

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

August 11, 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, MR. SHANE OGDEN; and DR. MARK WURZEL.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**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. JACQUE COBOURN; MR. DUSTIN DICKS; MS. TRACY GASAWAY; MR. MARK GRANT; MS. CAREY MILLER; MR. CORY OSTERMILLER; 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.

**CALL TO ORDER:** President Denise Laursen called the regular meeting of the Northwest College Board of Trustees to order on Monday, August 11, 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 Kost to approve the agenda. Motion carried.**

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

In response to a question from Trustee Wurzel, President Watson stated that the American Association of Community College Trustees (AACCT) has created an advocacy page regarding the most recent proposed federal budget cuts and actions impacting higher education and the community colleges. Federal grants, such as for TRiO, PELL and Adult Education, could be affected. Recently, the College was awarded a seven-year GEAR UP grant; however, there is concern that it could be stripped.

She has tasked the Vice Presidents with aligning the dollars to the potential cuts and creating a spreadsheet that will detail the impact of the Big Beautiful Bill, should the potential cuts be implemented.

In response to a question from President Laursen, President Watson said that, although international enrollment has slightly decreased, ninety-four international students are enrolled for the fall semester. The largest numbers come from Japan, the United Kingdom, and Honduras. Historically, the College has had students from Turkmenistan; however, it is one of the countries recently added to the federal government's list of restricted nations.

In response to a question from Trustee Wurzel, President Watson stated that the newly developed Strategic Enrollment Management Plan is being finalized and will be presented to the Board in the next couple of months.

Upon invitation by President Watson, VP Havron introduced a newly developed "Welcome Box" that all individuals will receive upon acceptance to Northwest College. The box includes swag items as well as a QR code that can be scanned to access a video showcasing the beautiful campus and generate excitement.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson explained that the CREG report estimates revenue based on sales and income from the past year within Wyoming, not across the entire country. Although the current

administration might pass legislation to support oil, gas, and raw material extraction, the economic recovery could take some time.

In response to Trustee Housel's question, President Watson said she is part of the Budget Response Team for the Commission, which includes Presidents and Trustees working to find the best way to communicate the need for sustainable funding to the Governor and Legislators.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that the College is in its final year of receiving funds from WIP for the Outdoor Education program, the Software Development program, the Creative Economy, and Virtual Reality for supplemental learning opportunities. The colleges are working to partner with the Wyoming Business Alliance to build on their efforts and strengthen connections with businesses.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that the Strengthening Institutions grant application that the College is working on is geared toward student retention, which would allow the College to supplement and add services aimed at serving students.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that work has been done to create a draft Strategic Enrollment Management Plan. Once complete, the Plan will be presented at a future Board meeting.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that the new online procurement system is in the testing phase and will be rolled out campuswide once testing is complete. It is designed to streamline the process by allowing for single entry, approval, and automated payment of expenditures, all of which are completed electronically.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that insurance costs have risen 6% to 13% in some instances. Since it has been a few years, the College will go through an RFP process this year to determine if it has adequate coverage and can achieve future savings on insurance.

In response to a question from Trustee Ogden, President Watson stated that the College did not have to purchase an additional insurance rider as a result of legislation repealing gun-free zones.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that the College has a complex technology model that benefits our students. Annual software upgrades are essential to ensure that systems run smoothly for students, faculty, and staff.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that HR Director Jill Anderson utilizes many data sources to compare salaries at Northwest College with other institutions; such as CUPA, which analyzes national salaries of institutions of similar size, the Mountain State region (Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah), Wyoming specific data, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Faculty salaries have always been a priority of the College; therefore, faculty are paid at a prevailing market rate for a community college in the Mountain States region. Because the State of Wyoming funds K-12 so well, their salaries often exceed those in the community colleges.

Trustee Housel echoed the appreciation of the Physical Plant staff, as mentioned in the Student Services report, for going above and beyond in ensuring the students are well cared for.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, Carey Miller stated that the new brand look has a greater emphasis on the great outdoors of this area.

President Watson stated that the new website is now live and will continue to be updated with new images and additional content, to keep it fresh and interesting, and to provide people with a sense of what it's like to live in this area.

Trustee Kuipers stated that it's truly incredible that 100% of the May 2025 nursing graduates passed the NCLEX exam on the first attempt. She noted that while it hasn't happened at Northwest College in many years, she is doubtful that it happens at other institutions very often, if at all. She commended the students and the faculty who prepared them so well.

In response to a question from Trustee Kuipers, President Watson stated that summer conference groups and interns staying in campus housing is a welcome trend. Sometimes, groups or individuals want to stay through September or longer, and that can be a challenge. The College then determines if it can accommodate them and if there's flexibility to meet student needs in August.

President Watson informed the Trustees that the gym floor in the Johnson Fitness Center has heaved over the last couple of weeks. VP Reynolds has been working with the insurance company, and Physical Plant Director Quillen has been working to get asbestos testing, for which there is none. Conversations have begun with State Construction to determine the available options.

There have been many pre-bid walk-through meetings with contractors about the Orendorff Capital Renewal project. A final price will be decided soon, and State Construction has responded positively regarding their support for the project. Work is expected to start inside the building by the end of September or early October.

**Motion carried, and the consent agenda, including the minutes of July 14, 2025, regular meeting, and the minutes of the July 14, 2025, Budget Hearing, was approved.**

## **DISCUSSION/ INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

### **Annual Contract Review**

President Watson stated that Computing Services had purchased software that came with a contract management system. VP Reynolds, Finance Director Grant, and Business Office staff have worked with Computing Services Director Dearcorn to create a tracking system that will generate reports on current contracts the College holds.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that the BOCES contract is for a grant that the College receives to operate PVCE.

In response to Trustee Housel's question, President Watson stated that the College has contracted with Ellucian Company to provide guidance on how to best apply for various grants and to develop the entire grant process for the College's future. For example, they helped draft the TRiO grant and are working on an application for the Title III exception. They also review and offer input on grants that the College prepares independently. This is the third year of a three-year contract, which will end on September 30, 2026.

In response to Trustee Housel's question, President Watson explained that the College hired Hanover Research to support academic program research and review. Both the Ellucian and Hanover contracts stem from Strategic Plan

initiatives, where the College believed that utilizing outside consultants would be advantageous.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson explained that Turnitin is an advanced software used in higher education to help identify if a student's writing is plagiarized or generated by AI.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that the maintenance agreement with The Office Shop is for Printing Services' digital copy machines.

**Citizens' Open Forum Procedure  
Review**

There were no suggested changes to the current Citizens' Open Forum procedure.

**Schedule Fall Board Retreat**

President Watson stated that the Doodle Polls used to schedule a mutually agreeable date for the fall Board Retreat were unsuccessful. Trustees were asked to notify Keli if schedules had changed for the first two weeks in October.

**CITIZENS' OPEN FORUM**

The Citizens' Open Forum convened at 5:00 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:**

There were no new business items on the agenda.

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

September 8, 2025, upcoming:

- Host campus open house
- Quarterly budget adjustments
- CCSSE report
- Big Horn Basin High School report
- New employee introductions
- Course/lab fee proposals
- President's Operational Plan 2025 & 2026
- Distribute Board's self-assessment
- Distribute President's evaluation document
- Other TBD

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

New Faculty Orientation, August 14-15, 2025, Main Campus  
Kick-Off Weekend, August 16-19, 2025, Main Campus  
State of the College Address, August 18, 2025, 8:30 a.m., Yellowstone Bldg.  
1<sup>st</sup> day of fall classes, August 20, 2025, NWC  
Joint Education Committee, August 21-22, 2025, Casper  
Paint the Town Red, August 22, 2025, 4:00 p.m., Powell  
3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Run for Berry, August 23, 2025, Campus Mall  
Trapper Bonanza, August 23, 2025, Powell Golf Course  
Next Board meeting, September 8, 2025, 4:00 p.m., Yellowstone Bldg.  
Joint Appropriations Committee, August 19-20, 2025, Dubois  
WCCC meeting, October 2-3, 2025, 8:30 a.m., Douglas

**A ADJOURNMENT:**

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