

MINUTES OF MEETING
WISCONSIN TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM (WTCS) BOARD
SEPTEMBER 10-11, 2024
NORTHCENTRAL TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Tuesday, September 10, 2024

Members Present: Lindsay Blumer, Quincey Daniels, Jr., Janixa Franco Gonzalez, Douglas Holton, Sr., Dan Klecker, Alex Lasry, Amy Pechacek, Sara Rogers, Daniel Sperberg, Leslie Svacina, S. Mark Tyler, Jill Underly, Karen Walsh.

System Office Staff Present: Jamie Bernthal, Rachel Colla, Danielle Cook, Julie Drake, Stephanie Glynn, Mandy Johnson, Tou Ya Khang, Christina Lorge, Ward Lyon, Colleen McCabe, Layla Merrifield, Jeremy Nichols, Katy Pettersen, Dan Scanlon, Chrystal Seeley-Schreck, Lenard Simpson, Latisha Spence-Brookens, Megan Stritchko, Brandon Trujillo, Julie Tyznik, JP Villavicencio, Ann Westrich.

District/Others Present: Sherry Bunten, Aspirus; Chuck Bolstad, Diane Handrick, District Boards Association; Chris Matheny, Fox Valley Technical College; Ritu Raju, Gateway Technical College; Jack Daniels, III, Madison Area Technical College; Betty Bruski Mallek, Peter Mallek, Shelly Mondeik, Mid-State Technical College; Anthony Cruz, Milwaukee Area Technical College; Bonnie Baerwald, Moraine Park Technical College; Kate Ferrel, Nicolet Area Technical College; Darren Ackley, Sarah Dillon, Nikki Kopp, Paul Proulx, Chet Strebe, Jeannie Worden, Northcentral Technical College; Kristen Raney, Northeast Wisconsin Technical College; Holly Clendenen, Southwest Wisconsin Technical College; Roger Stanford, Western Technical College; Sharon Wendt, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Board President Tyler called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm. Julie Drake read the open meeting statement and roll call indicated that a quorum was present.

Board President Tyler thanked President Dr. Jeannie Worden and her team for hosting the WTCS Board. Dr. Worden welcomed the Board, shared she is honored NTC is the host location for President Merrifield's first System Board meeting. President Worden then presented a clock displaying the WTCS and NTC logos, proudly made by students in their Machine Tool program, to each Board Member as a token of appreciation for the Board's leadership.

WTCS Ambassador Grace Koehler, graduate of NTC's Welding Fabrication & Robotics program, now pursuing a bachelor's in technology education from UW-Stout, addressed the Board.

ITEM A: Approval of July 16-17, 2024, Meeting Minutes

It was moved by Board Member Sperberg, seconded by Board Member Holton, that the July 16-17, 2024, meeting minutes be approved. Motion carried unanimously.

ITEM B: Report of the Board President

The Universities of Wisconsin Board of Regents report for August was shared with Board Members on September 6, 2024.

Board Member Pechacek provided an overview of the four-year State Apprenticeship Expansion Grant the Department of Workforce Development just completed to expand state apprenticeship, including registered apprenticeship, certified pre-apprenticeship and youth apprenticeship. The Wisconsin Technical College System was a key partner in this work, along with many other collaborators, for direct instruction and expansion of programs. Wisconsin was the first state to pass an apprenticeship law in

1911 and continues to lead nationally, not only in the number of apprentices, but also in the number of employer partners and different pathways and careers.

Board President Tyler thanked all those involved in the search and screen committee for selecting WTCS System President Layla Merrifield. Special thanks to WTCS Human Resources Director Madeline Erce and Executive Staff Assistant Julie Drake for supporting the committee's work in this process.

Board President Tyler welcomed and introduced WTCS System President Layla Merrifield.

ITEM C: Report of the System President

System President Merrifield thanked everyone for the warm welcome. She is thrilled to be at her first Board meeting on day two of her presidency and thanked Dr. Worden for hosting the meeting and her work on the search committee.

System President Merrifield shared her background and vision, expressing her passion for the System's mission and the communities we serve. She believes education is a pathway to greater opportunities and aims to continue the momentum built over the past 12 years.

The Wisconsin Technical College System has always embraced open access and inclusion, serving many first-generation students and those facing academic and financial challenges. Our mission is to address these barriers and ensure equal access to labor market opportunities. System President Merrifield is passionate about implementing universal design for learning to support neurodivergent learners, aiming to make our colleges known for neuro-inclusivity. She emphasizes collaboration with various stakeholders and strives for excellence in all aspects, making our colleges the top choice for education.

ITEM D: Building the 2026-2030 Strategic Directions

Wisconsin Technical College System Provost and Vice President Dr. Colleen McCabe outlined the timeline and process for developing the Board's 2026-2030 Strategic Directions. Planning will include collaboration and stakeholder engagement with AI being used as a tool throughout the process.

The Board Workgroup will distill information for full Board discussion and consideration and will meet virtually during the months between regular WTCS Board meetings with updates shared at Board meetings through November 2025. Additionally, a WTCS staff workgroup has been formed to create a stakeholder survey for college staff and faculty, employers and community members and review strategic plans of the colleges. As planning of these groups progresses, keep in mind that these directions are lived through action and not a workplan.

Dr. McCabe shared and referenced two articles on Strategic Planning:

- [3 Ways Leaders Drive Success Through Strategic Planning](#)
- [The Trouble With Strategy](#)

Board President Tyler emphasized the Strategic Directions' flexibility, aligning with our System's structure, giving our colleges the ability to react to workforce needs. He invited Board Members to contact him if they are interested in serving on the Strategic Directions Development Workgroup, with a commitment of virtual meetings through November of 2025.

Board Member Franco Gonzalez left the meeting at 5:08 pm.

ITEM E: Workforce Advancement Training (WAT) and Apprentice-Related Instruction Grant Guidelines

WTCS Grants Manager Tou Ya Khang provided an overview of the State of Wisconsin WAT and Apprentice-related grant guidelines for fiscal year 2025-26, which operates on a different timeline than the state and federal guidelines approved at the July 2024 meeting.

All of these grants are in alignment with the priorities of the Board. First, they provide direct resources to expand the skilled workforce in our state. Secondly, they make student success a priority, ensuring more students are successful and complete their credential. They also continuously help improve instruction at the colleges and encourage innovative thinking.

Grant report due dates and contact information for the Apprentice-Related Instruction grant have been updated.

WAT grant updates include deadline for completion of WAT projects, application due date and formal budget revision deadline.

Upon the Board's approval, the colleges will submit grant applications for funding in December and January for Board approval at the March and May 2025 Board meetings. The colleges will receive notification of grant awards in March with grant activities beginning July 1, 2025.

It was moved by Board Member Underly, seconded by Board Member Svacina, that the Wisconsin Technical College System Board adopts the funding categories for the State of Wisconsin WAT and Apprentice-Related Instruction grant programs for fiscal year 2025-26. Motion carried unanimously.

ITEM F: 2025-2026 Board Meeting Schedule

It was moved by Board Member Underly, seconded by Board Member Holton to adopt the 2025-26 WTCS Board meeting schedule as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

ITEM G: Futuremaker Partner Award

The Board recognized [J & D Tube Benders, Inc. with the Board's Futuremaker Partner Award](#) for their ongoing partnership with Northcentral Technical College and their significant advocacy that recognizes and promotes technical education through numerous collaborative efforts with the college.

It was moved by Board Member Underly, seconded by Board Member Pechacek, to recess the meeting until Wednesday, September 11, 2024. The Board adjourned at 5:32 pm. Motion carried unanimously.

Wednesday, September 11, 2024

Members Present: Lindsay Blumer, Quincey Daniels, Jr., Douglas Holton, Sr., Dan Klecker, Alex Lasry, Amy Pechacek, Sara Rogers, Daniel Sperberg, Leslie Svacina, S. Mark Tyler, Jill Underly, Karen Walsh.

Members Absent: Janixa Franco Gonzalez.

System Office Staff Present: Sarah Arneson, Hilary Barker, Rachel Colla, Danielle Cook, Julie Drake, Stephanie Glynn, Mandy Johnson, Tou Ya Khang, Ben Konruff, Colleen Larsen, Christina Lorge, Ward Lyon, Joel Mathis, Colleen McCabe, Carolann Nelson, Jeremy Nichols, Cristina Parente, Anna Richter, Dan Scanlon, Chrystal Seeley-Schreck, Lenard Simpson, Latisha Spence-Brookens, Megan Stritchko, Brandon Trujillo, Julie Tyznik, JP Villavicencio, Ann Westrich, James Zylstra.

District/Others Present: Tracy Pierner, Blackhawk Technical College; Sunem Beaton-Garcia, Joni Geroux, Lynette Livingston, Chippewa Valley Technical College; Chuck Bolstad, Diane Handrick, District Boards Association; Chris Matheny, Fox Valley Technical College; Matt Janisin, Ritu Raju, Gateway Technical College; Paul Carlsen, Lakeshore Technical College; Jack Daniels, III, Sylvia Ramirez, Madison Area Technical College; Betty Bruski Mallek, Peter Mallek, Shelly Mondeik, Mid-State Technical College; Anthony Cruz, Milwaukee Area Technical College; Bonnie Baerwald, Moraine Park Technical College; Kate Ferrel, Nicolet Area Technical College; Darren Ackley, Jon DeGroot, Tom Felch, Nikki Kopp, Renae Krings, Paul Proulx, Chet Strebe, Josh Stutting, Jeannie Worden, Northcentral Technical College; John Will, Northwood Technical College; Holly Clendenen, Southwest Wisconsin Technical College; Rich Barnhouse, Waukesha County Technical College; Roger Stanford, Western Technical College; Sharon Wendt, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction; Jim Jelak, Wisconsin Technical College System Marketing Consortium.

Board President Tyler called the meeting to order at 9:29 am. Julie Drake read the open meeting statement and roll call indicated that a quorum was present.

ITEM H: Teaching & Learning – Digital Literacy & Integrating AI in Programs

WTCS Provost and Vice President Dr. Colleen McCabe, Associate Vice President for Student Success Dr. Christina Lorge and Associate Vice President for Instruction Chrystal Seeley-Schreck provided an overview of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Integration in Education: Pathways to Success.

Northcentral Technical College (NTC) Provost and Vice President for Learning Dr. Darren Ackley, Vice President of Business & Technology Dr. Chet Strebe, Senior Director of IT Jon DeGroot and IT Faculty Josh Stutting provided an overview of how NTC has incorporated generative AI into new academic programming, their current programs, workforce training division and internal business process. All 16 colleges are leading this work for their communities.

They gave the example that AI in Culinary looks vastly different than AI in marketing. Part of their AI presentation included a culinary experience created by NTC Chef Brock and delivered by students.

Board Member Holton inquired about addressing student absences. NTC monitors login frequency and timing, noting that early logins correlate with success. Their model has proven accurate. Student connection specialists may intervene as early as two weeks into classes. Each student must complete projects, and the Starfish platform alerts instructors to trends.

Board Member Blumer noted that Chat GPT's effectiveness depends on the quality of input. She raised concerns about AI generating misinformation, accessibility and inclusivity. Discussions at NTC, including in AI 101 classes, have addressed these issues, highlighting significant biases and the need for comprehensive integration. Guided solutions are provided for diverse learning needs.

Board Member Daniels inquired about AI's role in enhancing critical thinking. The instructors suggested students create arguments and debate with Chat GPT. Mr. Stutting emphasized the importance of training in fundamental and soft skills, including critical thinking. He asked for guidance on developing effective prompts, noting that AI should be seen as an extension of oneself – detailed input yields detailed responses.

Board President Tyler asked if there are challenges with credential agencies. NTC has not had any issues.

ITEM I: Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association

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

On behalf of the 144 trustees of the 16 technical colleges, President Bolstad extended a heartfelt congratulations to System President Merrifield. They are enthusiastic about her leadership and confident she will elevate WTCS to new heights.

President Bolstad recognized NTC Trustee Paul Proulx, who shares a wealth of knowledge and is a guiding light for the organization.

President Bolstad thanked the Board for including Chippewa Valley Technical College Trustee Erin Greenawald on the Board Biennial Budget Development Workgroup.

DBA had three employees and currently they are down to one. Thank you to Diane Handrick for serving as the Interim Executive Director of the DBA. The DBA Executive Committee has begun the search for the Executive Director and will serve as the search committee.

Diane Handrick expressed her enthusiasm for serving as the Interim Executive Director and her commitment to advancing the Association.

The DBA fall meeting will be held at Fox Valley Technical College November 20-22, focusing on universal design in education and neurodiversity.

They will also focus on preparing for the Madison legislative meetings on January 15, 2025 where the Trustees will meet with legislators to share budget priorities. The meetings on January 16, 2025 will include in-house training on Governance Leadership Institute by the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT). This will recognize cost savings by not having trustees travel out of state to attend ACCT summits.

Board Member Underly left the meeting at 10:50 am.

ITEM J: WTCS Presidents' Association

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

On behalf of the Association, Dr. Barnhouse congratulated President Merrifield. The Executive Committee of the Presidents' Association aims to get to know President Merrifield in her new role and are looking forward to a long working relationship.

The Association has not met since the last Board meeting. They will be meeting the afternoon of September 11 and will focus their discussions on Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees (AA/AS), general education and transferability to meet the needs of WTCS students as they look to transfer to other institutions. They will also focus on the budget this year.

President Barnhouse welcomed Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) President, Dr. Anthony Cruz, who joined MATC in July.

President Barnhouse highlighted the System's strong position despite the demographic and workforce challenges. Our enrollment is rising and we continue to develop for our communities daily. The Presidents' Association is collaborating effectively and remains a strong, cohesive group.

Board President Tyler commented that collaboration is the strength of our System and that is related to the leadership at the colleges.

ITEM K: Consent Agenda

Board President Tyler noted that at most meetings we cover the Consent Agenda topic quickly. Today, the Board is approving nearly \$19 million in construction and remodeling projects. Despite the seemingly cumbersome process, we operate much faster than other higher education systems. The behind-the-scenes work at colleges and WTCS often goes unnoticed. Our programs yield impressive outcomes, with starting wages of \$19-\$37 an hour. This approval represents significant effort and dedication.

Board Member Blumer inquired about the onsite instructor for the Bricklaying Less-Than-One Year Technical Diploma at Milwaukee Area Technical College and the employers involved in the program. WTCS Associate Vice President of Instruction Chrystal Seeley-Schreck will research and provide the information to Blumer.

It was moved by Board Member Pechacek, seconded by Board Member Daniels that the Board approve the program and facilities development requests with the exception of the Waukesha County Technical College program and facilities development requests. Motion carried unanimously.

It was moved by Board Member Walsh, seconded by Board Member Sperberg that the Board approve the program and facility development requests for Waukesha County Technical College. Motion carried unanimously.

ITEM L: Gateway Technical College – Project Concept Review – Remodeling of Existing Facilities in Racine

WTCS Facilities Director Dan Scanlon introduced Gateway Technical College Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs Matthew Janisin who briefed the Board on the project. The District proposes to remodel 12,000 square feet in the technical building to enlarge facilities for Welding and Welding Fabrication programs. The District's Business and Workforce Solutions department has been approached by the U.S. Navy's submarine industrial base (SIB) command with interest in offering a welding certificate program in bootcamp format. The program goal is that welding certificate completers would be employed by SIB employers contracted to support the Navy's submarine fleet modernization efforts. The U.S. Navy expressed a willingness to fund capital and operating costs of an expanded welding program. The investment will be made in collaboration with the industry trade group Blue Forge Alliance.

Board Member Blumer asked about the number of contracted employers. Mr. Janisin said the list is being created and there are hundreds. The primary focus is on local companies needing trained workers.

Board Member Pechacek remarked that she finds this project fascinating and shared that a northern Wisconsin shipbuilder facing workforce shortages has sought help from our technical colleges. They will meet with her and President Raney from Northeast Wisconsin Technical College in the coming weeks. She inquired about involving other colleges in the System. Mr. Janisin indicated the project aims to be scalable and could potentially involve our colleges across the state.

Board President Tyler asked if employers require NAVSEA (Naval Sea Systems Command) certification. Mr. Janisin indicated that those details have not been shared yet.

It was moved by Board Member Sperberg, seconded by Board Member Klecker, that the Board finds that the concept for Gateway Technical College's proposed remodeling is reasonable. The final scope and design of the project are subject to review and approval by the Board as required by s. 38.04(10) Stats. Motion carried unanimously.

ITEM M: Western Technical College – Project Review – Construction of Additional and Remodeling of Existing Facilities in La Crosse

WTCS Facilities Director Dan Scanlon provided an overview of the project. The District proposes to construct additional and remodel existing facilities to create an Innovation Center in La Crosse at a cost of \$6,238,584. This is the second phase of a two-phase review, initially approved in March 2024. The project will be funded through district borrowing and donations, gifts and grants.

Board President Tyler remarked that employer participation in projects is imperative but can also take time and be complicated.

It was moved by Board Member Holton, seconded by Board Member Sperberg, that the Board grants approval to the Western Technical College District to construct additional and remodel existing facilities to create an Innovation Center in La Crosse at a cost of \$6,238,584.

ITEM N: 2025-27 Biennial Budget Request

System President Tyler thanked the Biennial Budget Workgroup members for their time.

WTCS Executive Vice President James Zylstra thanked Board Members Tyler, Blumer and Klecker for serving on the Biennial Budget Workgroup with other stakeholders including representatives from the District Boards Association, Wisconsin Student Government, two college presidents and a faculty member along with WTCS staff members. Mr. Zylstra further explained there are five budget papers which are due to the Governor's office on September 16. Advocacy pieces will be finalized and shared with the Board to use while talking with legislators and policy makers when discussing budget priorities.

WTCS Policy Advisor Megan Stritchko provided the Board with an overview of the General Aid for Wisconsin's Technical Colleges budget request for \$20 million GPR in 2025-26 and \$25 million GPR in 2026-27 for state aid for technical colleges under s. 20.292(1)(d). This funding will provide colleges with the flexibility to expand their capacity to deliver a talent pipeline that is positioned to thrive.

WTCS Policy Advisor Brandon Trujillo provided the Board with an overview of the Open Educational Resources (OER) budget request for an increase of \$1 million GPR in 2025-26 and \$2 million in 2026-27 and thereafter in s. 20.292(1)(f) to provide grants to technical colleges to create OER textbooks and other materials that can be utilized by all students within the Wisconsin Technical College System and beyond.

Ms. Stritchko provided the Board with an overview of the Professional Development for Artificial Intelligence budget request for \$5 million GPR in 2025-26 and \$5 million GPR in 2026-27 s. 20.292(1)(f) to provide funding for professional development and tools to support technical colleges in their adoption of artificial intelligence.

Mr. Zylstra provided the Board with an overview of the System General Program Operations budget request for an increase of \$700,000 GPR in s. 20.292(1)(a), WTCS general program operations in each year of the biennium to convert four (4.0) FED positions to GPR positions and to fund data infrastructure and cybersecurity needs. No additional position authority is requested.

Board Member Holton asked what would happen if the System does not receive the funds requested. Mr. Zylstra responded that we will need to narrow our scope of work.

Mr. Zylstra outlined the next steps in the process upon Board approval:

- Budget is due to the Governor and Department of Administration on September 16, 2024.
- Fall 2024 the Governor/DOA Budget staff develops the Governor's budget proposal based on agency requests, administration priorities, projected revenue and fiscal conditions.
- In January/February 2025 the Governor submits 2025-27 budget proposal to the legislature.
- Late winter 2025 the legislature and interested parties assess the initial bill. The Joint Committee on Finance (JFC) holds statewide budget hearings including presentations by WTCS, other state agencies and the public.
- A DRAFT one-page budget paper was shared with the Board which highlights talking points from each of the papers that can be shared with legislators.

Board President Tyler praised the System's impressive outcomes and emphasized the importance of collaboration and unity in presenting our budget request to state legislators for the greatest success.

It was moved by Board Member Pechacek, seconded by Board Member Klecker, to approve the submission of the 2025-27 WTCS budget request to the Wisconsin Department of Administration. Motion carried unanimously.

Board Member Pechacek left the meeting at 11:40 am.

ITEM O: Ethics for Public Officials Training

WTCS Executive Vice President James Zylstra facilitated Ethics for Public Officials training that must be completed by members of Boards to state agencies.

ITEM P: Announcements/Adjourn

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board will be held November 12-13, 2024, at Mid-State Technical College in Stevens Point.

Mid-State Technical College Trustee Betty Bruski Mallek shared with the Board that Mid-State's College President Dr. Shelly Mondeik has been chosen as the recipient of the [2024 Central Regional CEO Award](#) from the Association of Community Colleges (ACCT). Mondeik will be recognized during the Annual ACCT Leadership Congress in Seattle in October.

It was moved by Board Member Sperberg, seconded by Board Member Holton, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 12:02 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Julie Drake