

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

March 9, 2026

- MEMBERS PRESENT:** President MS. DENISE LAURSEN; Vice President/Secretary MR. R.J. KOST; Treasurer MR. BOB NEWSOME; Trustees MR. JOHN HOUSEL (via Zoom), and MS. TARA KUIPERS.
- MEMBERS ABSENT:** Trustees MR. SHANE OGDEN and DR. MARK WURZEL.
- OTHERS PRESENT:** MS. LISA WATSON, President (via Zoom); 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. KAREN BERCHTOLD; MS. JACQUE COBOURN, MR. DUSTIN DICKS, MS. KIERSLEY FRASIER, MS. CHRISTI GREAHAM, MS. CAREY MILLER, MR. DENNIS QUILLEN, MS. LISA SMITH, MR. TED 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, March 9, 2026, at 3:59 p.m. in Room 2214 of the Cody Center.
- A APPROVE THE AGENDA:** **A motion was made by Trustee Kost, and seconded by Trustee Kuipers, to approve the agenda. Motion carried.**
- A CONSENT AGENDA:** **A motion was made by Trustee Kuipers, seconded by Trustee Newsome, to approve the consent agenda.**
- In response to questions related to the check register, President Watson stated:
- The payment to NC State University was for the PACE Climate Survey, which is conducted every two years to measure employee satisfaction.
  - Advance Local Media is a company that assists the College with digital advertising. There were two payments in this month's check register due to the timing of the monthly payments.
  - The payment to Armor Coat LLC is for flooring repair at the fairgrounds from wear and tear from use by the College during the Student Center project.
- Trustee Housel acknowledged and congratulated Trustee Wurzel for being elected as President of WACCT. He expressed his appreciation to Trustee Wurzel for his years of service and hard work with the organization.
- Trustee Housel acknowledged and congratulated the Forensics Team and the Livestock Judging Team for their success and excellent representation of Northwest College.
- Trustee Housel acknowledged and expressed his appreciation to President Watson for the continued efforts and work with area Superintendents and principals to build and strengthen the College's relationships with local high schools.
- In response to a question from Trustee Housel, VP Reynolds stated that specialized advertising strategies for open positions on campus include posting to industry-specific job boards and working with professional associations to advertise hard-to-fill positions.

Trustee Housel stated that the Powell Rotary Club's hosting of the international students for a Valentine's party is a great way to welcome them into the community. He stated that the Cody Rotary Club is very active and would likely welcome an opportunity to provide a similar experience to Northwest College students.

Trustee Housel extended his appreciation to the Music faculty for again dedicating themselves to hosting the 51<sup>st</sup> annual Showalter Music Festival, which brought over 300 students to campus from Wyoming and Montana regions.

Trustee Housel stated that he was pleased the Commission approved the RPAS program. He expressed his appreciation to those who worked to develop the program.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, VP Havron stated that both Men's and Women's basketball teams won their first game of the Region IX North tournament. The Men's team will travel to Sterling, Colorado, and the Women's team will travel to Rock Springs for the next round of the tournament.

VP Havron stated the Wrestling team completed their season at the NJCAA National Tournament in Council Bluffs, IA, with two third-place finishers and a national champion. Zachary Covolo and Asad Fayzullaev took third place in their respective weight classes, and Austin Richens won the national championship in the heavyweight division.

Trustee Kuipers stated that she was excited to see some of the fixed-term faculty being hired into full-time tenure-track positions. She extended her congratulations to those faculty members.

Trustee Kuipers expressed her appreciation for the faculty's thoughtfulness in working on AI policy. When the policy is presented for consideration, the Board will be confident that it will result from a sound process.

Trustee Kost stated that he appreciated the forward-thinking and the focus on the future of the AI policy development to keep Northwest College progressive.

**Motion carried, and the consent agenda, including the minutes of the February 9, 2026, regular meeting, was approved.**

**DISCUSSION/  
INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

State Performance Indicators  
Report

Lisa Smith explained that the State Performance Indicators report is the annual update to the Commission on performance, highlighting retention and completion rates. There is additional information in the full report, of which Lisa provided a link in the Board packet, if Trustees are interested in viewing it in its entirety.

Of the students who started in Fall 2024, 64% of full-time students graduated by or returned to NWC in Fall 2025, which is the full-time retention rate. The state average is 65%.

NWC's persistence rate is 70%, which represents full-time students who either graduated by or enrolled at any institution in Fall 2025. The state average full-time persistence rate is 72%.

Workforce Development  
Activities Report

22% of part-time students attending NWC either graduated by or returned in Fall 2025. The state average part-time retention rate is 39%. The part-time retention rate fluctuates significantly due to the small size of that group. The College is implementing efforts under the Strategic Enrollment Management Plan to increase retention rates.

Lisa stated that, when looking at averages over the past ten years, NWC's fall-to-fall retention rates have typically been comparable to state and national retention rates for public two-year institutions. NWC's completion rates have been above the state and national rates for most of the past decade. The cohort of first-time full-time students who began in Fall 2021, 43% graduated within three years. Degree and certificate completion are national priorities, with rates increasing across the country.

A better indication of student success combines completion and transfer rates over the same period. For the most recent cohort, 43% of students completed within three years of starting, and 15% transferred without completing. When added together, 58% of students either completed or transferred.

Christi Greaham, Training and Development Program Coordinator, explained that the online classes offered are Ed2Go through CareerStep. There are typically over 50 students per year taking introductory courses in Computers, QuickBooks, Teachers' continuing education classes, Surgical Tech, and Heavy Equipment, among others.

Christi stated that the Surgical Tech program is going very well. Three new clinical sites have been added this year, and three sites in Billings accept the College's surgical tech students. Christi and Dr. Marneé Crawford are working to move the Surgical Tech program to a for-credit certification within the next year.

Christi stated that the DELTA programs have been very busy. Rafting, paddleboarding, and hiking trips continue, and the new rock wall and high elements course have been very busy. Almost every school in the district has visited the rock wall within the past six months. It is open to homeschool students for one hour per week, with an average of 60-80 students visiting every Wednesday. Many times, these students will enjoy lunch in the Dining Hall and participate in campus tours. The rock wall is open to the public and NWC students on Monday evenings, with 20-40 participants per week.

Christi shared a marketing video created by Ronnie Wolfe, Interim Multimedia Production Specialist, for the CDL program. It will be used in social media advertising, and videos of other programs are currently being created for the same purpose.

Christi stated that the CDL program graduated 102 students in 2025. The program offers non-credit and for-credit options, and many high schools utilize it for dual and concurrent coursework. Nine students have completed the for-credit option within the first year of its implementation, and many more are currently in the program.

Christi reported that the YEP (Youth Empowerment Program) is enjoying continued success, with programs such as construction, STEM camp, jewelry making, cooking, and wood projects that bring younger students to Northwest College and help them have fun and be involved.

Two new courses have been added this year: small engine repair and core construction. Small engine repair students get their own engine to work on,

disassemble it, and put it back together. The construction students are building a model house built on a foundation. They will be adding landscaping to the project this week.

Other upcoming programs include hospitality, business leadership, photography, referee certification, and sewing. Upcoming summer camps include DELTA camps, STEM camps, and, newly added this year, an Esports camp.

Participation numbers continue to increase overall in CTD classes and CTD “other” activities (conferences hosted, classes, tours, school visits). Although testing numbers are down slightly this year, which is the TEAS testing for the Nursing program.

## 2026 Legislative Update

President Watson stated that, despite the politics and nuances of the Legislative session, the good news was that all state agencies received funding for employee compensation. The \$14 million has yet to be allocated to the community colleges, so at this time she is uncertain how much Northwest College will receive, but still noted the positive outcome.

The Legislature also allocated \$20 million for dual and concurrent enrollment in the K-12 recalibration bill. It is intended to encourage dual-enrollment growth in high schools and can be used to pay colleges to provide dual-enrollment courses. The funding came with a caveat that it would open dual enrollment to all students in grades 9-12. There was another \$750,000 in a separate bill for dual enrollment, but it is unclear whether that funding remains in place, since the other bill was approved.

It was calculated that the money would cover current dual-enrollment costs, with little left over for growth, but it certainly helps colleges that don’t receive funding from their BOCES to pay for dual enrollment. President Watson feels it provides an opportunity for Northwest College to continue conversations with area superintendents about ways the College can better serve their needs.

The colleges had requested that the Governor provide funds for inflationary increases, which he did not include in his preliminary budget. However, Joint Appropriations added \$5 million to state aid, and the measure passed.

Another request made by the colleges was for ongoing funding for Career and Technical programs. \$7.5 million was allocated, and the Presidents agreed to split half of it evenly between the colleges and the other half based on CTE credits per institution in the first biennium. After that, funding may be based on the number of CTE credits each institution offers, but that is still up for debate.

Wyoming Works is a grant-funded program that supports career and technical program expansion and provides scholarship awards to students. Wyoming Works allowed Northwest College to start its CDL program. The Legislature allotted \$5 million to keep the program going.

The budget also provides an additional \$600,000 for college Rodeo teams. They currently receive \$200,000 in state support, which will increase the total to \$800,000, to be divided among the colleges to help cover fuel and other inflationary costs associated with Rodeo programs.

In 2017, Senate File 80 forced the colleges to recalibrate, resulting in the funding increasing or decreasing based on enrollment. At every budget session, the Governor has refused to include it in his budget. This year, Governor Gordon was going to accept the recalibration resulting in a \$1.5 million reduction; however, the Legislature elected not to remove it.

President Watson stated that most property tax bills did not pass, but a few remain related to homeowner exemptions and similar matters. The 25% reduction has already taken place and is already on the books. The November election will allow voters to reduce it to 50%, which would affect the College even more.

The gun bill that lowers the age to obtain a concealed carry permit from 21 to 18 is likely to pass and take effect on July 1, 2026. The College's policy regarding firearms and weapons on campus refers to the statute and therefore does not need to be amended.

Senate File 90 creates an agriculturally focused trust fund that the University and colleges could use the interest from to fund ag projects and research. President Watson noted the details are still outstanding, but feels the money will get prioritized and gone quickly.

The Legislature funded Capital Construction projects for the first time in a few years. There was an amendment to include Northwest College's Student Center square footage in the calculations for Major Maintenance funds, resulting in more maintenance funding for the College.

President Watson hopes that the passage of funding for Capital Construction indicates that Legislators support reasonable growth and thoughtful Capital Renewal. This may be a positive sign that matching funds could be available in the future as the College continues planning related to the NPA building or renovations to the Armory.

Trustees reviewed Policy 1700 Public Records. There were no suggested changes.

Policy Review:  
1700 Public Records

Trustees were asked to provide Keli with dates in April and May when they would be unavailable. Keli will create a Doodle poll to find a date for the retreat that works for everyone's schedules.

Schedule Spring Board Retreat

## **CITIZENS' OPEN FORUM**

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

Ted Smith, a resident of Cody, WY, and a 2019 graduate of Northwest College, stated that the University of Wyoming Extension employs him as the Horticulture Program Coordinator.

Ted is working toward his Land Management Certification at UW's School of Energy Resources. He is especially grateful that all his electives were transferable from Northwest College. One of the core classes required for the certificate was waitlisted this spring. Fortunately, Eric Atkinson's Intro to Environmental Sciences fulfills the requirement, and his educational track will continue.

Ted expressed his appreciation to Trustees, Administrators, and Division Chairs for their dedication to the education he and others are provided at Northwest College. He thanked the instructors and support staff for the professional and personal growth he has experienced since enrolling in 2019.

**The Citizens' Open Forum adjourned at 5:03 p.m.**

## **A UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

Policy 1400 Organizational  
Structure

**A motion was made by Trustee Kost and seconded by Trustee Kuipers to bring Policy 1400 Organizational Structure forward for consideration. Motion carried.**

President Watson stated that after Trustee Housel suggested adding Accreditation to the Organizational Structure during the February meeting, Institutional Researcher Lisa Smith reviewed other institutions' structures and determined that some include it and others do not.

President Watson stated that accreditation does not have a formal department because Northwest College operates in a diversified team structure that continually works on accreditation. Accreditation work is extremely important to the College; therefore, President Watson supports adding it to the Organizational Structure.

Additional changes reflected in the proposal include alphabetizing the departments and minor wording changes across various departments.

**A motion was made by Trustee Kuipers and seconded by Trustee Kost to approve Policy 1400 Organizational Structure as presented. Motion carried.**

**A NEW BUSINESS:**

ORB Renovation Change Order

President Watson explained that during the Facilities Committee's tour of the ORB renovation project, it was suggested that the College research options to improve the finish of the CMU walls. The most cost-effective method was determined to be the application of a Dryvit CMU coating system.

The change order includes installing the Dryvit system on designated surfaces and relocating electrical devices on those walls. State Construction supports the College's use of Major Maintenance funds to cover the modification to the original cost estimates.

President Watson stated that she intends to host an open house once the renovation is complete to celebrate the revitalization of the 70-plus-year-old building and Northwest College's 80th anniversary.

**A motion was made by Trustee Kost and seconded by Trustee Newsome to approve the ORB Renovation Change Order as presented. Motion carried.**

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

April 8, 2026, upcoming:

- State Fall Enrollment Report
- Major Maintenance projects update
- Marketing Report
- Spring Board Retreat reminder
- Other TBD

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Last day of Legislative session, March 6, 2026, Cheyenne  
NWC Spring Break, March 7-15, 2026  
WCCC Special Meeting, March 11, 2026, 2-4 p.m., via Zoom  
What's the Tea – Honduras, March 16, 2026, 2-3 p.m., Student Center  
Wednesdays Around the World – Japan, March 18, 2026, 11:30-1:30, Student Center  
What's the Tea – England, March 23, 2026, 2-3 p.m., Student Center  
NWC Foundation Giving Day, March 26-27, 2026. 12:00-12:00 p.m.  
Multicultural Showcase, March 28, 2026, 1:00-3:30 p.m., Student Center

What's the Tea – Vietnam, March 30, 2026, 2-3 p.m., Student Center  
NWC Spring Recess, April 3-6, 2026  
Wednesday's Around the World – England, April 8, 2026, 11:30-1:30, Student Center  
NBHB High School District Festival, April 13, 2026, NPA  
What's the Tea – France, April 13, 2026, 2-3 p.m., Student Center  
April Board Meeting, April 8, 2026, 4:00 p.m., Yellowstone Building  
Chorale, Wind & Percussion Ensemble, April 13, 2026, 7:00 p.m., NPA

**A ADJOURNMENT:**

**The meeting adjourned at 5:21 p.m.**

---

R.J. KOST, Vice President/Secretary

---

Date