

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

March 3, 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 (via Zoom), and DR. MARK WURZEL.
- MEMBERS ABSENT:** MR. SHANE OGDEN
- OTHERS PRESENT:** MS. LISA WATSON, President; MR. DAVE ERICKSON, Interim 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; DR. MARNEÉ CRAWFORD; MR. DUSTIN DICKS; MS. TRACY GASAWAY; MR. MARK GRANT; MS. CHRISTI GREAHAM; MR. GAVIN LEPAGE; MS. CAREY MILLER; MS. LISA SMITH; MS. LINDA SPOMER; MR. OSCAR TREVIÑO; MS. SHELBY WETZEL; 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, March 3, 2025, at 4:02 p.m. in the Cody Center, Room 2214.
- A APPROVE THE AGENDA:** **A motion was made by Trustee Wurzel 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 Wurzel to approve the consent agenda.**
- In response to a question from Trustee Wurzel, President Watson stated that the College has applied for federal grants through the Department of Education (ED), such as the TRiO grant. The ED is facing potential cuts, and the College continues to monitor the situation. Losing the TRiO grant would negatively affect the students it serves.
- President Watson stated that, in working with Ellucian, the College is learning about grant opportunities beyond the federal government and is focusing its time on grants relevant to the College's needs.
- Trustee Housel congratulated the Forensics team on their recent success at the 2025 Western States Communication Association Tournament in Albuquerque, NM.
- In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that the Foundation used to have a separate website. With the College's website redesign, the Foundation redesigned its web pages and now has a presence on nwc.edu.
- In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that the card reader access points would be installed on the exterior doors of buildings, not individual classrooms.
- In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that on page 16 of the Facilities Worksheet included in the Board packet, the Board approved the Major Maintenance projects at the beginning of the year. She will correct the report to indicate the date they were approved.
- In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that Counseling Services has implemented programs that bring students together in support of one another. For instance, they hold "Lunch and Learn" programs that address various difficulties students may be facing. The College also

utilizes a HELP Alert system where faculty and staff can enter a HELP Alert on a student they may be concerned about. A message is sent to various departments, which then reach out to the student to see if the College can support them. Counselors can assist students in the short term, but if their needs are greater, they are referred to local providers for additional help.

Trustee Housel stated that the latest issue of *Trustee Quarterly* magazine published by the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) highlights the M. Dale Ensign Trustee Leadership Award winner. He further explained that Dale Ensign was the Vice President of Husky Oil company for many years and also served on the Board for Northwest College. As a firm believer in the community college system, he helped start ACCT. This annual national award recognizes his leadership.

Motion carried, and the consent agenda, including the minutes of the February 10, 2024, regular meeting, was approved.

**DISCUSSION/
INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

State Performance Indicators
Report

Lisa Smith shared retention and completion rate highlights from the 2023-2024 Wyoming Community Colleges Performance Indicators Report. The full report can be found on the Wyoming Community College Commission's website.

Lisa explained that retention occurs when a student starts at a college as a first-time student, is full-time, and either graduates or returns to the same institution. Persistence occurs when a first-time, full-time, degree-seeking student either graduates or returns to any institution; they persist in their education one year later.

Of the first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students who started at Northwest College in the fall of 2023, 65% graduated or returned in the fall of 2024; 71% graduated or enrolled at any institution. The ideal rate is in the sixtieth percentile, and NWC rates are typically comparable to state and national rates. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the rates decreased slightly.

Lisa explained that Northwest College didn't experience as big of an enrollment decrease in Fall 2020 as other institutions did but did experience a lower number that returned the following year.

Northwest College has maintained completion rates mostly above the state and national rates for the past ten years. However, of the first-time, full-time, degree or certificate-seeking students starting in Fall 2020, 35% graduated within three years. The state average is 40% for this cohort, but NWC's lower number corresponds to the lower retention rate attributed to COVID-19. Lisa believes that the graduation rates of the next cohort will also increase since retention rates are increasing.

Transfer or completion are both successful measures for degree-seeking students. Combining completion and transfer rates gives a more complete picture of student success. Over the past decade, 52-60% of Northwest College students completed or transferred within three years.

Workforce Development
Activities Report

Christi Greaham shared pictures of the new truck and trailer and the Career and Technical Center. The classrooms are set up and used for classes, and the computer labs are used for training and testing. The gym will hold all three trucks, two trailers, and the school bus. The simulator area is complete. Workbenches and a dust collection system are being discussed.

Christi explained that the Surgical Tech program is starting to come back strong after COVID. The program takes approximately twelve to eighteen months to get through, and it was determined that it was too long of a wait for students who wanted to begin the program. There are now three starting dates throughout the year.

Different companies are using heavy equipment simulators to train employees, and high school students are also getting training. The simulator is currently in Red Lodge and will be moved to Lovell High School before returning to Powell.

Christi stated that the College acquired the construction trailer through a WIP Makerspace grant with the University of Wyoming. She expressed appreciation to the Foundation and the Bill and Joanne Price Economic Development Fund for their financial assistance in completing the project. The trailer is equipped with Milwaukee tools and can travel anywhere. Thus far, projects include birdhouses, candy machines, and raised garden beds.

Christi explained the Youth Empowerment Program, a grant from BOCES meant to bring trade programs to elementary schools. Christi held a trades fair at Burlington School for first through third graders, where they could see and talk to different tradespeople and see different demonstrations. She also offered one at the library where students could operate the backhoe simulator, and a power company demonstrated a kite that sparked and caught on fire when it touched a power pole. The construction trailer was utilized to build dog houses and benches that were used on the trailer for students to sit on during the Christmas parade, and then they could take them home. They also made cutting boards for Christmas gifts. The program has been excellent, and the students love it.

Christi stated that the DELTA program held sixty-eight programs that served 697 students and community members. Courses included high ropes, caving, fly fishing, etc. One of the most popular classes was building fly fishing poles. There is an upcoming Rock Wall certification in which twelve students can become certified to operate the rock wall. Advertising has just begun, and the class is half full. DELTA has partnered with Sunlight Sports to offer a Wilderness First Aid Responder class.

In the past year, 136 people attended the CDL orientation, and 109 completed the program. During the orientation, Christi explains in detail what it means to have a CDL so that those interested can determine if it's a good fit for them. The 109 completers also include school bus and passenger endorsements. Walk-in numbers are down slightly, but the program continues to grow by serving at least seventeen employers, and there are many high schools that Christi has begun working with to serve their students.

Christi stated that recent CTD numbers are down slightly overall, which she attributes to the move into the new building and the inability to offer as many classes during that time. She is excited to offer more classes now that they are settled into the new space and expects numbers to keep growing.

2025 Legislative Update

President Watson stated that although no specific legislation was brought forward for the community colleges, many bills would impact the College if passed. For example, many property tax bills could affect the budget as early as next fiscal year.

Preliminary conversations with the Park County Assessor indicated that the proposed 50% property tax cut could mean a potential \$1.4 million reduction to Northwest College before the funding formula is applied for state allocations. As a result, the College will need to be very conservative in its approach to developing the FY26 budget.

A bill would increase contributions of .25% to the State of Wyoming retirement plans for both the employee and employer. The statute states that the College could not absorb this increase on behalf of the employee. If passed, this bill would impact the College and its employees financially.

If passed, many bills would affect the College operationally, such as eliminating DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) programs. Northwest College focuses more on equality with a global vision rather than specific DEI initiatives. Still, it needs to look closely at its programming and events to ensure they aren't categorized as such.

Other bills that could impact the College are Hathaway/CTE expansion, what is a woman related to restroom utilization, restrictions of taxpayer funds/sexually explicit events, and defining males and females for participation in athletic events.

Legislation repealing gun-free zones will go into effect on July 1, 2025. The College will begin developing policy immediately.

The College will continue to monitor the Legislative Session and changes being made at the federal level and adjust policy and procedure as needed.

Schedule Spring Board Retreat

President Watson requested that Trustees notify Keli of dates they would be unavailable from the end of April to the middle of May. Keli will create a Doodle poll to find a date for the retreat that fits everyone's schedule.

CITIZENS' OPEN FORUM

The Citizens' Open Forum convened at 5:00 p.m. No citizens requested to address the Board; therefore, the Citizen's Open Forum adjourned.

A UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

FY2026 Mandatory Student Fees

A motion was made by Trustee Kost and seconded by Trustee Wurzel to approve the FY2026 Mandatory Student Fees as presented. Motion carried.

A NEW BUSINESS:

FY2026 Meal Plan Rates

A motion was made by Trustee Kuipers and seconded by Trustee Newsome to approve the FY2026 Meal Plan Rates as presented. Motion carried.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS FEEDBACK TO CITIZENS' OPEN FORUM TOPICS:

April 22, 2025, upcoming:

- State Fall Enrollment Report
- Major Maintenance Projects Update
- Marketing Report
- Spring Board Retreat reminder
- Other TBD

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

42nd Annual Northwest College Jazz Festival, March 4, 2025, NPA
What's the Tea – Costa Rica, March 4, 2025, 2-3 p.m., Student Center
From the Heart of Central America: The Best of Honduras, March 5, 2025, 7-9 p.m., YB Conference Center

Last day of the Legislative session, March 6, 2025, Cheyenne
Wrestling NJCAA Nat'l Champ., March 7-8, 2025, Council Bluffs, IA
NWC Spring Break, March 8-16, 2025
WBB/MBB Region IX Tournament Play-In Game, March 8, 2025, TBA
WBB/MBB Region IX Tournament, March 13, 2025, TBA
What's the Tea – Spain, March 18, 2025, 2-3 p.m., Student Center
Northwest College Nursing Fair, March 19, 2025, YB Conference Center
NWC Foundation Giving Day, March 20-21, 2025, 12:00 – 12:00 p.m.
WBB/MBB NJCAA Region IX Tournament, March 22, 2025
What's the Tea – Brazil, March 25, 2025, 2-3 p.m., Student Center
Stothart Reading, March 27, 2025, 2-3 p.m., Student Center
What's the Tea – Japan, April 1, 2025, 2-3 p.m., Student Center
Jazz Night, April 5, 2025, 7:00 p.m., NPA
Phi Rho National Tournament, April 7-12, 2025, Norfolk, VA
Writers Series - Chris La Tray, April 10, 2025, 6-8 p.m., Hinckley Library
Chorale, Wind, and Percussion Ensemble, April 14, 2025, 7:00 p.m., NPA
What's the Tea – Uzbekistan, April 15, 2025, 2-3 p.m., Student Center
NWC Spring Recess, April 18-21, 2025
NBHB High School Music Festival, April 22-23, 2025, 8-5 p.m., NPA
What's the Tea – Argentina, April 22, 2025, 2-3 p.m., Student Center
April Board Meeting, April 22, 2023, 3:30 p.m., Meeteetse School

A ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 5:36 p.m.

R.J. KOST, Vice President/Secretary

Date