

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

February 9, 2026

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, MS. ANNA CRAGOE, MR. DUSTIN DICKS, MS. TRACY GASAWAY, MR. TIM HOPKINS, MS. CAREY MILLER, MS. LISA SMITH, MR. MARTIN STENSING, 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, February 9, 2026, at 3:35 p.m. in the Meeteetse School Cafeteria.

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

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

In response to a question from Trustee Wurzel regarding HR Director Jill Anderson's report, President Watson stated that CUPA-HR stands for the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources. It's an excellent source for national compensation and other information.

In response to a question from Trustee Wurzel, VP Havron stated that Green Dot is a grant-funded initiative that focuses on bystander intervention. The motto is "No one has to do everything, but somebody has to do something." It is meant to foster a campus culture of everyone being on the same team and looking out for one another. Training sessions have been available to faculty, staff, and Student Senate members.

President Watson stated that Trustees would be able to participate in Green Dot training during a future Study Session.

In response to a question from Trustee Wurzel, President Watson stated that Hanover Research is currently working to complete the Farming and Ranching survey and the Nursing survey report. The College is assessing all information gained from its work with Hanover to prioritize initiatives going forward. The College is closely monitoring the outcome of the Legislative Budget Session, which could affect its ability to move forward with new initiatives.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that the College provided contacts for the farming and ranching survey that are representative of the area's farming and ranching. The College seeks to determine whether its programmatic offerings are effective and to understand the constraints and challenges farmers and ranchers face in hiring skilled workers. It has been difficult to connect with participants who agreed to take the survey; however, Bronson Smith, Ag Pavilion and Judging Coordinator, has been helpful by calling participants in advance to inform them of upcoming calls from Hanover.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, VP Havron stated that approximately three-fourths of the new students who enrolled this spring are taking a full-time course load.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that several of the instructor positions listed on the Personnel Status Report are fixed-term and have been posted as tenure-track.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that she is pleased with the initial enrollment numbers for the Outdoor Emergency Care and Ski Patrol Operations classes. They are consistent with overall Outdoor Education enrollment levels.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, Carey Miller stated that the increase in social media engagement in November was due to a post about a project conducted by Photography students who photographed vintage aircraft in Greybull. People were interested in the fact that the planes were being sold, moved, or dismantled. Nurses' Pinning also sees significant engagement, which explains the increase in December.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, Carey stated that she believes China shows a much higher user count in the Website Traffic Report due to its population size. The College is not taking any specific steps to capture that audience.

In response to a comment from Trustee Housel regarding the number of international students attending Northwest College, President Watson stated that the Office of International Student and Scholar Services do an excellent job of maintaining relationships with the different countries it works with and tries to assuage the fears of parents and students who want to study here.

Trustee Housel stated that the awards presented to Dr. Robert Rumbolz, honoring 25 years of service, and to Dr. Zach Paris, named Jazz Educator of the Year, are very impressive.

Trustee Kuipers expressed appreciation for the College's invitation of the Big Horn Basin School District Superintendents to campus to deepen relationships in the service area.

In response to a question from Trustee Kuipers, President Watson stated that, in the recapture-redistribution process, one of the colleges owes a substantial amount. Payment was deferred to allow the College to budget for it.

President Watson noted that, in the Budget-to-Actual report included with the Board materials, the College is currently trending toward expending less than its receipts, which helps close the enrollment gap or for project planning. It will also be beneficial if expenditures remain in check in case local levies or gas and oil prices decline.

Motion carried, and the consent agenda, including the minutes of the January 12, 2026, regular meeting and the January 12, 2026, Executive Session, was approved.

**DISCUSSION/
INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

Completion and Transfer
Summary

Lisa Smith explained that the Completion and Transfer summary helps identify and measure student success. In the 2024-25 academic year, 272 unduplicated students graduated with a degree or certificate, 318 degrees or certificates were

awarded, of which sixteen were BAS degrees.

Lisa shared a chart depicting the breakdown of degrees and certificates awarded by program. General Studies (58), Nursing (54), and Agriculture (39) were the top program areas with degrees awarded.

Transfer numbers are more difficult to identify because some students take classes at multiple institutions simultaneously. Lisa explained that, for the report, she identified degree- or certificate-seeking students who attended in 2024-24 and did not attend Northwest College the following year. Of the 595 students who did not return the following fall, roughly one-fourth transferred to another institution. Of those who transferred, 69% attended a four-year institution, and 31% attended a two-year institution. These percentages have been consistent over the years.

The top four institutions that students transfer to are the University of Wyoming (36), Black Hills State University (5), Montana State University Billings (5), and Western Governors University (4). The institutions students typically transfer to have remained consistent over the years.

Trustee Kuipers stated she is pleased to see the large cohort of Criminal Justice students continuing in the BAS program and completing their degrees.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel about the success of Aeronautics students who complete the program, President Watson stated that she knows of students who have gone on to succeed, but that, in general, it is difficult to reach students for data collection after they leave the College.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that the data indicate that state-level enrollment in Outdoor Education is not changing. It is trending slightly upward for Northwest College, primarily due to the new space and new Ski Operations program. While significant marketing dollars have been spent on the University's programmatic offerings, and billions are spent on tourism and outdoor recreation each year, jobs in the industry don't always earn graduates a decent salary.

President Watson stated that the University's program is a traditional classroom-based learning environment. Northwest College's programs offer hands-on learning and deliver better outcomes for students.

Student Center Final Report

President Watson is pleased to present the final report on the Student Center project, as all construction contracts have been fully completed and closed. The project came in under budget and debt-free, which is a reason to celebrate.

VP Reynolds explained that a correction is needed to the financial breakdown in the report presented in the Board packet. An additional \$500k was contributed by the Foundation for the Temp Dining construction. The following is a breakdown of the contributions toward the construction of the Student Center:

- Northwest College - \$6,860,078
- Foundation - \$4,850,000
- State - \$11,749,301
- Total cost - \$23,459,379

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:

Designation of Depositories President Watson explained that the Designation of Depositories is approved annually for banks that have expressed interest in serving as depositories for the College.

A motion was made by Trustee Ogden and seconded by Trustee Kost to approve the list of depositories as presented. Motion carried.

FY2027 Mandatory Student Fees VP Reynolds stated that various Directors were consulted when determining the Mandatory Student Fees proposal. There were just a couple of areas that needed a price adjustment. The Student Services fee had remained the same since its inception in 2022, and the technology fee was adjusted slightly to help alleviate the inflationary pressures the College has experienced. Last year, fees were increased by \$1.50, which caused some problems for the Financial Aid office; therefore, it was also necessary to bring the total to a whole-dollar increment.

In addition to speaking with area Directors, many factors are considered when determining the proposal, such as inflation. The Commonfund Higher Education Price Index reported inflation of 4% in 2023 and 3.4% in 2024. The State of Wyoming reported 3.9% and 4.2% during the same period.

The proposal includes increases to the technology fee by \$.50 and the Student Services fee by \$1.00, for a 2.8% increase from FY2026 to FY2027. The goal of the proposed increases is to address inflationary increases without over burdening students.

In response to a question from Trustee Wurzel, President Watson stated that student fees are somewhat discretionary. While other schools in the state may have lower fees, their course fees may be higher. Every college has a mindset and culture about where students pay and where they don't. When considering increases this year, Northwest College considered cost of attendance. There are increased costs for accommodations that the College is obligated to provide to students, which are increasing operational costs. Every college in the state is setting its mandatory fees based on areas it feels need extra support.

In response to a question from Trustee Ogden, President Watson stated that, generally speaking, Northwest College is still one of the best values. One of the areas in which the College excels is its scholarship offerings. Many of the other colleges can't provide their students with the significant scholarship dollars that Northwest can.

A motion was made by Trustee Wurzel and seconded by Trustee Kuipers to approve the FY2027 Mandatory Student Fees as presented. Motion carried.

FY2027 Residence and Apartment Rates

VP Reynolds explained that when considering housing and apartment rates, research indicated that the Higher Education price index reports a 3.6% inflationary increase, and the State of Wyoming has experienced a 5.8% increase, averaging 4.5% overall. The College aimed to keep increases at approximately 2.8%. While not keeping up with inflation, it will help the College incrementally without overly burdening students or pricing its housing out of the market.

Compared to other community colleges in the state, Sheridan College offers the lowest rate because of a \$600 scholarship they offer that offsets costs. However, Northwest College's proposed rates are still below average for both double and single rooms.

A motion was made by Trustee Kuipers and seconded by Trustee Ogden to approve the FY2027 Residence Hall and Apartment Rates as presented. Motion carried.

FY 2027 Meal Plan Rates

VP Reynolds explained that pricing for the FY2027 meal plan rates was more difficult because the College has issued an RFP for a food service provider. The inflationary indexes for food costs are approximately 3.8%.

The College anticipates that its focused efforts on enrollment management will drive enrollment, which, in turn, will drive housing residency and meal plan numbers. The proposal includes a 2.7% increase in meal plan prices, which should put the College where it needs to be in terms of revenue collected to offset expenses. While the rate is slightly above the average of the other community colleges in the state, the proposal is in line with LCCC and CC.

A motion was made by Trustee Wurzel and seconded by Trustee Kuipers to approve the FY2027 Meal Plan Rates as presented. Motion carried.

Course/Lab Fee Proposals

VP Erickson explained that one of the categories for earning points under the TRiO grant involves service-learning opportunities. TRiO Program Manager Rebecca Moncur developed an argument and a narrative for adding a service-learning course.

The course fee request allows the College to provide transportation to locations in Powell, Lovell, or Cody for students to participate in service-learning activities as part of the course.

A motion was made by Trustee Kuipers and seconded by Trustee Wurzel to approve the Course/Lab Fee Proposal as presented. Motion carried.

Policy 1400 Organizational Structure

President Watson stated that as part of the Board's commitment to review policy each month, it was discovered that the next policy in line for review needed to be updated. The policy, 1400 Organizational Chart, was last updated in 2019, and there have been organizational changes since then. Therefore, because this is a basic operational update, the proposed changes have been brought before the Board as an action item for approval.

The Board packet includes the current policy, a markup of the suggested changes, and the proposed policy as amended.

Speaking on behalf of the Board Policy and Student Success Committee, Trustee Kuipers stated that this instance aligns with the intent of the review exercise and falls within the President's administrative and executive authority.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, Foundation Director Shelby Wetzel stated that the responsibility of the Alumni Association transferred to the Foundation upon Mark Kitchen's retirement. It made sense to unify operations, since the Foundation maintains and pays for the alumni database, and because so much of what the Foundation does is outreach to alumni for events, communications, fundraising, volunteer services, etc. There are two separate Boards, and the Foundation funds the Alumni Association. President Watson serves as an ex officio on each Board.

Trustee Housel questioned whether Accreditation should be listed on the Organizational Chart, given its great importance.

President Watson stated that the College uses a team approach to the accreditation process, comprising faculty, staff, and administrators. While she would not be opposed to its inclusion on the Organization Chart, she feels it is less about a role than a function. She is willing to research whether other schools include it in their organizational structure.

A motion was made by Trustee Housel and seconded by Trustee Kost to table Policy 1400 Organizational Structure for further review and discussion. Motion carried.

**DISTRIBUTION OF
DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST
FORMS**

Disclosure of Interest forms were distributed to Trustees for completion and return by the March meeting.

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

March 9, 2026, upcoming (Cody):

- Quarterly budget adjustments
- State performance indicators report
- Workforce Development Activities Report
- Schedule Spring Board Retreat date
- Other TBD

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Wednesdays Around the World – Italy, Feb 11, 11:30-1:30, Student Ctr
WCCC meeting, Feb 12, 7:00 am, Cheyenne, WY
WBB/MBB vs. Gillette, Feb 14, 2:00/4:00 Cabre
What’s the Tea – Mexico, Feb 16, 2:00, Student Center
Alumni Climbing Night, Feb 17, 5:00-8:00, Student Center Rock Wall
Wednesdays Around the World – Turkmenistan, Feb 18, 11:30-1:30, Student Center
WBB/MBB vs. CWC, Feb 18, 5:30/7:30, Cabre
Wrestling – NJCAA Plains District Tournament, Feb 21, Rock Springs
WBB/MBB vs. CC, Feb 21, 2:00/4:00, Casper
What’s the Tea – United States, Feb 23, 2:00, Student Center
Pops Concert w/PHS, Feb 24, 7:00, PHS
Wednesdays Around the World – Brazil, Feb 25, 11:30-1:30, Student Ctr
WBB/MBB vs. WWCC, Feb 25, 5:30/7:30, Rock Springs
43rd Annual Jazz Festival Concert, Mar 2, 1:00, NPA
What’s the Tea – Japan, Mar 2, 2:00, Student Center
Wednesdays Around the World – US, Mar 4, 11:30-1:30, Student Center
Wrestling NJCAA National Championship, Mar 6-7, Council Bluffs, IA
NWC Spring Break, Mar 7 – 15
Next meeting, March 9, 2026, 4:00, Cody Center

A ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 5:39 p.m.

R.J. KOST, Vice President/Secretary

Date