

## **I. STUDY SESSION**

### **1. Call to Order**

Chair Jessica Norouzi called the meeting to order at 1:13 P.M. and noted a quorum.

### **2. Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

## **II. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

1. An Executive Session will be called to review the performance of a public employee for purposes of Tenure, in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act (RCW 42.30).

At 2:45 P.M., the executive session was extended for fifteen minutes until 2:00 P.M.

At 2:00 P.M., the executive session was extended for five minutes until 2:05 P.M.

2. The executive session concluded at 2:05 P.M.

3. Return to Open Session

## **III. DISCUSSION**

Vice President Jacob Jackson joined the group to answer budget questions. The Office of Financial Management (OFM) claw back is likely to happen this fiscal year, which will create an additional \$800k shortfall. The OFM is resetting the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) maintenance funding level allocation by \$47M, or about 2.5%. The SBCTC has advised the Business Officers Commission (BAC) that colleges should prepare for an additional 3-17% general state allocation reduction unrelated to the OFM debacle.

To address the OFM debacle and anticipated general state allocation reduction, RTC is currently undergoing a hiring freeze, reviewing contracts for savings, temporarily increasing qualifying faculty retirement notification incentives, not applying the I-732 general wage increase to exempt staff in the 2025-2026 fiscal year, reviewing student and program fees, and reviewing organizational structure.

VP Jackson walked the group through the college reserves. There are currently \$15.4M in Board reserves. The Board reserve policy requires RTC hold \$12.8M, leaving \$2.6M in reserve funds over the reserve policy. Prior to the OFM debacle, RTC was looking at a \$1.8M budget shortfall in fiscal year 2026, a \$660K budget shortfall in fiscal year 2027, and a surplus in fiscal year 2028. With the OFM debacle, the budget shortfall increases

and is sustained. Vice Chair Tim Cooper asked about the scenario VP Jackson previously presented at the December 9, 2024 Board Meeting on eliminating the Board reserve policy to cover shortfalls. VP Jackson recommended against eliminating the Board reserve policy because it leaves the college in a position where it would be unable to cover emergency costs. The Governor's budget will be released next week.

Vice Chair Cooper asked about requirements for program closures. Vice President Lesley Hogan stated that faculty must receive notification a quarter in advance, which is why this information is coming to the Board at this time. Vice Chair Cooper asked about the possibility of non-represented furloughs. This was done in 2008. Trustee Bob Zappone asked about the 2008-2009 process. VP Jackson stated that this was a damaging process to the community that was largely top-down. There was another process in 2018, which was a more transparent process with less negative impacts. Vice Chair Cooper asked about other colleges declaring a financial emergency. VP Jackson responded that he has heard that some colleges are internally discussing budget planning.

President Yoshiko Harden briefed the group on a proposed communications plan that will help the community manage expectations and outline a schedule that will ensure transparency. Internal audiences have an internal SharePoint site. There will be a website for external audiences, and meetings for both audiences. There will be campus updates every two weeks, as well as monthly hybrid town halls.

#### **IV. MEETINGS**

1. Regular Board Meeting – December 11, 2024 at 3:00 P.M.

The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for December 11, 2024 at 3:00 P.M.

#### **V. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Trustee Zappone motioned to adjourn the Board of Trustees meeting at 2:48 P.M. Vice Chair Cooper seconded, and the motion carried.

#### **VI. REGULAR BOARD MEETING**

1. Call to Order

Chair Norouzi called the meeting to order at 3:08 P.M. and noted a quorum.

2. Adoption of Minutes

- A. November 25, 2024 – Special Session

Trustee Frieda Takamura introduced a motion to approve the minutes for the special meeting held on November 25, 2024. Trustee Tm Zappone seconded, and the motion carried.

### 3. Communications

#### A. General Information/Introductions

There were no general information updates or introductions.

#### B. Correspondence

There were no correspondences.

#### C. Public Comments from the Audience

There were no public comments.

#### D. Student Leadership

There is now a full Associated Student Government (ASG) Executive Board. ASG will have a welcome back event that will be finalized on Friday. Lunar New Year Celebration is January 29 in the Cafeteria from 11:30 A.M.-1:00 P.M. In February, ASG will partner with a local Renton group for Black History Month with an intergenerational conversation on February 8 from 11:00 A.M.-4:00 P.M.

The Learning Resource and Career Center (LRCC) had a winter coat drive and also received over 40 turkeys from the Food Lifeline. With the help and contributions of staff, faculty, the Foundation, The United Way of King County, and the ASG, the LRCC gave away 90 coats and 40 turkeys and sides.

#### E. Renton Federation of Teachers

Donna Maher gave an update from RFT. RFT is currently in a watch and wait situation, hinging upon Board action.

#### F. Written (and video) Communication Reports

Chair Norouzi thanked the group for their written and video reports.

### 4. Action Items

#### A. Tenure Advancements

##### i. Advancements from First to Second Year Status:

*After considering the recommendation of the tenure review committee and all other recommendations, Chair Norouzi moved that **Filisha Jackson** be promoted from first year to second year status. Trustee Frieda Takamura seconded, and the motion carried.*

#### B. Resolution No. 24-12-28

*After considering the information presented to the Board, Vice Chair Cooper moved to approve Board Resolution Number 24-12-28, declaring a Financial Emergency. Trustee Bob Zappone seconded, and the motion carried.*

Vice Chair Cooper quoted Matthew McConaughey who wrote, “when you have a challenge in front of you, you can confront it, pivot, or concede.” He stated that he is confident that RTC will confront this together.

## 5. Discussion/Reports

### A. President’s Report

President Harden gave her report. She expressed gratitude for the community’s work during a busy fall quarter. The new banners highlighting the Strategic Equity Plan are up. Thank you to Katherine Hansen and her team. The spouse of former Trustee Kirby Unti’s wife, Kim Unti passed recently. She was very active in supporting Renton businesses and organizations and RTC, as well as mother to three lovely daughters. Drum Roll Wine will be holding a remembrance event in her honor this Friday, December 13. There will be a memorial on January 11.

President Harden reassured community that the Cabinet and Board are invested in transparent communication and spaces to process, listen, share ideas, and learn together. She acknowledged the 2008-2009 process, which will not be mirrored here. RTC will continue to develop a communications plan and adhere to that.

### Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

President Harden highlighted the Renton Promise (RP) Program. Vice President Jessica Gilmore English presented on the RP at the Joint Higher Education Committee. There are 137 Renton Promise students enrolled at RTC for Fall quarter, with a majority coming from Hazen High School. Over 80% of RP students self-identify as of color. Fall Quarter RP enrollment alone exceeded the last year’s total enrollment. Most students are Pre-Nursing transfer, Information Technology, Business transfer, Automotive, and Computer Science transfer. There is a RP Partnership group that will meet next week about funding once the proviso dollars run out. The RP RTC staff are working to ensure sustainability for the program. There was a RP meet and greet between students and staff which included the RP Advisor. This position is not covered by proviso dollars. Close to \$200K has been spent on RP. Trustee Takamura asked why some high schools have more enrolled students than others. Associate Director Rahel Weldu commented that it is dependent on engagement of high school counselors/advisors.

### Be The Place Strategic Equity Plan (BTP SEP)

The BTP SEP Implementation Taskforce has its first meeting. Year One will focus on infrastructure so that RTC is an exciting place to be, teach, and learn. The All-Leadership Team participated in an Active Shooter learning event run by Security and Safety Director Matt Vielbig. President Harden would like this to be a recurring all-campus event. The training included what will happen during,

immediately after, and then in days following an event of this type. Fall All-College Professional Development (PD) was last week. All sessions were facilitated by faculty and staff. Title II has new regulations coming out, and Fall PD was focused on accessibility.

### Partnerships

The City of Kent is coordinating local schools and mid-sized manufacturers in order to create a school to work route for students who are interested in going into manufacturing. This roundtable is about listening to employers and responding to industry.

The Connell Scholarship Reception was last quarter. Many students (in the 100s) were funded by the Connells' annual gifts and students who attended the event stated that it was meaningful to know someone believes in them. Executive Director Carrie Shaw shared a story from a donor who contacted her to leave a gift to RTC. When ED Shaw asked this donor how she was associated with RTC, the donor stated that she read Trustee Debra Entenman's op ed in the Seattle Times and wanted to support the trades. Thank you to Trustee Entenman.

### Enrollment update

Enrollment is up 9% from last year and 25% of tuition-paying. Year-over-year, enrollment is up 17%. We are exceeding our internal target for tuition-paying students. The college has done an incredible amount, both collectively and individually. We still have work to do around retention and strategic enrollment management. Classroom updates are underway for Spring quarter. New I Building updates will include computer spaces for all staff.

### Legislative Priorities

The SBCTC has a prioritized a list of legislative priorities which includes: maintain the previously approved state allocation, continue to provide fully-funded competitive programs, and support college operations. The January Hill Climb is scheduled for January 30, 2025. If anyone is interested in getting involved, please let the President's Office know. ED Shaw is working on coordinating a reception the evening of January 30 with Green River College and Highline College. Trustee Zappone commented that last year, he, three students, and Rick Giest all attended the Hill Climb.

The Presidents and Chancellors have been meeting on what they can anticipate with the Trump Administration. Some college presidents have already had Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents come to campus. Title IV federal funding may be in jeopardy. During the last Trump Administration, over 100 counter-lawsuits were filed. The Assistant Attorney General (AAG) looks for demonstrable proof that initiatives are harmful to Washington-state citizens.

Men of Merit has hosted a speaker on Know Your Rights. Trustee Zappone commented that the Edmonds School District canceled an immigrant rights information session after backlash and concerns about safety. He stated that this is unacceptable and that we need a proactive and organized response now. President Harden remarked that regulations will impact our industry. Spring Quarter's All-Leadership meeting will focus on cybersecurity.

B. Financial/Budget Status

VP Jackson gave an update on the financial status. He walked the group through revenue. There is an increase in tuition collections and a light increase in fees. Our revenue is currently outpacing expenditures. The largest expenditure is salaries. There has been a large increase in goods and services as a response to ensuring expenses are made in the proper year.

There is currently just under \$20M in cash and investments. It's been a relatively flat year with several construction projects being locally funded. Both projects are nearing completion and most bills have been paid. Winter quarter enrollment will see an increase in cash and investments.

There was some damage to the campus during the last storm, which included loss of fencing and flashing. Replacements will likely happen throughout during Winter Break.

For fiscal year 2025, OFM is likely to claw back funds which will create an \$800K shortfall for RTC. We will likely need to pull \$1.6M out of cash to cover this and other expenses. The OFM is decreasing the SBCTC allocation by \$47M or about 2.5%. There will likely be an additional maintenance funding allocation reduction somewhere between 3-17%. Provisos and earmarks are likely to stay in place, unlike general funding. RTC has instituted a hiring freeze and is evaluating impacts to students, employees, and community. We are also reviewing vendor contracts for savings, increased the RFT retirement notification incentive which will have variable savings, reviewing annualized employee contracts, looking at student and program fees at comparable institutions, and is considering more efficient organizational structures. Executive Cabinet has agreed to not apply the I-732 general wage increase to exempt staff in 2025-2026.

College Reserves are around \$8M in the bank and \$12M in investments. Some of those funds are not able to be moved. The Board Reserve policy sets aside \$12.8M. There is about \$2.6M in cash. Before the OFM debacle, RTC was looking at a deficit of about \$1.7M for fiscal year 2026 with a positive budget in fiscal year 2028. With the OFM debacle, RTC is now looking at \$3.4M in deficit. There is no way to know how the college budget will be impacted in fiscal year 2028. The

deficit is modeled to decrease year after year due to assumptions about enrollment. The SBCTC believes the reduction will be between 3-6%. OFM is the budget and state's financial office.

Chair Norouzi stated that she knows this is a stressful time for community. The great work that we're doing on innovations and attracting students has a real and critical impact as we support each other. She commended President Harden for being transparent and for leading with robust communication to avoid speculation. Trustee Takamura stated that this is a tough decision that is resulting from a state office's mistake. We are in this together and will not make arbitrary or capricious decisions. You are all part of the solution, so please help as you can. Chair Norouzi stated that if you feel that you aren't getting information, please check that the communication channels are working. President Harden thanked the instructional faculty who are in the Board meeting off contract and acknowledged that the timing of these events has not been good. Chair Norouzi thanked the group for public comments on Monday and noted that this is a resilient community, and she is grateful for everyone's participation.

6. Board of Trustees

A. Foundation Liaison Report

Trustee Frieda Takamura stated that the Foundation is on track to have raised over \$1M. President Harden thanked employees for employee giving. The Thanksgiving Pie Event sold out and was a huge success. The Celebrity Chef event sold out and the auction help raise funds. The Foundation Board agreed that the Foundation will only have one event a year, alternating between the Celebrity Chef event and the Student Success Gala. This change should not impact overall fundraising and will help with staff capacity. These events go by academic year, so the next event will be March 2026, followed by the Celebrity Chef event in Fall 2026. Trustee Takamura thanked ED Shaw for attracting top chef talent. Vice Chair Cooper thanked ED Shaw for making a bold decision that will continue to benefit our students.

B. Legislative Action Liaison Report

Trustee Zappone reiterated that the Hill Climb will be January 30 and encouraged participation. He urged the campus to help put faces to the impacts of policy.

C. Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Liaison Report

President Harden and Chair Norouzi are planning to work together on a series of exploratory meetings with key experts in order to coalesce the CAC.

7. Meetings

A. Special and Regular Board Meeting – January 15, 2025

The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for January 15, 2025 at 3:00 P.M.

8. Adjournment

There being no further business, Trustee Zappone motioned to adjourn the Board of Trustees meeting at 4:53 P.M. Vice Chair Cooper seconded, and the motion carried.

JESSICA NOROUZI, Board Chair  
Board of Trustees



YOSHIKO HARDEN, President  
Renton Technical College

