

**MINUTES OF MEETING**  
**WISCONSIN TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM (WTCS) BOARD**  
**MARCH 17-18, 2026**  
**WISCONSIN TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM**

Tuesday, March 17, 2026

Members Present: Quincey Daniels, Jr., Eli Guthrie, Frances Huntley-Cooper, Dan Klecker, Timothy Nixon, Amy Pechacek, Sara Rogers, Michael Rosen, Daniel Sperberg, Leslie Svacina, Jill Underly.

Members Absent: Lindsay Blumer, Terry Craney.

System Office Staff Present: Hilary Barker, Rachel Colla, Julie Drake, Paul Hammer, Mandy Johnson, Tou Ya Khang, Christina Lorge, Colleen McCabe, Layla Merrifield, Jeremy Nichols, Cristina Parente, Katy Pettersen, Dan Scanlon, Chrystal Seeley-Schreck, Lenard Simpson, Megan Stritchko, Brandon Trujillo, Ann Westrich.

District/Others Present: Avery Bohm, Mike Borowicz, Elisa Colson, Tiffany Garrison, Cassie Hartje, Katie Lange, Jim Nemeth, Tracy Pierner, Jon Tysse, Blackhawk Technical College; Sunem Beaton-Garcia, Chippewa Valley Technical College; Morgan Phillips, Gateway Technical College; Cameryn Hilbelink, Chou Yang, Lakeshore Technical College; Jennifer Berne, Madison Area Technical College; Shelly Mondeik, Mid-State Technical College; Anthony Cruz, Milwaukee Area Technical College; Bonnie Baerwald, Moraine Park Technical College; Jeannie Worden, Northcentral Technical College; Kristen Raney, Northeast Wisconsin Technical College; John Will, Northwood Technical College; Rich Barnhouse, Waukesha County Technical College; Roger Stanford, Western Technical College; Sharon Wendt, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction; Mike Mosher, Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development; Kendra Klein, Wisconsin Student Government; Bryan Albrecht, John Wyatt, Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association.

**Board President Rogers called the meeting to order at 4:31 pm. Julie Drake read the open meeting statement and roll call indicated that a quorum was present.**

Board President Rogers introduced Blackhawk Technical College President Tracy Pierner who welcomed the Board.

President Pierner introduced Blackhawk's 2025 WTCS Ambassador, Avery Bohm, who shared remarks with the Board.

**ITEM A: Approval of January 20, 2026, Meeting Minutes**

Board Member Klecker requested an amendment of the January 20, 2026 meeting minutes for Item J: Teaching & Learning – Program Approval Process to include the following comment by Board Member Klecker: When a college suspends a program, it is possible that the equipment for that program may be dispersed and the facility is repurposed prior to Board approved

program discontinuance. Therefore, it is Board Member Klecker's recommendation that the program advisory committee be involved in the decision to suspend programs.

**It was moved by Board Member Huntley-Cooper, seconded by Board Member Underly, that the amended January 20, 2026 meeting minutes be approved. Motion carried unanimously.**

## ITEM B: Report of the Board President

The February and March reports from the Universities of Wisconsin Board of Regents were distributed to Board Members on March 16, 2026.

Serving with Board President Rogers on the WTCS Board Biennial Budget Workgroup will be Board Members Blumer, Klecker and Rosen.

Board President Rogers recognized Wisconsin Student Government president and Lakeshore Technical College student Kendra Klein, noting that this was her final meeting as her term concludes in April.

On February 19, the WTCS Executive Committee conducted System President Merrifield's performance evaluation. The meeting minutes were shared with the Board on March 16. The Executive Committee reviewed the System Office's work in 2025, including internal operations, collaborative initiatives with external stakeholders and key challenges and opportunities facing WTCS.

Board President Rogers encouraged Board members to attend the Ambassador Banquet on Thursday, April 16. Hotel rooms have been released, but banquet registration remains open through March 31. Contact Julie Drake if you would like to attend.

## ITEM C: Report of the System President

System President Merrifield shared System updates:

- A formalized input process will be established for the WTCS Board Budget Development Workgroup. Board President Rogers will appoint Board members to the workgroup. Northwood Technical College President John Will is serving as the representative of the Presidents' Association. Representatives from Wisconsin Student Government (WSG) and faculty will be announced at a later date, along with members from the District Boards Association and WTCS leadership. The workgroup will focus on identifying and discussing challenges facing the colleges. Meetings will be held throughout the spring and summer to review data and engage in robust discussion.
- System President Merrifield addressed the Wisconsin Student Government (WSG) during its February meeting in Madison. WTCS Policy Advisor Brandon Trujillo serves as the liaison to WSG, which annually visits the Capitol to advocate for technical college funding and engage with policymakers and invited speakers, including Governor Evers. WSG members develop policy priorities, meet with legislators representing their colleges and discuss issues affecting students across the System.
- System President Merrifield, along with Board President Rogers, attended the Governor's Council on Workforce Investment (CWI) meeting on February 24 at Rockwell

Automation in Milwaukee. The meeting included discussion of WIOA State Plan modifications and departmental strategic planning updates. Secretary Pechacek will provide a related presentation later in the agenda.

- On February 26, System President Merrifield led a Workforce Pell webinar for community college leaders nationwide, alongside representatives from Nebraska and Massachusetts. The webinar was organized by the American Association of Community Colleges. The presentation highlighted Wisconsin's collaborative approach to Workforce Pell implementation, including coordination with the Department of Workforce Development and WTCS colleges.
- The WTCS Foundation sponsored a Systemwide AI Summit last month at Madison College, with 350 participants representing all 16 colleges. Due to strong demand, the event reached capacity. The summit featured WTCS AI leaders and a national speaker and was well received. Plans are anticipated for a future summit as AI integration in education remains a priority to support workforce-ready skills development.
- On March 6, System President Merrifield participated in the Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative retreat in Sauk Prairie, where leadership from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services also addressed attendees. President Merrifield provided an overview of WTCS, highlighting health science programs, dual credit options, EMT and dental funding, and the System's role in supporting rural health workforce needs. She also sought input on WTCS's role in the Rural Health Transformation Program as grant guidelines are developed for a summer launch. This event was a continuation of her ongoing efforts to make meaningful connections with employers and grow our advocacy coalition in support of the colleges.
- System President Merrifield attended Gateway Technical College's State of the College event in early February. Trustees provided an overview of the college's recent transition and Interim President Phillips highlighted current initiatives with a focus on AI, including an AI-generated introduction.
- On March 13, System President Merrifield toured Waukesha County Technical College's (WCTC) Child Development Center, highlighting Wisconsin's new Get Kids Ready program, which subsidizes 4K programs. She was joined by Department of Children and Families Secretary Jeff Pertl, WCTC President Rich Barnhouse and Center Director Lauren Holtz. This National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accredited center serves community members, staff and students and functions as a teaching lab for early childhood education associate degree students.
- The WTCS Student Ambassador Banquet will take place on Thursday, April 16. Board members were invited, and the event will be livestreamed for those unable to participate in person. System President Merrifield shared that she looks forward to meeting the next class of Student Ambassadors.
- In April, WTCS will celebrate apprentices through Ascendium's Tools of the Trade scholarship program. Now in its thirteenth year, the public-private partnership awards \$2,000 scholarships to eligible apprentices enrolled at WTCS colleges in construction or

industrial trade programs who demonstrate financial need. To date, Ascendium has provided more than \$8.8 million in scholarships to over 5,000 apprentices statewide.

Each year, apprentices share stories of gratitude. WTCS Media Specialist Jeremy Nichols [captured one such story](#) to share with the Board.

## ITEM D: Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association

Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association (DBA) President and Lakeshore Technical College Trustee John Wyatt and DBA Executive Director Pat Goss updated the Board on recent activities.

Association President Wyatt introduced DBA staff:

- Amiee Leavy joined DBA last October as Program and Engagement Manager. She focuses on providing opportunities for trustees to learn how to better serve their colleges and looking for ways for trustees to collaborate.
- Pat Goss started with DBA on March 2 as the Executive Director. He has extensive experience in association management and advocacy and he has already begun to meet with the 16 colleges.
- Since the January WTCS Board meeting, the DBA hosted several successful events, including one of their most successful Winter Meetings with more than half of their membership registered for the event hosted by Mid-State Technical College.

## ITEM E: WTCS Presidents' Association

Dr. Jeannie Worden, Northcentral Technical College president and current association president, provided the Board with an overview of recent association activities.

- System President Merrifield and college presidents continue to meet biweekly to proactively address federal and state legislative developments and their potential impacts on the System, including preparations related to Workforce Pell funding implementation.
- The Presidents' Association will meet the afternoon of March 18. Agenda items include discussion with Dr. DeRionne P. Pollard, CEO of the American Association of Community Colleges, regarding a System-wide application for a \$65 million Strengthening Community College Training grant and determine whether to participate in a statewide economic impact study to clearly articulate the value of the WTCS.
- A financial summit is scheduled for April 17 for college presidents, chief financial officers, vice presidents for learning and vice presidents of student services. The summit will focus on proactive planning, preparation and advocacy related to the financial challenges facing Wisconsin higher education. Discussions will consider factors expected to impact colleges over the next five years, including the need to balance financial constraints with the continuation of critical services amid rising costs.
- The Presidents' Association will hold a strategic planning retreat on June 4-5, facilitated by Dr. Andrea Henderson, former executive director of the Oregon Community College

Association and current executive director of the Arkansas Community Colleges Association. Using a scenario-based planning approach, the session will focus on defining a long-term vision, clarifying System identity and identifying key strategic initiatives. The association may continue working with Dr. Henderson following the retreat to support implementation and change management.

- By the end of the retreat, participants will establish:
  - A 10-15 year vision for the Presidents' Association's future,
  - A defined future System identity, and
  - Three to five strategic initiatives to advance the desired long-term direction.
- Dr. Worden thanked Dr. Bryan Albrecht for his leadership of the District Boards Association and welcomed Patrick Goss.
- Dr. Worden welcomed Dr. Jeremy Pickard, incoming president of Southwest Wisconsin Technical College who will begin on July 1, 2026.

## ITEM F: WTCS Dashboard Data

The System Office maintains multiple Power BI dashboards to support data-informed decision-making across the colleges. WTCS State Director of Career & Technical Education, Dr. Hilary Barker, highlighted the collaborative process used to develop and enhance these dashboards and demonstrated how colleges and the System Office use them for strategic planning. She also provided an overview of key dashboards, including Student Success, Dual Credit and Justice-Involved dashboards.

## ITEM G: Workforce Solutions Initiatives

Board Member and Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development Secretary Amy Pechacek highlighted the successful partnerships between Governor Evers' Workforce Solutions Initiative (WSI) and Wisconsin's technical colleges. The presentation provided a high-level overview of the program, including the Governor's \$158 million American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) investment, and recognized the technical college awardees: Chippewa Valley Technical College, Gateway Technical College, Lakeshore Technical College, Madison Area Technical College, Mid-State Technical College, Northwood Technical College and Southwest Wisconsin Technical College. Secretary Pechacek also highlighted the program's overall impact and success, serving as recognition of the colleges' exceptional work and a broader discussion on the value of investing in innovative workforce development programs. To date, WSI has exceeded more than 200% of its original outcome goals.

**It was moved by Board Member Klecker, seconded by Board Member Huntley-Cooper to recess the meeting until Wednesday, March 18, 2026. The Board adjourned at 6:04 pm.**

**Wednesday, March 18, 2026**

Members Present: Lindsay Blumer, Quincey Daniels, Jr., Eli Guthrie, Frances Huntley-Cooper, Dan Klecker, Timothy Nixon, Amy Pechacek, Sara Rogers, Michael Rosen, Daniel Sperberg, Leslie Svacina, Jill Underly.

Members Absent: Terry Craney.

System Office Staff Present: Sarah Arneson, Hilary Barker, Chevon Bowen, Rachel Colla, Danielle Cook, Julie Drake, Stephanie Glynn, Paul Hammer, Mandy Johnson, Tou Ya Khang, Christina Lorge, Joel Mathis, Colleen McCabe, Layla Merrifield, Jeremy Nichols, Cristina Parente, Katy Pettersen, Anna Richter, Michelle Rudman, Dan Scanlon, Chrystal Seeley-Schreck, Brent Simmons, Lenard Simpson, John Smigleski, Latisha Spence-Brookens, Megan Stritchko, Brandon Trujillo, Julie Tyznik, Ann Westrich.

District/Others Present: Julie Barreau, Avery Bohm, Elisa Colson, Tiffany Garrison, Cassie Hartje, Katie Lange, Tracy Pierner, Karen Schmitt, Blackhawk Technical College; Sunem Beaton-Garcia, Chippewa Valley Technical College; Lucas Carrigg, Chris Matheny, Fox Valley Technical College; Morgan Phillips, Gateway Technical College; Paul Carlsen, Cameryn Hilbelink, Chou Yang, Lakeshore Technical College; Jennifer Berne, Madison Area Technical College; Shelly Mondeik, Mid-State Technical College; Anthony Cruz, Milwaukee Area Technical College; Bonnie Baerwald, Moraine Park Technical College; Kate Ferrel, Nicolet Area Technical College; Jeannie Worden, Northcentral Technical College; Kristen Raney, Northeast Wisconsin Technical College; Liz Pizzi, Northwood Technical College; Caleb White, Southwest Wisconsin Technical College; Rich Barnhouse, Waukesha County Technical College; Roger Stanford, Western Technical College; Tonya Kristiansen, Wisconsin Department of Children and Families; Sharon Wendt, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Kendra Klein, Wisconsin Student Government; Bryan Albrecht, Amiee Leavy, John Wyatt, Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association.

**Board President Rogers called the meeting to order at 9:45 am. Julie Drake read the open meeting statement and roll call indicated that a quorum was present.**

#### ITEM H: Teaching & Learning – Removing Barriers, Centering Students

WTCS Associate Vice President, Office of Instructional Services Chrystal Seeley-Schreck and Director of General Education and Faculty Quality Assurance Chevon Bowen presented highlights on how the Wisconsin Technical College System and its 16 colleges center students in teaching and learning by reducing academic and structural barriers. It highlighted aligned General Education expectations, evidence-informed teaching practices and faculty support structures across the colleges. Blackhawk Technical College (BTC) Dean of General Education and Transfer Pathways Tiffany Garrison illustrated these priorities through flexible learning models, consistent course design, dual-credit expansion and zero cost materials to support student persistence and success.

#### ITEM I: Consent Agenda

**It was moved by Board Member Nixon, seconded by Board Member Blumer, that the Board approves the program and facilities development requests and interim district board appointments, with the exception of the Chippewa Valley Technical College program development requests as presented. Motion carried unanimously.**

**It was moved by Board Member Daniels, seconded by Board Member Huntley-Cooper, that the Board approves the program development requests for Chippewa Valley Technical College as presented. Board Member Guthrie abstained. Motion carried 11-1.**

#### ITEM J: Fox Valley Technical College – Project Review – Remodeling to Improve Facilities at the Main Campus in Appleton

WTCS Facilities Director Dan Scanlon provided an overview of the project for the Fox Valley Technical College district to remodel existing facilities at the Main Campus. The funding for these projects will be funded with \$1,500,000 in district borrowing and \$435,301 in donations.

**It was moved by Board Member Sperberg, seconded by Board Member Klecker, to grant approval to the Fox Valley Technical College district to remodel existing facilities at the Main Campus in Appleton at a cost of \$1,935,301. Motion carried unanimously.**

#### ITEM K: Waukesha County Technical College – Project Review – Construction of Additional Facilities in Pewaukee

WTCS Facilities Director Dan Scanlon provided an overview of the project for the Waukesha County Technical College district, pursuant to s. 38.04(10) Stats., requesting approval to construct additional facilities at the Pewaukee Campus.

**It was moved by Board Member Klecker, seconded by Board Member Underly, to grant approval to the Waukesha County Technical College District to construct additional facilities at the Main Campus in Pewaukee at a cost of \$5,500,000. Motion carried unanimously.**

#### ITEM L: State and Federal Grant Awards

WTCS Grants Manager Tou Ya Khang presented an overview of the System’s grant timeline, categories and processes, along with examples and highlights from the colleges’ 2025-26 grant activities. The presentation noted the goals of the 2026-27 grants align with the Board’s priorities, including:

- expanding Wisconsin’s skilled workforce;
- prioritizing student success;
- continuously improving instruction at the colleges; and
- encouraging innovation.

Following Board approval, the System Office will issue grant action notices informing applicants of their funding status, including approval, disapproval or the need for revisions to meet eligibility requirements. Technical assistance will be provided for applications requiring revision.

Applicants whose grants are not funded will receive formal notification through turn-down letters and feedback calls will be offered to provide additional insight.

All FY27 grant activities will begin July 1, 2026, with WTCS providing support as needed throughout the grant period.

Two videos were shared with the Board highlighting benefits to students from grants approved by the Board last year:

- [Using AI to improve Professional Communications](#) – Fox Valley Technical College
- [Open Educational Resources](#) – Northeast Wisconsin Technical College and Chippewa Valley Technical College

Board Member Sperberg left the meeting at 11:00 am.

**It was moved by Board Member Pechacek, seconded by Board Member Rosen, that the Board approves funding awards for the State of Wisconsin, Carl D. Perkins Act and Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) grant programs for fiscal year 2026-27, with the exception of Chippewa Valley Technical College grant awards. Motion carried unanimously.**

**It was moved by Board Member Underly, seconded by Board Member Klecker, that the Board approves funding awards for the State of Wisconsin, Carl D. Perkins Act and Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) grant programs for fiscal year 2026-27 for Chippewa Valley Technical College. Board Member Guthrie abstained. Motion carried 10-1.**

The Board reconvened at 11:26 after a short break.

#### ITEM M: 2026-27 Tuition Recommendation

WTCS Executive Vice President Paul Hammer, who facilitated a tuition workgroup of Board members, presented an overview of the group’s process, historical trends, findings and recommendations. The workgroup included Board Members Blumer, Guthrie and Rosen along with Board President Rogers. After considering factors currently affecting the technical colleges, the group forwarded a recommendation for a 3% tuition increase for Occupational degrees (\$4.60 per credit) and a 2% increase for Associate of Arts/Associate of Science (AA/AS) degrees (\$3.85 per credit).

**It was moved by Board Member Rosen, seconded by Board Member Huntley-Cooper, that upon the recommendation of the president of the Wisconsin Technical College System, the per credit tuition rates for 2026-27, beginning with the summer session, shall be as follows:**

<b>Occupational</b>	<b>\$157.45 per credit</b>
<b>Occupational non-resident addition</b>	<b>78.73 per credit</b>
<b>Associate of Arts/Associate of Science</b>	<b>\$196.05 per credit</b>
<b>Associate of Arts/Associate of Science non-resident addition</b>	<b>\$98.03 per credit</b>

#### ITEM N: Legislative Update

WTCS Executive Vice President Paul Hammer, joined by WTCS Policy Advisor Brandon Trujillo provided an overview of state legislative items affecting the System.

On March 17, the Senate met in what may have been its final floor session before the mid-term elections. Although the session concluded earlier than anticipated, it was busy and fast-paced. Policy Advisors Megan Stritchko and Brandon Trujillo tracked more than 350 bills during this session. Here are a few notable bills still being decided.

PFAS Bill (AB130/AB131) Passed: Following extensive bipartisan negotiations, legislation was advanced to provide grant funding for PFAS contamination cleanup and to identify entities exempt from the State’s Spills Law. WTCS worked with bill authors and the Administration to ensure technical college districts are eligible for cleanup grants, similar to municipalities. Ongoing concerns remain regarding potential PFAS contamination at fire training centers.

WTCS Admissions Priority Bill (SB750/AB750) Passed: The bill would allow technical college districts to establish their own admissions priorities for public safety programs, eliminating current residency-based requirements under Chapter 38 and Administrative Code. The System Office opposed the legislation due to the lack of WTCS Board oversight, the existence of current statutory pathways to address workforce shortages and concerns that districts would not be required to maintain waitlists for in-district students. The bill has passed both houses and now awaits action by the Governor.

Designating Sports and Athletic Teams Based on Sex (SB116/AB102) Passed: Legislation designating all college sports teams as male or female was passed. WTCS opposed the bill due to the presence of club and co-ed sports within the technical college system.

WTCS Policy Advisor Megan Stritchko shared federal updates affecting the System.

#### ITEM N: Announcements/Adjourn

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board will be held May 19, 2026, at Hill Farms State Office Building in Madison.

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

The meeting adjourned at 12:11 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Julie Drake