

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

June 17, 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, and DR. MARK WURZEL (via Zoom).

MEMBERS ABSENT: MR. SHANE OGDEN

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. LESLIE BIGHAM; MR. JOSHUA BUHMANN; MS. JACQUE COBOURN; MR. DUSTIN DICKS; MS. TRACY GASAWAY; MS. NANCY GILMORE; MR. MARK GRANT; MR. JEREMIAH HOWE; MS. JEN LITTERER-TREVIÑO; MS. CAREY MILLER; MR. DENNIS QUILLEN; MS. LISA SMITH; 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, June 17, 2025, at 4:05 p.m. in the Student Center, Room 100.

A APPROVE THE AGENDA: **A motion was made by Trustee Kuipers and seconded by Trustee Kost 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.**

President Watson stated that departments are getting moved out of the Orendorff Building. Within the last few weeks, there have been two separate failures: a sewer line failure and a gas line failure. The structure of the building is sound, but repairs to these systems would be cost-prohibitive for the College without the Capital Renewal project, which aims to upgrade the building's infrastructure.

Trustee Housel stated he was pleased to see the large number of international students who participated in the recent trip to Yellowstone National Park. He also recognized that thirty-five international students graduated from Northwest College this year.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that there are students who are affected by the President's executive order outlining countries of concern, such as Turkmenistan. There are other countries that, while they appreciate Northwest College, have concerns about sending students to the United States in general, such as Honduras. She expects that international student numbers could be affected, but the extent to which it is unknown. The College continues to monitor the situation.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that campus tours and recruiting efforts continue throughout the summer. Dual and concurrent student enrollments are still being entered into the system. She is cautiously optimistic that enrollment numbers will be on track.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that Northwest College has two students competing at the College National Finals

Rodeo in Casper.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that while there is a waiting list for Trapper Village West, it doesn't mean every unit is occupied; only those that are available to be rented. The Board recently approved funding for renovating two previously uninhabitable units. The barracks (studio apartments) are also being repaired and will be available for rent in the fall. Several of the studio apartments will be used for short-term rentals for CDL and hybrid nursing students.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that it's too early to tell if GEAR UP or TRiO will be affected by the federal bill that calls for examination of these programs. She agreed that the data contained in the GEAR UP report is indicative of the program's success. Northwest College's GEAR UP program has led the state in performance thanks to the efforts of former GEAR UP Coordinator Rebecca Moncur and current GEAR UP Coordinator Callee Erickson.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that the website traffic report is affected by the launch of the new website in December 2024. Comparisons of the previous year's data will be inaccurate until a whole year has passed.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel regarding an entry in the check register, President Watson stated that the WRAP Technologies Inc. entry is for an annual renewal of the Criminal Justice VR software.

Trustee Kuipers noted the outstanding performance of Northwest College's GEAR UP program, which exceeded every metric of the statewide program.

In response to a question from Trustee Kuipers, VP Havron stated that the non-traditional student representative on Student Senate is sometimes held by a BAS student. In an item of interest, it was noted that the outgoing 2025 Senate President graduated from the Criminal Justice BAS program and has been admitted to law school.

Motion carried, and the consent agenda, including the minutes of May 12, 2025, regular meeting, was approved.

**DISCUSSION/
INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

PVCE Contract for Services

President Watson reminded the Trustees that Park County School District #1 BOCES provides Northwest College with \$100,000 per year to support community education programming. The renewal contract is included in the meeting material for review.

PVCE Annual Report

Leslie Bigham, in her seventh year as Community Education Program Specialist, explained that other BOCES in the state may strictly fund programs such as Driver's Education, after-school programs, daycares, and mobile libraries. The PCSD#1 BOCES elected to contract with the College to provide continued learning and community enrichment classes. They also allocate \$25,000 to support special projects, such as dual and concurrent enrollment and CTD programming for high school students.

Leslie reported that PVCE offers many popular classes and is always seeking new courses and community events to participate in. In FY2020, during the pandemic, PVCE served members through various online and in-person classes. Participation has steadily increased since.

PVCE became involved with the Rec Co-op and purchased paddle boards and additional outdoor equipment. With a membership fee and deposit, community members and students can utilize equipment they wouldn't otherwise have access to.

PVCE also participates in numerous community events, including Paint the Town Red, the Park County Fair, Suicide Prevention Seminars, and the Community Baby Shower. The Powell Elks Lodge received a grant for the baby shower that included a literacy component. PVCE partnered with them to host a shower for expectant mothers, providing gifts and resources for new parents.

PVCE has conducted mock interviews for high school students. Students are interviewed in the fall and then again, the week of graduation. Students are provided with feedback and an opportunity to improve their skills for the second interview.

The Alive at 25 classes are held every three months and are a requirement of the Driver's Education program. Other participants include those who are court-ordered and those whose parents want them to learn road safety.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, Leslie stated that she attributes the increase in participation to a shift in the age demographic. When she began in her role, the typical age of participants was 45 and older. Without solid research, she perceives the age demographic to have shifted to 25-35 and older. Social media, word of mouth, and the variety of offerings have contributed to a change in demographics and an increased appeal to a broader range of community members.

In response to a question from Trustee Kuipers, Leslie stated that she tries to follow trends and adjust offerings to suit the community's desires. She also encourages input from community members on which classes they would like to see offered and attempts to provide them when possible.

BOCES Budgets

President Watson stated that the budgets being presented are in draft form and will be finalized soon. She pointed out that the three support Driver's Education classes, and some have increased their support for some of the College's dual and concurrent enrollment costs.

President and Board Budgets

President Watson presented the FY2026 President's and Board's budget for review. The budgets reflect the changes suggested during the May 12, 2025, Board meeting.

CITIZENS' OPEN FORUM

The Citizens' Open Forum convened at 5:05 p.m. No citizens requested to address the Board; therefore, the Citizens' Open Forum adjourned.

A UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Policy Amendments:
5600 Nondiscrimination
5610 Equal Employment
Opportunity

President Watson stated that the policy amendments have been reviewed by the Policy Review Committee, the College Council, constituent groups, and the President's staff. There were no dissenting concerns.

5630 Prohibition of Harassment
5700 Sexual Misconduct –
Sexual Harassment

A motion was made by Trustee Kuipers and seconded by Trustee Kost to approve the proposed amendments to Policies: 5600 Nondiscrimination, 5610 Equal Employment Opportunity, 5630 Prohibition of Harassment, and 5700 Sexual Misconduct-Sexual Harassment as presented. Motion

carried.

5530 Discipline: Staff

President Watson stated changes to Policy 5530 Discipline: Staff are necessary to align with the new Policy 7150 Firearms and Weapons, 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 Newsome to approve the proposed amendments to Policy 5530 Discipline: Staff. Motion carried.

New Policy:
7150 Firearms and Weapons

President Watson stated that the policy has been reviewed by the Policy Review Committee, the College Council, constituent groups, and the President's staff. While there is consternation from some campus members, the College must comply with state statute. After review by the groups mentioned above, the policy remains unchanged from its first reading by the Board on May 12, 2025.

A motion was made by Trustee Kuipers and seconded by Trustee Kost to approve Policy 7150 Firearms and Weapons as presented. Motion carried.

President Watson stated that these policies will go into effect on July 1, 2025. The College will continue work on procedures associated with Policy 7150 and plans to provide ALICE training to employees and students.

A NEW BUSINESS:

Preliminary FY2026 Budget
(first reading)

Finance Director Mark Grant highlighted items from the narrative at the beginning of the proposed budget:

- Enrollment is currently challenging to project due to the potential impact on international students at the federal level.
- The county valuations are down from \$1,005,000,000 last year to \$853,448,112 this year, resulting in a 15% budget reduction in levy funding.
- Housing and meal plan utilization is expected to remain flat.
- The College is focused on budget stabilization to lessen the impact on the campus when there are large swings in state appropriations and local mil levies from year to year.
- The College is committed to collecting input from campus groups such as the Academic Advisory Council, Institutional Effectiveness Committee, and Budget Managers to understand the needs across campus as it builds the budget.
- The proposed budget does not utilize any of the College's reserves.

Mark explained that in years past, the State had a funding concept of 60% state funding, 20% local funding, and 20% from Institutional (tuition and fees). Currently, the College's funding is derived from 52% state funding, 14% local funding, 25% Institutional funding, and 8% from other sources, including federal and state grants.

Mark stated that last year, the College gained approximately \$580,000 from the state allocation model. This year, it will lose \$400,000. The College had to send back \$150,000 last year for recapture/redistribution. Early projections indicate the College will be sending back approximately \$300,000. Considering the local levy reduction of 15% (roughly \$600,000), the state budget reduction,

and the recapture/redistribution process, the College expects to have \$1 million less in revenue in FY2026.

Mark noted that carryover funds are those that are budgeted but not fully expended and will be carried over to the next fiscal year. Typically, carryover funds are small; however, this year the carryover is larger as the College continues to expend monies from the Wyoming Innovative Partnership grants for projects such as Outdoor Recreation, the virtual reality simulation, and Creative Economy.

Mark stated that, in response to State reporting requirements regarding operating expenses, expenses such as insurance, bad debt, and ADA compliance have been transferred from the Fund 11 One Mill account to Fund 10 to provide a more accurate representation of the College's operational costs.

Another adjustment made to the budget was that pass-through fees weren't previously shown, as they netted out the expense and revenue. The budget now reflects the revenue from the course fees, in addition to the instruction costs. Programs such as Aviation have higher course fees and, in turn, higher instructional costs; therefore, the budget reflects both higher revenue and higher instructional costs.

Mark clarified that while the FY2026 budget appears to have increased by \$2.5 million, the budget has been reduced. The increase is due to accounting transfers, which will provide a more accurate representation of operating expenses when reported to the State.

President Watson stated that she is recommending a 1% salary increase. She believes it is essential to support employees while trying to retain them, particularly in light of inflation. While there is uncertainty about the year ahead and the College is not being funded at a level that allows employees to earn a livable wage, she believes it is essential to support employees when considering the College's future.

President Watson stated that the Orendorff project has been funded at \$4 million by the State. The College is waiting to see if the State will provide additional support for inflationary overrun. The final budget may be adjusted to reflect any potential additional funds, or a budget adjustment may be made at a later date if needed.

Trustee Housel expressed his appreciation for the detailed explanation about the transfers and accounting changes. At first glance, the budget appears to have increased, but he has a better understanding after the explanation.

President Watson stated that there are many different ways to manage the accounting, and how it has been managed is not wrong; however, the College is making every effort possible to ensure its structure and accounting aligns with the rules and provides the most accurate information related to funding.

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

July 14, 2025, upcoming:

- Year-end budget adjustments FY2025
- 2026 Board Goals
- 2026 President Goals
- Budget hearing
- Annual hearing for the mill levy approval
- Policy update review
- Other TBD

Trustee Kuipers stated that she would be very interested in having the presentation provided by International Student and Scholar Services at the Wyoming Community College Commission meeting, presented at a future Board meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Yellowstone Summer Music Camp, June 15-20, 2025, NPA
5th Annual Trapper Classic Car Show, June 28, 2025, Campus Mall
New Student Registration, June 30, 2025, NWC
July Board meeting, July 14, 2025, 4:00 p.m., Yellowstone Building

President Watson announced that Sodexo will be serving lunch in the Student Center this summer, Monday through Thursday, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. The Coffee Shop is also open in the morning on those days. She invited Trustees to enjoy an entrée and full salad bar if they had the time and opportunity.

A ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 5:54 p.m.

R.J. KOST, Vice President/Secretary

Date