

**WESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE AREA
BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

**INFORMAL MEETING
MINUTES**

November 20, 2024

The Western Community College Area Board of Governors held an Informal Board meeting at 10:37 a.m. on Wednesday, November 20, 2024, in the Coral E. Richards Boardroom at Western Nebraska Community College, Scottsbluff Campus, located at 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 on Tuesday, November 12, 2024.

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

AREA BOARD

Karen S. Anderson, Chairperson	Present
Linda A. Guzman-Gonzales	Present
F. Lynne Klemke	Present
Allan D. Kreman	Present
Starr Lehl.....	Present
Lori J. Liggett	Present (via Zoom)
William M. Packard.....	Present
Coral E. Richards.....	Present
R. J. Savely, Jr.....	Present
Marjorie A. Schmidt	Present
John P. Stinner, Vice Chairperson.....	Absent

Quorum

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

Board Chairperson Comments

A copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act was available on the table at the back of the room.

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

Community Comments

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

Higher Learning Commission Conference Attendance

Ms. Kimberly Reichert, Institutional Effectiveness and Planning Director reported the 2025 Higher Learning Commission Conference is scheduled April 5-8, 2025 in Chicago, Illinois. Usually, two members of the Board attend the conference and recently, the Board determined it was advantageous to rotate attendance. Board member attendance at the conference will be determined later.

Safety Report

Mr. Ty Frohbieter, WNCC Occupational Health and Safety Director addressed the annual safety report (Clery Report). On October 1st of each year, colleges and universities participating in federal financial aid programs must publish and distribute their Annual Campus Security Report to current and prospective students and employees. The report is required to provide crime statistics for the prior three years, policy statements regarding various safety and security measures, and campus crime prevention program descriptions and procedures to be followed in the investigation and prosecution of alleged sex offenses. The Department of Education monitors the reports.

The Clery report's geography covers all locations associated with the institution. A violation may not involve someone who is part of the institution but is on campus. When athletic teams travel and spend a night in a hotel, data may be requested from that hotel. Many variables go into the data to give an idea of what campus safety looks like, including non-campus areas.

In response to an inquiry, Mr. Frohbieter explained College security personnel are contracted and do not carry weapons. Two security personnel are on the Scottsbluff campus at night and are strictly observing and reporting. A resource officer is present on the Scottsbluff campus during the day and security cameras are in place throughout all three campuses.

This past year, College staff have been working on an Emergency Management Plan. The main objective is to determine roles during emergency situations. The National Incident Management Standard (NIMS), set forth by government standards, was used as a guide in the development of the College plan. Once the plan is implemented, training will be required for those with specific responsibilities.

The violent incidents that have taken place on several campuses are a concern. We need to know how we might prevent them and how to respond if we do have an incident. College employees have been participating in drills for emergency situations. The drills provide an excellent opportunity to identify how well employees reacted and any issues to address.

Home Depot recently donated eighty plastic buckets that will be filled with supplies for emergency situations, such as a lockdown. The buckets will be placed in classrooms and other locations throughout the campus buildings.

In response to an inquiry, Mr. Frohbieter explained lockdown buckets will also be placed at the Alliance and Sidney campuses, but scheduling drills requires a different approach. We are working with fewer staff and smaller areas and must consider that ESU occupies part of the building in Sidney. Both satellite campuses have multiple locations which could require different responses at each location.

Ms. Abbott, Sidney Campus Director mentioned all Sidney campus faculty and staff have received first aid and CPR training.

Budget Update

President Dart reviewed budget information recently presented to all WNCC employees. Though the Board approves the budget in September, there have been recent talks regarding a more strategic budget model. The Budget Advisory Committee, led by Ms. Lynne Koski, has been doing significant work looking at different budget models.

Budget Update (cont.)

It is anticipated the timeline of budget discussions will be changing in the future with a strategic budget regarding resource allocation, yet still meeting the needs of the College.

Several years in a row, the budget was passed using one-time dollars for ongoing expenses, but that practice cannot continue. Discussions have begun regarding how to design the strategic College budget.

The first step was to hold a College wide forum to review budget related information. Over the past ten years, enrollments declined, and spending increased. The spending increase was not due to excessive spending, but just doing business, which included increases in utilities, insurance, and personnel costs. Personnel costs are a significant portion of the budget.

Over the past four years, FTE has been flat, which included a 20% reduction from 2020 to 2021. In 2020, the budget was higher than it has been since that time. The total budget has reduced some, but there are factors that include single expenses for one-time projects. Some of this is due to the way the College has been funded and how changes in funding impact the College. WNCC is an institution where a significant percentage of funding comes from the State. Property tax funding will no longer exist in the same way going forward with the college future fund. The property tax dollars outside of the two cents received for capital have been replaced by state funding. Even though the College is solely governed by a board, the State has a significant say in what we do because of the percentage of funding received.

In response to an inquiry, President Dart stated that colleges in Nebraska are well funded compared to other states. At this point in time, there is uncertainty regarding state funding going forward. With the recent election, there will be fourteen new senators and none of them were bound by this deal, so the future is uncertain.

Whenever one-time funding is utilized, cash reserves decrease. One-time funding should be for one-time expenses such as a building project or new equipment purchase. Over the last few years, those funds have been used to balance the budget, which is not a sustainable budget model.

Over the past five years personnel costs have increased. The increase is not due to the substantial number of new employees during that time, it reflects the way personnel costs work. There is no question that we must reduce ongoing costs and increase enrollment. Even though we experienced a four percent increase in enrollment, which was just a first step, that increase must continue.

In response to an inquiry about the timeline for budget decisions, President Dart stated the timeline is the Board's decision. Even though it has taken four years to get to this point, every year spending increases so we need to find a way to cut the \$892,000, as well as make further cuts. These cuts are essential if the College is going to make the strategic investments the institution has revealed as needs by the end of our strategic plan in 2027.

We also have growth strategies. One area to look at is this year's dual credit growth, twenty percent is amazing. Also look at packaging online programs to bring in students from across the country. A leading concern is the projected birth rates in Scottsbluff and the Panhandle over the last five years and over the next ten years.

Budget Update (cont.)

This area is not growing, so we need to find a way to enroll a higher percentage of students throughout our service region, but also serve students who are not in our service region. Construction trades are also a growth opportunity, especially if offered as credit bearing. We need to find strategies that will give students a reason to enroll at WNCC.

Last year the College did a 4% across-the-board cut. Even though that cut helped, and made us more efficient, it was just a small piece of the total budget. A hiring freeze could be considered; however, it is not strategic to freeze hiring and not rehire needed positions. A potential voluntary separation incentive is under consideration, whether it is early retirement or voluntary separation. Vacant positions will be reviewed to determine if they need to be replaced or can be replaced in a different way at less cost. Difficult decisions will be required as is the case when cuts are being considered.

Board Member Comments

Dr. Packard mentioned faculty member, Brian Croft published a book of poetry titled Lyrical Cartography.

Ms. Schmidt and Ms. Liggett thanked Mr. Kreman for inviting them to ride with him to the NCCA meeting in Norfolk.

Board members who attended the NCCA annual conference reported it was a good conference and it was nice to meet with constituents from across the state. The speakers were also well received.

Chair Anderson shared on behalf of the Board, a "thinking of you card" was recently mailed to past Board member Dr. Thomas Perkins. Ms. Anderson read a letter from Dr. Perkins thanking the Board for remembering him.

Chair Anderson shared she will be moving to Lincoln, NE mid-December. This move was anticipated a year ago, but because she was vice chair at that time, she agreed to stay on the Board for another year anticipating it would take some time to sell her house. She will submit her resignation at the January Board meeting.

Next Regular Meeting: Wednesday, November 20, 2024, 1:00 p.m., Coral E. Richards Boardroom, Scottsbluff Campus, 1601 East 27th Street, Scottsbluff, NE.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 12:06 p.m.

Karen S. Anderson, Chairperson

Susan L. Verbeck, Secretary