

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

April 8, 2026

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** President Ms. DENISE LAURSEN; Vice President/Secretary MR. R.J. KOST (via Zoom); Treasurer MR. BOB NEWSOME; Trustees MR. JOHN HOUSEL, MS. TARA KUIPERS, and DR. MARK WURZEL.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Trustee MR. SHANE OGDEN

**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. KAREN BERCHTOLD; MS. JACQUE COBOURN, MR. CASEY DEARCORN, MR. DUSTIN DICKS, MS. TRACY GASAWAY, MS. CAREY MILLER, MR. DENNIS QUILLEN, MR. GREG SMITH, MS. LISA SMITH, MR. MARTIN STENSING, MS. SHELBY WETZEL; NWC Livestock Judging Team – MR. BRONSON SMITH, Ag Pavilion and Judging Coordinator; MAGGIE MCSTAY, Assistant Coach; MR. TY BERGH, MR. DILLON BOWMAN, MS. GRACE ONES, MS. AVERY SCHEWMAKER, MS. MARETT SCHIEBER, MS. JOSIE SHAW, MR. TUCKER SITZ, MS. KAYCEE STENE, MS. MADALYNE STOKES, MR. LANE TORCZON; NWC Wrestling Team – MR. BRIAN ERICKSON, Athletic Director; MR. JIM ZEIGLER, Men’s Wrestling Coach; MR. ORRIN JACKSON, Assistant Coach; MR. ZACHARY COVOLO, MR. COLBY DUCATT, MR. ASAD FAYZULLAEV, MR. DEVIN GROSSMAN, MR. JACKIE MEADOR, MR. RACE MOXLEY, MR. RYAN NUTT, MR. PORTER OLSON, MR. DUSTIN RHOADES, MR. DYLAN SORENSON; 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 Wednesday, April 8, 2026, at 4:12 p.m. in the Yellowstone Building Conference Center.

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

**MISSION MOMENT:** Bronson Smith, Ag Pavilion and Judging Coordinator, introduced the Livestock Judging team members, where they are from, and their various majors. He also expressed appreciation for Assistant Coach Maggie McStay's assistance with recruiting efforts and preparing the team for contests.

Bronson described the various individual and team awards received during the year. He stated that the students have become family to each other after many hours of traveling and competing together. Because eligibility differs in livestock judging from athletics, he can recruit the best students right out of high school. Community colleges in the surrounding states don't have livestock judging programs to enhance their Ag programs; therefore, he hopes the program will continue to grow with recruiting efforts.

Wrestling Team members introduced themselves, where they are from, and their majors. Coach Jim Zeigler stated that he is very proud of his team and that all of them have been named Academic or Scholastic All-Americans. He also thanked volunteer Assistant Coach Orrin Jackson, who graduated from Northwest College two years ago, was named as an All-American, and placed fourth in the nation.

Coach Zeigler stated that, unfortunately, Austin Richins, National Heavyweight Champion, was unable to attend the meeting as he is visiting other colleges for transfer opportunities. Austin was also voted the Outstanding Wrestler at Nationals.

Coach Zeigler reiterated his pride in the team and extended his appreciation to the Trustees for all they do for students.

**A CONSENT AGENDA:**

**A motion was made by Trustee Wurzel, seconded by Trustee Newsome, to approve the consent agenda.**

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that the College purchased a Traverse as part of the fleet vehicle rotation cycle. She provided a spreadsheet that lists all vehicles currently owned by the College, the rotation cycle for cars vs. vans, the department they are used in, their condition, and mileage.

President Watson shared another spreadsheet that tracks monthly costs for maintenance, mileage, and fuel gallons used. It is useful when setting rates for vehicle usage to ensure the College captures revenue to offset motor pool costs. The business model is not currently designed to charge departments at a rate sufficient to fund new vehicle purchases. The College uses general or one-mill revenue to purchase vehicles.

Management and maintenance of the fleet are important for ensuring the safety of employees and students and for maximizing the College's return on each vehicle purchased.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, Dennis stated that the spreadsheet is a moving target and is updated a few times per year. The College used to replace vehicles when they reached 100,000 miles; however, they are keeping them longer and replacing them only when repair costs to keep them safe and operable become too expensive.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that although the ambulance donated to the College by the hospital has over 232,000 miles on it, it should last another five years because it is not driven long distances. Dennis is ensuring it is well-maintained and used to extend its life as long as possible.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that the College belongs to three key associations and typically attends their conferences: the American Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT), the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), and the Higher Learning Commission (HLC).

President Watson stated that this year, she was invited to present at the Association of College Unions International, a student services association. She shared her experience with the Student Center project, and attendees were very interested in our partnership with the County which rented kitchen space to support the temporary dining operations.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that Bronson Smith personally contacted farmers and ranchers to ask them to complete Hanover's survey, which resulted in a higher response rate.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that she met Pam Cox Otto a few years ago at an ACCT Conference, where she presented on increasing enrollment while working with limited funds.

When enrollment decreased last fall, President Watson realized that while the College is doing positive things, it's not seeing the outcomes it needs. Although Pam recently retired, she was available for contracted work to assist with Marketing and Enrollment efforts. She visited campus in March and met

with various Student Services, Marketing and Communications, and Academic groups, as well as the Foundation. Her work will continue with these groups as the College redefines roles and responsibilities related to enrollment and retention.

President Watson stated that the recent tuition increase approved by the WCCC may prove challenging for students amid the current economic conditions. Therefore, the President's Staff, the Foundation, Enrollment, and Marketing are working together to bridge the gap for students.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that the \$750,000 the Legislature approved for dual and concurrent enrollment applies to all community colleges. An additional \$20 million was approved for the biennium as part of the Department of Education K-12 bill. State-level projections indicate that, with current dual-enrollment numbers, the statewide cost would be approximately \$8.7 million per year. The College will be working with local school districts to determine the best way to enhance dual offerings.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that state Major Maintenance funding is based on the total square footage of all campus buildings. Recent legislation passed to support funding for Major Maintenance included adding the square footage of the new Student Center, which had not been included previously.

Trustee Housel expressed appreciation for all the faculty and students involved in various activities, outreach, and connections that spread the word about Northwest College.

Trustee Kuipers expressed her appreciation to everyone in the International Student and Scholar Services office for their work on the Multicultural Showcase. It was an amazing event and a true gift to the community.

**Motion carried, and the consent agenda, including the minutes of the March 9, 2026, regular meeting, was approved.**

## **DISCUSSION/ INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

### **Giving Day 2026**

NWC Foundation Executive Director Shelby Wetzel shared a "Thank you" video created for Giving Day donors.

Shelby explained that nationally, donor numbers have been down, while large gifts have remained strong. This year for Giving Day, the Foundation focused on engaging people and increasing participation, especially the next generation. Annual giving is spotty as work continues to bring in newer donors and build a steady donor base over time to fill the pipeline for the future.

Shelby was pleased that the IHeart NWC campaign was very successful and resulted in higher engagement than in previous years across different platforms, leading up to Giving Day.

Traditionally, money is donated more by non-alumni; however, Giving Day flips that: 59% of gifts came from alums, and 41% from community-based donors. The Foundation engaged alums by highlighting special projects from various departments. There were fourteen projects, seven of which reached their goals. Departments that engaged their alums by further promoting Giving Day on their online platforms sometimes tripled their goals.

The Foundation appreciates the College's Administration for participating by engaging the campus with fun activities in the Student Center. Student Senate provided challenge money, which got students involved and showed them that giving back to the College can be fun and inspiring.

The Foundation created fun challenges for the campus community by offering incentives tied to the number 326, since Giving Day fell on March 26<sup>th</sup>. Employees "cleared the path for student success" by participating and designating gifts toward the Affordability Grants.

Over \$189,000 was raised on Giving Day. While work was done to engage for the future, there were many incentive donors and people who provided matching money to help inspire and challenge smaller donors.

The Foundation is on pace to raise over \$1.5 million this year, with over 1,000 donors. The work that is done now sets the course for the future and feeds the pipeline to do good things for students.

#### State Fall Enrollment Report

Institutional Research Manager Lisa Smith presented the 2025 WCCC Enrollment Report and stated that, although not yet approved by the Commission, it is expected to be approved next week at their meeting in Casper.

The report compares Northwest College to other community colleges in the state and shows areas of distinction. It also breaks down the current student group's population.

In Fall 2025, there were 1,383 total, unduplicated students enrolled in credit classes, and 1118.8 FTE. While the College has seen a decline in the percentage of full-time students over the last few years, 44% in Fall 2025, it has the highest full-time percentage among all the colleges since 2000.

The largest group of students took 3 to 5 credits, which is heavily influenced by dual- and concurrent-enrolled students. The next highest group takes 12 to 14 credits.

The largest age group of Northwest College students is under 18 (35%), which is also influenced by dual- and concurrent-enrolled high school students. Almost one-third of Northwest College students (31%) are aged 18-19, the largest share of this age group in the state.

Most of the College's students come from its service area (71%), followed by border states (9%), other Wyoming counties (7%), other states (5%), and internationally (7%). Northwest College's international population is the largest of all colleges.

The largest group of students at Northwest College are non-degree seeking (45%). Most non-degree-seeking students are high school concurrent or dual students. Of the students seeking a degree, most are working toward a transfer-preparation degree, such as an Associate of Arts or an Associate of Science (34%). Thirteen percent (13%) of students seek solely career and technical degrees (CTE), 6% seek multiple degrees crossing both transfer and CTE areas, and 2% seek a bachelor's degree.

Northwest College has the largest share of students taking at least one online class (62%), the highest percentage of dual-enrolled students (24%), and the lowest percentage of concurrent enrollment (18%). 4% of students take remedial coursework, and 4% take co-requisite coursework, both of which are developmental.

Every course is assigned a level of instruction based on its characteristics: Level 1 – Lecture; Level 2 – Laboratory; Level 3 – High Technology. Credit enrollment at each instructional level affects the amount of funding the College receives. 59% of the College’s credit enrollment is from Level 1, 28% from Level 2, and 13% from Level 3.

In response to a question from Trustee Kuipers, VP Erickson explained that Level 3 High Technology courses are lab classes that use expensive equipment and training, such as Welding, Nursing classes with high-tech simulators, Chemistry labs, and Biology labs.

In response to a question from Trustee Kost, Lisa Smith stated that high school students enrolled in dual or concurrent classes cannot become degree-seeking students while still in high school.

President Watson stated that it would be beneficial to track their areas of interest to better assess whether the College offers the programs students desire.

VP Havron added that having high school students declare that they are degree-seeking when they don’t intend to graduate from Northwest College would significantly reduce completion rates.

Perkins V Program Year 2026-27  
Notice of Intent to Participate

President Watson informed Trustees of Northwest College’s intent to participate in the Perkins V Program Year 2026-2027. She stated that the College has had a Perkins program for decades and has relied on it heavily to meet Career and Technical program equipment needs. There is a diligent committee that works to prioritize needs and manage the funds among eligible programs.

Spring Board Retreat

President Watson stated that the Spring Board Retreat will take place on Tuesday, May 5, 2026, in Powell.

## **CITIZENS' OPEN FORUM**

The Citizens' Open Forum convened at 5:05 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:**

Major Maintenance Projects

VP Reynolds reviewed the list of Major Maintenance projects completed in FY2026: Yellowstone parking lot and Simpson Hall Field drainage to Division; Cabre phase 1 of the HVAC upgrade; JFC parking lot; Moyer ADA access ramp; Equine office furnace replacement; and gravel improvements for the Sport Court. He explained that the ORB Renewal of doors, windows, and wall texture, as well as the ORB card readers and camera system, is still in progress.

Projects slated for FY2027 include: Cabre electrical panel replacements; Cabre phase 2 air handler replacement; the remaining gas infrastructure; Student Center server room backup cooling system; Field Station spring fence replacement; Field Station water tank access road culvert replacement; Cabre security cameras, Oliver and FAB parking lot and transformer replacement; and Moyer breezeway tunnel repair.

FY2028 projects identified include: Cabre locker room and handball court air handler replacement; Ashley Hall parking lot outlets, Oliver and FAB rear

parking lot and transformer replacements; Ashley Hall north parking lot replacement; FAB front entry ADA access; and FAB Annex furnace ducting replacement.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that the Sport Court is not assigned to any classes but is utilized by basketball and volleyball teams for practice, and Student Activities holds events there, in addition to general student use. The recreational floor material seems to be holding up well.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, Facilities Director Dennis Quillen stated that the spring at the Field Station has four valves that direct the water. One of the valves was leaking, believed to be allowing water to drain from the spring. The College will replace the valve, which will hopefully allow the spring to direct water to the property and restore water to the site.

Dennis further explained that the existing culvert for the water tank access road will be replaced with a larger culvert to accommodate potable water trucks if needed.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that the electrical, plumbing, and sewer infrastructure at Trapper West is nearing end-of-life, but the College receives only a limited amount of Major Maintenance funding from the state each year. In prior years, the Board indicated it didn't want to continue investing large sums in Trapper West improvements; therefore, Major Maintenance funds have been prioritized to main campus. President Watson suggested that the Board could revisit this and have a general discussion regarding campus project prioritization at a future retreat.

**A motion was made by Trustee Kuipers and seconded by Trustee Wurzel to approve the Major Maintenance projects as presented. Motion carried.**

## VDI Replacement

Computing Services Director Casey Dearcorn stated that the College replaced its servers with virtualized systems during COVID using one-time funding. At the time, the servers were expected to last 10 years. Although there are still no problems with them, the software that runs them was sold, resulting in a 300-500% annual increase in licensing fees. In addition, demand for AI-related data centers has driven up the cost of server hardware.

Seven months ago, Computing Services began evaluating alternatives to VMware software costs. The first vendor guaranteed they could offer 35-40% lower costs than what the College is currently paying, but the total cost would have been \$1.8 million, which was financially unfeasible.

After working with many vendors, the best option is to replace the server hardware, not to exceed \$400,000, using funding from the existing technology reserve funds, which were intended for server replacement in 2030. The hardware purchase timeline is urgent, as pricing now fluctuates daily.

President Watson stated that while the virtual system was purchased with federal funds and needed to accommodate changing technology needs during the pandemic, the College began saving money after the purchase to have funding available when replacement became necessary. She feels the timing is imperative, not only because of rising costs, but also to ensure there isn't a failure at the end of life of the current servers. VP Reynolds added that he supports the purchase and feels acting now will eliminate a potential cost in 2030 that would be cost-prohibitive for the College. He stated that the positive aspect of the plan is that it allows flexibility to keep existing servers in the

rotation and let them age out and be replaced as needed, rather than replacing them all at once. Director Dearcorn added that the expected life span of the proposed hardware is 2038.

In response to a question from Trustee Kuipers, the annual licensing fee is expected to be reduced, therefore allowing the College to invest the savings in the future by putting the funds into the technology replacement reserve account.

**A motion was made by Trustee Housel and seconded by Trustee Kost to approve the allocation of funds not to exceed \$400,000 from technology reserve funds for the replacement of server hardware as presented. Motion carried.**

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

May 11, 2026, upcoming:

- Review President and Board Budgets
- Preliminary Budget Presentation
- Renewal of the President's Contract
- PVCE Contract for Services Renewal
- Other TBD

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

NBHB District Music Festival, April 13, 2026, NPA

What's the Tea – France, April 13, 2026, 2:00-3:00 p.m., Student Center  
Collegiate Chorale, Wind, and Percussion Ensembles, April 13, 2026, 7:00 p.m., NPA

Wednesdays Around the World - Columbia, April 15, 2026, 11:30-1:30, Student Center

Jazz Night, April 18, 2026, 7:00 p.m., NPA

What's the Tea – Japan, April 20, 2026, 2:00-3:00 p.m., Student Center  
Small Ensembles, April 20, 2026, 7:00 p.m., NPA

Wednesdays Around the World – Japan, April 22, 2026, 11:30-1:30 p.m., Student Center

Juried Student Art & Design Exhibition Opening, April 23, 2026, 5:00-7:00 p.m., Cabre

What's the Tea – Honduras, April 27, 2026, 2:00-3:00 p.m., Student Center  
Zach Paris Recital, April 28, 2026, 7:00 p.m., NPA

Wednesdays Around the World – Honduras, April 29, 2026, 11:30-1:30, Student Center

Board Member Mixer, April 29, 2026, 5:30-6:30 p.m., Nelson House

Trapper Athletic Awards Ceremony, April 29, 2026, 5:30-8:00 p.m., YB Conference Center

Student Academic Showcase, May 1, 2026, Yellowstone Building

Northwest Civic Orchestra Spring Concert, May 2, 2026, 7:00 p.m., NPA

Final Exams, May 6-9, 2026, NWC

Nurses Pinning Ceremony, May 8, 2026, 3:00 p.m., NPA

Graduation/Commencement, Saturday, May 9, 2026, 10:30 AM, Cabre

May Board meeting, May 11, 2026, 4:00 p.m., Yellowstone Building

**A ADJOURNMENT:**

**The meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.**