Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Date: October 13, 2026
Time: 5:45 PM – 7:45 PM MDT

Attendance

- Jackie VanMark— Present
- Rick Vonburg— Present
- Robert Baumgartner — Present
- Katherine Patrick — Present
- Kurt Sittner — Present
- Doug Mercer -- Present
- Julia Newman -- Present
- Jim Willox -- Present

1. Call Meeting to Order

The meeting was called to order. Technical issues with phone and video access were resolved before proceeding.

2. Approval of the Agenda

No changes were proposed. The agenda was approved as distributed.

3. Introductions

a. ACEN Letter of Recognition: Director Kasey Powell

Chair VanMark read a letter from the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) recognizing Kasey Powell for her volunteer service as an ACEN peer evaluator during the 2025–2026 academic year. Powell was not present (teaching in Douglas) but was commended for her dual role supporting both the Douglas and Torrington nursing programs.

b. FY 2027 Cutting Edge Grants: Perkins Grant Manager Kimberly Russell

Kimberly Russell announced the college received an additional $100,000 in Perkins Cutting Edge Grant funding (on top of the existing $71,000), across four programs:

- Nursing (Chanel Barr): $25,000 for a healthcare simulation/SimCapture system to record and assess clinical scenarios.
- Gunsmithing (Jake Floyd): Equipment for a Cerakote coating system, broadening student employability into automotive, aerospace, and firearms industries.
- Agriculture (Martin Winchell): A rate controller and precision planter trainer to expand mobile and classroom-based training (including outreach to Colorado schools).
- Welding (Joel Alworth): A multi-function wire feed/laser welding and engraving system, replacing the original Tiptig request to better serve curriculum needs.

The Board thanked Kimberly Russell and participating faculty for securing four grants in a single cycle — a notable achievement for the college.

Special Recognition: Livestock Judging & Show Teams

Coach Brian Mackey introduced student members of the livestock judging and show teams, highlighting strong results at the Casper and Aksarben (Grand Island) contests, including record-setting performances by freshmen Drew Ballard and Bria Mills. The team also exhibited and sold 10 donated calves at the Nile (Billings), earning a $1,000 donation and praise for professionalism.

Director Martin Winchell announced the upcoming Onyx and Gold fall show on October 31 at the ATEC facility, with 160+ preregistered entries expected. Trustees were encouraged to attend.

5. Administrative Reports

a. Human Resources Updates: Director Catherine Conard

- Announced two new hires: Stefan Coetsee (incoming CFO/AVP) and a new Registrar. Formal ratification expected next month.

b. Financial Review: Interim CFO Ron Laher (presented by Brandy Tighe)

- Year-to-date revenue: approximately $8.3 million (45% of budget collected/recognized), a 9% increase over last year.
- State appropriations collections exceed last year's pace; local motor vehicle fee revenue is lagging but expected to normalize.
- Credit tuition enrollment is up 1%+ after adjusting for the 6.6% tuition rate change.
- Auxiliary fund revenue: $1.2M recognized (57% of amended budget), driven by higher residence hall utilization.
- Operational fund expenditures: salaries/benefits at 22.3% of budget, reflecting the recent 5% raise.
- Audit expected to continue through October, with delivery in December.

Discussion: Trustee Sittner raised questions regarding the impact of Proposition 1 (property tax measure) on mill levy bonding and budget projections. VP Korell and VP Hansen noted:

- Existing bond reserves are healthy; the college should remain stable even with a tax reduction.
- Estimated budget impact of further valuation reductions: roughly $250,000–$350,000, though figures remain uncertain pending assessor data.
- State legislature has earmarked $20M for dual/concurrent enrollment support, which may offset local funding losses — but final rules are still being determined.

c. EWC Insurance Renewal Review: Interim CFO Ron Laher (presented by VP Korell)

- Total insurance premium increased from $461,000 (actual 2025–26) to $518,085 (quoted 2026–27) — an increase of roughly $57,000 after accounting for new CDL program

endorsements.

- Notable increases: Property (+14%), Commercial Auto (+20%), CDL Program (+122%, due to fleet expansion).
- Open claims discussed: gym roof/floor damage (under one shared deductible, insurer has committed to covering roof and floor replacement) and a 2024 auto accident involving a women's basketball assistant coach (reserved claim of approximately $150,000).
- Risk-reduction training has earned the college $6,000–$8,000 in insurance credits.

d. President's Report: Dr. Jeffry Hawes

- Announced a major $3 million National Science Foundation (NSF) grant submission, led by VP John Hansen in partnership with Northwest College and Central Wyoming College, developed in under 22 days through the Community Funding Accelerator and grant-writing firm Vitrium.
- The grant would fund new technician training certificates in electrical, mechanical, and agricultural technology (including UAVs and machine learning).
- EWC was selected ahead of other applicants due to its strong dual/concurrent enrollment track record.
- Noted upcoming Foundation updates and Rodeo Expansion Project strategy changes to be presented at the next board meeting.

6. Board Approval of the Consent Agenda

Motion: Trustee Newman moved to approve; seconded by Trustee Vonburg.

Result: Motion passed unanimously. This included:

- Minutes from September 8, 2026
- Ratification of HR appointments: Dustin Baldridge (Service Technician II) and Holly Lehn (Nursing)
- Ratification of insurance coverage (Oct 1, 2026 – Sept 30, 2027)
- Ratification of September Expense Report
- Ratification of Construction Trades Curriculum

7. Board Approval of Action Items

a. First Reading: Provisional Board Policy 5.15 — Readmission of Service Members and Reservists

Motion: Trustee Baumgartner moved; Trustee Patrick seconded.

Result: Motion passed unanimously.

b. Approval of RFP for Construction Manager at Risk (CMaR) — Rodeo Expansion Project

Motion: Trustee Vonburg moved; Trustee Mercer seconded.

Discussion: Trustee Sittner confirmed this approval only authorizes issuance of the RFP; a direct negotiation path remains possible pending Foundation strategy discussions.

Result: Motion passed unanimously.

8. Department Reports

8.1 Update on the Construction Trades Project — Converse County Advisor Jim Willox: No additional report was given during the open session beyond items already addressed under the Consent Agenda.

9. Trustee Topics

- Trustee Mercer commented positively on a recent community car show.
- Trustee Sittner noted a correction needed on page 4 of the Work Session agenda (title formatting); to be corrected by staff.

10. Executive Session

The Board convened in Executive Session pursuant to W.S. 16-4-405(a)(ii), (iii), and (ix) to discuss personnel appointments, pending/proposed litigation, and confidential information. Trustee Willox (advisor) was included per motion.

Motion: Moved by Trustee Vonburg; seconded by Trustee Patrick. Passed unanimously.

Motion to adjourn Executive Session: Moved by Trustee Vonburg; seconded by Trustee Mercer. Passed unanimously.

11. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was called following Executive Session.

Jackie VanMark, Chairman

Robert Baumgartner, Vice Chairman

Lynda Dean, Executive Assistant