WESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE AREA
BOARD OF GOVERNORS

INFORMAL MEETING
MINUTES

October 15, 2025

The Western Community College Area Board of Governors held an Informal Board meeting at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, October 15, 2025, at Western Nebraska Community College Scottsbluff Campus, 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, October 7, 2025.

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

ROLL CALL

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

Ms. Guzman-Gonzales informed the Board secretary that she was unable to attend the meeting due to personal health.

Ms. Liggett informed the Board secretary that she was unable to attend the meeting due a personal business commitment.

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, community members who wish to make comments will be limited to a five-minute presentation. There were no comments.

BOARD CHAIR 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.

Presentation of WNCC Master Site and Facilities Plan
Jacob Sertich, with Wilkins Architecture, began his presentation by expressing his appreciation to all WNCC staff who contributed to the development of the Master Site and Facilities Plan. Mr. Sertich explained that this process began in 2023 and required numerous meetings. Progress on the plan was temporarily paused to focus on preparing information for the Harms Center and Alliance Powerline projects, both of which received ARPA funding. Because of this funding, it was essential to meet the related deadlines.

Presentation of WNCC Master Site and Facilities Plan (cont.)
Mr. Sertich noted that the Master Site and Facilities Plan has been in development for over a year. The plan provides historical context for the College's facilities and highlights the projects completed in recent years. It also establishes a framework to guide future projects. Decisions regarding future priority projects and their sequencing would be determined by the President and the Board of Governors. The information contained in the plan is intended to support sound, informed decision-making over the next ten to fifteen years.

The first half of the document focuses on the current facility inventory, detailing when each structure was built and when major improvements were made. The plan considers factors such as physical condition, student needs, and potential for growth. It not only evaluates building systems and infrastructure but also incorporates feedback from faculty and staff to assess how facilities can best support institutional goals.

A grading system was applied to each existing facility—poor, fair, good, and excellent. Mr. Sertich reviewed the ratings assigned to each College building and identified those that may warrant priority attention. Several facilities have not undergone significant updates in many years and are showing signs of aging. Once the Harms Center project is complete and spaces are vacated, additional opportunities for future projects will become available.

Presentation of 2025-2026 Proposed Fiscal Year Student Charges
Lynne Koski, Vice President of Administrative Services reported that they are still in the process of gathering feedback from students and other groups. The final tuition, fee, and housing recommendations will be presented for Board approval at the November meeting.

Included in the meeting packets were two documents:
- Board of Governors Tuition and Room & Board Recommendation – includes charts and slides.
- Detailed Rate and Fee Proposal (Excel) – outlines current and proposed rates with percentage changes.

Tuition and Fees Overview
The first slide showed resident tuition and mandatory fees for all Nebraska community colleges for 2025–26, along with proposed rates. Western and Northeast currently have the highest resident tuition.

The next slide showed non-resident tuition and fees. WNCC currently has both a border state and non-resident rate. A proposal is to eliminate the border state rate, which currently represents about 8% of total credit hours. Even with a proposed flat non-resident rate of $150 per credit hour (tuition + fees), WNCC would remain competitive—still at or below other colleges' resident rates. The difference in non-resident rates across colleges often reflects location, enrollment strategies, and historic funding philosophies (e.g., property tax offsets when colleges had taxing authority).

Dual Credit
Most Nebraska community colleges, except Central and Southeast, now offer $0 tuition for dual credit courses. The state provides reimbursement for dual credit through the funding formula, including an additional $5 million appropriation for FY 2025–26.

Housing and Meal Rates
Comparing residence hall rates is increasingly difficult due to differences in new facilities and room configurations. The first comparison shows suite-style double occupancy rooms with a 14-meal plan (the standard minimum). WNCC ranks mid- to high range compared to other colleges, including Chadron State and Eastern Wyoming. The next comparison showed suite-style single occupancy rooms, where WNCC is on the lower end of the cost range.

Presentation of 2025-2026 Proposed Fiscal Year Student Charges (cont.)
The final slide compared total student cost of attendance (tuition, fees, room, meals, and books) for residents and non-residents living on campus. WNCC remains competitive within this group.

Proposed Changes and Impact
- Resident tuition: +$2 per credit hour (+1.8%).
- Non-resident tuition: +2.33%.
- No change in per-credit-hour mandatory fees.
- Housing: +3% for double occupancy, +5% for single occupancy.
- Meal plans: no increase.
- Combined, the total average cost increase on the Scottsbluff campus is under 2.5%.

Examples of student impact:
A full-time resident student living in a double room would see about $128/year increase (~$4 per week). A border state student moving to the new non-resident rate would see about $560/year increase (~$18 per week).

Occupancy and Housing Discussion:
- Current residence hall occupancy is **below 70%**, down from last year due to Pioneer Hall being offline.

- Occupancy is expected to rise to **80–85%** within two years as enrollment grows, especially among online and first-year students.

- Some students live off campus due to family status, lack of available options, or lower costs, though on-campus rates include utilities, internet, and laundry.

- All athletes are required to live on campus; the college is also discussing requiring first-year international students (or all first-year students) to do the same for student success reasons.

Housing Projects in Sidney and Alliance
Proposed housing expansions primarily serve aviation and powerline programs, though nursing students are also expected to benefit. Sidney currently has twelve units (24 beds) with strong occupancy tied to aviation enrollment. Alliance housing would see similar success if built, helping draw additional students to that campus.

Board Training – Program Review
President Dart reminded Board members that during last year's budgeting process, both program review and the possibility of involuntary separation were discussed. While those conversations happened around the same time, they are separate processes.

The budget process last year was successful—the Board approved a responsible budget that reduced debt, aligned one-time funds with one-time expenses, and lowered overall costs.

The question has been asked if that means that there is no longer a need to conduct a program review. The answer is no—a program review is still necessary for important reasons.

As mentioned during the update on the Master Facilities Plan, if a priority is to build a new Career and Technical Education facility, before moving forward, there are questions that need to be asked. Mainly, are the programs currently in that building the ones that should be there ten years from now? Program review helps answer questions like that.

Board Training – Program Review (cont.)

Beyond facilities planning, program review fulfills several key responsibilities—to taxpayers, students, employees, and the college accrediting body. As a community college, we are legally obligated to meet the educational needs of our region, and program review ensures we are doing that effectively. Program review is not just a compliance exercise—it is a process to ensure our programs are relevant, effective, and aligned with the College mission.

At WNCC, program review occurs on two levels. Faculty conduct a thorough review of each program every three years, as outlined in Board Policy 617. This process identifies strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement, ensuring each program continues to meet the needs of our students and community. Many program improvements come from the review process. This process is separate from program accreditation—though accredited programs, such as those in healthcare, undergo an additional level of review through their accrediting bodies. For example, the Health Information Technology program recently completed its accreditation process, which led to the creation of a new Medical Coding Certificate. That certificate launched in the fall and filled immediately. Due to high demand, Alliance Campus Director, Misty Curtis has been working with Box Butte General Hospital to start a second cohort in January. This illustrates how program review helps identify needs and the opportunity to respond quickly.

The second level of review—the one presented last year—is the annual program performance review. This review evaluates all programs institutionally. Using data from Institutional Effectiveness and Planning, we look at which programs are performing well, which are struggling, and how to support improvement or determine if a program still meets the needs of the community.

The initial analysis focuses on five indicators:
- Headcount
- Student FTE (Full-Time Equivalent)
- Number of awards (degrees and certificates)
- Student FTE vs. instructional FTE
- Course capacity

Programs ranking low in at least three of these five metrics undergo a deeper, secondary analysis. That includes reviewing past program evaluations, recent enrollment trends, instructional design, cross-program impacts, dual credit and workforce alignment, instructional costs, and accreditation status.

Last year, approximately nine programs of concern were identified, and meetings were held with faculty to discuss the findings. Those discussions proved highly productive and resulted in noticeable improvements. One notable example is the Early Childhood Education program, a vital area that had been struggling with enrollment. After faculty expanded flexible and online course offerings and

implemented strategies to better reach paraprofessionals and nontraditional students, the program experienced a significant increase in enrollment this year.

Program review is not about eliminating programs—it is about strengthening them. It serves as a process to ensure that each program remains relevant, effective, and responsive to the evolving needs of the community and workforce. The goal is to identify ways to make every program stronger and to ensure that each one has the necessary resources, support, and strategies to improve and continue meeting community needs.

Board Training – Program Review (cont.)
President Dart shared that he met with staff in the health professions program as a follow-up to earlier discussions. They were actively redesigning their curriculum to better serve their region and hopefully boost enrollment. This issue was raised because, during the previous year's budget process, the institution faced a tight deadline—by January or February, it would have been necessary to notify a faculty member if their position were being eliminated. Leadership chose not to take that step and instead used the time to meet with every program identified for review.

President Dart emphasized that this review process should occur annually. It provides an opportunity for open dialogue and accountability, ensuring that the programs supported by institutional resources remain aligned with the College's mission. If a program no longer meets workforce demands or enrollment expectations, it draws resources away from areas that could have greater impact. Although reinvestment decisions are not formally part of the program review process, President Dart noted that such considerations are always an integral part of strategic planning.

The administration emphasized the importance of examining programs carefully and affirming that those funded are essential to the institution's mission. Programs that no longer meet workforce or enrollment needs risk diverting resources from programs that could better serve those needs. While reinvestment decisions are not technically part of program review, they are consistently considered in the institution's overall planning and decision-making.

Change is inevitable—a program that once met a critical need is not a bad program if it no longer meets that need, it is simply time to adapt. Several new programs were recently launched, but it has been a long time since one was phased out. The goal is to provide timely information to enable open, informed discussions about whether each program continues to meet the organization's needs.

Who sets the program review criteria? Is there an outside agency? In response to this inquiry, President Dart stated that common benchmarks are used, but there is no universal standard—it varies by institution. They have collaborated with faculty and administration to develop a unique process that ensures the benchmarks accurately reflect the institution's goals.

Board Member Comments
There were no comments.

Next Regular Meeting: Wednesday, November 19, 2025, 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 12:00 p.m.

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 John P. Stinner, Chairperson   Susan L. Verbeck, Secretary