

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

September 13, 2021

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** President DR. MARK WURZEL; Vice President/Secretary DR. LARRY TODD; Treasurer MS. CAROLYN DANKO; and Trustees MR. JOHN HOUSEL, MS. TARA KUIPERS, MR. BOB NEWSOME, and Trustee MR. DUSTY SPOMER

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**OTHERS PRESENT:** MS. LISA WATSON, Interim President; DR. GERRY GIRAUD, Vice President for Academic Affairs; MS. JILL ANDERSON; MR. LEE BLACKMORE; MR. BRAD BOWEN; DR. MARNEÉ CRAWFORD; MR. DUSTIN DICKS; MS. TRACY GASAWAY; MS. JO ANN HEIMER; MS. DEB JACOBS; MS. MICHAELA JONES; MR. KEVIN KUENN; MS. KELLY MCARDLE; DR. AMY MCKINNEY; MS. CAREY MILLER; MS. NANCY MILLER; MR. DICK NELSON; MR. DENNIS QUILLEN; MS. LISA SMITH; MR. JUSTIN SPAULDING; MR. MARTIN STENSING; MS. JILLIAN TAYLOR; MR. OSCAR TREVIÑO; MS. SHELBY WETZEL; MS. MARSHA WILSON; MR. KEVIN KILLOUGH, *Powell Tribune*; and MS. KELI BORDERS, Interim Executive Secretary to the President and Board of Trustees.

**CALL TO ORDER:** The regular meeting of the Northwest College Board of Trustees was called to order on Monday, September 13, 2021, at 3:05 p.m. in the Yellowstone Building Conference Center.

**A APPROVE THE AGENDA:** Chair Wurzel suggested amending the agenda to include two additional discussion/informational items: D. Presidential Search and E. Student Center funding update.

**A motion was made by Trustee Kuipers and seconded by Trustee Lawrence to approve the agenda as amended. Motion carried.**

**WORK SESSION:** Interim President Watson stated she is presenting a recap of the CampusWorks and Institutional Transformation work thus far that she shared with the constituency groups during opening meetings on August 30.

Interim President Watson reminded Trustees that in this process, Northwest College is looking at its unique capabilities and reimagining its offerings to better position itself for students, the community and to support financial sufficiency.

Phase 1 and Phase 2 of working with CampusWorks consisted of engagement and internal and external input and data scans. This was a collective visioning and scanning process to clarify Northwest College's market opportunities and position the College in the external market. Phase 3 will align the College's value Proposition and offerings with target markets through recruitment, branding, and marketing.

During Phase 1, feedback and ideas were gathered through various means, such as the SWOT survey, focus group sessions, the Future Summit, etc. The outcome was the development of 3-4 core idea models for the College. Interim President Watson stated that through this process, over 400 individual voices were heard. The results of the SWOT survey garnered various perspectives on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the College. The focus group sessions developed experiential learning, partnerships, workforce responsive programming, flexible delivery, and renaming or rebranding the College as themes. The work at the Summit resulted in several Impact Statements. From this feedback, the Advisory Committee, made up of faculty and staff, developed Core Ideas, which is "the unique and inherent truth about an institution that differentiates it in ways that are meaningful and persuasive to the target audience." Thirteen Core Idea statements were generated around

target audiences and their need.

Phase 2 scanned the external and internal environment to test core idea options and ways to position Northwest College. Prospective and current student surveys, community and alumni surveys, interviews and focus groups, external and internal data analysis were completed. From this work, the Core Idea model options were born:

- Destination Model – provide a distinctive learning experience for those seeking to enjoy, work and live in the Yellowstone ecosystem.
- Workforce Hub Model – Serve as an engine and agenda-setter for regional talent development and growth through strategic alliances and coalitions.
- Pathways Model – Provide flexible and engaging education pathways accessible at every stage of life.
- Distinctive Program Model – Serve as a source of authority and leader in targeted programs or learning practices.

Interim President Watson stated that as the College looks at transformational change, it needs to determine where to invest time, energy, and resources to achieve the desired outcome.

The final phase of work with CampusWorks will be the development of the Transformational Plan. The Plan will assemble the collective learning into an actionable and implementable roadmap. This roadmap will identify where action plans for transformation will need to be developed. Additional work will entail a risk assessment for transformation and mitigation strategies, a schedule and timeline for action plans, an investment and resource allocation strategy, a marketing and recruiting approach, and academic programs/delivery models to target.

Interim President Watson stated that money is set aside for some of the transformational change. Currently, there is approximately \$800,000 available for program development, rebranding/renaming or enrollment efforts, etc. (\$600,000 for programming given by the Legislature and the 2.5% of one-time funding provided this year). She noted that tonight's discussion is not about the money but instead about our core mission to educate and serve. However, given the State's economy, the College needs to be very conscious about its use of resources going forward.

In addition to the slide presentation, Interim President Watson distributed the worksheet previously given to employees for the campus sessions. Trustees were asked to complete the worksheet with their thoughts on Phase 1 and Phase 2 work efforts to date, including areas of agreement or what might be missing. She is hopeful it will encourage thought and conversation and provide perspectives on the project work thus far.

In response to a question from Chair Wurzel, Interim President Watson stated that during the recent faculty session, it was noted how difficult it is to consider expansion and growth when there are ongoing budgetary concerns and worry that these discussions could mean further cuts peers. She expressed the hope that some of this funding would eliminate that fear along with the upcoming federal grant funds.

In response to a question from Trustee Danko, Interim President Watson stated that students were also surveyed in the CampusWorks efforts, with a good response rate. There was an attempt to survey students who applied but chose

to attend another college, but the response rate was poor.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, Interim President Watson stated a workgroup is in place to analyze the viability of growing the international program in light of COVID. Northwest College has several new international students this semester and is not seeing a shortage of interest at this time.

In response to a question from Trustee Kuipers, Interim President Watson stated that the next steps will be to look into the viability of the models and what the College seeks to accomplish due to the decisions. The campuswide process should result in a draft plan for the Board of Trustees to review. Interim President Watson stated she feels it could come before the Board for the first reading in November.

Trustee Spomer inquired from the worksheet if the Board will be driving the development of the vision or will an already developed vision come to the Board for approval. Interim President Watson stated the worksheet's purpose is to get a sense of Trustees' opinion of the work done so far and determine if there's an area where more information or work is needed. The College will work to develop a plan that it feels will make a difference. Once brought to the Board, Trustees will then decide if it is the correct path.

**MISSION MOMENT:**

Upon invitation from Interim President Watson, the new employees hired within the last year introduced themselves to the Board.

**A CONSENT AGENDA:**

**A motion was made by Trustee Kuipers and seconded by Trustee Danko to approve the consent agenda.**

In response to a question from Trustee Danko, Interim President Watson stated Northwest College, in conjunction with MSUB, received a grant in support of international studies. This partnership expands opportunities for students and faculty. It will provide faculty and students travel opportunities as well as various language classes. For instance, Northwest College teaches Japanese classes, and MSUB is offering Korean classes. Students enrolled at either college can take these courses.

In response to a question from Trustee Danko, Interim President Watson stated that several heat pumps in the Science and Math building began failing due to age and were replaced a year ago using major maintenance funds. Since then, the College has been slowly replacing all of the heat pumps in Hinkley Library. This work was done in-house and has provided significant cost savings.

In response to a question from Trustee Danko, Interim President Watson stated that in order to offer federal work-study, one of the requirements is that one or more of the federal work-study students must be employed as either a reading tutor for children or perform family literacy activities. In the past, that project was conducted through the Children's Learning and Care Center. With the recent closure of the Children's Learning and Care Center, the College is in the process of working with the Education program to develop an equivalent option to meet the requirement.

Interim President Watson stated she had received questions regarding Ashley Hall. Although the hall hasn't been open for regular occupancy, it is being used to house students in isolation or quarantine due to COVI-19. She stated there is a need to revisit plans for renovations and reopening Ashley Hall.

Trustee Housel again expressed his appreciation for the Communications and Marketing Analytics report. He made special note of the click-through rate of the Facebook/Instagram campaigns being at 4.25%, which is significantly

higher than the average .73% for other educational institutions.

Trustee Kuipers made a note of the Human Resources report, which indicates that salaries for faculty and staff and those below the midpoint. She expressed her appreciation to Jill Anderson for monitoring the compensation levels and keeping Trustees informed.

Trustee Kuipers also made a note of the TRiO report indicating sixty applications for admittance to the program have been received, when they typically see around 20 applications at this point in the semester. She feels this is a profound indication of student need, and she appreciates their increased efforts to serve Northwest College students.

Trustee Kuipers questioned the utilization of the CARES ACT grants received by the Foundation from the Park County Commissioners for scholarships. Interim President Watson stated she would have the Foundation Director and the Financial Aid Director include that information in the following report to Trustees.

**Motion carried, and the consent agenda, including the minutes of the August 16, 2021, regular meeting, was approved.**

**DISCUSSION/  
INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

CCSSE report

Upon invitation from Interim President Lisa Watson, Institutional Research Manager Lisa Smith shared the Community College Student Engagement (CCSSE) Executive Summary of Results report with Trustees. The survey is a national survey that many community colleges use out of the University of Texas. Northwest College has conducted the survey every other year since 2007. In previous years, students took the survey in class. This year, it was administered online due to COVID. Four hundred fifty-six students participated in the survey for a response rate of 49%. Lisa stated she was very pleased with the response rate as it compares closely to the years the survey was administered in person.

Highlights of the results included that 91% of respondents would recommend Northwest College to a friend or family member, and 83% rated their experience as good or excellent.

Many of the questions in the survey feed into the five benchmarks identified by CCSSE that are strongly related to student engagement:

- Active and collaborative learning
- Student effort
- Academic challenge
- Student-faculty interaction
- Support for learners

Lisa explained when looking at the benchmark scores, it is important to understand the mean of all national respondents' scores is 50. The national average for each is 50; therefore, if a score is above 50, it is considered above the national average.

While it's interesting to see how Northwest College measures up to other colleges, the greatest value in this survey comes from the discussions on campus about the results.

Trustee Kuipers inquired about the type of dialogue generated as a result of the survey and if the results would be woven into the discussions around the

transformation work to help identify the areas of strengths and challenges. Lisa Smith responded that as an example, after the prior year's implementation, the College hosted a "lunch and learn" session in which all employees were invited to discuss the various benchmarks, the questions that were asked, varying responses by full-time vs. part-time students, etc. While an event to discuss the 2021 CCSSE report has not yet been planned, she anticipates a formalized discussion will take place. As a result of past discussions, advising, career, and transfer assistance have been strengthened, and new ways have been sought to meet adult and part-time student needs.

President's Office Operational  
Plan FY2022

Interim President Watson reported the President's Staff held a retreat and developed the President's Office Operational Plan for FY2022. The Plan is being presented to the Board to gain an understanding of the areas of focus and priorities for the College President and staff during the upcoming year. She noted that the Plan is updated throughout the year with status changes to track progress.

WIP update

While the Joint Education Committee met last week, they spent a majority of their time discussing the community college funding models vs. WIP. Interim President Watson stated the most recent update from the Governor's office indicated that most of the WIP funding requests were moved from the \$50 million tranche the Legislature approved the Governor to disburse to the \$500 million tranche that will be decided during the spring Legislative Session. There has been a deadline extension to October 8<sup>th</sup> for the colleges to make changes to their original requests.

Presidential Search

President Wurzel stated that when the Presidential search was postponed, it was decided that it would be readdressed in September 2021.

Trustee Housel stated the Presidential Search sub-committee membership includes himself, Trustee Kuipers, and Trustee Todd. Committee members decided to meet immediately following the regular meeting to discuss the next steps in the search process.

President Wurzel reminded Trustees that if a majority of Board members participate in the search meetings, it must be noticed and ran as a Board meeting unless it moves into Executive Session.

Student Center update

Interim President Watson stated the Student Center project continues to move along. As a reminder, she noted the Board's approval of the \$1 million for construction document planning for the College's portion of the state match requirement. Representatives from Northwest College, State Construction, and the original architect will meet later in the week for a kick-off meeting and discuss where the plans were left off before everything got shut down because of COVID. The \$2 million earmarked for the project is more than sufficient for the Level III construction document planning work.

Interim President Watson stated that the project scope and overall cost would need to be determined and the funding sources. The Board Finance Committee met recently and determined it should be brought to the Board for discussion.

In response to a question from Trustee Danko, Interim President Watson stated the State and the College would be working together to design an energy-efficient building taking best practices into account.

Trustee Spomer stated the Finance Committee discussed the funding plan in terms of the overall budget and segments of a potential funding plan. Committee members questioned whether the discussion should take place with the Board as a whole or whether it was appropriate for the committee to work on a plan and bring forward a recommendation to the Board.

Trustee Kuipers stated she feels unsure if she has enough information to be equipped to offer insight into funding recommendations at this time.

Interim President Watson added that the Yellowstone Building was the first building to utilize state funds. The campus and the community paid for all other campus buildings. Currently, Northwest College has one debt instrument, a bond with First Interstate Bank that is set to expire in 2033, for Simpson Hall. She stated any debt that is taken on must be serviced, so the College will need to have a plan. It is unknown if the College will receive federal funds toward the building through ARPA or Infrastructure monies and if they could be used as part of the College's match requirement. The State Building Commission has approved a total cost of \$23.5 million for the project, of which Northwest College would be responsible for approximately \$12 million of the total. The decision will need to be made whether the College is comfortable with spending that much or should the project be scaled back in order to lessen the burden to the College. The Foundation has committed to a \$3.5 million campaign for the Student Center. They have already raised \$1 million as part of the Vibrancy campaign, which included the Visual and Performing Arts Center, so they are reaching out to donors to determine if they are in favor of the money being utilized for the Student Center project. Decisions need to be made regarding the remaining portion and whether reserve funds could be used, or if the College would want to do a bond, a loan, or possibly a penny tax. There are many options to consider, and it could end up being very complex.

Trustee Spomer reminded Trustees that part of the cost structure includes building a temporary dining facility. The immediate questions will be the overall budget, the components of the funding, how much, if any, reserves are to be utilized, and what other funding sources will be used for the remaining cost.

Interim President Watson reminded Trustees the Reserve balance is listed in the Financial Reports included in the Board Book. Due to strong fiscal management, the College was able to realize savings in FY21, adding to reserves.

President Wurzel stated that due to the various funding options, he would prefer the Finance Committee prepare a proposal of low, medium, and high-cost options of the Student Center that the Board as a whole could then discuss.

Trustee Kuipers agreed and stated that due to her lack of understanding of the various financing options, she would be more comfortable with the Finance Committee providing a recommendation or proposal for consideration.

**A motion was made by Trustee Housel and seconded by Trustee Kuipers to refer the anticipated financing of the Student Center to the Finance Committee for further review in anticipation of receiving funding from the Legislature. Motion carried.**

Interim President Watson stated that while numbers are likely to fluctuate throughout the semester, current numbers after the drop/add date show that

Enrollment update

**CITIZENS' OPEN FORUM**

**A UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

**A NEW BUSINESS:**

Covid-19 Response Plan –  
Fall 2021

Headcount is up 4% compared to last year and up 2% from two years ago (pre-COVID). Preliminary reports indicate the State is trending down 4%. The same report shows that FTE (full-time equivalent) is down 3%, which signifies that even though we have more students, they are taking fewer credits. Northwest College is currently trending slightly higher than the overall state enrollment numbers.

The Citizens' Open Forum convened at 5:02 p.m. No citizens requested to address the Board; therefore, the Citizen's Open Forum adjourned.

There were no unfinished business items on the agenda.

Interim President Watson reminded Trustees the Plan was approved in the spring and that the College is constantly monitoring data at the state and local levels in order to change operations to meet current conditions if necessary. The Plan was written to be flexible in response to changing conditions. One difference this year from last year is that the national trend is to continue to stay open and operational vs. shutting down.

The Plan has also stepped away from CDC protocols and utilizes state and local health and safety directives. Locally, the K-12 school systems have stepped away from the state recommendations and are utilizing a modified quarantine model. Specifically, if a person is identified as being in a quarantine status, they can choose to remain at the school as long as they are wearing a mask. Northwest College continues to follow the State's recommended quarantine directives.

Interim President Watson stated the College conducted a short survey for students and employees to determine individual preferences if infection rates increase on campus. The first question asked if the preference would be to have a rolling mask mandate or move to Zoom instruction. Of the responses received, 66% of students and 74% of employees preferred a rolling mask mandate over moving to Zoom instruction. The second question was designed to gauge vaccination rates on campus; 40% of students and 73% of employees are fully or partially vaccinated. Interim President Watson stated that based on current infection rates on campus, only .007 of the student and employee population is currently in isolation as of the previous Friday.

In response to a question from Board President Wurzel, Interim President Watson stated that while the Incident Command Team will not continue to meet regularly, there is a core group of individuals who have been and will continue to be called upon as the situation warrants.

President Wurzel stated he is very comfortable with the College being flexible and able to respond as the situation changes. Interim President Watson said she does not intend to ask the Board to put a mask mandate in place, but she is monitoring the situation very closely.

Trustee Kuipers stated she is in agreement with President Wurzel in her confidence of the College to be flexible and also expressed her appreciation for the forethought to conduct the survey in order to inform future decisions if health conditions worsen.

**A motion was made by Trustee Housel and seconded by Trustee Todd to approve the changes to the Covid-19 Response Plan. Motion carried.**

Course/lab fee proposals  
(Spring 2022)

Interim President Watson stated classes are continually evaluated to ensure appropriate fees are charged in order to cover costs associated with course delivery. Any approved changes will go into effect for the Spring 2022 semester.

**A motion was made by Trustee Housel and seconded by Trustee Newsome to approve the Course/lab fee proposals. Motion carried.**

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

October Upcoming:

- Longitudinal Enrollment report
- Marketing Report
- Academic program development update
- Facilities Master Plan update
- WACCT Leadership Awards
- Distribute Board self-assessment
- Schedule Winter Board Retreat
- Other TBD

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Next meeting, October 11, 2021, 3:00 p.m., Yellowstone Building  
WCCC Commission meeting October 7, 2021, 8:30 a.m., Sheridan  
Panel on Rebranding and Name change, October 13, 2021, 6:00 p.m.  
Yellowstone Building  
ACCT Leadership Congress, Oct. 13-16, 2021, San Diego, CA

Interim President Watson stated the Panel on Rebranding and Name change will be open to the public. There will be a Zoom option as well as limited seating in the Yellowstone Building Conference Center. The event will be promoted on social media as well as local papers. She also plans to have a section of the website that will allow individuals to ask questions or make comments.

**A ADJOURNMENT:**

**The meeting adjourned at 5:32 p.m.**

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LARRY TODD, Vice President/Secretary

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Date