

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

September 9, 2024

MEMBERS PRESENT: President MS. TARA KUIPERS; Vice President/Secretary MS. DENISE LAURSEN; Treasurer MR. BOB NEWSOME; and Trustees MR. JOHN HOUSEL, MR. R.J. KOST, DR. LARRY TODD, and DR. MARK WURZEL.

MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHERS PRESENT: MS. LISA WATSON, President; MR. DAVE ERICKSON, Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs; MR. TOM HAVRON, Vice President for Student Services; MS. SUSAN ADKINS; MS. JILL ANDERSON; MS. ANNA CRAGOE; MS. ELAINE DEBUHR; DR. JAY DICKERSON; MR. DUSTIN DICKS; MS. TRACY GASAWAY; MR. MARK GRANT; MR. CODY HELENBOLT; MR. JEREMIAH HOWE; MS. FAITH JOHNSON; MS. KORI JORDAN; MS. DAWN KASINGER; MS. SUSAN LARSEN; MS. JEN LITTERER-TREVIÑO; MS. CAREY MILLER; MS. SUE NORRIS; DR. ASTRID NORTHRUP; MR. SHANE OGDEN; MR. KEVIN ORR; MR. DENNIS QUILLEN; DR. CAMMY ROWLEY; MS. JEN SCHNEIDER; MR. KEITH SMITH; MS. LISA SMITH; MR. TED SMITH; MS. LINDA SPOMER; MR. MARTIN STENSING; MR. OSCAR TREVIÑO; MS. MAUREEN WALSH; MS. SHELBY WETZEL; MR. RONNIE WOLFE; MR. TYLER YATES; MS. BEKKI ZEIGLER; MR. ZAC TAYLOR, *Powell Tribune*; and MS. KELI BORDERS, Executive Secretary to the President and Board of Trustees.

CALL TO ORDER: President Tara Kuipers called the regular meeting of the Northwest College Board of Trustees to order on Monday, September 9, 2024, at 4:06 p.m. in the Yellowstone Building.

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

MISSION MOMENT President Watson introduced new and reassigned employees to Trustees.

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

President Watson clarified that the payment listed in the check register to Beartooth Environmental Inc. is for the disposal of dated chemicals.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, President Watson stated that the VA regulatory audit ensures that the College is in compliance with the services offered. The military offers many programs that aren't utilized in our area; however, the audit ensures the College is prepared to provide automatic access for students when necessary.

Trustee Kuipers congratulated GEAR UP on being re-funded for another seven years. She stated that she appreciated seeing the baseline requirements for each objective and that Northwest College GEAR UP is exceeding the objectives remarkably.

Trustee Kuipers expressed her appreciation to everyone who helped make Paint the Town Red a successful event. In reading the reports, she noted that it takes many individuals and departments to accomplish such a feat.

President Watson informed the Trustees that preliminary numbers indicate fall enrollment has increased. From the same time last year, headcount is currently up 6%, and FTE is up 7%. Nationally, universities are reaching pre-pandemic enrollment levels, and community colleges are beginning to gain as well.

Motion carried, and the consent agenda, including the minutes of the

August 12, 2024, regular meeting, was approved.

**DISCUSSION/
INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

PACE Survey Results

Lisa Smith stated that the PACE survey is conducted every other year and measures employee satisfaction by agreement levels with various statements. The survey was conducted in the spring of 2024. Of the 244 employees surveyed, 122 (50%) responded. She noted that the response rate is lower due to an 8% response rate by part-time faculty. This is typical in higher education, and all other Constituency groups responded at a very high rate.

Overall, the results are very positive and higher than those of all the comparison groups (NWC 2022 results, PACE norm base, and other institutions of similar size).

The questions are divided into four climate factors: institutional structure, student focus, supervisory relationship, and teamwork. Institutional structure generally scores the lowest of the group, which is true nationally, yet Northwest College scores higher than the comparison groups. Ratings were also higher in the other three categories than in all comparison groups.

Professional Staff rated the campus climate the highest, followed by Classified Staff and full-time faculty. There were too few part-time faculty responses to include, which could compromise privacy.

The full report breaks out all the questions by percent of agreement, highest to lowest. The first two pages include the top two-thirds of the questions of the highest agreement. For instance, all employees strongly agreed that they understood their responsibilities regarding anti-harassment and anti-discrimination. They also agreed that the institution follows a defined process for harassment, discrimination, and sexual misconduct. The bottom two questions with the least agreement were whether employees were paid fairly for their work and whether they had the opportunity for advancement within the institution.

The latest survey asked additional questions on employee engagement and student success practices that have not been asked before. The twelve questions related to employee engagement show very high engagement by employees. Most of the student success practice questions scored high. Some areas that scored lower indicate opportunities for improvement, while others are not areas the College has control over, such as tracking student employment after leaving the institution.

In response to a question from Trustee Laursen, Lisa stated the survey was open for response for four weeks, from mid-February to mid-March.

**Big Horn Basin
High School Report**

Lisa stated that the report summarizes student enrollment, retention, and performance for students from the College's service area high schools the year following their high school graduation.

The three-year average number of high school students in the Big Horn Basin was (BHB) 526. Of those, 117 (22%) enrolled at Northwest College. Over the past few years, the College has seen a gradual decline in the percentage of students who enrolled from area high schools (average 20%). However, in 2023, 24% enrolled at NWC, the highest rate since before the pandemic.

On average, of the area high school graduates who enrolled at Northwest

College, 81 have taken dual or concurrent courses, which is 15% of the total graduating population.

Typically, Lovell High School sends the highest percentage of its graduates to Northwest College, followed by Powell High School and Shoshone Learning Center. The lowest percentage comes from Worland, Meeteetse, and Heart Mountain Academy.

In the Fall of 2023, 23% of all Northwest College first-time, full-time students were placed into developmental writing classes, similar to the BHB graduates at 22%. BHB graduates who were previously dual or concurrent students were placed into developmental courses at lower rates (11%). Similarly, 62% of all Northwest College first-time, full-time students were placed into developmental math, 61% of BHB graduates, and 49% of former dual or concurrent students.

Of Fall 2022 students, 58% of all Northwest College first-time, full-time students, 46% of BHB graduates, and 42% of BHB concurrent or dual enrolled graduates returned in Fall 2023. These rates fluctuate regularly and are something the College will continue to monitor.

The report indicates that of students who started in the Fall of 2020, 35% of all first-time, full-time students graduated within three years, 33% of BHB graduates, and 37% of BHB concurrent or dual students. These percentages are lower than previous graduation rates and are likely affected by the pandemic.

The report is helpful as the College forms its Strategic Enrollment Plan. Multiple departments have also utilized the report to revamp the Trapper Scholarship program, allowing additional funding opportunities for students. The College anticipates that the increased scholarship award levels, along with increased recruitment and marketing efforts, will positively impact BHB enrollment. A newly implemented dual enrollment application and registration form will improve the capture of dual student information. The College is also increasing the involvement of parents in the recruitment process through targeted communication with the parent audience.

Trustee Kost stated that he feels the College should target more of the alternative school graduates from Shoshone Learning Center and the Heart Mountain Academy as he feels the College is better able to serve them than other schools.

In response to a comment from Trustee Kost, Lisa stated that the College has a report that breaks down the performance of BHB students who enroll at Northwest College by each district. He feels it would be essential to share the information with the individual schools so they can determine how well they are preparing their students for success in their first year of college.

President Watson stated that to find ways the College can better serve the area school districts, it is working with Hanover Research to conduct in-depth interviews with superintendents and principals this fall. Similar interviews will occur with counselors and interested teachers in the spring.

Distribute Board Self-assessment
and President's Evaluation

President Watson stated that Keli would email the Board Self-Assessment and President's Evaluation documents to be completed before the fall Board Retreat. She will also send a Doodle Poll with potential dates to determine a date for the Retreat that works within everyone's schedule.

CITIZENS' OPEN FORUM

The Citizens' Open Forum convened at 5:00 p.m.

Astrid Northrup, Professor of Engineering and Mathematics and Chairperson of the STEM Division, stated she wished to speak in favor of changing Northwest College's name to Yellowstone College. While there are many reasons to change the name, she hopes to address the negative result of keeping the name Northwest College.

As a faculty member, she regularly has to explain to students, parents, and other faculty members across the state that Northwest College (NWC) is not in Sheridan (NWCCD). The two colleges' names and abbreviations are very similar and nearly indistinguishable.

The previous week, Astrid contacted an assistant lecturer from the University of Wyoming regarding an anticipated student transfer. Several minutes into the conversation, Astrid realized the lecturer had confused Northwest College with NWCCD, even though the individual was originally from the Big Horn Basin.

Astrid feels that if a Big Horn Basin native is confused by the two names, it must be even more confusing to other potential students and their parents. For this reason, she asks the Board to consider the resolution.

Chair Kuipers read a prepared statement by Clay Cummins, a Foundation Board member who could not attend the meeting in person or via Zoom.

Mr. Cummings attended Northwest College, graduating in 1961. After a career in the Army, he returned to the Billings area. Clay reconnected with the College in the early 1980s, joining the Alumni Association Board in 1998 and eventually the Foundation Board.

Mr. Cummings stated that he did not favor the name change when it was discussed a few years ago. After reading the resolution, he found no new information to change his mind. He noted concerns about the cost and the importance of focusing on greater priorities and requested the Board to return the issue to the "back burner" where it should remain.

A UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

There were no unfinished business items on the agenda.

A NEW BUSINESS:

Resolution by Ad hoc Name Change Committee to change the name of Northwest College to Yellowstone College

Trustee Housel stated that the College President ordinarily brings Board action items. However, in this instance, the proposed resolution is being brought to the Board for consideration by the Ad Hoc Committee. The resolution originated with the committee and was drafted by Trustee Housel based on his independent research and available information. He did share a dialogue with President Watson regarding the commonality of the name, which causes confusion within the state and beyond. However, committee members feel it's important to note that President Watson can remain neutral, oppose, or support the proposal as she sees fit.

The Resolution has been presented in the Board packet as a first reading and will also be available on the College website. Input will be gathered before the October 14, 2024, meeting. Trustee Housel also invites anyone who chooses to speak during the Citizens' Open Forum during the October meeting to do so. The Committee would like to garner as much input as possible and allow all Trustees time to review and consider all comments made before making a decision. The Ad Hoc Name Change Committee will then meet again to determine if the Resolution should go forward as it is written, if modifications

need to be made, or if they choose not to bring it forward. If brought forward and a motion is made, followed by a second, it would be up for a vote at the November 11, 2024, meeting.

Trustee Housel felt that including the college's history in the Resolution was important. The Resolution also describes the events that led to the consideration of changing the name.

The College held community input sessions in December 2019 and January 2020 as part of the strategic visioning process. In July 2020, the Board initiated the rigorous and time-consuming institutional transformation process. Many comments made during both processes indicated that the College should consider rebranding or renaming to stand out and become more attractive to prospective students. As a result of the transformational work, the Board identified a Destination and Distinction vision to support the development of a strategic plan or core model options for the future of the College. A Strategic Plan was then developed that incorporated the core ideas and how they would be implemented.

As a twenty-year member of the Board, Trustee Housel feels that the commonality of the name to other institutions is what brought about the idea of changing the name. Many other institutions of higher learning share the same or a very similar name, causing confusion. He feels a name change would help the College differentiate itself.

Trustee Housel invited anyone with questions or comments to contact Board members or to attend the meeting in October. He also asked members of the Board to reserve judgment until the November meeting.

As a point of clarification from President Kuipers, Trustee Housel stated he and Trustee Wurzel serve on the Ad Hoc Name Change Committee, as does President Kuipers in her capacity as Board President.

Trustee Kost stated that he has concerns about changing the name and is unclear about the purpose. He noted that many entities share similar names, and while there is confusion, he doesn't feel that the name itself is what attracts students. The goal and focus of the College should be the students themselves. He questions whether changing the name meets the needs of the students and notes that the College should focus on moving forward in how students today learn, work, and what they want to become. Students will want to attend a college with the programs they best identify with.

Trustee Kost questioned whether the College would need to develop programs that align with the name and if the cost of the name change would eventually outweigh what the College is trying to achieve. He does not feel that the Resolution outlines a plan or direction the College will take or what it tries to achieve by changing the name. He thinks everything the College does should represent the students and what it tries to achieve in their best interests.

Trustee Laursen stated that Yellowstone College only represents a small part of our service area, which is the Big Horn Basin. She feels that area students may feel they are unwanted at Yellowstone College. She feels extensive research is needed regarding what the College represents and what it hopes to gain with a name change.

Trustee Laursen stated that she hears people in the community struggle financially. The College needs to appeal to adult learners, and if it spends money on a name change, she feels there could be potential backlash from that sector of potential students.

President Kuipers stated that while the Resolution creates enthusiasm and excitement, it also comes with gaps. She missed the preliminary conversations of the Committee's early work before becoming the Board President. In working through the Resolution, she hopes to reconcile her duties as a Trustee as they relate to the Strategic Plan.

President Kuipers noted that the Board approved the Strategic Plan in November 2022. Its two overarching qualities are Destination and Distinction, and it includes a commitment to two items contradicting the Resolution. Pillar 2, Strategy 1, Tactic 6, "Explore and develop a significant college rebranding effort...", and Tactic 7, "Explore the feasibility of renaming the College as part of the rebranding effort; build a case documenting who/what/why/when/how and cost; present findings to the NWC Board of Trustees, as requested, for their consideration." She stated that these elements of the Strategic Plan are crucial to the renaming issue. She feels that the Resolution opposes what the Board committed to when unanimously approving the Strategic Plan.

President Kuipers stated that it is not her intent to say that she does not have sincere enthusiasm for renaming the College but feels that her vote to support the Strategic Plan may oppose approving the name change without the supporting research and data.

Trustee Kost stated that the community knows about the budget cuts that the college has endured. The conservative Legislature has also stressed the need for educational entities to cut costs. He questions if the costs associated with the name change would be received positively.

President Kuipers thanked Trustee Housel and Trustee Wurzel for their time and commitment to the Ad Hoc Committee. She invited and encouraged members of the Northwest College community to share their input, as the decision has many facets. The October meeting will allow further conversation among Trustees and Citizens to provide their thoughts. The Committee will then meet for consideration and review before the November meeting when they choose to amend the Resolution, drop it, or bring it forward as it is currently drafted.

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

October 14, 2024, upcoming:

- Facilities Master Plan Work Session
- President's Operational Plan 2024
- President's Operational Plan 2025
- Strategic Plan Update
- Longitudinal Enrollment Report
- Other TBD

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

President Watson announced that all Retention Basin and Storm Drainage project documents have been finalized and signed.

Volleyball vs. Rocky Mountain College, Sept. 10, 2024, Billings, MT
President BBQ & Student Club Fair, September 11, 2024, Campus Mall
Volleyball-Trapper Invitational, Sept. 12-14, 2024, Powell, WY
Men's Soccer vs. CWC, Sept. 13, 2024, 3:30 p.m., Riverton, WY
Women's Soccer vs. WWCC, Sept. 14, 2024, 1:00 p.m., Powell, WY
Volleyball vs. Miles CC, Sept. 18, 2024, 6:00 p.m., Miles City, MT
Volleyball vs. Dawson CC, Sept. 19, 2024, 7:00 p.m., Glendive, MT

Volleyball vs. Williston State, Sept. 20, 2024, 10:00 a.m., Williston, ND
Women's Soccer vs. Trinidad, Sept. 20, 2024, 1:00 p.m., Powell, WY
Men's Soccer vs. Trinidad, Sept. 20, 2024, 3:00 p.m., Powell, WY
Alumni Day at NWC Soccer, Sept. 21, 2024, 1:00 & 5:00 p.m., Powell, WY
Women's Soccer vs. Otero, Sept. 21, 2024, 1:00 p.m., Powell, WY
Men's Soccer vs. Otero, Sept. 21, 2024, 3:00 p.m., Powell, WY
Joint Appropriations Committee, Sept. 26-27, 2024, Casper, WY
Women's Soccer vs. Casper College, Sept. 27, 2024, 1:00 p.m., Powell, WY
Men's Soccer vs. Casper College, Sept. 27, 2024, 3:30 p.m., Casper, WY
Volleyball vs. WWCC, Sept. 27, 2024, 6:00 p.m., Powell, WY
Women's Soccer vs. Gillette, Sept. 28, 2024, 1:00 p.m., Gillette, WY
Volleyball vs. Casper, Sept. 28, 2024, 2:00 p.m., Powell, WY
Men's Soccer vs. Gillette, Sept. 28, 2024, 3:30 p.m., Gillette, WY
WCCC meeting, October 2-3, 2024, Casper, WY
Volleyball vs. Eastern, Oct. 4, 2024, 6:00 p.m., Torrington, WY
Women's Soccer vs. CWC, Oct. 5, 2024, Powell, WY
Men's Soccer vs. CWC, Oct. 5, 2024, 3:00 p.m., Powell, WY
Volleyball vs. LCCC, Oct. 5, 2024, 6:00 p.m., Cheyenne, WY
Volleyball vs. CWC, Oct. 8, 2024, 6:00 p.m., Riverton, WY
Fall Recess, Oct. 11-14, 2024
Women's Soccer vs. W. Nebraska, Oct. 11, 2024, 12:00 p.m., Powell, WY
Men's Soccer vs. W. Nebraska, Oct. 11, 2024, 2:00 p.m.
Volleyball vs. Rocky Mountain College, Oct. 11, 2024, Powell, WY
Next meeting, October 14, 2024, 4:00 p.m., Yellowstone Building
ACCT Leadership Congress, October 23-26, 2024, Seattle, WA

A ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 5:56 p.m.

DENISE LAURSEN, Vice President/Secretary

Date