



## MEDIA RELEASE

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**CONTACT:** Raechel Dawson: (206) 592-3393, [rdawson@highline.edu](mailto:rdawson@highline.edu)

### **Sharmila Swenson joins Highline College Board of Trustees**

DES MOINES, Wash. — Washington state Gov. Jay Inslee recently appointed Sharmila Swenson to the Highline College Board of Trustees.

She joins a board that has served a collective 33 years at Highline.

“Sharmila values community building and engagement, which will be extremely valuable as Highline College begins to plan the future growth of the campus,” Highline College President John Mosby said. “Her knowledge and leadership in public affairs and community relations will be instrumental through this time of growth and change.”

When Swenson isn't serving on the boards of Treehouse, a nonprofit serving youth in foster care, or the Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce, she's working as the assistant vice president of public affairs for Bellevue-based Symetra Life Insurance Company. There, she oversees the community relations program, corporate giving, employee community engagement and public affairs at the local, state and federal levels.

“Highline College is an incredible asset to our community,” Swenson, a Des Moines resident, said. “I look forward to serving alongside our leadership team to provide the support needed to ensure our students reach their educational goals and can move forward confidently with a plan for their future.”

Swenson's prior experience includes work in the private, public and nonprofit arenas, most recently serving as manager of local government affairs and public policy for Puget Sound Energy, the largest energy provider in Washington.

She's also served as a relationship development officer for Treehouse, a national political coordinator for the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, operations director for Inslee's 2012 transition team, and deputy chief of staff for the 1st Congressional District, with a focus on energy, education, transportation and economic development.

She is a proud graduate of Mt. Rainier High School in the Highline School District, and holds a degree in political science from the University of Washington.

Swenson replaces Debrena Jackson Gandy, who completed her two terms in September after serving nine years on the Board of Trustees.

During Jackson Gandy's time on the board, she was instrumental in the president's search and has been a strong advocate for student success, achievement and diversity on behalf of students of color.

She served as chair twice and was co-chair on the board committee to revise operating policies, as well as the committee that led the national search for Highline's seventh — and current — college president in 2018.

“Debrena has been an extremely valuable and integral member to the growth and leadership of Highline College,” Mosby said. “Her dedication to the community and unwavering support has greatly benefited our students, staff, faculty and community members.”

Learn more about the Highline College [Board of Trustees](#).

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**Attachment:** Photo of Sharmila Swenson

**Links within this release:** <https://trustees.highline.edu/>

*Founded in 1961 as the first community college in King County, Highline College annually serves more than 17,000 students. With over 70 percent students of color, Highline is the most diverse higher education institution in the state. The college offers a wide range of academic transfer, professional-technical education, basic skills and applied bachelor's degree programs. Alumni include former Seattle Mayor Norm Rice, entrepreneur Junki Yoshida and former Washington state poet laureate Sam Green.*