

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

February 8, 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. DIEDRE ASAY; MS. LESLIE BIGHAM; MR. BRAD BOWEN; MS. KAREN BOWEN, MR. DEAN BRUCE; MR. JAY COSTIGAN; MS. ANNA CRAGOE; MS. JENNIFER DARE; MR. DUSTIN DICKS; MS. AMANDA ENRIQUEZ; MR. DAVE ERICKSON; MR. MIKE GARZA; MS. CHRISTI GREAHAM; MS. JOANN HEIMER; MR. JEREMIAH HOWE; MS. CINDY JACOBS; MS. DEB JACOBS; MS. MICHAELA JONES; MS. JENNIFER LITTERER-TREVIÑO; MS. CASSIE LOERA; MR. QUENTIN MCHOES; MS. CAREY MILLER; MS. NANCY MILLER; MS. CONNIE MOORE; MS. CASEY PATE; MR. DENNIS QUILLEN; MS. JEN SCHNEIDER; MS. LISA SMITH; MR. GREG THOMAS; MR. OSCAR TREVIÑO; 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; CampusWorks guests MS. CHRISSY COLEY, MS. LIZ MURPHY, MR. JUSTIN NORRIS.

**CALL TO ORDER:** The regular meeting of the Northwest College Board of Trustees was called to order on Monday, February 8, 2021 at 3:02 p.m.in the Yellowstone Building Conference Center.

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

**WORK SESSION:** Interim President Watson welcomed CampusWorks representatives Liz Murphy, Justin Norris and Chrissy Coley and invited them to update the Board on their efforts to date.

Liz Murphy began by stating there has been an inordinate amount of work done through collaboration between Northwest College and CampusWorks teams. Phase I and Phase II work has focused on engagement and visioning, as well as internal and external scanning. The resulting data is being used to determine possible market opportunities for the College. Phase III work will build a collaborative roadmap for positioning Northwest College in the marketplace. The value proposition and offerings will be aligned with target markets through recruitment, branding and marketing. Key decisions in building the framework for transformation are: 1) where will NWC compete; 2) what assets and capabilities are needed to compete; and 3) how will the College position its brand and identity to align its value proposition. Finally, once the brand and identity are determined, would it be appropriate to decide if a name change would assist with the brand identity. Liz went on to state that many of Northwest College's most valuable assets are its people. They work with hundreds of colleges and their team has noted the number of very talented staff at Northwest College. Phase II work will conclude in April. Phase III will be spent building the roadmap for transformation that will be developed by analyzing data and discussions that will take place inside as well as outside of the College.

Justin Norris shared that Northwest College's student demographics are indicative of what opportunities exist in the future. He explained that historically, community colleges' enrollment numbers ebb and flow with the

rate of unemployment. However, that has not been the case during the COVID pandemic, as enrollment has dropped even though unemployment rates are high. As we think about opportunities for Northwest College, we must also understand the shifts that are happening in the market and consider the future of the nation, state and region as well.

Justin shared that regional census data shows that the young adult population in Northwest College's service area has declined over the last ten years, partly due to declining birth rates. There also appears to be a migration to larger areas such as Billings and Bozeman, but also to more populated areas of Wyoming that have more job prospects. This loss in population somewhat mirrors the enrollment losses at Northwest College. Late and mid-career adult enrollment has grown, which means there will be a shift taking place within the next ten years as baby-boomers retire. Projected population demographics indicate early/mid-career adults will grow by 2030. Adult learner needs are based on their career stage and specific motivations such as degree completers, career searchers, lifelong learners and career advancers.

Justin stated that ongoing conversations will need to be framed around what are the needs of students and how do we connect those needs to opportunities for Northwest College? What is the identity of the institution and where can we provide the most value?

Trustee Danko stated she has faced difficulty in convincing constituents that birth rates are dropping, and thus affecting enrollment numbers. Justin stated that over a decade ago, news reports indicated the population in Wyoming was increasing. Over the years, that has slowed to the extent that some areas even lost population numbers. Another factor that community members struggle to understand is how the labor market also affects enrollment at community colleges.

Trustee Kuipers stated that while the demographics were presented on the counties in Northwest College's service area, how does the College define its recruitment area that stretches beyond the service area. Interim President Watson stated that statutorily, our service area is represented by the counties in the Big Horn Basin; however, Enrollment Services considers their recruiting area to be much bigger than that and not bound by service area statutes. Justin agreed and stated the opportunity scanning isn't just about staying close to home. Opportunities exist in online or specialized programs that can also capture niche populations.

Trustee Spomer stated he feels the community needs to know the source of the data used to determine the population demographics in the analysis. He is concerned there is a public perception that data we use is self-serving. He also stated he hears concerns from community members that we aren't recruiting enough in our service area, state and southern Montana high schools. However, data shows a loss in the young adult population in the last decade; therefore, the numbers aren't there to make up the difference in our enrollment decline. He feels it will be important to educate the community that an alternate solution is needed because working harder at the same thing will not produce the results needed. Justin stated the sources for the data used is from federal census data, in particular, the most recent census surveys.

Justin shared where the traditional competitive landscape has been, which includes all Wyoming colleges. The new competitive landscape will include traditional as well as emerging technologies/partnerships. Corporations and small businesses are seeking colleges and MOOCs as content providers in

training programs. It will be important for institutions to strategically align themselves externally to be able to compete and bring needed resources and assets.

Justin stated that all of the feedback gathered in Phase I was put into four workable models:

- Destination model – provide distinctive learning experience for those seeking to work and live in the Yellowstone ecosystem.
- Pathways model – provide a flexible and engaging education pathway accessible at every stage of life.
- Workforce Hub model – serve as an engine for regional talent development through strategic alliances and coalitions.
- Distinctive Program model – serve as a source of authority and reputation leader in targeted programs or learning practices.

Justin would like Trustees to take some time and review the models and provide feedback about which models resonate with them in thinking about the College's future and future markets.

Liz closed the presentation by stating the Power Point slides have been made available in order for Trustees to be able to take some time and go through the material presented. She suggested they pay particular attention to the Core Model Overview and the New Competitive Landscape slides as it will be important to understand where the competition is and also consider what Northwest College looks like in each of the models presented.

#### **MISSION MOMENT:**

Christi Greaham gave a brief history of the development of the CDL program which includes a mobile classroom, a state-of-the-art simulator, truck and trailer, and in-person and online coursework. In spite of the pandemic delaying the start, Northwest College was the first in the state to roll out the program. Also due to COVID, class size is limited to four persons. While one student is on medical leave, the other three have completed all coursework. One student will complete DOT testing this week and the other two students have completed all requirements and have received their official DOT license.

Mike Garza, who was part of the first group of students to complete the program, stated the technology was phenomenal. The simulator is top-of-the-line and diminished the anxiety associated with learning the controls. He stated the instructor was very knowledgeable as well as entertaining and he truly enjoyed the experience. He expressed his appreciation for bringing the technology to the community and feels it will greatly benefit employers in the area who seek individuals with a CDL license.

Christi went on to state that three more orientations have taken place and all were full. The program is at capacity for the second class which begins immediately and there is now a waiting list for those wanting to attend. They are beginning to expand beyond the CDL licensing program, as the simulator is also capable of providing training for fire trucks, ambulances, buses and many other modes of transportation. Later in the week, training will be provided to PVHC ambulance drivers and next week Wilson's Construction will be using the simulator as part of their annual safety training. These two trainings alone will see over 100 students utilizing the simulator. Christi also expressed her appreciation to the Board and Interim President Watson for their support of the program.

**A CONSENT AGENDA:**

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

Trustee Housel inquired about the Career Step online program offered at the Cody Center and also the number of participants in programs offered at the Cody Center. Interim President Watson stated she would gather the information and report back to Trustees.

Trustee Housel extended his congratulations to Jeannie Hunt for being selected to provide the keynote speech at the Academic Management Institute for the Colorado Network of Women Leaders and also for receiving the Community Forensics Citizenship Award from Webster University.

Trustee Housel inquired if there had been any discussion related to the potential second round of COVID funds. Interim President Watson stated that the regulations were very strict on the original money granted for students and College utilization. The new fund requirements will be more flexible and will allow unused CARES money to be distributed to students as well. Interim President Watson stated she met with the Finance Director, Financial Aid Director and the Business Office Manager regarding dispersing those funds to students this semester in addition to another disbursement during the fall semester. More research is needed regarding regulations related to institutional usage, as they may be more flexible in terms of utilization for losses incurred. Interim President Watson will update Trustees as she learns more.

Trustee Kuipers echoed Trustee Housel in extending congratulations to Jeannie Hunt and also wished to recognize the Adult Education Instructor for Cody being appointed by the Governor to the Wyoming State Advisory Council on Juvenile Justice as well as the Intercultural Program Coordinator beginning her term as the National Association of International Educators Region II Community College Representative.

**Motion carried and the consent agenda, including the minutes of the January 11, 2021 regular meeting and the minutes of the January 21, 2021 special meeting, was approved.**

**DISCUSSION/  
INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

Athletic event attendance protocols

Interim President Watson stated spectators are now allowed in Cabre Gym during athletic events. Northwest College has hosted a Wrestling tournament and Volleyball game so far this semester in which there was an excellent turnout of students and community members.

Legislative update and talking points

Interim President Watson encouraged Trustees to review the WACCT Legislative Talking Points included in the Board packet. WACCT puts together talking points every year in order for Trustees, College Presidents and community members to understand the focus for community colleges during the legislative cycle. Interim President Watson chose to highlight a couple of items such as that since 2010, community colleges have seen a reduction in funding of approximately \$94 million. Another item of note is that six years ago with House Bill 80, Legislators redesigned the funding formula and changed the weighting of certain types of classes. As a result, funding was diminished for online classes. In light of consortium work, flexibility and the pandemic, HB80 will not serve higher education well in the future. The Governor's budget recommendation to reduce funding by 15% is moving forward with no expected changes. The Legislators completed the virtual session on February 5, and a hybrid session will resume on March 1. Interim

President Watson will be meeting with Legislators in the coming weeks to discuss Northwest College and answer any questions they may have before the hybrid session.

#### Compliance training

Interim President Watson stated annual Compliance training as it relates to Title IX, harassment and discrimination will begin soon. The training will take place online and is in a shorter format than previous compliance training. She encouraged Trustees to take part in order to understand the mandated training campus will be taking part in.

#### **CITIZENS' OPEN FORUM**

The Citizens' Open Forum convened at 4:58 p.m. A number of requests to address the Board were submitted.

Connie Moore stated her appreciation to be able to speak at the forum as well as for the eighteen wonderful years she taught at Northwest College. While she understands the difficult decisions that Board members are faced with, she would like to see the College retain its foreign language program in order to help preserve the quality and diversity of education available at Northwest College. She feels that by cutting offerings, the College will lose students who would otherwise come and then encourage others to attend as well. Ms. Moore stated she feels Northwest College will gain a negative reputation and therefore qualified instructors will hesitate to apply for open positions. She feels that in order to adhere to the Northwest College Mission Statement, budget cuts must be shared by all. The College must retain a variety of course material in order to meet student needs, must invest in the future by keeping new and good teachers and also consider that instructors contribute to the bottom line by having the greatest impact on students. She suggests all employees make sacrifices and take a pay cut in order to save positions being considered for elimination.

Mike Higgins stated he is a 35-year educator, he and his wife are alums of Northwest College and five of his children have attended the College as well. He is concerned by what he is reading in the newspaper and he feels the professors are the face of the College. His children did not choose Northwest College because of the administration. They chose the College because of the instructors and low class sizes. He hopes that is given consideration when making decisions going forward.

Quentin McHoes expressed that he is very heartened to see Interim President Watson at the helm of the College following the departure of Dr. Hicswa who was his fond mentor. After graduating in 2018, he transferred to George Washington University, which has over 25,000 students. Quentin shared excerpts from a feature that was written and published about him in 2019. When asked what he would like to share about his experience at Northwest College for the feature, he stated he appreciated the wealth of diversity of students and faculty. He also stated he was able to come into his own and find his passion for leadership at Northwest College. Facing many difficulties, it was the people here who built him up and allowed him to recognize his potential. Quentin stated he is disappointed more consideration isn't given to administrative pay cuts and finding alternative ways to save programs. Programs that ensure that students like him, who came from nowhere, can end up with a success story to share with others.

Greg Thomas stated that when he began working on his comments after the last Board meeting, he planned to discuss the disconnect on campus that prevents all from fully appreciating each other's roles at the College. He intended to caution how the lack of understanding, combined with the difficult economic

situation, can lead to finger pointing that causes damage to the College and community moving forward. He stated he intended to suggest building a shared understanding among constituency groups in order to ensure a more productive future. However, he would like to address a more immediate issue. While there have been many opportunities to provide input on the future of the college such as the strategic visioning process or through ongoing work with CampusWorks, he stated the importance of not wasting the opportunity to put all of the input to good use. Greg stated his suggestion to the Board is to postpone the Presidential search. CampusWorks' Phase III project will be complete in June. It will provide direction for the College based on input from the College as well as the community. He believes we should select a leader who represents where the College wants to go and what it wants to do. He feels we should position ourselves as a college with a direction vs. a college needing a savior. He suggests before the Board begins the search for a President, it should commit to the transformational work in order for it to be successful in the long term.

**A UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

There were no unfinished business items on the agenda.

**A NEW BUSINESS:**

Designation of depositories

Interim President Watson stated the College is required to submit a list to Trustees of banks who have submitted proper documentation to be designated as a depository for public funds.

**A motion was made by Trustee Danko and seconded by Trustee Newsome to approve Bank of Powell, Big Horn Federal, First Bank and Wells Fargo as designated depositories. Motion carried.**

FY2022 Proposed residence hall rates

Interim President Watson stated capacity restrictions due to COVID have created profitability challenges for Residence Halls. While analyzing housing rates, the College has been cognizant of best practices in terms of looking at the markets, inflationary rates, and other colleges as well as expenditures incurred to maintain operations. The housing rate proposal is based on operations returning to normal (double occupancy) next fall. Due to declining numbers of student occupancy, the proposal recommends the reduction of a staff position by one month and also includes an inflationary increase of 1-4% that considers local markets in order to prevent overpricing the College out of the market.

**A motion was made by Trustee Danko and seconded by Trustee Newsome to approve the FY2022 proposed residence hall rates.**

Trustee Kuipers expressed her appreciation that the proposal included local market and other community college rates for comparison.

**Motion carried.**

FY2022 Proposed meal plan rates

Interim President Watson stated there have been many challenges with food service because of the pandemic, operational costs, reduced enrollments and reduced housing numbers. She expressed her appreciation to Finance Director Brad Bowen, Residence Life Director Lee Blackmore and Vice President for Student Services Dee Havig for their work on the proposal. The model is complicated as the College has not been able to meet the required meal plan numbers in the original contract. In order to keep prices manageable for resident students, the recommendation calls for an increase of \$100 to the meal plan rates.

Interim President Watson also stated the College has a new chef who is a wonderful addition to campus and feedback received from students thus far has

been excellent. She encourages Trustees to visit campus and have lunch in the Dining Hall from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. or to visit The Trap for soup, sandwiches, convenience items or Starbucks Coffee anytime from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

**A motion was made by Trustee Kuipers and seconded by Trustee Danko to approve the FY2022 proposed meal plan rates. Motion carried.**

FY2022 Proposed mandatory student fees

Interim President Watson stated the budget recommendation calls for an increase in student fees. While doing the analysis, it was necessary to simplify and organize the process to help students understand where their fees are being applied. Many areas on campus are involved in determining what the needs are and where their areas are trending in order to ensure the fees cover the upcoming year's budget. Finance Director Bowen and Interim Vice President Watson presented the proposal to Student Senate, who were very supportive of where the fees were being applied in areas such as dependable technology and student services. The recommendation is for the Board to approve an increase from \$41 to \$51 per credit hour.

**A motion was made by Trustee Newsome and seconded by Trustee Todd to approve the FY2022 proposed mandatory student fees. Motion carried.**

FY2022 Frisby Building Boiler replacement

Interim President Watson stated the Frisby Building's boiler was installed in 1961. While it has served the College well, it is struggling and is on the verge of complete failure. She stated she has the support of the state and the Board Facilities Committee and is requesting the Board approve the boiler replacement.

In response to a question from Board President Wurzel, Interim President Watson stated she discussed options with the Board Finance Committee and it was decided the most cost-effective model is to spend approximately \$65,000 to \$70,000 to replace the existing steam boiler with a new steam boiler.

**A motion was made by Trustee Newsome and seconded by Trustee Spomer to approve the FY2022 Frisby Building boiler replacement.**

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, Interim President Watson stated the Frisby Building houses the Veteran's Lounge, Vocational Rehabilitation, Workforce Services and classrooms. The entire basement is devoted to the TRiO program which provides services and support to over 150 students.

**Motion carried.**

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

Interim President Watson stated that an update on Esports will be provided during the March Board meeting.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Presidential Search Committee meeting, February 9, 2021, 12:00 p.m., Virtual  
ACCT National Legislative Summit, February 7-10, 2021, Virtual  
Wyoming Legislative Session II, TBD March 1, 2021  
Next meeting, March 8, 2021, 4:00 p.m., Cody Center

**A ADJOURNMENT:**

**The meeting was adjourned at 5:29 p.m.**