WESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE AREA
BOARD OF GOVERNORS

INFORMAL MEETING
MINUTES

Wednesday, June 17, 2026

The Western Community College Area Board of Governors held an Informal Board meeting at 11:00 a.m. on Wednesday, June 17, 2026 at Western Nebraska Community College, Coral E. Richards Boardroom, 1601 East 27th Street, in the City of Scottsbluff, in the County of Scotts Bluff, in the State of Nebraska, as per the publicized notice in the Star-Herald Tuesday, June 9, 2026.

A current agenda was available in the Board Secretary's office on the Scottsbluff Campus at the time of the publicized notice.

AREA BOARD

Linda A. Guzman-Gonzales .... Present
Joshua R. Hanson .... Absent
Mark A Kaufman .... Present
Allan D. Kreman .... Present
Starr Lehl, Vice Chair .... Present
Lori J. Liggett .... Present
Coral E. Richards .... Present
R. J. Savely, Jr. .... Present
Marjorie A. Schmidt .... Present
Monica R. Shambaugh .... Present
John P. Stinner, Chair .... Present

QUORUM

Chair Stinner declared a quorum was present for the transaction of business.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

Chair Stinner asked for comments from the community. Pursuant to Board Policy BP-106, Chair Stinner reminded community members who wish to make comments will be limited to a five-minute presentation. There were no comments.

BOARD CHAIRPERSON COMMENTS

Chair Stinner announced for public information there was a copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act available on the table at the back of the room.

Chair Stinner announced that the Board reserves the right to enter a closed session if deemed necessary for any item on the agenda per Section 84-1410 of the Nebraska Revised Statutes.

Budget Review – General Fund

Ms. Lynne Koski, Vice President of Administrative Services explained that the college faces a significant structural funding imbalance. Despite record enrollment growth, projected state aid is expected to increase by less than 1.5%, creating ongoing budget challenges. Personnel costs account for approximately 67% of the budget, leaving few opportunities for reductions without evaluating programs, services, and staffing. Over the past two years, the college has already reduced expenses by approximately one million dollars and anticipates additional reductions if state funding remains unchanged.

Budget Review – General Fund (cont.)
Board members discussed the need to redefine essential services and acknowledged that incremental cuts are no longer sufficient. Ms. Koski emphasized that budget planning is an ongoing process focused on identifying efficiencies while preserving the college's core mission.

The discussion also explored collaborative approaches to addressing resource constraints. A board member suggested sharing faculty and instructional resources with other institutions through reciprocal agreements, particularly for specialized programs with low enrollment. President Dart confirmed that these conversations are already underway with Nebraska community colleges and institutions in neighboring states. Drawing on previous experience within a multi-campus university system, he noted that shared instruction is feasible but presents challenges related to accreditation, tuition disparities, governance, and funding allocation. Nevertheless, he emphasized that shared services and instructional partnerships will likely become increasingly important if the college cannot achieve sufficient enrollment to sustain certain programs independently.

Board members also discussed broader opportunities for collaboration, including creating independent entities to manage shared instructional resources and exploring greater coordination among Nebraska's higher education institutions. While acknowledging that consolidation or system-level integration could improve efficiency, participants recognized the political and governance challenges associated with reducing local control. The president noted that statewide conversations about greater higher education collaboration have resumed, although significant barriers remain even within existing university systems.

The board expressed continued concern over the state's funding formula, noting that increases in property valuations have not translated into proportional revenue growth for community colleges. Members stressed the importance of maintaining fiscal discipline while continuing to advocate for changes in state funding policies.

Staff reviewed the preliminary budget, which currently reflects an estimated operating deficit of approximately $764,000 before additional reductions are identified. State aid and property taxes each account for roughly 45% of total revenue, highlighting the college's heavy dependence on external funding sources over which it has limited control.

Additional discussion focused on employee benefits, administrative costs, benchmarking against peer institutions, grant revenue, and foundation support. In response to an inquiry, Ms. Koski explained that most foundation funds are restricted and therefore unavailable for operating expenses, although future fundraising efforts could include endowments for operations, faculty positions, or equipment. President Dart reported on participation in a national community college benchmarking initiative to compare staffing, expenditures, and operational performance with peer institutions.

Board members questioned whether the college's financial challenges have been adequately communicated to the public. President Dart acknowledged that external communication has been limited, explaining the need to balance transparency with maintaining public confidence in the institution's long-term stability and ability to serve students. The presentation concluded with review of strategic operating requests, capital requests, and potential alternative funding sources, including Perkins funding for eligible equipment purchases.

President Dart emphasized that the college's primary revenue sources are tuition and state funding, with grants serving only as temporary support rather than a sustainable funding solution. Without significant new revenue streams or tuition increases—which would conflict with the institution's mission—the primary contingency for declining state support would be operating as a smaller institution.

Budget Review – General Fund (cont.)
The Board reviewed the college's equipment funding policy, which establishes an annual funding target of 3% of the general operating budget, or approximately $885,000. Equipment purchases may be funded through a combination of operating funds, equipment and technology funds, grants, donations, and other sources. While approximately $600,000 was allocated for equipment in the current year, the college invested more than one million dollars annually over the previous several years, reflecting a strong commitment to maintaining instructional equipment.

Board members questioned whether large capital equipment, such as welding equipment with long service lives, should be financed differently through reserves, debt, or other funding mechanisms rather than annual operating funds. It was noted that state statutes restrict the use of capital funds primarily to facilities, utilities, and bond-related projects, limiting their use for instructional equipment. Staff acknowledged that options such as leasing, financing, and expanded business partnerships could be explored, though financing would increase ongoing operating costs.

The discussion also highlighted the importance of private donations and industry partnerships. While the college has secured significant gifts—including donated equipment for workforce programs—members noted that local business support has been less extensive than at some peer institutions, presenting an opportunity for future fundraising efforts.

Athletics generated considerable discussion regarding its financial impact. Administration explained that although athletics requires institutional investment, it also supports a significant share of enrollment, residence hall occupancy, and tuition revenue. Eliminating athletics could reduce enrollment by an estimated 20–25%, offsetting much of any anticipated cost savings. A comprehensive cost-benefit analysis was recommended to better evaluate athletics' financial contribution, including opportunities for increased fundraising through the college foundation.

Enrollment projections were notably positive. Summer enrollment increased approximately 24%, while fall enrollment was tracking nearly 20% ahead of the previous year, with more than 1,000 students already registered. President Dart cautioned that these early gains should not be interpreted as final enrollment increases but described current trends as encouraging.

The strongest enrollment growth has occurred in dual-credit and online programs, driven by several strategic initiatives implemented over the past three years, including eliminating tuition for dual-credit students, reducing course prerequisites, and strengthening strategic enrollment planning. Improved student retention efforts have also contributed to the positive results.

Board members acknowledged that long-term demographic trends remain challenging due to declining birth rates and a relatively flat regional population. President Dart emphasized the need to continue increasing the college's market share within its service area to offset future enrollment declines.

The meeting concluded with a broader discussion of challenges facing public education in Nebraska. Board members expressed concern over limited funding, increasing operational costs, declining student populations, and the growing responsibilities placed on educational institutions. Several participants argued that sustainable improvements in education will require broader legislative action and expanded state investment beyond reliance on local property taxes.

Next Regular Meeting: Wednesday, June 17, 2026, 1:00 p.m., Coral E. Richards Boardroom, WNCC Scottsbluff Campus, 1601 East 27th Street, Scottsbluff, NE.

Adjournment
The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 12:03 p.m.

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John P. Stinner, Chair

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Susan L. Verbeck, Secretary