



Board of Governors Meeting Minutes

Board of Governors-Northeast Community College Area

1/8/2026 9:30 AM CST

@ Lifelong Learning Center, Suite O197, 801 East Benjamin Avenue, Norfolk, NE 68701

Attendance

Present:

Members: Steve Anderson - Member, Board of Governors; Diane Davies - Member, Board of Governors; Donovan Ellis - Chairperson, Board of Governors; Terry Nelson - Member, Board of Governors; Dirk Petersen - Member, Board of Governors; Julie Robinson - Member, Board of Governors; Jeffrey Scherer - Member, Board of Governors; Carol A. Sibbel - Member, Board of Governors; Pat Wojcik - Member, Board of Governors

Absent-Excused:

Members: Del Ames - Secretary, Board of Governors, Nicole Sedlacek - Vice-Chairperson, Board of Governors

Leah Barrett – President; Scott Gray - Vice President, Administrative Services and General Counsel; Charlene Widener - Vice President, Educational Services; Tracy Kruse - Vice President, Development and External Affairs; Amanda Nipp - Vice President, Student Services; David Cone – CIO; Lindsay Spiegel - Director, Institutional Effectiveness; Mike Walkowiak - Vice President, Human Resources & Organizational Development; Jerry Guenther, Director, Public Relations; and, Diane Reikofski - Executive Assistant and Board Recording Secretary

Guests: Wendy Swenson, Spanish instructor; Brandon Keller, Agriculture instructor; Tee Bush, Agriculture instructor; Janel Walton, Executive Director of Student Success; Terri Heggemeyer, Director of Career Services; Nejla Muminovic, *Norfolk Daily News*

1. CONVENE REGULAR MEETING (Presenters: Donovan Ellis)

Chairperson Ellis convened the meeting at 9:34 a.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE (Presenters: Donovan Ellis)

Chairperson Ellis led the assembly in pledging their allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.

3. OPEN MEETINGS ACT (Presenters: Donovan Ellis)

Pursuant to Nebraska Statute Section 84-1412, the public is advised that a copy of today's agenda and all reproducible printed material which will be discussed at today's meeting is located in Suite O197 of the Lifelong Learning Center and on the Northeast Community College website. Also available in Suite O197 is a current copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act which is accessible to members of the public.

4. CONSENT AGENDA (Presenters: Donovan Ellis)

APPROVE the Consent Agenda including:

- **Adopt** the Agenda of the January 8, 2026 meeting. Official Notice of the meeting is posted on the Northeast Community College website, and published in the [Norfolk Daily News](#) on Saturday, January 3, 2026.
- **APPROVE** [Minutes](#) of the December 11, 2025 meeting.
- **SECOND READING** and **APPROVAL** of **REVISIONS** to:
 - [EL-02, Access to Education](#). Removal of the outdated reference to 'property tax levy', replacing it with 'taxpayer funds' per recommendation made in the President's monitoring report in October 2025.
 - [GP-16, Handling Alleged Policy Violations](#). Wording in Section 1.1 was revised to improve clarity. Item 3 was also revised, adding that the President will work with the Board member who was contacted with the complaint.

 [EL-02 Access to Education.pdf](#)

 [GP-16 Handling Alleged Policy Violations-redline.pdf](#)

 [Consent Agenda-January 8, 2026](#)

Motion:

MOTION to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

Motion moved by Jeff Scherer and motion seconded by Carol Sibbel . Voting yes: Anderson, Davies, Ellis, Nelson, Petersen, Robinson, Scherer, Sibbel, and Wojcik. Absent-Excused: Ames and Sedlacek. MOTION CARRIED.

5. CLOSED SESSION for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to collective bargaining as authorized by Nebraska Revised Statute §84-1410. The closed session is necessary to protect the public interest. (Presenters: Scott Gray)

 [Closed Session - January 8, 2026](#)

Motion:

At 9:39 a.m., MOTION to enter into Closed Session for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to collective bargaining as authorized by Nebraska Revised Statute 84-1410, and to return to the regular meeting after business is discussed.

Motion moved by Julie Robinson and motion seconded by Diane Davies. Voting yes: Anderson, Davies, Ellis, Nelson, Petersen, Robinson, Scherer, Sibbel, and Wojcik. Absent-Excused: Ames and Sedlacek. MOTION CARRIED.

Returned to the regular meeting at 9:54 a.m.

6. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

6.1. Monitoring Report(s) (Presenters: Leah Barrett)

[EL-10, Land Development and Construction Monitoring Report Summary](#)

 [EL-10, Land Development and Construction.pdf](#)

Dr. Leah Barrett presented the monitoring report, EL-10, Land Development and Construction:

Details on capital construction projects, including procurement procedures, budget integration, and funding confirmations, are thoroughly outlined, ensuring all projects align with strategic goals and have been approved by the Board. Verification processes confirm adherence to guidelines and regulations. Continued vigilance is required to maintain compliance with policies and standards.

The Board of Governors assess the monitoring report, EL-10, Land Development and Construction, and determined that evidence supports compliance with a reasonable interpretation.

6.2. President's monthly update (Presenters: Leah Barrett)

President's [Monthly Update](#) 01.2026

 [President's Report-Monthly Update-01.2026.pdf](#)

Dr. Barrett provided the following update:

- During In-service activities on Wednesday, 61 employees were celebrated who have given 945 years of service to Northeast Community College.
- US Bank award winners included:
 - Faculty-Chance Rohlk
 - Adjunct faculty-Karen Hoffman
 - Professional/Managerial-Kim Vanosdall
 - Classified Staff-Brian Headlee

- Preliminary spring enrollment numbers reveals that Northeast is up 2% in credit hours and 5% in headcount. Official 10th day enrollment numbers will be provided in February.
- Work on the development of the Strategic Plan continues and it is anticipated that a draft of the plan will be presented to the Board of Governors in March.
- The second session of the 109th Nebraska Legislature convened on Wednesday, January 7th. Governor Pillen's agenda includes:
 - Tax shifts to reduce property tax.
 - Nameplate bills.
 - SNAP E&T changes. Dr. Barrett is working with Senator Dover and his Legislative Aid for revised language to the bill.
- On the federal level, the U.S. government is only funded through the end of January. Concerns remain regarding the rules around the RISE Committee as well as annual loan limits.
- Pat Wojcik and Dr. Tracy Kruse are registered to attend the Community College National Legislative Summit in February. Pat also serves on the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) Board of Directors.
- Dr. Leah Barrett will be attending the National Convening on Strategizing for Sustainability in Postsecondary Student Success Work conference.

6.3. 2025 Annual Report (Presenters: Leah Barrett, Terri Heggemeyer)

Annual [Report](#)

 [Annual Report-Graduate Report.pdf](#)

Dr. Barrett provided the following institutional highlights from the 2025 Annual Report:

- 14,179 total students enrolled at Northeast in 2024-2025.
- 99% of graduates are employed or continuing education.
- 53% of students are first-generation college attendees.
- 78.3% of degree-seeking students received financial aid.
- 42.5% of degree-seeking students received Pell Grants.
- Graduation rates are 23% higher than the national average.
- 650 acres of farmland for hands-on learning.
- \$15,573,009 awarded in total Financial Aid in 2024-2025.

Terri Heggemeyer, Director of Career Services, highlighted the following:

- A total of 919 graduates in 2025. Information was collected from 869 graduates, reflecting a collection rate of 85%.
 - 472 graduates are employed.
 - 379 graduates are continuing their education.
 - Three graduates were unemployed.
 - 65 graduates were not found or are not seeking work.
- 89% of employed Career and Technical graduates are working in their field of study.
- 11% of employed Career and Technical graduates are working outside their field of study.
- 91% of Northeast graduates are employed in Nebraska.
- 52% of Northeast graduates re employed in the 20-county service area.
- 96% of employers would consider hiring a Northeast graduate in the future.
- 98% of employers rated Northeast graduates as either excellent or good in their career program.
- Total alumni as of May 2025: 30,680.

7. BOARD EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

No constituents were in attendance to address the Board of Governors with a public comment.

7.1. Administrative Services Report

7.1.1. Monthly Financial Report and Paid Bills Report (Presenters: Scott Gray)

CONSIDER the [Monthly Financial Report](#) for December 31, 2025, and the [Paid Bills Report](#) for December 2025. Board members who received reimbursement during the month abstain from voting on those items only:

Ames, Del - \$53.20

Anderson, Steve - \$65.80

Ellis, Donovan - \$240.70

Scherer, Jeff - \$667.60

Sedlacek, Nicole - \$110.60

Sibbel, Carol - \$110.60

Wojcik, Pat - \$110.80

 [Monthly Financial Report-December 31, 2025.pdf](#)

 [Paid Bills-December 2025.pdf](#)

 [Monthly Financial and Paid Bills Report-December 2025](#)

Scott Gray advised that he will conduct a detailed analysis comparing the budget vs actual expenses in February.

Items of significance within the Paid Bills Report include payment to Veritas, Inc. for manure and Rogge Construction for work on the iHub. Mr. Gray also advised that at this time of year, Northeast conducts an annual review of certificates of deposit and initiates a bidding process. Consequently, some funds have been reallocated to First Commerce Bank, Charter West Bank, and Battle Creek State Bank.

Motion:

Motion to approve the December 31, 2025 Monthly Financial Report and the December 2025 Paid Bills Report as presented. Board members who received reimbursement during the month abstain from voting on those items only.

Motion moved by Terry Nelson and motion seconded by Julie Robinson. Voting yes: Anderson, Davies, Ellis, Nelson, Petersen, Robinson, Scherer, Sibbel, and Wojcik. Absent-Excused: Ames and Sedlacek. MOTION CARRIED.

- 7.1.2. Contract with City of Norfolk regarding NPPD (discussion) (Presenters: Leah Barrett, Scott Gray)

As an item of information, Scott Gray explained that in 1966 the City of Norfolk and NPPD entered into an agreement where the City owns and leases its electrical infrastructure to NPPD. The agreement was amended in 1991 and 2005. Electrical system is leased to NPPD and based on a 12% rate that is generated from individuals. Northeast Community College and the public schools were exempt from the agreement.

The lease, set to renew for 20 years, will increase the rate from 12% to 12.5%, equating to \$115,000 annually based on last year's usage. Previously exempt entities, including Northeast Community College, will no longer be exempt by 2028.

The City of Norfolk has discussed phased solutions and possible other options to alleviate the impact on Northeast Community College. Discussions included an NPPD proposal for cost mitigation through electrical audits.

- 7.1.3. Discuss, consider, and take all necessary action regarding the approval of the Cox Activities Center renovation project (Presenters: Scott Gray)

[Cox Activities Center renovation project](#)

The renovation of the Cox Activities Center, which includes upgrades such as fire sprinklers, cabling, lighting, and a fire alarm system, now extends to incorporate a data room per current design standards. This climate-controlled room will accommodate Norfolk's emergency response requirements. Despite some scope expansion, these enhancements are crucial for community safety.

The project is scheduled to begin following commencement in May 2026. Capital funds will be utilized to pay for the project. Although approval by the Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education (CCPE) is not mandatory, administration deemed it appropriate to seek approval by the Board of Governors given the project's significance and cost implications.

Motion:

MOTION to approve the Cox Activities Center renovation project.

Motion moved by Dirk Petersen and motion seconded by Pat Wojcik.

Voting yes: Anderson, Davies, Ellis, Nelson, Petersen, Robinson, Scherer, Sibbel, and Wojcik. Absent-Excused: Ames and Sedlacek. MOTION CARRIED.

8. PUBLIC COMMENT of Monitoring Report(s) or Board Education and Information

Individuals commenting on Monitoring Reports or Board Education and Information are allowed three minutes each. Any member of the public wishing to address the Board of Governors may sign in and comment to the Board at this time.

No constituents were in attendance to address the Board of Governors with a public comment.

9. LUNCH - Lifelong Learning Center, Suite K

Chairperson Ellis declared the meeting recessed for lunch at 12:11 p.m.

Chairperson Ellis declared the regular meeting back in session at 1:00 p.m.

10. COMMITTEE REPORTS

10.1. Governance Committee (Presenters: Dirk Petersen)

[Governance Committee Notes](#)-December 19, 2025
[Board Self-Evaluation Action Plan](#)

 [Board Governance Committee Meeting - December 19, 2025 Minutes.pdf](#)

Governance Committee Meeting was held on December 19, 2025 via Zoom.

No recommendations for revisions were identified during the Committee meeting.

10.1.1. Review Board Code of Conduct and complete Conflict of Interest Statement

Review [GP-10](#), Board Code of Conduct and complete annual [Conflict of Interest Statement](#)

 [GP-10 Board Code of Conduct.pdf](#)

 [Conflict of Interest Statement .pdf](#)

Brief review of GP-10, [Board Code of Conduct](#). Good to review and refresh on the policy content. The Board is in a place now that review of the policies will help the Board become stronger.

Dr. Barrett stated that we live in a small community and thanked the members of the Board of Governors for their service. They have a true understanding of their role as a board member and understand to not interject themselves into employee operations.

Conflict of Interest Statement was completed and submitted to the Board Recording Secretary.

10.1.2. APPOINT the Governance Committee Chairperson for 2026

 [Governance Committee Chairperson](#)

Motion:

Motion to APPOINT Dirk Petersen as the 2026 Governance Committee Chairperson.

Mr. Petersen extended appreciation to Scott Gray and Jennifer Happold for their support of and keeping the Governance Committee on track.

Motion moved by Pat Wojcik and motion seconded by Carol A. Sibbel.

Voting yes: Anderson, Davies, Ellis, Nelson, Petersen, Robinson, Scherer, Sibbel, and Wojcik. Absent-Excused: Ames and Sedlacek. MOTION CARRIED.

10.1.3. APPOINT the Ownership Linkage Committee Chairperson for 2026

📌 [Ownership Linkage Committee Chairperson](#)

Motion:

Motion to APPOINT Pat Wojcik as the 2026 Chairperson of the Ownership Linkage Committee.

Motion moved by Dirk Petersen and motion seconded by Diane Davies.
Voting yes: Anderson, Davies, Ellis, Nelson, Petersen, Robinson, Scherer, Sibbel, and Wojcik. Absent-Excused: Ames and Sedlacek. MOTION CARRIED.

10.1.4. APPOINT two members of the Northeast Community College Board of Governors to serve as representatives on the 2026 NCCA Board of Directors, with the remainder of the board serving as alternates.

📌 [NCCA Board of Directors representatives-2026](#)

Motion:

MOTION to APPOINT Nicole Sedlacek and Pat Wojcik as the Northeast Community College representatives on the 2026 NCCA Board of Directors, with the remainder of the board serving as alternate

Motion moved by Julie Robinson and motion seconded by Carol A. Sibbel.
Voting yes: Anderson, Davies, Ellis, Nelson, Petersen, Robinson, Scherer, Sibbel, and Wojcik. Absent-Excused: Ames and Sedlacek. MOTION CARRIED.

10.1.5. APPOINT two members of the Northeast Community College Board of Governors to serve as the 2026 representatives on the Northeast Community College Foundation Board of Directors.

📌 [Northeast Community College Foundation Board of Directors representatives-2026](#)

Motion:

MOTION to APPOINT Del Ames and Donovan Ellis to serve as the 2026 representatives on the Northeast Community College Foundation Board of Directors.

Motion moved by Diane Davies and motion seconded by Carol A. Sibbel.
Voting yes: Anderson, Davies, Ellis, Nelson, Petersen, Robinson, Scherer,

Sibbel, and Wojcik. Absent-Excused: Ames and Sedlacek. MOTION CARRIED.

11. PUBLIC COMMENT on Committee Reports:

Individuals commenting on Committee Reports are allowed three minutes each. Any member of the public wishing to address the Board of Governors may sign in and comment to the Board at this time.

No constituents were in attendance to address the Board of Governors with a public comment.

12. OTHER

Other announcements and birthdays for the month.

Board and staff member birthdays for the month of January were acknowledged.

13. Meeting Self-Evaluation (Presenters: Donovan Ellis)

Board Meeting Self-Evaluation-[January 8, 2026](#)

 [Board Meeting Self-Evaluation-January 8, 2026.pdf](#)

14. ADJOURNMENT

At 1:20 p.m., there being no further business to discuss, it was UNANIMOUSLY PASSED by VOICE VOTE to ADJOURN the meeting.