

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

May 12, 2025

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: MR. JOHN HOUSEL

OTHERS PRESENT: MS. LISA WATSON, President; MR. DAVE ERICKSON, 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. HOLLY BERRYMAN; MR. JOSHUA BUHMANN; MS. JACQUE COBOURN; MR. DUSTIN DICKS; MS. TRACY GASAWAY; MR. MARK GRANT; MS. CAREY MILLER; MS. CAMMY ROWLEY; 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.

WORK SESSION: Trustees met informally to discuss FY2026 Board and President goals and priorities.

CALL TO ORDER: President Denise Laursen called the regular meeting of the Northwest College Board of Trustees to order on Monday, May 12, 2025, at 4:02 p.m. in the Yellowstone Building Conference Center.

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

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

Trustee Kuipers noted the changes in leadership in the constituency group reports and expressed her appreciation for the time and effort that is extended in their governance roles.

Motion carried, and the consent agenda, including the minutes of April 22, 2025, regular meeting, was approved.

**DISCUSSION/
INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

Preliminary FY2026 Budget Upon invitation from President Watson, VP Reynolds stated that, as in years past, the FY2026 budget has been developed to support the 2030 Strategic Plan, which sets the priorities for the budget.

Although this is the second year of the biennium and the state allocation has been established, the annual calculations from the Commission are determined each year based on enrollment averages and weighted credit hours. The College is projecting a decrease of \$300,000 in the coming year due to fluctuations in weighted credit hours.

There were no additional compensation funds allocated to community colleges for the coming year. However, there is an upcoming special meeting of the Wyoming Community College Commission (WCCC) to discuss putting forward an exception request for next year's budget to include inflationary cost adjustments. The community college Presidents and WACCT continue to advocate for compensation whenever possible.

In 2021, a new state statute modified how oil and gas companies would pay

mineral taxes. The legislation eliminated the eighteen-month delay between production and the tax due date. Companies could elect to defer payments from 2021 production over the next thirteen years; however, many chose to pay their 2021 and 2022 taxes, opting not to take the deferral. This resulted in a spike in 2022 that has since leveled off.

The recent CREG report projects prices and production to go down in oil and gas. Additionally, there will be a reduction in residential property taxes due to the 25% tax breaks and incentives. The College is expecting a decrease in local appropriations of slightly more than \$600,000.

Tuition and fees revenue is expected to remain steady based on unemployment rates as well as the high school graduation rates. The College will remain conservative on estimations since the WCCC did not raise tuition rates for FY2026.

VP Reynolds stated that the Foundation discovered available funding to offset operational costs, of which the College is very grateful. There is a \$75,000 increase in "other sources of income," and it will be used to help offset a larger portion of the Foundation staff salaries.

The College is projecting a decline of \$835,091 in the FY2026 Operating Fund (Funds 10, 14, 15) and the One Mill Fund (Fund 11) revenue budgets overall.

VP Reynolds explained that between FY2023 and FY2024, there was an increase in credit hours taken at Northwest College. However, the percentage of all weighted credit hours produced went down because Northwest College did not increase at the same rate as some of the other colleges. Therefore, even though credit hours, enrollment, and completions increased, the percentage of the funding allocation is estimated to decrease.

For the first time, the WCCC CFO and the community colleges worked together to forecast the outcome of the recapture redistribution process. Early estimates indicate that the College will need to repay approximately \$350,000.

The College has been focusing its efforts on finding grant opportunities to support itself and reduce its dependence on state and local appropriations. Although federal funding is being reduced, the College is exploring other grant sources, including private foundations.

VP Reynolds stated that the College continues its efforts in shared governance and transparency. The Academic Advisory Council (AAC) meets regularly to review academic programs, discuss costs, and review course fees to offset increased costs associated with delivering courses. The Budget Managers met earlier in the month and continue to play a vital role in budget planning by informing the College about budgetary needs, ensuring the College is aligned with its Strategic Plan. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee meets to review support service programs and then develops ideas for cost efficiencies. The President's Staff meets and reviews the budget and allocates funds as needed. President Watson has also instituted a process whereby the Vice Presidents review any expenditure that exceeds \$250 to help maintain efficiencies.

VP Reynolds explained that the College anticipates needing to increase the budget line for the Welcome to Wyoming scholarship. This expense is offset by the increased enrollment of out-of-state and international students, resulting in higher revenue from tuition, housing, and dining.

Work that will continue in May includes reviewing compensation, as well as

open and interim positions. While the College will not be cutting positions because of the budget reduction, it must remain mindful of the possibility of further cuts. Revenue and expenditure lines will also be thoroughly reviewed, and adjustments will be made using the most up-to-date information available.

VP Reynolds noted that if there is a remaining budget shortfall after budgetary work in May, the College may request the Board to approve the use of reserves for one-time-only funds; however, the College does not anticipate the need to do so at this time.

The College will continue to monitor Federal and State legislation, local mill levy valuations, and enrollment trends. Work will continue with the President and Vice Presidents to develop the budget and prepare it for presentation to the Board in July.

In response to a question from Trustee Laursen, VP Erickson stated that, in addition to himself, AAC membership includes the five Division Chairs, the Dean of Instruction, the Library Director, the Director of International Student and Scholar Services, and the Director of Enrollment Services.

In response to a question from Trustee Laursen, VP Reynolds stated that in determining which grants to apply for, input is received from the Grant Writer, the Division Chairs, faculty, and Ellucian, with whom the College partners for grant support.

President Watson stated that the grant work is part of the Strategic Plan initiative and is very thoughtful around the needs of the College. There is also an Executive Grant Committee comprised of the President, Vice Presidents, Grant Writer, Foundation Director, and Finance Director who discuss grants that are brought forward to determine the viability and the intent concerning the Mission to ensure that the effort, energy, and time toward grants that will make a difference.

In response to a question from Trustee Kuipers, VP Reynolds stated that the Finance Director and the Foundation are working together to determine what restrictions will be associated with the \$75,000 additional funds being provided by the Foundation.

In response to a question from Trustee Kuipers, President Watson stated that Gillette College has not yet achieved accreditation status and has not pulled four mil to be included in the state process, remaining independent. Once they reach accredited status and become a formal college, their weighted credit hours will be removed from Northern, which could change the allocation to the remaining seven colleges. There are many unknowns at this point regarding whether they will become part of the system or stay independent; each scenario could have either positive or negative financial impacts on the other colleges in the state.

FY2026 Board Budget

President Watson stated that the Board's budget has not been changed during the planning process and is being presented to the Board for discussion.

Trustee Kost suggested reducing the travel line for Trustees in the interest of being conservative, given the budget reductions.

In response to a question from Trustee Kost, President Watson stated that the Facilitator line is for Trustee trainings. The Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) may occasionally schedule training at the state level, thereby alleviating the financial burden from individual colleges. If the Board

determines it wants specialized training outside of the regular governance leadership work, the Facilitator line allows for the allocated funds to be used accordingly.

President Watson stated that the travel line was increased a few years ago because several Trustees wanted to participate in training. In 2024, the Trustees elected not to attend the national training due to the timing of Board members joining and leaving the Trusteeship. It would be beneficial to send two Trustees to the ACCT national conference in 2025 to fulfill training requirements.

Trustee Kost reiterated that he feels the travel line is an area that could be cut to allocate the money elsewhere where it's needed. He suggested using Zoom for training and in-state travel to reduce costs.

Trustee Kuipers agreed with Trustee Kost and feels that being conservative is wise. However, she doesn't want to lose the opportunities, particularly for in-state travel, as it's essential to learn from and stand with the other community colleges, given the potential for funding impacts. It remains important to stay actively engaged at the state level.

Trustee Wurzel stated that he would hate to lose the opportunity for a Board member or the President to attend the ACCT conference every year. It provides a wellspring of ideas about what other community colleges are doing around the country. Various Wyoming colleges have presented several times over the years, and it's also a way to learn about what's happening in the State. While expensive, he feels there's great value in engaging in training in person and in opportunities to make connections that aren't possible via Zoom. It is also essential for the President to maintain her national contacts.

President Watson stated that as long as there are online offerings that Trustees can engage in, there are opportunities to access educational resources. However, attending the conference ensures that Trustees are committed to going and are engaged. They are then able to report back on their experience. It also provides evidence to HLC that the College is focused on the latest trends, sustaining quality, and continually improving over time. She agrees that the line could be adjusted slightly, allowing room for the national conference.

President Watson agrees that the Facilitator line could be reviewed for continued relevance. It was added years ago, but bringing a Facilitator to campus may not be necessary every year.

President Laursen stated that she is grateful for the learning opportunities provided by attending the ACCT national conference, and it was very beneficial to her as a Trustee.

President Watson stated that she will work with the Finance Director to implement some of the suggested adjustments to the Board budget and bring it back for further review.

FY2026 President's Budget

President Watson stated that some reductions were made to the President's FY2026 budget after looking at utilization in areas such as travel, College printing, and motor pool.

Renewal of President's Contract

President Laursen stated that she and President Watson will meet with the lawyers to begin work on renewing the President's contract.

CITIZENS' OPEN FORUM

The Citizens' Open Forum convened at 5:01 p.m.

Cammy Rowley, Fixed Term Instructor of Education, stated that she is present to request that the Trustees be connectors.

Cammy stated that she has spent forty years in education. She is passionate about teaching and thanked the Trustees for their time, expertise, intellect, and effort they put into the Board that leads the College. She is grateful to the Board for its investment and trust in the leadership. The leaders of the College have empowered all professionals on campus, which is truly extraordinary. She extended her appreciation to the Trustees for supporting the Mission and Vision in ways that allow the College to serve students and the community.

Cammy stated that during the recent Legislative session, many individuals reached out to Legislators via phone calls, letters, and emails, but she feels maybe they weren't heard. She suggests that what is needed is a large collective group of individuals to voice their concerns. She envisions this as professional capital, where individuals with skills, knowledge, and experiences from their workplace can come together to keep the Institution and community whole.

There will be a 50% property tax reduction on the statewide ballot. There are seventeen months to educate the community. Cammy requests that the Board collaborate with the school district, the hospital Board, the City Council, and the Park County Commissioners, which could form a chain to inform the community about the impacts of additional property tax cuts. She would like to see the Trustees be "connectors" with other professional capital in Powell, Cody, and Meeteetse.

Cammy stated that education is a right, and with it comes responsibility. She believes that there is a responsibility to lead with professional capital so that everyone can invest in the community and keep it whole.

A UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There were no unfinished business items on the agenda.

A NEW BUSINESS:

Security Cameras and Card
Reader Access Improvements

A motion was made by Trustee Wurzel and seconded by Trustee Kost to approve the Security Cameras and Card Reader Access Improvements in the Residence Halls as presented.

In response to a question from Trustee Kost, President Watson stated that assistance for security upgrades from the State only applies to buildings that qualify for Major Maintenance funds. Residence Halls are not eligible for that support.

Trustee Kuipers stated that she is excited to see these upgrades taking place this summer, as the security of the campus and the students is vital.

Motion carried.

Policy Amendments:

5600 Nondiscrimination
5610 Equal Employment
Opportunity
5630 Prohibition of Harassment
5700 Sexual Misconduct –
Sexual Harassment

President Laursen stated that the first four policies listed on the agenda refer to similar terminology changes in response to recent executive orders and new Wyoming state laws.

A motion was made by Trustee Kost and seconded by Trustee Wurzel to approve policy amendments 5600 Nondiscrimination, 5610 Equal

Employment Opportunity, 5630 Prohibition of Harassment, and 5700 Sexual Misconduct-Sexual Harassment as presented.

President Watson stated that while she agrees with the Board's intent to move these amendments through, Policy 2140, Board Policy Development, is geared around the concept of shared governance. The Board Policy and Student Success Committee has had the opportunity to review the changes. However, the Constituency group's feedback period is still ongoing, and she wants to respect the process and give people the chance to review the changes. The laws will take effect on July 1, 2025. She encourages the Board to refrain from acting this month to maintain procedural responsibility.

President Watson stated that it's unusual to bring policy before the Board before completing the other steps. Still, she felt it was necessary because the laws would go into effect in July. She thought it was important to bring these amendments and the new policy proposal forward in May to give the Board the opportunity for a first reading.

In response to a question from Trustee Ogden, President Watson stated that she conferred with the lawyer, whose advice is that cleaning up the verbiage to align with the State statute regarding DEI law is the best first step. The College will continue to monitor federal legislation that would require additional changes.

A motion was made by Trustee Ogden and seconded by Trustee Kuipers to amend the original motion to move the policy amendments to second reading in June. Motion carried.

New Policy:

7150 Firearms and Weapons

A motion was made by Trustee Kuipers and seconded by Trustee Ogden to move Policy 7150 Firearms and Weapons to second reading in June.

President Watson explained that new Policy 7150 is being presented for approval because of state legislation related to repealing gun-free zones that was passed this spring.

The policy is concise, as intended, and the procedures outlined behind it detail how the College will manage it. Historically, the College has not had a policy on weapons or firearms; however, several procedures were in place. The passing of the new legislation necessitated the development of a policy.

Upon the recommendation by President Watson, and with the support of the other community college Presidents, the Risk Managers and Security Managers from the colleges met over several weeks. The proposed Policy 7150 is a result of their work.

President Watson stated that, as with the policy amendments presented earlier, Policy 7150 has been reviewed by the Board Policy and Student Success Committee and the College Council, and is currently being considered by Constituency groups for the opportunity to provide feedback.

Each Board at each of the individual community colleges is reviewing a similar draft policy at this time. The policies are very similar with a few grammatical differences, which reflects the good work done by this group.

The Policy intends to convey that the Board is committed to providing a safe environment for students and the greater campus community, and that the purpose is to promote an educational environment by regulating the possession, use, and storage of firearms and other weapons on property that is owned,

leased, or controlled by the College.

Also, the possession, use of, or storage of firearms, and any other dangerous weapons on campus or at a college-sponsored event, unless that individual has been issued and possesses a valid concealed carry permit or is a certified peace officer.

The State law that will go into effect on July 1, 2025, refers to a concealed carry permit holder who is 21 years of age or older, indicating an age restriction. Those who constitutionally carry are not able to conceal carry without a permit. The law also allows the College to prohibit open carry, which is the display or openly wearing of a firearm.

President Watson explained that the policy does not state that the College is responsible for managing the concealed carry permit; the permit holder is responsible for themselves. Concealed carry holders are expected to know and follow the law, and to understand the areas they are in as it relates to the law.

Trustee Kuipers stated that in the Board Policy and Student Success Committee meeting, it became apparent to her that proposed Policy 7150 aligns perfectly with state statute due to the diligence of those who helped to create it. She appreciates that the procedures outlined create a minimal amount of disruption to what is already being done on campus, ensuring a safe environment for the campus community.

Trustee Kuipers stated that it's a remarkable effort to have the community colleges working together. The opportunity to create shared learning and harmony with other institutions, aligning with State statute, was important to her as she reviewed the proposed policy. She is proud of the work done to create a safe environment on campus.

Motion carried.

Policy Amendment:
5530 Discipline: Staff

President Watson stated the new law repealing gun-free zones requires the modification of the existing policy as it relates to the proper storage of firearms and weapons in residence halls and personal vehicles.

A motion was made by Trustee Kost and seconded by Trustee Kuipers to move the proposed policy amendment 5530 Discipline: Staff to second reading in June.

President Watson stated that while a lot of legislation has been passed that affects the College, not all of it will require policy changes. The College must follow the law, and in some cases, can modify procedures without amending or creating policy.

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

June 17, 2025, upcoming:

- Quarterly Budget Adjustments
- Accounts Receivable write-offs
- Preliminary Budget
- BOCES Budgets for Greybull, Lovell, and Powell
- 2026 Board Goals and President's Goals
- Other TBD

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Special WCCC online meeting May 13, 2025
Summer Classes Begin, June 2, 2025, NWC
WCCC meeting, June 5-6, 2025, NWC Powell

College National Finals Rodeo, June 15-21, 2025, Casper
Yellowstone Summer Music Camp, June 15-20, 2025, NPA
June Board meeting, June 17, 2025, Student Center Room #100

A ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 5:48 p.m.

R.J. KOST, Vice President/Secretary

Date