

RESOLUTION  
BY  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
OF  
NORTHWEST COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

WHEREAS:

- I. The following chronology is relevant to this Resolution:
  1. In February 1945 the Wyoming Legislature passed the Wyoming Junior College Act which provided statutory authority for Wyoming school districts, with voter approval, to establish two-year adult educational programs and to levy two mills for financing.
  2. In Spring 1946 Park County School District Number 1 initiated the process to establish a junior college in Powell pursuant to the Wyoming Junior College Act; however, in April 1946, in lieu of establishing a junior college at Powell, the University of Wyoming agreed to establish a two-year fully accredited branch of the University of Wyoming in Powell.
  3. In September 1946 the first satellite branch of the University of Wyoming, known as the University of Wyoming Northwest Center (and also Powell College), opened in the Powell High School on September 10, 1946.
  4. In April 1949 the University of Wyoming withdrew its financial support for the University of Wyoming Satellite at Powell, but the Northwest Center continued to operate with full funding from Park County School District Number 1. Students attending the Northwest Center continued to receive college credits through the University of Wyoming.
  5. In February 1951 The Wyoming Legislature passed the Wyoming Community College Act; and, as a result, Northwest Community College was

established on May 12, 1953 at Powell. The boundary of Park County School District Number 1 was adopted as the boundary of the Northwest Community College District, which was completely free from further control by the University of Wyoming and Park County School District Number 1.

6. On January 30, 1968 voters of Park County approved expansion of Northwest College District to the boundary of the entirety of Park County.

7. In 1970 Northwest Community College began a series of multi-state agreements which allowed out-of-state students to attend Northwest Community College on reduced tuition.

8. In 1976 the Northwest Community College Service area was expanded to include the entirety of Big Horn County, Washakie County and Hot Springs County.

9. In May 1990 the legal name of Northwest Community College was changed to Northwest Community College District D.B.A (doing business as) Northwest College.

II. The following factual circumstances are relevant to this Resolution:

- ▶ During December 2019 and January 2020 Northwest College held a series of community input sessions in Cody, Powell and Meeteetse as part of a strategic visioning process. Community members were asked to share their views about Northwest College and write on yellow post notes their greatest concerns. Over 700 separate responses were received during this process. Many comments indicated the College should re-brand or rename to emphasize the unique characteristics of the College. Of the comments which addressed renaming, the majority favored the name “Yellowstone College.”
- ▶ In July 2020 the Board of Trustees initiated an Institutional Transformation process, facilitated by CampusWorks, in which the Trustees engaged in an introspection, engagement and visioning process to position the College as an attractive option in the student marketplace, refine existing course offerings, if needed, and identify and emphasize unique characteristics of the College. The transformation process also included an analysis of developing

target markets through recruitment, branding and marketing.

- ▶ The first phase of the transformation process, from July 2020 through December 2020, included the following campus and community engagement processes: SWOT ( Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) survey, focus group sessions, “future summit”, and work sessions.
- ▶ The SWOT survey included the following:

Faculty and Staff:

Faculty: 33 participants

Staff: 33 participants

Administrators: 2 participants

Community Survey:

Trustees: 6 participants

Alumni 11 participants

Retirees: 7 participants

Foundation: 9 participants

Community

Leaders: 13 participants

Business Partners: 2 participants

Elected officials: 3 participants

- ▶ The community engagement process identified the following as potential threats to the vitality of the College:
  - Demographic shifts to an aging population and a decline in the population of high school students within the College District.
  - Increasing prevalence of higher education on-line as well as non-accredited education and training providers.
- ▶ Themes which emerged from the Focus Group process included:
  - Need for enhanced recognition of the College to enhance enrollment and revenue. “Nationally and internationally not everyone may know where Wyoming is, but every one knows where Yellowstone is.”
  - Capitalizing on Northwest’s unique location and surroundings went hand-in-hand with possible renaming or re-branding of the College.

- ▶ With regard to the Community Summit on the future of Northwest College, held in September 2020, the following themes emerged:
  - Renaming and Rebranding the College: 44 votes
  - Academic Programs and Delivery Redesign: 31 votes
  - Workforce and Community Partnership: 31 votes
  - Experimental/Applied/Hands-on Learning: 26 votes
  - Community Engagement: 17 votes
- ▶ During the second phase of the Transformation process (January 2021 - May 2021) the Board of Trustees identified the following core model options for the future of Northwest College:
  - Destination Model in which the College focus on providing a distinctive learning experience for those seeking to enjoy, work and live in the Yellowstone Ecosystem.
  - Distinctive Model in which the College identify, emphasize, and market unique features and programs.
- ▶ In its March 25, 2021 issue *The Powell Tribune* expressed its opinion that Northwest College “should strongly consider name change,” reasoning as follows:

Meanwhile, NWC has had to grapple with a shrinking pool of potential students. While the Big Horn Basin’s population has grown a bit, the number of young people between the ages of 15 and 29 has sunk.

Between those and other factors no community college in Wyoming has seen a steeper decline in enrollment than NWC since 2009.

To their credit, NWC leaders have been working to reverse the downward trend. They’re currently in the midst of an ambitious institutional transformation, which could include changing the name of the college.

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In the meantime, we hope the trustees are willing to seriously pursue the idea of renaming Northwest College as Yellowstone College.

[Former College President] Hicswa strongly endorsed the idea at her final board meeting. “I think it creates a niche for this college, together with interdisciplinary and academic changes that focus on the Yellowstone ecosystem,” Hicswa said of Yellowstone College. “That gives Northwest College something different that no one else can claim.”

In today’s competitive education environment, our college needs something to help it stand out. Especially as the pool of local students dwindles, pulling in students from outside the area will be increasingly important.

While local residents are intimately familiar with Northwest College and all it offers, the name can get lost among Wyoming’s other community colleges — which can read something like a list of directions on a compass (i.e. Eastern, Central, Western and the Northern Wyoming Community College District). Then there’s the fact that “Northwest” remains an imprecise description for the Powell area, as most people use it to describe Jackson Hole, too.

And that’s not to mention all the other Northwests in higher education, including: North-West College (a vocational college in Southern California); Northwestern College (Orange City, Iowa); Northwest University (in Kirkland, Washington); and the more famous Northwestern University (in Evanston, Illinois).

In contrast, the name Yellowstone College immediately fixes the location – and the breathtaking outdoor opportunities we offer – in the minds of prospective students across the globe. And the name is unique: there is no Yellowstone University to overshadow us.

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- ▶ Full time student enrollment at Northwest College peaked during the time of the “Great Recession” (2008-2009) and has declined several years since that time.
- ▶ On October 13, 2021 the Northwest College Board of Trustees held a special public meeting on Re-branding and Renaming in Business and Higher

Education. The meeting was moderated by Amber Simon Power and panelists included Dana Pulis from Billings, Montana, an expert in nationwide marketing, and Jim Owston, EdD., Associate Provost, Alderson-Broadus University, West Virginia, who has extensively researched name changes and re-branding in institutions in higher learning.

The meeting was widely advertised and all members of the Northwest College Communities were encouraged to attend. The special meeting was a listening and information gathering session only; and no decisions were made by the Board on re-branding or renaming. From his research Dr. Owston related there are 19 schools of higher learning in the United States that have “Northwest” in their name and that “Northwest” is the most common jurisdictional name in U.S. colleges. Dr. Owston and Ms. Pulis also expressed that renaming may be a graduated process, and that many renaming programs can take upwards of two years. Costs for a change of name at Northwest College were estimated to be between \$50,000 and \$100,000.

- ▶ Other educational institutions in Wyoming or other states with “North” or “Northwest” in their name have been mistaken for Northwest College at Powell, Wyoming, and vice versa. The two principal groups who mistake the name of Northwest College with another institution within or outside of Wyoming are:
  1. Individuals such as Wyoming legislators or State of Wyoming employees who do not know that Northwest College is located in Powell, Wyoming. Employees of Wyoming state agencies which have confused Northwest College, Powell, Wyoming with Northern Wyoming Community College District, Sheridan, Wyoming include the Department of Education, the Community College Commission, Legislative Service Office and the Department of Administration and Information.
  2. Prospective students who are seeking enrollment in another college with a name which is the same or similar to Northwest College, Powell, Wyoming.

— The following four colleges located outside of Wyoming are most often mistaken for Northwest College, Powell, Wyoming:

North-West College, Los Angeles, California

Web site: NW.Edu

Northwest College, North Saddle,  
Saskatchewan, Canada

Web site: NorthwestCollege.Ca

Northwestern College, Orange City, Iowa

Web site: NWClowa.Edu

Northwest Mississippi, Senatobia, Mississippi

Web site: northwestms.edu

– North-West College in Los Angeles specializes in health care.

Prospective nursing students who intend to enroll in North-West College, Los Angeles have mistakenly applied to Northwest College, Powell, Wyoming.

– In addition, from time-to-time prospective international students seeking to apply to Northwest College, North Saddle, Saskatchewan, Canada have mistakenly applied to Northwest College in Wyoming.

– Students from Iowa and Mississippi have mistakenly applied for and telephoned student services at Northwest College, Powell requesting assistance from student support services such as technology support.

– Staff from Northwest College, Powell, Wyoming, often take from five minutes to thirty minutes to assist prospective students who have mistaken Northwest College, Powell, Wyoming for another college. The staff of Northwest College, Powell, in admissions, enrollment, registrar, computing services, international student services, and the business office receive awareness training to be aware of potential mistaken college identity problems. In the Northwest College, Powell, Registrar Office eight out of ten educational attainment requests are from businesses or students requesting educational attainment confirmation information from the wrong college.

- ▶ Northwest College, Powell, Wyoming has also been confused with Northern Wyoming College, Sheridan, Wyoming in the following particulars:
  1. In determining the number of employees for actuarial Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) purposes, the Wyoming Department of Administration and Information erroneously added a number of employees from Northern Wyoming College, Sheridan, Wyoming to the Northwest College, Powell, Wyoming report. Had this mistake not been detected by administrative staff of Northwest College, Powell, Wyoming, the annual audit of finances of Northwest College, Powell, Wyoming, as pertains to the GASB OPEB calculation, and inclusion in the financial statements, would have been incorrect; which, in turn, would have resulted in a material finding of incorrect auditing and accounting standards. It is important for Northwest College, Powell, Wyoming to have no material annual audit violations to maintain state and federal funding.
  2. The Wyoming Community College Commission uses the number of total enrolled students from each state community college to determine State operational funding for each Wyoming community college. During the 2021- 2022 biennium the Wyoming Community College Commission erroneously processed student data that underestimated the number of graduates at Northwest College and co-mingled data with Northern Community College District. This resulted in Northwest College being allocated less state funding than the amount to which it was properly entitled. The Northwest College Business and Academic Affairs offices noticed the discrepancy and requested a review and correction of the data. A similar error was also found in the previous year and was also corrected. The Northwest College Finance Officer also believed that similar errors in previous years existed, but the Wyoming Community College Commission would not make any corrections beyond the current biennium.
- ▶ Following are other institutions of higher learning in the United States with



“Northwest” in their name:

Alabama: Northwest Shoals Community College  
Arkansas: Northwest Arkansas Community College  
California: Northwestern Polytechnic University  
North-West College  
Colorado: Northwestern Community College  
Connecticut: Northwestern Connecticut Community  
College  
Florida: Northwest Florida State College  
Georgia: Georgia Northwestern Technical College  
Idaho: Northwest Nazarene University  
Illinois: Northwestern University  
Northwestern College  
Iowa: Northwestern College  
Northwest Iowa Community College  
Louisiana: Northwest Louisiana Technical College  
Northwestern State University  
Minnesota: Northwest Technical College  
Mississippi: Northwest Mississippi Community College  
Missouri: Northwest Missouri State University  
Ohio: Northwest State Community College  
University of Northwestern Ohio  
Oklahoma: Northwestern Oklahoma State University  
Oregon: Northwest Christian University  
Pacific Northwest College of Art  
Texas: Northwest Vista College  
Washington: Northwest Indian College  
Northwest Theological Seminary  
Northwest University  
Pacific Northwest University of Health

- ▶ A recent Google search for “northwest college trustees” initially responded with photographs of trustees of three separate colleges with the name “Northwest”:

Northwest College Board of Trustees

Northwest State Community College Board of Trustees

Northwest Florida State College Board of Trustees

- ▶ Northwest College will increasingly rely on electronic media for advertising and marketing, and a distinctive name will enhance marketing efficacy.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Board of Trustees of Northwest Community College District RESOLVE as follows:

- ▶ The name of Northwest Community College District, Doing Business as Northwest College is hereby changed to:  
Northwest Community College District, Doing Business as Yellowstone College.
- ▶ Implementation of this Resolution in which all identifying features of the College are changed to “Yellowstone College” shall take place as soon as practicable and shall be completed on or before December 31, 2026.

DATED \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, 20\_\_.

Number of Votes in Favor: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Votes Opposed: \_\_\_\_\_

*This Resolution was drafted by Trustee John Housel as a member of the ad hoc Board Committee on Change of Name.*