

**I. STUDY SESSION****1. Call to Order**

Chair Jessica Norouzi called the meeting to order at 9:15 A.M. and noted a quorum.

**2. Public Comments**

There were no public comments

Chair Norouzi thanked everyone in the room for their leadership and commitment to RTC. Serving on the RTC Board is meaningful to Chair Norouzi because of the Board's service to the community. Chair Norouzi thanked Executive Cabinet, noting that it's been a long year. She thanked Board for its guidance and stewardship of newer Board members, and President Yoshiko Harden for stepping into this role as President and making the role her own even though it was a tough year.

President Harden welcomed the group. Last year's retreat was about year one of the Strategic Equity Plan (SEP). President Harden stated that it's been wonderful to have such a great team and exceptional faculty and staff. She thanked the trustees for giving their time and being so engaged. President Harden noted that she is excited to continue work with Be Culture

**3. Campus Climate Survey**

James Whitfield and Kristen Whitfield from Be Culture welcomed the group. The day's objective is to review the SEP to understand progress and look at expected progress for the upcoming year. Trustee Frieda Takamura stated that climate is different this year than it has been previously. Trustee Debra Entenman stated that everyone is being impacted by what is happening outside of the college in many different ways, and the group can't make the assumption that everyone is unhappy with current event. Using reflective language during difficult conversations is important. Everyone has biases and it's interesting how unconscious biases pop up. No work is more important than health.

The group did a brief check-in. Top of mind for the group included budget, transitions, commencement, and positivity. Mr. Whitfield walked the group through the 2023 Campus Climate Assessment. Created by the Higher Education Data Sharing Symposium, the purpose of the survey is to help institutions understand the climate, address harassment, and inform policies. There was a 6.6% response rate, which makes the findings not statistically valid. Thus, this data is input, not research. Two elements must be in place for statistical validity—there needs to be a statistically significant number of respondents from various group as well as a demographic similarity with the group over all for each corresponding group. Executive Director Doris Martinez shared that this is a struggle across colleges.

Key findings of the survey include: diversity improves campus, respondents were satisfied with the campus climate, students were more positive than employees and staff were more positive than faculty, respondents wanted more campus events to create community, and some respondents shared concerns. In 2024, the listening session groups were: faculty, disability, BIPOC employee experience, LGBTQ+, students, and all-college. Generally, respondents said that RTC was welcoming while expressing concerns about favoritism/lack of consistency, physical safety, low confidence in administration's willingness to address issues, and low confidence in the survey and listening sessions. Respondents stated that they wanted to feel supported, but there was no consistent definition of "support".

In 2025, there were four virtual sessions, by group, for students, faculty, staff, and all-college. Faculty participation was extremely low, with students having the most participation and staff participation being close. There was an increased awareness of RTC's purpose and culture expectations. Responses included concerns about follow-through, budget challenges, the socio-political environment, and favoritism. There was appreciation of visible leadership stances. The aspiration gap may have increase because respondents both have good feelings about RTC and high expectations. Students were generally positive. Faculty reported feelings of disrespect, which was deeper for adjunct faculty. An aspect of this is not having a good connection with their department dean, not having space to meet with students, concerns about adjunct faculty after budget announcements, and need for onboarding. The focus of year one of the SEP was on infrastructure to help address concerns about favoritism. RTC is a highly relational environment, and so transparency around structure and consistent and understandable processes was one way to provide employees the tools to navigate work without needing specific relationships. Faculty participation is acutely low at RTC.

Vice Chair Tim Cooper asked about tenure process and how tenured faculty stay engaged in campus activities after receiving tenure. Vice Chair Cooper also stated that he has moved away from using the word "family" and towards "team" after feedback from his team. Mr. Whitfield noted that there are headwinds against bonded human relationships, regardless of the label.

#### 4. Be The Place Strategic Equity Plan Strategic Indicators

Mr. Whitfield walked the group through the strategic indicators, which the Board reviewed during May's Study Session. The goals are Student Success, Equity, Workforce of the Future, and Organizational Effectiveness. The goals seek to be responsive to data gathered in the Campus Climate Survey and listening sessions. The Strategic Indicators were adopted by the Accreditation team. Mr. Whitfield briefed the group on the Strategic Indicators, and invited the Executive Cabinet members present about strategic indicators and their units.

Vice President Lesley Hogan presented the Human Resources (HR) mission and purpose. HR had a retreat last August where they came up with an infographic. HR promotes ongoing professional development and trainings, supports professional development through professional development plans (PDP), refines policies, engages with external stakeholders to build partnerships, aligned the PDPs form with the SEP, and ensures accountability and accessibility. Goal number one included changing the PDP process to include a question about the SEP as well as updating SharePoint, policies, procedures, standard operating procedures, and supervisor training. One challenge in HR is lack of capacity which is an institution-wide challenge. Communication and accountability are both challenges. A total compensation letter includes salary, benefits, college contribution to retirement plan, and so on.

Executive Director John Henry Whatley presented on College Technology Services (CTS). CTS had tremendous turnover in the three years prior to ED Whatley's interim appointment. The CTS unit plan includes integrity of student accounts (enabling multi-factor authentication for students) which was inter-departmental, the remodel of the Building J first floor which was one of the largest CTS infrastructure projects on campus (now, any student can use that space), and translation devices which is in its pilot phase and was developed inter-departmentally. The Service Desk Survey gives CTS the ability to continuously approve and is exceeding its target. This year, CTS is working on revising policies, two of which are in the works (one on generative AI and another on social media). CTS has renegotiated multiple contracts, with savings to the college. The Security Operations Center (SOC) provides campus cybersecurity offsite. CTS is working on staff training and development to ensure practices continue. CTS is considering the data sharing agreement, how data is housed, and accessibility in agreements. Trustee Takamura thanked CTS for their help.

Executive Director Katherine Hedland Hansen presented Communications and Marketing's (C&M) mission. C&M is not only marketing, but also telling stories, engaging students, and much more. C&M uses a Customer Relationship Management System (CRM) for outreach to boost inquiry-to-enrolment conversion. C&M uses campaigns to highlight programs and continue student-centered messaging. C&M finds new markets in order to reach historically underserved students and highlights the SEP. C&M reinforces RTC as a hub for career advancement and uses social media for messaging while implementing website workflow and analyzing data to guide campaign decisions. C&M uses tools to provide branded materials. Challenges and new opportunities include new technology, website improvements, enrollment growth, broader use of the CRM, misinformation about C&M, budget, and employee uncertainty. Trustee Bob Zappone asked about advertising outreach to employers. ED Hansen stated that

both Foundation and Outreach are working on partnerships and C&M has a hand in collaboration.

Executive Director Carrie Shaw stated that the Foundation is a separate charity that has a separate Board with fiduciary oversight. The Foundation is also accountable to donors, the IRS, and more because the Foundation manages private money. The Foundation has its own strategic plan and goals that support the SEP. Goals include increasing fundraising capacity (the Foundation has raised \$2.4M this year), strengthening Board effectiveness (including engagement, influence, and accountability), expanding and deepening industry and community partnerships (which supports SEP goals three and four), and creating a platform for student feedback on scholarships and grants (which supports SEP goal one). One challenge around scholarships is how to manage AI in applications. There are two positions on the Foundation Board for students, and ED Shaw will be part of New Student Orientation (NSO) moving forward. The Foundation is sustaining a partnership with Renton School District to increase enrollment in professional-technical degree programs. The Foundation is also showing measured progress in implementing the Partnership Outreach Program. Staff capacity is a challenge.

Dean Anthony Covington (representing Vice President Jessica Gilmore English) presented on Student Services, which covers many different departments of different sizes. Key Priorities for academic year 2025-2026 include creating of the Funding Center. Many students report funding as a barrier, and the Funding Center would ensure cross-collaboration with staff in a one-stop-shop for students. Another priority is revising the advising model. There are many processes that run through one individual, and creating redundancies is necessary for student success. The number of students is increasing and the number of staff is not, and so Student Services is reviewing models and best practices for work allocation. Student Services is imbedding more tech to help with services. There has been an uptick in fraudulent enrollment. Having more touchpoints for new students can cut down on fraudulent enrollments. Challenges include limited staffing, bad actors who contribute to fraudulent enrollment, determining what work to stop doing, and ensuring spread of information to students about program changes. Vice Chair Cooper asked about fraudulent enrollment. Dean Covington responded that bad actors get financial aid from fraudulent enrollment. Vice Chair Cooper asked about how RTC partners with RSD on funding. Specific legislation has increased FASFA and WASFA, and RTC has an employee dedicated to high school outreach. Trustee Entenman asked about the State Board pre-flagging fraudulent enrollments. Dean Covington stated that because of the state-wide application, the State Board will flag certain actors, but fraudulent enrollments still get through. Chair Norouzi thanked Dean Covington for his presentation and for thinking of student needs in terms of the Funding Center. Student Services works with Foundation on making students aware of Foundation scholarships.

Vice President Stephanie Delaney presented Instruction's department unit plans. Like Student Services, Instruction has many departments to coordinate. Instruction's challenges include that people are tired, stressed, and feeling trauma at the loss of nine departments. This is a barrier to engaging in optimistic change. Deans are overworked. Other institutions have Associate Deans, program shares, faculty who are doing administrative work, and administrative support. At RTC, there are Deans and then faculty. In the context of program viability, almost every program has seen change, all of which need to go to the accrediting body. Instruction's goals have been to enhance student completion rates (making completion paths more efficient), having students participate in Navigate to ensure that students are being flagged when they need help, supporting more at-risk students by connecting them with navigators, and aligning curriculum with needs expressed in Advisory Committees. Some of the program closures were because RTC was not meeting industry needs. Instruction is working to ensure that students are getting opportunities to work out in the world. Instruction has been updating their student internship handbooks to help industry partners understand RTC's expectations for students and help students prepare for the environment they will enter. Instruction has been doing a lot of work around streamlining processes.

Executive Director Doris Martinez stated that many people at RTC want to be involved with campus activities, and so she has been putting together and hosting workgroups, teams, subcommittees and more. When students are not able to attend the New Student Orientation, Student Life works with Student Services to create a sense of belonging to a learning community. ED Martinez has been working on collaborative partnerships. The Unity Center is launching and will be a hub for community conversations. ED Martinez has been engaged in conversations about current events. The Unity Center is located in Building D. Trustee Takamura asked about trainings for culturally competent pedagogy. One of ED Martinez's goals for the coming academic year is to have more institutional trainings.

Vice President Jacob Jackson presented on Business Office, Facilities, and Capital Budget. The Business Office is focusing on updating policies (particularly purchasing and general disbursements policies). Institutional Research has been building infrastructure by refining policies and procedures and strengthening data literacy among campus (specifically, campus leadership). Facilities has been upgrading campus spaces, including building upgrades, to create more welcoming spaces. Staff capacity is a big challenge. ctcLink has presented challenges on the backend. Another challenge has been keeping stakeholders engaged despite transitions. Trustee Takamura asked about the Purchasing Policy. VP Jackson stated that RTC's new policy will be to follow Department of Enterprise Services guidelines. VP Jackson stated that disbursements have changed to be more accommodating to students, but the policy does not reflect this and will be updated. Some policies go to campus

for feedback and input, some policies must go to unions, and for the most part, policies go to Executive Cabinet.

Chair Norouzi expressed how impressed she was by the presentations despite the lack of staff capacity. Trustee Takamura stated that she was also impressed and thanked the group for their support of the SEP. Vice Chair Cooper asked about Cabinet's process of communicating each unit's goals to teams from the bottom up. President Harden stated that it's helpful to know what the Board priorities are. Mr. Whitfield noted that clarity around direction matters a lot for campus accountability. The group discussed bringing the Faculty Senate back.

Trustee Entenman stated that this is her last year on the RTC Board, and she's been seeing her work come to fruition. She noted that it's good for Board membership to turnover and that RTC is in a good place. Chair Norouzi commented that the Board has a fraction of the time that Executive Cabinet has on campus and asked to hear from Executive Cabinet. VP Jackson stated that he appreciates that the Board recognizes that employees are being asked to do more work with less staff. ED Shaw expressed appreciation for when Trustee Takamura specifically notes items from the written reports and calls out specific departments. Trustee Entenman stated that she is proud of all of the work that the Board did during COVID. This community needs RTC. ED Whatley thanked President Harden for her support with the CTS restructure, which included putting systems in place. He also thanked Executive Cabinet for supporting him as the newest Cabinet member. President Harden noted that when she started at RTC, the number one faculty complaint was technology, which is not a complaint anymore. Chair Norouzi asked the group to please send a positive point for share out at the last Board meeting. Mr. Whitfield noted that part of establishing credibility includes naming concerns and challenges.

##### 5. BTP SEP Year 2

The Board discussed implications for the upcoming year. Vice Chair Cooper stated that there is a need to lay out groundwork that hard decisions may need to continue. Trustee Takamura commented that this groundwork needs transparency. President Harden stated that no more programs will be cut. The Governor's budget extended RTC's deficit by \$350K, and so more positions need to be reduced. Impacted employees will be notified on June 30. Mr. Whitfield noted that there are legal and ethical responsibilities, which is a burden that people who have not been in the role may not understand.

Trustee Entenman suggested that every month, trustees attend a city council meeting to introduce themselves and advocate for RTC. Trustee Entenman also suggested that the trustees advocate against consolidation. Vice Chair Cooper stated a need for the Board to also meet with community partners to best determine community needs.



## 6. Managing Transitions

Mr. Whitfield led the group on managing transitions. Change is external, and transitions occur internally. The Kubler-Ross (Kessler) Grief Cycle is a biological reaction of fight or flight followed by the biological reaction of learning and growing. Whenever a change happens, the first thing that tends to occur is denial (shock and avoidance) and anger (frustration and anxiety). These can also occur when you are in favor of the change. When we bargain, we put self at the center of the story. Depression (hopelessness and flight) signals the beginning of acceptance. Depression is a sign of progress—sadness indicates movement to acceptance. Acceptance is where we can begin exploring options, but we can't explore new options if we're trying to replace old things or are otherwise holding on to old things. Finding meaning indicates growth. People transition at different speeds depending on the individual, culture, and when the change becomes real to them.

Management needs to be able to set clear expectations in advance. It's important to be proactive about time and space, including onramps and offramps as well as agendas and one-on-one meetings. The first step to management is management of self. This requires understanding where you are on the curve and meeting others where they are. It is harder for the people left on a team than the person who is leaving.

Upcoming changes for RTC include the state budget, as well as possible federal impacts to programs. These both have ripple effects across the larger community. Trustees Takamura and Entenman will be transitioning off of the Board in September. Chair Norouzi stated that the state's onboarding for trustees was helpful to her. Trustee Takamura remarked that it's important that each Board member have opportunities for professional development. Chair Norouzi and Trustee Zappone commented that it was helpful when Trustee Takamura reached out and helped orient them to the community. Chair Norouzi asked about getting employers more involved with advocacy. Trustee Entenman responded that that is what is important about a strong alumni network. Chair Norouzi thanked Trustees Entenman and Takamura for the legacy they have left the Board, the college, and the community. She also thanked the group for all of the hard decisions they've had to make, and Be Culture for being such great teachers. President Harden thanked the group. She expressed gratitude at working with the group together and as individuals.

## 7. Meetings

### A. Special and Regular Board Meeting – June 18, 2025

The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for June 18, 2025, at 3:00 P.M.

8. Adjournment

There being no further business, Vice Chair Cooper motioned to adjourn the Board of Trustees meeting at 3:56 P.M. Trustee Zappone seconded, and the motion carried.

JESSICA NOROUZI, Board Chair  
Board of Trustees



YOSHIKO HARDEN, President  
Renton Technical College

