

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

November 10, 2025

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** President Ms. DENISE LAURSEN; Treasurer MR. BOB NEWSOME; and Trustees MR. JOHN HOUSEL, MS. TARA KUIPERS, MR. SHANE OGDEN, and DR. MARK WURZEL.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Vice President/Secretary MR. R.J. KOST

**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. ANNA CRAGOE, MR. ALEC DEVOSS, MR. DUSTIN DICKS, MR. TY FLOCK, MS. TRACY GASAWAY, MR. MARK GRANT, MS. JEN LITTERER-TREVIÑO, MR. DENNIS QUILLEN, DR. GREG SMITH, MS. LISA SMITH, MS. LINDA SPOMER, MR. MARTIN STENSING, MR. OSCAR TREVIÑO, MS. SHELBY WETZEL, MS. BRITTANY WILSON, 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, November 10, 2025, at 4:00 p.m. in the Yellowstone Building Conference Center.

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

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

Trustee Kuipers expressed her appreciation for the Mission Moment at last month's Board meeting, which focused on the International Student & Scholar Services program, followed by the delegation from Turkmenistan's visit. It provided an excellent overview of the work being done with international student programs at the College.

In response to questions received regarding the check register, President Watson stated that 1) the purchase of cameras for the field station is for security purposes; 2) there were two payments made to Powell Chamber of Commerce that were a result of a duplication in process, which has since been corrected; and 3) the payment to Textbook Brokers is for remaining merchandise inventory (apparel, drinkware, etc.) to be bought from and paid for over the next twelve months as part of the contract as it expires.

In response to a question from President Laursen, President Watson stated that the College is in its sixth year of a five-year contract with Textbook Brokers. After receiving notice that they wished to discontinue service, they agreed to continue with the College until another provider could be obtained.

In response to a comment from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated the College has entered into a simplified lease with Friends of the Shoshone Trail, who will park equipment in one of the shop bays at the Field Station over the winter months. They will also be responsible for utility costs associated with the shop.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that Turkmenistan is interested in collaborating with colleges. Their visit included schools in Montana as well as UW. They are working to build their health services across the country and have entered into an MOU with Northwest

College to collaborate and learn from each other.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that the Consul from the Turkmenistan Embassy was part of the delegation that visited the College. He noted that they have been working with the federal government to reach an agreement on lifting the travel restrictions.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that while the College enjoys good working relationships with the local school districts, these relationships can continually be strengthened. Discussion revealed high interest in opportunities to enhance the dual and concurrent environment, but all have different initiatives or areas of focus for their students. During the recent high school visits by President Watson and Interim Director Ty Flock, the Hanover survey results were shared, and feedback was received on different ways the College could serve each district.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that the College will increase the number of scholarship opportunities for FY2026-27. Because athletes are generally retained and graduate in high numbers, Athletics will have its own healthy pool of scholarship funds. All other scholarships (activity, talent, etc.) will be in a separate pool, allowing more funds for incoming freshmen.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that Trapper funds awarded in the fall but unused are being used for a spring initiative to drive enrollment. New students enrolling for the first time in Spring 2026 will be able to take one free class, with the potential to sign up for more.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that three policies were reviewed by the Board Policy and Student Success Committee and will be coming before the Board of Trustees next month.

**Motion carried, and the consent agenda, including the minutes of October 8, 2025, Special Meeting/Retreat, and October 11, 2025, regular meeting, was approved.**

## **DISCUSSION/ INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

### **Preliminary Audit Report**

Brittany Wilson, CPA and Partner of MHP, presented the draft financials of fiscal year 2025.

Brittany explained that her overview includes three parts of the audit: Generally Accepted Auditing Standards, Government Auditing Standards, and Uniform Grant Guidance. She will also cover some high-level financial statement highlights, changes, and significant accounting estimates within the College's financial statements.

The independent auditor's report, set by the AICPA, applies to all audits, regardless of the type of entity. It covers the financial statements and notes. Brittany stated they are issuing an unmodified or clean opinion.

The management discussion and analysis follow. It provides a high-level comparative analysis of fiscal years 2023-2025. The statements of net position are equivalent to a balance sheet. Brittany reported an unrestricted net position of over \$4 million. After backing out the pension and OPEB liabilities, the unrestricted net position is a positive \$26 million. The College's financial position is trending in a great direction.

The statements of revenues, expenses, and changes in net position, the equivalent of an income statement, show an increase in net position of \$7.6 million. This is down from the prior year of \$18.5 million, which can be attributed to incoming revenue for the Student Center, including State Appropriations, private gifts, grants, and contracts. Overall, fiscal year 2025 was very strong.

Brittany discussed the notes to the financial statements related to significant accounting estimates. Note Five is the allocation of Northwest College's portion of the funding deficit in the Wyoming Retirement Systems Public Employee Pension Plan. An actuary determines how much each college would have to pay out in the future to cover everyone in retirement and compares that amount to the funds held in trust. The difference is the net pension liability, calculated as a percentage of contributions relative to the plan as a whole.

Note seven is also actuarially determined. It is the OPEB liability related to the College's participation in the State's employee group health insurance plan. It is different because there are no assets held in trust to offset the liability arising from retirees' participation in the health insurance plan.

There are two significant accounting estimates in the financial statements that lack footnote disclosures. One is the scholarship allowance, calculated under NACUBO guidelines, and is a contra-revenue related to institutional financial aid provided to students.

The second is unavailable property taxes. Taxes are assessed in January every year; however, they are not levied out until August or September, which falls in the next fiscal year. Therefore, the accounts receivable that are recorded are estimated until finalized.

The new GASB Standard addresses compensated absences. It required extensive analysis of what has been accrued and what is likely to be used by the employee during employment or upon termination. As a result of the new analysis, the compensated absences, including vacation and sick leave, increased from \$527,000 to \$1 million. It also required an estimation of how much would be utilized within the next year versus later in an employee's career.

The second Independent Auditor's Report relates to Government Auditing Standards. It addresses internal control over financial reporting and the College's compliance with laws and regulations. Brittany stated that it is a clean report with no noncompliance and no reportable internal control deficiencies.

The last report is under the Uniform Grant Guidance and audits the federal dollars the College expended. A calculated determination is made based on prior-year reports and findings to determine whether an entity is low-risk. The College is considered to be low-risk; 20% of the federal funds expended by the College must be audited.

The two programs that were tested this year were Financial Aid and GEAR UP. The government outlines direct and material compliance requirements and related internal controls. Brittany stated that it was a clean report with no deficiencies noted in the testing and no related internal control items.

Brittany stated that there has been a delay in the OMB 2025 Compliance Supplement. The audit reports will not be finalized until a final compliance supplement is issued. She is hopeful it can be finalized by the December Board

meeting for Board approval.

Brittany stated that the auditing standards require her to provide a summary of the audit process, titled "Report to the Board of Trustees." The summary states that there were changes in significant accounting policies during the year, including changes in the scholarship allowance calculation and GASB 101 changes for compensated absences. No significant issues or difficulties were noted. No significant unusual transactions, disagreements with management, significant issues, or difficulties noted.

Brittany expressed her appreciation to Vice President Reynolds, Finance Director Mark Grant, and their team for their hard work putting the information together for the audit.

In conclusion, Brittany stated that the College is doing very well and she is grateful for the relationship and opportunity to work together. Specifically, there is a very strong accounting team and a Vice President in place, and she is excited to work with the whole team going forward. She also stated that the Financial Aid auditing team was very complimentary of Financial Aid Director Shaman Quinn. He is very knowledgeable and an asset to the College.

#### ACCT Conference

Trustee Ogden stated that he is grateful for the opportunity to attend the ACCT Conference in New Orleans, LA. Although he has worked in education his entire career, he is beginning to understand the community college perspective.

The group from Northwest College attended a workshop on dual and concurrent enrollment, which was interesting to learn about the different methods and procedures that are used across the nation. He stated that he feels fortunate for the relationship PCSD #16 has with Northwest College and the learning opportunities it provides his students.

Trustee Ogden attended several sessions on AI and its role in community colleges. While there are warnings about AI, it can enhance teaching and learning if embraced.

Trustee Ogden stated that the networking at the Conference was very valuable. After learning of the challenges other institutions face across the nation, he is very appreciative of Northwest College, such as the Foundation that works so hard to provide for the College, the forward-thinking professors who want to embrace a hands-on approach to learning, and the value of the Trustees who always put student success as their primary concern.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, Trustee Ogden stated that he learned there are many different funding models for dual and concurrent enrollment. He is envious of states that pay both the district and the colleges, recognizing that there is a financial obligation on both sides of dual and concurrent enrollment.

President Watson echoed Trustee Ogden's comments about AI. She and Trustee Kost had many conversations during the conference about AI and the potential uses at the College. Instead of fearing or protecting itself from it, she noted that perhaps the College should investigate ways to provide students with positive workforce skills. There are also many possibilities AI could assist the College with operations.

President Watson stated that another takeaway from the dual and concurrent workshop and sessions she and Trustee Kost attended was that institutions should focus on providing students with pathways. By providing access to all

students and not just those who are high-achieving, and creating pathways instead of just taking random courses, students are more likely to feel they are making progress and will continue their education. Helping students feel that education is an attainable option, whether through transfer or career and technical programs, helps them move forward positively.

President Watson reported that Trustee Kost also attended many sessions on working with industry partners and businesses, focusing on building internships and apprenticeships and creating opportunities to connect. There is a lot of momentum around colleges meeting companies' needs and providing students with real-world skills and experiences.

#### Student Housing Survey

Vice President Havron stated that a survey was conducted within the Residence Halls to gauge how students are acclimating and to provide an overview of the issues they are facing. This allowed the College to intervene immediately if students were struggling. The survey will be conducted within the first four weeks of classes each year to support early intervention efforts.

The survey contained approximately 80 questions and was open to residents from September 24th to October 8th. Of the 296 students surveyed, 162 responded. Students were provided with a free coffee drink from Sips and Such for participating.

The questions were broken down into six different categories. The first two were Social and Personal Adjustment. Over 90% of respondents rated themselves highly in this area, which is a testament to the students themselves.

The next two were related to Resiliency, and Homesickness, and Family Responsibilities. Once again, students rated their resiliency high: 99% stated they are confident they will succeed at NWC, 91% can healthily cope with academic stress, and 95% are confident they can ask for help when needed. However, 8% say homesickness is affecting their ability to engage, 12% say concerns about their family make it difficult to be at NWC, and 8% say family obligations are interfering with their ability to focus on academics. 98% have parents who are supportive of them attending NWC.

The last two categories of questions were Financial Concerns and Commitment to NWC. Financial concerns are more prevalent for our students and perhaps an opportunity for the College to fill some gaps: 23% report that they have financial obligations interfering with their ability to focus on academics; 16% say college expenses are causing a strain on their family; 40% are worried about being able to pay for college, 91% have completed the financial aid paperwork, and 92% know how to find available scholarships at NWC.

The survey indicates there is a strong commitment to NWC: 99% are committed to completing their degree at NWC, 94% would still choose NWC if they had the chance to do things over; 99.6% would recommend NWC as a place to go to school; 96% plan to return this spring; and 97% feel attending college was the best decision for them.

In conclusion, Vice President Havron stated that the residents responded very positively to their experience in the residence halls. The survey also provided an opportunity to reach out to those who were struggling and to offer support.

Financial concerns were rated the highest factor affecting students. The College is hoping to address some of these challenges through efforts under the Strategic Enrollment Management Plan and changes to scholarship awards.

Vice President Havron stated that a spring survey of newly admitted students

will be conducted four weeks after classes begin. The fall 2026 survey will be released to the freshman cohort. Outreach efforts will continue for those students who are struggling or have challenges. Ninety students left the residence halls last year. So far, 94% of residents have declared they have or will enroll for spring. Vice President Havron stated he is hopeful the College can retain most of those students through its outreach efforts and the amazing people who work at Northwest College.

#### CCSSE Report

Lisa Smith explained that the CCSSE survey is conducted every two years to measure student engagement. The Wyoming Community College Commission has paid for all Wyoming community colleges to participate since 2007. Northwest College had nearly one-third of its students, or 250, respond to the survey in spring 2025.

Questions are categorized into one of five benchmarks, and responses are then compared with those of Wyoming community colleges and the national cohort. NWC scored higher than other Wyoming colleges and the national cohort in two of the benchmarks: Active and Collaborative Learning and Student-Faculty Interaction. Lisa stated that Northwest College has historically scored very high in these areas. Two other cohorts, Student Effort and Support for Learners, scored higher than those of other Wyoming colleges but were just below the national average. Northwest College scored slightly less than the other Wyoming colleges and the national cohort in Academic Challenge.

Lisa stated that 95% of students would recommend Northwest College to a friend or family member, and 90% rated their overall educational experience as good or excellent, a consistently high figure over the years. 87% of immediate family members are quite or extremely supportive of students attending NWC; 85% noted that their experience at the College helps them think critically or analytically, and 85% indicated that the College helped them learn effectively on their own, 77% were very satisfied with peer or other tutoring, 75% were very satisfied with services for students with disabilities, and 75% noted that their experience contributed to their ability to develop career goals. These all scored higher than the comparison groups and are all things the College prides itself on.

In addition to the standard questions, CCSSE includes special-focus questions. The 2025 survey included questions related to student use of Artificial Intelligence and Campus Accessibility. 63% of Northwest College respondents are familiar with AI tools, and 49% use them to assist with coursework. These are low percentages compared to the national average. 41% of students who responded indicated that instructors taught them the most about evaluating the accuracy of AI-generated content.

Campus accessibility scored high as well. 100% of respondents stated that instructors provide enough time to complete homework assignments, 92% said that the College is welcoming of students with disabilities, 92% stated they fully participate in class activities, 84% indicated that their instructors use captioned videos when media is shown in class, and 31% indicated they have a disability or health condition, the majority reporting a learning disability or mental health condition.

Various campus groups will review the results and identify areas that inform departmental planning. The detailed survey results are available to all employees on the MYNWC Portal.

## Big Horn Basin High School Report

Lisa Smith stated that the Big Horn Basin High School Report is a summary of student enrollment, retention, and performance for students from Big Horn Basin High Schools who enrolled at Northwest College the year following graduation. She has also added two tables on the first post-secondary institution that students enroll in.

On average, 528 students graduated from Big Horn Basin (BHB) high schools each year (over 3 years). Of those, 119 (23%) enrolled at NWC in the year following graduation, and 16% had been concurrent or dual-enrolled at NWC in high school.

The schools that send the highest percentages of their graduating classes to Northwest College are Shoshone Learning Center, Lovell High School, Rocky Mountain High School, and Powell High School. The lowest percentage of graduates comes from Worland High School, Heart Mountain Academy, and Riverside.

Newly added to this year's report is data on which institutions students attended who had taken NWC dual or concurrent classes from 2019 through 2024. Northwest College had the highest number of dual or concurrent students enrolled after graduation at 33%. The second-highest is "no institutional record," referring to students who did not enroll in any college (23%); the University of Wyoming had 14%; and other community colleges had 9% of BHB NWC dual- or concurrent-enrolled students.

The data shows that the majority of BHB dual and concurrent students enroll at Northwest College. Lisa feels this is a good indication that the College is providing a good experience for those students. VP Havron and Lisa have discussed the potential for further outreach to those students who did not enroll at any college.

Lisa stated that the full report included with the meeting materials contains additional data on GPA, developmental coursework, retention, and graduation rates for BHB students who attended NWC after graduation. Lisa noted a few items of interest: over the three years covered in the report, the number of BHB students who place into developmental coursework has decreased; the retention rate of BHB students has dropped below that of other groups; and the most recent three-year graduation rate of BHB students is 45%, which seems to follow an overall pattern.

Trustee Housel noted the decrease in enrollment among Cody High School students at Northwest College. He suggested that the Trustees from Cody brainstorm outreach ideas to improve the mindset among school officials and parents in Cody regarding Northwest College.

President Watson stated that she and Ty Flock recently visited Cody High School officials as part of their BHB high school outreach efforts. Cody has implemented an instructional curriculum change, and they are doing things quite differently than in the past. She feels there are opportunities to present students with the what options are available at Northwest College.

During the visit, President Watson reiterated the College's desire to work with them. Afterwards, Cody brought students to Northwest College for Preview Day for the first time in quite a while.

President Watson stated that she is continuously working to expand the partnership with Cody High School and welcomes discussion with the Cody Trustees to implement ideas to further the relationship. She also reiterated her

desire to strengthen relationships with all school districts in the Big Horn Basin service area.

Policy Review – 1100 The  
Northwest Community College  
District

President Watson stated that she is pleased to begin regularly reviewing policy as part of the Board of Trustees' governance duties. It will allow identification of needed updates and continued relevance. As part of the operational cycle, existing policy will be examined in numerical order monthly, and the review date will be added to each for tracking purposes. New or proposed policy changes will be considered separately by the Board.

NWC Holiday Party

President Watson stated that the NWC Holiday Party will take place on Friday, December 12, 2025, at the Commons, beginning at 5:30 p.m. She noted that the party is funded by vending machine proceeds, not taxpayer dollars.

**CITIZENS' OPEN FORUM**

The Citizens' Open Forum convened at 5:03 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:**

JFC Gym Floor

President Watson extended her appreciation to Vice President Reynolds for his work managing the insurance aspect of the JFC gym floor replacement.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that the water damage was caused by heavy rain occurring at the same time as the surrounding ground was being torn up for parking lot and sewer line work.

The condition of the concrete under the floor won't be known until the existing floor is removed, and any necessary concrete repairs will need to be funded by the College. Any costs over \$50,000 would come before the Board for approval.

**A motion was made by Trustee Housel and seconded by Trustee Kuipers to approve the Trapper Gym Floor Replacement Project, currently estimated at \$230,000, using plant fund revenues and reserves to pay for the cost of the \$25,000 insurance deductible and other repair costs not reimbursed by insurance. Motion carried.**

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

December 8, 2025, upcoming:

- Quarterly budget adjustments
- Strategic Plan Update
- Annual signing of Ethics Policy
- Wyoming Postsecondary Education Options
- Acceptance of Audit
- Statewide Legislative update
- Election of officers
- Other TBD

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Wednesdays Around the World-US, Nov 12, 11:30-1:30, Dining Hall  
WBB vs College of Spokane, Nov 14, 3:00 p.m., Coeur d'Alene, ID  
MBB vs Green River CC, Nov 14, 4:00 p.m., Coeur d'Alene, ID  
WBB vs Bellevue College, Nov 15, 11:00 a.m., Coeur d'Alene, ID



MBB vs North Idaho College, Nov 15, 2:00 p.m., Coeur d'Alene, ID  
NCOC Small Groups Concert, Nov 15, 7:00 p.m., NPA  
Small Ensembles Concert, Nov 17, 7:00 p.m., NPA  
Wednesdays Around the World-England, Nov 19, 11:30-1:30, SC DH  
WBB vs Eastern Arizona, Nov 20, 5:30 p.m., Cabre  
Buffalo Feast, Nov 20, 6:00 p.m., YB Conference Center  
Open Mic Stothart Readings, Nov 21, 12:00-1:00 p.m., Hinckley Library  
NBHB District Clinic, Nov 21-22, NPA  
Wrestling vs Umpqua CC, Nov 21, 4:00 p.m., Coeur d'Alene, ID  
Coach Collins Heart of a Champion Classic Nov 21-22, Cabre  
WBB vs United Tribes Technical, Nov 21, 5:30 p.m., Cabre  
MBB vs United Tribes Technical, Nov 21, 7:30 p.m., Cabre  
Wrestling vs Clackamas CC, Nov 22, 10:00 a.m., Coeur d'Alene, ID  
Wrestling vs North ID College, Nov 22, 12:00 p.m., Coeur d'Alene, ID  
WBB vs Williston State, Nov 22, 2:00 p.m., Cabre  
MBB vs Williston State, Nov 22, 4:00 p.m., Cabre  
WBB vs Rocky, Nov 25, 5:30 p.m., Cabre  
MBB vs Rocky, Nov 25, 7:30 p.m., Cabre  
Thanksgiving Break, Nov 26-30  
MBB vs Snow College, Nov 29, 2:00 p.m., Cabre  
Wednesdays Around the World-Vietnam, Dec 3, 11:30-1:30, SC DH  
Vespers Concert w/PHS, Dec 3, 7:00 p.m., Church of God  
Wrestling vs Trinidad State College, Dec 4, 2:00 p.m., Beatrice, NE  
Wrestling vs Labette CC, Dec 4, 4:30 p.m., Beatrice, NE  
Wrestling vs. Southeast CC, Dec 4, 6:00 p.m., Beatrice, NE  
WBB vs Northeastern JC, Dec 5, 1:00 p.m., Rock Springs  
MBB vs Otero, Dec 5, 3:00 p.m., Rock Springs  
WBB vs Utah State Eastern, Dec 6, 11:00 a.m., Rock Springs  
MBB vs Northeastern JC, Dec 6, 1:00 p.m., Rock Springs  
NCO Christmas Concert, Dec 6, 7:00 p.m., NPA  
Board of Trustees meeting, Dec 8, 4:00 p.m., YB Conference Center  
Faculty Jazz Holiday Concert, Dec 8, 7:00 p.m., NPA  
Wednesdays Around the World-Mexico, Dec 10, 11:30-1:30, SC DH  
Final Exams, Dec 10-12  
NWC Holiday Party, Dec 12, 5:30 p.m., The Commons  
Booster Club Tournament, Dec 12-13, Cabre  
WBB vs Dawson, Dec 12, 5:30 p.m., Cabre  
MBB vs Dawson, Dec 12, 7:30 p.m., Cabre  
WBB vs Miles CC, Dec 13, 2:00 p.m., Cabre  
MBB vs Miles CC, Dec 13, 4:00 p.m., Cabre  
WBB vs Central Arizona, Dec 16, 11:00 a.m., Yuma, AZ  
MBB vs Cochise College, Dec 16, 7:00 p.m., Yuma, AZ  
Wrestling vs Western Wyoming CC, Dec 17, 6:00 p.m., Rock Springs  
WBB vs Arizona Western, Dec 17, TBA, Yuma, AZ  
MBB vs Arizona Western, Dec 17, 7:00 p.m., Yuma, AZ  
WBB vs North Idaho, Dec 18, TBA, Yuma, AZ  
MBB vs Central Arizona, Dec 18, 3:00 p.m., Yuma, AZ  
WBB vs Chandler-Gilbert CC, Dec 19, 5:30 p.m., Yuma, AZ  
Winter Holiday, Dec 24-Jan 1, Campus Closed

**A ADJOURNMENT:**                      **The meeting adjourned at 6:04 p.m.**

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DENISE LAURSEN, President

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Date