

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

September 8, 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, 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. SAMI ASHCRAFT, MS. HOLLY BERRYMAN, MS. MICHELLE BLACK, MR. TIM CARPENTER, MS. MARIA CEBALLOS PAZ, MS. JACQUE COBOURN, MS. ANNA CRAGOE, DR. ALLEN DENNY JR., MR. DUSTIN DICKS, MR. TY FLOCK, MR. BRAD GAMBILL, MS. TRACY GASAWAY, MR. MARK GRANT, MR. WEST HERNANDEZ, MS. JORDAN KINDSFATER, DR. JILL MASCHIO, MS. CAREY MILLER, MS. MIYUKI ONO, MR. DENNIS QUILLEN, DR. GREG SMITH, MS. LISA SMITH, MR. MARTIN STENSING, 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, September 8, 2025, at 4:03 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.**

**MISSION MOMENT** President Watson introduced new and reassigned employees to the Trustees.

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

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that the CACS (Computer Administrative Computing System) RFP referred to in her report is related to the Ellucian system that all the State's community colleges utilize. The Ellucian product that is used is Colleague. It tracks information such as student records, registration, class offerings, and the Institution's financial management. The State of Wyoming holds the licenses for all community colleges and requires them to investigate other systems and conduct cost comparisons periodically. Changing systems would be a significant undertaking and at a very high cost; therefore, the Commission decided to postpone the RFP for the time being.

Trustee Housel stated that he was pleased to see the College's participation in the Meeteetse Labor Day parade.

Trustee Ogden expressed his appreciation as well and stated that it was the largest parade they had had in years, and the College's students were a large part of that. He also noted that two years ago, over half of Meeteetse's graduating class enrolled at Northwest College.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that she, Dennis, and Burt have had several meetings with architect Kane Morris regarding the Master Plan. A rough draft has been developed, and work continues to create the report that will serve as a roadmap for years to come.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that the Wyoming Community College Commission and the college Presidents work to ensure the Colleges' Strategic Plans align with the Commission's Strategic Plan. There are other groups, such as Vice Presidents' Councils, that are continuously working with the Commission on processes and how they align with the Strategic Plan.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel regarding a statement in the Commission's Strategic Plan, "Elevate Wyoming's Citizens through strategic investment in the community colleges," President Watson stated that it's a philosophical statement about the desire to support Wyoming citizens by ensuring community colleges are sustained and can provide programming for citizens to learn and grow.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, Mark Grant stated that the significant accounting standard change related to the scholarship allowance pertains to how the allowances are calculated and reported. It will result in more accurate reporting.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that the Yellowstone Building parking lot drainage system, and a dry well West of Simpson Hall will be connected to the new drainage pipe on Division Street. These are the results of negotiations with the City of Powell regarding the Retention Basin.

In response to Trustee Housel's comment about the demographics of nursing students, President Watson explained that the hybrid program works well for those who may be balancing the program with work or living elsewhere. They can complete coursework online, attend weekend labs, and finish clinical work at their designated clinical sites.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that there are no consequences to students if they do not complete the required Title IX training. However, the College must exercise due diligence in offering the training and following up with students to encourage their completion of the training, thereby remaining in compliance with federal regulations.

In response to a question from Trustee Kuipers, President Watson stated that there are other programs in addition to Nursing that offer flexible delivery to students, such as the CDL program. The Nursing cohort is unique in that it typically serves non-traditional students who seek a pathway to advance in their careers while continuing to work. The College is exploring other areas where hybrid options would allow students more flexibility.

Trustee Kuipers expressed her appreciation for collaboration across campus in making things happen at the College, such as the efforts by Student Services and Academic Affairs to work together to increase enrollment and retention.

**Motion carried, and the consent agenda, including the minutes of August 11, 2025, regular meeting, was approved.**

#### **DISCUSSION/ INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

Board Self-Assessment and  
President's Evaluation

President Watson stated that the Board's self-assessment tool and the President's evaluation documents will be sent via email later in the week. She asked that Trustees complete them so that the results can be discussed at the Fall Board Retreat on October 8, 2025.

## 2025 Carnegie Classifications

Lisa Smith stated that the national Carnegie classifications have been in place for many years and are recognized by numerous organizations nationwide. It was established in 1970 as a means to categorize the colleges, providing comparative metrics for policymakers, grant funders, researchers, and other end-users. This year, they have revised them significantly and added a new component.

Formerly, Northwest College was classified as *Associate's Colleges: Mixed Transfer/Career & Technical-Mixed Traditional/Nontraditional*. These classifications were primarily organized based on the highest degree awarded.

The College's new institutional classification is *Professions-focused Associate Small*. This is based on the types of degrees awarded, the subjects in which degrees are awarded, and the size of the institution.

The second classification is *Higher Access, Medium Earnings*, which is based on how closely Northwest College's students compare to the similar population in its area regarding race/ethnic and economic makeup, and earnings eight years post-enrollment.

The size categories are small, medium, and large. Northwest College is classified as "small" because it has fewer than 4,000 students.

Although Northwest College awards BAS degrees, it primarily awards associate degrees; therefore, it is classified with other Associate institutions.

Northwest College is profession-focused because a variety of its programs fall into career and technical or other professions. Targeted areas, such as arts and science, are not considered profession-focused, but most of the College's programs align with focused areas.

The access component of the classification compares the socioeconomic status, racial, ethnic, and diversity of the institution to those of the surrounding region's population.

Similar to the access component, the earnings classification examines the earnings of students eight years post-enrollment compared to the local population.

Lisa next shared the classifications of the other Wyoming colleges. All of the community colleges are classified as *Professions-focused Associate* and *Higher Access*. Some are considered *Small*, with Casper College and LCCC classified as *Large/Medium*. Like Northwest College, three other colleges' students have *Medium Earnings*, while three are considered to have *Lower Earnings*.

## President's Operational Plan Update 2025

President Watson stated that the 2025 Operational Plan update reports on the work that was done over the past year. This is the second year that the Plan has been primarily modeled after the Strategic Plan, turning strategy into action.

President Watson is pleased with the amount of work being done in addition to teaching and supporting students on any given day. Conducting the Community Needs Assessment, consulting with schools and companies, and compiling this information allows the College to make informed decisions for programmatic change and development. For instance, the development of the for-credit CDL program and the Ski Operations certificate, as well as the committed space for Outdoor Education and Tourism, were all very thoughtful and methodical decisions.

A significant amount of work was done related to grants, including the development of strategies and processes. Although federal funding opportunities remain uncertain, the work is valuable. A grant writer has been hired, and the leadership team meets weekly.

Assessment work continues in academic and support services programs, which is essential for accreditation work. It is also vital as the College seeks efficiencies in its operations.

Trustee Kuipers stated that she is very appreciative of the way President Watson presents the progress of the work being done monthly, as well as the year-end report. It is humbling to see the progress made last year. In addition to the completion of the Student Center, the HR reports indicate the pursuit of qualified individuals to do the work, while successfully educating hundreds of students. The year-end celebration of graduation also proves that great work is being done.

President Watson commends the President's Staff for their hard work on initiatives. They are each involved in several committees and working closely with their Directors and Coordinators to move things forward.

#### President's Operational Plan 2026

President Watson noted that some of the items on the 2026 Operational Plan are a continuation of work from the 2025 Plan. For instance, the website redesign has been completed, but work will continue on branding efforts, including marketing and recruiting materials, as well as website updates. Program review and grant work will also continue.

The Strategic Enrollment Management Plan has been completed and the focus will now be on implementation. The Operational Plan outlines several activities aimed at enhancing strategic enrollment and retention efforts.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson said that, as part of the 2026 Operational Plan, the College will examine expanding BAS programs. The rule recently changed, allowing community colleges to offer more than two degrees. This could mean creating a new BAS degree or developing pathways within existing degrees, like a specialization in the Professional Studies degree. The College will assess if there are gaps it can fill to help regional students who cannot travel to a university to earn their bachelor's degree.

In response to a question from Trustee Kuipers, President Watson said that many factors remain uncertain regarding the future budget. The Plan was carefully developed to identify initiatives that are financially manageable and would benefit the College moving forward. The Plan also recommends reviewing existing academic and student support programs to make sure they meet current needs.

#### Strategic Enrollment Management Plan

President Watson stated that the Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) Plan was a cross-collaboration between many departments, led by Vice President Tom Havron.

VP Havron shared his experience in Southeast Kansas at a financially strapped institution that needed to enhance its enrollment efforts. Unable to afford the high cost of hiring a consultant, the institution's employees collaborated to assess its strengths and weaknesses, identifying areas for improvement. He described the experience as extremely fulfilling because the people working on the project were very passionate about moving the College forward.

Last spring, he established a committee at Northwest College with eighteen members from various parts of campus, including faculty, staff, students, and administrators. The group met multiple times, and VP Havron recognized that it would be a valuable project to help strengthen the institution.

The Strategic Enrollment Management Plan is modeled after the Strategic Plan, featuring pillars, strategies, and tactics. It will also follow the same time frame, running through the year 2030, and will be reviewed yearly to identify progress, much like the Strategic Plan and Operational Plan. The Committee will develop a yearly SEM Operational Plan to focus on specific activities and hold itself accountable to ensure the work is being done.

The three areas of focus identified as pillars are recruitment, retention, and access. SEM Committee members divided into subcommittees to develop strategies and tactics for their assigned pillar. The goals are lofty, but they will force the College to do the hard work and strive for excellence.

Trustee Ogden expressed his appreciation for the SEM Plan and praised the College's innovative approach. He believes that with the State considering changes to the Hathaway Scholarship, there's a great opportunity to advocate for scholarships for high school students taking classes at community colleges. By working together with other districts, he thinks there could be increased funding for colleges to support dual and concurrent enrollment options.

Trustee Kuipers echoed Trustee Ogden, expressing her excitement about the Plan, highlighting that the cross-campus collaboration is notable. She mentioned that the goals are significant, yet meaningful and achievable. She also appreciates that the initiative is community-centric.

In response to a question from Trustee Kuipers related to financial support needed for the Plan, VP Havron stated that those involved in developing it were mindful of the uncertain financial landscape the College is experiencing. All three Vice Presidents served on the Committee; therefore, there was a higher-level vision of developing viable formulas and tactics. Most of the sub-tactics involve personnel efforts. There will be some additional costs for additional recruitment material, such as the admissions box, but he believes it's too soon to determine exact financial needs.

There are immediate things that can be addressed, such as investigating why the number of students in the Residence Halls decreased. They intend to launch a survey of students to determine how they are adjusting to college life, whether they have financial concerns, whether they are homesick, are involved in activities, and whether they have built a connection with the school. Residence Life staff can then work to address issues before students are lost. Each semester, the needs of students differ; therefore, it is essential to adjust to accommodate them.

President Laursen stated she was excited to see that Pillar 3 relates to improving access for all College stakeholders, especially as it calls for enhancing community partnerships. She feels it is essential that the College continue its efforts of community outreach. The effort that went into developing the SEM Plan indicates the buy-in from the campus community.

VP Havron stated that he believes involving so many individuals across campus gives employees ownership in what has been created.

Trustee Housel stated that he is very impressed with the Plan. He has served on the board for many years, and while some of these topics have been discussed

before, it's the first time they've been presented in such a clear and concise manner that can be easily referenced. He also expressed satisfaction in seeing an intention to strengthen relationships with parents and other influencers, as well as to begin building connections with K-12 students earlier than their junior and senior years.

Trustee Kost stated that he believes the College should also build relationships with the alternative schools in the area. He believes there is an opportunity to reach students and build excitement for them to continue their education through the various ways the College can serve them.

VP Havron responded that two alternative high schools visited the campus last week. He received an email this morning thanking the College for opening their students' minds about the opportunities for them at Northwest College, and that the visit was very impactful.

Trustee Wurzel stated that he agrees with other Trustees about the SEM Plan and expressed appreciation to those who worked on it and for thinking outside of the box. He likes the idea of opening on-campus housing for part-time students to provide options for them. He also believes exploring childcare options for students could provide opportunities for students that wouldn't exist otherwise.

VP Havron expressed his gratitude to Enrollment Services Director West Hernandez, Admissions Coordinator Kendle Jeffs, and all other committee members. He also thanked President Watson for providing the leadership and guidance that helped the group develop a plan demonstrating that it is a top priority for the institution.

President Watson mentioned that there are many possible reasons and obstacles that students encounter, which may cause them to stop their studies. Since each group of students is different, the College must constantly look for new and creative ways to meet their needs. Much of this work can be handled internally, but sometimes it's helpful to bring in consultants.

President Watson expressed her appreciation to VP Havron, West Hernandez, Kendle Jeffs, and the rest of the SEM Committee for their hard work to develop the SEM Plan.

## **CITIZENS' OPEN FORUM**

The Citizens' Open Forum convened at 5:01 p.m. No citizens requested to address the Board; therefore, the Citizens' Open Forum adjourned.

## **A UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

There were no unfinished business items on the agenda.

## **A NEW BUSINESS:**

### **Course/Lab Fee Proposal**

President Watson stated that the proposed course fee increases for the Nursing and EMT classes are primarily due to increases in liability insurance for those programs. The Chemistry lab increase is due to a rise in the cost of Labster, the program used for labs. There is a recommendation to decrease the fee associated with Graphic Design, as the new instructor has chosen not to use a product that was previously utilized.

**A motion was made by Trustee Kuipers and seconded by Trustee Ogden to approve the proposed Course/lab fees as presented. Motion carried.**

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

October 13, 2025, upcoming:

- Longitudinal Enrollment Report
- Big Horn Basin High School Report
- Academic program updates
- Facilities Master Plan update
- Strategic Plan update
- Other TBD

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Volleyball vs. Miles CC, Sept. 9, 6 p.m., Miles City, MT  
Volleyball – Trapper Invitational, Sept. 12-13, TBA, NWC  
W & M Soccer vs. Otero, Sept. 12, 2 p.m./4 p.m., La Junta, CO  
W & M Soccer vs. Trinidad, Sept. 13, TBA, Trinidad, CO  
W & M Soccer vs. Gillette, Sept. 19, 1 p.m./3 p.m., NWC  
W & M Soccer vs. Casper, Sept 20, 1 p.m./3 p.m., NWC  
Taste the Nations: Oktoberfest, Sept. 25, 5:30-8:30 p.m., Yellowstone Building  
Volleyball vs. Casper, Sept. 26, 6 p.m., Casper  
Volleyball vs. Gillette, Sept. 27, 2 p.m., Gillette  
W & M Soccer vs. Central, Sept. 27, TBA, Riverton  
WCCC meeting, Oct 2-3, 8:30 a.m., Douglas  
Volleyball vs. Eastern, Oct. 3, 6 p.m., NWC  
W & M Soccer vs. LCCC, Oct. 3, TBA, Cheyenne  
Volleyball vs. LCCC, Oct 4, 2 p.m., NWC  
W & M Soccer vs. Western Nebraska, Oct. 4, TBA, Scottsbluff, NE  
Fall Board Retreat, Oct. 8, 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Holiday Inn, Cody  
Volleyball vs. Central, Oct. 8, 6 p.m., NWC  
Volleyball vs. Western, Oct. 10, 6 p.m., Rock Springs  
W & M Soccer vs. Lamar, Oct. 10, 2 p.m./4 p.m., NWC  
W & M Soccer vs. Northeastern, Oct. 11, 1 p.m./3 p.m., NWC  
Fall Recess, Oct. 10-13, 2025  
Next meeting, October 13, 2025, 4:00 p.m., Yellowstone Building  
ACCT Leadership Congress, Oct 22-25, New Orleans, LA

**A ADJOURNMENT:**

**The meeting adjourned at 6:20 p.m.**

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R.J. KOST, Vice President/Secretary

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Date