

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

January 11, 2021

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** President DR. MARK WURZEL; Vice President/Secretary DR. LARRY TODD; Treasurer Ms. CAROLYN DANKO; and Trustees MR. JOHN HOUSEL, MS. TARA KUIPERS, MR. BOB NEWSOME, and MR. DUSTY SPOMER.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**OTHERS PRESENT:** MS. LISA WATSON, Interim President; DR. GERRY GIRAUD, Vice President for Academic Affairs; MR. DEE HAVIG, Interim Vice President for Student Services; MS. JILL ANDERSON; MS. ADRIANA ARISMENDI; MR. MILO ASAY, MS. DIEDRE ASAY, MS. SAMI ASHCRAFT; MR. ERIC ATKINSON; MR. DALTON BANKS; MR. ROBERT BECKER; MS. BOBBIE BELL; MS. LESLIE BIGHAM; MR. LEE BLACKMORE; MR. BRAD BOWEN; MS. KAREN BOWEN, MR. DEAN BRUCE; MR. LOGAN BURNS; MS. JENNIFER CANNIZZARO; MS. ANNA CRAGOE; MS. VAL CROSS; MR. MICHAEL CUDDY; MS. JENNIFER DARE; MR. CASEY DEARCORN; MS. ELAINE DEBUHR; DR. RENÉ DECHERT; MR. DUSTIN DICKS; MS. AMANDA ENRIQUEZ; MR. DAVE ERICKSON; MS. CALLEE ERICKSON; MS. SANDY FEYHL; MS. MARY FORD; MS. DAVETTE FREY; MS. CHRISTINE GARCEAU; MS. TRACY GASAWAY; MS. NANCY GILMORE; MS. CHRISTI GREAHAM; MR. MICHAEL GUNDLACH; MS. LAURA GWINN; DR. RACHEL HANAN; MS. JOANN HEIMER; MR. GREG HAROLD; MR. JASON HORTON; MR. JEREMIAH HOWE; MS. BETH HRONEK; MS. JEANNIE HUNT; MS. DEB JACOBS; MS. MICHAELA JONES; MS. DENISE KELSAY; MS. JENNIFER LITTERER-TREVIÑO; MS. CASSIE LOERA; MS. AUTOURINA MAINS; MR. ANDY McDONALD; MS. AMY MCKINNEY; MR. AARON MILLER; MS. CAREY MILLER; MS. NANCY MILLER; MS. REBECCA MONCUR; MS. ASTRID NORTHRUP; MR. MATTHEW OSBORN; MR. CORY OSTERMILLER; MR. DAVE PATTERSON; MS. TAWNYA PETERSON; MR. DENNIS QUILLEN; MS. LAURA RILEY; MS. MALLORY RILEY; MR. ROBERT RUMBOLZ; MS. KARA RYF; MS. JO-EL SAUERS; MS. JEN SCHNEIDER; MR. LUCAS SHAW; MS. LISA SMITH; MS. KERRIE SPINNEY; MS. LINDA SPOMER; MR. GREG THOMAS; MR. OSCAR TREVIÑO; MS. BECKY VOSS; MS. MICHELE WADDELL; MR. NEIL WAITE; MS. SHELBY WETZEL; MS. MARSHA WILSON; MR. KEVIN KILLOUGH, *Powell Tribune*; and MS. KELI BORDERS, Interim Executive Secretary to the President and Board of Trustees.

**CALL TO ORDER:** The regular meeting of the Northwest College Board of Trustees was called to order on Monday, January 11, 2021 at 3:01 p.m. in the Yellowstone Building Conference Center.

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

**WORK SESSION:** Board President Wurzel invited Interim President Watson to discuss the Budget Reduction Recommendations. Interim President Watson stated that the Budget Reduction Recommendations and Reduction in Force memo presented to Trustees was also distributed to the campus community prior to the Board of Trustees meeting. Interim President Watson went on to state that Governor Gordon has instructed state agencies to reduce their budgets by 15%, which equates to \$2.8 million for Northwest College. Local mil levies are also expected to be down, which would be in addition to the Governor's cuts. The challenge is not knowing what will come out of the Legislative Session and the county valuations. The College has made every effort to analyze and control areas of the budget that can be controlled and then reconcile the difference as it relates to personnel. Guidance in these decisions was taken from Northwest College policies in terms of prioritization as well as recommendations and

analysis that occurred.

The Wyoming Community College Commission approved a modest tuition increase in October for fall 2021, which has been taken into account based on current enrollment. Course fees were also analyzed and raised to be more in line with the actual costs of instruction. A proposal for student fees will come before the Board in February. There are additional initiatives to address student bad debt and offset credit card fees. Taking these revenue streams into account, Northwest College will be facing cuts of approximately \$2.6 million in fiscal year 2022, which comprises 8.6% of the current budget. The memo reflects non-personnel reductions of approximately \$726,000. Personnel reductions through attrition, retirements as well as the formal reduction in force process indicates a reduction of 24.5 positions, which is a 12 % reduction to total personnel. Total personnel reductions amount to approximately \$1.86 million. The memo was reviewed in its entirety.

In response to a question from Trustee Danko, Interim President Watson indicated that in the past six years, Northwest College has lost 48 positions as a result of budget cuts and this proposal recommends another 24 positions to be cut.

The recommendation also includes a shift of 3% of the retirement contributions from the College to employees. As state revenue has declined over the last four or five years, the state has passed legislation that puts more burden on employees and employers regarding the cost of benefits. The proposal provides an increase of 3% to the salaries of A and B bands of employees to offset the out-of-pocket expense to those lowest paid positions. While furloughs and overall pay cuts were considered, they are not considered to be a long-term solution as it provides challenges in term of recruiting and retaining quality employees.

Interim President Watson stated her appreciation of the NWC Foundation, who has offered to assist with athletic scholarships in the amount of \$85,000, to offset the recommended discontinuation of soft dollar scholarships. They have also offered to provide \$70,000 to offset their employee costs that are currently covered by Northwest College.

Interim President Watson stated the proposed discontinuation of the Children's Learning and Care Center is difficult. The Center has served many students, employees and community members over the years; however, over the last 20 years, it has struggled to support itself financially. Because of our commitment to student success, the College has provided support to the Children's Learning and Care Center to provide this service to our students and their children. The recommendation includes the discontinuance of the Center's operations as of February 26.

Interim President Watson stated that when considering academic programs, there was discussion regarding elimination of programs vs. reduction of course offerings and increasing class capacity levels. Following a variety of financial and enrollment analysis, consultation with College Council, Academic Affairs Council, Faculty Senate, Curriculum, and Division meetings, feedback indicated a desire to focus on course reductions. Reductions to faculty positions have been prioritized according to policy 5510; first, through fixed term and probationary positions followed by tenured faculty. As Northwest College moves past budget work and focuses on transformational work, academic programs will be analyzed further in terms of how they serve the community and their career potential. In moving forward, the Board and the campus as a

whole will need to further evaluate programs and determine where to invest long term resources for the betterment of students, the College and the community.

In response to a question from Trustee Kuipers regarding the impact to academics in closing the Children's Learning and Care Center as it relates to being a clinical site for students, Interim President Watson stated that while there are other options, the loss would be felt by both the Nursing and Education programs.

In response to a question from Trustee Spomer related to the timing of these decisions, Interim President Watson stated that faculty and staff preferred to learn of potential job loss sooner rather than later. There is also a need to begin working on the budget. As additional numbers are known from the Legislative session and county valuations, there will be a need to address additional losses if they arise. The Work Session is intended to go through the recommendations, and as part of New Business on the agenda, the Reduction in Force is being presented to the Board. The Board may choose to act on the recommendation at that time, although Interim President Watson's recommendation would be to delay the decision on invoking a reduction in force to allow the Board time to reflect on the recommendations and receive feedback from the campus and community. There will be a link on the Northwest College website that allows community members an opportunity to provide comments on the recommendations. Interim President Watson stated she would also be conducting follow-up meetings on campus to gather feedback. All feedback will be gathered and presented to the Board Finance Committee on January 19, 2021. The Board may then request more information or recommend changes. A tentative Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees is suggested to take place January 21, 2021.

In response to a question from Trustee Spomer, Interim President Watson stated staff positions that are being eliminated are normally given 30 days' notice. Faculty and instructional staff have been asked to stay until the end of spring semester. If the Board chooses to close the Children's Learning and Care Center before the end of the semester, Interim President Watson is recommending staff be paid through May 14, to align with faculty and instructional staff, as the budget has been scheduled to the end of the year.

In response to a question from Trustee Spomer, Interim President Watson stated she has sought legal counsel to ensure the recommendations align with policy.

In response to a question from Board President Wurzel regarding the capacity of the community to be able to absorb childcare needs, Interim President Watson stated the Center currently serves 10-15 children, not all of which are full-time, with a capacity to serve approximately 65. Although the Children's Learning and Care Center's services have been opened up to the community, they aren't being utilized due to a number of other options available.

In response to a question from Trustee Kuipers regarding the reduction of Adjunct Faculty money, Interim President Watson stated that Academic Affairs Vice President Giraud and Dean Thomas work with faculty and Division Chairs in course scheduling and are able to tighten the budget and schedule classes accordingly.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, Interim President Watson stated that Reduction in Force in the Fitness Center would not necessarily result in limited access to the public as it will potentially be managed by the Athletic

Director, with assistance from the coaches and the remaining Fitness Center staff member.

Trustee Housel commented that Northwest College is experiencing what others across the community and state are experiencing with declining revenues. The decisions that must be made as a result of that are very difficult. He further commented that the Board of Trustees takes all of these decisions very seriously. Trustee Housel stated it would be helpful to know what budget cuts the other colleges are making. Interim President Watson stated she would reach out to her peers to gather information regarding their budget proposals.

**A CONSENT AGENDA:**

**A motion was made by Trustee Danko and seconded by Trustee Todd to approve the consent agenda.**

Board President Wurzel noted that the Board Committee report states that the Facilities Committee was to have met on January 7, 2021, but that meeting has been rescheduled later in the month.

**Motion carried and the consent agenda, including the minutes of the December 14, 2020 regular meeting was approved.**

**DISCUSSION/  
INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

Board President Wurzel stated that Board members have been getting inquiries on real estate the College may be considering selling, such as Mickelson Field Station and Trapper Village West. Northwest College is facing a presidential search, budget reductions and transformational change; therefore, selling the real estate is not a priority at this time.

Trustee Danko stated the Powell and Cody communities are experiencing an influx of people wishing to move to the area. Her opinion is that we shouldn't wait too long before the Board decides whether or not to sell the properties.

**CITIZENS' OPEN FORUM**

The Citizens' Open Forum convened at 4:24 p.m. A number of requests to address the Board were submitted.

Dalton Banks addressed the Board on behalf of students, student athletes, former students and community members regarding the ability to attend sporting events during the spring '21 semester. He expressed the importance of building unity between the campus and community and feels that COVID-19 safety precautions could be taken in order to allow spectators at athletic events.

Marybeth Gundlach spoke in favor of keeping one or both of the education faculty currently teaching education classes. She noted the Education department lost two faculty members since 2018. The resulting searches for both positions failed and she feels it will be difficult to hire a full-time faculty member willing to take over the entire program.

Mallory Riley expressed concern over the failed searches for faculty and the lack of competitive compensation being offered at Northwest College. She feels the housing market in the area will limit new faculty from being able to find affordable housing. A solution would be to offer housing at Trapper Village West to provide incentive to young professionals to move to the area. In addition, she expressed frustration that when she proposed her offer of developing a legal studies or paralegal program on a voluntary basis, she was redirected to various departments on campus. She feels there would be other alumni and community members that would like to become part of the solution as well.

Jeannie Hunt spoke on behalf of the community and a number of faculty members. She expressed concern that 50% of the positions being proposed for elimination are coming from Academic Affairs. Student Affairs are also being cut, equating to 17.5 of the 24.5 positions proposed to be cut are those directly related to interactions with students. She stated evidence shows that potential students choose their school associated with the programs available and the people in them. She expressed frustration that Administration is rarely cut. While the Communications department doesn't necessarily have a large number of students who are majors, it is a support program for many other majors. Her concern is that in eliminating the people who serve and interact with students, would also eliminate the number of students who will attend, thus further impacting enrollment.

Laura Riley stated she doesn't feel like the decisions to eliminate programs take into account the ripple effect on other programs. She encourages "thinking outside the box" when considering cuts, possibly wage cuts across the board to save positions from being eliminated. She also reiterates that utilizing Trapper Village West as part of a compensation package that includes housing for faculty is a unique opportunity. She stated that faculty and connections with students are what attract students to Northwest College, and that will be lost if we continue to eliminate faculty positions.

**A UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

There were no unfinished business items on the agenda.

**A NEW BUSINESS:**

Budget Reduction  
Recommendations

Board President Wurzel stated the Board needs to make a decision regarding postponing a vote on the Budget Reduction and Recommendations and Reduction in Force FY22 in order to gather information and provide more time for consideration.

In response to a question from Trustee Spomer, Interim President Watson stated it would be her preference to wait to decide on the recommendation in order to gather feedback from the campus and local community.

Trustee Spomer stated he feels it's important to follow Interim President Watson's lead. He recognizes she has spent a lot of time, effort and consideration of every detail, including her desire to gather feedback before a decision is made and feels the Board should honor her desire to do so. Trustee Spomer went on to state that in his work on the Board Finance Committee since November, he has noted there has been an exceptional level of analysis done in preparing the recommendations. He feels it is a well thought out and substantiated plan, but the extra time to potentially fine-tune the end result if necessary would be beneficial.

Trustee Danko stated that Legislators should be made aware that new taxes will be important to continue funding and providing services that are needed in the state of Wyoming.

Trustee Kuipers stated she would advocate strongly for waiting to act on the recommendation in order to allow the Board to digest the information and to emphasize the importance of gathering feedback.

Trustee Todd recognized Interim President Watson's effort in laying out the criteria stated in policy as it relates to Reduction in Force.

Interim President Watson was thankful for the recognition of the effort that went into the budget reduction document. Many people worked hard and she is thankful the recommendations are clear and easily followed. She went on to

state that she is very saddened by these potential losses and that while they are numbers on a sheet, they represent real people. When we lose the level of funding that we're losing, we lose the opportunity to make the community better as well as the opportunity to create and provide jobs. These are very hard choices.

Board President Wurzel stated that in hearing no objections, the Board will wait until the Special Meeting to act on the Budget Reduction Recommendations.

Recommended Policy Revisions:

1. 2140 Board Policy Development
2. 3800 Faculty Employment Policies

Trustee Kuipers stated she has been appointed Chair of the Board Policy and Student Success Committee. She stated the Committee would like to express their deep appreciation of the exceptional amount of work that occurred by the individuals responsible for working on these policies. The Board Policy and Student Success Committee is in full support of presenting the policies for review and approval by the Board.

**A motion was made by the Board Policy and Student Success Committee to approve the proposed policies 2140 Board Policy Development and 3800 Faculty Employment Policies as presented. Motion carried.**

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

Trustee Spomer would like to discuss options for allowing spectators at sporting events at a future meeting. He feels it's important to promote a vibrant campus life while maintaining a safe environment.

Board President Wurzel thanked outgoing Board President Spomer for his service and contributions to the Northwest College Board of Trustees and presented him with a paperweight and a gift card.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

WCCC Meeting, February 5, 2021, Virtual  
ACCT National Legislative Summit, February 7-10, 2021, Virtual  
Next meeting, January 21, 2021 4:30 p.m., Yellowstone Building

**A ADJOURNMENT:**

**The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.**

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LARRY TODD, Vice President/Secretary

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Date