



Board of Governors Meeting Minutes

Board of Governors-Northeast Community College Area

10/13/2026 9:30 AMCDT

@ Northeast Community College, Lifelong Learning Center, Suite O197, 801 E. Benjamin Ave.,
Norfolk, NE 68701

Attendance

Present:

Members: Del Ames - Secretary, Board of Governors, Diane Davies - Member, Board of Governors, Donovan Ellis - Chairperson, Board of Governors, Dirk Petersen - Member, Board of Governors, Jeffrey Scherer - Member, Board of Governors, Nicole Sedlacek - Vice-Chairperson, Board of Governors, Carol A. Sibbel - Member, Board of Governors

Absent-Excused:

Members: Julie Robinson - Member, Board of Governors, Pat Wojcik - Member, Board of Governors

Absent-Unexcused:

Members: Steve Anderson - Member, Board of Governors, Terry Nelson - Member, Board of Governors

Staff: Leah Barrett - President, Scott Gray - Vice President, Administrative Services and General Counsel, Amanda Nipp - Vice President, Student Services, Charlene Widener - Vice President, Educational Services, Tracy Kruse - Vice President, Development and External Affairs, David Cone - CIO, Mike Walkowiak - Vice President, Human Resources & Organizational Development, Lindsay Spiegel - Director, Institutional Effectiveness, Jennifer Greve - Executive Director of Marketing and Recruitment, Diane Reikofski - Executive Assistant and Board Recording Secretary

Guests: Kristi Rastede-English Professor, Wendy Swenson-Spanish Professor, Stacy Dieckman-Senior Director of Financial Aid, Jake Lockee-Information Security Analyst, Darin Watts, Director of College Technology Services, Field May- Executive Director of Technology Services Operations, Allison Lambert-College Engagement Coordinator, Usiel Garcia-SLA representative, Emma Johansen-SLA representative, Landon Bonneau-SLA representative

1. CONVENE REGULAR MEETING (Presenters: Donovan Ellis)
Chairperson Ellis convened the meeting at 9:31 a.m.
2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE (Presenters: Donovan Ellis)

Chairperson Ellis led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

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, located 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:

- Agenda of the October 13, 2026 meeting. Official Notice of the meeting is posted on the Northeast Community College website and published in the [Norfolk Daily News](#) on Saturday, October 10, 2026.
- [Minutes](#) of the September 24, 2026 Board of Governors meeting.
- SECOND READING and APPROVAL of REVISIONS to:
 - [EL-04](#), Planning.

 [Board of Governors Meeting-Minutes 09.24.2026.pdf](#)

 [EL-04 Planning-Draft-Changes.pdf](#)

 [Consent Agenda - October 13, 2026](#)

Motion:

Motion moved by Jeffrey Scherer and motion seconded by Del Ames. Voting yes: Ames, Davies, Ellis, Petersen, Scherer, Sedlacek, and Sibbel. Absent-Excused: Robinson and Wojcik. Absent-Unexcused: Anderson and Nelson. MOTION CARRIED. (Verbal approval in favor by Dirk Petersen)

5. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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

[EL-02, Access to Education](#)
[Monitoring Report Summary](#)

Dr. Leah Barrett presented the monitoring report for Executive Limitations Policy EL-02, [Access to Education](#), indicating compliance with the policy. The report reveals that the College remains in compliance with standards related to student access, affordability, support services, accommodations for students with disabilities, and access to required coursework, although one measure related to the timing of financial aid notifications was identified as needing improvement.

Key findings demonstrated that Northeast students reported levels of satisfaction with academic advising and financial aid advising that exceeded

both medium-sized colleges and the 2025 CCSSE cohort. Students also reported higher rates of completing registration before classes began, stronger perceptions of receiving financial support needed to afford college, and a more positive overall educational experience than comparison institutions. The report found that Northeast continues to maintain affordable tuition and fees. Tuition and fee revenue remains below the 20% threshold. Northeast's tuition and fee rates remain below Nebraska state colleges and the University system and significantly below peer-group median tuition rates.

The report also demonstrated compliance in recognizing learning outside of traditional classroom experiences. Student participation in internships, clinicals, co-op, and field experiences, as well as engagement with instructors outside of coursework, exceeded both medium-sized college and CCSSE cohort benchmarks.

Northeast remains in compliance with supporting academically qualified students with disabilities. The graduation rate for students with disabilities remained within the policy standard and was better than the national comparison benchmark. Increased utilization of Disability Services coaching and advising support was also reported.

Finally, the report confirmed that Northeast maintains processes, including teach-out plans, to ensure students can complete academic programs and enroll in required courses. Fewer than three complaints were received regarding students' ability to enroll in necessary courses during the 2025-26 academic year.

Board members commended the amount of evidence provided in this monitoring report. The Board of Governors assessed monitoring report, EL-02, [Access to Education](#), and determined that evidence supports compliance with a reasonable interpretation.

 [EL-02, Access to Education 2026.pdf](#)

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

President's Monthly Update 10.2026

Dr. Leah Barrett highlighted institutional accomplishments under the college's strategic framework, *Rise Together*. Student success initiatives included more than \$16.1 million in financial aid awarded, 91.5% of first-time, full-time students receiving financial aid, and Early College programming serving 102 communities through 116 high schools. Workforce alignment efforts included participation in statewide economic development initiatives, healthcare pathway development, and continued exploration of Rural Healthcare Transformation funding.

Organizational updates included progress on software modernization, BambooHR implementation, and legislative engagement efforts.

She also recognized recent college and alumni achievements, including Nebraska Community College Association service awards, Foundation honors, distinguished alumni recognitions, student scholarship achievements, and upcoming college and community events.

As a follow up to discussion that was held in December 2025 regarding E-00, Global Ends, Dr. Barrett reported that while no areas for improvement were identified at that time, an Institutional Data Action Team (iDAT) has been established to provide a deeper analysis of completer transfer data and students who transfer without completing a credential. Additional data and analysis will be provided to the Board of Governors in the coming months.

November 19 is Rural Healthcare Day. The Board of Governors will conduct its monthly meeting in O'Neill and Northeast is looking to find a way to also lift up healthcare providers and workers that day.

6. COLLEGE REPORTS (10:45-11:00 a.m.)

[Student Leadership Association](#) (SLA) update

 [SLA presentation-October 2026.pdf](#)

Student Leadership Association (SLA) members reported strong progress on the campus ice machine petition, which has generated 74 responses and unanimous support from surveyed students. Students identified hydration, wellness, convenience, and sustainability as key reasons for requesting additional ice machine access, with the goal of increasing petition signatures to 150-300 by the end of the fall semester.

The Board was informed of the upcoming Harvest Hangout event scheduled for October 20 from 3:00-5:00 p.m. in the lower level of Union 73. The pumpkin-carving and painting activity is designed to foster student connection, gather student feedback, encourage involvement in SLA, and provide opportunities for cultural engagement among international students.

Members also shared plans for the 23rd Annual Spooktacular, to be held October 28 from 5:30-8:00 p.m. at the Ag Complex in partnership with College Engagement and SAC. The event will welcome local families to campus for an evening of Halloween-themed

activities, including a new candy salad buffet. SLA emphasized its focus on community service and engagement, noting the event's value in strengthening community relationships, showcasing student leadership, and creating positive experiences for local children and families. Appreciation was expressed to Marketing for assistance with event promotion.

The presentation concluded with a leadership reflection question posed to Board members regarding leadership lessons they wish they had learned during their college years.

7. BOARD EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

7.1. Student Services Report

7.1.1. Annual college affordability update (Presenters: Stacy Dieckman)

[College affordability update](#) 10.13.26

 [College Affordability update-10.13.2026.pdf](#)

Stacy Dieckman, Senior Director of Financial Aid, provided an overview of college affordability, noting that Northeast's 2025-26 tuition and fees remain below peer institutions at \$3,930, compared to the peer group median of \$5,632. Estimated annual cost of attendance ranges from \$11,198 for students living with parents to \$17,201 for students living on campus. Financial aid packages substantially offset costs, leaving relatively low levels of unmet need for many students.

Data reveals that 735 students applied but did not enroll for Fall 2026, including 458 Pell Grant-eligible students and 361 students with a Student Aid Index of zero. Additionally, 76% of these non-enrolled applicants were first-generation students, highlighting ongoing affordability and access challenges. Inquiry was made regarding how the number compares to last year. Amanda stated that last year there were 601 students who did not register with 50% of them being first generation students. Northeast will continue exploring strategies to improve enrollment among these populations.

The report also reviewed student loan repayment metrics, including cohort default and delinquency rates, and discussed participation in the ECMC Elevate Grant initiative to support borrower success. An update was provided on the successful early launch of the 2027-28 FAFSA and the

College's FAFSA outreach efforts, which included FAFSA completion events and high school visits throughout the 20-county service area.

For 2025-26, Northeast disbursed \$16.1 million in financial aid, an increase of approximately \$342,000 from the previous year. Growth was reported in Pell Grants, institutional aid, and Foundation scholarships, while federal student loan borrowing declined.

7.2. Administrative Services Report

7.2.1. Preliminary review/discussion on 2027-2028 tuition, fees, room, and board rates (Presenters: Scott Gray)

[Tuition, Fees, Housing, & Meal Plan](#) preliminary review

 [Board Finance Meeting Tuition&Fees Housing&Meals 10.13.26.pdf](#)

Scott Gray, Vice President of Administrative Services and General Counsel, reviewed comparative tuition, fee, housing, and meal plan data for 2027-28. Northeast Community College remains competitively positioned among Nebraska community colleges and regional peer institutions, with resident tuition and standard fees totaling \$133 per credit hour in 2026-27, among the lowest rates in the region. Housing and meal plan costs also remain below several regional peer institutions, supporting the College's commitment to affordability and accessibility for students. Approval 2027-28 tuition, fee, housing, and meal plan rates will occur at the November 19, 2026 meeting.

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

CONSIDER the [Monthly Financial Report](#) for September 30, 2026, and the [Paid Bills Report](#) for September 2026. Board members who received reimbursement during the month abstain from voting on those items only:

Anderson, Steve - \$136.30

 [Monthly Financial Report-September 2026.pdf](#)

 [Paid Bills Report-September 2026.pdf](#)

 [Monthly Financial and Paid Bills Report-October 2026](#)

Scott Gray presented the September 2026 Monthly Financial and Paid Bills Reports. Total assets were reported at approximately \$56.7 million, with total fund balances of \$53.3 million, reflecting a year-over-year

increase of 14.8%. General Fund revenues included tuition, fees, and state appropriations, while expenditures remained consistent with budgeted operations and strategic priorities.

Items of significance with the September Paid Bills Report included payments on capital improvement projects, operational expenses, and student financial aid disbursements.

Motion:

Motion to approve the September 30, 2026 Monthly Financial Report and the September 2026 Paid Bills Report as presented. Board members who received reimbursements during the month abstain from voting on those items only.

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

7.3. Technology Services Report

7.3.1. Cybersecurity update (Information) (Presenters: David Cone, Jake Lockee, Field May)

[Technology-2026](#)

[Northeast GLBA status report](#)

 [Northeast GLBA Status - 2026 Board Report.pdf](#)

 [Technology-2026.pdf](#)

The Board received the annual update on the College's Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act (GLBA) Information Security Program for the reporting period of October 2025 through September 2026. The College maintained and strengthened its information security program through ongoing security assessments, vulnerability monitoring, employee training, vendor oversight, and incident response activities. Following the departure of the Chief Information Security Officer (CISO), the Chief Information Officer (CIO) is serving as interim Qualified Individual while a virtual Chief Information Security Officer and cybersecurity services provider are being onboarded.

During the reporting period, the College completed an independent red-team exercise and a Microsoft 365 security assessment. Findings from these reviews are being evaluated and addressed through established risk-management processes. Efforts also continue to strengthen access controls, improve monitoring capabilities, and enhance protection of institutional information. Nearly all required employees completed annual security awareness training, and vendor security reviews remain an ongoing component of the College's risk-management activities.

Administration reported that the College investigated and responded to phishing attempts, suspicious account activity, and other security events during the year. The College also responded to a cybersecurity incident involving a third-party learning management system provider and continues to evaluate information provided by the vendor to determine any additional reporting or notification obligations.

Priorities for the coming year include completing the virtual CISO transition, addressing assessment findings, strengthening access governance and third-party oversight, maintaining security testing and incident-response readiness, and continuing employee security awareness efforts.

The report concluded that the College maintains an active information security program and will continue to enhance safeguards in support of regulatory compliance and risk management objectives.

7.3.2. Enterprise Systems and Operations Modernization (Information) (Presenters: David Cone)

An update was provided on enterprise systems modernization efforts, highlighting the transition to Banner SaaS as a strategic investment to modernize and standardize administrative systems. The initiative is expected to improve employee productivity, streamline business processes, expand self-service capabilities, strengthen student engagement, and reduce reliance on customized solutions. The Board also received an overview of the College's approach to artificial intelligence, including efforts focused on governance, literacy and education, and the practical application of AI tools to support institutional operations and decision-making.

8. PUBLIC COMMENT on Monitoring Report or Board Education and Information

Individuals commenting on Monitoring Report 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.

At 12:01 p.m., Chairperson Ellis recessed for lunch. As part of the Ownership Linkage activities, TRIO students joined the Board of Governors for lunch.

Nicole Sedlacek departed at 12:47 p.m.

Chairperson Ellis reconvened the meeting at 12:51 p.m.

9. COMMITTEE REPORTS

9.1. Nebraska Community College Association (NCCA) update

Dr. Leah Barrett reported that the 2026 NCCA Annual Meeting in Scottsbluff. The 2027 NCCA Meeting will be hosted by Central Community College and held in Hastings. It is anticipated that a representative from ACCT will provide a Governance Workshop as part of the conference program.

9.2. Governance Committee (Presenters: Dirk Petersen)

[Governance Committee Notes](#)-September 29, 2026

Content Review:

[EL-08, Communication and Support to the Board.](#)

[BPD-03, Delegation to the President.](#)

[Board Self-Evaluation Action Plan](#)

 [Board Governance Committee Meeting - September 29, 2026 Minutes.pdf](#)

 [EL-08 Communication and Support to the Board.pdf](#)

 [BPD-03 Delegation to the President.pdf](#)

The Governance Committee meeting was conducted via Zoom on September 29, 2026.

Content Review was conducted on the following:

- EL-08, [Communication and Support to the Board](#) - No suggestions for revisions. Committee members engaged in productive discussion regarding monitoring reports and expressed appreciation for President

Barrett's commitment to maintaining high standards through the use of reasonable interpretations.

- BPD-03, Delegation to the President - No suggestions for revisions.

The Governance Committee also completed a review of the Board Self-Evaluation. It was decided by the Board of Governors that the review of the Board Self-Evaluation should continue to be reviewed by the Governance Committee.

Governance Committee Chairperson, Dirk Petersen, provided a summary of Governance Committee activities over the past year, noting the committee's use of a tracking spreadsheet to monitor progress and ensure follow-through on action items and ongoing initiatives.

9.3. Ownership Linkage Committee (Presenters: Del Ames)

[Ownership Linkage Committee Notes](#)-September 23, 2025

 [Ownership Linkage Committee Notes 09.23.26.pdf](#)

Del Ames reported that the Ownership Linkage Committee met via Zoom on September 23, 2026, to finalize plans for the November 19 meeting in O'Neill. Recognition of Rural Health Care Day will be added to the day's schedule.

Committee members expressed enthusiasm for the opportunity to hear from local healthcare leaders and to learn more about how Northeast Community College supports businesses and workforce development efforts throughout the region.

10. 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.

11. OTHER

Other announcements and birthdays for the month.

Chairperson Ellis acknowledged board members observing birthdays during the month of October.

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

Board Meeting Self-Evaluation-[October 13, 2026](#)

13. CLOSED SESSION

CLOSED SESSION for the purpose of discussing the potential purchase of real estate.

Motion:

At 1:20 p.m., motion to enter into Closed Session pursuant to Nebraska Revised Statute § 84-1410(1)(a) for the purpose of discussing the potential purchase of real estate, when a closed session is clearly necessary to protect the public interest. Upon completion of the discussion, the Board will reconvene to open session.

Reconvened to the open session at 1:56 p.m.

Motion moved by Jeffrey Scherer and motion seconded by Del Ames. MOTION CARRIED.

Voting yes: Ames, Davies, Ellis, Petersen, Scherer, and Sibbel. Absent-Excused:

Robinson, Sedlacek, and Wojcik. Absent-Unexcused: Anderson and Nelson. MOTION CARRIED. (Voting was conducted verbally)

14. ADJOURNMENT

At 1:56 p.m., there being no further business to discuss, it was UNANIMOUSLY PASSED by VOICE VOTE to adjourn the meeting.