

**MINUTES OF MEETING**  
**WISCONSIN TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM (WTCS) BOARD**  
**JANUARY 21, 2025**  
**HILL FARMS STATE OFFICE BUILDING, MADISON, WI**

Tuesday, January 21, 2025

Members Present: Lindsay Blumer, Quincey Daniels, Jr., Janixa Franco Gonzalez, Douglas Holton, Sr., Dan Klecker, Alex Lasry, Amy Pechacek, Sara Rogers, S. Mark Tyler, Sharon Wendt for Jill Underly.

Members Absent: Daniel Sperberg, Leslie Svacina, Karen Walsh.

System Office Staff Present: Sarah Arneson, Hilary Barker, Rachel Colla, Danielle Cook, Julie Drake, Heather Dunne, Stephanie Glynn, Brandon Graf, Paul Hammer, Mandy Johnson, Tou Ya Khang, Colleen Larsen, Christina Lorge, Ward Lyon, Joel Mathis, Colleen McCabe, Layla Merrifield, Carolann Nelson, Jeremy Nichols, Cristina Parente, Katy Pettersen, Anna Richter, Dan Scanlon, Chrystal Seeley-Schreck, Brent Simmons, Latisha Spence-Brookens, Becky Stewart, Megan Stritchko, Brandon Trujillo, Julie Tyznik, JP Villavicencio, Ann Westrich.

District/Others Present: Tracy Pierner, Blackhawk Technical College; Sunem Beaton-Garcia, Chippewa Valley Technical College; Chuck Bolstad, Diane Handrick, District Boards Association; Chris Matheny, Fox Valley Technical College; Ritu Raju, Gateway Technical College; Doug Nysse, Inland Companies; Paul Carlsen, Lakeshore Technical College; Tim Casper, Sylvia Ramirez, Madison Area Technical College; Brenda Alberts, Rick Anderson, Ryan Kawski, Brad Martinson, Shelly Mondeik, Mid-State Technical College; Anthony Cruz, Milwaukee Area Technical College; Michael Belot, Milwaukee Bucks; Bonnie Baerwald, Moraine Park Technical College; Kate Ferrel, Nicolet Area Technical College; Jeannie Worden, Northcentral Technical College; Kristen Raney, Northeast Wisconsin Technical College; John Will, Northwood Technical College; Rich Barnhouse, Waukesha County Technical College; Kai Brito, Wisconsin Student Government.

**Board President Tyler called the meeting to order at 9:00 am. Julie Drake read the open meeting statement and roll call indicated that a quorum was present.**

**ITEM A: Approval of November 12-13, 2024, Meeting Minutes**

**It was moved by Board Member Rogers, seconded by Board Member Holton, that the November 12-13, 2024 meeting minutes be approved. Motion carried unanimously.**

**ITEM B: Report of the Board President**

The Universities of Wisconsin Board of Regents report for December was shared with Board Members on January 17, 2025.

Board President Tyler introduced and welcomed WTCS Executive Vice President Paul Hammer, who joined the team on January 13, 2025.

Board President Tyler announced Board members Franco Gonzalez, Holton and Rogers would join him on the Tuition Workgroup.

Board Member Lasry arrived at 9:03 am.

## ITEM C: Report of the System President

System President Layla Merrifield shared System updates:

- System President Merrifield welcomed Madison College Interim President Dr. Tim Casper, who has been with Madison College since 2011 and previously served as the college executive vice president of Student Affairs.
- System President Merrifield introduced Executive Vice President Paul Hammer who comes to the System with a wealth of experience in state government, most recently serving as the deputy secretary for the Wisconsin Department of Administration. He also served as the deputy secretary of the Department of Transportation (DOT) and held several positions among DOT, the Department of Natural Resources and the Legislative Audit Bureau.
- On November 15, WTCS Associate Vice President for Student Success Dr. Christina Lorge and Student Support Director Stephanie Glynn hosted the first 2Gen Student Parent Convening in partnership with Jobs for the Future (JFF), bringing stakeholders from across the state and colleges with a goal of improving family economic advancement. This convening is unique in that it is focused on student voice. Two additional in-person convenings will be hosted at Madison College in February and April.
- The Apprenticeship Completion Report will be shared with the Board with 2024 being another record-setting year for Registration Apprenticeship enrollment, the third consecutive record-setting year in the program's 112-year history. Along with the enrollment increases, this year's report also highlights the relevancy of this model of education delivery, thanks in part to the work done by the colleges to provide classroom instruction and their partnership with the Department of Workforce Development (DWD).
  - Board Member Pechacek announced that DWD celebrated a record-breaking year, making the third consecutive year of smashing records in youth apprenticeship and opportunities for apprentices and employers. This success is a testament to the collective efforts of WRTP, labor partners and the WTCS Board, staff and colleges, amidst a record high unemployment over the past seven months.
- Ag Day will be hosted by Mid-State Technical College on March 11 in Marshfield, a great opportunity to highlight the importance of the \$116 billion agriculture industry to our state and colleges. The farmer member on the WTCS Board is just one example of the strong relationship between the agricultural industry and WTCS colleges. An article from the 2024-25 Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection Growing Wisconsin magazine features an interview with WTCS Agriculture and Natural Resources Director Betsy Leonard focused on how Wisconsin technical colleges are shaping careers in agriculture.
- The WTCS Ambassador Banquet will take place April 10, 2025, at Glacier Canyon Conference Center in Wisconsin Dells. After a day and a half of teambuilding and leadership development, the Ambassadors will be celebrated at a banquet where they will share their stories of determination, perseverance and success. Baird has been a long-time sponsor of this event and recently hired Dajanae Williams, 2023 WTCS Ambassador from Gateway Technical College, as a communications intern.

## ITEM D: Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association

Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association (DBA) President and Southwest Wisconsin Technical College Trustee Chuck Bolstad and DBA Executive Director Diane Handrick updated the Board on recent activities.

The DBA Board of Directors appointed Diane Handrick as the Executive Director in November. Her priorities include System and student interests in the state budget, DBA regular meetings, restructuring internal portions of DBA and participating in many adjacent groups to keep their unified work and history of success going forward.

The DBA November meeting was hosted by Fox Valley Technical College. Dr. Maureen Dunne was the keynote speaker followed by an interactive hands-on-workshop where participants learned about the neurodiversity paradigm in fostering authentic inclusion within classrooms, educational systems, workplaces and communities.

Mr. Bolstad welcomed and congratulated Madison College Interim President, Dr. Tim Casper, to his new role.

The DBA hosted a successful Legislative Seminar and Governance Leadership Institute (GLI) in Madison on January 16 and 17. The well-organized program, led by Ms. Handrick, received overwhelmingly positive feedback. The DBA, in collaboration with the Association for Community College Trustees (ACCT), is preparing for a similar event in Washington, DC. The seminar, held at the start of each biennial budget session, had 76 participants and featured clear and informative presentations from guest speakers Senate President Mary Felzkowski (R-Tomahawk), Assembly Minority Leader Greta Neubauer (D-Racine), Joint Finance Co-Chair Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green) and owner of the Wheeler Report Gwyn Guenther.

The DBA and System Office are co-hosting the Legislative Open House, a biennium budget briefing at the State Capitol for legislators, on January 30. WisconsinEye will film the presentation and it will be shared with legislators unable to attend.

Ms. Handrick strongly encouraged Board members to attend the Ambassador banquet. The DBA is hosting a breakfast on Friday, April 11 with the Ambassadors 1 and Trustees as a way to build student connections and foster a desire for those students to someday consider applying to be on a district board.

In addition to the work of advocacy and day-to-day operations, DBA is in the process of evolving their operations. Their core duties will remain the same and they are focused on a successful legislative and budget session and anything else they can do to support technical education in Wisconsin.

## ITEM E: WTCS Presidents' Association

Dr. Rich Barnhouse, president of Waukesha County Technical College (WCTC) and chair of the Association, updated the Board on recent activities.

Many college presidents attended the DBA legislative summit in Madison on January 16-17, which was extraordinarily successful. From the presidents' perspective, navigating the budget and priorities can be challenging, but this year it was clear that the discussed priorities were being implemented. Everyone worked together to promote the System's priorities, and there was a collective satisfaction with the presidents' efforts. The summit was well organized, with special praise for Ms. Handrick.

The Presidents will meet the afternoon of January 21 to discuss:

- The WTCS budget request and what the Presidents' Association (PA) is working on in order to continuously move forward. The budget process is long, and presidents need to continue the conversation to help individuals in our communities understand the request.
- 2025-2026 tuition and balancing the colleges' needs to run a college with up to thousands of faculty and staff, while keeping costs low for students.

- Potential changes to Act 10 and preparing for the impact on college operations.
- They will be planning for the next fiscal and academic year in March.

Dr. Barnhouse thanked Board Member Klecker for visiting WCTC to discuss improved ways to conduct Advisory Committee meetings which will have an impact on all Advisory Boards.

Board Member Holton mentioned that this is his fourth year on the Tuition Workgroup and that it can be challenging to understand the various tuition requests from college presidents. He asked if it would be possible for presidents to agree on one recommendation to send to the Tuition Workgroup. Dr. Barnhouse agreed and said the PA would try to narrow their recommendation to an average or median number. The varied needs of each campus make this process difficult, as each college operates independently.

System President Merrifield further explained the differences of the institutions, as they each serve different communities. She stressed that we cannot lose sight of the importance of affordability for our students.

Board President Tyler mentioned that other increases or decreases in revenues also affect the colleges but are beyond our control.

Board Member Rogers inquired about the Advisory Committees' recommendations. Dr. Barnhouse offered to collaborate with Board Member Klecker to create a document highlighting the aforementioned recommendations. Additionally, WTCS Associate Vice President for Instruction Chrystal Seeley-Schreck mentioned she plans to meet with Board Member Klecker to provide further information and guidance to the colleges.

#### ITEM F: Consent Agenda

**It was moved by Board Member Klecker, seconded by Board Member Wendt, that the Board approve the program and facilities development requests and Interim District Board Appointments with the exception of the Waukesha County Technical College program discontinuances. Motion carried unanimously.**

**It was moved by Board Member Holton, seconded by Board Member Pechacek that the Board approve the program discontinuances for Waukesha County Technical College. Board Member Franco Gonzalez abstained. Motion carried.**

Board President Tyler remarked on the difficulty of recognizing and appreciating the effort behind these approvals. The motto of the Wisconsin Technical College System, "We were built for this moment," serves as a reminder that we continuously adapt to the evolving environment.

#### ITEM G: Mid-State Technical College – Project Review – Construction of Additional Facilities and Remodeling of Existing Facilities in Adams; and Remodeling of Existing Facilities in Wisconsin Rapids

WTCS Facilities Director Dan Scanlon provided an overview of the projects to remodel in Adams to improve the entrance, student services and general sciences lab. The construction in Adams will create a welding lab and a construction trades lab. The remodeling in Wisconsin Rapids will create facilities for dental programs.

**It was moved by Board Member Holton, seconded by Board Member Rogers, that upon the recommendation of the president of the Wisconsin Technical College System, the Wisconsin Technical College System Board grants approval to the Mid-State Technical College District to remodel facilities**

**in Wisconsin Rapids at a cost of \$1,836,000, construct additional facilities in Adams at a cost of \$2,020,000 and remodel existing facilities in Adams at a cost of \$894,150. Motion carried unanimously.**

#### **ITEM H: Milwaukee Area Technical College – Project Review – Lease of Facilities in Milwaukee**

WTCS Facilities Director Dan Scanlon provided an overview of the project for the Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) district to lease approximately 27,000 square feet two blocks from campus to provide training space and a venue for its National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) athletic programs.

**It was moved by Board Member Pechacek, seconded by Board Member Rogers, that upon the recommendation of the president of the Wisconsin Technical College System, approval is granted to the Milwaukee Area Technical College District to lease an athletic facility near the Downtown Campus at an average annual cost of approximately \$1,551,774 for ten years. Motion carried 9-1; Board Member Holton opposed. Motion carried.**

Board Member Holton asked why the anticipated salaries increased from \$546,000 in the program concept review to \$1,181,500 in the program review. MATC President Dr. Cruz explained that in addition to how they are utilizing the facility, they included expansion of other sports programs and the need to hire additional coaches, etc. which does not relate directly to the facility. They are looking at adding eight additional athletic teams and the expansion will help with FTEs.

Board Member Holton mentioned that the proposal includes additional annual operating expenses of \$263,112, with \$20,000 in initial property taxes. Dr. Cruz clarified that the estimated property taxes are based on the anticipated assessment of the building, which cannot receive an exemption due to zoning regulations.

Board Member Holton noted that annual expenses are estimated to be \$2 million while average income is projected at \$1.5 million, leaving a \$500,000 shortfall. Dr. Cruz mentioned that expanding athletic teams will increase FTEs and they do not anticipate cutting faculty. They plan to review all positions and not rehire those that may not need to be replaced.

Board Member Blumer asked if the fitness center is available to all students and if students can attend games at no cost. Dr. Cruz said that building residents must pay for the fitness center, but students can attend games for free and student organizations can use the venue for additional events.

Board Member Daniels inquired about future athletic programs and if hotel accommodations and travel costs were considered. Dr. Cruz mentioned the possibility of adding eight teams, highlighting additional revenue from FTEs, enhancing the student experience, improving the college's visibility and increasing student participation as spectators. He noted that some sports are indoor/outdoor and that they are very aware of potential costs.

Board President Tyler said the Board, over the years, has taken a liberal approach to have colleges do new and different things. Tyler's hope is that MATC finds ways to market the space and technical colleges at large. It is on the edge of our wheelhouse, but he thinks it has an incredible opportunity to elevate the perception of the colleges.

Board Member Pechacek left the meeting at 9:54 am.

## ITEM I: Apprenticeship Completion Report

WTCS Associate Vice President – Office of Instructional Services Chrystal Seeley-Schreck provided an overview of the most recent [Apprenticeship Completion Report](#), highlighting high earnings and apprentices' strong level of satisfaction with on-the-job training and related instruction they receive through a Wisconsin technical college. The median annual salary has jumped more than \$10,000 from last year's report, with the largest gains being seen in the construction sector. The median salary for all apprentices is \$96,733 with the construction sector median salary of \$99,840.

Registered Apprenticeship combines structured, on-the-job training with classroom instruction. Apprentices learn the theory and practice of a highly skilled occupation in one to six years and are paid for their time on the job and in the classroom. Wisconsin's technical colleges work closely with the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) -Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards (BAS) to meet employer needs in apprenticeship, providing classroom instruction for apprenticeship programs in industrial, construction and other sectors. Highlights of the report include:

- 94% reported they were satisfied with their related instruction and 91% of apprentices were satisfied with their on-the-job training.
- As Wisconsin employers struggle to attract and retain talent, it is important to note that 96% of employed apprentices were working in Wisconsin after their completed training. Of those, 49% worked in the district where they received training, and apprenticeship participation has seen a steady increase of 19% over the past five years.

Board President Tyler asked about the Teacher Apprenticeship which is typically a four-year degree. Ms. Seeley-Schreck shared that it is being piloted at Fox Valley and Waukesha County technical colleges with the first two years of education at the technical college followed by the pathway of two years at Lakeland College. Those students are in the classroom right away and are being paid for student teaching, making this apprenticeship accessible and affordable. System President Merrifield thanked Ms. Seeley-Schreck and WTCS Director of Hospitality, Human Services and Education Katie Roberts for their work on this. President Merrifield talked to someone from Tennessee that increased the Teacher Apprenticeship to 600 individuals. Ms. Seeley-Schreck said it is built upon the Foundations of Teacher Education program to open the pipeline and address Wisconsin's teacher shortage.

Board Member Blumer inquired about the Tech Hub initiative and the demand for lab techs. With billions of dollars for the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) program for broadband infrastructure, higher demands may be expected. Ms. Seeley-Schreck stated that we are currently determining our role in the BEAD grant, focusing on workforce development, though measuring progress is challenging.

System President Merrifield shared that both Madison College and Milwaukee Area Technical College are part of the Tech Hub initiative. While there is still much to do, significant progress has been made in uniting partners.

Board Member Klecker asked about the Service Desk apprenticeship and the variation in apprenticeship program lengths. Ms. Seeley-Schreck answered that it is an emerging IT service desk program. Each sector has a different number of hours required under DWD-BAS and the employer determines the length based on anticipated needs of what can be taught on the job, etc.

Board Member Pechacek returned to the meeting at 10:10 am.

Board President Tyler inquired about the eligibility stage for emergency licenses in teacher education. Board Member Wendt responded that eligibility depends on the student's experience. They may be issued a license with a stipulation, giving them a one-year or three-year license.

The Board reconvened at 10:32 after a 15-minute break.

## ITEM J: Teaching & Learning – Program Approval Process

WTCS Provost and Vice President Dr. Colleen McCabe and Associate Vice President – Office of Instructional Services Chrystal Seeley-Schreck provided the Board with an overview of the program development process from concept to approval; program maintenance process, including assessment modifications and discontinuances; and 2024 program activity. In 2024, the Board approved 58 new programs.

Dr. McCabe thanked her team for the work on program approvals and Ms. Seeley-Schreck recognized WTCS Programs Education Specialist Joel Mathis and WTCS directors for their work on the program approval process.

Board Member Pechacek inquired about the initial conversation with districts and employers, wondering how the concept is formed and how information is relayed to each college. Ms. Seeley-Schreck answered that District staff communicate with the directors at the System Office to determine the need. Districts also engage with stakeholders and track employer needs in their Districts. Ms. Seeley-Schreck elaborated that district advisory committees, along with employers and student inquiries, often identify the need. However, industry input is crucial and requirements vary widely. Ideas come from across the state, sharing as an example the Governor's dental health initiative which specifically drove recent funding for colleges to expand their dental programs.

Board Member Klecker acknowledged the cycle of adding and removing programs and inquired about lessons learned from discontinued programs that could inform future approvals. Dr. McCabe emphasized learning from past successes and errors and the importance of discontinuing ineffective programs allows colleges to pivot to more successful initiatives.

Ms. Seeley-Schreck noted that they learned a lot from the need for short-term credentials, which initially generated excitement but did not meet field needs, so the process has been refined. Dr. McCabe added that laddering pathways and policy changes have been made to allow innovative work on pre-major designations.

Board Member Wendt inquired about minimum salary requirements for program approvals. Ms. Seeley-Schreck answered that there is not a set minimum due to varying salaries and needs, but programs offering less than \$20 an hour raise more questions. The goal is to ensure family-sustaining wages and future opportunities.

Board President Tyler inquired about the considerations and discussions happening to ensure approval of programs that contain laddering and career path opportunities. Ms. Seeley-Schreck said discussions occur across the sector, as WTCS directors consult with university peers. These rich discussions are often informed by surveys and lead to articulation agreements.

Board President Tyler inquired how smaller colleges manage the need to keep pace with salaries despite limited tax funding, questioning if programs are cut due to financial constraints rather than demand. Dr. McCabe mentioned that serious discussions occur with community stakeholders and employers when a program is being considered for discontinuance. Ms. Seeley-Schreck added that colleges are making tough decisions based on program viability, cost-effectiveness and faculty availability. From a System

perspective, the colleges' decisions are generally supported, trusting they are well-informed and community driven.

### **ITEM K: Strategic Directions Development 2026-2030**

Wisconsin Technical College System Provost and Vice President Dr. Colleen McCabe provided an update on developing the Board's 2026-2030 Strategic Directions and the work conducted to-date.

Discussions continue regarding how we make the strategic directions come to life. The WTCS mission is driven by state statute with additional input from the stakeholder survey.

Recent discussions focused on the System's vision and values. The Board workgroup's top priorities are innovation and collaboration with inclusion being a strong third. The staff workgroup's top priority is innovation with inclusion, equity and collaboration, tying for the second priority. Both groups felt that diversity and equity are embedded within several of the other values. Great discussions were held with both workgroups.

Their next focus will be on the stakeholder survey.

The Board will have Strategic Directions updates at Board meetings until next November.

### **ITEM L: Teaching & Learning – Keeping Data Secure**

WTCS Associate Vice President of Information Technology Brandon Graf provided the Board with an overview on how the System keeps data secure throughout its entire lifecycle at WTCS.

Board Member Pechacek inquired about which community-based organizations access our data. System President Merrifield clarified that limited access is shared with organizations, such as literacy groups, which obtain grant support from WTCS.

Board Member Holton asked if there is a generator for data backup at the location that houses the data and what would happen if someone would hack our System for ransom. Mr. Graf confirmed that there is a generator and shared that we have ransomware and System IT staff would roll all systems back to a previous date of data ensuring WTCS would maintain control of all data.

Part of the System budget request includes funds to fill a currently vacant IT specialist position and to meet IT infrastructure needs, ensuring the System continues to both protect and leverage WTCS data systems to improve student outcomes and meet Wisconsin's workforce demands of the future.

### **ITEM M: Legislative Update**

WTCS Executive Vice President Paul Hammer, along with Policy Advisors Megan Stritchko and Brandon Trujillo and DBA Executive Director Diane Handrick provided an overview of legislative items affecting the System.

WTCS Executive Vice President Hammer shared the State Budget timeline, stating that the Legislative Fiscal Bureau will release their forecast soon, which the legislature will use throughout the budget process. Governor Evers will introduce his budget on February 18. If the budget does not pass by July 1, the previous budget will remain in use.

DBA Executive Director Handrick provided updates on policy and budget. System President Merrifield and Ms. Handrick began legislative visits at the end of last calendar year and will meet with members of key committees, including the Joint Committee on Finance, Senate Committee on Universities and Technical Colleges and Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities.



WTCS Policy Advisor Trujillo briefed the Board on Wisconsin Student Government, Wisconsin Act 80 and Wisconsin Act 117.

WTCS Policy Advisor Stritchko shared federal updates and continues to track the potential disbanding of the U.S. Department of Education.

#### **ITEM N: Announcements/Adjourn**

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board will be held March 11-12, 2025, at Madison College, Truax Campus.

**It was moved by Board Member Pechacek, seconded by Board Member Klecker, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously.**

The meeting adjourned at 12:02 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Julie Drake