Navajo County Community College District
Governing Board Regular Meeting Minutes

September 15, 2026 – 10:00a.m.

Northland Pioneer College Painted Desert Campus
Tiponi Community Center Board Room
2251 East Navajo Boulevard, Holbrook, AZ 86025

Governing Board Members Present: Chair Everett Robinson; Mr. Porter Black; Ms. Rosie Sekayumptewa; Derrick Leslie

Governing Board Members Absent: Kristine Laughter

Others Present: President Von Lawson; EVPLSS Michael Solomonson; VPAS Maderia Ellison; VPHR Nicole Ulibarri; AVP Michael Jacob; AVP Rich Chanick; AVP Dr. Farah Bughio; COS Rebecca Hunt; Julia Wilson; Justin White; Horacio Luna; Rennie Gonzales; Dr. Alexander Henderson; Pat Lopez; Kathleen Berlyn; Jesse Reeck; Tiffani Martin; Pamela Bishop; Russell Kupfer; Rachel Townsend; Betsy Ann Wilson; Ed Wilson; Jessica Kitchens; Dawayne Bahe; Tonya Thacker; NAVIT Superintendent Matt Weber

Remote Attendees: Josh Rogers; Natalie Kee; Andrew Farr; Libby James; Pat Lopez; Dr. Tabitha Stickel; AVP Katie Matott; Dr. Alex Stritmatter; Scott Waite; Debra Gibbons; Tia Owens; Karen Baker; Dor Jaquez; Alethia Broderick; Rickey Jackson; Rhonda Paladino; Jonathan Lawerence; Jorge Meza; Elizabeth Giacalone; Julius Marshall; Kelsey Cox; Janalda Nash; Candace Morehouse; Chelsea Wood; Karen Zimmerman; Chun-Hung Wang; Jefferson Hunt; Erika Lord; Dr. Jeri Lastine; Jodie Humphrey; Olivia Jaquez; Susan Jensen; Daphne Brimhall; Colleen Marsh; Jennifer Brimhall; Lia Keenan; Francis Skibicki; Kimberly Reed; Norvita Charleston; Muriel Metcalf

Agenda Item 1: Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Robinson called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Agenda Item 2: Adoption of Agenda

Chair Robinson called for a vote to adopt the agenda as presented with Mr. Black, Mr. Leslie, Ms. Sekayumptewa, and Chair Robinson all voting in the affirmative. There were no votes against.

Agenda Item 3: For Discussion and Possible Action

3.A. Old Business

There was no old business to review.

3.B New Business

3.B.1 **Request to approve FY2028 Budget Calendar and Assumptions**

Director of Financial Service Russell Kupfer requested the Board approve the FY2028 Budget Calendar and Assumptions.

Chair Robinson called for the vote to approve the FY2028 Budget Calendar and Assumptions with Mr. Black, Mr. Leslie, Ms. Sekayumptewa, and Chair Robinson all voting in the affirmative. There were no votes against.

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3.B.2 **Request to change the October 20, 2026 regular DGB meeting to October 27, 2026.**

Chair Robinson requested the Board approve moving the regular Board meeting from October 20th to October 27th due to Board Members Leslie and Sekayumptewa travelling to the ACCT Conference in Chicago that week.

Chair Robinson called for the vote to approve changing the October regular DGB meeting from October 20th to October 27th with Mr. Black, Ms. Sekayumptewa, Mr. Leslie and Chair Robinson all voting in the affirmative. There were no votes against.

Agenda Item 4:

4.A Standing Presentations

4.A.1. Financial Position

Vice President Ellison provided the Board an overview of Northland Pioneer College's financial activity for July 2026, the first month of fiscal year 2027. VPAS Ellison reported that there were no significant financial developments at this early stage of the fiscal year.

- General Fund: Revenue was approximately 10% of the annual budget, compared with 8% anticipated. Expenditures were at approximately 8%, consistent with expectations.
- Unrestricted Plant Fund: Revenue and expenditures remained low, reflecting limited activity at the beginning of the fiscal year. Additional activity was expected as facilities projects progressed.
- Restricted Fund: Grant-related revenue and expenditures were still limited, at approximately 2% and 1%, respectively, as funding and program activity ramped up.
- Auxiliary Fund: Revenue reached approximately 6% of the annual budget, while expenses were at 4%. This fund supports activities intended to generate sufficient revenue to cover their costs, including the bookstore and performing arts.
- Cash Flow: Cash flow from all activities was nearly $5 million, with slightly more than $1 million available for funding.

VPAS Ellison also reviewed historical property tax receipts alongside the current fiscal year's activity. Because the report covered only July, significant property tax collections were not yet expected.

4.A.2. NPC Student Government Association (SGA)

SGA President Pamela Bishop provided the Board an update on Student Government Association (SGA) activities and priorities for the 2026–2027 academic year and beyond. Key initiatives include:

- Continuing the student merchandise and T-shirt initiative.
- Supporting welcome-back events at NPC locations through funding for campus offices.
- Expanding virtual activities so online students and students unable to travel to campus can participate.
- Continuing the laptop scholarship program, with one laptop allocated for each of the nine campuses and an additional laptop for online students.
- Volunteering at the annual Pedal the Petrified event to promote NPC Friends and Family scholarships.

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- Increasing student participation and developing future university tours for transfer students.
- SGA membership increased from four to seven students, but staffing remained a challenge when trying to support all nine locations. The presentation emphasized making students feel welcomed and connected regardless of where or how they attend college.

Ms. Sekayumptewa asked Ms. Bishop about SGA recruitment across the campuses. Ms. Bishop reported that the SGA works with the campus front offices and social events to recruit. She also noted that the SGA attends campus events like Eagle Fest and makes sure that all information is posted around the campuses.

4.A.3. NPC Faculty Association

No report.

4.A.4. Classified and Administrative Staff Organization (CASO)

No report.

4.A.5. Northland Pioneer College (NPC) Friends and Family

NPC Friends and Family Director Jesse Reeck presented the Board with an update on NPCFF activities.

1. Pedal the Petrified Fundraising Event

- Approximately 225 riders had registered for the upcoming September cycling event at Petrified Forest National Park.
- A check-in event was planned at the Nizhoni Learning Center in Holbrook the evening before the ride.
- The event relies on volunteers from students, staff, community members, and board representatives.
- Local businesses and corporate sponsors provide food, water, supplies, and financial support.

2. Student Transportation Assistance

- NPCFF has distributed $16,500 of its $20,000 transportation assistance allocation for tribal-member students.
- Additional funding remained available for students who needed help traveling to class.
- A new transportation grant funded by NPC Friends and Family was piloted for non-tribal students, with approximately half of those funds already distributed.

These programs help address transportation barriers for students attending NPC across its large service area.

3. Scholarships and Student Support

- A new scholarship was introduced through the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) chapter for the White Mountains, intended for a student enrolled in a behavioral health program.
- NPCFF also approved support for a scholarship recognizing a Hopi community member who had helped strengthen the college's relationship with the community.

4. Community Service and Partnerships

NPCFF participated in the Clear Creek cleanup organized by the Student Success Department. Participants collected more than 200 pounds of trash in the Winslow area.

Director Reeck reported that the project was a meaningful contribution to the community and an opportunity to strengthen relationships with students, faculty, and local partners.

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5. Scholarship Application Improvements
Director Reeck reported positive results from its scholarship application platform, AwardSpring. Application numbers had increased, and students and staff were becoming more familiar with the system. Plans are underway to allow additional college departments to use the same portal so students can access institutional and departmental scholarships in one place. The Foundation also planned to implement donor-management software to improve recordkeeping and streamline administrative processes.

6. Upcoming Activities

- Spring scholarship applications were scheduled to open October 1.
- NPCFF representatives planned to visit all nine NPC locations during October.
- These visits would recognize current scholarship recipients, promote upcoming application opportunities, and help students with questions about the application process.

4.A.6. Human Resources

Ms. Wilson presented the Board an HR update on behalf of VPHR Ulibarri.

1. Employee Welcome and Recognition
    - The college welcomed three new employees:
        - Registrar
        - Whiteriver Campus Monitor
        - WMC Learning Assistant
    - One employee had departed from the institution.
2. Recruitment and Vacant Positions
    - Four positions had been closed and were pending offers.
    - Several other positions were in the committee review process.
    - Three positions remained open.
3. Employee and Leadership Training
    - Chelsea Wood was expected to provide training as the college continued implementing its new NeoEd learning system.
    - Additional leadership development opportunities were being planned, including conflict-resolution training for supervisors and other leadership-level employees.
4. Employee Wellness and Total Rewards
    - September's employee wellness theme focused on immune resilience.
    - Wellness activities and services included:
        - Foot zone therapy at the Painted Desert Campus in Holbrook.
        - Mini massages planned for employees in Kayenta.
    - Employees were encouraged to participate in these wellness offerings and take advantage of the benefits available through the college's partners.
5. Employee Benefits and Engagement
    - Ms. Wilson highlighted the importance of supporting the college's wellness partners and making use of available employee benefits.
    - Updated information on employee turnover and related human resources matters was expected in the following month's report.

4.A.7 Construction Report

Director of Facilities and Transportation Justin White presented the Board with an update on various construction projects.

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Kayenta Building Construction

- A successful beam-signing event was held in Kayenta, allowing community members to sign a structural beam before it was installed.
- Following the event, additional community members expressed interest in signing the beam. The beam was being installed at the time of the report.
- The building project was approximately 40% complete and remained on schedule.
- The project team anticipated reaching approximately 95% completion by April, with the building fully completed and turned over to the college by the end of August.

2. Cosmetology Project

- The cosmetology project remained in the design phase.
- Plans were expected to be completed within approximately two weeks.
- Once the plans are ready, the project will proceed to the bidding and contracting process, with construction expected to begin soon afterward.

Chair Robinson asked Director White about the new table for the Board room. Director White replied that four of the six pieces had reportedly been completed. Measurements and placement arrangements had been made, and the remaining work was progressing on schedule. Ms. Wilson commented that the table was being made in house by NPC employees.

4.A.8. Leadership Council

No report.

4.A.9 ERP Implementation Update

AVP of Information Technology Michael Jacob provided a comprehensive update on telecommunications infrastructure, network reliability, computer upgrades, student technology support, data security, and the college's Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system implementation. The report emphasized collaboration across IT departments and the broader college, ongoing infrastructure improvements, and challenges caused by delays in vendor integrations.

1. Telecommunications Infrastructure and Network Reliability

Mr. Jacob reviewed the college's current network infrastructure in response to questions from board members about service disruptions and available backup options.

- Network redundancy: Most campuses have backup connections designed to maintain service if the primary network infrastructure fails. These backup systems help reduce interruptions to instruction and daily operations.
- Transition to Sparklight: The college is moving away from Cellular One to Sparklight to obtain greater bandwidth. Some backup connections are expected to become primary connections, with microwave links serving as backup.
- Recent outages: Several network disruptions occurred during the year, primarily due to internet service provider power failures and damage to regional fiber-optic lines. Some disruptions were outside the college's direct control.
- Potential Starlink backup service: IT is exploring Starlink satellite internet for geographically difficult locations where traditional microwave infrastructure is impractical. Locations under consideration include the Taylor and TC buildings and facilities in St. Johns.
- Potential costs: The Starlink option would require subscription fees and additional equipment, including firewalls and routers. Reliability may also be affected by weather conditions.

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Mr. Jacob explained that redundancy means having an alternate connection available when the primary system fails. The goal is to improve network reliability and minimize interruptions for students and employees. He also confirmed that Frontier's transition from copper to fiber infrastructure would not affect the college's existing network, as NPC was already not using copper infrastructure.

2. Computer Upgrades and Technology Equipment

- Windows 11 upgrade: More than 1,300 computers were upgraded to Windows 11. Most upgrades were completed during the previous year, with the remaining devices recently updated.
- New identification card printers: New ID badge printing systems were deployed across all campuses. The cloud-based system replaces aging equipment and supports RFID-enabled badges, which could be used for future electronic access controls.
- Equipment inventory: IT is conducting a comprehensive inventory of computer equipment throughout the college. Older or unused equipment will be evaluated for reuse, auction, or disposal to improve resource utilization.

3. Student Technology Access and Support

Student hotspot program

- The college increased its media fee from $47 to $50 to help fund internet hotspots for students who need them.
- The program was still being finalized, with plans to provide hotspots to three students initially.
- The first participants will help IT evaluate and refine the process before expanding the program.

First-day student support challenges

- The first day of the semester created difficulties when more than 400 students using Navigate contacted the support center at approximately the same time.
- IT acknowledged that the response process did not work as intended.
- The department was reviewing internal procedures and met with Navigate representatives to better understand workflows and improve coordination.
- IT planned to present proposed improvements at a future board meeting, with the goal of providing a smoother start for students in the upcoming semester.

4. Cosmetology System Implementation

- New point-of-sale equipment and equipment used by students were installed at cosmetology locations.
- The system was implemented and tested before the semester began.
- Initial feedback from the cosmetology department was positive.
- Future work will integrate the system with the college's other platforms so student enrollment information can transfer automatically, and grades may flow into the student information system.

5. Data Security and System Monitoring

The college was implementing a new data security posture management system.

The system is expected to:

- Scan college systems to identify stored data.
- Classify information according to its sensitivity.
- Help the college better understand where sensitive information is stored and how it is managed.

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- Potentially identify unofficial or "shadow IT" systems operating outside the college's primary ERP environment.

6. ERP Modernization and System Consolidation

System consolidation

- The new ERP environment replaces a more fragmented collection of systems.
- Reducing the number of systems and integrations should lower the ongoing maintenance burden on college staff and vendors.
- The transition has been completed at a foundational level, although work remains to stabilize the environment and complete integrations.

Faculty workload management

- The faculty workload management solution went live.
- It supports the processing of faculty overload payments and other qualifying compensation.
- Automating these processes is expected to reduce manual work.

Emergency notification system

- The integration between Anthology and Rave was not yet functioning as intended.
- An interim process was established to send student information to Rave daily and employee information twice monthly.
- This process ensures current students and employees are included in emergency notifications for campus closures or other urgent situations.
- A near-real-time integration is planned once the broader system integration work is completed.

7. Anthology Implementation: Major Challenges and Delays

A substantial portion of the presentation focused on the ongoing challenges associated with implementing Anthology and its related systems.

Original system scope

The college initially purchased several Anthology products and related capabilities, including:

- Student information and academic records.
- Finance, budgeting, accounting, grants, and procurement.
- Human capital management and employee-related functions.
- Analytics and business intelligence.
- Occupational Insight to help students connect career goals with NPC programs.
- Reach and other student engagement and support tools.

Over time, the college acquired additional products to meet its needs. These included ADP for payroll, NeoEd for human resources functions, Modern Campus for noncredit courses, TouchNet for payment processing, and Blackboard for learning management.

Integration problems

Mr. Jacob explained that the actual implementation became more complicated than originally planned. Several factors contributed to the current difficulties:

- Delayed integration development: Anthology's implementation approach postponed development of integrations until near the end of implementation or after systems went live.
- Vendor layoffs: Multiple rounds of layoffs affected personnel responsible for stabilizing products and developing integrations.
- Incomplete system connections: Some integrations remain unfinished, while others are operational but experiencing problems.

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- Manual workarounds: Until integrations are completed, employees across multiple departments must perform additional manual steps to transfer and maintain information.

Current status and priorities

- Some integration milestones have been completed since the previous board meeting.
- Other integrations are close to completion, while additional work remains scheduled.
- Lower-priority work has been placed on hold so staff can focus on the most critical issues.
- IT personnel and employees throughout the college have been working extended hours, including nights, weekends, and holidays, to resolve problems and maintain operations.

NPC continues to work with Ellucian leadership to address vendor-related issues and pursue concessions related to implementation difficulties. The presenter explained that earlier discussions had been disrupted by Anthology's bankruptcy and subsequent acquisitions, requiring the college to restart negotiations.

8. Board Discussion

During the discussion, board members asked for clarification about network redundancy, overtime associated with the ERP implementation, and the status of negotiations with the vendor. The IT representative explained that overtime was necessary because of the substantial workload created by incomplete integrations and the need to maintain normal college operations.

Board members acknowledged the challenges of the implementation and thanked Mr. Jacobs and the IT team for their efforts. The discussion recognized that the team was working through a difficult situation while continuing to support the college's operational needs.

4.A.10 External Relations

President Lawson provided the Board a brief report on behalf of AVP Rich Chanick. The Board also viewed a video from the White Mountain Apache Tribe regarding the building of their new hospital.

4.A.11. Chief of Staff

Chief of Staff Rebecca Hunt provided an update to the Board on college and strategic planning, accreditation, strategic plan alignment, and shared governance.

1. Developing an Integrated College Planning Framework

COS Hunt presented an update on NPC's efforts to connect its strategic planning and institutional operations into one coordinated system. The goal is to ensure that strategic planning, departmental master plans, assessment activities, procedures, and accreditation evidence support one another rather than operate independently.

The proposed framework is intended to improve institutional decision-making, transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement.

The framework includes:

- Strategic plan: Establishes the college's overall direction and priorities.
- Departmental master plans: Translate institutional priorities into longer-term goals for specific operational areas.
- Alignment crosswalks: Show how departmental activities connect to strategic initiatives, identify collaborating departments, and establish measurable outcomes.
- Key Performance Indicator (KPI) dashboards: Track progress and measure results.
- Central evidence repository: Provides access to supporting documentation, reports, and accreditation evidence.
- Continuous improvement: Uses results and assessment findings to evaluate progress and adjust as needed.

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2. Alignment of Departmental Master Plans

NPC is working to align five major master-planning areas:

- Academics
- Information technology
- Human resources
- Facilities
- Finance

Ms. Hunt explained that these plans are interdependent. Each master plan is expected to address a common set of questions:

- How does the plan support the college's strategic plan?
- What improvements will result for students, the community, and other stakeholders?
- How will success be measured?
- What resources will be required?
- Which departments or individuals must collaborate?
- How will the work be implemented, assessed, and improved?

The master plans were still in draft form and required additional coordination to ensure consistency and alignment.

Ms. Hunt clarified that NPC had previously developed academic and facilities master plans, but the more comprehensive planning process would introduce formal master plans for Academics, IT, HR, and Finance. Although the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) does not specifically require master plans for all five areas, NPC is developing them to improve coordination and ensure that institutional decisions are supported by comprehensive planning.

3. Alignment Crosswalks and Measurable Outcomes

The college is developing alignment crosswalks to document the relationship between individual departmental activities and the broader strategic plan.

The crosswalks will identify:

- The activity or initiative being undertaken.
- Its relationship to the strategic plan.
- The departments and individuals involved.
- The resources and coordination required.
- The measures used to evaluate success.
- The evidence documenting progress and results.

4. Centralized SharePoint Repository and Procedure Management

Ms. Hunt is establishing a central SharePoint location for institutional planning and documentation.

The repository is intended to house:

- The strategic plan and departmental master plans.
- KPI dashboards and performance reports.
- College procedures.
- HLC evidence and supporting documentation.
- Institutional reports and related resources.

5. Continuous Improvement and HLC Accreditation

Ms. Hunt emphasized that the initiative is not simply a response to an upcoming accreditation visit. Although HLC expectations are an important consideration, the broader goal is to improve the college's effectiveness.

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The integrated framework is intended to address previous difficulties involving disconnected planning documents, manual reporting, scattered evidence, and limited visibility into how departmental work supports institutional priorities.
The college's next steps include:

- Completing and aligning the remaining master plans.
- Expanding outcome reporting and executive dashboards.
- Developing an annual strategic-plan progress report for the District Governing Board.
- Continuing regular procedure reviews.
- Working with the staff responsible for institutional effectiveness and accreditation to maintain HLC evidence.
- Establishing an ongoing planning and assessment cycle rather than preparing documentation only when an accreditation visit approaches.

6. Board Request for Greater Transparency About Problems and Gaps

Mr. Leslie welcomed the presentation but expressed concern that reports often emphasize progress without fully explaining the underlying difficulties. He requested that future reporting identify problems, gaps, and disconnects early enough for the board to understand them before they become larger issues.
Ms. Hunt clarified that the disconnects she had described primarily reflected historical planning practices. Previously, departmental master plans often did not explicitly reference or align with the strategic plan, and there was no comprehensive college-wide planning framework connecting all the pieces.
The college is addressing these shortcomings through:

- SharePoint and other shared planning tools.
- Crosswalks linking departmental and institutional goals.
- More frequent coordination meetings among those responsible for strategic initiatives and master plans.
- A formal college planning procedure and calendar.
- Clearer accountability for ensuring that plans are coordinated.

Ms. Hunt also explained that her role includes helping bring these planning efforts together. She and the individual responsible for HLC accreditation had established regular meetings, at least weekly, to coordinate strategic planning and accreditation activities.

7. Communication and Ongoing Board Updates

Board members emphasized the importance of keeping both the board and the college community informed as the framework develops.
Ms. Hunt explained that communication would occur through several channels:

- Regular board updates on strategic planning and HLC initiatives.
- All college meetings, including the meeting scheduled for Wednesdays following regular board meetings.
- Convocation and planned presentations on strategic initiatives.
- SharePoint, including a potential news and updates section.
- Annual strategic-plan progress reporting.

Ms. Hunt also offered to provide a more detailed presentation on the master plans at a future meeting and indicated that she could present the SharePoint system to the board.
Mr. Leslie suggested incorporating strategic-plan categories into the board meeting agenda as a reminder of how agenda items relate to the priorities approved by the board. The response was that changes to the board agenda would be subject to direction from the District Governing Board and its chair.

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8. Relationship Between Board Directives and College Planning

A significant portion of the discussion focused on how board directives should fit within the strategic plan, departmental master plans, and the college's shared-governance processes.

Board members emphasized that the strategic plan should be a living document, capable of being adjusted when circumstances, institutional needs, or available evidence change.

Ms. Hunt agreed that board directives should be considered in relation to the strategic plan and master plans. She noted that the planning framework should help board members understand how their initiatives fit into the broader institutional structure.

The discussion also recognized that plans must remain flexible enough to respond to significant changes, such as the COVID-19 pandemic or other unexpected events. However, adjustments should be supported by evidence, feasibility assessments, and a clear understanding of their implications rather than made arbitrarily.

9. Concerns About Shared Governance and the Feasibility of Board Directives

Board Member Leslie raised concerns about what happens after the board directs the college to pursue a particular initiative.

The example discussed was a proposed 90-credit bachelor's degree program in business administration. A board member expressed concern that a directive could create pressure on college personnel if they believed a proposal might not generate sufficient enrollment or might not be financially sustainable.

The discussion raised several questions:

- How are board directives evaluated through the college's internal processes?
- How do proposals move through shared governance and instructional review?
- What happens if the college determines that a directive is not feasible?
- How are the reasons for rejecting or modifying a directive communicated back to the board?
- How can the college ensure that directives do not unintentionally bypass established procedures or create uncertainty for employees?

Board members stressed that proposals should still undergo appropriate evaluation, including financial analysis, enrollment considerations, feasibility studies, and review through the established instructional and shared-governance processes.

The concern was not simply whether a proposal would be accepted or rejected, but whether the board would receive enough information to understand the reasons behind the recommendation.

In response, EVPLSS Dr. Michael Solomonson explained that there were concerns about the viability of directives from the Board and if the process of Instructional Council was still usable in these situations. Board Member Leslie expressed concerned that when the answer from the College is no to Board directives, that the reasoning behind that decision is not coming back to the Board for discussion. He expressed concern with Shared Governance practices between the Board and the College. President Lawson emphasized that he and the President's Cabinet have a responsibility to provide the board with wise counsel and good information. He acknowledged that, in the past, when the board received a negative recommendation, it had not always received a complete explanation of the reasons behind it. He commented that the college intends to improve this practice by providing more comprehensive information, including both benefits and concerns. When an initiative is determined to be inadvisable or infeasible, the board should receive information explaining whether the proposal could:

- Harm the institution or the community it serves.
- Create financial or operational difficulties.
- Conflict with established processes or institutional priorities.

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- Fail to demonstrate sufficient feasibility or sustainability.

President Lawson also clarified that the board retains its statutory authority to make decisions, even when college administrators advise against a proposal. The purpose of the improved process is to ensure that board members understand the potential consequences and can make educated decisions. The discussion concluded with an emphasis on providing the board with the complete picture—the positive aspects, the challenges, and the supporting rationale—rather than presenting only favorable information.

The Board took a break from 11:35 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.

4.A.11. ACCT Federal and State Update

Board Member Leslie provided an update to the Board on ACCT/AACCT activities.

1. Legislative Updates and Funding Requests

The retreat included updates from lobbyists on current legislative issues. Proposition 123 remained unresolved at the time of the meeting.

The presentation referenced approximately $64 million in funding requests to the state, distributed among several priorities:

- $10 million for community colleges.
- $10 million for allied health.
- $10 million for workforce development.
- $10 million for the Community College Promise program.
- $34 million for operating aid for the entities identified in the transcript as "Arizona" and "EMA"

2. Anticipated State Budget Challenges

Mr. Leslie reported that significant state budget challenges were expected in 2027. Arizona was described as the first state to implement the cuts associated with federal legislation referred to in the transcript as "H.R. 1."

Mr. Leslie expressed concern that hospitals would require additional funding in 2027, potentially increasing competition among public services and institutions for limited state resources. As a result, obtaining funding for community college priorities could become more difficult.

3. Statewide Community College Priorities

AACCT participants identified several priorities for community colleges across Arizona:

- Adult education.
- Community College Promise.
- Dual enrollment.
- Nursing programs.
- Workforce development.

4. Ongoing Organizational Issues Within AACCT

Mr. Leslie noted that an unresolved disagreement continues between AACCT and AC4. The issue was described as longstanding and primarily concerning organizational roles or responsibilities—summarized by the speaker as a question of "whose box" particular responsibilities belong in.

5. Potential Continued Service on AACCT

Mr. Leslie said he was considering running for another term on the AACCT board, with a potential submission due in November and was also considering serving on either the Policy and Advocacy Committee or a diversity-related committee.

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Mr. Leslie closed his report saying that he anticipated some changes in the political landscape following the election, although no major changes were expected. He also said that he anticipated further discussions of many issues at the annual ACCT Conference in Chicago in October.

Agenda Item 5: Recruitment Report

NPC North Recruiter Dawayne Bahe presented the Board with an overview of the college's recruitment and outreach efforts, describing how recruiters connect with prospective students, promote college programs, and help students navigate the admissions process. He emphasized that recruitment is essential to increasing awareness of Northland Pioneer College, particularly in rural and tribal communities, but that both students and recruiters face significant geographic, financial, and logistical challenges.

Key Highlights

Community outreach and recruitment: NPC has two recruiters covering the northern and southern service areas. Outreach includes high schools, community events, college fairs, and tribal gatherings. A key objective is to increase awareness of NPC's nine locations, affordable tuition, academic programs, and student support services.

Student guidance and enrollment support: Recruiters help prospective and returning students understand program requirements, submit applications, obtain student identification numbers, connect with advisors, complete registration steps, and navigate financial aid and scholarship opportunities. They also assist transfer students with transcript requirements and follow up with students who need help completing enrollment.

Barriers facing students: Students may lack reliable transportation, internet access, housing, or childcare. Long distances to campuses and specialized programs, particularly nursing and allied health programs requiring in-person labs, can make attendance difficult. Recruiters help students explore online coursework and other options when available.

Recruitment staffing and travel challenges: With only two recruiters serving a large geographic area, it is difficult to attend every event, especially when multiple events occur on the same day. Mr. Bahe described extensive travel, early departures, use of his personal vehicle to transport recruitment materials, vehicle wear, and safety concerns related to monsoon storms, flash flooding, and other hazardous driving conditions.

Mr. Bahe provided information on upcoming outreach activities: Recruitment efforts include school district cyber events, college fairs, the Hopi Economic Summit, and other community events. He also established an NPC event hub through Webex so employees can see upcoming events and help by attending or providing program brochures and other materials.

Governing Board Discussion

Board members thanked Mr. Bahe for explaining the realities of recruitment and recognized that enrollment challenges extend beyond simply promoting the college. Discussion included the potential value of student housing, stronger dual-enrollment outreach, greater awareness of NPC programs among students living in residential facilities, and the importance of addressing childcare and transportation barriers.

The Board also raised concerns about employee safety, travel distances, and the demands placed on a two-person recruitment team. Administration acknowledged that the staffing level stretches recruitment resources and explained that mileage reimbursement is available for employees who use personal vehicles for college business. An exception related to the recruiter's particular circumstances is also being considered.

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Agenda Item 6: Expenditure Limitation Presentation

VPAS Ellison provided the Board an overview of Arizona's constitutional and statutory expenditure limitation affecting Northland Pioneer College (NPC), explaining why the college has exceeded its spending limit in recent fiscal years, how accounting changes and permitted exclusions affect the calculations, and what strategies the college is pursuing to address the issue long term.

Ms. Ellison emphasized that the expenditure limit is based on a formula established in 1980 that does not reflect the current costs and operations of a modern community college. Although NPC has funding available, the expenditure limit restricts how much of certain local revenues the college can spend. The presentation was intended to clarify the issue for Governing Board members and address questions and criticism raised by the public.

1. Understanding the Expenditure Limitation

- Arizona's expenditure limitation applies to community colleges, as well as other local government entities.
- The limit is calculated using a historical base amount adjusted for inflation and enrollment.
- NPC's base limit was approximately $3.7 million in fiscal year 1979–80 and has increased to approximately $15.3 million.
- The presenter explained that the formula has not kept pace with changes in college operations, student services, technology, and facilities.
- Property taxes account for approximately 40% of the college's budget, with state aid contributing approximately another 20%.

2. Accounting Changes and Recent Limit Exceedances

VPAS Ellison explained that changes introduced by the Arizona Auditor General beginning in fiscal year 2024 affected how expenditures are calculated for limitation purposes.

- The updated methodology requires institutions to use more consistent accrual-based accounting calculations.
- Certain items, including institutional scholarships and construction-related expenses, are treated differently under the revised methodology.
- The changes added approximately $4 million to NPC's calculated expenditures.
- NPC has exceeded its expenditure limitation in recent fiscal years, including fiscal years 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025, according to the presentation.
- MS. Ellison stressed that the exceedances occurred and explained that changes in accounting methodology and the college's growing operational responsibilities contributed to the situation.

3. Exclusions That Help NPC Stay Within Its Spending Capacity

The college relies on authorized exclusions to reduce the amount counted against its expenditure limitation. Major exclusions discussed included:

- Federal and state grants, which accounted for approximately $7.5 million in fiscal year 2025.
- Construction and renovation expenses, reflecting investments in facilities and instructional spaces.
- Tuition and fees, generally totaling approximately $5.5 million to $6 million annually.
- Payments received through agreements with other political subdivisions, including Apache County and NAVIT, totaling nearly $4 million.

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Together, these four categories accounted for approximately $23 million in exclusions in fiscal year 2025. The presenter noted that changes in the calculation methodology increased NPC's reliance on carried-forward amounts.

4. Factors Contributing to Increased Expenditures

The presentation outlined several reasons NPC's operating costs have increased over time:

- Expanded student services, including relational advising and additional support for students.
- New bachelor's degree programs and investments in welding, nursing, and College and Career Preparation programs.
- Additional administrative and program leadership positions to support new and expanding academic areas.
- Technology upgrades, cybersecurity protections, insurance, and specialized staffing.
- Facility construction, maintenance, repairs, and the operational costs of additional buildings.
- Compensation increases approved by the Board.

Ms. Ellison also addressed concerns about administrative staffing and salaries. Administrative headcount increased from 17 in 2015 to 33 in 2025, with compensation approximately doubling over that period. The presenter explained that the figures include compensation increases across employee groups and reflect organizational changes made to support the college's expanding programs and responsibilities.

5. NPC's Debt-Free Financial Strategy

NPC has maintained a debt-free approach since approximately 2008, relying instead on fund balances to support capital projects and other needs.

Ms. Ellison acknowledged that some other community colleges have used debt as part of their expenditure-limit strategies. However, NPC chose not to take on debt because leadership did not want to transfer that financial burden to local communities.

6. Long-Term Strategy and Proposed Voter Initiative

NPC is examining strategies used by other Arizona community colleges to address their expenditure limitations. The presentation referenced Pima Community College, Maricopa Community Colleges, and Eastern Arizona College, which pursued voter-supported approaches to reset their expenditure-limit bases.

NPC's proposed approach includes:

- Continuing to consult with other colleges that have completed similar processes.
- Hiring specialized consultants to help navigate legal, financial, and election-related requirements.
- Preparing a draft voter initiative for Board consideration, potentially in January.
- Working with college leadership, communications staff, external relations, and the Governing Board to inform county residents.
- Targeting the November 2028 election for the proposed initiative.

The estimated cost of obtaining expert assistance was approximately $100,000 to $250,000, potentially including both direct expenditures and employee time.

7. Interim Financial Outlook and Potential Consequences

NPC reported a carried-forward balance of approximately $30 million, which has generally ranged from $28 million to $32 million. The presenter stated that the college believes these funds could help manage continued exceedances while a permanent solution is pursued.

However, if the voter initiative does not pass, NPC may need to make more significant spending reductions and reconsider how it delivers services and operates its facilities.

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Governing Board Discussion
Board members asked questions about the process and compliance requirements for voter initiatives, drawing comparisons with previous bond elections. The discussion highlighted the need to understand restrictions on college involvement in election-related communications and the role of independent citizen groups.
Ms. Ellison acknowledged that the college would need expert guidance to ensure compliance with applicable election and campaign requirements.

Agenda Item 7: President's Report

President Lawson invited Business Department Chair Rachel Townsend to provide the Board an update on the 92 Credit Bachelor of Applied Science in Business Administration program as directed by the Board.

- Program development began in August 2026, with a target launch in August 2028 and projected completion planned for December 2028. The project includes nine phases covering research, internal review, approvals, curriculum development, marketing, and post-implementation evaluation.
- Program approval and timeline: NPC hopes to obtain Instructional Council and District Governing Board approval by late spring or early summer 2027, followed by Higher Learning Commission (HLC) approval anticipated in fall 2027. Marketing and recruitment would begin after HLC approval.
- Program design and student benefits: The proposed degree is intended to address regional workforce needs and help increase bachelor's degree attainment in Apache and Navajo counties. Business and economics courses would be offered entirely online and asynchronously, with eight-week course formats, year-round admissions, and free educational resources to reduce student costs. Courses would incorporate relevant artificial intelligence applications, career-readiness skills, and quality standards for online instruction.

President Lawson continued his President's report providing the Board with the following updates:

- **Strategic planning and accreditation:** President Lawson praised the work underway to connect NPC's strategic plan, departmental master plans, assessment, and accreditation activities. Leadership emphasized collaboration across the college and ongoing preparation for the next HLC review.
- **Potential student apartments and dormitories:** President Lawson reported that student housing needs have been raised by college personnel and community members. NPC plans to establish a working group representing students, faculty, classified professionals, administrators, parents, and external stakeholders. Surveys and other data-gathering activities will help inform recommendations, with the goal of bringing information to the Board and potentially making decisions by January.
- **Growth at the Springerville location:** President Lawson recognized three employees for their initiative in recruiting students and engaging the local community. Their outreach efforts, including participation in a local Fourth of July parade, were described as contributing to increased interest and growth. They are expected to present to the Board at the next meeting. NPC is also considering additional space at the existing location to accommodate growth.

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- **Construction and community engagement:** President Lawson thanked Director White and others involved in the beam-signing ceremony in Kayenta, describing the building project positively and noting the future skills center.
- **Regular reporting to the Board:** President Lawson acknowledged the Board's request for regular updates. A combined President's report covering May through September was emailed to the Board with weekly reporting expected to resume.

Agenda Item 8: Consent Agenda

A. August 18, 2026 Regular Board Meeting Minutes (Julia Wilson)
B. August 18, 2026 Executive Session Minutes (Julia Wilson)

Chair Robinson called for the vote to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Mr. Black, Ms. Sekayumptewa, Mr. Leslie and Chair Robinson voted in the affirmative. There were no votes against.

Agenda Item 9: Call to the Public

None.

Agenda Item 10: DGB Agenda Items and Informational Needs for Future Meetings

Concerns raised by Ed Wilson to be discussed at the October Board Meeting.

Agenda Item 11: Board Report/Summary of Current and Upcoming Events

Caregiver's Conference – LCC Campus in Winslow September 23, 2026
Pedal the Petrified – September 26, 2026
White Mountain Symphony Orchestra – Blue Ridge High School Auditorium - September 26, 2026
Constitution/Citizenship Day – September 17, 2026

Agenda Item 10: Announcement of Next Regular Meeting

Chair Robinson announced the next regular meeting of the DGB would be held October 27, 2026.

Agenda Item 11: Adjournment

Chair Robinson declared the meeting adjourned at 1:28 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Julia Wilson

Julia Wilson
Recording Secretary to the Board

Approved

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