

**WESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE AREA
BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

**INFORMAL MEETING
MINUTES**

Wednesday, January 21, 2026

The Western Community College Area Board of Governors held an Informal Board meeting at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, January 21, 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, January 13, 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.....	Absent
Starr Lehl, Vice Chair.....	Present
Lori J. Liggett	Absent
William M. Packard.....	Absent
Coral E. Richards	Present
R. J. Savely, Jr.....	Present
Marjorie A. Schmidt	Present
John P. Stinner, Chair	Absent

QUORUM

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

COMMUNITY COMMENTS

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

BOARD CHAIRPERSON COMMENTS

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

Vice Chair Lehl announced 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.

Board Training

President Dart explained the importance of the information he provided. While much of the material would be reviewed during the meeting, it would also serve as a reference for discussions over the coming months.

The information packet opened with the institutional program review timeline, a document familiar to the board, as it had been discussed in several consecutive meetings. President Dart reiterated that, as previously stated, any recommendation for program closure would be brought forward at this meeting and outlined the process leading up to such a recommendation.

Included were relevant Nebraska state statutes governing involuntary separation—specifically §§ 85-15,528; 85-15,531; and 85-15,532. These statutes define the legal requirements for reductions in force, including mandatory notification timelines and employee rights. The presenter highlighted the statutory 90-day, and 60-day notification requirements tied to faculty contract renewal dates, explaining how those dates are calculated based on the faculty contract year. Distinctions between faculty and staff notification requirements were also clarified.

President Dart reviewed the board's role in the process, emphasizing that faculty contracts are deemed renewed unless a majority of the board votes otherwise at least 60 days before the contract end date, with notice to the affected faculty member required 90 days prior. Additional statutes were summarized, including provisions requiring evidence of a change in circumstances necessitating a reduction in force, and outlining employee rights such as honorable dismissal and preferred reemployment status for up to 24 months.

Discussion moved to institutional policy BP-430, adopted in May 2024, which governs reductions in force. The policy identifies permissible justifications, including budgetary and programmatic changes. President Dart focused specifically on programmatic changes defined as adjustments based on enrollment decline, workforce demand, market feasibility, or program viability—as the basis for the current recommendation.

Associated procedure AP-431.01 was then reviewed, detailing the operational steps for implementing the policy. President Dart outlined the termination process for faculty on continuing contracts, noting that involuntary separation may occur only for just cause or through a reduction in force. The procedure specifies notification requirements, the faculty member's right to request a hearing before the board, timelines for that hearing, evidentiary standards, and reporting obligations following the board's decision. The hearing process, including representation, questioning, and standards of proof, was summarized to ensure clarity.

Before turning to program-specific data, President Dart emphasized the broader context: the responsibility of a community college to maintain programming that aligns with the needs of its service region. Over the institution's nearly 100-year history, programs have evolved in response to changing community and workforce demands. While program closures have historically been rare, President Dart stressed the importance of continual evaluation and adaptation.

President Dart reviewed the two-phase program review process undertaken in recent months, incorporating enrollment trends, completion data, regional workforce demand, and Department of Labor projections. The decision to bring forward a recommendation was described as difficult but necessary, grounded in institutional responsibility rather than individual performance.

It was emphasized that no board action was requested at this meeting. Rather, the purpose was to present the recommendation, explain the rationale, and allow for discussion and questions before any notifications were issued. Formal board action would occur only after required notifications, and any requested hearings had taken place.

Phase 1 quantitative data were then reviewed, ranking programs across five indicators, including three-year averages for declared majors, student FTE, awards conferred, instructional efficiency, and capacity utilization. Programs appearing repeatedly among the lowest performers across these indicators were identified for further analysis. President Dart clarified that these rankings served as a starting point only and did not, by themselves, determine program closure. Collision Repair emerged as the program most consistently ranked in the lowest tier across multiple indicators. President Dart explained each metric and emphasized that while quantitative data are important, they must be interpreted alongside qualitative factors such as workforce demand, program relevance, and future viability. Other programs appearing in the data were discussed to illustrate why low rankings alone did not justify closure in those cases.

Phase 2 data, which include faculty impact, curricular overlap, workforce alignment, and regional demand, were referenced as part of the broader analysis. Financial considerations were also discussed: the Collision Repair program costs approximately \$162,000 annually in instructional and equipment expenses, with significant additional capital investment required to modernize the program. While cost alone was not determinative, it contributed to the overall assessment.

President Dart addressed the distinction between student demand and workforce demand, noting that the Collision Repair program currently struggles on both fronts. Industry changes, increased vehicle total losses due to repair costs, technological advances, and shifts toward employer-based training models have reduced both enrollment and regional demand. These industry trends have been evident for several years and were not unexpected by program faculty.

President Dart clarified that the recommendation reflected program viability, not faculty performance, expressing high regard for the instructor involved. Current student impact was outlined, noting that four students are actively enrolled and may be able to complete their credentials this semester. A teach-out plan would be developed in accordance with institutional procedure and accrediting requirements, including coordination with state and regional accrediting bodies.

Notifications to the advisory board, dean, and faculty member had already occurred, with full transparency regarding the data, policies, statutes, and procedural rights involved. No student notifications had yet been issued, pending board discussion.

President Dart formally stated the recommendation is to close the Collision Repair program, including its three certificates and one applied associate degree. The faculty member would remain in good standing, complete the current contract term, and retain reemployment rights as defined by statute. Adjunct or alternative instructional opportunities could be considered in the future if appropriate.

Next Regular Meeting: Wednesday, January 21, 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 11:46 a.m.

Starr Lehl, Vice Chair

Susan L. Verbeck, Secretary