

**UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI**  
**Official Proceedings of the**  
**Four Hundred and Eleventh Meeting of the Board of Trustees**  
**(A Regular Meeting)**  
**February 25, 2025**

The Four Hundred and Eleventh Session of the Board of Trustees of the University of Cincinnati was opened at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, February 25, 2025, in the Annie Laws Building of the University of Cincinnati. Notice of this meeting was given in accordance with Section 121.22 of the Ohio Revised Code. The proceedings of the Board, when not otherwise provided for by its bylaws, are governed by *Robert's Rules of Order*.

Monica Turner, Chair of the Board of Trustees, presided.

Mrs. Turner asked that roll be called.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Monica Turner; Ronald D. Brown;  
Gregory Hartmann; Jill McGruder; J. Phillip  
Holloman; Shelly Gillis; Steve Boymel;  
Kerry Byrne

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

**ALSO PRESENT:** Neville G. Pinto, President;  
Patrick Kowalski, Senior Vice President for  
Administration and Finance;  
Kristi Nelson, Interim Provost and Senior Vice  
President, Academic Affairs;  
Lori Ross, General Counsel;  
Greg Postel, Executive Vice President for Health  
Affairs  
Joseph Cortas, Undergraduate Trustee;  
Joseph Lampton, Graduate Trustee;  
Tamika Odum, Faculty Senate Chair;  
Lindsey Mills, Faculty Senate;  
Everrett A. Smith, Faculty Senate;  
Brandi Elliott, University Staff Senate

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Nicole Blount, Executive Director of Board  
Relations;  
and the public

**THE BOARD COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

*(Proceedings of the Board committee meetings are contained in the respective committee meeting minutes, which are on file in the Office of the Board of Trustees.)*

No Board Committee meetings were held today, February 25, 2025.

**THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees was convened at 8:30 a.m. and, as noted on the first page of these minutes, roll call was taken.

Mrs. Turner:

Good morning, everyone. We are now ready to call the 411th session of the Board of Trustees of the University of Cincinnati to order. We are going to open up with the President's remarks.

Dr. Pinto.

Thank you, Chair Turner. Good morning, board members, and good morning, everybody here. I want to acknowledge our community. Thank you for being here today and expressing how you feel about the issue of diversity, equity, and inclusion. It's voices like yours that make us a vibrant and healthy campus so thank you for being here today. I want you to know that we see you and we hear you. Like every public university, we are the intersection of a cultural collision

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of competing ideologies that will challenge us for the foreseeable future. This is clear. What is also clear is that elected leaders in both the state and federal levels are pursuing and enacting policies that are a departure from decades of established practice within academic communities. Not surprisingly, as these developments come to a head, our university community is expressing concern, worry, and even fear. These are legitimate reactions to significant change.

Last week I shared messages around the campus community about recent federal actions that have occurred related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. On Friday a U.S. District Judge in Baltimore enjoined certain aspects of two of President Trump's Executive Orders related to DEI. Since then, I've been in contact with our deans and vice-presidents to dialogue how we must adapt our timing and possibly our scope as it relates to DEI.

Yesterday I met with the leadership from the Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, and both undergraduate and graduate student government. We also shared new messaging with our campus late yesterday to try to update everyone with the latest information. We know many questions remain on this topic, and we will continue to communicate with you to keep you informed.

We as administrators have received outreach from many who have specific and valid concerns. I assure you your feedback is heard. While I will not be able to offer a satisfying response to every outreach, we do factor your input into your decisions. As a leader of this university, the number one question I must ask myself when making a hard decision is how will this decision impact our students? How will it impact our faculty and staff? This approach is shared by my leadership as well as our Board of Trustees. We as leaders must weigh the overall risks of every decision, every action, as well as every inaction. I assure you that the decisions around these issues do not come lightly. Some may ask what we're doing as a university to influence the changes arising in higher education. Our team spends countless hours on these

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topics. We pay close attention to scenarios and the evolution of policy to assure our university is prepared as much as possible. My team and I make regular trips to both Columbus and D.C. to meet with our legislators, raise concerns, demonstrate our value and attempt to encourage state and federal officials to support policies that honor the mission of public higher education.

Finally, I want to acknowledge these students, faculty, and staff feeling helpless or powerless in this moment. If that's you, I would encourage you to continue to focus on that which you can control. What do I mean by this? While we may not always control our situation, we can control how we react to it. We can control how we treat one another. We can control how we engage with one another and particularly, how we support those who are most impacted. We can also take charge of how we treat ourselves and how we are managing such things as our mental illness, our physical health, and our wellness. These things are largely in our control. We must treat one another with care and compassion.

Our university has withstood years of change by working together for the greater good of our society and remaining focused on educating the next generation. This will continue. Together we've navigated incredible challenges since our founding in 1819. We remain committed to our founding mission, to provide a supportive learning and working environment where all are welcome, all are safe, and all are free to be successful.

Thank you, Chair Turner, for allowing me this time at the board meeting.

Mrs. Turner:

Thank you, President Pinto, and from the Board of Trustees, we want to offer our continued support for the university, the faculty, and the students as we navigate these times to ensure we are able to complete the mission of the university, and that mission is to continue to be a premiere

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public urban university that's dedicated to developing, educating, and engaging with citizen leaders and continue to do that together.

Thank you, President Pinto, for your comments.

**Approval of the Items Recommended by the Board Committees**

No Recommendations were presented for approval today, February 25, 2025.

**Unfinished Business and New Business**

Mrs. Turner:

We are now moving on to the reports of the board representatives. We start with the Undergraduate Student Trustee Report by Joseph Cortas.

**Undergraduate Student Report**

Mr. Cortas:

Good morning, Chair Turner, members of the board, President Pinto, cabinet, and esteemed guests. Yesterday I had the opportunity to participate in the final candidate interviews for the Cincinnati Presidential scholarship. My role was simple, to provide a student's perspective and ask a single question. If you had to choose what are the world's most complex problems to work towards solving as a student, what would it be and why?

That is a challenging question. That is a question of challenge. And yet, for many of our students, the greatest challenge is not one which they have chosen. It is one that they navigate each and every day. More than any time in recent history, our students' collegiate experiences are not exclusively of their own choosing. We did not seek, nor did we provoke a deconstruction of

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systems seeking to protect, support, and sustain us. We did not expect, nor did we invite fear into our campus and into our classrooms. It's a true measure of our strength to how we rise to master that moment when it does arrive.

I join you today as a member of this, our board, and as a member of the Academic and Student Affairs Committee. I have learned much of this seemingly task-oriented action attributable to the committee, the policy, appointments, admissions, and enrollment. Responsibilities whose conveyance and oversight are governed directly by mechanisms codified in procedure. On these topics I see no greater opportunity for the Academic and Student Affairs Committee to improve. However, as a written university rule, there remains for the committee a requirement of action on behalf of student affairs and welfare.

In some instances, it is imperative this community serve not only as a responsive body addressing the immediate tasks but also a proactive agent in ensuring student affairs and welfare remain at the forefront of our institution's decisions. Herein lies our opportunity. Herein lies our legacy. Today's reality demands a more intentional and continuous engagement with the student body. Now more than any time in recent history, it calls for the committee in service to the board to have a finger on the pulse of student life ensuring decisions made by the board are informed by a true understanding of the evolving student experience, and what a challenging experience it has become. As the overwhelming weakness and historical structure of strength support crumble around us, the burden of utility when institutions of mutualism and understanding fall at our feet. I need not remind this room that many of our students find no feeling in finance, no protection in policy, no compassion in compliance, and no love in the law. If our students do not feel seen, supported, and valued, then what is the meaning of our mission? What is the strength of our community, and what is the purpose of our board? That is a challenging question and that is a

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question of challenge. If an arch is to be strengthened, it's not by removing the burden but ensuring the weight upon it is born together firmly joining many parts as one. May our creed be our call, and may our strength come in unity.

Mrs. Turner:

Thank you, Joseph. We will now have the Graduate Student Report by Joseph Lampton.

**Graduate Student Report**

Mr. Lampton:

Thank you and good morning, Chair Turner, President Pinto, board members, representatives, and guests. I want to restate the importance of this being the first board meeting led by Chair Turner. We are fortunate to have you. You are going to do great things for us this year and we are happy to have the opportunity to work with you. If you are entering a potential season of change, it is crucial we remain mindful and appreciative of these different walks of life students have taken to come to UC. These different paths have shaped our growth, fostered irreplaceable communities, and elevated what it means to be a bearcat.

Next Lives Here and Next Lives Now as we are being faced with a process that requires reduction and is vital that we use compassionate strategies to implement support while acknowledging the impact that reductions will carry. Additionally, by setting a foundation of centering student voices and collaboration can help ensure all students are embraced, respected, and supported in upcoming changes. As we continue to support and advocate for one another, this serves as a viable reminder that we must demonstrate empathy, endurance, and courage to face adversity without losing hope. Thank you.

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Mrs. Turner:

Thank you, Joseph. We will now have the Faculty Senate Report by Tamika Odum.

Tamika.

**Faculty Senate Report**

Dr. Odum:

Thank you, Chair Turner, President Pinto, board members, and guests for this opportunity to give a report on behalf of the university faculty and Faculty Senate. As always, faculty senate has been hard at work ensuring faculty voices are represented in the shared governance process. Recent legislative changes have been heavily on the minds of many students, faculty, and staff. These changes have and will continue to impact higher education and the University of Cincinnati for the foreseeable future.

Over the last several weeks, I have received many reports from certain faculty regarding the legislative changes. Of the concerns I have received, common themes emerge related to communication and strategy as we seek to manage the impact of these changes on our university. The current legislative environment is forcing many universities, including our own, to undo decades of effort to focus on creating a culture of belonging. The changes ahead are more than laws and policy on paper. They directly impact students, faculty, and staff and the future of learning itself.

Our priorities over the next few weeks and months will be to continue to work closely with administration to ensure transparent communication regarding impact, roles and responsibilities of faculty, staff, and students as a result of the legislative changes. In addition, we will work



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closely with administration to make sure our voice is heard through the change process and continue to strive the development of future policies affecting the academic mission of the university. As we navigate this evolving legislative landscape, we must work together to create a shared vision that ensures UC is a place where opportunity, affordability, and access remain at the heart of who we are. The Faculty Senate is committed to shaping this vision.

President Pinto, we urge you to go beyond communicating with us about the changes that lie ahead. We're asking that you invite us both faculty, staff, and students to the conversation. Last night you invited leadership from undergraduate student government, graduate student government, faculty and staff senate to discuss the future. This was a first step to working more collaboratively towards a future we can be proud of. Let us be part of shaping the future of UC.

Thank you and that concludes my report.

Mrs. Turner:

Thank you, Tamika. With that, we will now have the Staff Senate Report by Brandi Elliott.

**Staff Senate Report**

Dr. Elliott:

Good morning, Chair Turner, members of the board, President Pinto, distinguished guests, I am pleased to provide an update on behalf of UC staff and Staff Senate regarding recent activities and initiatives. Our next staff senate meeting that will take place on March 5 will feature Tina Mahle from the Staff Success Center. March is Staff Development month organized by HR, and the theme is “A Rising Tide Lifts All Boats” emphasizing collective benefits of learning and

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growth. Each session will focus on one of four Tide themes: technology, inclusion, development, and engagement.

For our staff excellence awards, there were 122 nominations, 81 individuals were nominated, and 10 were selected. The event will take place March 28. The Staff Senate is also working with faculty senate to host our first town hall featuring Pat Kowalski to provide an overview of the budgeted model. This initial is a part of our continued effort to foster transparency. The event is scheduled for March 11 in TUC. We are collaborating with Faculty Senate, undergraduate and graduate student government, and graduate student trustees to advance shared governance initiatives that enhance representation and engagement across the university community.

In closing, as things are changing rapidly, many staff have expressed a great deal of sadness, grief, anxiety, and confusion. Many are doing their best to support students while also trying to navigate their own feelings and emotions. As we continue to navigate the waves of information, staff have requested the need for more transparency and care as decisions are being made. Staff Senate remains steadfast to assist University of Cincinnati leadership while also continuing to advocate for the staff needs through education, support, representation, and a collective voice so that we can continue to keep the students at the center of our work.

This concludes my report.

Mrs. Turner:

Thank you very much, Brandi. We have one more report that has been submitted, which is the Student Government Report by Madison Wesley. She is not here today but her remarks will be put into the record.

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**Student Government Report (Written report submitted)**

Ms. Wesley:

Good morning, Chairman, board members, President Pinto, and distinguished guests. Although I am unable to attend today's meeting in person as I am currently in Washington D.C. with three other members of the Undergraduate Student Government, meeting with our local lawmakers to advocate for issues critical to our student body, including college affordability and student mental health, I am pleased to present this report to update you on our recent activities and developments.

Our reform of the Undergraduate Student Government's election process is now fully implemented, and I am thrilled to report that the elections are currently underway with great enthusiasm and participation from the student body. These reforms were designed to increase engagement and ensure a more inclusive and transparent process, allowing for broader student involvement in our governance.

In addition to our election activities, we are actively involved in the process of reviewing applicants for the undergraduate student trustee positions. This role is crucial as it provides a direct link between the student body and the board, ensuring that the voices of our peers are heard and considered in university decisions. The selection process has been rigorous and thoughtful, with an emphasis on finding candidates who truly represent the diversity and dynamism of our student community.

Furthermore, I am honored to have been selected to serve on the Search Committee for the University of Cincinnati's next Provost. This role has allowed me to contribute a student

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perspective to this critical decision-making process, ensuring that our academic and administrative leadership continues to align with the needs and aspirations of our students.

While I regret missing the opportunity to engage directly with you all today, please know that my absence is in service of advancing the interests of our university and its students at the national level. We are engaging in meaningful discussions that have the potential to influence policy and bring about positive changes that will benefit not only the University of Cincinnati but also higher education institutions across the country.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to the success of our students and our university. Your dedication is vital as we strive to enhance the academic and social environment at the University of Cincinnati. I look forward to reporting back on the outcomes of our discussions in Washington.

This concludes my report for February. Thank you for your attention and your ongoing commitment to our community.

Mrs. Turner:

I'd like to thank all of the speakers today, all the trustees, student trustees, as well as the reports by Tamika, Brandi, and of course, thank you for your voices. We appreciate it as the Board of Trustees.

I'd like to allow us to go into Executive Session so that we can conduct further business and then return to adjourn the board meeting. Having no further business before the board, may I have a motion to go into Executive Session?

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**Adjournment of Regular Meeting**

Mrs. Turner:

We are going to conclude our meeting of the Board of Trustees. There will be no Executive Session. May I have a motion to adjourn?

*(A motion was moved by Mr. Brown, and second by Mr. Hartmann)*

Mrs. Turner:

All those in favor say “aye.” All opposed say “nay”. Motion carries. Thank you. The meeting is adjourned.

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MONICA TURNER  
CHAIRPERSON

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JILL MCGRUDER  
SECRETARY