

**NORTHWEST COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING**

February 10, 2025

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** President MS. DENISE LAURSEN; Vice President/Secretary MR. R.J. KOST; Treasurer MR. BOB NEWSOME; and Trustees MR. JOHN HOUSEL, MS. TARA KUIPERS, MR. SHANE OGDEN, and DR. MARK WURZEL.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**OTHERS PRESENT:** MS. LISA WATSON, President; MR. DAVE ERICKSON, Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs; MR. TOM HAVRON, Vice President for Student Services; MR. BURT REYNOLDS, Vice President for Administrative Services and Finance; MS. JILL ANDERSON; MS. ANNA CRAGOE; DR. MARNEÉ CRAWFORD; MR. DUSTIN DICKS; MS. TRACY GASAWAY; MR. MARK GRANT; MS. CHRISTI GREAHAM; MS. JEN LITTERER-TREVIÑO; MR. KEITH MCCALLISTER; MS. CAREY MILLER; MR. DENNIS QUILLEN; MS. LISA SMITH; MS. LINDA SPOMER; MR. OSCAR TREVIÑO; MS. SHELBY WETZEL; MR. ZAC TAYLOR, *Powell Tribune*; and MS. KELI BORDERS, Executive Secretary to the President and Board of Trustees.

**CALL TO ORDER:** President Denise Laursen called the regular meeting of the Northwest College Board of Trustees to order on Monday, February 10, 2025, at 4:04 p.m. in the Yellowstone Building.

**A APPROVE THE AGENDA:** **A motion was made by Trustee Kuipers and seconded by Trustee Wurzel to approve the agenda. Motion carried.**

**A CONSENT AGENDA:** **A motion was made by Trustee Kuipers and seconded by Trustee Kost to approve the consent agenda.**

President Watson stated she received a question regarding a check register entry to Hanover Research. Hanover Research is a consulting firm the College has contracted with for three years as part of its strategic initiatives. They have conducted the *Community Needs Survey* to assess the community's needs and recently completed feedback sessions with K-12 officials. These efforts aim to gather valuable insights to inform the College's educational strategies.

Trustee Housel thanked President Watson for traveling to Cheyenne twice in February to represent Northwest College at the WCCC and WACCT meetings and the Legislative session.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson explained that the outdoor lab in the Student Center has three instructional areas: a climbing wall, a repelling area, and an aerial element. The aerial element is currently in the final design stages and will be built with different platforms and an island affixed to the ceiling.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that when Jamestown University's kitchen burned down, Northwest College could assist them by providing equipment that was no longer needed so they could continue to feed their students. The food trailer, refrigeration truck, serving line from JFC, and additional used equipment from the old DeWitt Student Center were sold for \$100,00 and delivered in two trips to North Dakota.

In response to a comment from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that she commends Laura Gwinn, Title IX & Clery Coordinator/Policy Specialist, and Jill Anderson, Human Resources Director, for staying on top of Title IX compliance and training. All employees are also required to participate in annual training.

Trustee Kuipers congratulated the Forensics Team on their recent success. Although the team includes students from many states and countries, she is incredibly excited to see the Big Horn Basin represented so well by the local students.

**Motion carried, and the consent agenda, including the minutes of the January 13, 2024, regular meeting and the minutes of the January 13, 2025, Executive Session, was approved.**

**DISCUSSION/  
INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

**Completion & Transfer Summary**

Lisa Smith shared that the completion and transfer information is important for identifying and tracking students' progress toward their goals.

At the end of the 2023-2024 academic year, Northwest College had 228 individual graduates, called completers, and 256 completions, credentials awarded as both degrees and certificates.

In reference to a graph in Lisa's report, she stated that while it looks like the number of completions went up during the 2017-2018 year and then back down, there had been a push to contact students who were close to graduating to encourage them to complete their degree or certificate.

President Watson further explained that this initiative was performed by a position on campus that was lost during one of the budget cuts; therefore, the initiative had to be discontinued.

The top four programs with the highest number of degrees and certificates completed were General Studies, Nursing, Agriculture, and Education programs. Some programs include multiple degrees or certificates but have been categorized into their overall program grouping. These program areas have remained in the top five for several years.

Of the degree-seeking students who do not return to Northwest College the following year, 25% transfer to another institution. Of those, 80% transferred to a four-year institution, and 20% transferred to a two-year institution. The top four-year institutions students transferred to were the University of Wyoming, Montana State U-Billings, Montana State University, and Black Hills State University.

**CITIZENS' OPEN FORUM**

The Citizens' Open Forum convened at 5:00 p.m. No citizens requested to address the Board; therefore, the Citizen's Open Forum adjourned.

**A UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

There were no unfinished business items on the agenda.

**A NEW BUSINESS:**

**Designation of Depositories**

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that all the College's funds are kept locally in the institutions listed, in money market accounts or certificates of deposit. Banks must pledge collaterals to protect the funds, which is difficult for smaller banks. Therefore, the College does not keep funds in every institution listed in the request.

**A motion was made by Trustee Kuipers and seconded by Trustee Ogden to approve the Designation of Depositories as presented. Motion carried.**

**FY2026 Proposed Mandatory  
Student Fees – first reading**

President Watson explained that she recommends that the Trustees consider the proposed fees as a first reading since the Legislative session is not over. While

this is not a budget session, several bills related to property tax cuts are being considered that would affect the College's funding. Analysis indicates the draft bills could result in a \$1.4 million budget cut for Northwest College. This number does not take into account the state appropriations and how it could be affected by the funding formula.

Mandatory student fees are the baseline fees for the college's operations. While Northwest College's mandatory student fees aren't the highest in the state, they are the third highest. Higher education is becoming very competitive, and schools are creatively finding ways to cut student costs. The College must remain competitive while addressing rising operating costs and potential budget cuts.

In response to a question from Trustee Kost, President Watson stated that the Student Technology Fee and the Facilities Fee are left as "TBD" on the proposal, as areas that fees could potentially be increased by \$1-3 to help cover the increased costs in those areas.

President Watson stated that the proposal had been presented to the Student Senate. They were supportive and surprised the fees weren't being increased more since they are aware of rising costs.

Trustee Kuipers stated that she is constantly impressed by the fiscal responsibility of the College's leaders. While she desires to keep costs as reasonable as possible, she feels that the facilities and technology fees may need to be increased to address the shortfall in those budgets.

FY2026 Proposed Residence Hall and Apartment Rates

President Watson stated that the proposed housing rates were prepared considering inflation and other colleges' rates. Community comparators were also used regarding Trapper Main and Trapper West.

**A motion was made by Trustee Kuipers and seconded by Trustee Wurzel to approve the proposed FY2026 Residence Hall and Apartment rates as presented. Motion carried.**

Academic Program Approval –

Dave Erickson expressed his excitement about bringing these two programs forward for consideration. The College's work with Hanover Research indicated that both programs are needed in this region. He expressed his appreciation to Marneé Crawford, Christi Greaham, and Keith McCallister for their time and effort in developing each program.

CDL Certificate

Marneé Crawford, Chairperson for Health Professionals Division, stated the CDL certificate program is designed to meet the growing demand for CDL drivers in Wyoming. The demand is increasing, as indicated by local surveys and workforce reports. The non-credit program has been very successful, and the new program will allow students to earn academic credits while obtaining their license. Students enrolled in the for-credit program can apply for scholarships and veterans assistance, which is unavailable for noncredit programs.

The program aims to attract students already enrolled in other degree programs, such as Agriculture or Welding, who may want to add CDL certification to their qualifications. It would provide students with practical skills that can lead to employment opportunities while they complete their degrees.

The CDL certificate program consists of two six-credit classes offered every eight weeks, year-round. The flexible schedule allows students to start and complete the program at their convenience. The first class focuses on

curriculum and simulator training, while the second class involves hands-on driving, including unique challenges like mountain driving and hazardous conditions.

Marneé stated that the CDL certificate program is crafted to meet the needs of students in the Big Horn Basin, providing them with valuable skills and opportunities for employment in a growing field.

#### Ski Area Operations Certificate

Marneé explained that in the initial WIP proposal, the College pledged to explore area needs for Outdoor Education and develop new programs. Based on surveys of industry partners and recommendations from Hanover Research, Keith McCallister developed a unique Ski Area Operations program.

The certificate program is twenty-five credits and is eligible for financial aid. Students can obtain additional certifications, including Outdoor Emergency Care, Outdoor Emergency Transportation, Rental and Binding, and National Ski Patrol. Keith investigated the industry's needs in Wyoming, Montana, Utah, and Colorado. These certifications allow students to become work-ready when completed.

Keith explained that the idea was born from a request received two years ago from Sleeping Giant for a ski patrol class since they were very short-staffed. The Ski Patrol director at Antelope Butte is also very excited about providing training and allowing students free access to their slopes.

Marneé stated that while Keith will teach many of the classes, the College will require some support from adjunct instructors. The College's industry partners will also provide the adjunct support.

**A motion was made by Trustee Kost and seconded by Trustee Kuipers to approve the CDL Certificate and the Ski Area Operations Certificate as presented. Motion carried.**

Dave explained that the next step in the program approval process will be a review by the Vice Presidents, followed by the Presidents, and finally, the Wyoming Community College Commission. He is hopeful it will be on their agenda for the April meeting.

#### Course/Lab Fee Proposal

Dave Erickson stated the course fee proposal is for the new CDL program. The first page of the proposal describes fees related to the online learning modules to support the curriculum. The second page, which is a much larger fee, helps to cover fuel, vehicle maintenance, insurance, safety equipment, etc.

The non-credit CDL program costs \$4675. If a student seeks all endorsements, the CDL certificate costs approximately \$3390, plus tuition. The intent is to keep the costs similar for each. Northwest College's cost of obtaining a CDL is the most reasonable in the state.

**A motion was made by Trustee Kuipers and seconded by Trustee Ogden to approve the Course/Lab Fee Proposal as presented. Motion carried.**

#### **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS FEEDBACK TO CITIZENS' OPEN FORUM TOPICS:**

March 3, 2025, upcoming:

- Quarterly budget adjustments
- State Performance Indicators Report
- Workforce Development Activities Report
- Schedule Spring Board Retreat date
- Other TBD

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

President Watson introduced Burt Reynolds, Vice President of Administrative Services and Finance, to the Trustees. Burt has a background in higher education, both in Texas and Wyoming. Burt began his role on January 31, 2025.

3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Photo Contest & Exhibit, Feb 11, 2025, 7:00 p.m., ORB  
WBB/MBB vs. CWC, Feb 13, 2025, 5:30/7:30 p.m., Cabre  
Red Lodge Clay Closing Exhibit Reception, Feb 14, 2025, 12 p.m., Cabre  
Western States Forensics Tourn., Feb 14-16, 2025, Albuquerque, NM  
WBB/MBB vs. CC, Feb 19, 2025, 5:30/7:30 p.m., Casper  
Wrestling Plains Tourn, Feb 22, 2025, La Junta, CO  
WBB/MBB vs. WWC, Feb 22, 2025, 2:00/4:00 p.m., Rock Springs  
NWC & PHS POPS Concert, Feb 25, 2025, 7:00 p.m., Powell High School  
WBB/MBB vs. Gillette, Feb 27, 2025, 5:30/7:30 p.m. Cabre  
March Board meeting, March 3, 2025, 4:00 p.m., Cody Center, Rm 2214  
42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Jazz Festival, March 4, 2025, 8 :00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., NPA  
Last Day of Legislative session, March 6, 2025, Cheyenne  
Wrestling NJCAA National Championship, March 7-8, 2025, Council Bluffs  
WBB/MBB Region IX North Play-In Game, Mar 8, 2025, TBA  
NWC Spring Break, March 8-16, 2025

**A ADJOURNMENT:**

**The meeting adjourned at 5:52 p.m.**

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R.J. KOST, Vice President/Secretary

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Date