

---

**PENNWEST REPORTS GROWTH IN GRADUATE ENROLLMENT, HONORS ALUMNA AT TRUSTEE MEETING**



*September 26, 2024*

**Photo:** Anne Simon Simmons and Paul Simmons Jr. accept a resolution from Dr. Jon Anderson (left), PennWest president, and Kathy Pape (second from left), chair of the PennWest Council of Trustees, in memory of their mother, Gwendolyn “Gwen” Simmons.

Pennsylvania Western University reported significant growth in graduate and online enrollments at the Council of Trustees meeting, held Sept. 26 at the California campus.

New graduate enrollment increased by 9.4%, while online enrollment saw a 9.5% rise. In total, PennWest fall 2024 enrollment stands at 10,834 total

students across its California, Clarion, Edinboro and online campuses this fall. This includes 7,586 undergraduates and 3,258 graduate students. For the second consecutive year, retention rates have increased, reflecting a positive trend for the university.

PennWest remains the second largest public university in western Pennsylvania. More information about the fall 2024 class is available [here](#).

PennWest continues to prioritize affordability and quality. For the 2024-25 academic year, the university invested \$19 million in grants and scholarships for students. In total, 86.5% of undergraduate students receive financial aid or scholarships. For the seventh consecutive year, PennWest has frozen tuition, reinforcing its commitment to accessible education in western Pennsylvania.

“Our fall 2024 enrollment numbers demonstrate what we call the Power of PennWest,” said Dr. Jon Anderson, president of PennWest University. “More students are choosing to pursue advanced degrees at PennWest, and the overall experience at our campuses is attracting students who are staying enrolled – a testament to the Power of PennWest. With our campuses undergoing updates, students thriving, and first-class programs drawing attention, we are confident that the best has yet to come.”

### **Alumna Honored by Trustees**

The Council of Trustees passed a resolution honoring the late Gwendolyn "Gwen" Simmons for her lifelong dedication and contributions to the PennWest California community and the Mon Valley region. Simmons, who died in January 2024, served as a trustee at California University of Pennsylvania from 1995 to 2011.

“(Simmons) led a life in service for others and believed that life’s greatest reward lies in benefiting others,” the resolution read. “Gwen’s legacy of selfless service, leadership, and dedication to the better of the community will continue to inspire future generations.”

Simmons established the Paul A. and Gwendolyn G. Simmons International Studies Scholarship, which continues to benefit PennWest students. Simmons’ children, Anne Simon Simmons, Gwen Simmons and Paul Simmons Jr., attended the meeting.

### **New Officers Elected and 2025 Meeting Dates Set**

The Council of Trustees held officer elections and approved meeting dates for the 2025 calendar year. Officers are elected every two years at the last quarterly meeting of the calendar year. The newly elected officers will begin their new terms at the January 2025 meeting.

J.D. Dunbar has been elected as council chair, and Larry Pickett vice chair. Tyrique Whitson, a PennWest California student double majoring in sociology and political science, will serve as secretary.

“I embrace this opportunity to serve as council chair,” Dunbar said. “I am interested in maximizing trustee and student voices, and all others in the university family. Trustees maintain a vital role in guiding the University. I look forward to working with President Jon Anderson in concert with my fellow trustees as we lead PennWest into the future.”

Dunbar, a 1977 and 1979 graduate of Clarion University, was appointed to the PennWest Council of Trustees in 2022, after serving as a trustee at Clarion from 2009 to 2022. Pickett, a 1977 Clarion University graduate, has been a PennWest trustee since 2022, previously serving as a Clarion trustee from 2009 to 2012 and again from 2019 to 2022. Whitson was appointed as a student trustee in 2023.

The 2025 council meeting dates are Jan. 23, Mar. 27, Jun. 26, and Sept. 25.

For additional information about the Council of Trustees, including meeting agendas and a recording from Thursday’s proceedings, visit the [council’s webpage](#).