOR EQUITY AND GENDER JUSTICE | Kristen Perry, Director of Abby's House, Center for Equity and Gender Justice; Maria Barrera, Basic Needs Coordinator of Abby's House, Center for Equity and Gender Justice; and Kailey Knospe, Confidential Advocate of Abby's House, Center for Equity and Gender Justice

General Overview:

Chair Ambris welcomed the Abby's House team and asked Abby House Director Kristen Perry to kick off the presentation. Director Perry also introduced Maria Barrera, Abby's House Basic Needs Coordinator, and Kailey Knospe, Abby's House Confidential Advocate. They discussed the center's mission, services, funding sources, and recent changes, including the hiring process for an LGBTQ+ violence prevention coordinator. The presentation covered the center's educational programming, direct support services, and the impact of their initiatives on campus. Director Perry highlighted the center's various funding sources, including grants, student fees, legislative support (basic needs navigators from the Higher Education Coordinating Commission), and foundation accounts, and mentioned their ongoing fundraising efforts and efforts to apply for new grants.

Basic Needs:

Abby's House Basic Needs Coordinator, Maria Barrera, presented an overview of Basic Needs services available to the campus community, including childcare assistance, transportation support, and resources for mental and physical wellness. Maria also highlighted the availability of school supplies, financial aid, food security programs, and clothing resources, emphasizing that food insecurity is a significant issue faced by many students at WOU. Maria also shared data from the previous academic year, noting that they provided assistance to 133 students at least once, that over 2317 households used the food pantry, which gave out over 26,000 pounds of food. Over 700 people used the stitch closet, and over \$3,000 in aid was provided, focusing on gift cards, textbooks, and support.

Survivor Support Services:

Confidential Advocate, Kailey Knospe presented an overview of confidential advocacy services provided to survivors, including academic support, safety planning, reporting assistance, housing support, financial aid, medical referrals, and emotional support. Last year, they met with 31 students, 45% of whom identified as LGBTQ, and 32% disclosing a disability. Additionally, over half of these students were experiencing domestic violence. The team provided over \$8,000 in direct survivor support, including emergency assistance, rental help, and replacement of damaged items. The most common services included emotional support, safety planning, academic accommodations, and financial support.

Stonewall Center:

Director Perry gave an overview of the Stonewall Center's recent move under Abby's House and highlighted their services, including peer support, social events, and educational programs.

Resource Challenges:

Director Perry addressed funding limitations that impact Abby's House, noting the end of certain grants and the need to rely on foundation accounts for student support. Additionally, Director Perry mentioned challenges with insufficient funding for bilingual services and the instability of government funding. And increased demand for the food pantry, which operates with limited staffing and hours. The team is also considering equipment upgrades for the food pantry and stitch closet, and preparing for potential changes in SNAP benefits that may affect student access to resources.

Student Support Testimonials:

The team shared testimonials from students highlighting the positive impact of the services Abby's House provides. Chair Ambris commended the growth of Abby's House over the years and discussed potential partnerships, including with Habitat for Humanity, which might have some equipment Abby's House needs, such as a freezer.

President Peters asked about the difference between confidential advocates and other campus employees, who are mandatory reporters. Director Perry clarified that confidential advocates cannot report incidents, with a couple of exceptions (e.g., risk to themselves or others), without the person sharing with them. They can also assist students who wish to report. Chair Ambris asked how the Abby's House staff support each other and practice self-care when supporting students in difficult situations. Director Perry and Confidential Advocate Knospe shared personal self-care strategies and discussed the importance of maintaining a light-hearted office environment despite the challenging nature of the work. The team noted an increase in student needs this year, particularly regarding food security, due to upcoming changes in SNAP benefits. Chair Ambris thanked the presenters for their presentation and for supporting our students as they navigate difficult changes in their lives.

VI. ANNOUNCEMENTS

None:

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Ambris adjourns the meeting at 2:22 pm.