

**EASTERN WYOMING COLLEGE**  
**BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES**

Tuesday, March 10, 2026  
EWC Dolores Kaufman Board Room

**Attendance**

**Present:**

Members: Randy Adams, Bob Baumgartner, Doug Mercer, Katherine Patrick, Kurt Sittner, Jackie VanMark, Rick Vonburg, and Jim Willox

**Absent:**

Members:

**1. Call Meeting to Order**

Chairman VanMark called the meeting to order at 5:47 pm.

**2. Approval of the Agenda**

Chairman VanMark called for approval of the agenda as presented.

Moved by: Rick Vonburg; seconded by: Katherine Patrick

**Motion Carried**

**3. Approval of the Minutes**

Chairman VanMark called for any changes to the minutes as they were distributed. No changes were called for, Minutes were approved as distributed.

**4. Introductions**

**5. Public Comment**

**6. Administrative Reports**

**President's Report**

Dr. Jeffry Hawes recently briefed the Board on the final general appropriations bill signed by the Governor. While the state has restored critical funding levels, the college faces a complex budgetary landscape as it balances new state mandates with local economic pressures.

The 2026 legislative session resulted in several targeted investments for community colleges:

- Employee Compensation: \$14.6 million was allocated statewide for salary increases. EWC's share is estimated at 7.6–7.7% of the total. The college is currently evaluating which employees qualify under specific fund restrictions.
- Career & Technical Education (CTE): \$12.5 million in total support was approved (\$5M in ongoing block grants and \$7.5M for programs).
- College Rodeo: Funding for rodeo programs saw a significant boost, increasing from

\$200,000 to \$600,000 statewide.

- Dual Enrollment Pilot: \$750,000 was approved to support high school students exploring college-level coursework.

#### Budgetary Challenges

Despite the positive news from the state, Dr. Hawes cautioned that the college is not necessarily "moving forward" financially.

- Operational Adjustment: Due to property tax impacts from the previous year, EWC may still need to find \$1 million in operational budget savings for the upcoming fiscal year.
- Flat Funding: The new appropriations largely serve to bring the college back to previous funding levels rather than providing surplus growth.

The administration is conducting a detailed analysis to determine the exact dollar amount and wage level increases for EWC staff. A full report will be presented at the next board meeting to finalize the impact on the Fiscal Year 2027 budget.

Vice President Patrick Korell presented facilities assessment and infrastructure upgrade requirements.

- VP Patrick Korell presented a mechanical engineering assessment showing the majority of HVAC equipment 15-25 years old and past useful life. Detailed estimated costs - \$3.2 million for Tebbet, \$1.9 million for Fine Arts, \$2.1 million for Activity Center.
- VP Patrick Korell explained assessment was provided at no charge by Colorado engineering firm, who will also digitize all paper building plans.
- VP Korell described two funding pathways - emergency funds through Building Commission or formal renovation process through legislature. He noted state representatives indicated EWC hasn't asked for much in building funds and would likely support project.
- VP Korell confirmed universal aging infrastructure across Wyoming with many institutions experiencing deferred maintenance.
- VP Patrick Korell stated Facility Master Plan will shift from new building construction to renovation and repair focus.
- The project will be staged over 4-5 phases, with Douglas campus included in later stages. Board may tour mechanical infrastructure to see conditions firsthand at a later meeting.

Vice President Patrick Korell presented a phased plan to evaluate a donated 10-acre property for a potential college rodeo facility.

The donated land currently includes a brick house, a modern metal building, and a functional well. Before any construction begins, the college will conduct a rigorous two-stage evaluation:

- Stage 1: Technical Viability – Engineers will perform soil borings and land surveys to ensure the ground can support heavy barn structures and arena facilities.
- Stage 2: Basic Infrastructure – If the site is viable, the college will prioritize "short-term wins," such as horse runs, water lines, and electricity on the eastern portion of the property.

The administration emphasized that being a "good neighbor" is a top priority. Key considerations for the development include:

- **Buffer Zones:** Strategic setbacks to protect the neighboring subdivision to the west and agricultural lands to the north.
- **Mitigation:** Proactive plans for drainage, professional fly control, and specialized lighting to minimize impact.
- **Engagement:** Dr. Hawes committed to meeting with local residents to address concerns regarding road access and noise.

#### Funding & Governance

The Board has authorized the administration to collaborate with the EWC Foundation on a comprehensive funding strategy.

- **State Support:** Rather than relying solely on Foundation funds, the college will pursue state-level funding opportunities.
- **Lease Agreements:** Progress is being made on a formal lease agreement with the Foundation to clarify long-term management.
- **Public Input:** A public hearing may be scheduled before final submissions are made for state funding.

The immediate goal is to provide a safe place for student-athletes to keep their horses. Long-term development of a full-scale barn and arena remains contingent on the results of the initial site analysis and the success of the funding plan.

Dr. Hawes provided an update on the college's innovative mobile lab initiative. The project consists of two specialized trailers equipped with cutting-edge technology, including drones, satellite communications, and integrated teaching modules:

- **Agronomy Lab Trailer:** Already completed and in service.
- **Animal Science Trailer:** Currently in the final stages of construction, with an expected completion date before the end of the spring semester.

To ensure these labs can reach their destinations, the college is expanding its transport capabilities:

- **New Heavy-Duty Truck:** The Board approved an additional truck to haul the Animal Science trailer. When not towing, the vehicle will serve general agricultural and workforce development needs.
- The college aims to have all equipment purchases finalized by May 2026 to meet year-end grant reporting requirements. Once fully operational, these trailers will serve as mobile classrooms, providing hands-on experience in precision agriculture and veterinary science.

Dean of Workforce and Career Technical Education Darryl Spitzer presented a major expansion of Eastern Wyoming College's workforce development programs, highlighting a surge in demand for Commercial Driver's License training and the launch of new safety certifications.

The CDL program is seeing record participation and strong regional support:

- High School Enrollment: 30 students are currently enrolled across five districts, including Wheatland, Douglas, Guernsey, Torrington, and Lusk.
- Industry Partnerships: Major companies in the Newcastle and Upton areas—including Dixon Brothers—have committed to donating equipment and enrolling employees.
- Revenue Potential: With 21 pledged enrollments in the "use-your-own-truck" program, the college anticipates approximately \$100,000 in revenue.

EWC is diversifying its offerings to meet the specific needs of Wyoming's energy and construction sectors:

- MSHA Training: Starting in Fall 2026, EWC plans to launch a Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) program. This is expected to serve over 2,000 annual participants in northern counties.
- OSHA & Forklift Certification: Instructor Ed Kimes will be a certified trainer for OSHA 10/30 and forklift operations within the next 60 days.
- Hotshot Trucking: The newly launched hotshot training program is already seeing high demand, with the first class expected to cover the cost of the foundation-funded trailer.

The expansion into the Newcastle/Upton area has been met with significant enthusiasm from the City of Newcastle, WYDOT, and local refining and oil companies. Notably, Newcastle High School is establishing a private grant program where industry sponsors will pay \$5,300 per student to support local workforce development with CDL Training.

Trustees noted the critical importance of lead instructor Ed Kimes, whose extensive construction background and industry relationships have been central to the program's rapid growth.

### **Financial Report**

Chief Financial Officer Kwin Wilkes provided a comprehensive review of the college's financial health as of the end of January. Overall, the college is in a stable position, with revenues generally outpacing expenditures and key benchmarks being met as the fiscal year progresses.

The General Fund covers the primary operations of the college, including instruction, student services, and administration.

- Revenues: \$14.03 million (78% of the annual budget) has been received. This is driven by strong tuition and fee collections, which are at 93% of the target due to new fee structures.
- Expenditures: Spending remains disciplined at \$11.41 million (64% of budget), leaving a healthy temporary difference of \$2.61 million between revenue and expenses.

Auxiliary funds represent self-supporting entities such as housing, dining, and the bookstore.

- Strong Performance: Revenues reached \$1.92 million, hitting 97% of the annual goal early in the year.
- Revenue Drivers:

- Food Service: \$788,626
- Housing: \$658,679
- Bookstore: \$156,225

Key Discussion Points

- Reporting Clarification: Trustee Kurt Sittner noted a discrepancy between the slides and the board packet; CFO Wilkes clarified that the slides inadvertently included preliminary February numbers, while the formal packet reflected the verified January totals.
- Expenditure Management: The college’s check register was notably small (only two pages), which was cited as an indicator of careful, conservative fiscal management.

**7. Approval of the Consent Agenda**

Vice Chairman Vonburg called to approve the Consent Agenda

Moved by: Bob Baumgartner; seconded by: Katherine Patrick

**Motion Carried**

- 7.1 Ratification of January Expenditure Report  
BR #92.pdf

**8. Board Approval of Action Items**

- 8.1 Board approval for an RFP for procurement of a Heavy Duty Truck not to exceed \$80,000.00.

**Model Year:** 2026

**Configuration:** 4x4 Crew Cab Dually with Flatbed and 5th-wheel hitch

**Engine:** Minimum 6.5L V8 Diesel

**Funding:** This purchase will be fully funded through the WIP AG Grant and the John P. Ellbogen Foundation.

BR #93.pdf

Vice Chairman Vonburg called for approval of Board Report 93.

Moved by: Randy Adams; seconded by: Doug Mercer

**Motion Carried, Board Report Approved**

- 8.2 Board Approval to authorize the College Administration to partner with the EWC Foundation for funding to conduct a comprehensive site feasibility study for the proposed rodeo facility expansion. This authorization includes the completion of Level I, II, and III studies in alignment with Wyoming State Building Commission requirements for state funding, including the issuance of all necessary RFQs, RFPs, and RFBs.

BR #94.pdf

WYOMING STATUTES PUBLIC ACCESS.pdf

Vice Chairman Vonburg called for approval of Board Report 94.

Moved by: Doug Mercer; seconded by: Bob Baumgartner

**Motion Carried, Board Report Approved.**

**9. Department Reports**

Admissions Report

**10. Trustee Topics**

Advisor Jim Willox noted the expansion of the Douglas campus is progressing on two fronts: the physical construction of the new Construction Technology building and the formal approval of its academic programs.

Construction Status

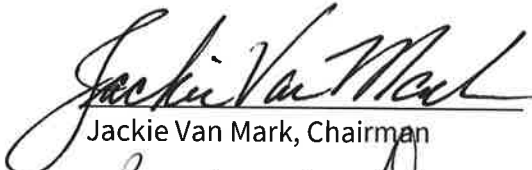
- Favorable weather has kept the project on target. Current work involves coordinating utility hookups and finalizing the construction sequence for the steel structure and concrete floor.
- Equipment specifications are being updated to ensure the building features current IT and audiovisual technology.
- The college is preparing its first reimbursement request for the Economic Development Administration (EDA) to maintain project funding.

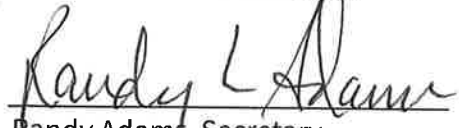
Vice President of the Douglas Campus Margaret Farley Spoke to the Board on the status of curriculum development.

- Programs for an AAS degree and certificates in Construction Technology and Management have been reviewed by regional experts to ensure they meet modern labor needs.
- To maintain strict safety standards for power tool use, initial classes will be capped at 15 students. Trustee Sittner inquired to the low number of students. Dr. Farley explained that with one instructor that felt like a viable number of students to instruct with power tools.
- The program is strategically timed to meet massive regional demand, with two potential data centers in Converse County expected to require up to 3,000 workers.
- The college is exploring hands-on student projects, such as "mini-house" construction, and potential workforce housing partnerships with local developers.

**11. Adjournment**

Vice Chairman Vonburg called to adjourn the meeting at 7:23 pm.

  
Jackie Van Mark, Chairman

  
Randy Adams, Secretary

*Lynda Dean*  
Lynda Dean, Executive Assistant