NORTHWEST COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

October 12, 2026

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

MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHERS PRESENT: MS. LISA WATSON, President; MR. DAVE ERICKSON, Vice President for Academic Affairs; MR. BURT REYNOLDS, Vice President for Administrative Services and Finance; MS. JILL ANDERSON, MS. DIEDRE ASAY, MS. JACQUE COBOURN, MR. DUSTIN DICKS, MS. TRACY GASAWAY, MR. MARK GRANT, MS. JILL HARTMANN, MR. HANK HOVERSLAND, MS. DOSSIE OVERFIELD, MS. LISA SMITH, DR. GREG SMITH, MS. LINDA SPOMER, MS. ERIN TAYLOR, MR. OSCAR TREVIÑO, MS. SHELBY WETZEL, and MS. KELI BORDERS, Executive Secretary to the President and Board of Trustees.

WORK SESSION:

Property Tax Presentation

President Watson introduced Erin Taylor, Director of the Wyoming Association of Community College Trustees (WACCT), and Hank Hoversland, Executive Director of the Wyoming Taxpayers Association, who led a work session on Wyoming property taxes and Proposition 1. Mr. Hoversland reviewed the state's property tax structure, recent legislative changes and exemptions, and the financial effects on Northwest College, including an estimated additional reduction of nearly $650,000 in the College's property tax revenue if Proposition 1 passed and all eligible Park County residents claimed the proposed exemption. Ms. Taylor discussed WACCT's work with the statewide community colleges and its participation in the coalition opposing Proposition 1, along with messaging and community outreach related to the initiative.

CALL TO ORDER: President Denise Laursen called the regular meeting of the Northwest College Board of Trustees to order on Monday, October 12, 2026, at 4:08 p.m. in the Yellowstone Building Conference Center.

A APPROVE THE AGENDA: **A motion was made by Trustee Ogden and seconded by Trustee Kost to approve the agenda as amended to include a WACCT report as the last item on the Consent Agenda. Motion carried.**

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

President Watson addressed questions regarding the check register and the delivery of potable water to the Field Station. She explained that the spring has not been working, so the College arranged to have water hauled to the site for the crew restoring the ropes course. Repairs have been made to the spring, and it seems to be holding water; however, further monitoring is needed to determine whether it will continue to do so.

In response to a question regarding Rocky Mountain Power charges, President Watson explained that a single day of higher electrical demand at the Field Station sets a higher billing rate for the entire month. Recent fencing, roofing, water-system repairs, and ropes-course work have increased usage. She stated that the College has tried to consolidate projects to manage those costs.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel about collaboration with Eastern Wyoming College and Central Wyoming College, VPAA Dave Erickson described a National Science Foundation Advanced Technological Education

Track 3 grant proposal submitted by the three institutions. The proposal sought up to $3 million, with Northwest College receiving about $570,000, and would support shared curriculum in autonomous machinery, advanced manufacturing, precision agriculture, and drone technologies. The colleges would divide curriculum development and use flexible delivery to make coursework available to students at all three institutions.

President Watson discussed the value of the collaboration and the experience gained from pursuing a competitive federal grant. An award decision is anticipated near the end of December.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson explained that Element 451 is the College's contracted student recruitment and admissions platform, connected to Colleague, and is used to support enrollment communications and recruitment messaging.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson said that, through WIP funding, the College repaired and replaced the Field Station ropes course elements that had reached end-of-life. The ropes course to be installed north of the Soccer field will replicate several of the Field Station course aerial elements and also include zipline elements and a low ropes course that will allow for programming that the College has not been able to offer previously on campus.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel about experiential learning, President Watson said the College works with all area school districts in different capacities, depending on each district's needs and in ways that make sense for the College and the district.

President Laursen said she appreciates the reporting from the academic divisions and the work different programs do, such as the Forensics Team, Livestock Judging Team, Art Department, etc. She is always amazed by the level of engagement.

President Watson asked that Faculty Senate President Greg Smith report to faculty that the work that faculty do is visible and greatly appreciated.

Trustee Wurzel provided a report from the Wyoming Association of Community College Trustees (WACCT) meeting held in conjunction with the Wyoming Community College Commission meeting, on October 8-9. During the meeting, there were discussions with area legislators; it was decided that the Student of the Year breakfast will be held on February 19, 2027; discussion related to Wyoming delegates attending the ACCT Leadership Congress; and WACCT's work related to Proposition 1 and educating the public about the consequences if it were to pass.

Trustee Wurzel said that during the Wyoming Community College Commission meeting, the Commission considered five new BAS degrees, two of which were approved easily. The other three were joint efforts by Sheridan, Casper, and LCCC, related to mental health care. The Commission approved the programs but attached many conditions. Trustee Wurzel felt that the University of Wyoming's concerns about allowing community colleges to offer BAS programs were evident in the conditions, and he felt the Commissioners were being pressured to impose conditional approval. He was disappointed that the Commissioners didn't necessarily support the workforce purpose of BAS programs, and he is concerned it set a precedent.

Motion carried, and the consent agenda, including the minutes of the September 14, 2026, regular meeting, was approved.

**DISCUSSION/
INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

Property Tax Initiative

VPASF Burt Reynolds reviewed the planning brief regarding Initiative #1 and potential financial and operational effects on Northwest College. He stated that the College receives approximately $4.5 million annually from its local mill levy, representing roughly 20% of the operating budget. Existing exemptions have already reduced annual local property-tax revenue by approximately $839,000.

Under the scenarios presented, the additional local reduction associated with Initiative #1 was estimated at approximately $345,000 if exemptions do not stack, or approximately $511,000 if they do. Total local impacts under those alternatives were approximately $1.18 million and $1.35 million, respectively. Assuming the State will need to backfill K-12, the Legislature is unlikely to provide additional money to the community colleges or other special districts. Considering enrollment changes between the colleges and other factors in the funding formula, a separate potential reduction of up to $372,948 under the state funding allocation model could bring the combined additional FY2028 reduction to approximately $718,000 or $884,000, depending on the scenario.

VP Reynolds explained that these are planning estimates based on many conversations with the County Assessor and a review of Department of Revenue data and depend on the final interpretation and application of exemptions and allocation inputs.

If these reductions occur, Northwest College could lose positions, eliminate programs, offer fewer courses, be unable to develop new workforce programs, and provide reduced support to students, employers, and communities in the service area. It could also delay technology purchases, equipment replacements and maintenance, and lack the budget flexibility to absorb inflation, respond to workforce needs, or withstand future funding volatility.

VP Reynolds also reviewed Park County tax-base information from the County Assessor. Park County's tax base is 56.3% residential property, 24.2% oil, 9.7% commercial, 3.2% industrial, 3% agriculture, 2.5% “other,” and 1% electric.

Before the existing exemptions, Park County property tax revenue was $72.45 million. The 2026 exemptions reduced revenue by $9.9 million, bringing total Park County revenue to $62.55 million in 2026. The top-level distribution of property-tax revenue goes to K-12 schools (61.5%), the County levy (16.7%), special districts (12.7%), Northwest College (7%), and municipalities (2.1%).

Trustee Ogden clarified that 61% allocated to K-12 schools is not divided among Park County's three districts. It goes into the general fund that funds all of Wyoming’s K-12 schools, similar to the College’s allocation going into the funding allocation model.

President Laursen expressed appreciation for the information on the local impact and said it will help communicate the potential financial effects to the community.

Longitudinal Enrollment Report

Institutional Research Manager Lisa Smith presented the annual Longitudinal Enrollment Report, reviewing enrollment trends over the past ten years. She stated that preliminary Fall 2026 enrollment was within about ten students and two FTE of the previous fall, with some increase possible as students enroll in

later-starting classes.

Lisa reported that 54% of students are enrolled part-time and 46% full-time. The largest enrollment group, 41%, consists of part-time, non-degree-seeking students, including many dual and concurrent high school students. Approximately 71% of students reside in the College's three-county service area, and 34% are enrolled in dual or concurrent coursework.

Lisa reviewed the College's largest program areas, including Allied Health, Business, General Studies, Agriculture, Nursing, Biology, Criminal Justice, Education, Engineering/Math/Physics, and Aeronautics.

Lisa stated that approximately 21% of high school graduates in the service area enrolled at Northwest College in the year following graduation over the five-year period reviewed. The largest percentages of high school graduates enrolling at Northwest College are from Lovell (34%), Powell, (30%), Rocky Mountain (24%), and Shoshone Learning Center (24%).

In response to Trustee Housel's questions, she explained that the report's percentage comparisons were based on the overall service-area average rather than each high school's historical average. Cody's five-year average was 17%, compared with the overall 21%; Lovell averaged 34% and Powell 30%. Class size affects comparisons between schools and how to interpret the percentages.

Lisa reported a fall-to-spring retention rate of 83% and a fall-to-fall retention rate of 64%, both near the College's historical highs. The most recent graduation rate was 39%, with an additional 18% transferring, for a combined completion-and-transfer rate of 57%. She noted that graduation rates often follow retention trends with a delay.

In response to a question from Trustee Kost, Lisa responded that the information from the Longitudinal report is used when researching enrollment trends and for informing marketing and recruiting decisions.

Reserve Overview

VPASF Burt Reynolds reviewed estimated College reserve balances as of June 30, 2026, noting that the fiscal year close had not yet been completed. VP Reynolds explained that balances in several funds declined as the College transferred resources to establish quasi-endowments for strategic initiatives.

Operating reserves were estimated at $5.43 million, compared with $6.14 million the previous year, representing approximately five months of payroll expenses and remaining within the College's target of four to six months. One Mill Fund reserves declined from approximately $1.84 million to $1 million. Combined unrestricted operating and One Mill reserves totaled approximately $6.4 million, enough to cover six months of operating expenses if needed.

Auxiliary reserves were estimated at $1.05 million, down from $1.61 million the previous year, to create a quasi-endowment for furniture and fixtures; General Plant Fund reserves were $2.59 million, down from $2.96 million; and Major Maintenance reserves were zero following expenditures associated with completion of the Orendorff project. VP Reynolds anticipated that additional state major-maintenance funding allocated during the legislative session would allow the reserve to be reestablished this year.

Policy Review (cont.) Policy 2140

President Watson returned Policy 2140 to the Board for further discussion of the distinction between Board policy and administrative procedure. Trustees discussed the history of including procedures in the Board Policy Manual, the importance of shared governance, the Board's authority to act on policy, and

whether to keep procedures separate for clarity and easier revision.

Trustee Ogden expressed concern that including procedures within Board policy could require Board action for routine procedural changes.

Trustee Housel emphasized that some procedures are closely connected to particular policies and that separating them could create confusion through cross-references. The final sentence of the procedure listed with Policy 2140 states that, "This review procedure shall not restrain the authority of the Board of Trustees to enact, revise, or remove policy at any meeting of the Board." Trustee Housel believes that if immediate policy action is needed, the Board could call an emergency meeting.

Trustee Wurzel supported keeping the Board Policy Manual focused primarily on policy while recognizing that limited exceptions may be appropriate.

Trustee Kost suggested separating policies and procedures over time rather than requiring an immediate comprehensive revision.

President Watson stated that the procedure could be removed from the Board Policy Manual and housed on the internal portal for easy employee access.

A motion was made by Trustee Kost and seconded by Trustee Wurzel to separate procedures from the Board Policy Manual, allowing the President and College to move readily separable procedures first and address more complicated sections as time permits, without a fixed deadline.

Trustee Housel opposed the motion and suggested developing a new policy stating that, in some instances, policies will intentionally incorporate procedures when necessary.

Trustee Kuipers stated that she agrees with Trustee Ogden that the procedures should not be listed within the policy to avoid confusion. She is comfortable with the original motion.

Motion carried.

After the vote, Trustees reviewed the policy language and did not identify any additional changes requiring action.

Policy Review – 2200
Board Membership

Trustees reviewed Policy 2200 Board Membership. There were no suggested changes.

CITIZENS' OPEN FORUM

The Citizens' Open Forum convened at 5:04 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 AND FEEDBACK TO CITIZENS' OPEN FORUM TOPICS:

November 9, 2026, upcoming:

- Concurrent and Dual Enrollment Summary Report
- Preliminary audit report
- 2030 Strategic Plan update
- 2026-2027 Operational Plan
- Statewide legislative update
- Nomination Committee for Board Officers

- Holiday Party
- Other TBD

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Trustee Housel introduced Ms. Dossie Overfield, who was in the audience, as his anticipated successor. He thanked her for her willingness to serve on the Board of Trustees.

Trustee Housel recited a poem by Emily Dickinson.

Trustee Housel referred to two individuals who grew up in Cody. The first being Bob Edgar, whom he called the quintessential American frontiersman of the 20th century. Bob graduated from Northwest College in the early 1960s with degrees in Art and Archaeology. The second, Jim Terry, taught art at Cody High School for many years. Trustee Housel discussed the historical significance of two works of art created by these Cody artists that are currently on display in the library of campus. He said he intends to bring a motion before the Board at its November meeting to move the artwork to more prominent on-campus locations.

Orendorff Open House/ 80th Anniversary, Oct. 13, 2026, 4-6 p.m. NWC
Volleyball vs. Gillette, Oct 16, 2026, 6 p.m., Gillette
Fall Recess, Oct 17-20, 2026
Women's Soccer vs Western, Oct 17, 2026, 1 p.m., NWC
Volleyball vs. Casper, Oct 17, 2026, 2 p.m., Casper
Men's Soccer vs. Central, Oct. 17, 2026, 8 p.m., Riverton
Second Half-term classes, Oct 21, 2026
Volleyball vs. Eastern, Oct 23, 2026, 6 p.m., NWC
Volleyball vs. Casper, Oct 24, 2026, 2 p.m., Casper
Soccer Region IX Tournament Quarter Finals, Oct. 24, 2026, TBA
Volleyball vs. Central, Oct 28, 2026, 6 p.m., NWC
ACCT Leadership Congress, October 21-24, 2026, Chicago, IL
Concert Band, Collegiate Choir, Percussion, Nov 2, 2026, 7 p.m., NPA
Volleyball Region IX Tournament, Nov 4, 2026, TBA
Jazz Expo, Nov 7, 2026, 7 p.m., NPA
Next meeting, November 9, 2026, 4:00 p.m., Yellowstone Building

A ADJOURNMENT: **The meeting adjourned at 6:38 p.m.**

R.J. KOST, Vice President/Secretary

Date