

I. STUDY SESSION

1. Call to Order

Chair Jessica Norouzi called the meeting to order at 9:12 A.M. and noted a quorum.

2. Public Comments

There were two submitted public comments, both of which were read aloud. Wahaj Ol Obid, a current RTC student voiced their strong support for the BAS programs, specifically the Computer Networking Engineering (CNE). These programs provide invaluable opportunities for students to advance careers, meet industry demands, and contribute to the community's workforce. Wahaj urged the Board to prioritize the continuation and growth of BAS programs. The second public comment came from Tyler Sabin, a current RTC student who shared their experiences in the CNE Program. Tyler returned to RTC after being advised by Labor and Industries that CNE is a growing field. The instructors at RTC have helped Tyler learn, and Tyler has received A's in every class and four scholarships. Tyler expressed appreciation for hybrid, remote, and evening classes

3. Update on the Budget

President Yoshiko Harden greeted the group and thanked the students who shared their stories. Today's study session is on the budget. Vice President Stephanie Delaney will speak to specific programs, and Vice President Jacob Jackson will brief the group on the budget.

VP Jackson thanked the Board for having him to present. There was an Office of Financial Management (OFM) budget error that is leading to an \$800k claw back that will likely take place next year. The accounting correction will occur this next biennium. On July 1, the base will be reset, resulting in a budget deficit if nothing is done.

VP Jackson walked the group through the college reserves. There is currently \$15.5M, and the Board Reserve policy is to keep \$14M to cover Financial Aid, two months' worth of operating expenses, and two weeks' worth of cash expenses. If the Board decides to take no action, there is not enough in variance to cover projected costs. Additional potential revenue from outside sources could change projections.

Currently, RTC is not filling vacant positions. The I-732 COLA will not be provided for non-legislatively mandated positions. RTC is examining annualized contracts, which include "soft-funded" positions and positions that were designed to be temporary.

VP Jackson walked the group through the possible instructional program reductions. So far, there has been one faculty resignation in Accounting, and six faculty who took advantage of the early retirement notification. There are currently five vacant faculty positions. Two of these positions were reassigned to Welding, which allows the college to run a full afternoon Welding cohort.

VP Jackson walked the group through BAS Application Developer full-time enrollment (FTE) numbers when compared to the RTC FTE enrollments. Enrollment has been declining steadily since 2020.

Computer Science is a 2-year degree. There has been a significant decline in Computer Science enrollment since 2019. There was extra allocation to increase enrollment, resulting in hiring an additional instructor to offer evening classes. Engineering Design enrollment declined and leveled off. This went from a two-instructor program to a one-instructor program after an instructor resigned during COVID.

Machining had a significant decline during COVID which has leveled off in recent years. This program has two full-time faculty as well as an additional faculty who supports the machining math courses. Machining has significant equipment costs. Other programs have salaries as the primary expense.

Some of enrollment limitations are space limitations, sequencing impacts how many instructors and FTEs are in each program, and external regulations on instructor-to-student ratios. RTC is obligated to teach out current students. Up to 100 students will be impacted. However, impacted programs will not enroll new students. RTC would put programs on hiatus and the programs could be taken off hiatus in the future.

Trustee Bob Zappone asked about industry partners. VP Delaney has met with each of the advisory committees to discuss potential solutions, but so far this has not resulted in increased enrollments. Chair Norouzi asked about program recovery time considering COVID. VP Delaney stated that COVID impacted enrollment, however the OFM error does not allow for more recovery time. Chair Norouzi commented that she knows that Executive Cabinet has made careful considerations, and that her questions were from a place of learning what decisions were being made. There are bright areas, such as Welding, General Education, Nursing, Automotive, Early Childhood Education, Commercial Engineering, Legal Assistant, Medical Office Assistant, and others are seeing substantial growth over the last couple of years. Trustee Takamura noted that this is what the community is saying is needed. Chair Norouzi started that this is a time to be intentional about what we're offering. Vice Chair Tim Cooper asked about the cost to provide education and loss

of FTEs. There is about a \$2M net in cost-savings to the college for FY24 if the Board acts on possible program reductions. FY27 is when the savings will be realized.

Trustee Debra Entenman asked how RTC will answer when students ask about how we are making these decisions when students need training for the future. VP Delaney responded that RTC has offered aid and outreach, and enrollment is still down. Trustee Entenman stated that it's important that we all know that we have discussed options and made the best student-focused decisions with the information that we have.

President Harden stated that this is why this is so tough. Many of these programs were under review in 2019, and so this is also a historical process. One of the factors Executive Cabinet looked at is whether a degree or certificate is necessary for employment in the field, as well as wages. Re-investment in programs that require certification and allow for higher wages may be the better way to go. There are several colleges that are impacted by the OFM error and are looking at reductions. President Harden noted that currently, students report that they pick programs based on proximity, specific program, and reputation. Trustee Takamura asked about looking at future students and their needs. VP Jackson stated that Executive Cabinet has been talking about growing programs like commercial refrigeration. He briefed the group on conversations with deans on new programming. President Harden stated that the college is always working on strategic enrollment management.

The group discussed whether there are similar programs nearby, and this may be a time to strategically build RTC's reputation. Trustee Zappone noted that he recently visited campus and was impressed with what the college is doing. President Harden noted that, overall, enrollment has improved and the group is working to make decisions that will continue to increase enrollment. VP Delaney reminded the group that we are still in program viability and programs are having conversations about how to continue to build enrollments, program revisions, and data. Chair Norouzi stated that messaging to partners should include this information. These are very difficult decisions.

Vice Chair Cooper stated that the burden of leadership is to carry moral injuries from making difficult decisions. He fully trusts the decisions Executive Cabinet is making, and these conversations build trust because the details and facts are there.

Trustee Entenman stated that this has been a challenging legislative session. Legislature has been involved in difficult conversations about program cuts and raising taxes to protect services to vulnerable populations.

President Harden thanked everyone who showed up to this meeting and helps get the word out.

4. Meetings

A. Regular Board Meeting – March 19, 2025 at 3:00 P.M.

The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for March 19, 2025 at 3:00 P.M.

5. Adjournment

There being no further business, Trustee Frieda Takamura motioned to adjourn the Board of Trustees meeting at 10:44 A.M. Vice Chair Tim Cooper seconded, and the motion carried.

JESSICA NOROUZI, Board Chair
Board of Trustees



YOSHIKO HARDEN, President
Renton Technical College


